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AFTER THE TSUNAMI

Koizumi, Kan, Karen Hill Anton, and Tadaaki Shimizu



Your March FCCJ kicks off with former prime ministers Junichiro Koizumi and Naoto Kan marking the 10th Anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. On March 17, Karen Hill Anton discusses her memoir in an evening Book Break with a delicious dinner and drinks, courtesy of our new Iron Chef, Tadaaki Shimizu.

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In this issue

JUSTIN McCURRY

Ten years ago this month, Japan was shaken by the strongest earthquake in its recorded history. The resulting tsunami killed more than 18,000 people and triggered the world's worst nuclear crisis since Chernobyl a quarter of a century earlier. For those of us who were in Japan at the time, the triple disaster was the single most important - and the most challenging - domestic story we had ever covered. To mark the anniversary, Jonathan Watts, then the *Guardian's* East Asia editor, recalls the fear and hope he encountered amid the 3.11 tragedy, and Chie Matsumoto, fixer extraordinaire, recounts her experiences making sense of the chaos for a stream of visiting writers and broadcasters.

For foreign correspondents in Japan, the troubled preparations for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics have also generated acres of copy. But few of us could have anticipated the uproar created by an *Asahi Shimbun* account of a meeting of the Japan Olympic Committee. Karyn Nishimura, in her first piece for the magazine, looks back at how the foreign and Japanese media covered the events that led to the downfall of Yoshiro Mori as president of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics organizing committee.

After the *New Yorker* was hoodwinked while researching an article about Japanese rent-a-families, regular contributor David McNeill looks at the pitfalls of feeding foreign news organizations' huge appetite for the more unusual side of life in Japan.

I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to this issue, and encourage you all to pitch stories - after all, this is your magazine. Please feel free to contact me at no.1shimbun@fccj.or.jp. I look forward to hearing from you.

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Cover: The tsunami-hit town of Ishinomaki, taken from Hiroyama Park on March 20, 2011.
Photo by Kazuma Obara (kazumaobara.com)

THE FRONT PAGE

From the President

Dear Members,

As I write, I've just finished watching a Book Break with the award-winning writer Yu Miri, whose commitment to working with the survivors of the 2011 Fukushima disaster led her to take up residence in Minamisoma, just up the coast from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. While maintaining a literary career that brought her the National Book Award for translated literature last year, Yu now runs a bookshop and a community theater, in the hope that access to the arts can help plant the seeds of recovery for a community still devastated by the events of a decade ago. Her courage and resilience certainly put my own challenges into perspective.

Many of our press conferences this month are related to the triple disaster on Japan's northeast coast and its myriad after-effects, as we remember the more than 18,000 people who died and the tens of thousands still evacuated from their homes. We'll have two former prime ministers - Junichiro Koizumi and Naoto Kan - in a rare joint appearance for former political rivals brought together by their shared determination to rid Japan of nuclear power, an idea for which the government has expressed little enthusiasm. We'll also be hearing from the governor of Fukushima prefecture on how the reconstruction process is faring, as well as from Kiyoshi Kurokawa, who led parliament's investigation into the handling of the disaster at Fukushima Daiichi.

Speaking of investigations, this seems like a good moment to remind you to make your nominations for the Freedom of the Press Award. All Club members, regardless of category, are eligible to nominate journalists or media outlets for this year's awards: one for Japan coverage and one for work in the Asia-Pacific region.

Closer to home, we're looking forward to the end of the state of emergency in Tokyo, which may come on March 7 as the number of new virus cases falls in the capital, albeit a little more slowly than we had hoped. It's not yet clear what that will mean for our bar and



©FCCJ / JULIO SHIKI

restaurant hours, so please keep an eye out for further announcements. Please note that the requirement to wear a mask in the Club, except while eating or drinking, will remain in place regardless of the emergency.

You will have noticed the survey recently sent out to members by our Japan Market Expansion Competition team. I hope most members took part and I'm looking forward to seeing the results, which will help us map out our plans for the future. But there are regular opportunities to make your voice heard and to learn about what's going on at the Club. The General Meeting is coming up on March 22, at which we ask members to approve our financial report and budget. Please mark your diaries and be sure to attend, whether online or in person - this is your Club and it can't function without your participation.

● **Isabel Reynolds has been reporting for Bloomberg in Tokyo since 2012. She has lived in Japan for more than 20 years and been a Regular Member of the FCCJ for most of that time.**

AFTER THE TSUNAMI

INTO

THE



JONATHAN WATTS

UNKNOWN

THE *GUARDIAN*'S THEN EAST ASIA CORRESPONDENT RECALLS FEAR, GRIEF AND HOPE AMID THE RUINS OF THE TRIPLE DISASTER

JONATHAN WATTS

Mujō. If there is one word that I carry with me from my years in Japan, it may well be this Buddhist concept, conveying impermanence or transience. I first came across it in Japanese literature classes at university, where it struck a chord, reminding me of Shelley's poem, *Mutability*. I celebrated it every *hanami* season, along with the throngs revelling in the short-lived beauty of the cherry blossoms. I worried about it whenever I felt the FCCJ building in Yurakucho sway in the wake of an earthquake. But it was only after March 11, 2011, that I did not just understand the meaning of *mujo*. I felt it. I was enveloped by it.

The magnitude-9 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown that struck Tohoku that day and eventually took more than 18,000 lives was a disaster of epic proportions. But it was not the scale that made the biggest impression. As the *Guardian's* East Asia correspondent, I had already covered the Indian Ocean tsunami that

killed 227,000, and the Sichuan Earthquake, in which 68,000 died. But catastrophes are far more than a matter of death tolls. On a personal rather than journalistic level, what really struck me was the emotional proximity of Tohoku. I was living in Beijing at the time, but had spent most of my adult life in Japan. My wife was Japanese, my half-Japanese daughters had spent their early years in Tokyo. This disaster felt disturbingly close to home.

I first heard the news when I touched down in Beijing airport on an afternoon flight from Hong Kong. As soon as I switched on my phone, it pinged with a swarm of new messages about the earthquake and tsunami. The most urgent was from my foreign editor: "Don't bother going home. Get on the next flight to Japan." I called my wife and asked her to bring clean underwear, money, a battery charger and other equipment I might need in a disaster area. The *Guardian* photographer Dan Chung joined me and I set about trying to plot a route to Tohoku. It was the

Top image:
Jonathan Watts
in Ishinomaki in
March 2011

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JONATHAN WATTS

▲
The Statue of Liberty
in Ishinomaki

usual journalistic challenge: how to get into an area that everybody else is trying to leave.

This was no simple task. My flight wouldn't get into Tokyo until close to midnight. Many flights to airports in the Tohoku region had been cancelled, roads had been blocked and train services disrupted. I could not hire a rental car because my Japanese license had expired. There was only one thing to do: beg for help.

I posted an appeal on Twitter, asking if anyone was willing to drive me to the area. I didn't expect a positive response and had begun to plan for an overnight stay in the capital and a new effort in the morning. But to my surprise and delight, an assiduous blogger who went by the handle @NoFrills, had taken my cause as her mission. Even though we had never met, she spread the word far and wide, eventually finding me a guardian angel in the unlikely shape of a reporter for Playboy magazine, Kiyomu Tomita.

I could not have been more fortunate. Tomita-san was an indomitable travelling companion, a superb journalist and a thoroughly decent human being. Even before my call-out, he had been preparing to head north, mapping out a route around known road closures, and filling the tank in his car, along with two spare gasoline containers, in the expectation that petrol station supplies would be disrupted. He had even arranged a half-way stop at a friend's house to collect extra supplies. In a small car, it was a tight squeeze with him, us and so much luggage and equipment that Dan and I had suitcases on our laps. We drove through the night, listening to the NHK news on the radio and stopping frequently when the broadcast was interrupted by a warning of an imminent

aftershock. Dawn broke just before we reached Sendai and began reporting.

