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29th Gender Workshop in conjunction with Annual Conference of the Association for Social Science Research on Japan (2023, November 2-3)

Abstracts

MAI ISHIJIMA (JOHANNES-GUTENBERG-UNIVERSITÄT MAINZ)

What is possibly implied in Japan's judicial practices over family law? An introduction and examination of recent court decisions

The diverse forms of the family have become visible in Japan through increasing recognition of diversity in sexual orientation and gender modality, development of assisted reproductive technologies, and international marriages involving gender transition, same-sex relationships, or reproductions abroad. On the other hand, the Japanese judiciary has tended to apply the existing kinship law rigidly in recent court cases. Although this tendency is understandable for legal stability, it is worth reexamining the basis of the decisions where such application takes precedence over other significant legal interests. Japanese law must also handle legal gender and kinship status established abroad. Problems arise where the Japanese legal system premises a standardized family form, as seen especially in the civil registration system *koseki*, which symbolically reproduces a patriarchal, patrilineal, primogeniture prewar household system (*ie-seidō*) through compiling one's civil status by two-generational family units. In addition, Japan's heteronormative legal order requires trans people to lose their reproductive capacity, have no minor children, and be unmarried when they apply for legal gender recognition. Such safeguarding of the existing legal family order loses its function when a spouse has applicable law outside Japan, as they can change their legal gender in their jurisdiction without fulfilling Japan's requirements. The family order implied in Japanese law has reached its turning point.

Legal principles and cultural foundations are interwoven in judicial decisions. This presentation introduces several court decisions and provides information for further interdisciplinary examinations, especially regarding possible priorities set in Japan's recent judicial practices related to gender, legal parental status, husbands' position in the family, children's interests, status of legitimacy, and nationality.

XINYU WANG (UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO)

"Home is ... in the future" – Chinese trans women in Japan and their negotiation of placelessness

By focusing on the diasporic experiences of Chinese trans women in Japan, this paper examines their search for a place to belong in relation to the intersectionality between gender, ethnicity, and mobility. Findings presented in this paper are drawn from extensive qualitative data that I have collected from 2018 to 2023 through in-depth interviews with 22 interlocutors.

Existing studies on queer migrants in Japan often portray their sense of placelessness in Japanese society due to their unique positionality as both ethnic and gender minorities. In this context, this research aims to add nuance to the ongoing debate by challenging this assumed sense of placelessness. The empirical evidence indicates that in the context where trans people's social activities in both online and offline China are subject to increasingly strict state censorship and suppression, many Chinese trans women find their Sino-Japanese movement self-actualising and liberating. Having the opportunity to self-express and obtain crucial resources for their transitioning journey post-emigration, while being marginalised as gender and ethnic minorities, they see Japan as their potential, future "home": "With more migrants and the continuous fights for queer rights, we can eventually be acknowledged and embraced", as one of my interlocutors stated.

Consequently, I argue that the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity is not necessarily the only prominent identity assemblage in queer migrants' interpretation of their positionality in Japan, nor does it necessarily lead to a sense of placelessness. Instead, transnational mobility as an identity axis can be equally validating in shaping queers' diasporic experiences, serving as an inspiration for queers to claim home to Japan, despite their perceived marginalities.

SAMANTHA AUDOLY (UNIVERSITY OF ROME)

Imperial Priestesses' part in dodging premodern gendered roles

When we consider waka poetry produced by Imperial priestesses in the Heian (794-1185) and Kamakura periods (1185-1333), Ise priestesses' poems are often more focused on sexuality and love affairs than the ones written by Kamo priestesses. Furthermore, both Ise and Kamo priestesses frequently appear as characters in Heian courtly romance tales (*ōchō monogatari*). While this reflects their historical relevance, those characters seem to acquire the specific function to represent peculiar views of sexuality and gendered roles in literary works. For instance, in *Yoru no Nezame* ("Wakefulness at Midnight", ca 1060-1080), a character known as Itsuki no Miya (or Saikū, as in "Imperial priestess of Ise") plays a central part in helping the female protagonist Nezame no Ue to defend her status as manager of her whole family instead of succumbing to the traditional female role.

This is quite stunning when we consider that this same character had probably been inspired by the story of Imperial Priestess Masako no Naishinnō (1001-1022), forced by her father Emperor Sanjō (976-1017) to take the tonsure to keep her from her illicit lover Fujiwara no Michimasa (992-1054). As a matter of fact, according to their actual biographies, Ise priestesses seldomly became Buddhist nuns at the end of their service, as opposed to Kamo priestesses who often did, thus suggesting that usually the notions of gendered roles and sexuality conveyed in those two groups of priestesses differ greatly.

In this instance, I intend to discuss the reasons behind Ise priestesses' stronger association with love relationships and sexuality, the extent of their significance and their function in representing distinctive ideals regarding romance and agency. In particular, I will focus on the transformative role of *Yoru no Nezame* in turning the priestess' tonsure from a constraint to a means of empowerment.

