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Séminaire collectif du Centre de
recherches sur le Japon (EHESS)

Histoire du Japon moderne et contemporain : permanences et ruptures

«Travel-Writing and the Furniture Design Industry in Modern Japan, 1910–25»

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Abstract

In twentieth-century Japan, a national network of designers, engineers and technologists employed at state industrial research institutes supported small- and medium-sized enterprises in locally-important manufacturing industries through interaction with local manufacturing communities, local government and their peers nationwide. Arguably, these men and the mechanisms they enacted played a significant role in shaping the overall trajectory and everyday operations of local manufacturing communities 地場産業 (jiba sangyô) from the early years of the century through the 1960s. However they remain largely absent from the historical scholarship, particularly in social history and the history of design.

This talk explores interactions between researchers specialising in furniture-making and other wood products in the city of Shizuoka with local manufacturers, local government and their national network, from the years immediately following the Second World War to Japan's high economic growth period in the 1960s. Particular themes will include different communities' relationships to materials, making and innovation, the impact of these cultural and social factors on communication between communities and what an artefact-led, globally-situated history of social interaction around technologies, skill and knowledge can offer modern history.