There is no need to describe the scenes there and - over the following days - in Ishinomaki, Kamaishi, Kesenuma, Rikuzentakata, Minamisanriku, Fukushima, Otsuchi, and Onagawa. Everyone has seen what happened. The images of destruction saturated TV news programmes and social media websites at the time and long after. Ten years on, it may be more interesting to describe what didn't go into those reports - at least not directly. In particular, how it felt to witness this not just as a journalist but as a human. As well as horror, unease and sympathy, the most surprising sensation was of wrongness. Even more than in Phuket and Sichuan, the world seemed upside down and inside out. Giant ships were stranded in car parks, cars bobbed about in harbour waters, houses floated free of their foundations, buses were rammed into the fourth-floor of apartment blocks and children's toys lay scattered among the ruins. Nothing was where it should be. This was all the more disorientating because the setting was otherwise so familiar. After a while I realised this "wrongness" was in my mind. This was simply an alternative way for things to be. It may not seem right or normal to humans, but it was real.

At first sight, all disaster areas are the same - rubble, twisted steel, shattered glass, intimacies exposed to the public, mega-ambitions reduced to ashes, and a stench of death that is little affected by geography or race. But there are also infinitely different patterns and stories from place to place and from person to person. It quickly became clear that demographics were an important factor. Many of the victims were elderly and too frail to escape quickly when the tsunami warning sirens sounded. This was far more evident in the countryside of ageing Japan than it had been at the beach resorts of Thailand or the cities of Sichuan. Survivors told harrowing stories of being trapped in flooded buildings or torn from the arms of loved ones. Parents pinned up missing-children signs on noticeboards in shelters. Fishermen recounted in awe how the tsunami had ripped through massive coastal defences. Emergency teams winched an injured man from the rubble of an office block. Firefighters fought blazes that had burned through the night. One local mayor said shelters were overcrowded and the authorities did not have enough manpower to bury the dead. There were

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JONATHAN WATTS



JUSTIN MCCURRY

▲
Top: Cars swept away by the tsunami in Otsuchi; **bottom:** The Asia Symphony freighter after it rammed into a seawall in Kamaishi

so many powerful stories, it was impossible to do justice to them all. But I didn't feel helpless. There is no time when I feel more useful as a journalist than in disaster zones, finding out where help is needed and sharing the stories of those affected with those who might be able to provide relief. It is almost like being part of the emergency services, though often we were ahead of them by several days. The work felt essential and raw. Perhaps I just told myself that to get through those grim, exhausting days, but that sensation of utility was motivating.

In the first three or four days, we fell into a routine. After an early start and a full day's reporting, we'd drive a couple of hours to a ryokan deep in the mountains of Yamagata or Akita, where we could find internet to send stories, electricity to charge batteries, hot water for baths and enough food to keep our energy levels up. Just as importantly, we figured, this location was relatively sheltered from any radiation clouds that might have been spewed out by the wrecked nuclear reactors of Fukushima

Daiichi. Many journalists had the same idea. During those days, I bumped into several old friends, including Rupert Wingfield-Hayes of the BBC, Mure Dickie of the *Financial Times*, Brad Olsen of CNN, Calum Macleod of *USA Today* and Mark Magnier of the *Los Angeles Times*. We'd share notes on which roads were open and what the likely risks were of contamination from the reactors, which appeared to be getting worse. Some major international news organisations had withdrawn to Tokyo or even further afield. Dan also decided to leave. Everyone had a different view on whether to stay or go. I felt a duty to stick around, influenced largely by my attachment to Japan and sense of gratitude for everything the country had done for me.

We were constantly updating risk assessments, but information was sketchy and constantly changing. I called nuclear experts in the UK, a friend who worked as a weather forecaster to check wind directions from Fukushima and kept up with the latest reports from my colleague Justin McCurry, but we were never entirely sure if we were safe. One morning, I recall setting out with Tomita-san, Calum and Chie Matsumoto, who was working as Calum's fixer. On the way to the disaster area, we heard an NHK emergency bulletin telling us another reactor had exploded at Fukushima Daiichi. Tomita-san stopped the car and we discussed whether to go on or head back. Nobody should be obliged to go on if they felt uncomfortable. The view was unanimous - we would keep going. An hour or two later as we approached the coast, there was another emergency NHK bulletin, this time with a tsunami warning. Another debate. Another decision to go on. It felt worthwhile then and on the following days. In Koriyama, the mayor was grateful to get the word out to the outside world about food and fuel shortages. It was a similar story in Ishinomaki, where the deputy mayor said his community felt cut off. He told us he was getting by on one *onigiri* a day.

Every day revealed new challenges and gripping stories. In that situation, meeting survivors who have reached the limits of human endurance, pretensions are stripped away. Conversations are concentrated at a fundamental level. It is remarkable how much people help one another, how love and courage shine through. I can no longer remember the exact sequence of events, but what follows are some vivid flashbacks from that time:

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JUSTIN MCCURRY

► Rikuzentakata

- A trip to Fukushima to cover the evacuation of British residents in a bus arranged by the embassy. I was so nervous of radiation, I ran between my car and the shelter to make sure as little snow fell on me as possible. I interviewed a courageous young English teacher who decided at the last moment to stay behind because he was in love with an equally brave local woman, who did not want to leave her parents. “We have a full tank of petrol and if things get worse, we will drive further north,” he said.
 - An argument with a German photographer who was grumbling about the stoic demeanour of the survivors. “They don’t seem to have feelings,” he said. “Give me Africans any time.” I resisted the urge to punch him and tersely replied that people express their emotions in different ways and nobody was obliged to perform for the camera. “Gaman” was being pushed to its limits. As food and fuel ran short, I feared social breakdown, but, apart from one or two reports of looting, this never transpired.
 - The surreal scenes around the manga museum in Ishinomaki, which is dedicated to the work of artist and author [Shotaro Ishinomori](#). The city dubs itself “Mangatant” and has a replica Statue of Liberty to drive home this pun. The streets are lined with human-sized statues of Kamen Rider, Ecchan and characters from Super Sentai, Cyborg 009 and Ganbare!! Robocon - all of which mysteriously survived the tsunami, though everything around them was in ruins. The sights of those brightly coloured, seemingly indestructible superheroes amid the carnage made it look like the aftermath of a violent invasion by aliens.
 - Spending a restless last night at a crowded evacuation shelter at Minamisanriku, a fishing town that was pulverised by the tsunami. More than 700 people were crammed into the corridors, stairwells and offices of the Ocean Plaza gymnasium. By this time - eight days after the earthquake - relief teams had arrived, people were getting three meals a day and some were even starting to talk about recovery.
- Leaving was strange. I was happy to go home and see my family, but after such an intense experience it was not easy to focus on anything else for some time. So I continued to put my thoughts and efforts into the disaster zone - sending video files, writing opinion pieces and organising a Tohoku relief fundraising event at the Beijing Bookworm. Some media organisations arrange counselling for journalists who return from disaster zones. I can’t recall if that was ever proposed by my employers, but I probably wouldn’t have taken them up on it. I didn’t feel traumatised. I felt like I had learned an important truth: that the concrete and cities and certainties on which we build our understanding of normality are far more ephemeral than we realise. Don’t take anything for granted. Don’t waste a moment. Whenever you start getting cocksure or downhearted, keep a healthy awareness of impermanence in the back of your mind. Nothing new in that, of course. It’s the essence of mujō. Or as Shelley put it: Man’s yesterday may ne’er be like his morrow; Nought may endure but Mutability.
- Postscript:** I returned to Fukushima a few months later at the invitation of Tomita-san. He took me inside one of the most-irradiated areas in the town of Namie to interview a lovely couple of dairy farmers who had defied government advice to leave. Fearless as ever, Tomita-san had visited frequently to cover their story. Generous as ever, he wanted to share what he had learned.

