Statistics and a New Vision of Humanity: Politics of Population in Meiji Japan

Dr. Akiko Ishii

CHAIRMAN
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Abstract

Through an examination of the writings of intellectuals who had a great interest in statistics in Meiji Japan, this presentation traces the arrival and spread of the statistical understanding of collective human life. As the foundational rationale behind governance moved from feudal morality to science, statistics became a symbol of rational and scientific governance in the Meiji period. The statistical regularity intrinsic to population was understood as analogous to the law of nature, and this new way of understanding people enabled Japanese intellectuals and political elites to envision a new foundation for a national community and its governance.

About the Speaker

Ishii Akiko is a postdoctoral fellow with the Department of History at NUS. She studied intellectual history of modern Japan and received her Ph. D in History from Cornell University in January, 2013. The title of her dissertation is “Statistical Visions of Humanity: Toward a Genealogy of Liberal Governance in Modern Japan.”

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