

La soutenance de mémoire de Master en sciences sociales  
- *pilier migration et citoyenneté* - de

Madame Charlotte Frey

**“En Okinawa me siento más peruana y cuando voy al Perú  
me siento japonesa”**

*A qualitative research on everyday experiences of belonging  
of Nikkeijin living in Okinawa, Japan*

aura lieu – en anglais - le

**3 septembre 2020 à 10h00**

Bâtiment MAPS, A.-L. Breguet 1, salle -010 (rez inférieur)

Directrice de mémoire : Prof. Christin Achermann

Expert : Dr Damian Rosset

Since 1990, a change in the Japanese immigration law allows Nikkeijin – people of Japanese descent – to live and work in Japan on the basis of their blood descent. Policy makers assumed that Nikkeijin would easily integrate into Japanese society due to their Japanese ancestry. But many Nikkeijin found themselves alienated from Japanese society after their arrival.

This master's thesis focuses on everyday experiences of belonging of Nikkeijin living in Okinawa, the southernmost prefecture of Japan. During a two-and-a-half-month-long research stay in Okinawa in the summer of 2019, ten qualitative interviews were conducted on this topic. Based on the theoretical concepts of *belonging* and *boundary-making*, the interviews were analysed.

The empirical analysis has shown that Okinawa is perceived as a distinct place in Japan. First, Nikkeijin draw a clear boundary between Okinawa and the mainland of Japan, whereby Okinawa is valued as positive with regard to the quality of life, for instance. Second, these perceived and experienced differences are also reflected in a strong sense of belonging to and strong identifications with Okinawa. Further, belonging is not experienced as a stable condition, but rather as a process, which is situational and also changes over the course of life. Ultimately, Nikkeijin also make various experiences of non-belonging. These mainly include the physical appearance, linguistic aspects and non-Japanese names.