From text to inscription:  the Japanese steno-typewriter and its turning of speech into a forensic object

As part of the post-World War II democratization and modernization policies under US military occupation, the Japanese court adopted the principle of direct trial and the adversarial system from Anglo American law.  The post-war judicial reform was instructed by GHQ (General Headquarters) to shift away from the earlier inquisitional system towards oral-based trials and cross-examination, and thus to introduce the idea of “spoken language” as a central mode of judicial processes.  Accompanied was the adoption of the Japanese stenographic typewriter, or “sokutaipu,” in 1950 as an official recording method to document “the judicial process as speech.” In this workshop, I would like to discuss how speech goes through a series of medial displacements in order to attain its legal truth, shuffled between technical and juridical fidelity in current criminal law in Japan.  The goal of this workshop is to facilitate a conversation about how we can understand “law” not only as an hermeneutic text/object, but also as a technical process that involves the transduction between speech and writing, and the circulation and the archiving of speech in the forms of papers and files.