

Comparative Asian Research Network
Monthly Lecture Series on Issues and Research in the Asian Region
Organized by the Department of Japanese Studies, CUHK

All are Welcome!!

**The Japanese Have Arrived! The Iwakura
Embassy in America in 1872**

Speaker: Professor Martin C. COLLCUTT

Professor of East Asian Studies and History, Princeton University.

Date: 25 March 2015 (Wednesday)

Time: 11:00-12:30

Venue: Leung Kau Kui Building, Room 401

Language: English

Abstract: In late 1871 the Meiji government in Japan sent a high-ranking delegation to the USA and Europe to try to re-negotiate unequal treaties, encourage trade and investigate how it might modernize its political and economic institutions. Led by the Foreign Minister Prince Iwakura Tomomi, the 'embassy' of politicians, officials and students arrived in San Francisco on January 15th, 1872 then travelled extensively in the USA for nearly seven months visiting Chicago, Washington, Philadelphia, New York and Boston. On August 6th, they left by ship for Europe, where they spent a further year visiting different countries there and examining the British manufacturing industry, German armaments and French culture, etc. Then they returned to Japan via the Suez Canal, stopping at Singapore and Hong Kong along the way.

The official record of the Iwakura embassy was kept by Kume Kunitake(1839-1931), a young samurai-scholar who was appointed as the private secretary to Ambassador Iwakura. In 1878 Kume published a detailed five-volume account of journey and what he and other members of the embassy had observed in the United States and Europe - The Tokumei Zenken Taishi Bei-O Kairan Jikki 特命全權大使米歐回覽實記.

In this illustrated presentation, I will focus on the decision to send such a distinguished mission, usually referred to as the Iwakura Embassy; the composition of the embassy (including the five girls who were sent to the United States for their education); and its activities in the United States from mid-January to early August 1872 (how they were welcomed and what they observed).

No registration necessary.

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