

Japan and the World

Newsletter



Greetings from the Chair

Dear Alumni, Alumnae and Supporters of Japanese Studies at Cambridge,

In the February newsletter greeting, I started off by saying that “it would be an understatement to say that 2020 seems uncertain to many of us”. Well, little did I know how very uncertain it would become, and never have I made such dire predictions and found myself to be so right and yet not nearly right enough. But, rather than dwelling more on the pandemic, which has of course affected all of us, as well as those of you reading this newsletter, I should like to focus on positive news in an effort to lift our collective spirits. First, allow me to think back to four years ago, when we began fundraising for and promoting our postgraduate programme. We have been very fortunate in having a great deal of success in this area, in part thanks to generous donors who have stepped in to offer support to Japanese scholars of the future. But to a large extent, the success is also, and mainly, due to the superb cohorts of students who chose to come here. Cambridge has always had success with its PhD students, but what has been new to us is the number of talented students entering every year. The first “large” cohort is now in Japan, two of them fully funded by Japan Foundation scholarships, but this year, they really blew the roof off the building. We currently have four graduate students in their second year all looking to go to Japan in the fall (or whenever it becomes possible), and low and behold, all four of them have been awarded Japan Foundation fellowships for next year! That’s 4 for 4, people, a perfect 1,000 batting average to use baseball lingo! You can get a sense of what they are working on in the newsletter, but please do join us in congratulating them. We’re also delighted to congratulate Dr Shirota Nanase for passing her viva, and thus earning her PhD.

Not to be outdone, our graduating cohort of undergraduate students have been equally impressive. You will read in this newsletter about their plans after graduation, ranging from continuing on to postgraduate studies to one of them landing a job at SEGA’s Tokyo office! I would be remiss if I did not also congratulate Tessa Rizzoli for winning the very prestigious Japan Foundation Japanese Speech contest. If you have time, I would urge you to go to the link in this newsletter and listen to the speech. I should also like to thank Tessa for her wonderful help with creating a number of YouTube videos of what it is like studying Japanese at Cambridge in 2019-20. A link is available below, and I would like to encourage our alumni and alumnae to perhaps take a trip down memory lane, or perhaps be astonished at how much may have changed. Congratulations to all of our graduates. It is very, very unfortunate that we are not able to celebrate your graduation in a proper way this year, but we are hoping that this will give you an excuse to come back and visit us soon.

Besides seeing our students being so successful, it is also a great pleasure for us to see reports from our former students. In this newsletter you will learn about Nikolay Murashkin’s experiences in Japan as he embarks on a research fellowship, and a recent article in the Mainichi Economist includes an article about alumnus Sven Paly’s company in Japan. As we are always eager to hear from you, please stay in touch with us, share the newsletter with alumni/ae who may not have received it and encourage them to let us know what they are up to.

Our faculty has been busy as always. Dr John Nilsson-Wright hosted the sixth annual Cambridge-Hitotsubashi joint seminar in February. The format has evolved over the years, and students from the two universities this year worked on concrete policy questions for months before the seminar and there are plans to publish the results online. This is something entirely new in terms of collaborative teaching between two universities, which we hope to continue. Dr Laura Moretti unfortunately had to cancel her by now famous Summer School in Japanese Early Modern Palaeography, but true to form she immediately found a replacement project, which will engage machine translation and scholars to translate early modern text dealing with pandemics! Prof Barak Kushner, who has been on leave this academic year, published another edited volume, this one together with one of his former postdocs. Dr Vicky Young has also been active and we expect to see a fascinating article in *Japan Forum* in the near future, while Dr Brigitte Steger will be celebrating the launch of *Beyond Kawaii*, the third edited book in the series on popular culture and gender that she has spearheaded together with our current and former students.

