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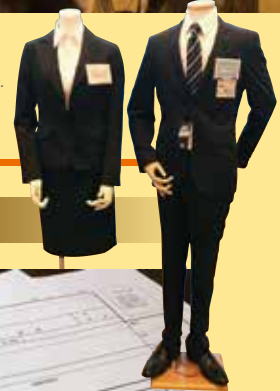
KOMABA *times*

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Photo by Xuan Truong Trinh.

ACADEMIC LIFE

Job hunting uniform.
Photo by author.



Grating Grades

By Jessica Ge

Grades. Grades. Grades. Grades are commonly recognized as a symbol of the apparent success of a student. This is no foreign concept to the students at The University of Tokyo, who have braced through its highly competitive entrance exam and hours and hours of study at home and at cram school. However, what kind of students does this education system produce? The sight of students stressing about these numerical figures is no rare sight, but why is it so? The following is a personal account from a student looking back on her schooling life, examining what kind of life she has led, and what kind of life she wants to lead from now on.

Good grades do not equal smartness. Thus in the same sense, bad grades do not equal stupidity.

Perhaps you recognize one of Albert Einstein's well-known quotes: "Everybody is a genius, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." Parents raise their children telling them to be their own person, to find their own purpose in the world, and that is okay to be different and unique. Yet the education system, which plays an influential role in at least the first 18 years of their lives, encourages the homogenisation of

A Todai student hard at work. Photo by author.



their abilities under the excuse that only in this one way can everyone be judged fairly. But it is far from fair. It is undeniable that smartness can be measured in a variety of ways. Some people are street smart, some have a keen sense of direction, some are really good at solving visual puzzles, others better with audio stimulus. Of the broad number of people we encounter each day, their skills and abilities are even broader. In that sense, how can a simple number properly represent the intelligence of a person?

Students are taught to study, but not learn.

In the process of being forced to adapt to this standardised assessment scale, students are taught how to study for a certain test rather than learning and retaining the information it is supposed to test. What the majority of students get out of school are an improved short term memory bank, fast essay writing skills, and an irregular sleeping schedule. This is further reinforced in Japan with its cram schools that are specifically targeted towards raising grades. Cram schools, or *juku*, are special private institutes that offer lessons after normal school hours, on weekends, and during school vacations. As the name suggests, a lot of time is dedicated towards studying, yet it is purely focused on increasing their numerical grades, and not on the quality of education or the application of critical thinking. Are students studying to gain deeper knowledge about their subjects or are they studying to pass?

Grades should not define who you are as a person.

Humans are not quantitative data. To reduce a person to a simple number is to take away their individuality. Yet so much of the world evaluates people based on their numbers. Throughout our schooling we are conditioned into thinking that grades are everything. We compress our three-



Self-advertisement paper. Photo by author.

dimensional self into a two-dimensional number. Japan's strict resume format illustrates this two-dimensional compression. A number of lines are provided to list education and employment history with no room for further elaboration; only a small section is provided for the applicant to describe who they are as a person. How can workplaces tell the difference between one applicant and another when all they have is a sheet of paper almost identical to the hundreds that came before? A number of students at The University of Tokyo begin *shuukatsu* (job hunting) once they reach their senior year. Many hope to be the one to stand out and win a good position at a company. However, their identical black suits and white dress shirts do little to set them apart. It is clear to see that plain numbers and letters on a sheet of paper do little to capture the complexity of humans.

From a young age we are told that we have to go to a good university to get a good job to live a good life. We get into these institutions by achieving a certain grade, so we study hard to raise those figures. We are told that the higher the grade, the higher the guarantee of success. But there is no guarantee. So why do we cling onto the idea that grades are so important? Why do we let our lives revolve around these plain numerical figures? Perhaps it is time to reconsider the weight we place on this aspect of our life. Perhaps it is time to focus on the quality of our life, rather than the quantities within it.

Shingaku-sentaku: A Turning Point for Students in the University of Tokyo

By Shin Tokura



Building 1 in Komaba campus, UT. Photo by author.

During the second year at the University of Tokyo, students come to a turning point in their lives—known as *Shingaku-sentaku*. It is a system in which students from all departments (students are divided into six departments; Science 1, 2 and 3, Humanities and Social Science 1, 2 and 3 when they get in the university) decide their majors based on their average scores for courses they've completed by the summer semester of their second year. Students study liberal arts before they choose their majors and they focus on their majors after that. Although this is common in universities overseas, it is peculiar in Japan.

Apparently universities in Japan are hard to enter but easy to graduate because students do not need to study so hard to graduate. However, this system makes the University of Tokyo different from other universities in Japan. The history of *Shingaku-sentaku* dates back to 1947 when the University was divided into two schools; the Tokyo Imperial University and the First High School. Students had to take an exam to get in the Tokyo Imperial University from the First High School. This exam is said to be the origin of *Shingaku-*

sentaku. It is as competitive as the entrance exam. The students have to get high enough scores to get into a faculty they want to study in.

The system of *Shingaku-sentaku* has changed over time. Now, it has three stages of selections. In the first round, 70 percent of the maximum seats in each faculty are selected. At the second selection, the rest of the students are selected. If needed, faculties that still have vacant seats welcome students in the third round. Usually, each faculty has seats limited to certain departments and seats open to all departments. For example, the Economics faculty welcomes 189 students from Humanities and Social Science 2, 7 students from all the science departments and 42 students from all departments.



Ginkgo avenue on Komaba Campus, UT. Photo by author.

There are upsides and downsides to *Shingaku-sentaku*. As the University of Tokyo boasts, students can study whatever they want to without being trapped by their majors. Actually, one of the major reasons why students come to the University of Tokyo is because they do not have to choose their major before getting into the university and they can study broadly. From the point of view of educators, it might have a good aspect because it makes students study at least until that. However, students tend to go for courses which can earn easy grades rather than following their interests. That is why students who have more than a year to think about their major spend that time with almost no help to choose their major and they come to face a problem they are not supposed to face, which is thinking what to study in the future vaguely. Students are preoccupied by a lot of required courses (science students need to get about 60 credits by the summer of their second year) and the grades in these courses, which leaves them limited opportunities to seek out their interests. As an example of this case, I wanted to come to the University of Tokyo because the system of *Shingaku-sentaku* attracted me. The fact is that my schedule is almost filled with requirements and I chose the course with easy grades. Now, I have no idea what I want to study in the future.

Among many required courses, there are some non-requirement courses done by each faculty that is aimed to let students know what they can studying in the various faculties. These kinds of courses really help students choose their majors. However, many students do not take that kind of courses because they are already busy with requirements. In my opinion, those courses should be requirements or the University of Tokyo should not force students so many requirements so that they can take those helpful courses.

Recommendation-based Admission at University of Tokyo

By Yu Nakatsuka

From 2016, the University of Tokyo (UTokyo) has started a recommendation-based admission “to increase the variety of the student body and stimulate the undergraduate education,” according to the official homepage of UTokyo.

Before this reform of the entrance system, all domestic students were evaluated only by the score of the examinations. However, from 2016, UTokyo decided to evaluate students based on other aspects such as achievement of extracurricular activity. Since the introduction of this new admissions system, 154 students have been accepted to UTokyo.

Since, this system only takes a maximum of 100 students each year, most of the students in UTokyo do not know much about the system. Many

students think students who were accepted by this system are extremely talented, “special” people. However, when I interviewed Aoi Takeuchi, who enrolled in UTokyo in 2016 using this system, he had something to say about that.

I want to ask you few question about recommendation based admission today. First of all, I know you personally and think that you could have easily passed the entrance exam. Why did you use recommendation-based admission?

Well, one reason is that there is no *Shingaku-sentaku* (trans. selection of major) if you take the recommendation-based admission. In UTokyo, students select their major from the third year. This is called *Shingaku-sentaku*. To study the major you

want, you need to earn a good grade during the freshmen and sophomore year. But students who used recommendation-based admission decide their major when they apply, so instead of worrying about *Shingaku-sentaku*, I can focus on what I want to do during the university life. And, to be honest, the other reason is that I didn't want to study for the entrance exam.

I see. So after you decided to use the recommendation-based admission, what was the process of exam?

First, we have to write a few essays to demonstrate why we chose an specific major, what we did at high school, and what we want to do at UTokyo and after we graduate from UTokyo. In my case, I wrote mainly about my experience at the International Chemistry Olympiad and the

Seminars at UTokyo

By Yulee Kim

There are a number of advantages in college life, and one of them is that students can easily gain access to specialized courses of interest and diverse experiences. One way students at UTokyo can access these special learning experiences on campus is to participate in seminars, which are lectures and discussions about independent research or practical experience in one's specialized field. The University of Tokyo holds numerous seminars, many of which are listed on the University of Tokyo event page website (<http://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/news/events/index.html>) There is everything from an Algebra seminar by a MIT professor, to Tokyo Carbon conferences. Chances are you'll find something that matches your interest.

Why are seminars important?

Of course, students can attend seminars for the pure purpose of increasing their knowledge and fulfilling their intellectual curiosity, but for junior division students, these events may be particularly useful in deciding a major since UTokyo students apply for a major after finishing a 2-year liberal arts curriculum. There are many students who wonder whether their choice in major is the right one. In such case, attending the UTokyo seminars may help students to experience various majors.

Students can participate in a variety of seminars, regardless of their major or interests. You can directly attend various classes from linear algebra lecture by MIT professor to business seminar such as Tokyo Carbon Conference.

This year, Han, a PEAK Environmental Science student, attended a seminar by Dr. Carl Wieman, who is a professor at Stanford and received the Nobel Prize. Because it was held at Komaba, all students were able to attend the seminar easily.

Dr. Wieman gave a lecture about ways to teach physics more efficiently. The Nobel prize-winning professor brought his own experiment results to explain his own teaching methods. Not only UTokyo students but also professors from PEAK environmental sciences actively engaged in Dr. Wieman's lecture. Han said "the lecture was very useful and application method was not difficult."

UTokyo seminar provides various opportunities to participate in not only academic seminars but also business seminars that the company has actually conducted within their own business: *The Tokyo Carbon Conference* was held in Hongo Campus. Japanese company *Toshiba* invested in African countries within the project *GO Thermoenergy in Africa*. It was not an academic seminar for GO Thermoenergy, but rather about business trends. Han remarked that attending various seminars, from academic to business, is definitely an opportunity to expand her knowledge.

How to Apply For UTokyo Seminars



UTokyo website event page.

Seminars are open in varying degrees. There are also many flyers around the campus. Many UTokyo's seminars accept not only students but also members of the public. Capacity always varies, from 10 to 300 people, and there are many places where seminars are held, often at the Hongo or Komaba campus, and most of the seminars are free. Seminars are usually conducted in Japanese, but English-speakers, do not worry, there are also many English seminars, too. When you set the language of the UTokyo event page in English, it is often possible to find English-language events. (<http://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/news/events/index.html>)

The registration method is different for each seminar, but often easy via an online registration form or a simple email.



Photo by author.



Seminar flyer in Komaba campus classroom. Photo by author.

National Science Competition. And when I wrote my essay, I made sure everything I wrote were connected with each other.

I also heard that there is an interview exam. Could you tell me more about it?

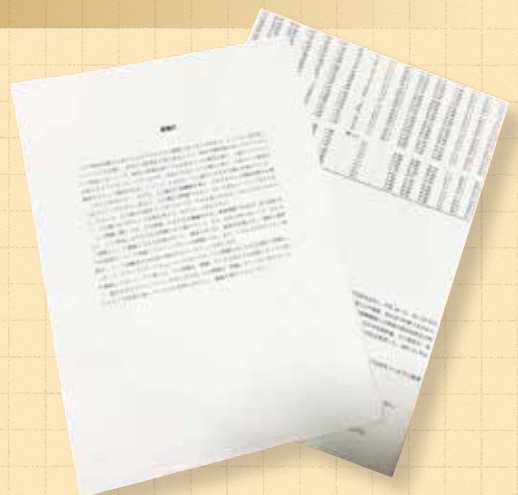
In the interview, I prepared a resume in advance and did a presentation about what we wrote in the essays and answered questions about my presentation. It wasn't too serious like everyone thinks. I think that examiners want to see our personalities than the academic abilities at the interview.

