Welcome Message

Welcome to the third May edition of the CJS e-newsletter. Although economic woes have dominated headlines this week, we seek to bring you positive news of innovation and endurance in these trying times. Nadine Willems writes this week from Tokyo on how pandemics and other social turbulence has been interpreted and weathered in Japan’s past. Our Piece of Japan segment offers to transport you to another time, place and state of mind as we bring you Japanese cultural gems on the theme of the future. We are also pleased to announce the recommencing of the Third Thursday Lectures in online form at the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures. The first lecture by Robert Simpkins on amateur music in Tokyo will be at 6pm this Thursday – more information is available in the events section. You can find a message from CJS Director Professor Simon Kaner on the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures website and hear more from our SISJAC colleagues on their monthly e-bulletin. We hope you enjoy reading and as ever look forward to hearing from you on what you would like to see in future issues.

Written by Oliver Moxham, CJS Project Coordinator and editor

Editor’s note: Japanese names are given in the Japanese form of family name first i.e. Matsumoto Mariko
The economy dominates headlines this week with the sobering news that Japan has become the first of the world’s top three economies to go into recession, although the BBC argues that the country appears to be faring better than other major economies in spite of this. Economic woes come as criticism mounts over the ¥100,000 handout with some cities closing online applications due to unpreparedness [JP] and further handouts earmarked for students raising questions of how much more can the government afford to give away. The tourism industry which normally gives a much needed boost to the economy is also in limbo as key sights like Mount Fuji are deemed off limits for the summer and foreign visitors dropped 99.9% in April. These factors seem to have spurred on the lifting of the state of emergency in Kansai in order to restart the economy there, although fears remain of a virus relapse. Even the Tokyo Chief Prosecutor Kurokawa Hiromu seems to be a bit strapped for cash after he was caught gambling at Mahjong despite the state of emergency he was supposedly enforcing, inciting calls for his resignation from the LDP [JP].

Businesses and institutions continue to be innovative in these trying times, with the Kyoto observatory bringing stargazing sessions online and a rubber sole firm creating a device for direct touch-free doorknob-turning to improve sanitation in workplaces. Research has also led to new insights of Covid-19, including doubt over anti-flu drug Avigan touted by Abe Shinzō as a treatment and the revelation that domestic cats can transmit the virus. Cat owners are recommended to keep their pets indoors or give them regular bath for which I am sure they will be most grateful.

Finally, it seems that even in times of social distancing love finds a way as online matchmaking businesses claim a big boost in users following the state of emergency. Perhaps more concerning is the news of more teens seeking advice on pregnancy since schools have been closed — an impressive feat if social distancing was being observed.

*Written by Oliver Moxham, CJS Project Coordinator and editor.*

*Sources can be found in the ‘News from Japan’ section.*

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**Tokyo Days – Report by Nadine Willems**

**CLEAR SKIES IN TOKYO**

It is a sweltering day, a harbinger of the fierce summer ahead. We give a last push and cycle up the hill, unfit and unprepared, to reach the central part of Ikegami Honmonji. Our foolhardiness will prove punishing, but not before we explore this large Buddhist complex located in the southern part of Tokyo.

Nichiren, the 13th century monk, founded the temple shortly before his death. He developed the teachings of the sect that bears his name, one that has played an important role at various historical junctures and remains influential today.
Bells are ringing at the other end of the vast square. Incense is wafting above a slow procession of mourners straining under the midday sun. We hear chanting through the walls of the main hall, where a billboard-sized sign informs us that appropriate, Nichiren-style prayers will keep the epidemic at bay. Practitioners are encouraged to make a written prayer request and a donation to help ward off the disease. Even if the spread of the coronavirus is definitely on the wane in Japan, an abundance of caution will not hurt.

