

VSJF-Jahrestagung 2022

Programm der Fachgruppe „Geschichte“ am Samstag, 19.11.2022

Raum RAA-E-08

<https://ruhr-uni-bochum.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5wuc--urTsvGtc-Dx4vikix6rAtkrVHPRDN>

Organizers: Anke Scherer (Ruhr University Bochum) and

Torsten Weber (German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) Tokyo)

16:00-18:00

Melissa Kaul (University of Zurich): *Between original thinking and transmissioned knowledge: Andō Shōeki's "Volume on birds and beasts" (Kinjū kan 禽獸卷)*

Even after more than a century following his rediscovery, Andō Shōeki 安藤昌益 (1703-1762) raises more questions than answers. He spent most of his life in northern Japan, where he worked as a doctor while writing numerous treatises on medicine, metaphysics, and natural philosophy as well as texts on political and social issues. In his most prominent work the *Shizen shin eidō* 自然真榮道, he criticizes the authorities, denounces rulers as robbers, advocates farming, and establishes his cosmology and metaphysics. Within Tokugawan thought, he seemed to stand out as one of the most unique and original thinkers he had been labeled throughout his reception in Japan and the West as a „genius“ (Kano Kōkichi), „bold and original minded“ (E.Norman), „communist“ and „premarxist“ (Radul-Zatulovskii/Joly/Müller), as Japan's „first ecological thinker“ (Yasunaga) and „Critical Thinker“ (Piovesana).

Recent attempts were made to put Shōeki's thinking within the broader scale of East Asian Thought, which made him less of a standout and more of a re-interpreter of less popular ideologies of Chinese philosophy, such as Primitivist and Yangist Daoist views found in the outer chapters of the Zhuangzi, nongjia 農家 (“agriculturalists”) concepts, the minimalism of Mozi and the intellectual ideas found in the Huainanzi. This blending of traditional Chinese concepts and Shōeki's own spin on them and preference for the reinterpretation of Chinese characters poses a great challenge to the translators of his work.

In my presentation, I would like to present some examples from my dissertation project of Shōeki's attempt of an encyclopdia, the *kinjū kan* 禽獸卷 (Volume on birds and beasts), in which this mixture of handed down knowledge of Chinese sources and its reinterpretation of those narratives become apparent in his description of various nonhuman animals. Within my doctoral thesis, I argue that without a solid understanding of Neoconfucian concepts and their Chinese origins, Shōeki's reference book and other Japanese premodern *leishu* like Ekken's *Yamato honzō* 大和本草 or the *Wakan Sansai Zue* 和漢三才図会 are almost impossible to understand. This also means that Shōeki was by no means an “outsider” but very much following the traditional path of other Neoconfucians of his time.

Anke Scherer (Ruhr University Bochum): *The “hygienic turn” and its impact on Japanese colonialism: Public hygiene as an instrument to justify the Japanese rule of Taiwan (1895-1945)*

The development of public hygiene concepts was an important element of the modernization in Japan that followed the Meiji-Restoration (1868). The ensuing creation of institutions, laws, and educational campaigns to achieve their implementation is also named the “hygienic turn” in Japanese history. This “turn” in the late nineteenth century was not only motivated by the domestic need to fight outbreaks of waterborne diseases (Cholera, Shigellosis, Typhoid) that occurred after the opening of the country induced by the modernization process. It quickly became part of the endeavour to raise Japan’s status in the international order through the promotion of the image of a civilized country that was at the forefront of medical research and scientific progress to combat the spread of epidemic diseases.

After the acquisition of the island of Taiwan as Japan’s first colony after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), the island was turned into a showcase of the civilizing influence of Japanese colonial administration. The first civil governor of the colony Gotō Shinpei (1857–1929), a politician who was a medical doctor by training with study abroad experiences in Berlin, established an approach to colonial administration that emphasised the importance of public hygiene. Endemic diseases like malaria as well as outbreaks of cholera and the plague challenged the colonial administrators in Taiwan and eventually led to the fast copying of the system of public hygiene that had just been established in Japan. Due to the political constellation of the colonial setting, the development of public health in Taiwan relied on strategies of “othering” the supposedly unhealthy indigenous society. In the end this “othering” of the colonial subjects justified the coercive power of colonial administration with a mission to “civilize” them, civilization meaning among other things the scientific control of diseases and prevention of epidemics.