

Keeping Japan on the Map

*A Conference in Celebration of the Sasakawa Lectureship Programme
and the breadth of Japanese Studies in the UK today*

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Birkbeck College, University of London
Room B04
43 Gordon Square, London WC1H

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 1: Gender

Dr Sharon KINSELLA, University of Manchester

Contemporary Trends in Transvestism: josōko, cross-play, visual-kei, the Desire for Vicarious Femininity

Risk-taking male figures of postwar music, dance, and art scenes, from transgender singer and actor Miwa Akihiko and *butō* dancer Hijikata Tatsumi to artists Yasumasa Morimura, Aida Makoto, and Nara Yoshitomo have made female drag integral to their work. Female impersonation on the bohemian fringe has been so naturalized it has attracted little notice. From the mid-1990s the transvestite urge appeared to diversify and increase in visibility in cross-play, visual-kei bands, in from the 2000s in josōko cross-play subculture, and in transvestite presentation in mass entertainment and *josō shōnen manga* targeted at mass readerships of teenage boys. What is the context for the popular appeal and tension of cross-dress looks? Does *josō* represent gender liberation or the further colonisation of female performance and sensibility?

Dr Sharon Kinsella

Dr Ekaterina HERTOG, Oxford University

Negotiating Work and Family Balance in Lonely Heart Ads

Academic literature has noted a connection between employment and marriageability at least since the 1980s. For men, a stable job has been seen as a necessary condition for marriageability. A better job has been shown to add to a man's desirability in the marriage market. The link between employment and marriageability is more complex for women and varies across different cultures. Women's economic resources, such as education, earnings and employment status, have been found to be positively associated with marriage in several Western countries, such as the U.S., Sweden and Australia, but negatively associated with marriage in Japan. Schoppa has speculated that many successful Japanese women on high incomes delay or forego marriage because they choose either a career or a family, and has linked this situation to the continuing decline in the Japanese birth rate. Existing research is based exclusively on quantitative data which links employment to the likelihood of marriage but tells us little about the mechanisms behind this connection, the differences between men and women as well as between cultures. In this paper I will use qualitative analysis of lonely heart ads placed by the customers of a large Japanese marriage agency to analyse the link between employment and marriageability in contemporary Japan.

Dr Ekaterina Hertog

Dr Ulrich HEINZE, University of East Anglia

Gendering Death: Concepts of Passing Away in Japanese Manga

Death in Japan is often seen to have a culture-bound and even ritualised form: *harakiri* and *seppuku*, suicide and group-suicide, 'otaku murders' and *Battle Royale*. This paper reinforces this prejudice, looking at the *manga Death Note* by Ohba Tsugumi and *Ikigami* by Mase Motorō, and compares their depiction of death to Norbert Elias' theory of dying. While for Elias, after the 'civilising process' loneliness is the core feature of the normal and normative death in modern society, Japanese society obviously upholds a direct and exclusive relationship with the experience of dying. While destiny and sacrifice are accepted in a *shōganai*-posture, the decision to (let) die also enables and empowers the individual to regain his/her (limited) control of (limited) life. Close encounter with death therefore implies intensive living, and only the readiness to die makes survival possible. The success of the 'nekrophile' *manga* is therefore based on the 'non-Eliasian' shared experience of an extreme emotion.

Dr Ulrich Heinze

PANEL 2: Health, Safety and Old Age in Japan

Dr Louella MATSUNAGA, Oxford Brookes University

Negotiating the Unusual, Classifying the Unnatural: Reporting Hospital Deaths in Japan and England

This paper will compare the ways in which death in hospital is reported and investigated in Japan and in England. A key issue here is the ways in which deaths are classified as 'unusual' or 'unnatural', and the problems surrounding the definitions of these categories in the context of increasingly complex medical interventions in a hospital setting. The paper goes on to consider the consequences of classifying deaths as 'unusual' or 'unnatural', and compares the legal frameworks for death reporting in Japan and England. I argue that both countries face some similar problems, and that the reporting process always and inevitably entails ambiguity and negotiation. However, the locus of ambiguity differs, and this has some important consequences for the negotiation of death reporting among those involved – including medical professionals, bereaved relatives, and those charged with investigating these deaths. A comparison of the two cases, and in particular of areas of ambiguity, helps to highlight the particularities in the ways in which the relationships of those involved are configured, and the assumptions underlying the process of death reporting and investigation.