We walk towards the five-story pagoda further away from the square. Dating from 1608, the pagoda is one of two buildings in the complex that survived the fire-bombing of Tokyo in the spring of 1945. The heat is relentless, but we make it to the statue of Rikidōzan, the hugely popular Korean Japanese professional wrestler whose life met an abrupt end in 1963, at the age of 39, when he was murdered by a yakuza in a Tokyo nightclub. He now stands there proudly, arms crossed, at the back of the cemetery, his muscly, ready-to-rumble figure slightly at odds with the quietness of the surroundings.

In the current circumstances Rikidōzan’s presence at Honmonji appears to me less relevant than the temple’s connection to Saigō Takamori, a samurai from the former Satsuma domain and another of Japan’s legendary fighters. It is within Honmonji’s precincts that early in 1868, Saigō negotiated the surrender of Edo Castle to the revolutionary forces he represented with Katsu Kaishū, a low ranking but ambitious retainer of the Tokugawa Shogunate. These two men are emblematic of dramatic change.

As we know, the Revolution of 1868 marked the dawn of modern Japan. Although loyal to the losing side, Katsu would end up as a significant figure in the development of the Japanese Imperial Navy after 1868. Saigō, one of the original masterminds of the Meiji Revolution, famously died as a counter-revolutionary hero during the Satsuma rebellion of 1877. But as I try to locate the exact spot of the Saigō-Katsu negotiations, I wonder what calamities can tell us about change.
In the decade or so leading to 1868, Japan experienced not only political turmoil but natural disasters too. In the mid-1850s, three major earthquakes rocked the archipelago. In 1857, influenza badly struck the population, and an epidemic of cholera followed shortly after. In 1862, it was measles, and then smallpox in 1867.

Colourful woodblock prints made at the time document these calamities and give a hint of the popular responses they incited. According to the namazu-e (catfish pictures), earthquakes were caused by the mythical giant catfish Namazu waking up from under the Japanese ground. It was up to the god Kashima and ordinary people’s efforts to tame it. The hashika-e (measles pictures) involved other deities responsible for disease or assisting with its eradication. Such works of folk-art emphasised the need for everyone to adopt a routine of hygiene in order to subdue the pathogen.

The prints, particularly the namazu-e, had other stories to tell too. Often they included more or less veiled social and political criticism. Sometimes they suggested that the current chaos was a premonition of radical change. The devastation of an earthquake and the ravages of an epidemic made people imagine what a better world would be like, and these aspirations somehow found their way into the prints.

As I stand by one of the great bronze bells of Honmonji, I think of Saigō Takamori and Katsu Kaishū, who both possessed their own vision of a better Japan. Perhaps the calamities of the previous years had inspired some thoughts about the process of transformation. Likewise today, if the pandemic has opened a debate, it is one that sketches out the contours of the post-covid world and the potential for renewal.

We recover our bikes and continue our journey. It is downhill this time and we make it to Senzokuike in less than twenty minutes. Because of the fear of contagion, the army of pedal-boat swans rests immobile and forlorn on the extensive pond, but many people are enjoying the fine weather on the shores and in the adjacent park. Daily infection rates in Tokyo are now in single digits. Shops and restaurants are reopening one by one. There is vigilance, but no panic. I don’t know what the post-virus world will be like, but summer is definitely in the air, and this giant city is slowly waking up.
Written by Nadine Willems, Lecturer of Japanese History at UEA. All photos taken by the author.

**Piece of Japan**

Each week, we will bring to you some fresh recommendations from CJS members to help bring a piece of Japan to you at home through film, books, anime, manga and more. This week we bring you a wealth of recommendations on the theme of the future. If you have any suggestions for themes or other recommendations, send us an email at cjs@uea.ac.uk.

*Editor’s note*: English e-books and Japanese e-books on Amazon can largely only be purchased on amazon.co.uk and amazon.co.jp respectively, meaning that English and Japanese e-books cannot be purchased on one account. You can read in both languages on your computer, but it is necessary to have two accounts. Furthermore, if you wish to read on a Kindle you must log in with either an English or Japanese account. Switching accounts on a Kindle will delete any content already stored on the device, so choose wisely!

