

Workshop: Family, relatedness and emotions in premodern Japan – developing historical anthropology

University of Cambridge, 9 – 10 April 2026



Convenors:

Pia Jolliffe (Oxford)
Polina Barducci (Cambridge)
Brigitte Steger (Cambridge)

Participation free, registration required.

Contact: Brigitte Steger
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Venue:

Rooms 8 & 9, Faculty of Asian and
Middle Eastern Studies, University
of Cambridge, Sidgwick Avenue,
Cambridge, UK, CB3 9DA

In this historical-anthropological workshop we invite scholars to present their work-in-progress on practical and performative aspects of family life in premodern Japan. We understand “families” as people who are related through shared activities in everyday life, during seasonal celebrations and the various rites of passages that mark major life course transitions. We are particularly interested in the performative aspects of such activities, the emotions put at display and the forms of relatedness that are created in these ways between individuals and across time.



With the generous support of
Japanese Studies, University of Cambridge
The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation



WS: Premodern families, Schedule (revised as of 3 April)

Presentations should be no longer than 20 minutes!

Day 1 - Thursday 9 April, 2026

12.15 - 12.25	Arrival at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies lobby Sidgwick Site, Cambridge CB3 9DA
12.30 - 13.45	Lunch at a college (Darwin or Queens' College)
14.00	Workshop starts at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Online access: https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/82090083642?pwd=bQZC3bityHRu1qL33wA7y5YZXPeaMn.1 Meeting ID: 820 9008 3642 Passcode: 210939

Programme:

14.00 - 14.10	Welcome, self-introductions, information
14.10 - 15.30	Session 1: What is a family? Pia Jolliffe, Polina Barducci, Brigitte Steger: Introduction Dixon Wong (Tenri) and Yau Hoi Yan (National Taiwan Normal) “What family is and is not in premodern Japan” (online)
15.30 - 16.00	Coffee / tea break
16.00 - 17.30	Session 2: Women's roles in the households of the Heian and medieval periods Anna Andreeva (Ghent) “Aristocratic grandmothers in early medieval Japan” Polina Barducci (Cambridge) “Motherhood in the Ashikaga shogunal family from the late fifteenth to the early sixteenth centuries”

Day 2 – Friday, 10 April, 2026 (all day)

09.30	Workshop day 2 starts at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Online access: Join Zoom Meeting https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/87899595758?pwd=nJJeS9PGkgimh1iG8aLlFxCEUOZftm.1 Meeting ID: 878 9959 5758 Passcode: 474435
Programme:	
09.30 - 11.30	Session 3: Transition from sixteenth to seventeenth century Japan Yabe Kentarō (Kokugakuin) “Conceptualising the next generation in Nō performances during the Toyotomi administration” Pia Jolliffe (Oxford) “ <i>Himegimi</i> : Writing girls back into Sengoku history” Marcia Yonemoto (Colorado Boulder) “Adoption practices and purposes during the transition from the Sengoku to the Tokugawa period”
11.30 - 12.00	Coffee / tea break
12.00 - 12.30	Jiyeon Wood (Cambridge UL): premodern sources at the University Library
12.45 - 13.45	Lunch at a college
14.00 - 15.30	Session 4: Gendering the family Daniele Durante (Ca’ Foscari and Kanagawa) “Family bonding in the lives of nineteenth-century Japanese gender-variant individuals” Mary Reisel (Rikkyō) “Women in the Ma: From the ancient world of the courtesans to contemporary <i>enjo-kōsai</i> services” (online?)
15.30 - 16.00	Coffee / tea break
16.00 - 17.30	Session 5: Everyday practices of family life Chiara Rita Napolitano (Kyoto) “Bonds of impurity: household rituals and the architectural dimension of <i>kegare</i> ” Brigitte Steger (Cambridge) “‘Who sleeps by whom?’ How sleep arrangements constituted family life in the Heian period”
17.30	Closing discussion
19.00	Predinner drinks, at Trinity Hall College, Chetwode room
19.30	Formal college dinner, Trinity Hall College, Chetwode room

Collaboration of University of Cambridge, University of Oxford and JAWS – Japan Anthropology Workshop

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