

AFC Roundtable Session: The 6<sup>th</sup> Asian Cultural Dialogues

## On the Margins: A Dialogue on Exclusion, Displacement, and What Emerges

Host: Atsumi International Foundation Sekiguchi Global Research Association (SGRA)

Co-Host: Tohoku Gakuin University

**August 26, 2026 (Wed), 14:00-15:30,**

**August 27, 2026 (Thurs), 11:00-12:30, 14:00-15:30**

**Venue: Tohoku Gakuin University, Itsutsubashi Campus**

Language: English • Free participation

### Abstract

Space and distance are not neutral concepts, and any consideration of the ideas would involve an understanding of the power dynamics that drive them as well as the forces and political actors that create distance and control space. This Asian Cultural Dialogues session focuses on the groups and individuals who are driven to the margins, and strives to work towards an understanding of the political and social structures that marginalize certain groups, as well as the ideologies that ground these movements. Those on the margins are, however, agents and actors as well, and we seek to explore the actions that can be taken when marginalization occurs, as well as the new forms of being as well as the bonds that emerge in the process.

The Asian Cultural Dialogues seeks to discuss contemporary social issues in Asia through pragmatic and theoretical means, and to foster meaningful discussions about these issues while encouraging social action. Involving activists and academics in these dialogues and breaching barriers between society and academia has been crucial in this effort, and we seek to create a maintain a network of engaged activists and scholars. To date, our sessions have explored gender and violence, the impact of globalization, peace and the role of religion in conflict and crisis resolution, religious ethical theory and the economy, and mental health issues and support.

## Schedule

### August 26 (Wed), 14:00-15:30 Session 1: Exploring the Margins in Japan

Chair: Sonja Pei-Fen Dale (SGRA)

#### 14:00 **Monoracism in Japan**

Lawrence Yoshitaka Taguchi (Tokai University)

Based on the research of “Survey of people with mixed race and multiple ethnicities in Japan” which was conducted by Viveca Ichikawa (Toronto University) and Lawrence Yoshitaka Taguchi, I present the connection between bullying, racial discrimination, and the mental health of mixed race people in Japan. A high percentage of them are exposed to bullying in school, as well as racism in the workplace and in public spaces. This causes mental illness, leading to a higher rate of suicide and isolation when compared to the results of the national survey conducted by the Japanese government. I reveal that there is a hegemonic norm of monoracism behind these tendencies in Japan.

#### **Imagining Home into Being: Zainichi Korean Feminist Struggles for Ontological Wholeness**

Miho Kim (Doshisha University)

From a Zainichi Korean feminist standpoint, this presentation examines the enduring structural marginalization of Zainichi Koreans in postwar Japan and asks what it would mean to move from enforced life at the “margins” toward transformative belonging. Attending to centuries-long histories of empire, racialization, and legal precarity, I analyze how colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary exclusions. Through an aspirational visioning exercise, I weave personal and communal memory with geopolitical realities to animate decolonial feminist theory as lived praxis. Rather than treating “the margins” as a fixed or deficient space, I approach them as sites of epistemic insight and ethical possibility. From this standpoint, I explore pathways toward self-definition that resist both assimilationist incorporation and nationalist containment. Framing the normative horizon in terms of human rights, dignity, and justice, I argue that ontological wholeness—recognition as fully human and socially legitimate—is a necessary precondition for building a society genuinely hospitable to all. By centering Zainichi feminist knowledge production, the presentation contributes to interdisciplinary conversations on race, migration, gender, postcoloniality, and democratic futures in Japan.