**Foreword by CJS Director Professor Simon Kaner**

A quick google search throws up plenty on how Japanese art is relating to the future – from the Mori Museum’s focus on AI and robotics to the travelling exhibition from the Museum of Modern Art with its focus on cool. At the Sainsbury Institute we have run projects including looking at how Tokyo has seen its future at key moments in its history (Tokyo Futures involving collaborations with, among others, Tate and the Meiji Shrine Intercultural Research Institute – though pandemics did not feature in the talks. For me: hard to beat Ōtomo Katsuhiro’s 1988 Akira, based on Ōtomo’s manga of the same name: which wowed us all when it first appeared (and continues to do so) with its ‘post-apocalyptic cyber-punk’ animated version of life in a future Tokyo, with a long-promised live action remake (am I the only one who doesn’t care for most such remakes? Very much hoping they don’t represent the future of cinema).

**Film**

*Recommendations by editor Oliver Moxham*

**Akira** (1988) by Ōtomo Katsuhiro

アキラ 作者：大友克洋

Set in 2019, Ōtomo’s post-apocalyptic epic technically may no longer be our future, but it certainly ranks as an historic film in its field, often cited by critics as one of greatest animated and science fiction films ever made. The
film follows Kaneda Shōtarō, leader of a bōsōzoku biker gang in the sprawling dystopic metropolis of Neo-Tokyo. After his childhood friend Tetsuo suffers a motorcycle crash and develops psychic powers, Kaneda finds himself caught between the military government that seeks to capture and control his friend and the increasingly egomaniacal and unstable Tetsuo himself. With over ¥1 billion (£7.6 million) worth of animation and a soundtrack inspired by Indonesian gamelan and Japanese Noh theatre, Akira remains an otherworldly experience 32 years on from its inception. Fans of the film may be delighted to know the original manga contains double the content.

Available in Japanese with subtitles and dubbed in English. The manga is available in English and Japanese paperback.

The Bird People in China (1998) by Miike Takashi

Juxtaposed with the dizzying chaos of lasers, robots and telekinesis in Akira, The Bird People in China may seem far removed from science-fiction visions of the future. However, it provokes a wholly different perspective on what the future of society ought to be. Mr. Wada (Motoki Masahiro) is sent to a remote village in Yunnan, China to assess a vein of jade only to find he is being shadowed by a yakuza member claiming his boss owes the company money to be repaid with the precious stones. The two unlikely travel companions endure surreal hardships in reaching the village far removed from the concrete jungle of Tokyo. Fascinated with the traditions of flying in the village, the two men become enamoured with the archaic way of life found there and begin to question whether the inevitable industrialisation that the jade will bring is the best future for the people living there or indeed civilisation in general. A far cry from Miike’s typically violent works, The Bird People of China is a rare gem of Japanese cinema – no pun intended. Its exploration of Chinese landscapes and heavy themes of blurred language and cultural identities set it well apart from the homogenous and inwardly focussed films which have come to dominate the industry, making it refreshing to watch in spite of its age.

Available to stream in Japanese and with English subtitles on DVD.

Manga & Anime

Recommendations by editor Oliver Moxham

Cowboy Bebop (1997-1998) by Watanabe Shinichirō

The year is 2071 and a technological disaster has ravaged Earth, seeing humanity terraforming and populating the more habitable planets and moons in our solar system. This is far from the minds of bounty hunters Spike Spiegel and Jet Black, however, who are more concerned with earning enough woolongs to keep their spaceship the Bebop fuelled and beef in their stir fry. This usually involves hunting down lowlife criminals hiding in rundown settlements or abandoned space stations, yet in spite of their skills something always seems to get between them and their payday. Hailed as a legendary cult anime series, Watanabe took elements of noir, wild west, pulp fiction and cyberpunk, chucked them in a shaker with a fantastic original soundtrack and poured out “a new genre unto itself”. This vision of a poor man’s future went on to earn its own featurelength
movie Cowboy Bebop: Knockin’ On Heaven’s Door and is soon to get the live action treatment courtesy of Netflix under the creative consultation of Watanabe himself.

