



DIJ History & Humanities Study Group

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Kiyoshi Ueda

Hiraizumi Kiyoshi and the ‘Spiritual’ Consolidation of the Nation, 1931-1936

Hiraizumi Kiyoshi (1895-1984), Professor of the Study of the Nation’s History (*kokushigaku*) at Tokyo Imperial University, dominated the field from 1935 to 1945. A devout Shinto believer, he attempted to de-secularize the study of history and preached ‘Japanese Spirit’ (*Nihon seishin*) in his ‘spiritual’ lectures. After the war, he was purged but continued to be influential without assuming an official position. He remains a controversial figure and a taboo subject in modern Japanese historiography.

This paper will examine Hiraizumi’s activities after his return from Europe in 1931 until the February 26 Incident in 1936, viewing him as an inheritor, practitioner, and promoter of the Southern Court View of History (*Nanchō seitōron shikan*). Briefly stated, he sought to reinvigorate this early modern interpretation of the Kenmu Restoration (1333-1336) in the early Showa period. To explore his point of view, I will first discuss what he meant by ‘History.’ I will then explain why and how he disseminated ‘Spirit’ (*seishin*) by examining his involvement with various organizations, including Tokyo Imperial University, the Ministry of Education, Army, Navy, Police, his private academies and Shinto shrines. Finally, I will assess the results of his efforts to restore a ‘rule of state by immediate direction of the Emperor’ (*Tennō goshinsei*) in the first half of the 1930s and consider their relevance to us today.

Kiyoshi UEDA received his PhD in Modern Japanese History from the Department of History at the University of Toronto, Canada, in 2009. He is currently revising his dissertation entitled ‘Hiraizumi Kiyoshi (1895-1984): “Spiritual History” in the Service of the Nation in Twentieth Century Japan’ for publication.

The presentation will be given in English. Everybody is welcome to attend. Registration is appreciated (backhaus@dijtokyo.org).