



April 25 (Thu), 2024, 18:30 (JST) / 11:30 (CEST)

Captured in Reflection – Japanese photography in Manchuria

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From 1932 to 1945, professional Japanese photographers, civilians, and soldiers took many pictures in Manchuria and North China. The Japanese puppet state *Manchukuo*, founded in 1932, took on multifaceted roles as an experimental ground for Japanese press regulations, aesthetic and social trends of creating and using photographs, and in the training and employment of Japanese amateur and professional photographers. As cameras became more accessible, new social groups participated in the visual economy of the empire. After the official commencement of the war with China in 1937 they began to contribute to the 'National Reportage Movement'. Japanese authorities employed photographic propaganda to convince international partners and the Japanese population of the righteousness of the Japanese government's and Imperial Army's activities on the continent. However, Japanese soldiers and civilians also used the camera to document and produce memories of their daily lives and experiences in China for themselves.

This talk aims to bring forward new perspectives on photographic practices and on visually over- or underrepresented aspects of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria and North China. It introduces examples of private photo albums by soldiers stationed in Manchuria and discusses their creation as processes of selecting and ordering images, allowing for a later identification of places, people and situations. The presentation traces the adaptation of stylistic elements from propagandistic material and of ideological viewpoints in these hitherto under-researched media and shows how the albums function as containers of both personal and collective memory. Drawing on visual anthropology and media history, it will show connections between "imperial" and "patriotic" photography, and between vernacular and formal photographic repertoires. This talk further questions how and whether the reporting and photographic illustrations in Japanese media and private archives contributed to sustain visual narrative tropes of war and occupation that persisted into the post-war period.

Jasmin Rückert is currently completing a Ph.D. in Modern Japanese Studies at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Germany. Her dissertation focuses on modern Japan and its imperial ambitions in Asia, particularly in China in the period 1931-1945. Her broader research interests range from gender to the history of science and technology. Since October 2023 she has been a PhD student at the DIJ.

About:

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum open to scholars working on Japan in any field of the humanities. This session is organized by Torsten Weber. All are welcome to attend.

Venue:

Online and DIJ Tokyo: <https://www.dijtokyo.org/access/>

Hybrid Event:

On-site participation: Registration is required via email to weber@dijtokyo.org until April 24.

Online participation: Please register via our [webpage](#). Log-in data will be provided after registration.