● Jonathan Watts is the *Guardian’s* global environment editor.

AFTER THE TSUNAMI

A FIXER'S STORY

**LOCAL MEDIA ORGANISERS BECAME INDISPENSABLE
IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE DISASTER**



Ishinomaki

CHIE MATSUMOTO

A few hours after one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded hit the east coast of Japan, I got a call on my cellphone. Night was falling and I was standing at the Yurakucho intersection. The phone network had crashed and nobody had been calling anyone - I had not even talked to my husband.

The call was from the Beijing bureau chief of *USA Today* asking me to go up to Tohoku to report on the disaster. My battery was running low but the phone kept buzzing afterwards, each call from a different overseas editor. Some desperately wanted a fixer, others a report filed on the spot.

This is how life would be for weeks.

A fixer is required to be a journalist, interpreter, travel agent, driver, porter (for TV crew), a friend and, sometimes, enemy of the journalist she is helping. This disaster posed challenges in all of those roles.

After a long journey back home to Kita-Kamakura that ended at 6 a.m., I grabbed a few hours' sleep, took a quick shower and went straight back to Tokyo. Although I and the foreign correspondent with whom I would be working intended to drive up to Tohoku the fol-

lowing day, expressway entrances throughout Tokyo had been barricaded. Instead, we flew to Shonai Airport in Yamagata Prefecture and crossed the country to the Pacific coast by car.

After a five-hour drive through snow, we arrived at the flattened landscape of Rikuzentakata. The view, as many remarked, resembled Hiroshima after the atomic bombing of August 1945. Self-Defense Force (SDF) personnel had already cleared a path through debris that had been swept inland by a 9-meter-high tsunami. I could see the light of a minivan that had nosedived into the sludge and I felt a chill run through my body as I realized that its passengers may have been buried.

Survivors were aimlessly wandering through what was left of their neighborhood. In the last few hours of daylight, a group of SDF members returning from a search-and-rescue mission led us to the local elementary school, which had been turned into a makeshift morgue.

The following day, we joined up with a *Guardian* correspondent and a Japanese freelance photographer. Journalistic competition had been suspended - the more brainpower and experience the better. They told us that Ishinomaki had also suffered terribly, as had the entire northeast coast.

For a while, the car radio was pretty much all we had to learn about what had happened. During the six-hour drive to Ishinomaki, we caught an announcement by Naoto Kan, the prime minister, that there had been an accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

The correspondents' phones started ringing. Their head offices had heard about the plant and tried to convince them not to go to Tohoku, but we were already there. We heard that the CNN crew had left.

We stopped the car to talk. "It's nice that they prioritize your safety," I said enviously. But no, the companies were only worried about insurance, they replied. Maybe, but as freelancers, the photographer and I had no insurance whatsoever. It had never occurred to me to think about my own safety.

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“I feared for my life many times in the tsunami aftermath”

We voted to continue heading north as we figured we were safe from the southerly winds carrying the radioactive plume from the plant.

Two full days after the tsunami, we found people in Ishinomaki still wearing wet clothes. It was snowing. Every one of the survivors had a story to tell and begged us to look for their missing family members. There was still no electricity. Traffic lights and city lights were dead. At night, the streets were so dark that it was impossible to see even a few meters ahead.

Even though I was with two tall men, a different kind of fear gripped me. I recalled how rapes and other sexual assault cases had been reported after the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. I thought about the safety of the survivors, especially the women. The city hall was the only place that was lit, thanks to an emergency generator, and locals huddled near electricity sockets to recharge their mobile phones.

I feared for my life many times in the tsunami aftermath. We fled up a hill in Kesenuma after a huge aftershock occurred while we were interviewing a survivor near the shore.

Gasoline was scarce from the outset. Theoretically, it was my job as a fixer to find any excuse to cut the long lines and secure gas, but this was one job both the photographer and I refused to do. Knowing that local survivors deserved it more than we did, we didn't have the courage or the desire to jump the queue. We watched the foreign correspondents approach the gas station owner. They said they had a mission to report this devastation to the rest of the world so that the rescue effort and relief goods would arrive as quickly as possible. I would have failed miserably at that. As we watched them from the car, the Japanese photographer told me how he couldn't bring himself to take a picture of a dead mother embracing her baby as the SDF dug their bodies out of the mud.

I later covered the nuclear disaster with a different reporter. It was snowing again, and we fretted about standing in what may have been radioactive snow. Later, it was reported that survivors had inadvertently followed the radioactive plume to Nihonmatsu, where they thought they would be safe. I tried not to remember which day we had been there and the position of the plume at the time.

Accompanying a TV crew through a heavily contaminated part of Fukushima, my dosimeter beeping furiously. I thought again about insurance - and my safety. Did I need to demand a higher daily rate? “It's not about the money,” my husband said. His words have stayed with me ever since.

By then, Tokyo Electric Power had already issued a gagging order to its employees. Walking through a makeshift evacuation shelter in Nihonmatsu, we discovered that practically everyone there had worked, in one way or another, at one of the two nuclear power plants in Fukushima Prefecture.

My work as a fixer continued on and off for a month after the disaster with print, radio and TV journalists, as well as a documentary crew, from several countries. One night in Ichinoseki, which had turned into a hub for international journalists covering the disaster, eight of us - mostly Tokyo correspondents - found ourselves eating dinner together. We shared stories about meeting tsunami survivors, how we learned not to trust the car GPS (ours had almost made us drive off the end of a damaged road) and hints for staying awake during the long drive each night.

We joked and laughed, and agreed that it was good to let off steam after days of covering such a terrible tragedy. One of our group said that he could not help cry, even wail, at the end of each day. We all fell silent, then admitted that we did the same.

I am still glad that I am driven by curiosity and the urge to see things with my own eyes, and then to report on them. But those assignments - and most of my fixing jobs - made me realize that long after my journalist clients have flown home, I am still here with the people we have interviewed and got to know.

I usually don't read articles or watch TV programs that I helped produce (except those that are sent to me) as I don't really consider them my work. But my experiences during the disaster taught me that I had a professional responsibility to see this work through. This year, on the 10th anniversary, I will return to Tohoku for the first time since the disaster.

● Chie Matsumoto is a journalist and an adjunct media instructor in the Faculty of Law at Hosei University.

FEATURE

SEEN ... AND FINALLY HEARD

**HOW THE FOREIGN AND JAPANESE MEDIA
COVERED THE OLYMPIC SEXISM ROW**



WIKIPEDIA - CC BY 4.0

KARYN NISHIMURA

It may come to be seen as a turning point in the battle against sexism in Japan. The resignation of the Yoshiro Mori as president of the organizing committee of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics less than six months before they were due to open was just

one of several obstacles confronting Tokyo 2020. But for at least two weeks, it dominated coverage of the Games.

Soon after the first reports about Mori's sexist comments emerged, the story turned into a crisis. For foreign correspondents based in Japan it was one that we could not afford to ignore.

The saga began on February 3 with an article in the *Asahi Shimbun* whose headline can be translated as: "Meetings that many women attend take time." Those words were attributed to Mori, who uttered them during a 40-minute speech at an online meeting, attended by several reporters, of the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC). At one point, Mori seemed aware that his remarks were politically incorrect, telling his audience: "The TV networks are here so it's a little hard to say, but ..." And then he delivered the line that would end his career at the head of Tokyo 2020.

