

Refugees and Migrants in Tokyo: An Oral Narrative Approach 2022

David H. Slater: d-slater@sophia.ac.jp

Participating Members: **Murai Noriko**, **Okada Hanako**

New member: **Megha Wadwa**

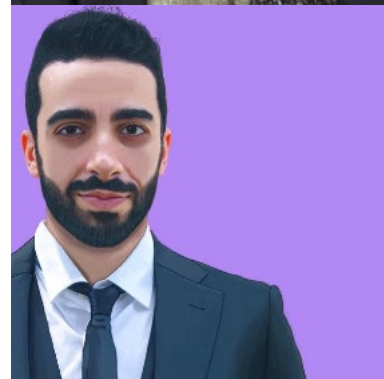
Affiliates: **Tanaka Masako** (Sophia U., Faculty of Global Studies)

Project Statement

This project focuses on the collection, analysis and dissemination of digital video research of the large and growing population of foreign refugee asylum seekers in the Kanto region of Japan.

Summary

In the first year of our 3 year project, we have been quite active in data collection, the dissemination of research results through academic lectures, substantial increases in the work on our website (<https://refugeevoicesjapanet.wordpress.com/>). New this year is our ability to also combines this more traditional work with the photo exhibitions and film showings. This has much widened our audience about issues facing refugee and migrant populations.



2022 Achievements

Lectures:

Slater, David, "Refugees in Japan" Department of Sociology, University of Utah, April 2nd, 2022.

Slater, David, "Refugee Voice as Method." Modern Japanese Studies Program, Hokkaido University, June 8th. 2022.

Slater, David, "Hustle, abuse and making ends meet: Work in Tokyo as a refugee asylum seeker," WIAPS Colloquium, Waseda University, June 22nd, 2022.

Slater, David, "Using Visual Data in Narrative Study," Ritsumeikan University, June 28th, 2022.

Slater, David, "Bait and Switch: Japan refugee policy and practice leading to Ukraine," 學術研究特別推進費, Sophia University, November 18th, 2022

Slater, David, "Refugees Voices" and "Ethnics of Qualitative Work with Vulnerable Populations," Department of Sociology, University of Utah, Feb 9th, 2023.

Workshop

Kurdish Communities in Japan and Beyond (Not open to public)
Sophia University, September 24th, 2022.

- Slater, David H.: Professor for Cultural Anthropology, Sophia University, investigating refugees and immigrants in Japan in general
- Ahmadian Sohrab: PhD candidate at the Department of Diaspora Studies/University of Tsukuba, examining Kurdish diaspora patterns in Japan and their impact on the growth of political issues and identity formation in the context of Japanese society as well as the country of origin.
- Colak, Vakkas: Lecturer for Kurdish Language/Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, doing his PhD on Kurdish identities, and Secretary General of the Japan-Kurdish Cultural Association
- Khalili, Mostafa: JSPS International Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute of Asian, African, Middle Eastern Studies/Sophia University, researching Kurdish nationhood.
- Asadpour, Hiwa: JSPS International Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Languages and Information Sciences/University of Tokyo, focusing on linguistic aspects of Kurds in Japan
- Reuter, Evelyn: post-doctoral visitor scholar at the Institute for Comparative Cultures/Sophia University, analyses changed meaning of religion among Kurds.
- Drott, Edward: Professor for Studies of Religion, Sophia University, investigating religion in Japan.

Film Screening

Supported by Catholic Jesuit Center and Center for Student Affairs
"Artistic Ukraine" film screening on June 29th, 2022.

Screening of 6 short films by Ukrainian Female Directors,

With more than 200 in attendance including the Ambassador of Ukraine, written up in half a dozen newspapers in Tokyo and beyond.

Film Showing

Film maker, Rosa Barbaran; Producer, David Slater; co-hosted by the Sophia University, Catholic Center, "Film: Refge in Religion" (31 minutes) Film showing and discussion on December 5th, 2022.

"Finding their niche: Unheard stories of migrant women."
A film by Megha Wadhwa, November 12th, 2022.

Photo Exhibition

Co-hosted with Catholic Jesuit Center and Center for Student Affairs

Artistic Ukraine Photo Exhibition from June 1st~30th
4 Female photographers of Ukraine exhibited their work in the lobby of bldg. 2 for 4 weeks, written up in 3 different Sophia and media outlets in Japan and beyond.

Photo Exhibition

Photographer, Rosa Barbaran; Producer, David Slater; co-hosted by the Sophia University, Catholic Center, "Home: Interior Lives of Refugee Houses" (a 19-image collection of black and white photos were displayed in the lobby of bldg.2 from December 5th to 16th, 2022.



Data Gathered

Our research project has continued to collect narrative interview data at a much faster rate than we had over the past two years. While covid lockdown was productive in different ways, it also slowed down our progress.

Publications

Slater, David, Ayano Soma, Meg Mallari and Kyi Min Khant, “Students Researchers in Refugee Voices Japan” in *Student Research in and on Japan*” ed. Sebastian Polak-Rottmann, Vienna University

Workshop with Guest Lecturer (October 15th, 2022)

A guest lecture by Prof. Julia Cassaniti on “Burning Stories: The Displacement of People, Spirits, and Blame in Southeast Asia’s Haze Crisis,” (October 14th, 2022) followed by a closed workshop on oral narrative collection among vulnerable population. The workshop with Julia Cassaniti was designed to focus on methodology, the ways that we incorporate narrative into our ethnographic research. For many years, it has been assumed that the study of narrative falls within oral history or interview study. There has often been difficulties to full take account of this sort of datai with the larger ethnographic and/or participant observation study. Dr. Cassaniti has been a pioneer in this sort of “mixed-methods” so we are able to listen to her own methodology through different case studies, leading to a discussion. Discussion included topics such as ethics in oral narrative method and the role of religious practitioners in setting the narrative framework for understanding injustices. Participants included research unit members and other experts in the field.

Launching a pilot website: [URBAN ETHOGRAPHY \(Pilot Project: Migrant Shinjuku\)](#)

Drawing on research methodologies and output formats from last year’s project that created the Refugee Voices website, we set out to launch a new website as a pilot. For this new website, we have chosen Shinjuku, which is a place where diverse people gather in Tokyo, as a single community for research. The website is one of the very few that shows the role of migrants in Tokyo urban spaces. We needed to move the site from its first iteration in Notion to a more flexible platform on Wix. This required some editing of textual content but mostly reformatting of visual and archival materials, a new design and layout for Wix, and checking of all of the links, etc.