By the way, we hadn't seen each other after we entered UTokyo. How have you been? Has this recommendation system affected your life in any way?

It's been great. I'm really glad that I took this

system. Since I didn't have to be sensitive about my grades, I took as many classes as possible and I will get all the credits I need by the first semester in my sophomore year. I won't have to take classes for a while and I'm planning to do a internship using this time. Because I already have a major, I think it is easier for companies to accept me for internships.

Since Takeuchi attended national and international science events, it may seem that recommendation based admission is for special students. However, he also said this. "Students from the recommendation-based admission are not that different from other students. If you have something that you devoted yourself to at high school, you should try and apply. There is no need to hesitate."



Theme for group discussion at the interview exam for Law Faculty. Students were asked to discuss population decline based on given data. Image by author.

Credit Where Credit's Due

By Cameron Lam



Course catalog for 2017 Spring semester and Guidance booklet for PEAK

How heavy is the workload at The University of Tokyo (UTokyo)?

Workload is undoubtedly a factor to consider when you are choosing the university you attend. For UTokyo, the first two years of the four-year undergraduate degree is named "junior division". It falls under the College of Arts and Sciences, which offers a liberal arts education. After which, students specialise in different departments and proceed to the two years long "senior division". Classes in UTokyo are usually conducted once a week and yield two credits for semester-long ones. While credit requirements vary according to departments, the average credit required for the four-year education is about 150-180. On the other hand, although universities outside of Japan ask for less credits, more work is needed to earn the credits (e.g. more frequent classes and tutorials). So how tough is it as a UTokyo student?

The workload in the junior division is not that heavy. With the minimal requirement of 56 credits in the two-year long division, allocation of credit is versatile. As a PEAK student, I am soon finishing my 56 credits by the end of my second semester; another student who is in his second year of studies, Takuno Nishimura, also finished his credit requirements during his first year while participating in several students projects that brought him overseas over the summer. Having 24+ hours of lessons per week for two semester and then laying back and relaxing for a semester may not be everyone's option, but those who

spread out their credits are nonetheless enjoying their university lives. It is possible to finish the minimal requirement in three semesters by taking 10 classes (which is about 17.5 hours) a week. By doing that, students can participate in circles and clubs of their interest while fulfilling the credit requirements.

While not as easy as the junior division, the difficulty of the senior division highly depends on the specialisation of the student.

For example, the senior division of College of Arts and Sciences asks for 76 credits while the College of Medical Sciences demands as many as 90+ credits. Cezar Visan, a third year student in the College of Arts and Sciences, spread out his credits and took 8 classes per semester. He is now looking to finish his credit requirements in the first semester of year



Credit requirements of PEAK students in the junior division

4. "The number is not challenging," commented Cezar, with a computer-screen-full of readings, "but workload increases a lot from junior division to senior. We used to have 20 pages of reading per class but now it's 50 plus and sometimes a hundred." While there are students like Cezar who hope to empty the last semester to focus on their graduation thesis, a considerable number of students also do not mind taking classes in the last semester of their four years study, further fanning out their credits across the semesters.

Difficulties student encounter when fulfilling the credit requirement are the categorisation and content of the classes. In the junior division, classes are categorised into foundation courses and integrated courses, which is then further divided into

groups like social sciences, humanities, ideas and arts, mathematics. UTokyo students are subjected to a set of limitations that calls for careful balance between classes of interest and of credit requirement. Kenta Kofuse, a first-year science student, found it particularly difficult to strike a balance between courses he wants to take and those he has to take. Since the sheer number of mandatory courses for science students already placed significant pressure on him during his first semester, he was not able to pick courses on philosophy, race, or other language courses of his interest. Philipp Buschmann, who is currently in his second year in UTokyo, commented on how some classes are misplaced into other categories.

Delayed graduation may happen under certain conditions. For one, going on a semester-long exchange may result in delayed graduation because of the complication in the credit transfer system from exchanges programmes. Students are required to match up courses they take overseas and courses offered at UTokyo before submitting a document that will go through the department committee, which changes yearly, for approval. Moreover, the final decision lies in the hands of the professor who teaches the class. Currently in his third year after spending a semester in Zurich, Kamiyu Hijikata is only applying to transfer 4 credits from his exchange programme. "Luckily I began obtaining senior credits since my second semester in year 2," commented Kamiyu. Classes that yield credits to the senior division are available starting from the fourth semester. Students usually take classes from the senior division in their fourth semester to alleviate their workload in the senior division. Careful planning is advised for those who aspire to go on exchange without delaying their graduation.



When preparing for a class in history. All photos by author.

Is Your One and a Half Year Worth Studying?

By Sachiko Kawano



Do you have enough scores for the department you want to go to? Why do I have to study math and physics even though I am sure that those subjects are unimportant to my career? Although many students of University of Tokyo (UT) have a negative attitude toward the curriculum, our school is one of the few universities in Japan that allow students to decide their major after their entrance and to take liberal arts classes, which can be a great appeal for students to apply for this school.

Possibilities in front of us. Edited by the author.

One thing that is often criticized about this late specialization system is the lack of specialized knowledge and skills. For example, a two-year education at the undergraduate level is not enough for science students to acquire proper skills to conduct experiments and write papers. Other universities in Japan offer courses in areas of specialty from freshmen year and let students prepare for advanced research in their later university life. When students at UT decide their major in the summer of their sophomore year, they need to endure a nail-biting competition to

Stepping Outside the Comfort Zone: University of Tokyo Students Speak about Studying Abroad

By Ji Hee Song



Trinity College Dublin (March, 2016).
Photo by Yoshiyuki Yamada.



Interacting with new friends (September, 2015).
Photo by Ena Okano.



Disneyland with a roommate (August, 2016).
Photo by Saeko Kawataki.

University of Tokyo (UT) offers a large number of international exchange programs, for example USTEP and AIKOM, which are diverse in lengths, places and types. To encourage their students to participate, the university provides various types of scholarships, holds briefing session on campus and recruits former participants of the international exchange programs as tutors to introduce these programs to other students. Despite their efforts, the numbers of students studying abroad is not that high; according to the Globalization Office, the number of undergraduates in the College of Arts and Sciences participating in these programs ranges from 30 to 40 each year; 33 in 2014, 34 in 2015 and 39 in 2016.

The biggest reasons behind the lack of participation are fears of using English and worries about delayed graduation. Unlike English, Japanese is regarded as a subject-object-verb (SOV) language which makes it difficult for Japanese people to learn English and gain confidence in using it. Moreover, worries toward delayed graduation act as an obstacle toward studying abroad. Graduating university in 4 years is usual in Japanese society and age is still considered crucial in employment which makes students hesitate in participation of these exchange programs. Though many efforts are made by the University of Tokyo, still it is not enough for many students to step outside their comfort zone called Japan.

However, there are a number of students who left the shore and became a trailblazer. Here, 3 students talk about what made them go on exchange, what kinds of difficulties they have faced and how they overcome.

Interests about the European Union and soccer led Yoshiyuki Yamada, senior majoring in International Relations, to study at Trinity College Dublin in Ireland for a year. For the first few months, he struggled in adjusting to his new life in Ireland. "It was my first time living abroad and I have to admit that language was the major problem living and studying in Ireland. Reading a huge amount of references every week was very stressful. Also, doing everything by myself was very tough since I never have lived alone before going to Ireland," says Yamada. Although overcoming those difficulties took some time, not only did he gain confidence in English but it became an opportunity to reflect about Japan. He realized how convenient Japanese society is when calling a repairman but also how conservative it is in issues such as LGBT.

Ena Okano, a senior majoring in International Relations went to the University of Toronto in Canada. Since she has lived abroad for more than ten years, she did not worry about her one year in Toronto; however, food and English still became the sticking points in living. Fortunately, she overcame these in her own smart way by getting food from a nearby Japanese supermarket and getting

help from the writing center on campus.

Saeko Kawataki talked about her short-term exchange program in University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Her interest on cognitive science and a vague admiration toward United States made her dream of 5 wonderful weeks in UCSD, however, it was not as romantic as her expectation. Slow wi-fi, food, incorrect timetables at bus stops and also the fact that she was the only Japanese in the program were an obstacle for her to overcome. Nevertheless, she recall it as an unforgettable experience making her learn more about herself, Japanese society and the world. "Although I struggled, I really learned a lot. I knew that US is so-called 'open' society but knowing it through experience is totally a different one. I don't mean to say that America is such a marvelous country, but I do admit that every single day in US was exciting, giving an opportunity for me to step back and look at myself and my country, Japan."

All of the students agreed that studying abroad was a valuable experience to them and despite difficulties and hardness they faced, they still wished to get a chance of living abroad. "For me, studying abroad can be defined as leaving from unconscious biases and tasting real freedom. I hope more students will give it a try to go abroad not only to improve myself academically but to become a better-me," says Kawataki.

earn high grades if they wish to enter popular departments, such as the medicine and pharmaceutical departments. Students tend to end up taking easy classes rather than subjects of their interest due to the pressure from this system.

However, I think the late specialization system is valuable if students understand its original purpose. We can choose our favorite courses among a variety of topics, including literature, music, math and physics. Not only can we learn knowledge outside our major but also these classes can

be precious opportunities to talk and cooperate with students from different backgrounds. Recently, communication skills and cross-disciplinary problem-solving abilities are considered more and more important in the job market, so a liberal arts curriculum meet the needs of society. Even though we must take many mandatory classes that we are not necessarily willing to study, they provide a chance to discover our strengths that we had never realized and to find out the subjects unsuitable for you. I, for one, noticed that I was much better at math in university than I had

thought in high school. A number of students change their career options completely by realizing that their dream is not what they are really interested in and finding another area to pursue.

A year and a half at the College of Arts and Sciences might sometimes seem too long and unnecessary. For those who have decided your major, take your favorite classes and continue working toward your goal. For those who have not, keep an open mind and take liberal advantage of the time.

Conquering PEAK: A Survivor's Guide to Credits

By Ela Bogataj Stopar

In most cases, entering university turns one's life upside down. All of a sudden, it is up to no one but you to provide your meals, wash your clothes and pay your bills – and on top of that, you are also expected to stay on top of your schoolwork. Finding your way through PEAK's system of requirements can be confusing, but there is no need to worry. This article will try to shed some light on how to tackle your central mission in your first two years of university life: gaining enough credits to progress to the next level.

According to the current rules, PEAK students must gather 56 credits in the first two years of university in order to advance to the Senior Division. Each year is composed of two halves, the autumn and the summer semester, and the maximum credit limit for each semester is 30. In terms of dividing your work between the years, this leaves any student with two options: either they endeavor to get all the credits in their first year in favor of relative freedom in the second, or they meticulously plan their schedule for each of the four semesters so as to get all of the work done on time without overworking themselves in the process. Over the years, there have been students tackling both the first and the second strategy, and – as one would expect – there are upsides and downsides to both.

Collecting all the credits as soon as possible seems like a reasonable course of action, es-

pecially given the many chances for studying abroad if there are no lectures to attend that semester. Although it is true that by the end of the third semester almost everyone will have all of their Junior Division work completed, the fourth semester is not quite as free as the third could be. In the fourth semester, students can already start taking Senior Division courses and get some work done ahead of time – an opportunity well worth taking advantage of. In practice, however, this means blood, sweat and tears in Year 1: with the majority of courses yielding two credits each, covering 28 credits each semester equals to about 14 courses per semester. Adding that to extracurricular activities and leisure time, this is a strategy that calls for consideration of not only the student's will, but also endurance.