LUISA STELLA DE OLIVIERA COUTINHO SILVA (MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR LEGAL HISTORY AND LEGAL THEORY)

Christian Japanese women in the Iberian Empires? An approach to Christian sources from a women's legal history perspective (Japan, 16th-17th centuries)

When Christian missionaries arrived in Japan during the 16th century, they began to observe practices of cohabitation, covering their initiation, establishment, and termination. In an attempt to find parallels in their vocabulary, missionaries employed terms like marriage, divorce, and repudiation to describe these practices. In the instance referred to as repudiation, missionaries documented it as a prevalent custom in Japan, occurring frequently among both women and men. This was facilitated by the absence of ceremonies involved in the formation of Japanese marriages. However, the pragmatic literature and correspondence of these missionaries triggered discussions regarding novel practices that emerged in Japan after the conversion to Christianity of some of the Japanese populace. Among these practices, missionaries reported instances of wives being repudiated due to their refusal to convert to Christianity alongside their husbands. Building upon these descriptions that encompassed moral theology and canon law, and theological discussions, this study introduces a novel approach to the missionaries' sources. It employs a women's legal history framework to offer further interpretations about the generation of knowledge surrounding the practice of repudiation, taking into consideration intersectional aspects such as status, position, religion, and gender. In a broader context, the paper also strives to demonstrate how practices revolving around the role of converted and initiated women in Japanese society redefined social standings and legal classifications in the process of cultural translation. To do so, it analyzes concepts that had been present in Japanese legal history for centuries, at least since the 7th century, and assumed varying connotations throughout different historical periods. By looking to missionaries' sources from a gendered perspective, this paper aims to shed new light on the history of Christianity in Japan.

HIRO FUJIMOTO (HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY)

Yoshioka Yayoi and the Empire of the Japanese women doctors, 1910–1930

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, several Japanese women doctors traveled to countries of East and Southeast Asia, such as Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, China, British Malaya, and British Burma. Their overseas medical practice was often brokered by Yoshioka Yayoi, the most influential woman doctor at that time. In 1900, she founded Tokyo Women's Medical School (later Tokyo Women's Medical College, today's Tokyo Women's Medical University) and raised a number of medical professions. In the midst of the Asia-Pacific War, Yoshioka served in some important positions of the Japanese government. Building on recent scholarship on private actors of the Japanese Empire, this paper discusses the entangled relationship between overseas Japanese women doctors and the Empire, by examining why and how Yoshioka encouraged her students to work abroad.

ELENA KORSHENKO (FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN)

Substantive representation and the media: press coverage of women's issue promoters in Japan

The second term of Prime Minister Abe was marked by a surge in policy initiatives aimed at advancing women's interests in Japan under the banner of Womenomics. While the strengths and weaknesses of these policies were subject to thorough scrutiny, the simultaneous wave of legislators' proposals pertinent to women's issues, which by far outnumbered those of the government, largely escaped academic attention. This paper investigates how these legislators' efforts to represent women in Japan got reflected in the mainstream media coverage and based on what criteria: objective track record of individual politicians or their perceived expertise assumed from such ascriptive traits as gender, seniority, or party affiliation. Despite the media's role as the "fourth estate", no research has systematically examined the media coverage of substantive representation activities by elected politicians. Seeking to fill this gap, the paper applies quantitative content and regression analyses to a dataset of all major newspaper articles covering legislators most actively engaged in policymaking on women's issues in the period between 2012 and 2018, during the second premiership of Abe. The analyses demonstrate that, despite the limited power of legislators against the Cabinet in the Diet, the media gave them credit for their efforts and reflected the level of their commitment to representing women's interests in its coverage. However, the perceived expertise of politicians held stronger sway over the media coverage than their objective efforts, indicating that the media could reinforce the biased association of women with feminine policy areas and, by linking women's issues to the least influential parliamentary actors, could also play a role in the marginalisation of this agenda.

JULIA GERSTER (TOHOKU UNIVERSITY)

Whose lessons do we learn? On the absence of women's memory in public 3.11 disaster memorial museums in Japan.

After the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster ("3.11"), dozens of disaster memorial facilities have been built in the disaster-affected Tohoku region. The main goal of these facilities is to preserve the memory and pass on lessons learned from this disaster so as never to repeat a similar tragedy. Yet, whose lessons are being taught at disaster memorial museums is rarely being questioned. Based on a coding method, the authors of this research analyze the visual material, including pictures and videos of survivor accounts, displayed at prefectural disaster memorial museums focusing on "3.11" from a gender perspective. Initial results show that over half of all the materials include men only, whereas only 12 percent depict women only. The rest of the materials show mixed groups or are non-disclosed regarding distribution by sex. The gap widens even more regarding video testimonials, in which more than 77 percent of all the speakers are male. Drawing from gender-related literature on disasters and qualitative interviews with museum directors and staff, this paper aims to explain the difficulties regarding representational equality in cultural memory and offer hints for a more inclusive representation in disaster memorial facilities.

