

Comparative Asian Research Network
Monthly Lecture Series on Issues and Research in the Asian Region
Organized by the Department of Japanese Studies, CUHK

All are Welcome!!

**“Dissolving Pearls: The Japanese
Community in Hong Kong”**

Speaker: Dr. Reijiro Aoyama

**Lecturer , Division of Languages and Communication
City University of Hong Kong**

Date: 28 November 2012 (Wednesday)

Time: 12:30 -13:15

Venue: Rm 308, Lee Shau Kee Building

Language: English

In 2006 the size of the Japanese community in Hong Kong reached a peak and has since seen its concentration diluted and its boundaries loosened, with many Japanese companies hiring more Hong Kong locals and expanding their businesses to mainland China.

Previous research has drawn attention to the isolation of the Japanese community in Hong Kong, emphasizing the functional value of their presence here, and explaining the primary reasons for Japanese immigration to Hong Kong. Predominately male expatriates (*chūzaiin*) were sent by their companies, and had a greater interest in maintaining the social conventions of Japanese life rather than assimilating into local culture. Local Japanese hires (*genchi-saiyō*), the majority of whom were women, found Hong Kong to be a “second-best option” among English-speaking workplaces, because of its perceived career and language opportunity (Sakai 2003). Regardless of the disparity in motivations, it was noted that neither group identified Hong Kong for its potential for cultural enrichment.

However, my research found that among Japanese nationals in Hong Kong, there was a significantly pronounced interest in local culture. Since the early 2000s Japanese nationals have come to Hong Kong not only to take advantage of assumed Chinese economic growth but also to search for alternative values and a fulfilling life outside Japan. Many expatriates sent by Japanese companies willingly chose to come. Local Japanese hires either have the ability to speak, or the will to learn Cantonese or Mandarin. Japanese nationals have also started living outside Japanese communities and have close relationships with Hong Kong locals or other international expatriates.

The findings suggest that, like Hong Kong’s steady integration into China, the Japanese community in Hong Kong is also undergoing a process of dissolution, with the local Hong Kong culture increasingly infiltrating the once closely knit Japanese community within the city.

No registration necessary.

Enquiries: Prof. Stephen R Nagy

Email: nagystephen@cuhk.edu.hk