Compared to that, dividing the credits equally between three or four semesters will indeed grant the hard-working student a little bit more space to breathe and time to sleep. But a different type of danger lurks behind the innocent façade of a precisely calculated study plan: it leaves no room for error. University courses are quite a bit different from high school as much in level as in style, meaning that failing a course is an unfortunate slip that can occur to anyone. Furthermore, as the selection of courses changes each semester, a time may just come when few courses on the menu suit one's taste – although a small amount of necessary academic evil is to be expected,



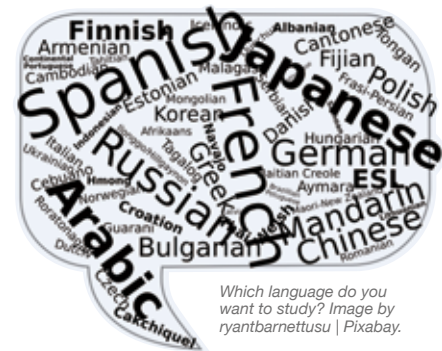
How to avoid ending up with too much on your plate?
Photo by Jessica Cross | Flickr.

it would certainly be preferable to reduce that amount to a minimum and study as much as possible of the truly interesting material.

In general, most students end up taking between 11 and 14 courses in each of the first two semesters and use the third semester to fulfill whatever remains of the requirements. This might sound like a lot to students who are used to three or four courses per week, but as PEAK course lectures only take place once per week for 105 minutes, 12 courses means about four and a half hours of classes per day – nowhere close as terrible as your average high school schedule. Balancing the pros and cons of the equation while considering one's habits, skills and interests ultimately rests in each student's own hands, leaving doors open for a variety of unique experiences of university life. And just when you think you have it covered, along comes the Senior Division – a whole new game with a whole new set of rules.

Class Culture at the University of Tokyo

By Yu Nakatsuka



At the University of Tokyo (UTokyo), all students choose their third language from Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Italian, Korean and Russian. Students are divided into classes by their languages. Class culture plays an important role in campus life at UTokyo. Being part of a class helps students get information about courses and extracurricular activities. Above all, it provides an opportunity to make friends.

When freshmen enter UTokyo they go to “class camp” before classes start. In this class camp, upperclassmen take freshmen to a camp for two days. Typically, freshmen introduce themselves, play sports and have a barbecue to get to know their classmates. At night, upperclassmen help freshmen choose their courses. Since students do not have much freedom to make their own curriculum in Japanese high school, the course

registration system in UTokyo can be complicated and challenging for freshmen. Upperclassmen can help freshmen to go through the system.

As the semester starts, class community becomes even more important because freshmen and sophomores take almost all of the mandatory classes together with their classmates. When students have trouble understanding the lecture or miss the class, they often rely on their classmates. Students interact with their classmates outside class too. For example, at the May Festival, each class makes their own food stand. At the end of the semester, they have parties to celebrate the end of exams.

The class community takes up a huge part of our life in UTokyo. If you are a prospective student, one thing you should know about class culture is that each class has a different atmosphere depending on the third language. Class atmosphere can be one of the factors to consider when you choose your third language. To help you decide on which language to choose, I did a survey about the impression students have about other students from each language class.

In my survey, subjects were asked to choose the language class whose students are most diligent, intelligent, active, fashionable and unique. Here are the results from 93 responses.

Most diligent:	German (78.5%),	Chinese (12.9%),	Russian (4.3%),	French (2.2%)
Most intelligent:	French (30.4%),	Chinese (27.2%),	German (22.8%),	Russian (18.5%)
Most active:	Spanish (82.6%),	French (8.7%),	Russian (4.3%),	Italian (2.2%)
Most fashionable:	French (68.8%),	Spanish (16.1%),	Italian (8.6%),	Russian (4.3%)
Most unique:	Russian (81.7%),	French, German, Korean, Italian, Chinese (3.2%)		

Except for most intelligent, particular languages have a dominant vote on each categories. According to students' impressions, German classes are thought to be the most diligent, Spanish classes to be overwhelmingly active, French classes are the most fashionable and Russian classes stand out in their uniqueness. It seems that students' characters match the image of each country that the language comes from. Germany is known for its industry and the people are thought to be hard-working. France are known for its art and fashion,

and Spain are known as “the country of passion” in Japan. However, Russian classes being unique do not really match the image of the country. We do not know why but it seems that majority of people think that Russian classes are unique.

At Today, class culture means a lot to students' university life. Each language allegedly has different atmosphere in the class. It might be wise to take this into consideration when you choose your third language.

Life after PEAK

By Dhriti Mehta

The PEAK program started in October 2012 as an attempt to attract bright young minds from across the world and to internationalize the environment of the University of Tokyo. Since its inception, PEAK has fostered intellectual debates and cultivated global thought. It has succeeded in not just being an excellent academic program, but also a close-knit family which continues to grow. Almost five years since the program started, it is time for the second batch of PEAK students to graduate.

This conclusion of the PEAK journey raises the simple yet pertinent question in the minds of current students, faculty and even prospective applicants, *What is life after PEAK like?* Students from the graduating class of PEAK (Class of 2017) were interviewed to find out more about their destinations after graduation and future plans.

The discoveries were intriguing, especially because of the diverse paths the students plan to take.

While Japan in East Asia (JEA) may sound like a degree course specific only to Japan, the liberal arts structure of the PEAK program gives you the opportunity to design your course in a manner similar to most International Relations courses. Thus making 'Global Affairs' a popular field for JEA students.

"Academically, I had such a wide variety of interests before I came to PEAK and that has definitely multiplied, but I was able to decide that what I enjoyed studying the most was really about global networks, the effects of globalization on culture and people and what it means to be truly global," says Manasa Sitaram, a JEA major. Owing to this interest in globalization studies, Manasa took many classes related to the field during her study-abroad semester in the U.K. all of which eventually helped her in selecting her specialization at the graduate level. Manasa will be pursuing an MA degree in Global Thought at Columbia University starting this fall, and couldn't be more excited to move to New York!

Like Manasa, Sam Brustard (JEA) realizes the importance of the global education he received at PEAK. While he has been admitted to an MSc in the Global Politics program at the London School of Economics and Political Science, he is also exploring options for working at the British Embassy in Tokyo or doing governmental work at New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and choosing to defer his LSE offer for a year.



A point on which a lot of graduating students agree is that the freedom to diversify, coupled with the opportunity to specialize, is amongst PEAK's strengths.

Marina Kondo (JEA) is one such student who realized her passion lies in studying political science in East Asia, which she intends on pursuing further at Yale University starting this fall. She says, "I was never interested in politics until I took a class on Japanese domestic politics during my second year. I have also been able to take classes on Japanese history, culture, language, economics, and sociology. Although the classes may not cover as much material as many American university classes do, it is a great way to explore different subjects and find your passion!"

Erin Kawazu knew from the beginning that she would like to specialize in Environmental Sciences (ES) and although she admits that the PEAK ES program did not give her substantial specialized knowledge in one field, she was able to discover her own area of interest from a wide range of topics she studied during her time here. Erin is heading off to Columbia University to pursue a Master's in Public Health in Environmental Health Sciences starting this fall, where she hopes to develop more specialized knowledge in the relationship between human health and the environment.

A big misconception most people have when they look at the two majors PEAK offers, Japan in East Asia and Environmental Sciences, is that they would be restrict to only these specific areas of study in their future. However, that is far from the truth.

Bipasha Kaur Chatterjee (JEA) has been accepted to a Master's program in Gender Studies at LSE. While she acknowledges that the structure of PEAK classes left her wanting more, she is thankful for the academic and supportive environment her professors created at the University of Tokyo which helped her follow her dream of studying Gender Studies and contribute to society by attempting to find solutions for gender inequalities.

Similarly, Helen Chang, an ES student, also chose to switch to a completely different area of study and has decided to go to Yale University to study International and Development Economics at the graduate level. Her advice to students is straight-forward, "I encourage people to challenge themselves and get some intern experiences. Interning at a company really makes you realize what you want in life."

And interning may even get you a job! Or at least it did for Hyeyoon Sung (JEA) who has decided to accept the offer of a full-time employment made by the International IT start-up company she interned at.

Kotoe Kuroda (ES) and Marie Hayashi Strand (ES) are two other PEAK students who decided to take a more conventional path and like most Japanese university graduates underwent the intense Japanese *shūkatsu* (job hunting process).

PEAK: The brainchild of the University of Tokyo. Image courtesy of PEAK.



Their hard-work paid off and both have secured jobs at Japanese development/construction consulting companies in the environmental and international consulting divisions respectively. And although going to graduate school in a few years is on the cards for all three, they are happy to be getting the opportunity to get practical work experience before doing so.

While many of these students have achieved their lifelong dreams after graduating from PEAK, some like Sherry Zheng have carved new dreams to follow. She says, "I'm one of the few people that decided from the beginning of fourth year that I wasn't going to go to grad school, not for another good three, four, five years. On top of that, I'm one of the even fewer people who has not run the *shūkatsu* race and secured myself a spot in a company already."

In fact, Sherry has bigger plans.

Since the end of her second year she became interested in film/video and since her third year she became even more interested in photography. As a result, she is looking to start working in video/photography and will be trained as a multimedia journalism intern in Japan after which she plans to narrow down her options further with the work experience she will gain. Originally from Australia, she is still open to the idea of going home or staying or moving on to another country, as long as there's something for her to do with a camera!

While interviewing these PEAK *senpai* (upperclassmen), I was impressed, proud and inspired all at once, when I heard about their future plans. A fairly new program, PEAK has been successful in carving an identity for itself because of the highly-qualified and motivated graduates it produces. As a current first-year student, I have only just begun my journey at PEAK but already feel extremely determined and optimistic after witnessing the amazing feats of the classes which have graduated.

As a final thought from the PEAK Class of 2017, Sam Brustard says, "PEAK gives the students many opportunities to succeed but doesn't really give us a roadmap for how to achieve them, so it's all on you at the end of the day."

And indeed, while PEAK students may take different paths, it is evident that all of them have reached the final destination of achieving their goals, fulfilling their dreams and reaching their PEAK potential!

Best wishes to the PEAK Class of 2017 from the entire PEAK family.

Just Dance: Life as a *Seikyomae* Dancer

By Sarah Goh

If you have ever been to Komaba campus before, you may have noticed people dancing in front of the cafeteria and bookshop. Among Todai students, these people are known as *Seikyomae* dancers – *Seikyou* refers to the co-operative that runs the school cafeteria and bookshop, and the suffix *mae* means in front of – so that would translate literally to ‘dancers in front of the cafeteria and bookshop.’ Now you may be wondering – who and why are these people dancing in our school? Well, I happen to be one of them so let me introduce you to this unique group on campus.

Seikyomae dancers mainly come from three dance circles, namely Wish, Boiled and FreeD. Each of the dance circles have their own distinctive features. For instance, FreeD specialises in jazz dance while Wish and Boiled specialise in street dance. The three dance circles stage various showcases throughout the year and perform at school festivals. You may have realised that the average *Seikyomae* dancer is somewhat different from the average Todai student. *Seikyomae* dancers tend to be more stylish and wild in their dressing and hairstyles compared to the studious and bookish Todai students. Aside from the fact that dancers are just naturally trendier, this is because some of them come from other universities. In particular, Wish and Boiled recruit students from other universities and they probably constitute more than half of the members.

As for the choice of location, *Seikyomae* may not seem like an appropriate place to dance.

