



Conference Report

## **Globalizing the Social Sciences: German-East Asian Entanglements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

*Virtual symposium organized by the German Institute for Japanese Studies Tokyo (DIJ), December 9, 2021, in cooperation with the German Historical Institute Rome and the China Branch Office of the Max Weber Foundation as part of the Max Weber Foundation's collaborative research project "Knowledge Unbound". Cosponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Convener: Yufei Zhou (DIJ Tokyo). Participants: Erik Grimmer-Solem (Wesleyan University), Stefan Keppler-Tasaki (The University of Tokyo), MISHIMA Ken'ichi (Osaka University), Egas Moniz-Bandeira (Max-Planck-Institut für Rechtsgeschichte und Rechtstheorie), ONOZUKA Tomoji (The University of Tokyo), Christina Philips (Max Weber Stiftung, China-Büro), Wolfgang Schwentker (Osaka University), TAKII Kazuhiro (International Research Center for Japanese Studies), Carlo Taviani (Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom), TSUNEKI Kentarō (Senshu University), Franz Waldenberger (DIJ Tokyo), Chunjie Zhang (University of California, Davis), Yufei Zhou (DIJ Tokyo).*

Conference Details: <https://dij.tokyo/globalizing>

This symposium brought together historians and scholars from related disciplines to revisit the impact of the German-speaking social scientific knowledge on the institutional and intellectual development of the political, economic and sociological sciences in modern East Asia. The participants highlighted the transnational experiences of the social scientists who helped facilitate the multilateral intellectual connectedness between Germany and East Asia during the past century. On this basis, the participants furthermore tackled the legacies and pitfalls left by this exchange in the context of today's worldwide globalization and standardization of social science research.

After introductory remarks by Franz Waldenberger and Yufei Zhou, the symposium started with MISHIMA Ken'ichi's keynote lecture "Zum deutsch-japanischen Transfer der Sozialwissenschaften: Rezeption, Eigenentwicklung, Sekten-Abkapselung". Mishima focused on three most representative topic fields that showcased the insularity of the postwar Japanese intellectuals in their encounter with the German social scientific knowledge. The first topic field is centered around the question, why the critical theory had found little resonance in postwar Japan's search for its national regeneration. Mishima argued that aside from the accelerated Americanization of Japan's academic landscape after the WWII and the general scepticism of Japanese left toward the contemporary thoughts from the Federal Republic of Germany, the lack of philosophical reflection on political and economic issues of the Japanese social scientists was also responsible for their neglect of critical theory – one of the most significant social theoretical attempts for national regeneration in their contemporary German-speaking academia. The first topic field was followed by two closely interrelated clusters of questions, namely, the reception of the Marxian analysis of the capitalist society and the (mis)interpretation of Max Weber. Both topic fields, Mishima demonstrated, showcased the ossified mindset of the Japanese intellectuals in engaging with Marx and Weber. In the first case, the Japanese leftists were occupied by Marx's exposition of capitalist society that emerged in the context of around 1848 and had therefore lost explanatory power in the age of Japan's high economic growth. The Weber-community in Japan on the other hand, was usually captured by the cult of Weber's personality, which hampered them from grasping Weber's thesis of Calvinism-inspired rational life management historically. As a result, related debates often ended fruitlessly, or even in personal attacks. Mishima concluded that the general lack of reflective-critical relation to their research objects had prevented the Japanese intellectuals from effectively establishing mutual communication with their German colleagues in the same field.

The first presentation following the keynote addressed the topic "Wechselwirkungen: Odaka Tomoo und die deutsche Soziologie um 1930". Wolfgang Schwentker traces the reciprocal influences of Odaka Tomoo's political philosophy and his contemporary German social scientists. By shedding light on Odaka's masterwork *Grundlegung der Lehre vom sozialen Verband* (1932, written in German) Schwentker argued that although Odaka's conception of social association as an "ideales Geistesgebilde" showed strong influences from Hans Kelsen and the Vienna School of Jurisprudence, his critical engagement with Hans Freyers, George Simmel and some representative members of the German Sociological Association also significantly shaped his understanding of the