This greeting will likely be the last one I will be writing, at least for a while. When Prof Kushner returns, he will take over as Chair of Japanese Studies for the next three years, and I look forward to seeing him continue to move us forward and up. I should therefore like to take this opportunity to thank our editor-in-chief Freddie Semple for all his work on our newsletters. He has designed, proofread and put them all together since we started in July of 2017. In fact, this is our 10th newsletter. By way of saying *sayonara* then, I am taking the liberty of sharing a reflection piece that I wrote for my College some weeks back. It gave me an opportunity to not just reflect on the pandemic, but also add a Japanese and historical perspective to it. It can be found here: <https://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/news/cherry-blossoms-impermanence-and-pandemics/>.

It has been my pleasure to write these greetings, and especially to get to know what our partners and alumni/ae are up to. We hope that you will continue to read and enjoy our newsletters and stay in touch. We need you now more than ever, as we are facing tougher times, and should you have the ability and desire to support us and our future students, please get in touch.

Enjoy the newsletter.

Mickey Adolphson
Keidanren Professor and Chair
Japanese Studies
University of Cambridge

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June 2020

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Dr Laura Moretti introduces her new transcription project involving the use of AI technology

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5. Alum-news

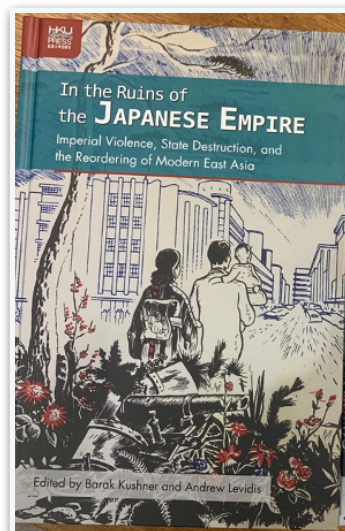
We hear from former PhD student Dr Nikolay Murashkin about working in Japan's International Cooperation Agency



Barak Kushner and Andrew Levidis publish new book

In the Ruins of the Japanese Empire: Imperial Violence, State Destruction, and the Reordering of Modern East Asia (Barak Kushner and Andrew Levidis, eds.) published in February 2020 is the third and final work to come out of Professor Kushner's 6-year ERC grant on the dissolution of the Japanese Empire.

The new volume, published by HKU Press "follows these processes as imperial violence reordered demographics and borders, and involved massive political, economic, and social dislocation as well as stubborn continuities. From the hunt for "traitors" in Korea and China to the brutal suppression of the Taiwanese by the Chinese Nationalist government in the long-forgotten February 28 Incident..."



For more information please go to: <https://hkupress.hku.hk/pro/1764.php>

Laura Moretti awarded Stockholm-Cambridge Collaborative Research Grant

Dr Laura Moretti has been awarded a grant for the project "Invitations to Playful Reading: towards a new Paradigm for the Study of Graphic Fiction from Early Modern to Contemporary Japan" through the Stockholm-Cambridge Collaborative Research Grants Scheme.

This research project is developed in collaboration with Prof Jaqueline Berndt and seeks to challenge our received understanding of literature by exploring the participatory and performative nature of texts. Focussing on early modern picture-books and late modern graphic narratives manga, ultimately the project aims at articulating a new critical paradigm to approach entertaining illustrated prose from before and after the heyday of modernism.

The project will engage students and colleagues both in Stockholm and in Cambridge.

Stay tuned for more news!

KJ Chen publishes article in Cold War History

Dr Kuan-Jen Chen, post-doctoral researcher in FAMES, published his article "Projecting Poseidon's Trident: America's East Asia and the Shifting Contours of 1950s Postwar Naval Policy" in Cold War History (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14682745.2020.1752676>).

Drawing on unpublished official documents from the US and Taiwan, Chen's article argues that the crises in the western Pacific, particularly the Korean War and the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, led the Truman administration to alter its perception of maritime space. The US accordingly shaped international waters as a link tying Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan together by projecting its military influence. The western Pacific, for Washington, became the most strategically valued area, which was the frontier of the Cold War with the Soviet Union and its Chinese comrades.

Carmen Blacker and Brandon Ginsberg Dissertation Prizes

It gives us great pleasure to announce that this year both the Brandon Ginsberg Japanese Studies Undergraduate Dissertation Prize, and the Carmen Blacker Prize will be awarded to Tessa Rizzoli for her dissertation "Spilling the Pomegranate Seeds" which focusses on Edo period picture-books set in public baths.