No one attending the meeting protested at the time. "If more women attend meetings you'll have to impose time limits ... otherwise the meetings will never end," Mori said. He suggested that the seven women on the organizing committee "knew how to behave," adding: "Women have a strong sense of competition. If one of them raises her hand, the others will probably think they have to say something too. And all of them will speak."

The *Asahi* emphasised the most unacceptable excerpts for effect, but surely even it could not have anticipated the huge wave of condemnation that followed.

Mori wasn't the first Japanese man from the generation born just before or after World War II to lay bare their sexism. But not all of them were forced to resign. In February 2007, the then health minister, Hakuo Yanagisawa, declared that women were "machines for making babies". The comment angered many Japanese, but the then prime minister, Shinzo

SEEN ... AND FINALLY HEARD

The angry reactions of Japanese women on social media also helped focus the minds of Japanese newspapers and broadcasters, some of which sought out foreign reporters in Tokyo to contextualize the outrage being voiced outside Japan.

Abe, while condemning his minister, said he should remain in his post. Yet on reflection, Yanagisawa's comments were arguably worse than Mori's. Why, then, did Yanagisawa survive, while Mori stepped down a week later?

There were four factors working against Mori. First, as president of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee, his position had a strong international profile and he was expected to display the spirit and ethics of the Olympic movement. His remarks clearly ran counter to that spirit. This was not the case with Yanagisawa, who was viewed as a politician with a limited shelf life and most of his career behind him.

Second, the foreign media reacted strongly to Mori, driven by the recognition that his attitude towards women was unacceptable, even among many people belonging to his generation, in a civilized society. Back in 2007, Yanagisawa's remarks were regarded as scandalous, of course, but also as somewhat unsurprising coming as they did from a Japanese politician of a certain type.

Third, Yanagisawa made his remarks long before the birth of the #MeToo movement and the emergence of social media as a campaigning medium. Both were key factors in determining Mori's fate.

Finally, the day before that fateful JOC meeting, Mori had told colleagues at the headquarters of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that Japanese public opinion was the main obstacle to Tokyo 2020, given that several opinion polls have shown that a clear majority of people oppose holding the Games as planned this summer. By denigrating women - not just in Japan - Mori simply made an even bigger enemy of the Japanese public.

Mori's words alone did not cause his downfall; rather, his fate was sealed by a combination of sexism, media coverage and a society perhaps more willing to air its frustrations after more than a year of living with the coronavirus.

While the international media response was unambiguous, what of the Japanese media?

As is often the case with this type of crisis, the Japanese media were not immediately critical. The Asahi article that kicked off the storm was short, straightforward and lacked context. It was only later, especially after the *New York Times* and other global media cov-

ered Mori's remarks that their wider implications gained traction in domestic coverage. The angry reactions of Japanese women on social media also helped focus the minds of Japanese newspapers and broadcasters, some of which sought out foreign reporters in Tokyo to contextualize the outrage being voiced outside Japan.

The media coverage that followed highlighted the damage being caused the crisis, particularly Mori's "apology" during a testy encounter with reporters and the inability of the Tokyo 2020 organizers and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to defuse the situation.

Mori's apology, prepared by officials and read out at a press conference - to which foreign journalists were not invited because no interpretation was provided - was so insincere that he ended up making matters worse.

In its first public response, the IOC issued a press release on February 4 in which it noted Mori's apology and haughtily declared the matter closed. But by now, Mori had managed to alienate the Japanese media to such an extent that even the Olympic organizing committee was unable to come to his rescue.

Before he officially resigned, Mori attempted to appoint his own replacement - Saburo Kawabuchi, a fellow octogenarian and "mayor" of the Tokyo 2020 athletes' village. The Japanese media issued news flashes that all but confirmed that Kawabuchi would succeed Mori as head of the Olympic committee. Few in the Japanese media appeared to believe there was anything untoward about the manner of his appointment.

It took an intervention from the prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, and other government official to block Kawabuchi's anointment and call for a more transparent transfer of power. But here, too, the organizing committee came up short. The selection process, conducted by a hastily formed panel, was opaque, and Seiko Hashimoto's quick emergence as the frontrunner - probably via official leaks - only go to show that if the Mori episode shone a light on sexism, it also exposed poor standards of governance at the heart of Japan's Olympic movement.

● Karyn Nishimura is a correspondent for the French daily newspaper *Libération* and *Radio France*

FEATURE

DOWN THE GARDEN PATH

WHEN “WEIRD” JAPAN CATCHES OUT
CORRESPONDENTS – AND FOOLS
THEIR AUDIENCE



CHARACTERS USED ONLY FOR EDITORIAL PURPOSE.

DAVID MCNEILL

A now infamous 2018 article in the *New Yorker* headlined “Japan’s Rent-A-Family Industry” features people who, with no relatives of their own, are happy to pay for the company of complete strangers.

Before you can get to the piece by award-winning staff writer Elif Batuman, however, a long editor’s note warns that the credibility of its key sources has been “broadly undermined.” It turns out that supposedly lonely clients of a firm called Family Romance, which rents out actors to play wives and children, were in fact married. In January, the *New Yorker* admitted Batuman had been hoodwinked and returned a National Magazine Award, the Oscar of the American magazine industry.

Among those pouring salt on the *New Yorker*’s wounds, the *New Republic* asked how “such a skewed depiction of a country sailed right over the heads of writers, fact-checkers, editors, and award-givers alike”. While acknowledging that, unlike previous journalistic fraud at the *New York Times*, the *Atlantic*, and, indeed, the *New Republic*, Batuman was as much as a victim as perpetrator (her sources had repeatedly lied to her - though she apparently ignored nagging doubts about their veracity), her piece belonged to a “tiresome journalistic genre”, lamented writer Ryu Spaeth. In the Western imagination, he said, “Japan is rife with shut-ins, celibates, loners and obsessive geeks”, a place where Western writers and correspondents play up

DOWN THE GARDEN PATH

The problem, says Chie Matsumoto, who has worked as a fixer with dozens of foreign journalists, is often not the local beat reporters but editorial desks thousands of miles away. Her heart sinks when editors call asking for quirky Japan stories, which she says are often the “door into more interesting stories”, if only editors would listen.

the oddness of Japan as they project their own concerns about the atomization of modern life and the dissolution of the family.

Batuman was not alone in being fooled by her interviewees. Japanese media companies fell victim to the plausible charms of Yuichi Ishii, the man who runs Family Romance. In 2019, NHK World produced a show in which a “client” (later proved to be an actor) had rented a wife, son and daughter from Ishii’s company. Ishii also appeared in at least one Japanese documentary, and his unusual services were featured in the surreal 2019 tragicomedy “Family Romance” by Werner Herzog. The *New Yorker* is more alert than most to accusations of objectifying Japan. A recent piece notes, for example, that Japanese actors in Western movies about the country are “either sterile, or soapy and naked, or satirized as types: a bowing suit, a kimono clutching a designer handbag”.

All the same, the suspicion persists that editors, even at highbrow publications, are more willing to drop their journalistic guard when it comes to Japan, or that their default setting is to presume every odd rumor about it is true - until proved otherwise.

Among the more notorious examples was eyeball licking among Japanese teenagers for “erotic gratification,” widely reported in the British media in 2013. The story, which is still on the websites of several newspapers (though it did elicit a detailed *mea culpa* from the *Guardian*) was traced by former FCCJ stalwart Mark Schreiber to a single article, based on a single anonymous source on *Bucchi News*, a site for subculture enthusiasts. The source was a “teacher.” A website (Naver Matome) copied the story, cherry-picking the more salacious bits and embellishing them.

