

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History and Humanities Study Group



March 5th (Thu), 2020, 18:30h

Learning to be funny: Training and social relationships in Rakugo

Sarah Stark, Ghent University

Kabuki actors learn their skills from their fathers. Ikebana students pay their master for lessons. In contrast, artistic lineage in *rakugo* is not hereditary, and performers do not acquire their stories and acting skills in acting schools or from their fathers. Newcomers to the *rakugo* profession start their apprenticeship with a *shishō*, a master, without paying any compensation. For the rest of both of their lives the *shishō* is responsible for his *deshi*'s (disciple) education and accountable for his off-stage behaviour. In return, the *shishō* expects his *deshi*'s unquestioning loyalty, obedience and subordination.

Newcomers are not only raised by their own *shishō*, they receive their education from the *rakugo* community through working in the *yose*'s (rakugo performance space) green room. Performers have to follow orders of any peer who has been in the trade longer than him or herself: strict training and strict hierarchy legitimize their participation in the *rakugoka* community.

The presentation provides a perspective on access to knowledge, knowledge acquisition, learning processes and structures inside Tokyo's *yose* theatres, as well as social relations among the stakeholders of the *rakugo* world. Sarah Stark's research is based on an analysis of printed interviews, autobiographies as well as one-on-one interviews with Tokyo *rakugoka*.

Sarah Stark is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, Department of Languages and Cultures at Ghent University.

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.

Venue:

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