[Tessa has very kindly agreed to make her dissertation available to read here](#)

Tessa Rizzoli wins Japanese speech contest

Final year Japanese Studies student Tessa Rizzoli has been awarded first place in the Japan Foundation Japanese Speech contest for undergraduates for her speech: Mottainai and Kintsugi- The Golden Answers to a Sustainable Present.

For a summary of the speech in English, and a link to a recording on YouTube please visit the FAMES news page here: <https://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/news/tessa-rizzoli-wins-first-place-japanese-speech-contest>



Japanese Studies graduate students' funding successes

We are very pleased to announce that the Japan Foundation has awarded funding to four of our Japanese Studies postgraduate students this year. Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Fellowships are awarded to outstanding graduate students to conduct research in Japan, with the aim of supporting them and promoting Japanese Studies overseas.

This years recipients are:

Giulia Garbagni

Research title: Tokyo's Envoy Diplomacy in the Early Postwar Period'

Mina Marković

Research title: Examining National Wealth in the Imperial Japan: the Importance of Statistics.

Colton Runyan

Research title: The Power of a Tourney: Physical Competitions in the Heian Court

Polina Serebriakova

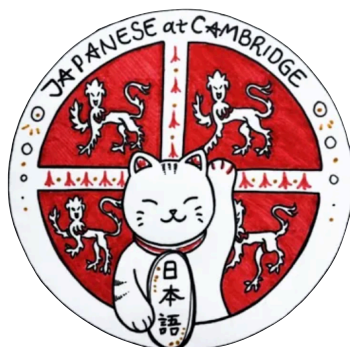
Research title: Sources of legitimacy for warrior leaders as seen through the lens of Japanese medieval ritual.

We would also like to offer further congratulations to Giulia, who has recently been awarded HRC International Placement Scheme for a 4 months fellowship at the Library of Congress in the US., and to final year PhD student, **Elena Follador**, who was recently awarded the British Association of Japanese Studies' John Crump Studentship.

Japanese at Cambridge YouTube channel

The Japanese at Cambridge YouTube channel is now active and features videos on a variety of topics relating to Japanese Studies at Cambridge. These include student accommodation videos, snapshots of classes, interviews with students, and much more. Please take a look at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyTr203msZNJ6EPu92u5WPw>

We would like to say a huge thanks final year student Tessa Rizzoli, for the extraordinary amount of work she has done filming and editing, and to all the students and staff who have given their time to produce these videos.



Farewell to our graduating students

It is with sadness that we bid farewell to this year's graduating students, a bright and engaging group, whose future careers we will follow with great interest. Before they graduate we caught up with them to ask what's next:

Melissa Holt

Melissa plans to go on to further study and will be starting a masters in linguistics and Korean.

Norman Luk

"With regards to my plans after Cambridge, I will be pursuing a postgraduate law degree in the University of Hong Kong, and hopefully be able to qualify as a lawyer one day."



Mercedes McCambridge

"I plan to move to Japan as I am starting work at SEGA's Tokyo world headquarters within their PR department. I will be working in a completely Japanese-speaking environment which is so exciting and is the perfect chance to utilise the Japanese skills I have gained while at FAMES."



Tessa Rizzoli

"Sustainable travelling, discover my passions, write and publish, hone my Japanese, make documentaries, interview people, start my own company in Japan: these are some of the things that I would like to do after graduating."



Good luck to all of you, and we look forward to hearing from you in the future!



Student joins Kyushu Tea producer for internship

Earlier this year third-year student Mary joined Kyushu based tea producer, [Takahashi Seicha](#), for a three week internship. Takahashi Seicha are one of our newest Japan and the World internship partners. Below we feature a report from Mary about her experiences.

"I applied for and took part in an internship for Takahashi Tea this March, during my year abroad. Spring holidays in Japan generally run from late January/early February to the start of April, making it a great time to do an internship during the break from university study.