Similarly colorful, and improbable, stories about Japan abound. In 2007, the British tabloid *The Sun* and other foreign newspapers reported how thousands of gullible Japanese doglovers had handed over as much as ¥150,000 pedigree poodles that were, in fact, cleverly disguised sheep.

The scam was uncovered when the owner of a sickly “toy poodle” that refused to bark took it to a vet, who delivered the bad news that the malingering pooch was, in fact, a lamb. The details of the story were, well, woolly. For a start, lambs don’t act or look like poodles, even in tabloid newspapers. The story was traced

back to film star Maiko Kawakami. Stuck for a yarn during an appearance on a TV show, she had told a version of the story after overhearing it “from a friend of a customer” in a beauty salon. “I was amazed to see what I’d heard reported all over the world,” she said.

The problem, says Chie Matsumoto, who has worked as a fixer with dozens of foreign journalists, is often not the local beat reporters but editorial desks thousands of miles away. Her heart sinks when editors call asking for quirky Japan stories, which she says are often the “door into more interesting stories”, if only editors would listen. “Robots, the sex industry, pedophilia, sex dolls, cosplay, manga culture, groping - they all exist,” she says. “But there is a reason behind that quiriness, which exists in every culture and country. We need to dig into it, because we’re journalists, not entertainers.” Matsumoto recalls trying to argue this point with a former editor, who told her: ‘Well, that’s what people want to read’. Says Matsumoto: “I think Ishii (of Family Romance) feeds off that attention and the foreign media.”

The Japanese media can play this game too, of course. Over the years, Japanese people have been treated to TV stories on Jack the Ripper and his links to Queen Victoria, the “faked” 1969 moon landing, Princess Diana’s murder by MI5, and magazine articles on “Jewish conspiracies” to control the Japanese economy.

The overwhelmingly negative coverage of whaling in the Western media was often shal- lowly framed as cultural imperialism. Then there was the story of yakuza conspiring with the Russian secret services to alter the weather in the U.S. via a “weather-control” system leased from the Russians.

Much of this is arguably harmless, but there is a more sinister element to foreign coverage of Japan.

In many stories carried by international coverage of the murder of British teacher Lindsay Hawker in 2007, Tatsuya Ishihashi, the man eventually convicted of killing her, came to represent creepy Japanese men, casting sly looks at the unattainable Western fantasy female. Foreign journalists covering the story for British tabloids were inexplicably sent to interview white hostesses in Roppongi. The *Daily Mail* said that many of the hostesses were also worried about “weird” Japanese men. “While some British women described the attitude of the

DOWN THE GARDEN PATH

“While some British women described the attitude of the men they encounter here as strange, uncomfortable and unpredictable, others talked of the awe and mystique the “taller, more liberated” Western women hold for the Japanese male,” the reporter wrote. “They want you to belong to them, but there is a frustration there because they know they can’t have you,” said one hostess.

men they encounter here as strange, uncomfortable and unpredictable, others talked of the awe and mystique the “taller, more liberated” Western women hold for the Japanese male,” the reporter wrote. “They want you to belong to them, but there is a frustration there because they know they can’t have you,” said one hostess. Another said: “The Japanese are so very different to us that I wonder if we will ever really understand them”.

The helpless British woman, all alone in a terra incognita of menacing Japanese, was a staple of several stories about the murder. Sharon Flaherty described how she was stalked by a man with “cold black eyes” while teaching English in Tottori Prefecture, where the men “ogle all the Western women and wouldn’t look away even when they were obviously not enjoying the attention”. No Japanese voice was allowed to interrupt the sinister narrative. It was widely reported (without evidence) that Hawker planned to leave Tokyo because she was uncomfortable around Japanese men. It’s hard to avoid concluding that such stories are profoundly prejudiced.

Every culture has its idiosyncrasies, cubbyholes and dark corners - the writer’s trick is covering them in a way that treats the subject with respect, while also providing a good read. As Spaeth noted in the *New Republic*, Americans, too, are having less sex, or kinkier sex, dying alone and killing themselves in record numbers. “Yet I don’t get the sense reading these stories that these trends are indicative of the fathomless mysteries of the American soul but rather the product of identifiable material and social circumstances.” Trying to get space from a harried British editor, however, to explain the background to quirky or controversial phenomena in Japan can be a struggle.

My old newspaper, the *Independent*, was not terribly interested in the nuances of whaling, as I found in 2006, during a reporting trip to St. Kitts for the annual conference of the International Whaling Commission. The conference included a discussion on Japan’s plan to kill 50 humpback whales. I wrote an article explaining that the plan may have been a negotiating tactic by Japanese delegates to boost its quota for whales (such as minke). My copy was sent to London where it was transformed. Out went my arguments, and in went “outrage” by Australia and other anti-whaling countries that Japan would press ahead with the killing of humpback whales (it never did). The word “slaughter” appeared three times in 500 words.

Over time, I grew so frustrated by the vitriol of the whaling debate and the niggling worry that I - however inadvertently - was contributing to it that I spent weeks talking to experts, scientists and politicians to try to explain the driving force behind the pro-whaling campaign, which seemed to come down to wounded national pride. Yasukazu Hamada, then a leading member of the Parliamentary Whaling League, said. “I think whaling is the *only* issue that shows Japanese diplomacy can achieve something when it sticks to its guns. Usually for Japan in relation to China and other countries, all the diplomatic cards tend to be held by our opponents. The whale negotiations are the only area where Japan can take the initiative.”

I wrote up the article for my newspaper. The following day I got a note from my editor. He couldn’t run the piece because it was “too pro-whaling”.

Ironically, Batuman’s article *was* an attempt to contextualize a potentially sensationalist subject. She spent months researching it, trying to bring out the humanity of people who use the rent-a-family service, and was by all accounts mortified that she had been duped. In her last tweet, in 2018, she wrote that she was going hide in the wilderness and avoid social media. As Matsumoto notes, there is only so much you can do when a source is intent on lying.

● David McNeill is professor of communications and English at University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo, and co-chair of the FCCJ’s Professional Activities Committee. He was previously a correspondent for the *Independent*, the *Economist* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

FEATURE

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

FROM TRAVEL TO FOOD, YOUTUBERS
SHARE THEIR JAPAN OBSESSIONS



FRED VARCOE

In the old days, if you wanted to find out about a country or culture, you would probably have bought a book or a magazine. Now the internet will tell you everything you need to know, things you don't need to know and things that aren't remotely true. When I say "the internet," I really mean Wikipedia or the websites of English tabloid newspapers. But it could be argued that the go-to reference library is now YouTube.

YouTube delves into areas that simple images or minute-long videos, which you might find on Instagram, rarely reach. For a start, YouTube videos are usually long. The standard is 10 minutes as that triggers advertising, but good vloggers might go to 20 or 30 minutes and live streams even longer. Secondly, people talk to you, either directly or by voiceover. The success of a YouTube channel is

often down to its presenter's appearance and character. So, to some extent, it's a young person's medium. Thirdly, and somewhat obviously, you get video. Vloggers are basically documentary makers and entertainers, often rolled into one. They educate (hopefully) and they entertain.

And it's easy to grasp the extent of their appeal. While English-language media such as the *Japan Times* or the *Japan News* might have 100,000 readers, Chris Broad, arguably the top foreign YouTuber based in Japan with his "Abroad In Japan" channel, has over 2 million subscribers. Many of his videos get millions of views and his total viewing figures to date exceed a quarter of a billion. But he's not the only YouTuber with a huge following.