Available to stream in English and Japanese.

Trigun (1995-2007) by Nightow Yasuhiro
トライガン 作者：内藤泰弘

Far away on a planet of desert hills, the rumour of a man blows over sand dunes and through badland settlements – a man named “Vash the Stampede”. Little is known about him except that he dresses in red and leaves destruction in his path, earning him a sixty billion double dollar bounty on his head. Two employees of the Bernadelli Insurance Society, Meryl Stryfe and Milly Thompson, are charged with tracking him down to minimize the damage that seems to follow him wherever he goes. Their confusion and exasperation only grows when the man they’re after has severe retrograde amnesia, a cheery disposition bordering on naïvity and the bloodlust of a toothless kitten.


Books 本のおすすめ

Recommendations by Hannah Osborne, Lecturer of Japanese Literature at UEA

The Future in Japanese Literature

At the moment we seem to be inhabiting a realm so far removed from our own normality, it is difficult to think what the future of this present is going to look like. Perhaps we need to pay more attention to science fiction, which has always drawn on our ‘cognitive estrangement’ in times of trauma, to produce textual phenomena which articulate our deepest fears; some of which have since been borne out to an unnerving degree.

For instance, Abe Kōbō’s Inter Ice Age 4 (1958-1959) writes a world with melting ice caps, rising seas, and children who are genetically modified to develop gills so that they can breathe under water (wait, we need gills?); while Sakyō Komatsu’s Japan Sinks (1973) describes a Japan beset by volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis of a scale that seems certain to pull the whole country into the sea (yep, we need gills). Perhaps even more disconcerting is Project Itoh’s Genocidal Organ (2007), which tells of a world where, in the aftermath of the first home-built nuclear bomb, each democratic nation rapidly turns into a surveillance state that traces and monitors the movements of every individual.

Looking to the more immediate future, Yōko Ogawa’s The Memory Police (1994), will be released in its English translation here on 6th August 2020 (although you can already pre-order copies on Amazon) and has already garnered excellent reviews (see below). It describes an island community afflicted by an ‘epidemic of forgetting’ enforced by the fascist state that seek to control them, their minds, and, most crucially, their ability to hold on to their own personal history.
Abe Kōbō’s Inter Ice Age 4 in English and Japanese

Sakyō Komatsu’s Japan Sinks in English and Japanese

Project Itoh’s Genocidal Organ in English and Japanese

Yōko Ogawa’s The Memory Police in English and Japanese

Reviews of Yōko Ogawa’s The Memory Police (1994) are available from the Guardian, the New Yorker and the Japan Society.

Recommendations by the National Institute of Japanese Literature

Director-general Robert Campbell of the NIJL (国文研) has announced that they will be releasing many of their premodern texts on infectious diseases in response to the pandemic. These will be available for free on their homepage at www.nijl.ac.jp with regular updates on the latest texts to be released. You can watch Robert explain the move in both English and Japanese on YouTube.

Upcoming Events & Opportunities

The intimacy of minor sounds: An anthropologist’s journey into the private, insular worlds of amateur music in Tokyo

Dr Robert Simpkins - Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Fellow at SISJAC
Sainsbury Institute Third Thursday Lecture
Thursday 21 May
6pm
Book here or email sisjac@sainsbury-institute.org

Our colleagues at the SISJAC are pleased to announce that May's Third Thursday Lecture will be presented online. You can enjoy the lecture live from the comfort of your own home, complete with slides and an audience Q&A. We look forward to seeing you there virtually, and we particularly welcome new attendees.

About the Talk
A Tokyo night is normally full of sounds and stories. Thousands of people perform music all over the city in basements and narrow rooms, and along dimly lit passageways. Vibrant and energetic music pulses deafeningly behind closed doors. The grand scale of Tokyo conceals a great multitude of tightly woven, insular and private music spaces and societies: the world of amateur musicians, the majority. In this talk I examine the vital role of intimacy and physical presence in the social relationships of one particular amateur music scene in Tokyo today.
My research in the western Tokyo town of Koenji highlights the lifestyles of musicians on the outside of the professional and popular avant-garde. Their music is absent from festivals and will not grace the pages of culture sections or online music magazines. They represent a drop in an increasing pool of young people in Japan about whom we know less than we should: those conducting their lives beyond of the normalised narratives of employment and family, the irregular workers living alone.

