

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History and Humanities Study Group



Thursday, 14 January 2016, 18.30 h

Gerhard Krebs

King Solomon and Jinmu Tennô: Ethiopia and Japan in World History

The presentation will deal with two aspects: parallel historical development and bilateral relations.

In both countries the influence of the Portuguese and the Jesuit mission became very strong in the 16th century. In course of time a fierce opposition was evoked against this development, since many people feared that their country would become a colony of a foreign power or would come under foreign domination in one way or the other. The answer was seclusion policy from the 17th century on so that foreigners were forbidden to reside in the country. Newly arriving catholic missionaries were executed immediately after landing.

In the 1850/60s both countries were opened by foreign powers, Ethiopia by Great Britain and Japan by the United States. Both started a modernization policy including modernizing the military. In both nations the institution of the monarchy and emperor worship was used to propagate reforms. To the surprise of the whole world within a few decades these two modernizing countries defeated European nations, the Ethiopians in a war with Italy 1896 and in the case of Japan in a war with Russia in 1905. Both countries therefore became the beacons of the anti-colonial movement in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean as well as for the struggle for equal rights of the Afro-Americans in the United States.

Since Japanese modernization was more successful than that one of Ethiopia the Tennô's empire became the model for the Negus' nation. Ministers from Ethiopia travelled to Tokyo for advice. In many fields they followed the example of their host country including the constitution so that the Ethiopian one, enacted in 1931, is very similar to the Meiji constitution, particularly concerning the emperor's position. Japanese economic interest in Ethiopia grew in these years, particularly in cotton production. When Italy attacked Ethiopia in 1935 conquering the whole country until the next year, Japan tried to remain neutral, but finally took sides with Mussolini in the era of the beginning interest in Axis policy, though many nationalist organizations were campaigning in favour of Ethiopia.

Gerhard Krebs was born in Warsaw in 1943. He studied German Linguistics, History and Japanese Language in Hamburg, Freiburg/Br., Bonn, and Tokyo and taught at universities in Tokyo, Freiburg/Br., Trier, and Berlin. He was also a researcher at the DIJ in Tokyo (1990-95) and at the Research Institute for Military History in Potsdam. His main publications include (in German) *Japans Deutschlandpolitik 1935-1941* [Japan's Policy Towards Germany 1935-1941] (1984), *Das moderne Japan* [Modern Japan] (2009), *Japan im Pazifischen Krieg* [Japan in the Pacific War] (2010).

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is organized by Miki Aoyama-Olschina and Torsten Weber. All are welcome to attend, but prior registration (weber@dijtokyo.org) is greatly appreciated.

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

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

For directions to the institute please see www.dijtokyo.org/access