Trash Taste (800,000 subscribers) is a video podcast by three well-known YouTubers inspired

Top image: The "Trash Taste" trio of Garnt (left), Joey (right) and Connor (second from right) explore Japanese culture in a swearsy YouTube podcast. Between them, they have 8 million subscribers.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE



▲ **Bilingual Japanese comedian Meshida pushes the envelope as he focuses more on the seedy side of Japan with a brutal sense of humor, and occasionally brutal English.**

by Japanese culture (anime, manga, cosplay, Takeshi's Castle) who have gravitated to Japan. Japanese-Australian Joey, "The Anime Man," has nearly 3 million subscribers, Briton Connor ("CDawg") has close to 2 million and Thai-Brit Garnt ("Gigguk") has almost 3 million. That's a huge media outreach and a fairly obvious reason why these people are called "influencers".

Ah, you say, but they're not journalists. Maybe that's the point and actually the key to their popularity. Too many outside observers of Japan - print, TV, movies, YouTube - focus on the same narrow points of interest: weird sex, weird TV, weird food, weird people. Legendary English DJ John Peel once described Japan this way: "It's as near as you can get on this planet to being on another planet." So perhaps the obsession with alien concepts is not really surprising. Some YouTubers play to their audiences and this can lead to drivel, while others go where the mainstream fears to tread.

YouTubers naturally gravitate toward the weird side of Japan. CDawg seems to be cornering this market as he's pretty much open to trying anything, and damn the consequences. Englishman Broad, who has serious ambitions to be a filmmaker, seems to be more protective of his image, but still manages to cover a wide range of topics without compromising on content and humor while remaining politely English.

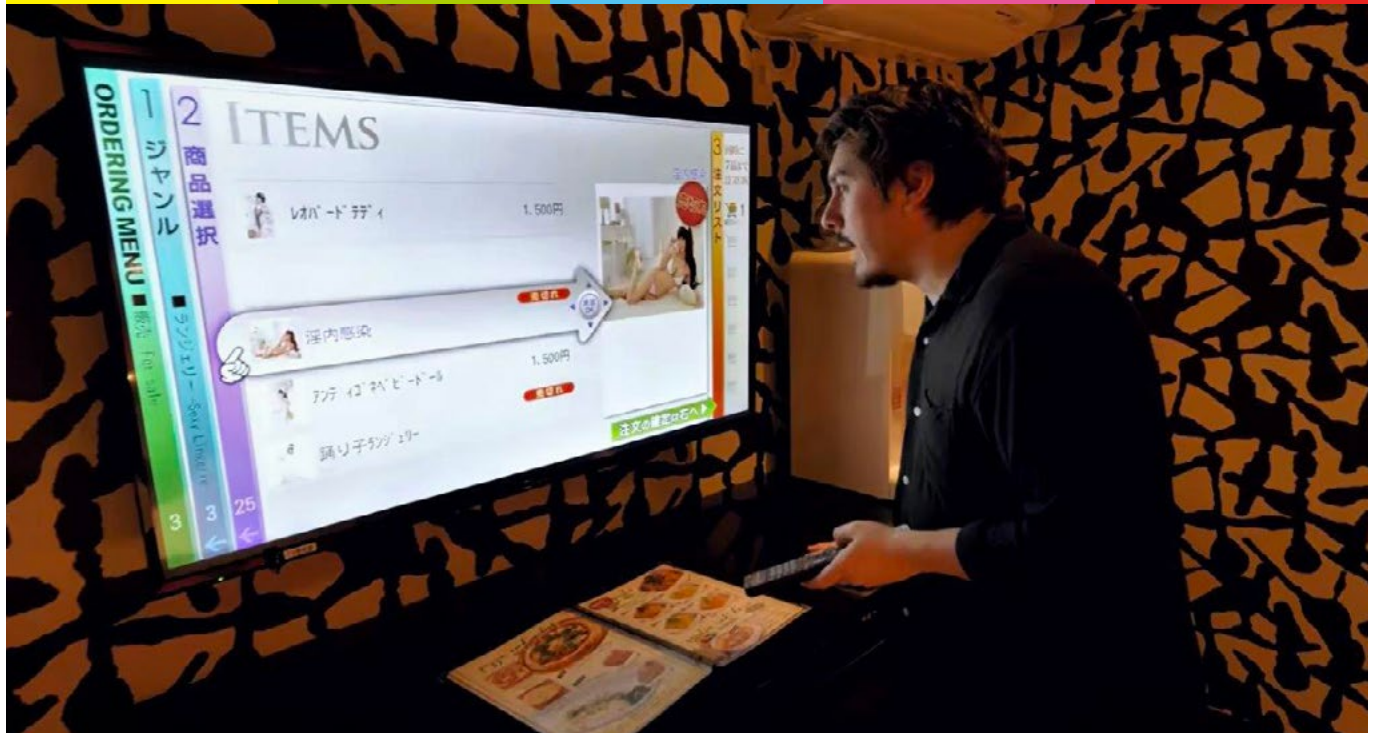
The Trash Taste trio, on the other hand, are happy to swear their way through their podcasts.

But the queen of potty-mouthed content is Garnt's partner, Sydney ("Sydsnap"), a blond American anime/manga/gaming follower who vulgarizes her way through her videos. "I cherish anime titties like I cherish my own life," she blurts out in one expletive-filled video. What's not to like?

Going beyond the voyeurism of most YouTubers is June Lovejoy, a bilingual American adult film actor plying her trade in Japan. Not your cup of tea, you might think, but on her YouTube channel, Lovejoy delves into Japan pornography industry via some excellent interviews with actors and directors. You have to move past her squeaky voice, but the (usually) bilingual content does a good job of revealing the reality of the lives of Japan's pornography actors and directors.

YouTubers do try to tackle serious issues. It was surprising to see a recent report by an anime YouTuber ("Akidearest") on notorious child-killer Tsutomu Miyazaki. It's also been reassuring to see English-speaking Japanese YouTubers tackle issues in their own country. Leading the field in this category are "That Japanese Man Yuta," "Nobita from Japan" and "Let's ask Shogo - Your Japanese friend in Kyoto," three somewhat serious men - irritatingly so, in truth - who tackle issues such as

UNDER THE INFLUENCE



▲ Top image: Chris Broad's "Abroad in Japan" channel has over 2 million subscribers. Bottom: Cathy Cat has her own channel and also appears in "Ask Japanese," exploring various aspects of Japanese life.

racism, education, prostitution, LGBTQ+ issues, the police, and so on. Taking a very different approach is Japanese stand-up comedian Meshida, who tackles mainly off-color issues with equally off-color humor.

Moving upscale in terms of documentary quality, "Paulo from TOKYO" (1.96 million subscribers), "Life Where I'm From" (1.42 million) and "Tokyo Lens" (206,000) have some excellent content on life and travel in Japan. Photographer Norm Nakamura, the guy behind "Tokyo Lens," may have the edge in quality production, but Paolo's slick "Day in the Life" series has attracted up to 12 million views for a single video. Also, keep an eye out for "Tokyo Dealer,"

a relatively new channel started by two young bilingual Japanese guys with some thoughtful and visually fantastic video reports.

Moving down the food chain, some presenters lack charisma and on-screen charm, while others are just a little too much into Japan (Cathy Cat on "Ask Japanese") or come across as amateurish. But with some creators attracting huge amounts of views - in the millions for the most popular ones - English-language YouTube reports on Japan can't be ignored. They are opening up Japan in ways that the print media can't do, and which TV and movies have tried, but failed to do (don't get me started on "Lost in Translation"). The reason is that YouTubers aren't mainstream, although the more creators rely on sponsorship and subscribers, the less likely it is that they will want to rock the boat. Politics is notable by its absence, but then that's probably not what the YouTube audience is looking for. And the YouTube audience is something that can no longer be ignored or dismissed as frivolous. This is a serious business.

