

International Workshop: Sources and Fieldwork in a Digital Age

‘I have always felt ... that because so much of living is lost in the writing of it down the historian’s obligation is to saturate her- or himself in all there is. So history writing is as much a pilgrimage to all the places where these unique and disparate remnants of the past are to be found as it is a culling from books on library shelves’

(Greg Denning, ‘Writing, Rewriting the Beach: An Essay,’ 1998)

What is the role of place-based research in an era of online archives and libraries? How has the work of anthropologists and historians been altered by digital tools and sources? Does the speed with which we can gather data limit the time we take to look at, and learn about, evidence? To what extent have the shrinking budgets and diminishing time allocated to research visits contributed to a dearth of experiential observation? While scholars now enjoy unprecedented international mobility (at least in the ‘Global North’), they have used this mobility to swerve away from research that is guided by, and rooted in, an extended experience of place. The resulting loss of material knowledge and local connection deeply affects the balance between familiarity and strangeness that is so central to both anthropology and history. However, so far, this is a shift which has passed largely un-noticed. Our workshop aims to bring together anthropologists and historians from geographically and temporally distinct fields to discuss place-based research in our respective disciplines. Our aim is to reflect on the relationship between non-textual and textual sources, to establish a new debate on the importance of experiential observation (notably under-theorized in history), and to create strategies to restore the role of learning in, and from, a place.

Date: 2025.4.26(Sat) 11.00-18.00

Venue: Seminar room 6, National Museum of Ethnology

Programme:

11.00 – 11.15: Introduction: Lucy Riall (Minpaku, Global Mediterranean, and EUI, Florence)

11.15 – 11.45:

“The power of feeling out of place: a case of European history in Japan”

Shusaku Kanazawa (Kyoto Univ., Global Mediterranean)

11.45 – 12.15

“And what the State said, a century later: reflections on Thursday Island, 1897”

Martin Dusinberre (University of Zurich)

12.15 – 13.30: LUNCH BREAK

13.30 – 14.00

“Here, there, and everywhere: long-term multi-sited fieldwork and the creation of a digital archive”

Michael Feener (Kyoto Univ., Maritime Asian and Pacific Studies)

14.00 - 14.30

“A few reasons why I head to my fields (so repeatedly)”

Hideaki Suzuki (Minpaku, Indian Ocean World Studies)

14.30 – 15.00

“Murmurs in the archive: re-writing the history of ‘someone else’ in Peru and Chile”

Lucy Riall (Minpaku, Global Mediterranean and EUI, Florence)

15.00 – 15.30: BREAK

15.30 – 16.00

“Listening to the text and reading the sound: fieldwork before and after Web 2.0”

Hatsuki Aishima (Minpaku, Global Mediterranean)

16.00 – 16.30

“Historical anthropological research in a Digital Age: the view from Africa and elsewhere”

Benjamin Soares (University of Florida)

16:30 – 16:45: BREAK

16.45 – 18.00

Concluding Discussion

Commentary: Ippei Shimamura (Minpaku, East Eurasian Studies)

Organizer : Global Mediterranean at the National Museum of Ethnology in collaboration with

Lucy Riall (European University Institute, Department of History and Civilisation)

Co-organizer :

-Indian Ocean World Studies at the National Museum of Ethnology

-Maritime Asian and Pacific Studies (At the National Museum of Ethnology)

-“East Eurasian Studies” Project by the National Museum of Ethnology