

TAKESHIMA AND SHIMANE PREFECTURE

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In 2005, the passage of "Takeshima Day" ordinance by Shimane prefecture has propelled the territorial dispute over the Takeshima/Dokdo islets to the fore of Japan's domestic discourse on bilateral relations with South Korea. So far, Shimane Prefecture's Takeshima related activism has been largely ignored by scholarship devoted to the dispute. Occasional references to the 2005 ordinance suggest that it was driven by a combination of nationalism and fisheries related interests. Based on extensive archival research in this talk I examine the fifty years of Shimane Prefecture's activities related to Takeshima and offer a different interpretation of this activism. I argue that in the early 1950s the prefectural authorities' interest in the uninhabited rocks was instigated by the collapse of the colonial economic sub-zone that encompassed Shimane, Takeshima and Korea's Ulleung Island. From early 1960s, however, Shimane prefecture's Takeshima related activism was shaped and sustained by Tokyo's contradictory policy on Takeshima and the Northern Territories disputes. The talk suggests that the 2005 Takeshima Day ordinance was a logical continuation of previous policies and actions taken by the prefecture and concludes by analyzing the domestic political processes that enabled the passage of the ordinance despite Tokyo's reluctance.

Lecture in English / No registration necessary



ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Alexander Bukh holds an LLM in International Law from Tokyo University and a PhD in International Relations from the London School of Economics. He is currently a Senior Lecturer in International Relations at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Prior to taking this appointment he held teaching positions at the University of Tsukuba and Waseda University in Japan.

Alexander has published a number of academic articles and book chapters on Japan-Russia relations and Japan's national identity and foreign policy. His latest publications include an article on Japan's quest for the Northern Territories published in the *International Relations of Asia-Pacific* and an edited volume chapter on early Soviet perceptions of Japan and China. Alexander is the author of "Japan's Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan's Other" (Routledge 2009) which was translated to Russian and published in November 2012.