

International Japanese Studies Talk Series

International Japanese Studies Group at Kanagawa University

The International Japanese Studies Group in the Institute for Humanities Research at Kanagawa University is pleased to announce its spring talk schedule as well as its tentative autumn schedule.

All meetings in the spring semester will take place from 15:30 to 17:00 in room 4020 on our Minatomirai Campus. All talks will be given in English. Preregistration at least a day in advance for those coming from outside the KU community is greatly appreciated. Please use the QR code on the information page for each talk. If you are coming from off campus, **please also register as a Guest at the Information counter near the entrance** before coming up to the room. (Preregistration is **not** necessary to attend talks online, when offered.)

Inquiries (お問い合わせ): James Welker jrwelker@kanagawa-u.ac.jp

Autumn 2026 Schedule

Details:

Wednesday, 28 October 2026 (hybrid)

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Christian Ratcliff, Kanagawa University

**The Acquisition, Protection, Transfer, and Growth of Cultural Assets in Kamakura Period Japan:
Examples from Poetry, Literary Scholarship, and *Kemari***

Wednesday, 18 November 2026 (hybrid)

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Daniele Durante, Ca' Foscari University & Kanagawa University

Cross-Dressing Women and Non-Reproductive Work in the Late Edo and Early Meiji Periods

Wednesday, 16 December 2026 (hybrid)

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Robert Hellyer, Wake Forest University

Filling the American Tea Cup: The Flow of Green Tea Through Yokohama in the Meiji Period

Wednesday, 20 January 2027 (in person only)

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Laurence Williams, Sophia University

Japan as Industrial Dystopia in Pre-War British Travel Writing



The Acquisition, Protection, Transfer, and Growth of Cultural Assets in Kamakura Period Japan: Examples from Poetry, Literary Scholarship, and *Kemari*

Christian Ratcliff

Associate Professor, Department of Cross-Cultural Studies, Kanagawa University

Wednesday, 28 October 2026 (hybrid)

15:30–17:00

Room 4020

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: In the middle of 1280, a young poet of no great reputation stands on the grounds of a prince's residence, there lying in wait for another far more senior, of whom he hopes to beg a lesson; some months later, this senior poet carefully attempts to interest the prince whom he serves in a project to gather knowledge of poetry possessed in bits and pieces by many aristocratic families, and inscribe it all together in a single text; at around the same time, a relatively obscure group of courtiers decides upon rules for a novel kind of entertainment, one in which participants will match the depth of their own knowledge of *The Tale of Genji* against that of their fellows; a few years later, the head of a family recognized for its hereditary mastery of the ball-kicking game *kemari* sits down to create a secret text that he does not wish to make, forced to do so by the death of his heir.



Poetry contest depicted in *Boki ekotoba* (1351).

(From the 1901 reproduction available at https://colbase.nich.go.jp/collection_items/tnm/A-6866.)

Taken as discrete episodes within the history of cultural activities during Japan's Kamakura period (1185–1333), each of these events has its own interest and provides insights into the history of a field of cultural practice (poetry, literary scholarship, sport). Taken together—along with innumerable other essentially similar events—they serve to trace out the shape of the cultural economy that prevailed in Japan at this time. In this talk, the activities of the individuals presented above will be considered less as cultural endeavors per se, and more as actions taken by persons who—desiring to participate in a social economy within which the possession of cultural knowledge and skills could produce real and necessary results—sought to manage their own asset portfolios, working variously to increase value, preserve currency, execute exchanges, and expand holdings. At issue throughout will be the question not of *how* such persons as poets, literary scholars, and sportsmen carried out their activities, but rather *why*.

To Attend Online (Zoom):

Access the Zoom Meeting via the following Meeting ID and Passcode. **Preregistration is NOT required to attend via Zoom.**

Meeting ID: 959 5252 3649 Passcode: KUMMC

To Attend in Person:

Preregistration via the adjacent QR code at least a day in advance for those coming in person from outside the KU community is greatly appreciated. If you are coming from off campus, **please also register as a Guest at the Information counter** near the entrance before coming up to the room.