#### **Labor at the Threshold: Gatekeeping, Mobility, and ASEAN – Japan Low Wage Labor Migration Regimes**

Yusy Widarahesty (Ritsumeikan University)

During the last two decades, East Asia has played a significant role in migration, functioning as both a destination and an origin area, and Japan has emerged as one of the most popular destinations for migrant workers from Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Even as it faces an acute need for foreign labor due to rapid aging and a dwindling population, Japan continues to be criticized for its draconian state regulation of labor migration. However, a frequently neglected aspect of this process is how entrenched institutional patterns and

asymmetric power relations actively shape and perpetuate the ASEAN–Japan migration regime. Thus, in what ways do these patterns and relations privilege certain actors – such as the government, supervising organizations, and intermediaries – and how do they marginalize the agency and voices of migrant worker communities and the workers themselves? This presentation explores how mobility regimes in Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines influence and regulate the flow of labor migrants to Japan in response to the country's demographic aging and labor shortages. By focusing on the mechanisms of recruitment, placement, oversight, and reintegration, it compares the three primary sending countries to illustrate how migrants are selected, governed, and eventually returned. By tracing these institutional patterns and power dynamics, the presentation clarifies the construction of an ASEAN–Japan migration regime and identifies the interests it ultimately serves.

14:00 **Q&A/Discussion**

Discussants: Carine Jaquet, Yuna Sato (Tokai University)

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**August 27 (Thurs)**

**Session 2: Processes of Exclusion (11:00-12:30)**

Chair: Diana Idzieva (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

11:00 **The Documentary Politics of Civil Registration and Statelessness in Malaysia**

Amanda Cheong (University of British Columbia) & Wong Kueng Hui (MANDIRI)

Drawing on ethnography, interviews, and community action research, this presentation explores the factors contributing to the contemporary crisis of statelessness in Malaysia. We focus on the relationship between omissions from Malaysia's civil registration and vital statistics system, and exclusion from Malaysian citizenship. Migrants and their descendants are at a higher risk of having their births, marriages, and other so-called vital events go unrecorded. These omissions cannot be wholly attributed to insufficient state capacity, or technical accidents. Rather, we show that who gets counted, and how, are inherently political choices which can be made in ways that omit unwanted populations from the nation by depriving them of the documentary means to prove their personhood. We also show how stateless people, in the face of their abject political exclusion, nevertheless exercise their political voice and agency in creative, subversive ways.

**Old Myanmar in the New Realities: Survey Findings on Continuity and Change in Political and Social Attitudes**

Sai Ye Kyaw Swar Myint (PACE-Myanmar)

The coup in February 2021 reversed a decade-long period of social, political, and economic reform and left the country as closed off as it had been before the 2010 reforms. One of the most consequential impacts of this shift has been the breakdown of the information ecosystem. Most, if not all, mainstream independent media outlets left the country, and social media platforms became the primary source of information for citizens. As these platforms are driven by algorithms, information became increasingly biased and polarized, resulting in many people choosing to remain silent. In response, PACE resumed its public opinion polling in 2024 to amplify these silent

voices. Over the last two years, PACE conducted three mini-surveys targeting youths, Buddhist monks, and IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons), as well as two nationwide surveys in 2025. The latest survey was conducted in October 2025, shortly before the general elections. The surveys explored public perceptions of the ongoing armed and political conflicts, the socio-economic situation, and attitudes toward democratic values.

12:00 **Q&A/Discussion**

Discussants: Genya Fukunaga (Tokyo University), Dinda Mundakir (Independent researcher)

12:30 Lunch Break (90 minutes)

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## August 27 (Thurs)

### Session 3: Resistance and Emergence (14:00-15:30)

Chair: Sonja Pei-Fen Dale (SGRA)

14:00 **Queer Guerrilla Politics: Displacement, Mobility, and the Emotional Politics of Queer Activism in China**

Lifu Guo (Tsukuba University)