I will explore how the production of amateur music in Koenji neighbourhood addresses the musicians’ isolation from industry success and family life through the exchange of different kinds of intimacy. The core activities of these musicians reproduce ties of friendship rooted in locality and build strong relationships of patronage. The lifeblood of their music is not sustained through record contracts or increasing listenership, but socially, through reciprocity, comradery, informal payments of time, physical presence and emotional support.

I focus upon this core aspect of amateur music culture in Tokyo at a time when our own sense of intimacy is dislodged by the Covid-19 pandemic. As we are shaken by new kinds of distance and stranded by enforced antisocial measures, I will spotlight the kinds of closeness that my interlocuters depend upon in their daily lives. As live venues and streets in the metropolis fall silent, what becomes of people and places of music?

**About the Speaker**

Robert Simpkins, a current Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Fellow at the Sainsbury Institute, is an anthropologist specialising in youth, creativity and precarity in Japan. His current focus centres upon the relationship between creative practices, irregular employment and isolation.

His work also concerns issues related to urban space and contemporary music cultures. His doctoral research investigates the lives of musicians seeking a career in the music industry after arriving in Tokyo from prefectures across Japan, the adversities they face and the readjustments they make in order to keep going. He explores how a train station forms the centre of their performing lives, and challenges common categorisations such as the division between public and private space.

**The Art of Kintsugi: Online Talk & Demonstration**

**Japan House**

Thursday 21 May

2pm-3pm

Free to attend, watch on Facebook

Learn about the centuries-old Japanese art of *kintsugi* in this online talk and demonstration led by Nishikawa Iku from Kintsugi Oxford.

Roughly translating as ‘joining with gold’, *kintsugi* is the process by which broken ceramic pieces are repaired using seams of tree-sap lacquer (*urushi*) often dusted with powdered gold or other precious materials.
The craft is underpinned by a philosophy of finding beauty in the flawed or imperfect: treating cracks and damage as part of the history of an object, and as something to celebrate rather than to disguise.

During this live online event, Nishikawa gives an introduction to the art of *kintsugi*, before demonstrating how viewers can use *kintsugi* techniques to repair their own broken or chipped ceramic items at home.

Guests are encouraged to ask live questions during the online event.

**About the speaker**

Founder of Kintsugi Oxford, Nishikawa Iku was born and raised in Kochi, Japan. She first became attracted to the art of *kintsugi* while assisting Kyoto lacquerware artists Shimode Muneaki and Sato Takahiko with the delivery of *kintsugi* workshops at the Ashmolean Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. Although *kintsugi* has often been considered as a professional craft technique achievable only in Japan, through practice and training Nishikawa found that the craft could be accessible outside of Japan by using recently developed new materials. As Kintsugi Oxford, she has given *kintsugi* workshops in Japan, Italy and the UK using new materials. She hosts individual and group lessons from her studio in Oxford from where she carries out *kintsugi* repairs for private clients. She has worked with artists including Lisa Hammond, Bouke de Vries, Kat Wheeler and Claudia Clare.

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**JSPS London Pre/Postdoctoral Fellowship for Foreign Researchers (Short Term)**

Application Deadline: Monday 8th June, 2020

Fellowships must start between: 1st November 2020 to 31st March 2021.

Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) is the leading research funding agency in Japan, established by the Japanese Government for the purpose of contributing to the advancement of science. Our Pre/Postdoctoral Fellowship for Foreign Researchers (Short Term) provides the opportunity for researchers based outside of Japan to conduct collaborative research activities with leading research groups at Japanese Universities and Research Institutions for visits of between 1 to 12 months. Eligible applicants need to be either within 2 years of finishing their PhD at the time of applying to start their fellowship in Japan or have obtained their PhD at a university outside of Japan within the last 6 years (on or after 2nd April 2014). Eligible research fields are not limited.

