

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

DIJ Social Science Study Group



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National Identity Discourses in Japan: Challenging Mono-ethnicity in the 2019 Rugby World Cup

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Large-scale international sporting events potentially trigger national identity discourses. Domestic media attention fosters an increased debate over self-perception and external perception of national identity and thus contributes to the process of nation branding. This highly dynamic period of renegotiating national identity in the spotlight of international attention usually spans over months, starting in the run-up to the event, and stretching all the way to its evaluation in public discourse. The Rugby World Cup held in Japan in 2019 is an intriguing example of an event of such power. The Brave Blossoms, Japan's national rugby team, is a multi-ethnic team which represented Japan with outstanding success. Their journey through the tournament was broadly covered in the media, and they were cheered on by fans across the country. Their credo #oneTeam was voted to be hashtag of the year 2019 in Japan. Yet, the myth of mono-ethnicity still resonates with some segments in Japanese society. The resulting tension is brought into focus by intensive media reporting and can ultimately lead to a process of redefining a nation-state's self-perception. Over-emphasized homogeneity of Japanese society is challenged by Japan's multi-ethnic rugby team. It demonstrates an alternative reality in which athletes of various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds fight together as a team. This team highlights the tension between old assumptions and the reality of a changing society which challenges the discourse of national belonging in Japan. How does this discourse take place? What is considered diverse in Japan and where do national and international reporting clash regarding Japanese national identity?

Jane Khanizadeh is a PhD student at the Japan Center of Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich. She is currently conducting field research in Japan as a DIJ scholarship holder. She completed her MA studies in Japanese Studies, Art History and Political Science at the University of Hamburg. Her research interests are discourses on national identity and national belonging in the context of international sporting events.

About:

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is a forum for scholars from all disciplines of the social sciences conducting research on contemporary Japan. The event is open to all.

Venue:

Online and DIJ Tokyo: <https://www.dijtokyo.org/access/>

Hybrid Event:

On-site participation: Registration is required via email to polak-rottmann@dijtokyo.org until November 27, 2023.

Online participation: Please register via the [webpage](#).