ご来場の方：神奈川大学関係者は事前登録不要です。学外の方は前日までに QR コードにて事前登録をお願いします。当日は 1F の Information カウンターで

Guest 登録を済ましてから、部屋までお越しください。

Inquiries ・ お問い合わせ: James Welker jrwelker@kanagawa-u.ac.jp



Cross-Dressing Women and Non-Reproductive Work in the Late Edo and Early Meiji Periods

Daniele Durante

Postdoctoral Fellow, Dept. of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies, Ca' Foscari University
Visiting Researcher, Faculty of Cross-Cultural and Japanese Studies, Kanagawa University

Wednesday, 18 November 2026 (hybrid)

15:30–17:00

Room 4020

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: In the 1820s and 1830s a biological woman who called herself the male name Takejirō (c. 1814–1838) led a portion of their life as a man because they disliked carrying out women's work and instead preferred carrying out men's work. In the 1830s Takejirō was repeatedly arrested and brought before the Edo High Court, whose judges sentenced them to prison not only for crimes they had



Yanagawa Tomoyo, "Osaka kudari onna chikaramochi" (Strong Woman from Osaka, c. 1841) from *Misemono kankei shiryō korekushon mokuroku* (Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan 2010)

committed but also for wearing adult men's clothing and sporting a male hairstyle, explaining that such a conduct ran contrary to social norms. At the current state of research, scholars have exhaustively investigated the complex socio-cultural reasons behind the judges' ban on cross-dressing; however, they have paid less attention to the reasons why Takejirō lived as a man and the connection with gendered labour. The talk aims to fill this gap by examining how in "instructional books for women" (*jokunsho*), a textual genre strongly influenced by Confucianism, "work" (*waza*) is assigned according to gender, with reproductive work such as sewing, cooking, and cleaning the house assigned to women, while non-reproductive work such as running a shop, being employed in the shogunate bureaucracy or as a warrior retainer was assigned to men. The talk will explore how between the 1800s and the 1880s a small number of women alongside Takejirō cross-dressed to adopt a masculine gender performance to carry out non-reproductive work that Confucian thought assigned to men. In this manner, this talk will move the focus away from the strategies the Tokugawa shogunate used to prohibit cross-dressing, a line of inquiry that experts have so far privileged, to study the points of view of cross-dressing women themselves and how their motivations were tied to a wider socio-cultural shift in the conceptions of gender and work.

To Attend Online (Zoom):

Access the Zoom Meeting via the following Meeting ID and Passcode. Preregistration is NOT required to attend via Zoom.

Meeting ID: 928 7530 2555 Passcode: KUMMC

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当日は上記の Zoom ミーティング ID とパスコードでログインしてください。

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Filling the American Tea Cup: The Flow of Green Tea Through Yokohama in the Meiji Period

Robert Hellyer

Professor, Department of History, Wake Forest University

Wednesday, 16 December 2026 (hybrid)

15:30–17:00

Room 4020

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: In the nineteenth century, Americans preferred green teas, which were imported exclusively from China until Japan entered the export trade following the start of the treaty port regime in 1859. For the next five decades, Yokohama served as an export hub for green tea, much of it high-quality sencha, which was then Japan's second most important export after silk. This talk will explore tea's place in Meiji-period Yokohama, first by tracing its flow into the city. It will also examine the life of workers, most of them women, employed at refining factories located in the port area and operated by Western firms. In addition, it will detail ways in which tea was shipped to the US Midwest, where Japanese green tea was especially popular. The presentation will also highlight how Americans of all classes made Japanese green tea their daily beverage, which many drank hot, often with milk and sugar. It will conclude by outlining how in the 1920s, American preferences shifted to black teas imported from Ceylon and India, prompting Japanese merchants to aggressively market sencha on Japanese domestic and imperial markets, transforming it into an icon of Japanese culture.