This presentation explores the history of queer activism in China through the idea of “queer guerrilla politics.” Instead of understanding displacement only as a consequence of repression, it suggests that mobility, improvisation, and the temporary use of space have become key ways through which queer activism survives and continues to create visibility. The talk focuses on several moments that illustrate how such guerrilla-like practices have developed. The repeated relocations of the Beijing LGBT Center, for example, show how queer community spaces in urban China have often existed under precarious conditions, requiring organizers to constantly adapt and rebuild spaces for gathering and support. Similarly, the history of the Beijing Queer Film Festival, especially around 2013 when screenings were forced out of conventional venues and moved to buses, trains, and other improvised settings, demonstrates how mobility itself became a creative strategy. The presentation then turns to the diasporic dispersal of queer activists after the 2023 White Paper Movement, which contributed to the formation of increasingly transnational queer networks. In these spaces, queer activists have continued to intervene in public debates—including those within overseas Chinese pro-democracy circles—often through flexible, decentralized, and sometimes confrontational forms of engagement. Placing these practices in conversation with feminism and queer marxist theories, the talk suggests that queer activism in China has developed a distinctive politics shaped by movement, uncertainty, and persistence. These experiences reveal an emotional landscape in which hope and despair coexist, shaping how activists imagine political possibilities across both local and diasporic contexts.

#### **Bad Games and Ugly Zines: The Agentic Forces of Literary Experiments**

Bonnibel Rambatan (Independent researcher)

In the 1980s, Kadokawa editor Otsuka Eiji realized that children bought chocolates to collect Bikkuriman stickers before throwing away the chocolate. He then proceeded to develop his theory of Narrative Consumption, which theorist Hiroki Azuma later developed into a theory of Database

Consumption: People do not consume stories; rather, they consume specific elements from a shared cultural database. But what exactly constitutes “an element from a database”? What if, instead of cat ears and maid costumes, we take the doujinshi form itself as an element—alongside zines, indie games, fanfiction, and other amateur creations? And what if, instead of the fictional worlds themselves, we take hope, community, and generational trauma as the universe into which these works provide access? Drawing on Teagan Bradway’s concept of “bad reading”, as well as a contemporary reading of Database Consumption via Lacan and Latour, this paper argues that resistance happens not only within the stories being told, but also the way new literary forms emerge—how they get adapted and take off, how they get denied as ‘lowbrow’ and face censorship, and how they build communities and inspire a new generation of creators. Spaces and distances are not neutral. But sometimes, their shifts and evolutions rely on more than just the human. Sometimes, they rely on broken photocopiers, bad risograph machines, and game engines that can’t handle more than 16 bits.

15:00 **Q&A/Discussion**

Discussants: Jose Jowel Canuday (Ateneo University), Kyoko Takeuchi (Kwansei Gakuin University)

15:30 End of forum

Profiles

PRESENTERS



**Lawrence Yoshitaka Taguchi** is a Lecturer at the School of Global Studies, Tokai University. PhD of Sociology, specializing in mixed race studies in Japan. Major publications include *Konketsu to Nihonjin* (Mixed race and Japanese): Socio-history of Hafu, Daburu, Mix (Seidosya, 2018), *What is “Hafu”?: Thinking of the Images and Reality* (Heibonsya, 2021).



**Miho Kim** is a third-generation Zainichi Korean whose grandparents were dispossessed illiterate peasants from colonial Korea. Born and raised in Fukuoka, she studied in Japan, the United States, and Seoul before settling in Oakland, California, where she spent two decades in grassroots social justice organizing and movement-building. In 2007 she founded Eclipse Rising, the first U.S.-based Zainichi social justice organization. Following the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, she co-founded the Japan Multicultural Relief Fund (JMRF) in California, supporting underserved communities with cash and technical assistance grants, one of which helped launch Japan’s first national, multilingual *Yoriso* Hotline. She is also a convener of the San Francisco Comfort Women Justice Coalition and founder of the Nikkei Decolonization Tour (NDT). She holds degrees from University of Georgia and University of Oxford, and is pursuing a PhD at Doshisha University. A recipient of the Yayoi Award for Women’s Human Rights, along with fellowships and awards from institutions including New York University and the University of Hawai’i, she continues to build international solidarity rooted in the lived expertise of oppressed communities across imperial contexts.