It's a small company, with about 10 employees, so it was a welcoming environment to work in. As an intern, I did a number of different activities during my time at the company- including translation, reports for the Facebook page, working on the farm and learning all about different types of tea and production methods in order to spread awareness of the business. In addition to that, I also got a chance to see how the company works in the community and in a business sense, attending community meetings and conferences.

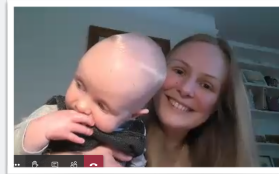
The company itself is located near Usuki, in the Kyushu countryside. During my internship, I did a homestay at the CEO's house, which is located right next to the office, factory and tea fields. The family were extremely kind and took me for various experiences- including flower arranging, a rickshaw tour, to a safari park and to a sushi restaurant. Usuki is quite a small area with relatively few visitors from abroad, which means my arrival made more of a stir than I was anticipating- photos of me visiting appeared on the local Stone Buddhas attraction website, a sake brewery website, a local pottery company Instagram, in a newspaper and on Takahashi Tea's Facebook page. Overall spending just over three weeks in a small community where everyone seems to know each other has been a very different experience from living in student dormitories in Tokyo- I certainly feel less anonymous! It was also a great chance to practice Japanese. Doing a homestay and working for a company means I've had a lot more exposure to the language than I usually get in the Hitotsubashi University international dorms. I've learnt a lot during my time here and had experiences I would not have been able to easily find elsewhere."

Graduate scriptorium moves online

It was a pleasure to drop in on last week's virtual graduate scriptorium, hosted via Microsoft Teams by PhD candidate and scriptorium organiser Ria Roy.



The graduate scriptorium meetings are intended as a structured space for MPhil and PhD students to work through texts related to their research. As many of you will know research can often be a very solitary activity, now more so than ever with many of our students confined to their own rooms. However, the 90 minute reading 10 minute break format of the scriptorium allows the students to combine reading with much needed opportunities to chat and discuss their work with their peers.



The scriptorium group also welcomed a new member this time: Polina's son, Viktor (by all accounts a very promising young researcher!).

We are, as ever, very proud of the collegiate atmosphere amongst our Japanese and Korean Studies graduate students, of the support they provide for one another, and the excellent research they produce.



Cambridge - Hitotsubashi joint seminar



Sixth annual Cambridge - Hitotsubashi joint seminar

On 14 February 2020, FAMES' Japanese Studies Section had the pleasure of hosting the 6th annual Cambridge-Hitotsubashi joint seminar, welcoming a student delegation from Hitotsubashi University. The seminar marked the culmination of more than a term of work and research on UK-Japan cooperation across the two universities. The project involved, on the Cambridge side, the students of the EAS2 'The Cold War and Its Aftermath in East Asia' class (supervised by Dr Nilsson-Wright and coordinated by PhD student Giulia Garbagni), and on the Hitotsubashi side the students of the Global Governance course (taught by Professor Akiyama Nobumasa and coordinated by his teaching assistant Yuki Fujii, of Hitotsubashi's Graduate School of Law).

Both teams, which included undergraduate and graduate students, engaged in the ambitious task of producing a policy brief aimed at analyzing four pressing questions affecting UK-Japan relations: the rise of great power competition (with a particular focus on China and Russia); the (in)compatibility of new regional frameworks of cooperation in Asia such as China's Belt and Road Initiative and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific; the scope for enhanced security cooperation between London and Tokyo; and – last but not least – the issue of how to deal with North Korea as a nuclear state.

During Michaelmas term, Cambridge and Hitotsubashi students worked in thematic subgroups to produce two 40-page long reports in which they not only outlined their analysis of these issues, but also advanced a series of policy recommendations to the British and Japanese government on how to best address them. After a process of exchange and adjustment with each group giving feedback on the other's report, in the joint seminar the two teams gave a final overview of their policy briefs. In their 30 minute presentations, the students proposed bold and thought-provoking arguments: some called for enhanced security cooperation between the UK and Japan, others argued in favour of relaxing the current sanctions regime on North Korea, and others presented historical evidence to show the potential of the UK-Japan partnership.



