



Comparative Asian Research Network

Monthly Lecture Series on Issues and Research in the Asian Region

Organized by the Department of Japanese Studies, CUHK

Commodifying Japanese Values in a Global Market: The Case of Hong Kong

Mr. Reijiro AOYAMA

Lecturer, Community College of City University of Hong Kong



Date: 12 November, 2013 (Tuesday)

Time: 19:00 – 20:00

**Venue: Rm 403, Yasumoto International
Academic Park, CUHK**

Language: English

All are Welcome!!

Abstract:

Owing to a complex set of factors including economic stagnation in Japan, frustration with cultural norms, and rejection of the established course of life, a new group of Japanese service professionals: chefs, bartenders, artists, designers, teachers has made their way into Hong Kong.

Young expert workers are often driven to Hong Kong after honing their skills for years in apprenticeships in Japan where they gradually grow frustrated with the extremely hierarchical system dominated by senior masters and the perceived lack of playing field for themselves. Once in Hong Kong, however, they rediscover the value of skills and standards learned in Japan and make an effort to capitalize on it. Their offerings are carefully designed to exemplify the Japanese spirit of craftsmanship and professional ethics.

Chefs cook in front of shop patrons as a traditional way of demonstrating their skills and pride in the ingredients. Bartenders pay extreme attention to creating an atmosphere of sophistication. Hairdressers offer excellent shampooing and massage embodying Japanese dedication to the customer. Language teachers place great emphasis on teaching manners and politeness. Many of them regard themselves as 'cultural missionaries' which inadvertently fits them right in with the 'cool Japan' campaign, a Japanese government's initiative of promoting Japanese culture. In their narratives tensions are found between authentic/localized, commitment to tradition/actualizing creative selves, and commodification/Japanese values.

Speaker Biography:

Reijiro Aoyama is a lecturer at the Community College of City University of Hong Kong. He taught at Tsinghua University and Fudan University in China. His interests include lifestyle migration and language education.

No registration necessary.

Enquiries: Prof. Stephen R. Nagy Email: nagystephen@cuhk.edu.hk