

The Japan Center at Stony Brook  
presents

Kohki Watabe

“Historical Amnesia and Emotional Politics:  
Popular Boom of Japanese Sword Image”

Thursday, Nov. 11, 2021, 7:00-8:30 pm EST

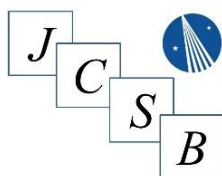
Zoom: <https://stonybrook.zoom.us/j/98190500663?pwd=Y0xmZ3Z5OS9qK084Y2Z2RXVkQ0MvUT09>  
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We are witnessing the politics of emotions worldwide today. Popular culture supports the trend, as Trump supporters use the Pepe the Frog meme and former Prime Minister Abe appears before the public in Super Mario costume. This talk examines the relationship between the arbitrary use of history and the politics of emotion, focusing on Japanese sword images in popular media. Throughout Japan's early modern and modern history, the Japanese sword has served as a symbol: it represented the samurai class in the Edo period and national pride in Imperial Japan. In the post-WWII period, while suppressing memories of Japan's Imperial past, people enjoyed aesthetic aspects of the sword. The culmination of such aestheticization is the proliferation of Japanese swords in anime and video games in the 21st century. The transmedia popularity of Japanese sword images has created an arbitrary positive image of modern Japanese history composed entirely of chosen facts, which operates as a vehicle for populist politics of emotion.



Kohki Watabe is an assistant professor at University of Tsukuba, Japan, and a visiting assistant professor at Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology, Egypt. He received a Ph.D. in Cinema and Media studies for his research on Japanese immigrants' cultural history on the West Coast before WWII from University of Southern California in 2018. He also works on contemporary Japanese visual media and popular culture.



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