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A Female Pioneer: Anna Berliner (1888-1977) and her Psychological Approach to Japanese Culture

Anna Berliner is today hardly known in Germany but rather in the USA as member of so called second generation of female psychologist. She was a pioneer in many ways: She was one of the few female students at the laboratory of Wilhelm Wundt, Professor of Psychology and Cultural Anthropology in Leipzig; she was one of the few German female researchers in Japan, who did not only taught but also studied the culture and language; she published one of the first books by a non-Japanese about the Way of Tea (*sadô*). During World War I her husband Siegfried Berliner, a mathematician and physicist, who taught business administration at Tôkyô University, was interned as an enemy alien and Anna was deported to the US. She was able to return to Japan in 1921 and in 1925 both of them returned to Germany, where they established the OAG office in Leipzig and were therefore also responsible for the image of Japan in Germany. In 1936 they had to leave Germany due to the rise of the Nazi Party and went again to the USA. After some difficult years earning their living, Anna Berliner lectured at Northern Illinois College of Optometry. She was able to establish herself as a renowned researcher in Psychology and Cultural Anthropology. In 1977 she was murdered in her house by a 13-year-old boy who committed to the crime.
In this speech only the years in Japan and Anna Berliners unique approach to the Japanese cultural, especially her book about the Japanese Way of Tea, will be discussed. It demonstrates the necessity of learning culture in its context but also the application of Western theory on non-Western cultural phenomena – actually a very modern approach in cultural studies.

Chantal Weber *graduated from the University of Cologne; Master in Japanese Studies, Archeology and Art History. After working at the Computer Center, University of Freiburg, in the department of New Media and E-Learning, Dr. Weber did research at Daitô Bunka Daigaku, Tôkyô, for her PhD thesis, granted with a fellowship by the Japan Foundation. Returning to Germany she worked as program manager for Asian relations at the International Office, University of Freiburg, being director of the special summer program for Japanese students.*

From 2008 Dr. Weber became a research assistant at the East Asian Department, Japanese Studies, University of Cologne, were she was granted the PhD in 2011 with a thesis about “Cultural historical network analysis – the tea-master Kanamori Sôwa”. JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship from 2012-2014 at Kansai University, Ôsaka, with the research topic “The Culture of Incense in Japan”.
Currently Dr. Weber is a research assistant at East Asian Department, Japanese Studies, the University of Cologne and since 2015 board member of the JSPS-Club Germany.