In the second part of the seminar, the students split into smaller groups and discussed their approaches to each question, trying to identify ways to harmonize the Cambridge and Hitotsubashi positions – which, being based on the different standpoints of the UK and Japan, inevitably diverged at times. The two teams could not reach an agreement on all questions (the North Korean nuclear threat and the rise of China being two particularly contentious issues), but all participants greatly appreciated the chance to hear different perspectives and ideas on the topics they had worked on over the previous months. Overall, the policy brief project provided students on both sides a great opportunity to experience the challenges of drafting concrete policy recommendations, while the joint seminar allowed them to discuss them and exchange ideas in person, in a friendly and informal atmosphere.

Giulia Garbagni



Transcription project

Tackling Pandemics in Early Modern Japan



In light of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis and the many uncertainties surrounding international travel for the months to come, the [Seventh Summer School in Japanese Early Modern Palaeography](#) has been postponed to August 2021. It was by no means an easy decision, but our priority is the safety and wellbeing of all the participants.

Despite this decision, we intend to continue our sustained efforts to foster engagement with early modern sources by launching the transcription project titled **"Tackling Pandemics in Early Modern Japan"**.

Organized in collaboration with Prof Hashimoto Yuta (National Museum of Japanese History) and using the Artificial Intelligence platform *Minna de honkoku* みんなで翻刻, the project aims at transcribing a large number of early modern books and ephemera dealing with smallpox, cholera, and measles. The transcriptions will be disseminated publicly once the project is concluded and the hope is that they will inspire more research on pandemics in early modern Japan.

For more information [visit the Wakan Cambridge webpage](#).

The project runs from 1 June to 31 October 2020, using the [dedicated website](#) created by Prof Hashimoto.

We would like to thank the generosity of our sponsor, Jonathan Hill Bookseller.

Why this project now?

As the current Covid-19 pandemic has shown, human beings are confronted with devastating pandemics. This is true throughout the centuries. Reading about how people dealt with the horror and trauma caused by pandemics in the past can help finding ways to tackle similar challenges in the 21st century. The burgeoning printing industry of early modern Japan gave life to an impressive amount of books and ephemera that talk about different epidemics, including measles, smallpox and cholera. Yet, most of these materials are not available in transcription and are therefore accessible only to a few specialists who can read the Japanese early modern cursive hand.

This project trains a young generation of scholars to decode, read, and analyse such materials. It also makes resources in transcription available to students and scholars who have no training in palaeography.

Exploring the potential of artificial intelligence

Thanks to the collaboration with Prof Hashimoto Yuta, the project will reflect critically on the use of artificial intelligence as a tool to assist in the study of palaeographic skills needed to read Japanese early modern materials. At the same time, the data created by the project will be employed to further enhance the effectiveness of artificial intelligence.

Informing our undergraduate and graduate teaching

Some of the materials transcribed as part of the project will be used to teach classical Japanese to our final-year BA students and MPhil students (paper J14, Advanced Classical Japanese). In Michaelmas Term the students will be asked to translate selected materials and to write on the importance of these texts within their context and beyond.



Beyond Kawaii

Studying Japanese Femininities at Cambridge



We are proud to announce the publication of our third collection of groundbreaking essays written by recent graduates of Japanese Studies at the University of Cambridge. Encouraged by the success of our two earlier books, *Manga Girl Seeks Herbivore Boy: Studying Japanese Gender at Cambridge*, published in 2013, and *Cool Japanese Men: Studying New Masculinities at Cambridge*, published in December 2017, we are continuing our exploration of gender issues in contemporary Japanese society by focusing on women's lives and their identities in the twenty-first century.