Given that it is open-air and on gravel floor, it certainly is not the most ideal for dancing. Practice has to be cancelled on rainy or snowy days and we sometimes have to sweep away clumps of fallen leaves in the fall. So why continue dancing there? The most important reason would be cost. Unlike renting a studio in town, dancing at *Seikyomae* obviously does not cost money. Since university students are perpetually lacking money, this is a huge draw. Another key factor would be the glass panels that line the *Seikyou* building. They are somewhat reflective, particularly when it gets dark, so we use them as a substitute for mirrors. Moreover, convenience is also a big factor. While it is possible to rent the studios inside the *Seikyou* building for free, this has to be done about a month in advance and in true Japanese fashion, requires a degree of administrative procedure. Especially when performances draw near, dancers may spontaneously decide they want to squeeze in some practice on a particular day. All they have to do is go down to *Seikyomae* and dance to their heart’s content.

However, dancing at *Seikyomae* is not entirely free of rules and restrictions. We have to keep clear of the entrances and exits to the cafeteria and bookshop. On occasions when the space has gotten too packed to the point of obstructing traffic, we have been chased away by angry *Seikyou* employees before. As such, the three circles usually stagger practice on different days and timings to prevent overcrowding. The only exception would be on Sundays when the *Sei-*



Seikyomae dancers dancing. Photo by author.

kyou does not operate. You would be able to catch dancers from all three circles occupying the entire space. While one may envision epic dance battles among the three circles to decide who would dance where, relations between the various circles are quite peaceful. As a general rule, whoever comes earlier gets first pick, but over time the different circles gravitate towards different areas, working out quite a harmonious arrangement.

Perhaps what is most striking about *Seikyomae* dancers is that they are able to dance freely despite the constant public gaze and lack the inhibition which so permeates the rest of Japanese society. In reality, most of us *Seikyomae* dancers do start off feeling rather self-conscious. But as time passes, we gradually get used to the curious stares from passersby. In fact, the more we focus on our dancing, the less conscious we become of the public attention. One can also think of this as good training for dancing in front of a crowd. All in all, the *Seikyomae* dancers add an interesting twist to campus life and show a creative and unrestrained side of students which we do not encounter every day.

Imperial Japan Persists Within these Hallowed Halls

By Taiga Tase



The chrysanthemum-like decoration atop the Hongo Main Gate is actually a rising sun on closer inspection. Photo by author.

The one hundred and three-article long postwar Japanese constitution is a consistent pot-stirrer in Japanese politics. One of the most relevant to campus life, as well as the university as a whole, is the very first article; it establishes the Emperor as merely a ‘symbol of the State...and People’ with no political power.

But what impact does any of this have on the University of Tokyo, the foremost of the *kyuuteidai*, or Former Imperial Universities? In contrast to the Komaba Campus, which bears few marks of the far-reaching influence of the Imperial household, Hongo makes far more ostenta-

tious displays of imperial reverence. The centerpiece of the campus and the symbol of UTokyo in popular culture, the Yasuda Auditorium, was built during the Interbellum period specifically to remedy the lack of a *binden*, a resting place for the Emperor, within the University.

Campuses the city over are dotted with reminders of the a bygone era. In 2015 a statue of Hachiko was erected in the Yayoi Campus - although his owner was indeed a professor at the University, Hachiko is also remembered as being the subject of a large-scale propaganda campaign in prewar Japan to stoke the flames of nationalism. He was exalted as a purebred Japanese dog that upheld traditional Japanese values of loyalty to one’s master and perseverance.

Not that the former Tokyo Imperial University’s administration is stacked with nationalists, of course. Students may be dismayed to find out that classes are held as usual on the 23rd of the December, the birthday of the Emperor regnant and a national holiday. Despite the annual greetings delivered by the Emperor, few teachers will take attendance to the celebrations as a valid reason to miss class.

One red herring amongst the relics of Imperial legacy is the *kabuki* festooning the Main Gate.

Although blatantly a sixteen-petaled Imperial chrysanthemum at first glance, more careful examination reveals it to be but a sixteen-rayed *kyokujitsu*, or rising sun. Although certainly a Japanese symbol, even a sixteen-rayed rising sun is not nearly as Imperial as the chrysanthemum, which was stamped on every Imperial Japanese rifle to mark it as personal property of the Emperor.

Chrysanthemum do, however, adorn the clay vessels on either side of the General Library stairs containing decorative plants.

It appears that the microcosm of UTokyo, both officially and in practice, reflects the highly mixed and seemingly contradictory views of society as a whole on the place of the Imperial family. Although nominally completely separate from the Imperial household and no longer an Imperial University, relics remain throughout that act as a constant reminder of its legacy. The actual impact the frequent reminders of the Emperor has on students is miniscule. Yet words and symbols matter. The University - especially in pursuit of more international appeal - seeks to distance itself from Imperial Japan, but the history of the institution is so deeply intertwined with the Empire that the legacy will remain stalwart so long as the mortar and bricks remains standing.

Todai-sei : The Weight of the UTokyo Brand

By Takuma Furukawa

UTokyo has been a topic popular in media recently. Whether it be about the eccentricities of UTokyo students or the myths surrounding the university, media outlets paint an image of the University of Tokyo, one which does not necessarily apply to all attending students. It's well-known that some students hesitate to introduce themselves by saying, "I'm a *todai-sei* (UTokyo student)." They say, "一応、東大生です (*ichiou todai-sei desu*)" in Japanese. The "東大生です" portion is simply, I am a UTokyo student, but there is no direct English translation of "一応" that would fit into this context. The closest translation would be "technically" or "in theory." This shows that using "ichiou" (with all of its connotations intact) is a phenomenon nearly exclusive to Japan.

Describing the meaning of this phrase as clearly and simply as possible, it creates a sense of slight reluctance at revealing that the person saying he or she is actually a UTokyo student. It is used similarly to a tentative "well..." or hesitant "uhm..." before revealing information that one would not necessarily want to share with others. Why are they reluctant to say which university they are from? It is because of the image the media and past generations have created regarding The University of Tokyo. The stereotypes shown in the media are not what should be expected of all UTokyo students, but it is hard to break these images.

The University of Tokyo has been thought of as

"elite" for a long time. For example, people say "if you enter UTokyo, you will definitely have a bright future. You won't have any hard time finding a job, and you will be financially secure for the rest of your life." UTokyo has been described as an internationally top-tier university. The social status received from attending The University of Tokyo is invaluable. Most Japanese companies that are hiring put a large emphasis on which university the applicants are from; therefore, it is natural to assume that UTokyo students are guaranteed bright futures.

However, what is the reality that UTokyo students face? Many of them don't believe that they deserve this image in which they are put on an unreasonable, nearly un-obtainable pedestal. It is true that they must have made tremendous efforts to enter UTokyo, but once accepted, studying at a Japanese university is often described as "four years of spring vacation." Therefore, UTokyo students do not believe that the image of an elite university student is appropriate for them. They are afraid of being the objects of envy or not being able to live up to such an image. In order to prevent this situation, they add "ichiou" when they say "I'm a *todai-sei*", and imply "I'm not as smart as you think" beforehand. There are two main reasons why they do not want the image of a "smart" UTokyo student to be applied to them.

First of all, the entrance exam focuses on memori-

zation skills and solving as many problems in as little time as possible. Many believe UTokyo students memorize well and know many things, but, in reality, some of us are not as knowledgeable in fields other than the ones we were required to study. It is commendable for the students to have passed the exam, but many of us do want it viewed as something that can be achieved by diligent studying and careful preparation. Secondly, many of the UTokyo students on television shows or other forms of media are portrayed as being geniuses. They are the ones who fit the cookie-cutter image of UTokyo prodigies while the rest of us attribute our acceptance to the university to hours upon hours of studying.

While many UTokyo students might seem stuck-up when hesitating to reveal the name of their university, there are a multitude of emotions behind this action. Perhaps it is time for our generation to break the stereotype of a "*todai-sei*" and to show the diversity and rich culminations of cultures that our university has to offer to Japan and the world.



The weight of the *Todai-sei* status. Image by <https://www.ac-illust.com>, edited by author.

Komaba Museum

By Yu Nakatsuka

Enter the main gate of the Komaba 1 Campus. Turn right, go straight, and you will see the building in the picture. Many of you may have walked passed but never gone inside. If so, you are missing out on some fascinating learning opportunities. This building is the Komaba Museum which has a history spanning more than 50 years.

Aside from the permanent Exhibition about Oman, Komaba Museum holds exhibitions about 3-4 times a year ranging on themes from literature to physics. Professors from Tokyo university offer and organize each exhibition. Professor Orimo, director of Komaba Museum, says that the Museum's mission is to disseminate the research done at the University of Tokyo especially to students in Komaba.

The most recent exhibition was "Novelists and Newspapers: The Golden Age 1900-1939". For people like myself, who have little knowledge about literature, the theme of the exhibition may sound a little unfamiliar. However, detailed and clear explanation panels provide us new perspectives toward literature.

Today, popular novels are sold and read in books. However, exhibited newspapers in early 19th century tell us a different story. Back then, newspapers were the main way to publish nov-

els. Well known novels that are still read today such as "Sherlock Holmes" or "Le Comte de Monte-Cristo" first earned their fame as serial novels on newspaper. The exhibition further shows us how newspaper affected the novelists and how the books and newspaper differed.

For example, "Doctor Dolittle" was first published in book form and later appeared on newspaper. Explanation panel shows that the caption of the illustration changed on newspaper, altering entirely the understanding of the novel.

According to Professor Orimo, newspapers became cheaper because of printing technology and the introduction of advertisement fee. Newspaper and newspaper novels became more popular to the public. Some novelist such as Dickens or Dostoyevsky may sound academic to us now, but people back then looked forward to the next installment on the newspaper every week. "To them, those stories were like light novels!" Orimo says.

Furthermore, he also stresses the importance of preserving actual historical records and exhibiting it in museum. Today, a trend to make digital record is prevalent in historical research. Although there are many advantages of making digital records, there are some things that

only real records can tell. We should understand strong points of each method to study historical records and use them.

He also told me about their next exhibition from July 15 to September 18. It will be about a famous physicist Toda Kazumori. He is famous for his research about structure of liquid. Exhibition will not only show as about his research but also about his interest in toys.

From my experience of visiting "Novelists and Newspapers: The Golden Age 1900-1939", I assure you that you will learn something new by visiting exhibitions in Komaba Museum.

Komaba Museum, taken by author.



The Struggle behind the Boar and Wine at May Festival

By Sachiko Kawano



Our stall (Bistro FUKUI). Photo by Makoto Iwasaki.

The sweet smell of crepe, the curl of smoke rising from *Gyukushi* (grilled beef skewers), and the streets busy with people and their laughter. You can experience the joyous mood just by walking around the campus and exploring various food stalls during May Festival, the school festival at the University of Tokyo. However, this is not the only way to join this annual event. I was in charge of a stall this year and managed everything necessary from purchasing ingredients to giving instructions to the members. It was not easy at all, but I felt a great sense of achievement afterwards, and learned good lessons and useful skills to live in society.

It is common for freshmen classes, school sport teams, and culture clubs to sell various foods at May Festival. Our group was a bit different from them as we were the participants of the Fukui program last summer, which is a program of about ten people in total visiting either the Echizen area or Wakasa area of Fukui Prefecture in order to see and experience farming and fishing. Since we were impressed by the rich natural environment, we wanted to introduce the prefecture to other people and decided to sell its local products, boar meat skewers and plum wine, at our school festival.

However, the preparation did not go as smoothly as I had expected. One difficulty was that I had to contact many people outside the university, such as the brandy company, the prefectural government and the local media outlets in Fukui. Not only did I write many emails to buy products from the prefecture, I also made a lot of calls to media outlets who were interested in our project. It was my first time to receive and send so many business letters and calls, so I was nervous about whether I used polite enough language.

Moreover, there were so many application procedures to operate a stand and rent the necessary materials. All the students who are responsible for projects at the festival were assembled for an orientation in February. After that until May, we had to fill in different forms to explain our products, get permission for selling alcohol, select the location of our stall. When the committee of the May Festival told us that we would not be able to sell boar meat because of its risk of food poisoning, we were baffled and felt hopeless. However, we finally received a green light from the committee after long emails to convince its safety.

