

# Institute for Japanese Studies Lecture Series

## Foot Work: The Labor of Innovation in Japan's 'Transportation Society

2020-2021

**IJS**  
LECTURE  
SERIES

Monday, March 15

3:30-5:00 pm

Online



## Kate McDonald

University of California, Santa Barbara

Humans power transport. This is obviously true for the early twentieth century. It's easy to find images of rickshaws on city streets in Tokyo. But it's equally true for the twenty-first century. Look no further than the parcel delivery workers sprinting up and down apartment-building staircases. Despite this continuity, human-powered technologies such as the rickshaw symbolize Japan's past while the promise of automated systems such as parcel delivery drones symbolize Japan's future. Why? Returning to the charged history of labor and innovation in Japan's transportation society, this talk shows how we can use the lives of transport workers to craft a history of technological change that places human power squarely in the present.

**Kate McDonald** is Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is the author of *Placing Empire: Travel and the Social Imagination in Imperial Japan* (University of California Press, 2017). Together with David R. Ambaras (NC State), she directs the *Bodies and Structures: Deep-Mapping Modern East Asian History*, a digital spatial history project that has received significant funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. This talk comes from her newest book project, *The Rickshaw and the Railroad: Human-Powered Transport in the Age of the Machine*.

Please register for this event on our website:

<https://easc.osu.edu/events/ijs/kmcdonald>



Free and open to the public

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