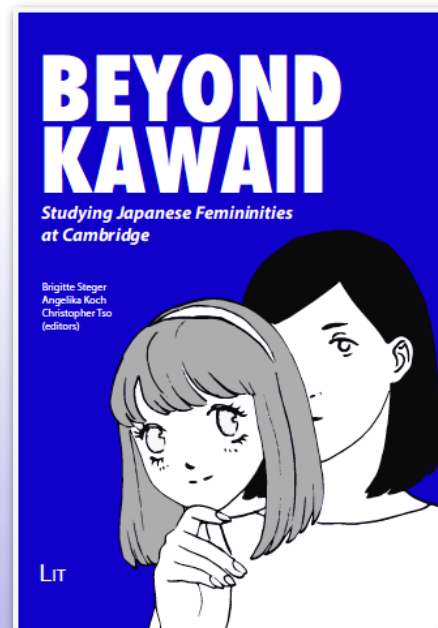
[Join us for the book launch on 30 June 2020, 5pm](#)

Ellen Mann: 'A Woman's Happiness is Decided by Her Uterus'

In recent years, alternative healing and pop-spirituality have been in vogue in the US and UK – think *Eat Pray Love*, horoscopes, luxurious 'ayurveda' shower gels. It was literally in *Vogue* – *Vogue Japan* – that I learned that these trends were also proliferating in my region of study. Flicking through I noticed a picture of a rose quartz facial massage stone which, the caption read, 'might confer spiritual (*supirichuaru*) power'. In my chapter, I use Japanese women's magazines and blogs to analyse the discourses surrounding New Age body care, specifically practices and products associated with uterus and vaginal health. I argue that although this 'new spiritual' media appropriates a feminist rhetoric of self-love and empowerment, it simultaneously reinforces notions of women's bodies as inherently polluting and reduces a woman's worth to her reproductive health.

Anna Ellis-Rees: 'Soft, Round and Squishy'

The pressure to lose weight in Japan is hard to miss. From rows of dieting products in cosmetics stores to the common sight of 'one size fits all' clothing in Kyoto's shopping district, I quickly bought into the image of Japan as a nation where to be thin is to fit in. To my surprise, about a month into my research on the commercialisation of the slim female body in Japanese dieting advertisements, I stumbled upon something unexpected: a music video from a pop idol girl group called Chubbiness. I had discovered Japan's body positivity movement, led by a number of idol groups who strive to spread messages of self-love and self-acceptance. And yet upon closer inspection, the representations of larger female bodies in this 'fat positive' media did not seem so different from the more 'fat negative' dieting commercials that I had been investigating. In 'Soft, Round and Squishy' I build on this observation, arguing that both types of media encourage aesthetic competition and judgment amongst women, reinforcing the patriarchal structures around which the slim female norm is built.



Tianyi Vespera Xie: 'Haha ni naru'

I cannot recall how many times I have heard the phrase 'work and family simply cannot be balanced (*shigoto to katei wa ryōritsu dekinai*)' in both Japanese and western contexts. It is always said in relation to women, revealing a common-sense assumption that they must prioritise their children once they become mothers. As more women are reluctant to have children, pregnancy and parenting magazines often feature inspiring stories about women who combine motherhood and career successfully. Through a close reading of such magazines, I show the emergence of a new '*mama* identity' according to which mothers can discover happiness through childrearing while also enjoying a fulfilling career through entrepreneurial forms of work. This discourse also manifests through the body with women encouraged to continue to enjoy fashion but to move beyond the kawaii image of their youth to a more sophisticated *kireime* ('pretty') style that matches their mature adult status as mothers. I suggest that the high standards required of a successful *mama* in Japan today may ironically be adding to the perceived burden of motherhood and thus contributing to women's decisions to postpone marriage and childbirth.

Alex Russell: 'Becoming Mayu'

Ambitious to practise reading Japanese as I arrived at Doshisha University for my year abroad, I purchased a one-yen copy of Kanehara Hitomi's *Trip Trap* (2009) off the internet, having thoroughly enjoyed her Akutagawa-award-winning *Snakes and Earrings*. However, the book languished unread on the shelf of my dormitory room, gathering dust. When I finally did start reading it, I was fascinated by the six short stories that comprised the collection, depicting the tribulations of six distinct characters called Mayu as they negotiate the relationships with the men in their lives. The characters are at different life stages; alienated teenagers, unhappy wives, and exhausted mothers, all united in their frustrations at the inequalities they face as women and social expectations that tie them to their male partners domesticity. In my chapter, I explore how Kanehara constructs a central 'female process' of transformation guiding them from youth, via marriage, towards motherhood. In doing so, she demonstrates the unfair expectations this places on women in Japan. I argue that Kanehara's move away from the shocking content of eating disorders, deviant sexualities and graphic violence of her earlier works only strengthens her critical voice, as she turns her eye to the detailed reality of the injustices faced by the Japanese everywoman.