We continued to have difficulties on the days of the festival though. Our team was small from the beginning, and what was worse was that many of the members were busy with other activities, so we managed our store with only a few people at any given time. I was really busy with managing the members and treating customers at the same time. Also, I had to stay at our stall as the person in charge most of the time due to the rule the committee established.

Why did I decide to do the work despite these challenges? Sometimes this thought came to my mind, but I realized that the struggles yielded much more important learnings. Many people supported me throughout the festival; for example, the members of the adjoining stall helped us set up our tent during the preparation. Smiling faces of the visitors who ate our boar skewers and drank our brandy encouraged us as well. A couple of girls liked our brandy so much that they ordered another cup and spread news about our stall by word-of-mouth. It strongly reaffirmed the kindness of people around me.

In addition, I acquired skills to communicate in a decent manner with people whom I met for the first time and business people who are much older than me. It was my first time to organize a group at such a big event as May Festival, which even attracts media attention. This project became a good chance to repay people in Fukui for their kindness during the program last summer. They said they were glad about our intention to do something for Fukui. We could not have been happier, relieved, and proud of ourselves to manage the project successfully when we sold the last cup of brandy.



Plum Brandy.
Photo by Makoto Iwasaki.



Boar meat skewers. Photo by Makoto Yanase.

Souji : The Art of Cleaning in Japan

By Lexa Brieck

Let's be honest here. We all know how hard it is to keep a room tidy. Here are a few tips to make your life easier if you're living alone, in a dorm, or otherwise in Japan. In this article, I would like to focus on *souji* (cleaning) during the four seasons in Japan – what you'll need to do and when it's best to do it.

SUMMER

This is the season in which you want to be especially careful with mold growth. For mold to grow, there are four key factors: organic material, fungal spores, moisture, and warm temperatures. So, how can you prevent the ghastly growth of mold from spreading in your home? Well, there are a few options (most of which won't "break the bank").

1) **Fans.** Whether it's airing out your bathroom after a steaming shower or clearing the moisture from the kitchen after making a piping hot bowl of pasta, it's essential to circulate air

in these rooms so that moisture does not immediately cling to surfaces and make it easy for mold to grow.

2) **Dehumidifiers.** These can help to suck the moisture out of rooms, but the downside is that they're an extra expense. I would recommend using these only if the other options don't seem to be working.

3) **Opening windows.** This is common especially in Japan. Opening windows helps to circulate air throughout the house. It's especially good if you have multiple windows or doors that you can open to create a system of pushing new air in and old air out.

And if none of these work, what do you do? Well, the final option is just to clean the mold. Make sure you have gloves, masks, and sometimes even goggles depending on how bad the mold is. There are a few options to cleaning mold, but what I find best (and cheapest) is the following method.

1) Mix equal parts ethanol and water in a spray bottle, and spray this mixture over the affected area.

2) Cover the area with a coating of baking soda, and let this dry for a few hours.

3) Finally, scrub away the mixture with an old towel or dry sponge (something easy to throw away afterwards). Everything should be dry and clean, revealing a mold-free surface.

SPRING

For Spring, I'd like to focus on something that plagues many of us: pollen. According to the Japan Times, nearly 1 in every 4 people in Japan experience an allergic reaction to cedar pollen throughout the months of February to May. This is a staggering amount! So, even if you take the necessary measures to combat these allergic reactions while outside, it's hard to prevent pollen from entering your home. Here's a few tips to combat these tough times.

Todai-Speak: A Crash Course on Campus Slang

By Sarah Goh

Ever taken some *nigai* classes or bought a *gyakuhyoutei* before? No idea what these words mean? These are just some examples of the slang that has developed from the unique school culture here in Komaba. Don't worry if you never heard these words before, this article will introduce you to all the frequently used slang you need to know to survive in Komaba.

Onakura 同クラ

An abbreviation of *onaji kurasu* (same class) and refers to your classmates. For most university students, the class unit is a matter of the past as students are typically arranged by their faculty and department, not by class units. However, the University of Tokyo is unique because students in the Junior Division are assigned classes which they take all their compulsory subjects with. Your *onakura* would be some of the people you first meet upon entering university and whom you'll continue to see almost every day throughout the first year. Furthermore, significant school events, such as the Orientation Camp and May Festival, are usually organized based on the class unit so it would be best to try to get along well with your *onakura*.

Nigai 二外

Short for *dainigaikokugo* which means second foreign language (the first foreign language being English for Japanese students). All April-entry students are required to learn *nigai* during the first year and some examples of the languages available are French, German, Chinese and Russian. One's choice of *nigai* is quite consequential as classes for the Junior Division are assigned based on *nigai*.

There are several amusing stereotypes that are associated with the various *nigai*. For example, Spanish classes are thought to be full of outgo-

ing and fun-loving people while those in German classes apparently tend to be more serious and philosophical.

Coincidentally, *nigai* also happens to be a homonym for the word 'bitter' in Japanese. For some people, this may be strangely fitting, as many are said to have suffered bitter experiences while learning their *nigai*.

Gyakuhyoutei 逆評定

Translated literally as reverse evaluation and refers to a biannual student-produced compilation of students' evaluation of teachers. In the *gyakuhyoutei*, students rate teachers on a 4-point scale from *daibutsu* (great Buddha) to *ooni* (great demon) and comment on quirks of the lessons. Students in the junior division must fulfill some credits for elective lessons and depending on the professor and elective chosen, the amount of work involved can vary widely. Those looking to achieve good grades with relatively little effort would scan the *gyakuhyoutei* to look out for courses with lenient teachers and easy exams.

If you have ever visited Komaba campus, you may have noticed a rather strange group of students in front of the school gate or cafeteria shouting incredibly fast through a megaphone. They are the student group responsible for collecting feedback on teachers and publishing the *gyakuhyoutei*. One can purchase a copy of the *gyakuhyoutei* from them at a relatively reasonable price of ¥300.

Shiketai シケタイ

An abbreviation of *shiken-taisaku* and refers to examination preparations. The University of Tokyo is notorious for its difficult entrance examination, so one would expect UT students to be very adept at studying for exams. In fact, UT students



A page of the *gyakuhyoutei*. Photo by author.

are so good at it, that there is a whole informal system dedicated to examination preparations. In every class, there is an appointed *shikechou* – someone who is responsible for coordinating the *shiketai* and assigning various people in class to be in charge of each subject. The person in charge of a subject would take notes for that subject and search for past year papers on behalf of the entire class. In essence, *shiketai* is a division of labor strategy that aims to maximize the efficiency of examination preparations.

Hopefully you are now more familiar with the slang commonly used on campus. Aside from being able to better understand the conversations of UT students, knowledge of the slang used on campus provides us an insightful glimpse into student culture in Komaba. We can see that the diligent yet strategic UT students have devised many ingenious ways to keep up with school work and still enjoy university life. Why not try using some of the words introduced above? You'll be one step closer to speaking like a bona fide UT student.

- 1) Regularly clean your air conditioning filter. Air conditioning cleaner sprays can easily be bought at a local supermarket or online. Just be sure to wear a mask when using it to prevent another allergic reaction!
- 2) If your air conditioner is connected to the outdoors, avoid using it as it can bring pollen into your room. Instead, opt for a dehumidifier or standing fan.
- 3) Try to regularly clean allergen-trapping materials such as bedding, carpets, moisture-filled areas, etc. Regularly cleaning can help keep these places pollen (and dust!) free.
- 4) Showering before bed can help remove pollen that you have brought in from outdoors. This way, you won't be tracking it into your bedroom when you go to bed.

FALL

Here's your season to take time off from large bouts of cleaning (unless, of course, you need to

rake leaves off of your front doorstep). Keeping your home clean during this season will help reduce the work for you with Winter's big cleaning at the end of the year.

WINTER

This is the season in which you do what in America is referred to as "Spring Cleaning." This is usually done at the end of the year. A survey done in 2015 by a major Japanese manufacturing company, Lion, estimated that nearly 72% of households plan on doing this end-of-the-year cleaning. People cleaning apartments need to set aside about one hour per room for cleaning, and those in larger homes might need to set aside more time depending on the size of the rooms. The best tip for this

huge undertaking of cleaning is to buy supplies at the 100-yen shop (such as Daiso) to save money. Trust me, it'll take a lot of supplies, but, on the upside, you'll be able to ring in the new year with a refreshingly clean home.



Struggle with Homesickness

By Hanna Hirakawa

"You can never go home again, but the truth is you can never leave home, so it's all right."

- Maya Angelou

Several months into college life, students finally feel that things are settling down. For many first year students at the University of Tokyo (UTokyo), it is not just the anxieties for new classes and unfamiliar faces that come to an ease, but the nerve-racking experience of moving into a new place, a new city. Clearing the hurdle of adjusting to a new environment, however, is no easy task. Homesickness, or the feeling of longing for home, washes over students in spontaneous waves.

A good portion of the student population, 70.2% to be exact, are from prefectures other than Tokyo, according to UTokyo's student population data. If you strolled through Komaba Campus, you would notice the distinct dialects spoken by these students. Still others, students who are part of foreign exchange or PEAK programs (where courses are lectured in English) have moved here from other countries. As statistical data by the university indicates, roughly 3% of the first and second year undergraduates were from foreign countries outside of Japan, as of 2016. These numbers are likely to be slightly higher since Japanese returnees are included in the domestic student population. And thus, for many freshmen, the beginning of UTokyo life is filled with unaccustomed and jarring experiences. Especially those who came from suburban areas are bewildered by the overflowing streams

of people at major train transfer points such as Shibuya, Shinjuku, and Kichijoji stations every morning on the way to campus.

Students quickly adapt to such changes in lifestyle as they need to focus on fulfilling their rigorous course schedules, but at certain moments, the sense of something absent suddenly weighs down on them. According to the Counseling Services at Warwick University, up to 70% of students will experience homesickness in their early days at university. Feeling a bit nostalgic from time to time, then, seems quite common among students when entering college.

However, this feeling is not something to be pushed aside easily; careful attention is needed depending on the degree of the student's emotional state, especially if it is disabling him or her from carrying out daily activities. When coupled with the need to adapt to new class settings and assignment loads, homesickness can possibly lead to serious levels of stress. Typical emotional symptoms include crying from distress and sudden waves of emotion. These effects may be reflected as physical symptoms, such as in the loss of concentration, eating or sleeping difficulties, nausea and headaches, trembling, and feeling either too hot or too cold.

At UTokyo almost 80% of the 108 surveyed students who have moved from elsewhere had experienced homesickness at some point during their university life. The timing of homesickness



Longing for home. Photo by Dhriti Mehta.

ranged anytime from the moment they set foot on new ground or several months after settling in. Interestingly, a wide variety of situational catalysts were accounted for such surges of nostalgia, such as cooking alone, going on ice-breaker class trips, and seeing a rice paddy. The majority of these triggers, though, involved the student's physical or emotional isolation from their loved ones. Despite this data, only 46% of those who have felt homesick indicated that they coped by communicating with their family.

At first thought, the solution to homesickness seems simple and easy. If we wish to thrive in our new setting, the quickest way would be telling yourself to "get over it" to focus on the present. Contrary to such convenient will, however, our minds wander at times and reminisce on past memories and the good feelings attached to them. Why do these sentimental feelings recur in not just students' but people's daily lives? One reason may be that our hearts are stubborn compared to our logical minds; we do not like to accept the departure from objects, places, and people that we have grown attached to over the years.

Alone in Komaba: Combating the Challenges of Leaving Home

By Ela Bogataj Stopar

Homesickness.