relations between individual and social association as well as the nature of sociology as a scholarly discipline. On the other hand, Schwentker claimed, the contemporary German scholars generally agreed that Odaka contributed in separating sociology as a “science of reality” and sociology as an ontological science of association. Schwentker’s presentation was followed by a session focusing primarily on the Sino-German exchange in the field of political and economic thoughts. Egas Moniz-Bandeira provided an overview of the local discourses over the Prussian Constitution at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with its focus on the German trained Chinese legal scholars. He came to the conclusion that the most of the Chinese intellectuals spoke for a gradual transformation to the constitutional system, and they usually had reservations about the Prussian model. Furthermore, Moniz-Bandeira discovered the active role of the Qing state in promoting a transnational network of legal knowledge between China and the West. Christina Philips illustrated the landscape of the Chinese social science students who sojourned in Germany during the interwar years. She observed that not few from those Chinese students had later become the prominent figures of the CCP. However, Philips argued, the “social sciences” in which these students were baptized, had brought forth little fruit for the institutionalization and professionalization of the related disciplines in China. Yufei Zhou put a spotlighted on the reception history of the German-speaking economic thinkers in Republican China. By examining the Chinese scholars’ engagement with Friedrich List, Gustav Schmoller, Werner Sombart etc., she concluded that most Chinese economists in the 1920s and 1930s found an historical parallel between Republican China and the Germany of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, Zhou argued, the early Chinese intellectuals were primarily attracted by the protectionist measures proposed by the German economists, but less concerned with the philosophical traditions behind them. In her comments on the keynote, Chunjie Zhang reinforced the importance of the idea of national salvation in the overall spectrum of China’s intellectual life at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She further provided the perspective of the rise of New Confucianism after the May Fourth Movement, which was deeply intertwined with different schools of ideas of reforming the Chinese state and society.

The second part began with Carlo Taviani’s investigation of the historiographical debate on medieval business corporation and its legacy in Japan. Focusing on the various interpretations of the Casa di San Giorgio, Taviani suggested that the financial features, for example, the limited liability, the tradability of shares and the management of dividends and capital of Casa di San Giorgio were most carefully studied by the German legal scholars and economists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He indicated that this insight had

possibly sparked in Japan a debate over modern enterprise and modern human being in an entirely different context. TAKII Kazuhiro provided an extensive overview over the impact of German Staatswissenschaft in Meiji Japan. Based on analysis of Itō Hirobumi's study tour to Europe (1882-1883) and his encounter with Lorenz von Stein, Takii pointed out three major elements in Itō's administrative policy that came into being under the influences of German Staatswissenschaft, namely, the reform of the imperial household system, the fundamental reform of governmental organization and the founding of the imperial university. ONOZUKA Tomoji had shed light on the German national economist Lujo Brentano and his role in shaping the development of social statistics in modern Japan. By highlighting the intellectual connectedness of Takano Iwasaburō and Fukuda Tokuzō to Brentano and their later achievement in integrating social statistics into Japan's welfare policies, Onozuka claimed that the leftwing social research institutes in Germany and Japan in the 1920s suffered the same fate as the world history reached its critical crossroad. In the same context, Erik Grimmer-Solem illustrated the development of the "Empirical Revolution" in German social sciences in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and spotlighted the leading role of the University of Strasbourg. Focusing on the case of Karl Rathgen, who was trained at Strasbourg and taught at the Imperial University of Tokyo, Grimmer-Solem unveiled the multi-dimensional entanglements between Germany and Japan in establishing the applied social science. Lastly, TSUNEKI Kentarō traced the transformation of thoughts and beliefs of the Japanese economic historian Ōtsuka Hisao during the final years of the total war. By examining Ōtsuka's changing interpretation of Max Weber's concept of "spirit of capitalism", Tsuneki demonstrated that Ōtsuka's cautious and uncertain standpoint in the spring of 1944 was quickly replaced by a definite supportive attitude towards the expansion of Japan's productivity for the sake of "overcoming the modernity".

Overall, the presentations in this symposium shared the thesis that the German speaking social sciences were most enthusiastically embraced by the intellectuals in East Asia from the late nineteenth century to 1945. They showed that this legacy had significantly pushed forward the evidence-based social governance and diversified the political spectrum in East Asian countries in the first decades of the twentieth century. This symposium provided a multi-national perspective in the history of knowledge circulation and contributed insights on how social sciences - as an emerging field - were disseminated globally and institutionalized, practiced and regenerated in the local context.