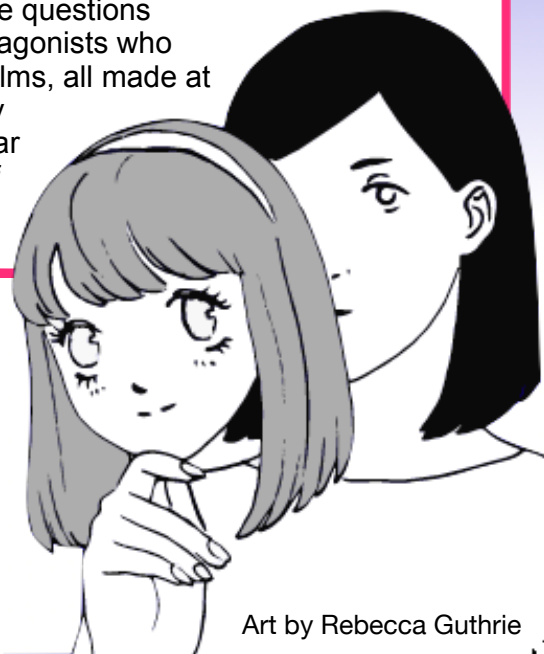
Tianyi Vespera Xie: 'Ikemen dansō Girls'

Walking down the streets of Harajuku in Tokyo and observing the youth fashion styles is always exciting. I am impressed not only by their creativity, but also by what they express about social change. I find myself raising endless questions. Does the popularity of 'genderless boys' mean that gender no longer matters in Japan? Why is the Lolita style now more popular in China and the US than in Harajuku? *Ikemen dansō*, an androgynous or boyish fashion style and subcultural practice in which women cross-dress as men from the '2.5 dimension', between manga and real life, gave me particular inspiration to carry out a research project in 2017 when I was studying at Keio University. Drawing on Japanese magazines and websites that provide information for *dansō* enthusiasts, I analyse discourses surrounding gender performance and identity. I argue that *ikemen dansō* girls negotiate gender through fashion, linguistic practice and body language. In doing so, they craft an alternative gender identity that opposes and subverts both normative masculinities and femininities, reflecting a desire to escape from gendered social norms and to pursue their own ideals of individuality and self-expression beyond adolescence.

Anna Ellis-Rees: 'Victim or Monster?'

I have long been an unashamed horror fan, but it was when I came across an in-depth analysis of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) during my second year of university that I began to look at this controversial genre from an academic perspective. I remembered the film for its notoriety and shocking violence, and yet had never considered what this said about contemporary attitudes towards animal rights, the family unit or women. Motivated to look further into horror cinema, I explored perhaps the most famous Japanese horror hit, *Ringu* (1998), the story of the vengeful ghost of a murdered girl named Sadako. Sadako is memorable not only for her ability to scare but also for the tragic roots of her vengeance. Is she meant to invoke fear, pity or both in the viewer? And what do these multiple layers of horror tell us about women's roles in Japanese society? These questions inspired my analysis of three horror films and their vengeful female antagonists who were not only monstrous but also victims of abuse. I argue that these films, all made at a time of palpable national anxiety in the 1990s, reflect the discrepancy between how women were perceived as a threat to the post-war nuclear family model during the 'lost decade' and the real female experience of public criticism, sexual abuse and domestic violence.

About the editors: *Brigitte Steger* is a Senior Lecturer in Modern Japanese Studies at the University of Cambridge researching daily life. *Angelika Koch* (PhD Cambridge) is a Research Fellow at the University of Ghent studying sexuality and health discourses in early modern Japan. *Christopher Tso* is a final-year PhD student at Cambridge exploring male grooming practices in Japanese business culture.