● Fred Varcoe is a British freelance journalist. He was formerly sports editor of the *Japan Times* and *Metropolis* magazine, and has written on sports, music, cars and other topics for the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail*, *Billboard*, *Automobile Year*, *Reuters*, the *Japan Football Association*, the *International Volleyball Association* and various websites.

CLUB NEWS

LUNCH WITH SHAKESPEARE

CLUB EVENTS CELEBRATING THE BARD
ARE MUCH ADO ABOUT SOMETHING



From left: Haruko Watanabe (SPC Chair) Elizabeth Handover (actor), Geoffrey Tudor (coordinator)

HARUKO WATANABE

On April 24, the day after the Bard's birthday, the FCCJ's long-running Shakespeare lunch lecture series will begin showing its second round of programmes from the BBC's Shakespeare DVD collection, with Japanese subtitles provided by Yushi Odajima, a leading drama critic and professor emeritus at Waseda University. This will allow audiences to follow the English audio and refer to the subtitles if and when their English fails them.

I acquired the DVD collection - a genuine BBC treasure - and used them as the basis for a cultural program, Saturday Lunch with Shakespeare, under the umbrella of the Special Projects Committee.

Opening night Macbeth

The committee launched the series on April 21st, 2012, with *Macbeth* - often referred to as the "Scottish play" to avoid bad luck - with Makoto Ozaki, professor emeritus of Doshisha Women's College and the then president of the Japan Shakespeare Globe Center attending as a special guest. Professor Ozaki was my classmate when I was an undergraduate student and attended an English drama class at Kyoto's co-ed Doshisha University.

I am personally and professionally in love with the Bard of Avon. My deep admiration for the playwright runs through my family. My father, a banker, loved both Western and Japanese theater - so much so that

LUNCH WITH SHAKESPEARE



PHOTO BY KAORU ICHIKAWA

▲
From left: Andrew Horvat, Paul Snowden, Geoffrey Tudor, James House, David Nolan, John Bamforth, Stuart Varnam-Atkin

he would often quote Shakespeare and kabuki plays in daily conversation.

He collected all of the translations by Shoyo Tsubouchi of the complete works of Shakespeare, published in 1935 by Chuo Koronsha. I started reading some of them when I was learning how to read, as there were hardly any new books for young children after the end of the war.

As a student at Doshisha, I turned part of Macbeth into a Noh play as a class term paper. I later found a similar presentation in Akira Kurosawa's film *Kumonosu-jo* (Cobweb Castle) and, in my youthful naivety, convinced myself that he had stolen my idea.

Shakespeare's works, of course, lend themselves to myriad forms, encompassing all of the performing arts. Take *West Side Story*, a modern reinterpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Professor Ozaki, now one of Japan's leading scholars of Shakespeare, shared my passion for Macbeth and agreed to be a guest at the lunch series' inaugural screening and help the committee launch this special cultural program.

Bard-inspired lunch

When I initiated this program, I decided it should observe two principles: to be enjoyable for people of all ages, and to include a lunch menu inspired by the Shakespeare play to be screened that day.

Geoffrey Tudor, an FCCJ life member and formerly international public relations director of Japan Airlines, kindly advised the chef on how the menu should be put together, including locally sourced ingredients that could be substituted for those not available in Japan. The menu for *Henry VI Part III*, for example, included cock-a-leekie soup, with Tudor on hand to explain the meaning of "leekie" to a relieved chef.

Tudor has several reasons for supporting the Shakespeare lunched over the years. "It's impossible to ignore Shakespeare as he lies at the heart of the English language, which for practical purposes is the language of the FCCJ," he said.

"And many Japanese associate members studied English and formed a love for the great poet. Our Shakespeare program is a wel-

LUNCH WITH SHAKESPEARE

►
An ad for the Club's 2019 screening of *The Taming of the Shrew*

Saturday Lunch with Shakespeare
"The Taming of the Shrew"
February 16, 2019

Mixed Salad with Italian Vinegar dressing
ミックスサラダ キャンティワインドレッシング添え

Roast pork with rosemary roast potatoes
トスカーナ風ローストポーク ローズマリー風味ポテト付

Panna Cotta with fresh fruit
パンナコッタ フルーツ添え

Coffee or Tea
コーヒー又は紅茶

BEVERAGE

● Draft Beer ¥600	● Sparkling Wine ¥700
● Red Wine ¥600	● Mulled Wine ¥600
● White Wine ¥600	(Hot Wine)
● Orange Juice ¥400	● Oolong Tea ¥400

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan
公益社団法人 日本外国特派員協会

come opportunity for them to maintain their language and cultural interest. And finally, foreign members who teach in Japanese universities can use this program as an excellent chance to enhance their English studies and help their students."

We both believe that the lunch program is in keeping with the club's official status as a public interest organization.

Tudor said his favourite play, *Richard III*, "sets the record straight by proving that "Tricky Dicky" truly was a nasty piece of work, despite post-1485 Yorkist attempts to whitewash his image. I have an interest in fair play, but these Yorkist claims were little more than anti-Tudor ploys to give Henry VII a bad name".

Oxbridge connection

We have been fortunate enough to welcome two distinguished lecturers over the years: Paul Snowden and Stuart Varnam-Atkin.

Snowden, a Cambridge graduate and professor emeritus at Waseda University, has a distinguished background in liberal arts and college administration, and his expertise is in great demand in Japan and overseas. But it is his love for Shakespeare that has brought him to the FCCJ.

His favorite Shakespeare play is Macbeth, one of the first plays he studied in depth at grammar school, and he played Banquo in a school performance when he was 17.

Varnam-Atkin, an Oxford graduate, has given several lectures at the lunch event. An actor, director and playwright, he can be heard commenting on grand sumo for NHK World.

Varnam-Atkin grew up in Warwickshire, not far from Shakespeare's birthplace Stratford-upon-Avon, and, accompanied by his parents, made childhood visits to Royal Shakespeare Company productions that included up-and-coming actors who would later become international stars, including Judi Dench, Ian Holm, Ian McKellen, Helen Mirren and Patrick Stewart.

His own acting talent comes to the fore during his masterful introductions to the plays, when he transforms himself into characters apparently on a whim, much to the delight of his audience.

Cake and ale

Our Shakespeare lunch-goers are to be found outside Tokyo, including those who come all the way from Kansai to attend. Most are former members of English literature departments and the English-speaking society at Doshisha, and see the lunches as a quarterly meeting of alumni where they can indulge their love of Shakespeare and brush up their English.

The food and drink on offer at the FCCJ restaurant have helped make these gatherings even more enjoyable. One of our associate members, a female executive at a trading company, said she had finally found somewhere to study Shakespeare and enjoy good food. "My college days, when I crammed using books and dictionaries, are over. Now I can relax and watch performances by the best Shakespearean actors on DVD while enjoying the food."

If pandemic measures allow, the committee plans to screen *The Merchant of Venice*, accompanied by Italian cuisine, on April 24th, while *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with a Greek lunch, is in the works for June. We are also looking at possible dates for *The Taming of the Shrew*. We look forward to getting back to the pre-coronavirus days, when each screening attracted about 50 people, united by a love of Shakespeare.

● Haruko Watanabe is president of HKW, a former Tokyo bureau chief of the Press Foundation of Asia, and chair of the FCCJ Special Projects Committee.