Dr Louella Matsunaga

Dr Junko YAMASHITA, University of Bristol

De-Familialisation of Elderly Care? Exploring Long Term Care Policy Reform in Japan and England

In the last two decades, the personalisation of care services has been high on the policy agenda in both Japan and England. Both societies have developed long-term care schemes designed to increase the choice and control of elderly people and their carers over access to and provision of care services. This agenda responds not only to an ageing population but also addresses the increasing cost of health and social care. In this context, this paper provides a comparative analysis of the current direction of the 'personalisation of care' agenda in Japan under the Long Term Care Act 2000 (and its subsequent reforms) and in England with the Individual Budget scheme piloted since 2006. In particular, the comparative analysis explores two relevant areas of the personalisation agenda: 1) differentiated concepts and meanings of 'personalisation' in the two schemes and 2) the position and recognition of informal carers. This paper will also focus on how the differentiated directions within the personalisation between the two societies impact upon the role of informal care, more precisely family care.

Dr Junko Yamashita

Dr Maki UMEMURA, Cardiff University

Modernising Tradition? The Decline and Revival of Kampō Medicine in Japan, 1874-2000

This paper examines the history of Japan's traditional medicines since the late 19th century. *Kampō*, a localised version of traditional Chinese medicine, had been Japan's traditional medicine for over a millennium. Following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan began a rapid programme of Westernisation and modernisation that included *Kampō's* replacement by Western style medicine. After 1874, only physicians trained in Western style medicine were permitted to practice in Japan. But the type of traditional medicines used in Japan before the Meiji Restoration continued to be consumed. *Kampō* revived in the decades after World War II. The resurgence

of *Kampō* medicines was due to a combination of factors, including the realisation of limitations to Western medicines following drug tragedies such as the thalidomide; the development of technologies to mass produce standardised versions of *Kampō* medicines; and the government's 1976 decision to recognise *Kampō* medicines as legitimate prescription drugs. My research aim is to provide a comprehensive multifactorial explanation for the fall and rise of traditional medicines in modern Japan.

Dr Maki Umemura

PANEL 3: Japanese Economy Past and Present

Dr Harald CONRAD, University of Sheffield

Recent Occupational Pension Reforms in Japan

This paper analyses changes in occupational pension provision in medium- and large-sized Japanese firms since the early 2000s. Japanese occupational pensions are for two reasons a fruitful subject of research: first, occupational pensions are an important part of Japanese compensation systems and have been closely linked to seniority-oriented pay practices as an important feature of the Japanese employment system; second, Japanese occupational pensions are, as in many other countries, highly regulated by the state and have been institutionally integrated with the public social security system. Changes in these arrangements are thus significant for our understanding of the nature of evolving interdependencies and reconfigured relationships of Japanese firms with institutions inside and outside the firm. Besides Japanese secondary statistical, ministerial and academic sources, this paper is primarily based on an analysis of semi-structured interviews with human resource managers of medium- and large-sized Japanese companies, labor union officials, experts in governmental and semi-governmental institutions, actuaries, as well as pension and human resource management experts from research and academic institutions.

Dr Harald Conrad

Dr Christopher GERTEIS, School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London

Mirror of an Uncertain Age - Japan at the Dawn of the Post-Industrial Era

Along with the decline of the Japanese economy in the 1990s there also seems to have disappeared much of the interest about Japan that had emerged during the boom years of the 1980s. The inability of Japanese politicians to cope with the past twenty years of economic recession and recent fears over looming demographic shifts precipitated a sense of crisis that has caused many to reconsider Japan's postwar rise to affluence. But 'Japan (still) matters'. Media attention during the global financial crisis in 2008, for example, brought to bear a great deal of commentary as to what lessons could be learned from Japan. Moving beyond the popular framework of the 'lost decade', Japanese recent history offers insight into the significant changes in economy and society experienced by all industrialised nations. There is yet much to be learned from the mistakes and successes of the country that still features the second largest GDP in East Asia (and third largest in the world). This talk will introduce some of the ways in which the scholars included in the volume currently being edited by the presenter seek to examine the historical, social, cultural, and political underpinnings of Japan's post-industrial trajectory.

