Biographic note

Dominik Schieder studied Ethnology (Social and Cultural Anthropology), Sociology and Religious Studies at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, where he earned his Magister Artium (M.A.) in March 2006. Since October 2006, Dominik has been a member of the International Ph.D. programme “Cultural Encounters” and doctoral candidate in Ethnology at the same university. Between 2006 and 2010 he was also a member of the Elite Network of Bavaria. For his doctoral dissertation Dominik conducted field and archival research in Fiji, Australia and the United Kingdom. In 2007 and 2008 he was affiliated with the Department of Sociology at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji. In July 2010 Dominik successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on the coup culture of Fiji (magna cum laude). Dominik’s research interests include ethnic identity & ethno-nationalism, peace & conflict studies, transnational migration & diaspora, urban anthropology, the anthropology of sports and Pacific history. His regional interests include Oceania, South Asia and Eastern Europe. Dominik currently prepares a postdoctoral research project on Indian migrants in the Fiji Islands. Early in 2010 he visited the National Archives of India in Delhi for this purpose.

Research statement

During the last two decades, the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural state of Fiji has witnessed three military coups and one civilian takeover, as well as several constitutional crises and military mutinies. As a result of these events, it has become common among scholars and laymen alike to talk about the existence of a coup culture in the Fiji Islands. The main focus of my research is on the forces and factors which constitute and shape Fiji’s coup culture because they embody the ideas and values and, in a broader sense, the cultural aspects that lie at the very heart of Fiji’s political instability. I discuss the complex interplay of inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic and class divisions that serve as ideological frameworks for the political rhetoric and strategies of Fiji’s coup protagonists. Unlike popular descriptions of Fiji as a deeply divided plural society with inter-ethnic divisions and frictions as prime movers of the coups d’état, I argue that it is misleading to regard Fiji’s political instability as a result of racial and ethnic discourses only. Existing inter-ethnic differences are contextually brought forward by Fiji’s coup protagonists in order to blur other significant elements and forces such as intra-ethnic Fijian and class divisions. My doctoral dissertation offers a social actor focused explanation of the complexities and contradictions which represent an integral part of Fiji’s coup culture. On the one hand, these complexities and contradictions can lead to identity crises or role conflicts of Fiji’s coup protagonists. On the other hand, it is exactly the complexity of the existing socio-cultural and political systems that provide the coup protagonists with numerous, occasionally innovative political strategies and justificatory grounds for their political rhetoric and actions.