The preparation of tea in Japan. Packing tea in one pound paper parcels.

(Graves, C. H., publisher, 1902) Library of Congress, USA, <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020634480>.

To Attend Online (Zoom):

Access the Zoom Meeting via the following Meeting ID and Passcode. **Preregistration is NOT required to attend via Zoom.**

Meeting ID: 954 1424 8924 Passcode: KUMMC

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Japan as Industrial Dystopia in Pre-War British Travel Writing

Laurence Williams

Professor, Department of English Studies, Sophia University

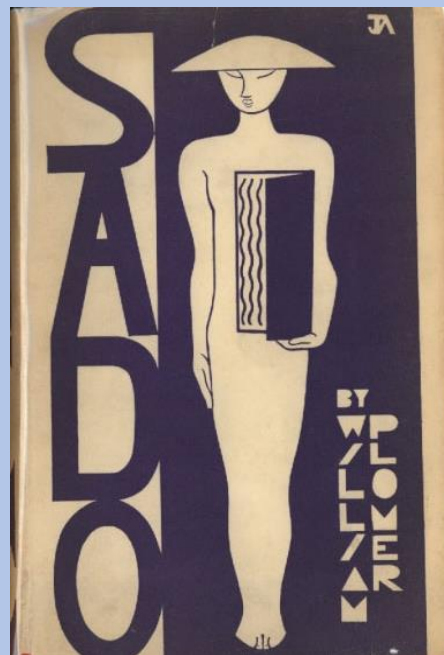
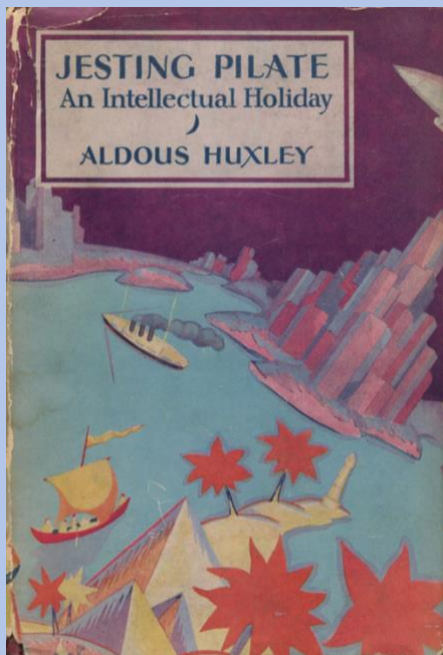
Wednesday, 20 January 2027 (in person only)

15:30–17:00

Room 4020

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: This paper examines the representation of Japan in British Modernist travel writing of the interwar period, focusing on Aldous Huxley's *Jesting Pilate* (1926) and William Plomer's semi-autobiographical novel *Sado* (1931). Whereas the "opening" of Japan to the West in the late nineteenth century inspired a literature that celebrated the country as a paradise of nature, artisanal craftsmanship, and art, these later writers instead depict Tokyo, Osaka, and other industrial centres as landscapes of environmental degradation, alienation, and the destruction of traditional culture. I situate these texts particularly within the changes to the urban landscape of Tokyo that followed the Great Kantō Earthquake (1923), and the growing political tensions that gave Japanese industrialization an increasingly threatening cast. Focusing on the interweaving of Orientalist and dystopian tropes, I show how these travellers reinvent Japan, not just as an increasingly threatening cultural Other, but as a site to visualize the possible future of Western industrial civilization. I close by arguing that these representations constitute an important precursor to the urban imaginaries later associated with science fiction, from *Blade Runner* (1982) to *Neuromancer* (1984), demonstrating that the techno-Orientalist projection of Western anxieties onto an Asian setting has intellectual roots in interwar travel writing.



Covers of Aldous Huxley's *Jesting Pilate* (1926), left, and William Plomer's *Sado* (1931), right.

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