



THE ORIENTAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY N.S.W. 2006

The Oriental Society cordially invites members, friends and guests of the Society to the November seminar 2011.

Date: Monday 28 November 2011

Time: 5.00pm to 6.30 pm

Venue: The Common room 524, Brennan MacCallum, The University of Sydney

Speaker: Professor Michael Lewis

Title: From Possession to Madness in Modern Japan

Abstract:

An ongoing debate in the history of Japanese medicine concerns the Japanese discovery of modern madness. "Discovery" does not mean that before the 1870s or 1880s that disturbed minds went unnoticed in Japan. People who appear physically unremarkable but transgress boundaries of "normal" behaviour have been ever present in Japan as in every other society. The debate is not about the presence or absence of difference, but about its *cause*. This presentation explores the historical ramifications of etiology, explanations or diagnosis based on medical causes, in shaping modern Japanese categories of sickness and health. Medicalizing what before the mid-19th century was widely considered spiritual possession created novel and lasting social structures and attitudes. Making mental difference a medical category, one that *legally* enforced established therapies and institutions, has shaped the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness down to today. Efforts by Japanese psychiatrists to professionalize their calling reinforced the new diagnostic regime. The tragic case of Dr. Ishida Noboru is considered to illustrate how a new medical system work as it transformed the spiritually possessed into sickened patients.

Biography:

Michael Lewis is a Professor in the Department of Japanese Studies at the University of Sydney and an historian of modern Japan. Since taking postgraduate degrees in History at Stanford University his main area of research has been the intersections of social, cultural, and scientific history. His major studies on mass movements in nineteenth and twentieth century Japan and state formation have been published by Harvard and University of California presses. More recently, he has published work on the crowd's popular "intellectuals," satirists and singers, and their inconsistent roles in movements for greater economic and political equality in Japan (*A Life Adrift*, Routledge, 2011).

He is currently researching the history of psychiatry in modern Japan by exploring the lives of medical professionals who introduced Western therapies from the late nineteenth century through the 1940s. Before joining the Department of Japanese Studies at the University of Sydney, he directed the Asian Studies Centre at Michigan State University, where he led in creating the first All-Asia U.S. Department of Education National Resource Centre.

OSA web site

<http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/publications/JOSA/>

Dinner: 7:00-

Venue: TBA

Address:

Tel:

Enquiries and dinner attendance: please contact Seiko Yasumoto by 27 November

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