

# Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20156]

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## **Proposed title of the session**

Wealth Inequality in East Asia from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century

## **Abstract**

In this comparative session, we gather scholars who analyze newly available household-level landholding data for communities in China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan between the eighteenth and mid-twentieth centuries to examine the long-term patterns of wealth distribution in these societies. While recent studies on the patterns of wealth inequality in Western Europe and United States reveal a concentrated distribution of wealth in the past and present, exiting studies in China and Japan have suggested that wealth distribution was more equal in pre-industrial East Asia. Yet, a better understanding of wealth inequality in these societies is still to be achieved for two reasons. First, most existing studies are based on survey or aggregated archival data; second, while economists have paid much attention to the structural changes brought by capitalism, colonization, reform, and revolution, the understanding of wealth inequality and its change has not been placed in the local context of these political, economic, and social transformations.

We emphasize the use of archival data drawn from population and land registers and integrate the analysis with the local historical contexts to achieve a holistic view of wealth distribution in agrarian communities in East Asia. Several participants have met in June 2014 in a workshop held at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and discussed the basic features of the data of each society. We not only measure wealth inequality by Gini but also examine wealth mobility at the household level to explore changes in wealth inequality in the long-term. Ultimately, we hope to enrich the understanding of global wealth inequality with new data and new findings from a less studied part of the world.

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## **I. Corresponding Session Organiser**

Prof. Shuang Chen (University of Iowa [United States of America])

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## **II. Co-Organiser(s)**

1. Corresponding Organiser.
2. Mr. Matthew Noellert (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology [Other])

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## **III. Expected Participant(s)**

1. same as correspondent.
2. Matthew Noellert (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology [Other])
3. Satomi Kurosu (Reitaku University [Japan])
4. Yingze Hu (Shanxi University [China])
5. Sangkuk Lee (Ajou University [Republic of Korea])
6. Kuenta Kim (Seoul National University [Republic of Korea])
7. Wenshan Yang (Academia Sinica [Taiwan])