Dr Christopher Gerteis

Dr Martin DUSINBERRE, University of Newcastle

Rescuing History from the Local: History, Memory and Nuclear Politics in Japan

In light of the Fukushima nuclear crisis, much attention has been paid to the rise of the nuclear power industry in postwar Japan, and especially to issues of safety management. This paper focuses on Kaminoseki town, the proposed site of Japan's newest nuclear power plant, in order to offer a different perspective on nuclear debates in postwar Japan. In particular, it argues that our understanding of those nuclear debates at a local level needs to acknowledge the extent to which historical memory has been manipulated by both the pro- and anti-nuclear lobbies, such that nuclear power in Japan has become much more than a debate merely about safety. While scholars of contemporary Japan regularly examine memory issues in terms of the 'history problem' and the Second World War, this paper instead offers a case study of local memory construction - a phenomenon that is crucial to our understanding of Japan's current 'uncertain age'.

Dr Martin Dusinberre

PANEL 4: Media and Popular Culture

Dr Nana SATO-ROSSBERG, University of East Anglia

The Lone Ninja Kamui Gaiden: From Manga to Live-Action Movie

The *manga Kamui-den* and *Kamui Gaiden*, written by Shirato Sanpei, were popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Japan. Criticising discrimination and segregation in Japanese society, they targeted communist activists (*zenkyōtō*) as readers and initiated a boom in *gekiga manga* (graphic novels). Now, in the 21st century, Shirato's *Kamui Gaiden* has returned as a live-action movie. Director Sai Yōichi is a Korean living in Japan and is well-known for his movie *Blood and Bone* (2004). Sai says that *Kamui Gaiden* 'is not for festivals. Major Japanese companies want to avoid this topic.' Obviously, the decade-old story today raises important issues and challenges to the mainstream entertainment industry. This paper will examine the socio-historical contexts of both the original manga and the movie and explore (1) why *Kamui Gaiden* has now been revived as a live-action movie, (2) how it was transformed/translated into this medium and (3) which message the movie aims to convey to contemporary Japan.

Dr Nana Sato-Rossberg

Dr Rayna DENISON, University of East Anglia

Big in Japan: The Absent Industrial History of the Contemporary Japanese Blockbuster Film

Given the long history of Japanese film scholarship outside Japan, the comparative neglect of post-1980s film is becoming increasingly notable. Donald Richie famously dismissed contemporary Japanese cinema, and subsequent studies have tended towards tokenistic or journalistic accounts, looking to emerging directors or internationally popular genres for value and meaning. This paper seeks to redress this imbalance by examining domestic films that could legitimately be considered 'big' in Japan, using historical materialist and political economics tools to unpack some of the many avenues by which Japanese films attain popular status as '*daihitto*' or 'big hit' films in their contemporary domestic market. The paper focuses on three recent films based in high profile media franchises: *20th Century Boys* (Parts 1-3, 2008-2009); *Boys over Flowers: The Final* (2008) and *Crows Zero* (Parts 1 and 2, 2007 and 2009) in order to examine the different structures that underpin successful domestic film production in Japan. Being big in Japan then, requires examination of an industry, star system, and promotional and review contexts that have as much to tell us about why the Japanese market is so lucrative within the global markets for film.

Dr Rayna Denison

Dr Christopher HOOD, Cardiff University

Death and Disaster in Japanese Manga: Constructing Memory and Behaviour

Japan is the 'Empire of Signs'. It is also the Empire of *Manga*. *Manga* account for about a quarter of all books sold and 20 percent of magazine sales. Its readers are found in most, if not all, demographic groups in Japan. Whilst not all Japanese read *manga*, many clearly do. And whilst not all *manga* readers read all *manga*, the potential for a *manga* to be read means that it is impossible not to acknowledge its potential influence. This paper looks at the way in which some *manga* deal with death and disaster. First, *manga* dealing with the JL123 plane crash in 1985 will be looked at in consideration of *manga*'s role in developing an understanding of historical events. The paper will then look at the *Kurosagi Shitai Takuhaibin* (*The Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service*) series and the way in which it both deals with historical events and has story lines which deal with symbolic locations related to death which may further influence individual's behaviour.

Dr Christopher Hood