

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

DIJ Study Group



November 11, 2026, 6.00pm (JST)

Media Linking in Kunichika's *Tokyo jiman meibutsu e* Kyoko Kurita, Pomona College

The threat that AI poses to the future of humanity reminds us that significant technological innovations have repeatedly transformed media and society throughout history. In Japan, one of the earliest major transformations in communications occurred during the Meiji period, when movable-type printing began to supplant centuries-old woodblock-printing practices, while photography appeared in daily newspapers. Movable-type printing was known in Japan for over two centuries before Meiji; however, because of the enduring popularity of texts combining scripts and images, it took until the Meiji period to become mainstream. The transition to modern printing methods, together with increasing use of photography, transformed conceptions of what was print-worthy. It also led audiences to question what constituted the 'real' or the 'true.' Both literary and visual arts in Japan had long valued history and tradition over factual accuracy. Toyohara Kunichika (1835–1900) was among the woodblock-print artists who established their careers before the Meiji Restoration and subsequently faced the challenge of adapting their practices to remain relevant. His *Tokyo Jiman Meibutsu-e* (Pride of Tokyo), published during the twilight years of woodblock-print culture, is particularly worthy of attention today. His work demonstrates how an artist could develop new forms of communication while taking advantage of traditional artistic skills and established human networks.

Kyoko Kurita is Professor of Japanese at Pomona College in the suburb of Los Angeles. Her primary teaching duties include advanced-level Japanese language courses and content courses on modern Japan taught in English. She earned a B.A. from Tokyo Woman's Christian University, an M. A. and a Ph.D. from Yale University. Her research primarily focuses on the early works by Kōda Rohan (1867–1947), and on the genre of *mirai-ki* (futuorlogical novels) that thrived in the Meiji Period (1868–1912). She has also co-translated some novellas and short stories from Meiji to the present, by such writers as Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Matsumoto Seichō, as well as Kōda Rohan. The most recent article discusses a contemporary female author, Asabuki Mariko (b. 1984), and the literary horizon of the 21st century.

About:

The DIJ Study Group is a forum for scholars from all disciplines conducting research on contemporary or modern Japan. The event is open to all.

This session is organized by Carolin Fleischer-Heininger.

This is a public event. Please be aware that audio-visual recordings may be made, stored, and published during and after the event.

On-site Only Event:

For participation, please register via email to fleischer-heininger@dijtokyo.org until November 9, 2026

Venue:

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