

Call for Papers

**Japanese Military Violence During the Asia-Pacific War: Reviewing the Field, Opening up New Paths**

Freie Universität Berlin, 5-7 September 2024

What the First World War meant for Europe, the Asia-Pacific War arguably constituted for East and Southeast Asia: the original catastrophe of the twentieth century, the cataclysmic event that shaped, and has continued to shape, state formations and international relations in the region until today. Japanese military violence was the driving motivator in this event, and it came in many forms: First and foremost, of course, as direct physical abuse of civilians and soldiers alike, but also in more indirect, structural and even symbolic shapes, such as bureaucratic, institutional, legal or ideological violence. Although much research has been undertaken and evidence gathered in the past decades, applying new methodologies and theoretical approaches based on an ever-expanding volume of historical sources, a synoptic view of this scholarship has been wanting. This conference therefore seeks to provide a forum for experts on the history of the Asia-Pacific War to present, and critically assess, the state of the field as well as imagine in their discussions new paths of research for the future.

The organisers therefore call for papers on a wide array of subjects that could elucidate the dynamics of violence in its multiple forms: Papers could deal, for example, with the various forms of abuse (physical, psychological or sexual) that civilians and soldiers suffered alike at the hands of Japanese troops; or bureaucratic measures or policy decisions at the centre, in the field or occupied territories that exacerbated the plight of local civilians or decimated POW populations; judicial or police institutions such as the courts-martial, military courts or *kenpeitai* units who set standards of permissible violence and cowed local civilians into submission; internal practices of disciplining within the army and navy that contained or inflamed external violence; ideologies of total war, race/culture or co-prosperity that justified “sacrifices” or the systematic disregard of accustomed rules of warfare and military conduct.

As open as the call is towards the forms of violence that exacerbated human suffering during the Asia-Pacific War, so it is towards the particular constellations of violence, as their subjects could be either within the Japanese military, enemy combatants, POWs or civilian agents. Similarly, the perspective need not be Japan-centred, but on the contrary we highly welcome papers that look at the dialectics of violence and discipline from the receiving end. Papers

should choose the Asia-Pacific War as reference time frame, but could also explore the dynamics of violence in this conflict from a *longue-durée* perspective.

Proposals (400 words) and a short bio should be sent to the organisers ([lawwithoutmercy@geschkult.fu-berlin.de](mailto:lawwithoutmercy@geschkult.fu-berlin.de)) by 31 March 2024. The conference is scheduled for 5-7 September 2024 at Freie Universität Berlin. Although we will conduct the conference face-to-face in principle, online participation is possible. Presentations (30 mins.) are to be given in English. The organisers plan to publish an edited volume as a result of this conference.

Travel expenses and accommodation costs will be covered by Freie Universität for all speakers whose papers have been accepted. The conference is conducted as part of the ERC-funded project (Consolidator) “Law without Mercy: Japanese Courts-Martial and Military Courts During the Asia-Pacific War, 1937-45”.

If you have any other questions, contact Professor Urs Matthias Zachmann ([u.zachmann@fu-berlin.de](mailto:u.zachmann@fu-berlin.de)).