

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES

PhD Proposal Presentation

Nourished by stories:
Indigenous identity and food in the Amami Archipelago

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My doctoral research is a community-based ethnographic project to document and clarify aspects of Indigenous ontologies of the Amami peoples of Japan by focusing on their changing foodways. My project explores Elders' reflections and stories about food as a way of understanding their worldview and the lingering impacts of being colonized and disenfranchised during both Asian and Western empire-building processes. These changes are contextualized within and against theories of empire and social theory, drawing on the concepts of Indigenous food sovereignty, dispossession and meta-dispossession, slow violence, and decolonization. Amami food systems were changed, particularly with the introduction of capitalist food markets on the island after WWII. Elders identified several areas of research for me during a period of consultation in 2025, which I have formulated as the following questions:

- What is the history of food systems on the Amami Archipelago? In what ways have interactions between the people, the landscape, and power structures influenced the current practices of Indigenous foodways and Amami identity?
- How was *Shimanchu* worldview and identity, found in oral stories that were passed down by older generations about traditional foodways, transformed in response to capitalist and colonialist incursions?
- What remains, and what can *Shimanchu* reclaim and/or preserve?

This project aims to not only document Elders' insights and stories through "walking interviews" and group discussions, typically communicated in oral form, but to produce new understandings about their struggle to maintain traditional foodways and worldviews.

Friday, October 24th, 2025

2:30 p.m., McCain #1116

All Welcome!