ANNETTE SCHAD-SEIFERT (HEINRICH-HEINE-UNIVERSITÄT DÜSSELDORF)

Japan's 'unprecedented measures' to tackle its population crisis

At the beginning of the year 2023 Japan's government released an alarming projection about the country's shrinking population, maintaining that due to the falling birthrate Japan is "on the brink of not being able to function as a society". Demographic research estimates that Japan's population will be diminished to 86.7 million and its proportion of the aging population (65 years of age and over) will reach 34.8% by 2040. As one of the fastest shrinking countries in the world, Japan has entered the phase of so-called post-demographic transition, resulting in a population structure that is far below replacement level. As Japan's population decline is about to turn into an exponential decline, the above-mentioned projections postulate fears about the increasing socio-economic costs of a hugely growing dependent population. Therefore, Prime Minister Kishida has proposed to lawmakers a plan that engages with the challenge to take up "unprecedented measures against the falling birthrate (*ijigen no shōshika taisaku*)".

Obviously, the number of births has been declining faster than expected and the proportion of childless persons among the productive population has increased to the highest level ever since. Analysts maintain that the trend to childlessness has slowed in those Western European countries that have successfully implemented work-life balance policies. To consider the effectiveness of past measures and to analyze how successful or unsuccessful they were, is an important strategy that should accompany the current campaigns and policies. By applying a gender-sensitive and reproductive bargain approach, this paper will critically evaluate the current proposals that aim to recover social fertility. After years of promoting work-life balance measures and gender equality at the workplace, the question remains why Japan's labor market reforms in the past obviously failed to be progressive enough to overcome the traditional gender segregation at the workplace and at home.

ILSE LENZ (RUHR-UNIVERSITÄT BOCHUM), MICHIKO MAE (HEINRICH-HEINE-UNIVERSITÄT DÜSSELDORF)

Buchvorstellung: *Die Frauenbewegung in Japan - Geschlechtergeschichte, vielfältige Bewegungen und neue Subjektgestaltung* -

Das baldige Erscheinen des Buchs *Die Frauenbewegung in Japan. Quellen und Analysen*, das aus einem langjährigen gemeinsamen Projekt von Ilse Lenz und Michiko Mae hervorgegangen ist, ist Anlass, die Entwicklung der japanischen Frauenbewegung kritisch zu reflektieren. Das Buchprojekt war eng mit dem Gender-Workshop verbunden und ist unter Beteiligung vieler japanologischer Kolleginnen und Kollegen entstanden, die mit ihren Übersetzungen von Quellentexten und mit Kommentaren dazu beigetragen haben. Den übersetzten Quellen vorangestellt sind zwei umfangreiche Texte von Lenz und Mae mit Darstellungen und Analysen zur japanischen Frauenbewegung aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven und mit sich ergänzenden Schwerpunkten.

Bei der Buchvorstellung wird Ilse Lenz die Verflechtung von Frauenbewegungs- und Geschlechtergeschichte in transnationaler und intersektionaler Perspektive skizzieren: Welche vielfältigen Bewegungen haben sich herausgebildet und wo liegen ihre Kontinuitäten und Brüche? Wie haben sie das Denken über Frauen und Geschlecht und die sich wandelnde Geschlechterordnung in Japan vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis heute verändert? Schließlich wird ihr widersprüchliches Verhältnis zur internationalen Ebene thematisiert: Wie verhielten sie sich zum japanischen Kolonialismus und zur Expansion nach Ostasien nach 1945 und was bedeutete ihre Internationalisierung nach 1970?

Michiko Mae sieht die Frauenbewegung als treibende Kraft für die Weiterführung der Modernisierung der japanischen Gesellschaft und als scharfe Kritikerin der männerzentrierten Moderne. Zu den wichtigsten gesellschaftlichen Impulsen dieser Frauenbewegung zählen: die Suche nach einem neuen Subjekt, die Kritik an Nationalismus, Kolonialismus, Rassismus und Kapitalismus sowie gleiche Teilhabe und das *gender-free* Konzept. Angesichts der strikten Trennung von privater und öffentlicher Sphäre entwickelten Frauen in Japan zwischen *Seitō*- und *Lib*-Bewegung eine eigene Definition von Frausein, in der sie ihr Subjektsein und ihre Individualität gemeinsam mit anderen verwirklichen konnten. Darüber hinaus übten sie radikale Kritik an der modernen japanischen Gesellschaft, die sich auch in der Trostfrauenfrage manifestierte. Dem 1999 verabschiedeten „Rahmengesetz für eine Gesellschaft mit gleichberechtigter Teilhabe von Männern und Frauen“ liegt der Gedanke des *gender-free*-Konzeptes zugrunde, wonach Männer und Frauen ihre Individualität frei von geschlechtsspezifischen Festlegungen entfalten können sollen. Damit hat die japanische Frauenbewegung auch die Entstehung einer kritischen Männerbewegung beeinflusst.