

## Guest Lecturer: Naomi Nishi

### *Title*

"Islamic education and sense of belonging in the Deep South of Thailand "

### *Short Bio*

Dr. Nishi is an Assistant of the Organization for Research Initiatives and Development at the Faculty of Global and Regional Studies of Doshisha University, Kyoto. She specializes in area studies of Thailand and Islamic education.

### *Session*

Dr. Nishi gave a lecture on the topic of Islamic education and sense of belonging in the Deep South of Thailand and described her journey as a PhD student in Global Society Studies. She provided background information on the Deep South of Thailand and showed how her first field trips to India and Thailand shaped her research interest and initial research question. She highlighted differences between interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, shared her challenges at attempting interdisciplinary research at early stages and her current realization that neither multi- nor interdisciplinary research is possible before one acquires one discipline.

Although common understanding among researchers is that Thaksin administration's (2001-2006) heavy-handed policies caused escalation of the conflict, Dr. Nishi found she couldn't completely agree with that, and her research question evolved from that. She saw over-presence of the military in the region as one of the factors contributing to the escalation and looked for reasons in Thai political culture. She later found Islamic education as a connecting point and focused on how it is seen by the government (as a threat or a cause of separatism) and by local Muslims (sense of identity and belonging). She highlighted the tensions between "sai mai" (reformists) and "sai kao"

(traditionalists) religious groups in Thailand and differences in their attitude to Islamic education. She also gave examples of types of Islamic educational institutions with photographs done in course of her fieldwork and useful tips for conducting successful fieldwork.

Dr. Nishi's lecture was followed by a lively discussion with the participants mentioning topics of Arabization of Thailand, perception of the monarchy by Muslim activists, comparing situation in Thailand and Indonesia where Muslims are majority and highlighting importance of language studies for successful fieldwork.

By Ivanova Polina (立命館大学大学院国際関係研究科博士後期課程)