Façade Truths in Tokugawa Japan and Beyond

Schedule

Conference Venue:
Evans Hall, Farr Room 4420
165 Whitney Avenue, New Haven CT 06520

Façade Truths in Tokugawa Japan and Beyond is inspired by a 2012 book by Luke Roberts. In Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan, Roberts argues that the politics of early modern Japan turned on an interplay of two socially agreed versions of reality: omote (literally: face, façade, surface, also used in the sense of ritual and decorum) and uchi (the inside of a delegated political space, also used in the sense of confidential versions of reality), connected through naishō interactions (confidential understandings and agreements). Omote and naishō found arresting expressions in the political life of early modern Japan, such as high officials assembling around a lord’s deathbed to solemnly witness him adopt an heir—when in fact, as everyone present knew but did not outwardly acknowledge, the lord had died weeks earlier.

The workshop brings together Tokugawa historians with experts in other times, places, and disciplines. It has two goals:

1) To take stock of how the concepts of omote, uchi, and naishō have helped historians of Japan understand phenomena they would otherwise have overlooked or misunderstood.

2) To put omote and naishō in conversation with analogues, close or distant, in other societies: theater states, performative governance, consensūs, decorum, systemic lying, legal fictions, embodied fictions, honestas, hypocrisy, Heuchelei, politique, constructive misunderstandings, studied ignorance, cognitive dualism, and lies mutually agreed upon, among others. In so doing, we will think about what their taxonomy should be, and explore what conceptual language is most productive of insights into such politically or socially inflected versions of reality.

Friday, October 25

16:30 Light, informal reception (coffee, pastry, fruit) outside the conference room for those able to arrive a little early

17:00 Keynote lecture by Luke Roberts (UC Santa Barbara):
Decorum as Politics: Observations from Early Modern Japan

18:30 Dinner at the Union League Café, 1032 Chapel St, New Haven.
9:00 Welcome (Fabian Drixler)

9:15 Panel 1: Tokugawa Lightning Round (7 minutes each)
Anne Walthall (UC Irvine): Women between inner and outer, public and private
Maren Eilers (UNC Charlotte), Façade Truths and Town Government: Accommodating Assertive Subjects in Tokugawa Japan
Floris van Swet (Yale), Keeping it in the family: Navigating rōnin status in the Tokugawa period
Robert Hellyer (Wake Forest), Perspectives from the ‘border’: Omote and naishō in the Tsushima domain
Laura Nenzi (University of Tennessee), How deep does the rabbit hole go? Omote-naibun language and microhistory

10:15 Coffee break

10:30 Panel 2 (20 minutes each)
Lauren Benton (Vanderbilt), Studied ignorance
Julia Simon-Kerr (University of Connecticut), Systemic lying
Reo Matsuaki (Trinity), Omote, naishō, and the study of performance in social theory

11:45 Lunch, catered on site.

12:45 Panel 3 (20 minutes each)
Phil Withington (Sheffield), Embodied Fictions
Markku Peltonen (Helsinki), Hypocrisy and dissimulation in early modern English culture

13:35 Short break

13:45 Panel 4
Tim Neu (Ruhr-Universität Bochum), Performing the Holy Roman Empire: Truths, ambiguity and façades of consensus (20 minutes)
Viktor Shmagin (Colby), Omote and naishō in foreign relations: Lessons from the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union (15 minutes)
Adam Clulow (UT Austin), The shogun’s new vassals: Performance and farce in Tokugawa Japan (10 minutes)

14:45 Coffee break
15:00  **Panel 5** (20 minutes each)
IZA DING (Pittsburgh), The performative state:
   Public opinion, political pageantry, and environmental governance in China
ANDREW JOHNSTON (Yale), Rex et res publica
CLIFFORD ANDO (Chicago), The image of civil government:
   Form and power in the Roman monarchy

16:15  Coffee break

16:30  Break-out groups, in Rooms 4420 (main venue), 4461, 4463, and 4465.

17:15-18:00  Plenary discussion

18:30  Dinner at the Penthouse, above the Study at Yale, 1157 Chapel St, New Haven.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27**

8:30  Breakfast available outside the conference room

9:00  **Panel 6** (20 minutes each)
DIANA KIM (Georgetown), The strength of weak actors:
   Opium and symbolic state power in colonial Southeast Asia
JOSEPH MANNING (Yale), Performing central authority in Ptolemaic Egypt

9:50  Short break

10:00  **Panel 7**
MICHAEL WERT (Marquette), The breakdown of *omote/naishō* during the Bakumatsu era:
   Toward theorizing a concept (10 minutes)
JOOYEON HAHM (Yale), Dividing the family, evading the military:
   *Naishō* negotiations over conscription in the early Meiji Period (7 minutes)
FABIAN DRIXLER (Yale), A modern afterlife of *omote*:
   Statistics as a site of negotiation in Imperial Japan (7 minutes)

10:45  Coffee break

11:00  Plenary discussion

12:00  Boxed lunches that can be consumed either gregariously on site or taken on the return journey

**Roving discussants:**
JISOO KIM (George Washington University)
HIROSHI MITANI (University of Tokyo / Atomi University)
FRANCES ROSENBLUTH (Yale)
SIXIANG WANG (UCLA)
KEITH WRIGHTSON (Yale)