

# Geophysical Gifts and Dangers in Japan: Toward an Anthropology of the Earth

**Emily Sekine**

**November 24th, 2015 18:30-20:00, L-912, 9F Library Building, Sophia University**



Today, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions tend to be regarded as threats to be constantly managed and controlled, through a combination of scientific observation, education, outreach, and bureaucratic and technical solutions. While the prioritization of public safety is understandable, particularly in a country as disaster-prone as Japan, this approach to geophysical processes does not reflect the full range of practices and knowledge traditions that people draw upon – and have drawn upon historically – in order to understand, approach, and respond to the earth’s liveliness. In this informal workshop, the speaker will share some ethnographic findings from her ongoing dissertation fieldwork research, conducted primarily on the Izu Peninsula. The talk and discussion will center on the increasingly popular concept of “geoparks,” as spaces where people are deliberately considering tectonic and volcanic processes not only in terms of potential or past disasters, but in relation to the concomitant dangers and pleasures of living in an active area. The approach here is to move beyond disaster-centered narratives, in order to better understand our continually evolving relationships with a dynamic and unpredictable earth, whose ongoing processes shape daily life in ways big and small.

Emily Sekine is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Anthropology at The New School in New York City. She is currently finishing up her dissertation fieldwork on human-nature relations in Japan, and was recently a Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Comparative Culture at Sophia University. Her dissertation research has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation.

[No prior registration required/ Lecture in English](#)

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