



A Space for Translation: Thresholds of Interpretation

Presentation Details	
Title of Paper:	Globalization of a Spatial Metaphor: the Case of “Frontier”
Speaker:	Masao IMAMURA, Associate Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yamagata University
Abstract:	<p>This presentation examines a particular spatial metaphor: frontier. Today this popular metaphor usually refers to a place that is about to be transformed because of an expansive force from the outside. The force in question could be anything so long as it is commonly understood to be expanding in a rapid and overwhelming manner; it could be science, technology, urbanization, democracy, terrorism, or empire. As a spatial metaphor “frontier” is unusual in that it carries a temporal sense, implying a process of transformation. This metaphor derives from the historical narrative of the United States, originally presented by Fredrick Turner at the end of the nineteenth century. As a metaphor “frontier” implicitly evokes the expansiveness of the United States as an imperial power. Ironically, while the Turnerian narrative has been disputed and rejected as a distorting myth by countless historians, the metaphor itself has travelled widely and captured popular imaginations even outside the United States of America. Databases of English-language news articles show that around the world “frontier” is used almost exclusively in this American metaphorical sense. In this presentation, I examine how and why the “frontier” metaphor has spread very widely around the world.</p>

Author's Biography

Masao IMAMURA is Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Yamagata University, Japan. He has a doctoral degree in geography from the National University of Singapore (NUS). Born and raised in Kamakura, Japan, he studied philosophy at Oberlin College in Ohio, USA and then worked as a librarian at St. John's College in New Mexico. Before joining the NUS, he worked for environmental NGOs in Thailand and also worked at Chiang Mai University as a research coordinator. His research, based on both field and archival work, primarily concerns Southeast Asia, especially the highland people called Kachin in northern Myanmar. He has been studying in particular the history of Bible translations into multiple Kachin languages and their multi-faceted impacts. He is also increasingly writing about Japan.