An emotion practically inevitable for anyone who has just moved to a different country to spend four years breaking their back in college. In spite of being the enthusiastic, decisive and independent student that you must be to have impressed the PEAK interviewers, it does get to everyone at some point; although it seems we tend to keep quiet about it. Why, however, remains a mystery, given that suffering in silence only amplifies the contradictory feeling of loneliness in the middle of one of the most populated cities in the world.

Owing to the fact that many of us live under the same roof for at least half of our time here, PEAK is a rather close-knit community, making the first and obvious solution to the problem that much easier. Find friends. Whether you are an extrovert or an introvert, the sudden decrease in your

friends or family's presence is bound to have an effect, and the only way to efficiently combat that is by finding a kindred spirit among the people whom you see on a daily basis. The PEAK interviewers look for specific characteristics in the applicants, so you can safely assume you'll have a few things in common with some of your new classmates; all that is left is to overcome the inexplicable want to spend the entire weekend in your room and make plans with them.

On particularly bad days, leaving the dorms to explore the city is beneficial regardless of whether you bring a friend. Tokyo is excellently equipped with green surfaces for a city of its size, and while nature might not be an adequate substitute for your mother's delicious homemade meals, it does have a reputation to lift one's spirits. Take your earphones out for a run or a walk, or consult Google Maps on beautiful bits of urban greenery slightly further away from Komaba if your taste for adventure manages to withstand the gloomy mood. If nothing else, it will at least provide a distraction and an opportunity to appreciate the many benefits of living in the center of Tokyo.

Speaking of distractions, the University of Tokyo offers plenty of ways to keep the students busy and productive during their free time. Clubs and circles come in a variety of flavors, from sports to

arts and science, and they provide for wonderful intercultural exchanges with the domestic students as well as a place to practice your Japanese. If group activities fail to be your cup of tea, or you prefer to earn money as opposed to spending it in the case of some clubs, the administration office also posts part-time job opportunities for students with different interests and levels of Japanese. You could even start a project that has been brewing in the back of your mind, or acquire a skill you always thought would be amazing to have. Although sometimes the only acceptable remedy may be a quiet day in the company of TV series and junk food, breaking the daily routine makes for a much better distraction. Furthermore, chancing upon people who come from the same country is bound to offer a little bit of comfort, especially if you live too far away from Japan to take a short trip home during the few short holiday periods within the semester.

Dealing with the challenges of leaving the nest, balancing adequate amounts of sleep with Skyping with family under the curse of time difference and handling culture shock are all factors that make feeling disconcerted and missing home an inevitable companion to starting university life abroad. However, as inescapable as it may be, it is also not entirely incurable; hopefully, it's but a matter of time that we make Komaba a place where we truly feel at home.

Studying abroad on your own can be overwhelmingly lonely. Photo by Aftab Uzzaman | Flickr; edited by author.



The Crowded Commute: Three Hours to and from Komaba Campus

By Takuma Furukawa

How long do you take to commute to school or work? Twenty minutes? Forty minutes max? I take three hours there and back when commuting to campus. Being shoved around in overcrowded trains and holding on for dear life to the handgrips, I make the journey every morning to Komaba campus.

When I have 1st period from 8:30am, I have to wake up at 6am (a.k.a. the crack of dawn for college students) to make it in time. Wanting to cut down time between switching trains, I choose the train car closest to the stairs leading to the platform that I need. Even when rushing, though, I wait for the second-arriving train so that I will have a chance to hold onto the handgrips instead of relying on a crowd of people to keep me from falling over when the train is in motion.

After I finally board the train, the realization that I



A platform during rush hour. Photo by Sushipaku | PAKUTASO.

have a long ride ahead of me is disheartening. I always wish to utilize my time wisely by studying or working on homework, but the constant shoving and wave of crowds makes it impossible to concentrate on anything other than standing upright. A thirty-minute train ride later, I finally arrive at my transfer station. As soon as the doors open, I am swept up in a wave of dark suits as businessmen rush through the station to change trains as fast as possible as though their lives depended on it. Each time I change trains (three times each way), I face this "torture." Because I go through this situation every morning, I have accumulated a few useful tips on how to make long commutes during rush hour as bearable as possible.

1) Avoid Rush Hour:

The most obvious, but often overlooked, way to avoid over-crowded trains is definitely to avoid rush hour. Generally, rush hour is from around 7:30 to 8:30am. Its peak is at around 8:00. You can avoid this time zone by waking up earlier or leaving home later. In fact, when I really want to avoid rush hour, I wake up at five in the morning. To board the train as soon as possible (around 5:30 a.m.), I sometimes skip eating breakfast at home. This way, I am able to arrive at campus by seven - before rush hour even begins. The earlier in the morning you leave, the greater chance you have of finding a seat so that you can catch some shut-eye. In other countries, it might be unheard of to sleep in trains due to safety issues or uncertainty, but I guarantee that many other people will be doing the same as you, making it the perfect op-

portunity to utilize your commute time.

2) Use Smartphone Applications:

However, it is sometimes hard to avoid rush hour. It sometimes happens that you have to get in trains during rush hour. Then "NAVITIME Transit Tokyo Japan" is a very useful transfer app that allows you to search for a roundabout route to avoid crowded trains. This app also offers the information on how crowded each train is.

3) Choose a Strategic Position:

Getting on the car at the tail end or at the front is also effective. Many people have not tried choosing the farthest car from the stairs. Once you try this, you may no longer go back.

4) Move Further into the Train Car:

Even if you have to get in the crowded train, there are some ways to ride trains as comfortably as possible. For instance, getting the position in front of seats is important because there you can hold on to the handgrips, and it is not so crowded compared to the area near the door. If you have a large backpack, you should carry it in front of you or put it on the overhead luggage rack because it might make maneuvering in an overcrowded train very difficult.

By combining these strategies above, you can make your commute bearable. The crowded commute may be one of the most serious problems you have to face as a worker or a student in Japan.

My First Gokon Experience

By Shin Tokura

Have you ever heard of *gokon*? *Gokon* (pronounced *goh-kon*) is like a group date. It is an opportunity usually for singles to meet new people of the opposite sex. During *gokon*, a group of boys and girls usually go to a pub together to drink and chat. Some say that three boys and three girls is a perfect ratio at a *gokon*. The purpose of having *gokon* varies among people. Some want to get a partner. Others want an one-night stand. Or just to have fun.

Last week, I went on my first *gokon* with two other boys and three girls. The boys were my classmates. One of the girls is a friend of one of my classmates. The rest of the girls are friends of the girl. *Gokon* is usually held among strangers, and I did not know any of the three girls. I did not expect I would enjoy it because you could say that *gokon* is gathering of losers in the struggle for love. However, it was not bad at all. Although my friend and I were late, it was quite enjoyable.

After we introduced ourselves, we started to drink quickly, everyone got more relaxed and we enjoyed talking about where we live, part-time jobs, hobbies, families, and our ex-boyfriends and ex-girlfriends. In a few hours, we started to play games. Because the loser had to drink, we got rather drunk. At 9:30pm, a girl left because she had a curfew. We kept drinking until 10. In

Japanese culture, men are supposed to pay all or pay more than girls, but we split the bill equally and went to a park nearby. We rode the swings and the slide in the dark at 11, and we yelled than talked. It must have been a nuisance to the neighbors. Then, somebody suggested going to a boy's house and staying over night because his house was near the park. We agreed with no reason except for drunken force.

In his house, we played a game using an app. While we played the game, girls had their textbook in their hands to prepare for an exam the next day, but there was no moment when they studied. We kept chatting until very late at night and I fell asleep. I had heard somebody talking in a small voice during the night. Even three days after the *gokon*, I still chat with one of the girls online.

This was my first time *gokon* experience. Everyone was sensible throughout the experience. The result of *gokon* is still developing. Possibly someone will get together in the group. However, whether I will get a partner or not, I really enjoyed it and I want to have another *gokon* again soon.

A typical image of *gokon* is rowdy. Apparently a final goal for some men is *omochikaeri*, which means "take home a girl" to have sex. One understands why 70% of women have experienced an

awful *gokon*, according to statistics. It is because of these men, who try to make women drunk and take them home. To stop this kind of awful *gokon* and let girls enjoy the gathering as much as boys, you have to remember a couple of things when you are in *gokon*. You should not be so drunk. It is better to be sober enough to see yourself objectively so as not to make the gathering an awful experience. What counts is to enjoy *gokon* itself. Not everyone gets a partner at *gokon*, so you can say a *gokon* is successful if you enjoy it and make new friends. Lastly, you should not focus only your favorite person. If you do so, other people will feel left out and also your favorite person will think you can not think of how unselected people feel.

Although I wrote a couple of things you have to mind, you do not have to be so nervous. If you go to a *gokon*, just have fun. Let go. Find someone who likes you as you are. Good luck!!

P.S. It is a pity that nothing has happened to me so far one month after the *gokon*. I am planning to have another *gokon* soon.



When we played a game at the *gokon* after one girl left. Photo by author

Recommended Lunch near Komaba

By Shoko Sano

In Komaba Campus there are few places to have lunch. Actually, the choices of restaurants are limited between eating at the cafeteria or buying food at the Coop. Honestly, the amount and quality are not good, and value for money is bad. However, if you go out of Komaba campus and walk a little, you can find lunch with better quality or value.

Here are two reasons why I think this information will be useful for Komaba students.

Firstly, university students who basically live on tight budgets, cannot treat themselves to expensive lunches every day. Nevertheless, we are young so we eat a lot. My information about good cost performance restaurants will be useful for students who eat a lot, or are trying to save money for lunch.

Secondly, I want Komaba students to be more excited about eating even during short lunch breaks on campus. Though this fact applies to any person, I believe that eating plays a really important role in our daily lives, and can affect our mindset at many cases. Students sometimes are stressed out by busy days or studying, but delicious food can make students relaxed and improve their motivation for their own activity after lunch.

Here I will introduce some places little known around Komaba campus.

1) TAKE~bento~

It is located next to Ramen Isshin which is at the left side of Komaba back gate. 'Higawari bento' is 500 yen and the volume is significantly more compared to usual bento at food shops.



All photos by author.

2) My basket~supermarket~

This is the nearest supermarket to Komaba campus. It takes only two minutes from the main gate. They have a good selection with reasonable prices.

Nigiri (rice balls) go for about 60 yen.



3) MUSKAN~Indian curry and naan~

This is also located two minutes from the gate and we can get take-out curry and naan or rice with salad at about 600 yen and enjoy lunch there if you like.

If you eat lunch at the shop, we are recommended to choose lunch set which allows us to order as much naan as you can eat.

Whether you choose to take out or eat in, you can have freshly-cooked curry and naan and choose from five levels of spiciness.



Of course you can find other places to eat lunch or get some food, but these 3 shops are really recommended for 3 points; low cost, large volume, and location.

Gaijin in Japan - Tips for Housing in Japan

By Yulee Kim

For most of the students who become students at the University of Tokyo, they start their first Japan housing in international lodges provided by the University. However, some students need to leave the dormitory because they are not guaranteed their residence in the dorm for four years. If international students plan to live in Japan for more than two years, housing contract other than university dormitory is necessary. It is considerably more burdensome for foreigners who do not have enough information about housing in Japan. For those who are interested in finding their first house in Japan, I would like to introduce a few tips.

Types of House in Japan

- Apartment: multi-household house mostly made of wood. As apartments are made of wood, the rent is low. It is significantly more vulnerable than a house made of concrete in terms of soundproofing and security because many apartments are old.
- Mansion: Unlike a large house is called mansion in the West, high-rise apartments are called

mansion in Japan. Rodent problem is also better than that of apartments because mansions are made of concrete.

Where to Look for a House

1. Local Housing

- Realtor: Usually, people use local realtors when they want to rent. Because monthly rent is most reliable in Japan, real estate properties are very active. Residents need to pay the brokerage fee, but this is most convenient way to get rent since there is certain support from realtor. Sometimes owners do not rent to foreigners because foreigners can have visa problem while having two year housing contract. (*When a foreigner rents a house, a Japanese person must be a guarantor. Otherwise, realtors introduce residents a guarantor company.)