Please visit the [JSPS London website](https://www.jspslondon.org.uk) here for further information.

Fellow's experiences from former JSPS Fellows who have taken part in this programme can be found [here](https://www.jspslondon.org.uk/).
Nationwide infections: yesterday (total)  deaths: yesterday (total)  recoveries: yesterday (total)

国内の感染者： +前日（総数）  死者： +前日（総数）  退院者： +前日（総数）

BBC:
- Japan’s economy falls into recession as virus takes its toll
- Japan’s low testing rate raises questions
- Tokyo hospitals trying to stay ahead [video]

Japan Times [EN]:
- Abe’s coronavirus-relief cash program faces barrage of criticism
- Japan to give struggling students up to ￥200,000
- Japan to lift state of emergency for Osaka, Kyoto and Hyogo this week
- Kansai fears virus relapse as Osaka, Kyoto and Hyogo blaze own trails
- Coronavirus transmissible between domestic cats, Japan-U.S. study shows
- Need for social distancing boosts Japan’s online matchmaking party business
- With Japan’s schools out, more teens seek advice on pregnancy

Asahi Shimbun [JP]:
- Mount Fuji to be closed for the summer to avoid spreading virus
  - 今夏は富士山登れません  山梨に続き、静岡も登山道閉鎖

Mainichi [JP & EN]:
- Online applications for ￥100,000 handouts stopped in Kōchi citing unpreparedness
  - 高知市、特別定額給付金のオンライン申請中止  記載不備で確認に時間
- Calls for resignation of Tokyo Chief Prosecutor following Mahjong gambling during lockdown
  - 「自覚なさ過ぎる」与党にも辞任容認の声  黒川検事長「賭けマージャン」報道
- Foreign visitors to Japan drop 99.9% in April on pandemic
- Online stargazing sessions at Kyoto observatory brings night sky to netizens' screens
- Clinical trials put efficacy of anti-flu drug Avigan in doubt as coronavirus treatment
- Japan firm develops device for direct touch-free doorknob-turning

Visit the Pandaid website for comprehensive material for educating on coronavirus. Nosigner has contributed many such manner posters including advising others to stay one tuna apart.

For a Japanese government public service video on coronavirus (Japanese only):

3つの密を避けよう！

For Japanese speakers, here are two articles in English from the Japan Times laying out vocabulary coming out of the crisis:
- The Japanese words used to encourage self-restraint
- Cancellations, postponements, suspensions — words that define the times

Click here for a comprehensive online document on Japanese universities adopting distance learning.
For more information on Japanese universities see this twitter thread by Rochelle Kopp, professor at Kitakyushu University, for resources.

**General Links**

[Embassy of Japan](#)
[Japan Foundation](#)
[JSPS](#)
[British Association for Japanese Studies](#)
[Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation](#)
[Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation](#)
[Japan Society](#)
[EU-Japan Centre](#)
[Canon Foundation](#)
[Applications for JET Programme](#)
[Japanese Language Proficiency Exam](#)
[UEA Japan Society:](#)
[ueajapansociety@gmail.com](#)
[Taiko Centre East](#)
[Career Forums](#)

**Contact Us**

If you have any contributions for the next week’s e-newsletter, please send them to us by **12:00 Wednesday** to make the next issue.

The CJS office is located in the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts (the mezzanine floor), although the office is temporarily closed as per university guidelines. You can always email us at [cjs@uea.ac.uk](mailto:cjs@uea.ac.uk).

To keep up with goings-on at CJS, follow us on social media:

![Social Media Icons](#)

Or visit our website: [uea.ac.uk/cjs](http://uea.ac.uk/cjs)

Left: **CJS Director Professor Simon Kaner**

Right: **Editor and CJS Project Coordinator Oliver Moxham**
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