**Yusy Widarahesty** is a researcher specializing in Migration studies with a particular focus on Japan-ASEAN migration and mobility, gender, culture, and human security. Yusy Widarahesty holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the Graduate School of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University. She’s currently working as a Senior Researcher at the Asia Japan Research Institute/AJI Ritsumeikan University. She co-founded RUMI Japan (Home for Indonesian Migrants in Japan), a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering Indonesian migrants in Japan. Recently, she has published her monograph, *Dreaming of a Better Life, Journeys of Indonesian Migrant Workers to Japan*. (<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-96-9156-2>)



**Amanda Cheong** is an Assistant Professor at the University of British Columbia. She researches the impacts of documents and legal status on people’s lives, collaborating with stateless, undocumented, and refugee communities in Southeast Asia and North America. Her award-winning work has been published in venues such as *Social Problems*, *Sociological Theory*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, and *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies*. She is working on a book, *Vital Omissions*, which is an ethnography of how people go missing from civil registration systems in Malaysia, and why this matters for citizenship. She earned her PhD in Sociology and Social Policy at Princeton University.



**Wong Kueng Hui**, a former stateless individual, is a dedicated advocate for youth empowerment and social justice. As MANDIRI's project coordinator, he champions youth democratic participation and inspires progressive ideas among young people. With a focus on building connections with local and international civil society organisation, activist, and student groups, Wong works to amplify youth voice and drive meaningful change.



**Sai Ye Kyaw Swar Myint** is the founder and Executive Director of PACE-Myanmar. PACE works to break the authoritarian cycle in Burma; promote peaceful democratic transition; build democratic values among citizens, leadership, and institutions; and ensure inclusiveness and democratic representation in a future constitution. The organization's most recent report, published under the pseudonym Blue Shirt Initiative, surveyed nearly 3,000 Burmese citizens on perceptions of democracy, the post-coup conflict, and Operation 1027. Before founding PACE, Sai Ye Kyaw Swar Myint was the co-founder of the Yangon School of Political Science, where he served as the Political Engagement Director from 2010 to 2013. Prior to this, he worked as the Shalom Foundation's Political Parties and Campaign Analyst in the organization's Election Observation Project. He is also one of the country's leading civic education trainers and curriculum developers. He graduated with a degree in Geology from Taunggyi University, Shan State. Ko Sai is from the ethnic Shan community.



**Lifu Guo** is an Assistant Professor in the Bureau of Human Empowerment, the University of Tsukuba. They graduated from the Department of Area Studies, the University of Tokyo. Their research focuses on feminism and queer studies, especially the gender and sexual politics in modern mainland China. Their recent publication is Guo, Lifu, "Medals and Conspiracies: Chinese and Japanese Online Trans-Exclusionary Discourses during the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games," Kazuyoshi Kawasaka & Stephan Würrer (Eds.) *Beyond Diversity: Queer Politics, Activism and Representation in Contemporary Japan*, Düsseldorf University Press, pp.117-135, 2024.



**Bonnibel Rambatan** is a transfeminine nonbinary writer, artist, and critical theorist. They currently serve as Director of Arts and Creative Expression at Rainbow Panda, a community for the welfare of queer and trans children in Asia. An independent scholar and artist, Bonni is passionate about finding new possibilities for solidarity and liberation. Their latest work is *Event Horizon: Sexuality, Politics, Online Culture, and the Limits of Capitalism* (with Jacob Johanssen, published by Zer0 Books in 2022). They post video essays and other conversations on the YouTube channel Writer Bonnibel. Find out more about them at <https://www.bonnibel.net/>

## DISCUSSANTS / CHAIRS



**Jose Jowel Canuday** is an associate professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the Ateneo de Manila University. Canuday serves as director of the Tagpuan Ateneo Center for Dialogue, Research, and Collaboration, and scholarship and practice-oriented institute developing approaches to bridging cultural divides. His field of studies cover indigenous rights and self-determination, grounded and obscured cosmopolitanism in politically marginalized terrains, and primary care inequities. Canuday holds a doctorate in social and cultural anthropology, which he earned from the University of Oxford.