"My college days, when I crammed using books and dictionaries, are over. Now I can relax and watch performances by the best Shakespearean actors on DVD while enjoying the food."

CLUB NEWS

New members

**REGULAR MEMBER**

JINHEE LEE is NurPhoto Agency's contributor, covering politics, society and culture. Before joining NurPhoto, he covered North Korean community in Japan as a fixer. He earned a M.A. in socio-information and communication

studies from The University of Tokyo and started his career as a news writer for the *Ryukyu Shimpo*, Okinawa's most widely-read broadsheet. His writing now appears in domestic news outlets, including Shueisha imidas, Fusosha Harbor Business Online, among others. He is a third generation ethnic Korean resident in Japan.

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATE MEMBER**

SHINTARO KANO is a producer/reporter for the Olympic Channel (<https://www.olympicchannel.com/en/>), fronting the coverage in Japan ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games for the official media of the Games since June

2019. He previously spent 21 years covering sports for Kyodo News, the *Daily Yomiuri* (now the *Japan News*) and the *Asahi Evening News* (International Herald Tribune/*Asahi Shimbun*). He has covered every soccer World Cup since 2002, the last four Olympics and three Rugby World Cups. Shintaro has worked in an official capacity for World Rugby, the Asian Football Confederation and Japan Racing Association, while contributing to the Associated Press, *Time* magazine and *Sports Illustrated*. Born in Tokyo, he was educated at Columbia University, New York University and the American School in Japan before beginning his career in 1998.

**REGULAR MEMBER**

TADAO ONAGA, senior diplomatic writer for the *Asahi Shimbun*, has been the newspaper's foreign news editor since October 2020.

He was deputy editor of foreign news from July 2018 to September 2018,

and served as the Middle East and Africa editor, including a stint as as Cairo bureau chief from September 2014 to June 2018. He is also a former Jakarta bureau chief. Onaga joined the *Asahi* in 1990 after completing his B.A economics at the University of Tokyo. From 1998 to 1999 he studied Indonesian at the University of Indonesia. He has covered many regional issues, including the first general election after the fall of the Soeharto regime the independence referendum in East Timor as well and the conflicts in Aceh province. He returned to Japan in July 2000 to cover domestic issues as a staff writer in Osaka and Hiroshimam, where he wrote about local politics and survivors of the atomic bombing. Onaga is married with two children.

**ASSOCIATE MEMBER**

KAZUHIKO WATANABE worked in the banking sector for more than 20 years, and as an economist in Tokyo and London. He counts many journalists among his acquaintances and understands the pressure of a looming

deadline. Watanabe is a regular visitor to the FCCJ main bar, usually at the invitation of his *senpai*. He is delighted to join a club that hosts important press events and serves good food.

Daruma Ceremony

The FCCJ Board and staff are all working hard to make sure the Club continues to thrive during the pandemic. But, just to be on the safe side, we decided to ask the Daruma to help us out. We plan to paint in the other eye when the pandemic is fully under control.

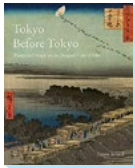
From left: Peter Langan (former FCCJ President), Mary Corbett (Director), Vicki L. Beyer (Kanji), Isabel Reynolds (FCCJ President), Gregory Clark (Kanji) and Walter Sim (Second Vice President)



CLUB NEWS

New in the library

1



Tokyo Before Tokyo: Power and Magic in the Shogun's City of Edo

Timon Screech

Reaktion Books

Gift from Timon Screech

2



Memoirs of a Kamikaze: A World War II Pilot's Inspiring Story of Survival, Honor and Reconciliation

Kazuo Odachi; Shigeru Ohta; Hiroyoshi Nishijima; Alexander Bennett (trans.); Shigeru Ohta (trans.)

Tuttle Publishing

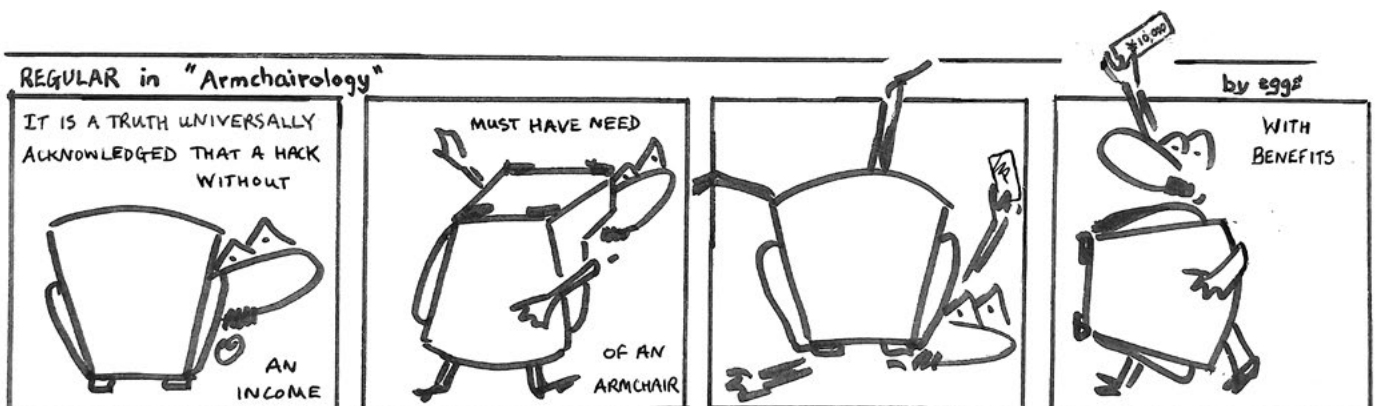
Join the Film Committee...



©KOWATANDA FILMS

On Thursday, March 11 at 6 pm for a sneak preview screening of *Kontora*, the first Japanese film to receive the Grand Prize at the venerable Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival (PÖFF). Made in Japan, in Japanese, by a mostly Japanese cast and crew, the film was helmed by a professional Indian animator and shot by an Estonian cinematographer, and it went on to receive major awards at the Osaka Asian Film Festival and the Skip City International D-Cinema Festival, as well as winning the inaugural Obayashi Prize (named after late, great filmmaker Nobuhiko Obayashi) at Japan Cuts in New York City. The hauntingly monochrome *Kontora* is both a richly layered family drama and an allegorical depiction of the inextricable ties binding past to present, and features one of cinema's oddest-ever characters, a man (Hidemasa Mase) who walks backwards. This enigmatic stranger appears one day in the rural backwater where Sora (Wan Marui) is hunting for buried treasure after reading her grandfather's WWII journal, and each will change the other's life. Director Anshul Chauhan and his two stars, Marui and Mase, will be joining us for the Q&A session. (*Kontora*, Japan, 2019, 144 minutes, in Japanese with English subtitles).

● Karen Severns



EXHIBITION

AN OATH WITH TOMODACHI

**EXHIBITION ORGANIZED BY
JAPAN DISASTER RECOVERY SUPPORT
MARCH 8 - APRIL 2, 2021**

To mark the 10th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake, we will exhibit about 25 photos showing scenes of devastation in the disaster-hit region. Selected from more than 2,000 photographs, these images have been kept as internal records of relief activities conducted by the Japanese Self-Defense Forces and U.S. Forces in Japan. The exhibition is an expression of gratitude to all those who took part in relief activities, and a reminder of the importance of preparing for disasters.

The exhibition is supported by the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, the Reconstruction Agency, the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense.



EXHIBITION

An Oath with Tomodachi: March 8 - April 2, 2021



EXHIBITION

An Oath with Tomodachi: March 8 - April 2, 2021





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