

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ Social Science Study Group



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Fiji Islanders in Japan: Transnational ties and ideas of community

Migration from the Pacific Island state of Fiji to Japan is a relatively new phenomenon which has led to the establishment of micro-groups of Fiji Islanders throughout Japan. It was only after Fiji, a former British Crown Colony, gained its independence in 1970 that Japan's interests in the Fiji Islands, its people and resources brought Fijians of diverse ethnic and cultural background to Tokyo, Osaka and other urban centres. At present, Japan's involvement with Fiji predominantly takes the form of development aid, scholarship funding for students, trade and investment, as well as sport and tourism.

Despite the fact that the number of immigrants continues to grow, Japan is still not a typical Pacific Islander migrant destination or an immigrant society in general. However, while Fiji Islanders in Japan face a number of linguistic, cultural and social difficulties, the majority of them seem to cope remarkably well with their so-called *gaijin* status, as well as the lack of extended social networks that usually characterize their social lives in the Fiji Islands.

Some of the research questions that drive my work, are: How important is the "community" for Fiji Islanders in Japan? Can we talk about the existence of a pan-Fijian identity amongst the Fiji Islanders? How are the social networks of transnational Fiji Islanders in Japan constituted?

In this presentation I focus particularly on Fiji Islanders in the Kantō region. I have been conducting ethnographic research and interviews with Fijians since March 2012. Data collected through questionnaires, electronic interviews and social networking services will also be taken into consideration.

Dominik Schieder is a JSPS Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo. Before that he taught Peace and Conflict Studies and Political Anthropology at Heidelberg University and Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. His recent publications and presentations address political conflicts, elitism and sport in Fiji, as well as transnational Fiji Islander migration to Japan and beyond.

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is a forum for young scholars and Ph.D. candidates in the field of Social Sciences organized by Maren Godzik, Phoebe Holdgrün and Barbara Holthus. All are welcome to attend, but registration (holthus@dijtokyo.org) is appreciated.

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