Art by Rebecca Guthrie



It is always a pleasure to hear from our former students about where they are, and what they are doing now. Last month we were delighted to hear from Dr Nikolay Murashkin, former PhD candidate in Japanese Studies. Nikolay shares his experiences below.



Remember your Japanese Studies reading lists?

Or perhaps you're a student and currently making your way through one of those epic bibliographies. Imagine now that you've completed your

degree and years later you stumble upon some of those familiar titles again, except this time you spot them on the desks of your new Japanese colleagues in a Japanese organization. Firstly, a feeling of gratitude to FAMES and the University for providing those resources and, secondly, a mix of relief and self-congratulation for having read them.

That was one of the main impressions from my first day at Japan International Cooperation Agency's Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development, or JICA Ogata Research Institute, where I've recently taken up a research fellowship. My team is in charge of promoting two subjects: firstly, the history of modern Japan and the country's modernisation, and, secondly, scholarship on Japan's ODA and development cooperation.

Although the team conducts a lot of work in collaboration with partner universities and academics in Japan, this role provides me with a rare opportunity to look at the academic field of Japanese studies outside the university setting. It's also a way to explore familiar salient topics – what sort of perspectives the Japanese people have regarding their country and its development path, and how they approach the external understanding and academic knowledge of Japan. At the same time, JICA's approach to the studies of modern Japan appears to be shifting in line with the evolution of the discipline from a predominantly Euro-centric or U.S.-centric focus – or even a Japan-centric one for that matter – to a more international and 'Asia-aware' perspective.

Modern Japan, including its most contemporary history, provides a plethora of case studies for scholars of social sciences and the human condition worldwide. Today's topical issue – the ongoing SARS-CoV-2 crisis and the response to it worldwide – evokes the topics very relevant to Japanese history, such as disaster response and relief or Japan's approach to medicine. As I was a PhD student at FAMES, the triple whammy of the 2011 Fukushima disaster and response to it profoundly affected Japan and placed it into the international spotlight, including expert commentary. This event directly impacted even my fieldwork trip to Tokyo and one of my doctoral case studies – Japan's energy and

resource policy (also, I am typing from my Tokyo flat as it is heated by fuel cell co-generation technology, the development of which intensified by 3/11).

However, one of the many ways in which Fukushima was most stimulating intellectually was the observation of the empathetic international response to 3/11, showing Japan's interconnectedness with the world and challenging the donor-recipient cliché long associated with Japan's global standing, as many of those indebted to Japan found an opportunity to give back to it. I had the opportunity to explore this concept academically by co-authoring an article on Indonesian support for Japan after the 2011 earthquake. Personally, I remember attending a fundraiser for Japan in Kazakhstan during the Central Asian leg of my fieldwork and even co-organising a small fundraiser with a university society back in Cambridge: we showed an Oscar-winning Japanese-Soviet film *Dersu Uzala* directed by Kurosawa Akira, itself about the relations between the humankind and the environment.

Now I am living and working in Tokyo bolstered not only by the reading FAMES prescribed me but also these valuable experiences had while at Cambridge. Encountering familiar books on new colleagues' desks was like finding an old friend in a new place and gave me a boost of confidence in my new role. *Benkyo-ni narimashita. Taihen osewa-ni narimashita.*

May 22, 2020
Nikolay Murashkin, PhD (Cantab)

Mainichi Economist runs two page article on Japanese Studies alumni Sven Palys' company 'Yuzu Kyodai'

Japanese Studies alumni Sven Palys has recently featured in the Mainichi Economist newspaper. The paper, which has the distinction of being the world's most widely circulated economic newspaper, ran an article on Sven's Japan based consulting company 'Yuzu Kyodai'.



For a full translation of the article, and more information on Yuzu Kyodai please follow the link below to the Japan and the World site:

<https://japanandtheworld.org/news/>

Japanese article available here: <https://weekly-economist.mainichi.jp/articles/20200428/se1/00m/020/062000c>