

April 22nd, 2008 Featured Speaker

## New Patterns of Consciousness Toward Foreigners in Japanese Regional Communities

Focusing on the cases of Wakkanai, Hokkaido and Imizu, Toyama

### Speaker

Masao Kobayashi, PhD Candidate, Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies

I was born in Ota, Gunma Prefecture, where laborers from Asian countries settled in the late 1980s and *nikkei* South Americans gathered in the 1990s. In this region, despite the presence of foreign laborers, there has been no change in local attitudes toward foreigners. Relations between laborers and the local community are characterized by a strong sense of prejudice. I can only imagine that this kind of situation is happening all over Japan. For this reason, the subject of my research is “consciousness toward foreigners in Japanese regional communities.” My aim is to investigate a way to improve this consciousness.

### Abstract

In the past, there were two main categories of foreigners in Japan. The first was the so called “old-timer,” such as the *zainichi* Korean (在日コリアン) who came to Japan during the colonial period. The second was the so called “new comer,” such as the *nikkei* South American Japanese who came to Japan to work in local industrial cities suffering from labor shortages.

However, there is a recent new trend of foreigners increasing in regions where there is no key industry. This means that their contribution to the local community is becoming larger even though Japanese people’s awareness of this contribution has not changed, leading to a decrease in the Japanese level of consciousness. Moreover, although it is more so in the case of *nikkei* South American Japanese, the consciousness toward foreigners is worsening in regional communities due to little interaction. The two trends combined result in the danger of even further consciousness deterioration. I conducted interviews in two cities, Wakkanai, Hokkaido, where there are many Russian sailors and Chinese trainees, and Imizu, Toyama Prefecture, where there are Russian sailors, Pakistanis who sell the sailors used cars (the number of car lots is about 260), *nikkei* Brazilian Japanese, as well as Chinese trainees. The findings of the interviews reveal the existing circumstances within Japanese regional society, and raise questions about ways to improve Japanese consciousness toward foreigners.

### Commentator

Eriko Suzuki, PhD Candidate, Hitotsubashi University

Eriko Suzuki is PhD candidate at the Graduate School of Social Science at Hitotsubashi University as well as a lecturer at Rikkyo University. Her research is on overstaying workers in Japan. She is researching Japanese policy toward foreigners and changes in the international workforce. She is also playing an active and supporting role for foreigners in Japan. Her major books are 『多文化化する日本を考える - 国境を越えた人の移動が進展するなかで』(FIF Special Report No. 8, 2004) and 『「多文化パワー」社会 - 多文化共生を超えて』(共編著, 明石書店, 2007).

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Date : Tuesday, April 22 18:00 ~ 20:00

会場 : 西早稲田ビル 19号館 710号室

Venue : Sodai-Nishiwaseda Bldg 19 Room 710

主催 / Organized by : WUDSN 協力 / Supported by : GIARI

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