

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History and Humanities Study Group



October 24 (Thu), 2019, 18:30h

Environmental Local Scales: Women's Writing in Northern Tōhoku, Present to Postwar

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Public and academic interest in literature from Japan's rural north culminated in consecutive Akutagawa Prizes awarded to Numata Shinsuke, Wakatake Chisako, and Takahashi Hiroki in 2017 and 2018. Despite mainstream success, however, the bulk of literature published by Tōhoku writers in minor or independent magazines remains unexplored. The politics of local cultural production in the contemporary moment reverberates with the print history of Japan's postwar period. A rapid proliferation of independently produced print media marked a decentralization of intellectual and cultural production. Regional literature flourished leaving behind a largely unexplored archive of local journals and magazines. Moreover, the legacy of women's writing today often passes over local materials in favor of mainstream figures connected with the central intellectual elite. Reviewing rural literary production and the gendered politics of democratization uncovers legacies that connect the postwar moment to our conceptualization of regional space and literary production in Japan's peripheries today.

This talk will explore women's writing published in northern Tōhoku in the present moment and trace legacies of local print culture from the mid-1940s. It will introduce the print history of regional women's magazines, as well as explore the fiction and essays of women writers that are rarely included in literary histories of the period. Tōhoku writers critiqued the gender politics of the postwar moment, reconfiguring what it means to scale literature to the region or the nation. Reviewing the history of rural literary production and gendered politics of democratization uncovers legacies that connect the postwar moment to our conceptualization of regional space and literary production in Japan's peripheries today.

Eric Siercks is a PhD candidate in Japanese literature at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is currently a Yanai Initiative Visiting Research Fellow at Waseda University, where he is completing his dissertation, "Scaling the Nation: Local Literary Production and National Literature, 1946-1955." He has also published on occupation censorship in northern Japan.

About:

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum open to scholars working on Japan in any field of the humanities. It is organized by Barbara Geilhorn and Torsten Weber. All are welcome to attend, but prior registration online at www.dijtokyo.org or by email (geilhorn@dijtokyo.org) is greatly appreciated.

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