

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

**DIJ History and Humanities  
Study Group**



Thursday, 28 November 2013, 18.30 h

Kristin Meißner  
(Free University Berlin)

***Channelling influence through experts:  
British and German oyatoi in Meiji Japan***

In order to achieve the revision of the Unequal Treaties, which were forced upon the Bakufu by Western powers (1858-1867), the newly constituted Meiji government not only implemented an extensive reform programme but also borrowed thousands of helping hands from abroad to realize this goal. Research on these *oyatoi gaikokujin* (lit.: Hired Foreigners) has hitherto mainly focused on their mediatory role within technical and scientific transfers and has evaluated the scope of their political agency as being rather marginal.

Starting from a global history approach and by focusing on expertise as a new resource in foreign policy, I challenge this narrative of the apolitical *oyatoi*. I examine how the British, German, and Japanese governments informally took advantage of the professional capital of the high-ranking experts in the service of the Meiji government in order to enlarge national spheres of influence in the context of informal imperialism.

**Kristin Meißner** is a PhD candidate in global history at the Freie Universität Berlin and currently conducting research in Tokyo as a DIJ doctoral fellowship recipient. Her PhD project on “Expertise as a political resource. British and German *oyatoi* in the Meiji Era” is funded by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung.

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum for early/mid career researchers and Ph.D. candidates in the field, organized by Torsten Weber. All are welcome to attend, but registration ([weber@dijtokyo.org](mailto:weber@dijtokyo.org)) is appreciated.

**German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)**

Jōchi Kioizaka Bldg. 2F, 7-1 Kioichō, Chiyoda-ku, Tōkyō 102-0094, Phone: 03-3222-5077.

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