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Monday, October 11th, 18:00h

François Lachaud

Emperor of Shadows Napoleon and the Japanese Imagination (1800-1900)

SPEAKER

From 1812 to today, Napoleon remains the most famous Frenchman in Japan. During the early years of the 19th century, while trying to stay away from the international diplomatic scene, Japan could not escape the consequences of the Napoleonic wars. It almost exclusively relied on Dutch traders—stationed in Dejima as the only state-sanctioned conveyors of Western knowledge—to be enlightened on the nature of a man who had unflinchingly defied the Russian and British empires, both sworn enemies of Japan. In charting the different stages of Napoleon's discovery in Japan—from the confessions of a sailor under duress, to the tears of his admirers—, this presentation will explore a series of texts and images that turned a 'defeated' French emperor into the icon of a new generation in urgent need of change and avid for glory. However, this passion did not stop in 1868 but gathered an even greater momentum during the Meiji era, when his nephew appeared as the worthy heir of Napoleon's genius. The lives and after-lives of the French emperor in Japan remain a neglected subject among specialists of Napoleonic studies and among Japanese historians. The talk will then examine the significance of this 'Napoleon moment', and the far-reaching implications of the discovery of France through its most universal great man.

François Lachaud is a Professor of Japanese studies at the École Française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO) since 2000. His field of research includes art history (antiquarianism) and Japanese Buddhism. Inter alia, he has published *Le Vieil Homme qui vendait du thé. Excentricité et retrait du monde dans le Japon du xviii^e siècle* (Cerf, 2010), and coedited two volumes (EFEO, 2010 and 2017) with Dejanirah Couto on the diplomatic and cultural exchanges between Western empires and East Asia in the early modern period. Most recently, he has coedited with Martin Nogueira Ramos a volume on Japanese-French relations in the 19th century: *D'un empire, l'autre. Premières rencontres entre la France et le Japon au xix^e siècle* (EFEO, 2021).

This lecture will be held on Zoom. If you are not on our mailing lists, please contact us by email.

École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO)
Italian School of East Asian Studies (ISEAS)

29 Bettō-chō, Kitashirakawa, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto, 606-8276 Japan

EFEO | Tel. 075-701-0882 E-mail efeo.kyoto@gmail.com

ISEAS | Tel. 075-703-3015 E-mail info.iseas@iseas-kyoto.org

