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International conference co-organized by Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture,
The University of Osaka, University of Geneva Geography Department, University of Turin
Department of Humanities

Call for Papers

Japan, tourist world tours and globetrotters – from the Meiji period (1868-1912) to 1970

Sophia University, Tokyo, 27 June 2026



Aoki, Tsunesaburō (1885-86). *Sekai ryokō bankoku meisho zue – Illustrated guidebook for travellers round the world*, Covers of volumes 1 and 6. Kobe University Library, <https://da.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/da/sc/0100407099/>

The first round-the-world tourists – who became known as “globetrotters” – appeared at the end of the 1860s, in connection with the completion of global transport networks. In 1872, Thomas Cook offered the first package tours of the world. In the same year, Jules Verne published *Around the World in 80 Days*, which not only became an inspiration for future globetrotters – challenging them to complete their circumnavigations as fast as, or faster than Phileas Fogg – but also made this expensive and time-consuming experience available to a vast public, as a virtual adventure. Tools for armchair globetrotting, such as stereoscopic photography, acquired growing popularity in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, with the explosion of a “globetrotting craze”.

Meiji Japan (1868-1912) was central to this craze. The opening of the San Francisco-Yokohama line had a key role in making circumnavigation journeys easier to complete; according to Griffis (1876, p. 339) the very term “globetrotter” may have developed among the workers of the port of Yokohama, in 1870. Not only Japan was physically central to world tours, but, for a number of cultural, economic and diplomatic reasons, it also quickly became their highlight: by 1878, an article in the British periodical *The Fortnightly Review* was reporting that “A traveller returning home from a tour of circumnavigation will [...] be asked more questions about Japan than about any other foreign land, and will hear the strongest expressions of a desire to visit that country” (Wedderburn, 1878, p. 417). Globetrotting in Japan was strictly intertwined with modernization and with the desire for international recognition: transport and tourist infrastructure were improved at least partly as a way to cater to foreign tourists, and tourism was consciously used, by institutions such as the Kihinkai (or Welcome Society, funded in 1893), and, from 1912, by the Japan Tourist Bureau, as a way to attract foreign currency and as a tool of soft power. Moreover, the craze for world tours penetrated Japanese popular culture, and some Japanese people became globetrotters: by the first decade of the twentieth century, the first Japanese tourist world tours were organized, in collaboration, by the *Asahi Shinbun* and Thomas Cook, for a very selected group of elite participants.

In the twentieth century, other milestones happened globally in the development of around-the-world tourism. In 1909, New York tour operator Clark offered the first round-the-world cruise. In 1947, Pan Am launched the first commercial round-the-world flight service. In the 1970s, the democratization of air travel enabled some young people to backpack around the world. Japan went through its own tourist milestones. In the 1920s and 1930s, during the heyday of the ocean liner that followed World War I, and amidst Japan’s economic boom, non-elite Japanese travellers, casting anxious glances around and uncertain of what to expect, began to embark on and participate in round-the-world tours. Moreover, in 1930, the Board of Tourist Industry and other organizations—comparable to, but more fully established than, the Kihinkai—were developed domestically and a new “Welcome to Japan” tourism campaign was launched. This campaign was then reused in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in connection with the Olympics, and leading up to the 1970 Osaka Expo. This overlapped with the so-called “Cold War Orientalism” in the US, as reflected in the production of the film *Around the World in 80 Days*, where Japan was featured prominently in location shooting. Conversely, for a time in the post-World War II period, ordinary overseas travel was discouraged for the Japanese: in the 1950s, only those who had some value or reason to “see the world”, as determined by the Japanese or, especially, the American government, were allowed to travel abroad. On the other hand, as part of the U.S.’s soft power strategy, these travellers were encouraged to write travelogues: famous examples include writers Yukio Mishima, who travelled around the world in the 1950s as a special correspondent for the *Asahi Shinbun*, and Makoto Oda, who went to the U.S. on a Fulbright and also

travelled the world, writing a travelogue that later became a bible for backpacker-style globetrotters. Inspired by these travelogues, after 1964, Japanese travellers commonly embarked in world travel.

Are there unexplored aspects in Japan's role in world tours in the Meiji period? What was the significance of Japanese middle-class globetrotters in the 1920s and 1930s and was Japan still physically and culturally central to world tours at that time? And what elements of novelty and what elements of continuity were there in Japan's relation to world tours after World War II, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s?

In this conference, organized as part of the outcomes of the research project "Faire le Monde: Premiers Globetrotters et Tours du Monde Touristiques (1869-1914)" (funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation – SNSF), we aim to explore the role of Japan in relation to world tours, from the Meiji period to 1970. **We invite 350-words abstracts for 20-minutes presentations, followed by 10 minutes of Q&A and discussion.**

Contributions might address topics such as (but not limited to):

- **Tourist encounters and experiences** (including both the experiences of globetrotters in Japan and of Japanese globetrotters abroad)
- **The tourist gaze and (mutual) representations** (of Japanese globetrotters abroad, of foreign globetrotters in Japan, of the world by Japanese globetrotters, of Japan by foreign globetrotters...)
- **The culture of globetrotting and Japan**, and **virtual globetrotting** in and about Japan
- **Japanese tourist and travel infrastructure** and its evolution in relation to globetrotting.

The language of the conference will be English. Please also note that the conference will be an **in-person event**, and that participants **will need to make arrangements to visit Japan on their own** (the event organizers will not be able to cover travel expenses or to sponsor visas).

Scientific Committee: Sonia FAVI (University of Turin); Yorimitsu HASHIMOTO (The University of Osaka); Noriko MURAI (Sophia University); Raphaël PIERONI (HEAD Genève/University of Geneva); Jean-François STASZAK (University of Geneva).

Guidelines for Submission

Abstracts should be submitted via email to globetrotterstokyo@gmail.com by **December 14, 2025**. **A single PDF document** should be attached to the email, with the following information:

- Full Name of the Applicant
- Affiliation, Contact Details and short CV
- Title of Presentation
- Presentation Abstract (maximum 350 words)

Notification of acceptance will be sent out **by the end of January 2026**, together with a tentative program. The final program will be announced **by the end of April 2026**.

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