

Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture presents a workshop on

Migration to Japan

Focus on Kurdish Communities



Date: April 8 (15:00-18:00) and April 9 (10:00-12:30), 2023

Format: In-person only, No registration required

Venue: Sophia University Yotsuya Campus, Building 10, Room 301 (3F)

7-1 Kioicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8554

<https://www.icc-sophia.com/>

Hosts: Dr. Evelyn Reuter (Visiting Scholar, Sophia University)

Dr. David H. Slater (Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Sophia University)

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Kurdish people have neither an own country, nor do they speak the same language variety, nor do they belong to the same religious community. Thus, they can be considered as several ethnic and religious minorities. Nevertheless, they identify as one group what raises the question of a common identity. The Kurds in Japan are mainly from Turkey and Syria. While the first came already in the 1990s due to political and economic reasons, the latter ones arrived mainly as refugees since 2015. The Kurdish community in Japan is politically active and recognizable in the society. Moreover, they are also connected with their families in their homelands and other Kurdish diaspora communities worldwide what influences their self-understanding and activities. However, up to now, little research has been done on this community in Japan.

This two-day workshop has two purposes: On the one hand, it introduces a minority in Japan that is highly diverse in terms of origins, migration (hi)stories and integration into the society. On the other, the workshop gives an overview of Kurdish Studies in Japan bringing researchers from different fields together such as from cultural anthropology, linguistics, or politics. This event aims at presenting various perspectives on Kurdish communities in their homelands and in Japan. The four panels will shed light on the Kurds in general, on migration issues, as well as on linguistic and religious features. The speakers will give presentations on their research projects.

The hosts of this event are Dr. Evelyn Reuter and Dr. David Slater. Evelyn Reuter is a Collaborative Research Fellow at the abovementioned institute investigating ethnic and religious minorities in broad historical and political contexts with an anthropological approach considering social media. David Slater is professor of Cultural Anthropology focusing among others on immigrants and refugees in Japan, political activists, as well as social and new media.

Day 1 (April 8): Kurdish Migrations from the Middle East to Japan (15:00-18:00)

Welcome: David H. SLATER (Sophia University)

Initial Comments: Evelyn REUTER (Sophia University)

1. Historical and Political Backgrounds of Kurds in the Middle East (15:00-16:00)

- a. Dr. Akihiko YAMAGUCHI (Professor, Sophia University): Kurdish Identity and Image in the Premodern Middle East
- b. Dr. Akiko YOSHIOKA (Institute of Energy Economics, Japan): Emigration from Iraqi Kurdistan: What makes Kurds cross borders?

Coffee Break (16:00-16:30)

2. Anthropological Perspectives on Kurdish Migrants in Japan (16:30-18:00)

- a. Vakkas ÇOLAK (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies): Representation of Kurdish Asylum Seekers in Japanese Media
- b. Sohrab AHMADIAN (Tsukuba University): Kurds in Japan: Diasporic Experience and Politics
- c. Dr. Naomi KATAYAMA (Obirin University): Nurturing the Sense of Shared Responsibility in Multicultural Societies: The Case of Supporting Kurds in Saitama

Day 2 (April 9): Language and Religion among Kurds (10:00-12:30)

Welcome: David H. SLATER (Sophia University)

Initial Comments: Evelyn REUTER (Sophia University)

3. Kurdish People and (Their) Language Issues in Japan (10:00-11:00)

- a. Dr. Abdurrahman GÜLBAYAZ (Professor, Nagasaki University): Language and Social Conflict – The Case of Kurdish Migrants in Japan
- b. Dr. Hiwa ASADPOUR (University of Tokyo): Positioning Kurdish Varieties in Japan within the Dialectal Variation of the Greater Kurdistan

Coffee Break (11:00-12:30)

4. Religion among Kurdish People (11:30-12:30)

- a. Abe TATSUYA (Sophia University): Kurdish Sufi Networks: A Case Study on Naqshbandi Order in Kurdistan
- b. Dr. Evelyn REUTER (Sophia University): Neglecting, Converting, Changing – Does Religion Matter for Kurdish Migrant?

List of Speakers

AHMADIAN, Sohrab (Tsukuba University): PhD candidate at the Department of Diaspora Studies

ASADPOUR, Hiwa (University of Tokyo): JSPS International Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Languages and Information Sciences

ÇOLAK, Vakkas (Tokyo University Foreign Studies): Lecturer for Kurdish Language, PhD candidate, Secretary General of the Japan-Kurdish Cultural Association

GÜLBEYAZ, Abdurrahman (Nagasaki University): Professor at School of Global Humanities and Social Sciences

KATAYAMA, Naomi (Obirin University): Part-time Lecturer at Obirin University, Tamagawa University, Seigakuin University and Fuji Women's University

REUTER, Evelyn (Sophia University): Post-doctoral Collaborative Research Fellow at the Institute of Comparative Culture

TATSUYA, Abe (Sophia University): MA student

YAMAGUCHI, Akihiko (Sophia University): Professor at the Department of Global Studies

YOSHIOKA, Akiko (Institute of Energy Economics, Japan): Senior Analyst at the Japanese Institute of Middle Eastern Economies