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Séminaire collectif du Centre de
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Histoire du Japon moderne et contemporain : permanences et ruptures

«Globe-Trotting and Nation-Building: A Sino-Japanese War Correspondent's View, 1894-95»

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Abstract

Kawata Masazō lived an extraordinary life as an adventurer, a war correspondent, and perhaps a government spy in the late-nineteenth century. Kawata was able to move across the Pacific world—from Moji to the Ogasawara Islands, from the Arctic to the Americas, and from Korea to China to Siberia—with ease, finding employment as needed, meeting famous individuals, interviewing generals, fighting in and reporting on wars, and tapping into significant global events and phenomena.

Through reports of his experiences, I examine two things. First, what Kawata's globe-trotting can tell us about spatial, social, and economic mobility within two decades of the Meiji Restoration. Second, how Kawata understood his Japanese national identity in direct relation to the people and places he encountered. Further, since he believed in a progressive world order and supported revolutionary ideals and action to launch more democratic, modern societies, Kawata's unusual life exposes the complexities of this formative era of globalization, nationalism, and imperialism.