

Faculty of History, University of Cambridge



Quantitative History Seminar, Lent Term 2016

Supported by the Centre for History and Economics
and the Trevelyan Fund



Seminars will take place in Room 5, Faculty of History.
Sandwiches and fruit will be available from 12.45 for a 1pm start.
Convenor: Leigh Shaw-Taylor- lmws2@cam.ac.uk

1st February

**Dr Jean-Pascal Bassino (ENS Lyon), Dr Kyoji Fukao (IER, Hitotsubashi University) and
Dr Tokihiko Settsu (Musashi University)**

***Revisiting Meiji Japan's economic miracle: the structural and regional dimensions of
productivity growth (1874-1909)***

The Japanese economy embarked in the last decades of the 19th century in a process of innovation leading to an acceleration of economic growth. As available national accounts estimates (Ohkawa and Shinohara 1979) provide only country level figures starting in 1885, the distinctive features of the early phase of Japanese economic development remain a matter of debate and conjecture. Relying on new sectoral GDP estimates for 1874, 1890, and 1909, for each of the 47 prefectures (Fukao et al. 2015), we conduct a quantitative analysis of structural change during Meiji Japan's economic miracle, accounting also for its regional dimension.

7th March

Professor B. Zorina Khan (Bowdoin College and National Bureau of Economic Research)

***Knowledge, human capital and economic development: evidence from the British industrial
revolution, 1750-1930***

Endogenous growth models raise fundamental questions about the nature of human creativity, and the sorts of resources, skills, and knowledge inputs that shift the frontier of technology and production possibilities. Many argue that the nature of early British industrialization supports the thesis that economic advances depend on specialized scientific training or the acquisition of costly human capital. This paper examines the contributions of different types of knowledge to British industrialization, by assessing the backgrounds, education and inventive activity of the major contributors to technological advances in Britain during the crucial period between 1750 and 1930. The results indicate that scientists, engineers or technicians were not well-represented among the British great inventors until very late in the nineteenth century. Instead, important discoveries and British industrial advances were achieved by individuals who exercised commonplace skills and entrepreneurial abilities to resolve perceived industrial problems. For developing countries today, the implications are that costly investments in specialized human capital resources might be less important than incentives for creativity, flexibility, and the ability to make incremental adjustments that can transform existing technologies into inventions that are appropriate for prevailing domestic conditions.