- Realtor from your home country: There are high possibilities that there would be realtor from your home country. It is most comfortable choice for foreigners who cannot speak Japanese but want to circumvent complicated

procedures in getting housing in Japan.

2. Online Housing Site

However, it is not possible to look for local realtor one by one. If residents do not want a particular area, it is convenient to browse the house by using internet. Suumo (<http://suumo.jp>), homes (<http://homes.co.jp>), Chintai (<http://www.chintai.net>) are some of the major online housing information sites in Japan. The site is in Japanese, so you may have to use a translator. If you enter the desired price range, house structure, area, etc. in the site, you will get a list. The contact information of the real estate agent in charge is also listed. After contacting the agent, you would need to bring friend who can speak Japanese. Also, University of Tokyo Housing Office for international students and researchers helps you with language problem.

3. Leopalace

Leopalace targets foreigners who want to find their housing in Japan. From monthly plans to two year contracts, renters do not need a Japanese guarantor. However, comparatively, housing

Achieving Gender Equality through Rent Subsidies

By Sarah Goh

From April 2017, the University of Tokyo began offering monthly rent subsidies of ¥30,000 to newly-enrolled female students to increase the female student population which currently stands at a meagre 20% for undergraduates. The announcement of this policy last November attracted significant attention in the media and was met with mixed reception. Some people felt that this was a positive step towards gender equality on campus while others criticized it as a discriminatory measure. To evaluate the effectiveness of this policy, several female students receiving the subsidy gave an account of how the policy has affected them and their views on the issue.

To begin with, the announcement of the policy was timed to coincide with the application for entrance examinations so that more girls would be enticed to apply for the University of Tokyo. Among the three female students interviewed, all three said that this policy had no immediate impact on their decision to study at UT as they would have applied anyway. Consequently, the effectiveness of this policy seems marginal at best.

On a fundamental level, it appears as if the policy does not target the root cause of the dearth of female students. When questioned about the reasons for the low number of female students, all three female students replied that there exists a societal perception that compared to boys, girls do not have to attain high educational credentials to survive. As a result, most choose not to push themselves to enter prestigious universities. In contrast, this policy of rent subsidies offers mainly economic support and may not be sufficient to change deep-rooted social norms.

Another issue raised by this policy was the unfairness towards male students, especially those who face financial hardships. Under this policy, all female students who enrolled in April 2017 and whose home is more than 90 minutes from campus qualify for rent subsidies, regardless of their economic situation. A freshman from Oita Prefecture felt that the rent subsidies may go a longer way to help male students who are struggling financially instead of female students who may be better-off. Another freshman from Miyazaki Prefecture felt that application for rent subsidies should also be made available to male students who require financial assistance. Both students expressed a similar sentiment that regardless of gender, deserving students should not be deprived of the chance to study at UT because of financial difficulties.

However, this policy had some positive impact as it raised awareness of the gender imbalance in the student population and affirmed parents' decision to send their daughters to the University of Tokyo. The freshman from Miyazaki Prefecture felt that the publicity surrounding the announcement of rent subsidies was akin to a "performance", and was effective in conveying the message that the University hopes to increase the female student population. Furthermore, the freshman from Oita Prefecture commented that most parents in the countryside are reluctant to send their daughters to schools far from home. This policy of rent subsidies encourages parents to consider allowing their daughters to pursue their studies in UT, especially if they have the aptitude for it.

Moreover, to claim the rent subsidies, female students are required to stay in a dormitory or



Female UT students studying in school. Photo by author.

apartment which has been shortlisted by the university. A freshman from the Kansai region remarked that this made the process of finding a place much easier because she simply had to choose from one of the options proposed by the University. Additionally, female students and their parents would have a peace of mind as all the shortlisted housing meet strict criteria regarding safety and security, such as earthquake-resistant structures and security cameras.

The freshman from Kansai suggested that aside from rent subsidies, UT should hold talks in various regions to promote interest among prospective female students. She stated that most girls in the countryside do not even consider applying for UT because they lack information on the University and it feels out of reach. Currently, the University of Tokyo does hold several such events but they are simply not as well-publicised as the rent subsidies. It seems that if the university is truly keen on increasing the female student population, they should focus more efforts to appeal on the strengths of the university instead of just offering rent subsidies.

price is higher than that of homes (Japanese)

All the Housing Costs in Japan

- 家賃 ('yachin,' rental fee): Japanese word for rental fee. (Sometimes includes maintenance costs & common area charge)
- 敷金 ('shikikin,' security deposit): for the purpose to repair the house in the circumstances that resident breaks something. Usually, residents charge once or twice the monthly rental fee for security deposit. When the residents finish the contract and leave the house, owner subtracts the cleaning fee and gives the remainder back.
- 礼金 ('reikin,' manner deposit): residents need to submit once or twice the monthly rental fee for expressing gratitude to house owner. Unlike security deposit, residents do not get a refund of this deposit even if they finish the contract.
- 管理費 ('kanrihi,' maintenance fee): monthly charge made for maintenance on a property.
- 仲介手数料 ('chuukai tesuuryou,' brokerage fee): residents need to pay a commission to realtors.
- 更新料 ('koushinryou,' renewal fee): renewal fee



Realtor at Shimokitazawa station. Photo by author.

for continuing the housing contract after the completion of the first contract.

- 連帯保証人 ('rentai hoshounin,' guarantor): to certify the identification of the residents, residents need to have a Japanese guarantor who works in Japan. If not, you can use a guarantor company to serve as your guarantor.

As explained above, the initial cost of renting a house in Japan is often about four or five times the monthly rent. If monthly rent is 50,000 yen, you need an initial payment of about 200,000 yen to 250,000 yen. The contract period is usually two years, but this contract period is not a mandatory period. It does not matter if you move

without having completed two years. However, it is customary to inform the owner about a month before moving. Or else, you may not receive any of the security deposit.

It sounds considerably difficult, but don't worry, we all have all gone through this. There are more methods than I introduced above. Home-sharing houses, share houses, private dormitories (unaffiliated with universities) are suggestions for avoiding these troublesome costs above and they are completely open for you. University of Tokyo also supports you in language problem and guarantor system for foreigners. By reading this article and getting interest, you are already ready to start.

What's Cookin' in Komaba? The Highs and Lows of *Shokudou* Spinach

By Taiga Tase

What's in a meal? A *donburi* in any other shape would be as nourishing. So what bearing does the source of the dining hall's food have on its ability to provide the hungry university student with the energy to get through another day? As the host of the cream of the nation's crop and a *kokuritsu* state-funded university, The University of Tokyo has an obligation to responsibly source the daily fare that fuels the student body.

Mr. Makoto Sasaki, the then head chef of the UTokyo co-op dining hall, agreed to speak with the reporter. Clad in a freshly ironed and pristinely alabaster shirt coupled with a utilitarian black apron, he answered my question in an office tucked away behind the kitchens. Right off the bat he told me that the Komaba dining hall prepares very little locally; it is supplied from a national scale by the same co-operational that students at such schools as Waseda and Keio rely on. In other words, very little sets our cafeteria apart from the other hundreds dotting the university campus the country over.

Sasaki enthusiastically told me about an infrastructural development project underway in

the mountains of Thailand. A former marijuana plantation, these fields now produce the spinach that you may have eaten as part of a seasonal vegetable dish. The proceeds from the harvests are then re-invested into the community in the form of funding for the beleaguered elementary schools responsible for educating Thailand's next generation. A group of students from the Faculty visit the village of Chiang Mai in northern Thailand every year to help maintain the quality of the fields and keep up with the community.

But of course not everything served in the dining hall comes from northern Thailand. Sasaki pointed the reporter in the direction of the University Co-op website, which features ingredients and sources for every menu item served in our dining hall. The domestically-produced rice was harvested in Hokkaido, while Australian flour constitutes the ever-popular ramen.

Out of a statistically significant sample of thirty randomly selected ingredients, twelve ingredients (40%) were sourced exclusively from Japan, while an additional five (17%) were sourced either from Japan or another country. All told, thir-

teen (43%) of the thirty sampled ingredients were sourced exclusively from abroad. Of particular note is that none of the meat was domestic, being sourced from such diverse nations as Thailand, China, the United States, and Australia. In contrast, Japan provides much of the vegetables that add bulk and fibre to the dining hall meals.

So perhaps the UTokyo dining hall doesn't fully support domestic farmers and companies. That's understandable, however, due to the much higher price of Japanese meat despite controversial import tariffs. In lieu of providing *kokusan* -- domestically sourced -- dishes, UTokyo strives to leave a Japanese mark on the rest of the world by supporting distant communities that would otherwise remain impoverished and disconnected from the world.



Pepper Steak Donburi. The rice was grown in Hokkaido, the potatoes in the United States, and the beef in Australia. Image by author.

End of an Era: UTokyo to Receive New Gym Facilities to Coincide with Olympics, Fate of Campus Plaza Remains Undecided

By Taiga Tase

KOMABA CAMPUS, July 2017- Discussions were finalized last month within the Sports Team Association regarding the construction of modern gymnasiums to replace the aging *Dai-ichi* (No. 1), *Dai-ni* (No. 2), and Training Gyms. The finality of the decision was indicated by an as-of-yet undisclosed budget being approved by the University board.

Much of the discussion comprised of debates on the timing with which existing facilities would be torn down; because the current gymnasiums are used daily for compulsory physical education classes, they would need to be relocated or suspended during the construction period. As of June 2017, plans call for pre-fabricated temporary gyms to be placed in the area behind the library while the new buildings are erected, according to a source familiar with the matter, who agreed to speak on the condition of anonymity. To help ease the load, elements of the existing complex, most notably the Training Gym, are to be retained until the after the new gyms are opened.

The three gyms also currently act as the meeting and practice locations for countless teams and clubs. Those teams unable to practice in the Training Gym will be forced to find such alternatives as local fields and privately-run gyms in the interim. As it stands, the Cheerleading, Gymnastics, and Bodybuilding and Weightlifting Teams - those that hold practices in the Training Gym - are to remain unscathed, but others are not as fortunate.

Yūma Matsumoto, a second year member of the gymnastics team, expressed excitement for the

new gym, complaining that the warped floors of the current Training Gym make complicated flips and moves difficult to practice. He personally hopes for a new gym wherein his team will be able to maintain an equipment setup on a permanent basis; currently they must set up and disassemble their equipment every time they wish to practice.

Planning for alternative practice sites following the loss of the gyms appears to be progressing slowly. Yōhei Kobayashi, a second-year member of the baseball team who trains with his teammates in the No. 2 gymnasium, expressed that he has no idea where to train while the gyms are unavailable. He is joined by Hiroki Wada, a first year who plays basketball recreationally in the No. 2 Gym, as well as the captain of a team that practices in the No. 2 Gym, who wished to remain otherwise anonymous.

Those who have searched for substitute training spots have largely settled on the facilities of other academic institutions. Those like the Kendo Circle led by second-year Kūta Nakajima will increasingly utilise the local Komaba Elementary School grounds, as well as private gyms. Wada intends to use the facilities of the universities to which his friends belong.

The students as a whole called for cleaner practice grounds, with Nakajima curiously being the sole voice calling for air-conditioning. Predictably, Kobayashi, who uses the gyms exclusively for weight training, seeks fantastic new training equipment. Dhriti Mehta, a first-year, finds the lack of cardio equipment unsatisfactory and hopes for

The exterior of the Training Gym. The dilapidated sign, formerly reading 'トレーニング体育館', now only reads 'イ育館'. Photo by author.



treadmills and ellipticals in the new gyms.

