

## **Cultural Flows Conference**

**Dr. Naomi Tsunematsu**

### **Abstract**

Title:

#### **Flow of Power and Identity: Western-trained Japanese Feminist and Australian Female Academician Meet Local Community Power Actors in Japan**

In this paper I analyze the discussion meeting between community power actors in a local community in Japan and Western-trained Japanese Feminist and Australian Female academician on the topic of gender identity and power. This discussion meeting was held when I conducted my fieldwork for my Ph.D. research in my hometown and brought my Australian supervisor to the town.

The discussion revealed the difference between the way local actors had perceived the role divisions and power relations between the sexes according to the 'tradition' they claim, and the way these issues have been examined in the global feminist debate. I, who grew up in the community, and have had Western academic training, critically examine the way local actors are misled in their understanding of recent feminism issues as influence of 'West'. I present the gap between the historical reality of Japanese women and the way local actors have perceived the transition of Japanese women as a result of Western influence.

For example, the local power actors tended to show their pride in what they call 'traditional' gender role divisions and argued that it is a Japanese culture which needs to be maintained. Further, they argued that recent tendency of women's challenge in work in public sphere is as a result of Western influence, and Japanese are losing its value. The local actors totally lack the awareness that their belief is contrary to the fact that Japanese women's role has been very different depending on the historical time and class. The way conservative community power actors perceived the cultural influence of the West, and the way they have been trying to preserve what they call 'Japanese culture' is an intriguing issue to examine since their beliefs have been working as a controlling force to form gender behavior in a local community.