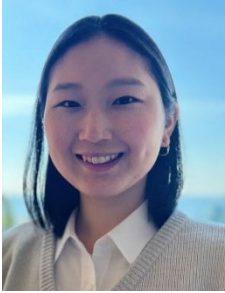
**Genya Fukunaga** is an Associate Professor at the Division of Diversity and Inclusion, Komaba Organization for Educational Excellence, the University of Tokyo. He specializes in feminist/queer studies, sociology, East Asia area studies. Most of his works focus on the intersections of colonialism/imperialism, the Cold War regime, and gender and sexual politics in East Asia. He is the author of *The Struggle Over Gender and Sexuality: Politics and Movements of Gender and Sexual Minorities in Taiwan and South Korea*, Akashi, 2025.



**Carine Jaquet** has been engaged in humanitarian aid, peace and democratization efforts, research and activism in and on Myanmar/Burma for two decades. Her research examines peace and conflict, civil society and humanitarian space, ethnic identity and narratives. She has authored books and peer-reviewed publications on humanitarian and political issues with a focus on Myanmar and Nepal, and worked in Asian and Southeast Asian countries for the UN Political Missions, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and NGOs aiming at supporting local organisations. She also served as a technical advisor for the Myanmar government institutions during the 'transition' period, including the Union Election Commission. A former associated researcher affiliated with the Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC), she holds master degrees in Asian studies, and in Intercultural Communication from the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilization (INALCO), a Masters in Political Sciences from Paris 1-La Sorbonne and graduated in Myanmar language and civilization from Yangon University of Foreign Languages (YUFL).



**Dinda Mundakir** is an independent researcher with a background in architectural writing and practice, focusing on contextual, climate-sensitive, and equitable design processes. A GREENSHIP Associate of the Green Building Council Indonesia, Dinda has over six years of editorial experience reporting on sustainable built environments throughout Asia. Previously serving as the Senior Editor of ARCHINESIA and FuturArc Journal, the latter received an Honourable Mention from the Society of Publishers in Asia (SOPA) in 2024, being the first architecture magazine to receive the accolade. Her published works include *Arsitektur Gelora Bung Karno 2018*, *Airport Design*, and *Tropical Houses: Equatorial Living Redefined*.



**Yuna Sato** is a Lecturer in the School of Global Studies at Tokai University. She holds a joint PhD in Sociology from Keio University and the University of South Australia. Her research focuses on ethnic and racial issues in Japan, with a particular emphasis on multiethnic and multiracial identities. Her recent publications include ‘Navigating Boundaries of Japaneseness: Identity Options and Constraints for “Invisible” Multiethnic Individuals in Japan’ (*Asian Ethnicity*, 2024) and ‘“Others” Among “Us”: Exploring Racial Misidentification of Japanese Youth’ (*Japanese Studies*, 2021).



**Kyoko Takeuchi** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Kwansai Gakuin University. They hold a Ph.D. in Sociology and specialize in gender and sexuality studies. They are a member of nonbinary community groups and Rainbow Panda, an organization that supports transgender and gender-diverse children. Their research focuses on the history of nonbinary gender categories and queer archives in Japan. Their major publication is *Hi-nigen-teki na sei o ikiru (A History of Sexual/Gender Minority Categories in Japan)* (in Japanese).



**Diana Idzieva** is originally from the Republic of Dagestan. A recipient of the 2024 Atsumi International Scholarship. Earned an M.A. in Literature from the Graduate School of Global Studies at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in 2021, and received a Ph.D. in Literature in September 2025. Idzieva’s research primarily focuses on contemporary Japanese literature, with the doctoral dissertation examining the theme of violence in the works of Natsuko Imamura. Idzieva currently serves as a part-time lecturer at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Keio University, and Tsuda University.



**Sonja Pei-Fen Dale** is the Program Director of the Asian Cultural Dialogues, a program coordinator with the Sekiguchi Global Research Association (SGRA), and the Director of Community & Membership for Rainbow Panda. A former academic with a PhD in Global Studies from Sophia University (Japan), Sonja’s research is multidisciplinary and examines the social structures of inclusion and exclusion as well as identity, with a special focus on LGBTQ issues and non-binary identity in Japan. Recent interests include creating safe and accessible spaces for minority groups as well as fostering diverse storytelling.

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