Plans for reconstruction of the Campus Plaza has, in contrast, been met with considerable resistance. As the site of clubrooms for a variety of clubs ranging from electronic keyboard enthusiasts to broadcasters, it holds significant sentimental value for generations of UTokyo students. This resistance is reflected in the school's policies; although a plan is in the works, no budget has yet been approved for a renovation of the Campus Plaza.

According to the same anonymous source familiar with the matter, plans currently exist for the old gyms to be torn down and ground to be broken over the Spring of 2018. Construction is to be completed in time for the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics, and the Student Union hopes that the new gym facilities will bolster domestic enthusiasm and may contribute to future UTokyo Olympians. The original Training Gym was built in 1963 as a training grounds for the 1964 Summer Olympics.

Currently no plans exists for the Martial Art Gym and the *Kyūdō* (Japanese archery) Range, dating from 1999 and 1987 respectively, to be replaced or renovated.

Rise of Coded Da Vinci's - Man vs Machine Divide in Art

By Hanna Hirakawa



Rembrandt brought back to life. The Next Rembrandt software processing programmed patterns onto canvas. Photo by ING. <http://creativity-online.com/work/ing-the-next-rembrandt/46306>.

You may have heard about specialized computers beating human chess professionals, but what about resurrecting Monet or Van Gogh? Today, the level of artistic abilities demonstrated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs are indeed mind-blowing. One such program called *The Next Rembrandt* produces fresh artworks with a Rembrandt-esque style, almost mistakable as an original. The program is fed digital visual information and trained to recognize the artist's brushstrokes, palette, and other distinct patterns that characterize Rembrandt's painting style, according to the official page. Essentially, the goal of the mechanical brain is to generate new pieces when it is given minimal instructions of a theme.

However, AIs aren't only resurrecting great painters. Other programs like *Emmy* (EMI), which composes music, and *Kimagure* AI Project *Sakkadesunoyo*, which writes short stories, are also AIs being put to test in the arts field. Additionally, Google Brain Team has developed *Magenta*, a project which aims to create an algorithm that produces "compelling art and music." Moreover, the project is intended to connect experts from a wide variety of fields including coders, researchers, and artists during the process, according to Douglas Eck, a research scientist working on *Magenta*. Taking all of this in mind, the potential skill of machines in the arts seem to

be progressing; and the conventionally perceived gap in artistic competency between humans and machines closing. Or is it?

Much debate circulates when we begin pondering the idea of technology authoring artistic works, independently of humans. Are the systematically produced works by these machines truly art? In answering this

question, one crucial criterion is originality. Originality encompasses creativity and authenticity. When one appreciates Van Gogh's paintings, we acknowledge the distinctness of contrasting hues and heavily rough brushstrokes. This set of visual features is what separates the artist from his contemporaries of the Impressionist Era and distinctly signifies his. And furthermore, these differences do not simply derive from studying differences and simultaneously gaining inspiration from existent artworks. Distinct styles develop from each artist's unique perception of the real world, emotional experiences, and even personality. Currently, AIs' creations is heavily based on the systematic analysis of existing past works, as is evident from *The Next Rembrandt*. In other words, although the content itself is entirely new, there are no intended themes or messages behind the piece. Hence such works can be described as merely rearrangements of used color and textural structures, lacking in meaning or emotional drive. And so if we were to define art based on originality in these terms, computer-produced works wouldn't make the qualifications for "true art."

However, the meaning of art itself seems to be evolving, emerging out of the conventional boundaries. Professor Simon Colton, the founder of a creative painting software called *The Painting Fool*, believes in the potentials of machines

in the arts field. He strongly believes that robot minds are capable of exhibiting creativity, equivalent to that of humans. Interestingly, his idea of art transcends the artist's body. "You can imagine a child doing exactly the same thing as software," Colton explains. "[B]ut people project creativity onto the child and not onto the software, because of the context." According to him, just as the definition of creativity leads to discussion, the meaning of art is highly subject to debate. He sees this as an opportunity to broaden our scope; he approaches the idea of art challengingly as he continues working on the development of *The Painting Fool*, which can now self-criticize, learn from past failures, and independently set itself a goal, and display its own personality.

Colton's thoughts may be right. As AI technology increases its level of autonomy, we will marvel at the human-like machines and, simultaneously, may feel a bit disturbed. Beginning with Ray Bradbury's *There Will Come Soft Rains*, the non-human advancing to the human level in performing skills and eventually replacing humans has been a repeatedly addressed theme in culture. Today, the concern feels ever more close as movies depict these machines in human form. If machines can do the same, why need humans to do it? This is a jarring question, especially when it comes to the arts, which many may have long assumed to be human's specialized field. The answer is not an easy. However, what we do know now for certain is that it's still a long ways before machines develop emotions and cognition based on real life experiences. And we can recognize the value of human-made art based on the emotional energy and drive that compels us to express our inner selves.



The Dancing Salesman Problem. The Painting Fool software applying motional patterns of the human body into fluorescent scenes. Image by The Painting Fool software. <https://www.newscientist.com/gallery/painting-fool/>.

Photo by Xuan Truong Trinh.



Kintsugi: The Art of Forging Meaning in Brokenness

By Eugene Song

My Mom loves ceramics. It was, and still remains paramount among the artistic passions she acquired, polished and eventually lost throughout the years. To her, an old and seemingly bland piece of Fine China teacup, carefully wrapped in newspaper and tucked away in an unseen corner of the dressing room, means much more than just a utilitarian demitasse. It's an appreciation of her unique aesthetic palette, and more dearly, a homage to her mother, who helped her cultivate her love for aesthetics.

I believe however that over the years, our family's frequent migrations between South Korea and New Zealand added a new layer of meaning to my Mom's love for porcelain.

Right upon our first arrival in New Zealand in the winter of 2003, one thing became clear to me; My Mom, despite the endearing demeanor she displayed in my presence, felt sadness. She was even pained by it. I found my Mom in the storage room, silently weeping, holding shattered pieces of one of her Villeroy & Boch Knife Plates - not the most exquisite piece of her collection, but a cherished one; it was my grandmother's dearest.

South Korea was, for the most part of my Mom's life, the soil that cultured her relationships with her family and friends. I too was scared of having to break with the old world - there was a strong sense of permanence about it. My friends back in Korea would remain together, intact, strengthening their bonds while I would deviate from our once-shared trajectory. If, however, breaking with an old world meant leaving behind permanence, my Mom had all the more reasons to be melancholic.

Despite her efforts to protect her ceramics - cherished symbols of the past - the impermanence of life seemed too substantial for the fragile plates to bear. Looking back, I think the broken plate reminded her of the inevitable fragility of life. While immigration means the perma-

nent settlement in a new world, it also means the permanent departure, or breaking, with the world that was once familiar.

So, 13 years later, when I first encountered Kintsugi - the Japanese art of mending broken ceramics with lacquer resin, mixed with powdered gold - I was inclined to explore. Was there an artistic way of viewing the world that embraced the inevitable fragility of life? I was eager to learn a means of expression that could illustrate, poetically and subtly, the paradoxical *strength of brokenness*.

Within the millennia long history of lacquerware, Kintsugi reportedly began in the 15th century. Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa, unsettled by the poor repair techniques of his age, encouraged Japanese craftsmen to develop a more artistic method of repairing ceramics. The repaired products turned out to be more beautiful than the original ceramics, garnering appreciation for this new art form.

Underlying this aesthetic aspect of Kintsugi however is a philosophical contemplation of 'impermanence' - most likely originating from the Japanese philosophical tradition of Wabi Sabi. Wabi Sabi is a worldview that embraces transience and imperfection - commonly represented through Japanese zen gardens - rather than glorifying permanence and perfection.

Instead of seeing cracks as irreparable flaws or reasons to dispose the ceramic, Kintsugi embraces them as undeniably unique moments in the history of that ceramic, adding more meaning and value to its existence. In truth, throughout our many more migrations between New Zealand and Korea, my Mom continuously engaged with her past, reflecting upon the cracks in her history, reminding me that

the forging of meaning and identity largely depends on the narratives of our personal histories that we tell ourselves. Her narrative found beauty in brokenness.

Whether it be in counseling peers or engaging in long overdue chats with old friends, Ernest Hemingway's quote, though admittedly taken out of context, "the world breaks everyone" somehow always rings true. Regardless of each and every individual's unceasing strive towards perfection and permanence, everyone, in some minor or major way, succumbs to breaks and fractures in their personal narrative of life.

However, "and afterward many are strong at the broken places" - the latter part of Hemingway's quote - is equally resonant and compelling whenever I am reminded of my mother and Kintsugi. To predicate the countless breaks and reconciliations in life - with people, the past or entire worlds - on the foundation of honesty, vulnerability, grace and vigor became our common understanding.

Indeed, even when broken, we are always intact.



Tea bowl, with gold lacquer Kintsugi repair work, 16th century. Ethnological Museum, Berlin. Wikimedia Commons.

Japanese Speakers Find it *Hard* to Find English *Easy*?

By Takuma Furukawa

I've always wondered why most Japanese native speakers are not good at speaking and listening to English. I belong to an international interaction circle at The University of Tokyo called TGIF, and I feel that among non-native English speakers, especially Japanese speakers including myself, seem to have a preconceived idea that they are not "up-to-par" with native English standards. I began to consider the underlying possibilities for this phenomenon and how Japanese people could overcome this and learn to speak English with confidence and fluency.

One of the reasons they find speaking English hard is related to how most Japanese people view English. Almost all Japanese people learn English for a minimum of 6 years, during junior high and high school, but what they learn is mostly gram-

mar. Those English classes test students on their grammar knowledge, which makes them afraid of grammar mistakes. This attitude towards English makes them think of it as a skill which should be studied as a subject, as opposed to a way of expressing oneself. Although English is a language of communication, most English teachers never touch on the subject of pronunciations and intonations. Therefore, most native Japanese speakers have a strong inferiority complex regarding their pronunciation and are sometimes strict towards others' pronunciations - which can be seen by the unsupportive comments on videos of a famous personality messing up when speaking English. On the other hand, if you try to pronounce words correctly (not with a "typical" Japanese accent), you will often be laughed at and seen as someone trying too hard or showing off. In these situations,

it's really hard to find English easy and interesting. Then what is the way out?

To uncover the "big secret" to answering my question, I decided to speak to non-native English speakers who were also non-Japanese citizens. I wanted to see how foreigners dealt with this type of situation. When questioning two PEAK students at the University of Tokyo and a student from China studying at the University of Illinois, I was surprised by the results. The resounding reply was that they studied English primarily by listening in class at school, by watching English-speaking television dramas, and talking to native English speakers. In fact, what they learn in school does not differ much from what is taught at Japanese schools. I wanted to know more about the secret to their confidence when speaking a language

JK Business... Not a Joke

By Jessica Ge

The land of sushi, anime, and cute high school girls. This is the image that Japan stereotypically exudes to the rest of the world. Walking through the streets of Harajuku, high school uniform costumes are just as common of a sight as the well-known maid outfit. Akihabara boasts a huge number of cosplay cafes, among which high school girls, or *joshikousei* (女子高生), are the main focus. Japan's idol groups, such as AKB48 named after Akihabara itself, and anime are also stellar examples of the extent of popularity the *joshikousei* image holds in Japanese culture. Bright colours, high voices, and cute smiles; it's all fun and games, until someone gets hurt.

Along with the deep adoration of *joshikousei* comes the more controversial 'JK business', in which *joshikousei* is abbreviated into JK. The JK business refers to dating services which match teenage school girls with men, often in their late 30s to 50s. The levels of service range from taking a walk with them while holding hands; modelling for pictures in school uniforms, swimsuits, and the like; and in many cases to sexual services, in a sense, prostitution, according to Anna Fifield from The Washington Post. Reasons for such a high demand for young high school girls could be due to Japan's strangely low age of consent of 13 years old, which is at the lower end internationally. However, it is important to note that factors such as financial burdens and emotional difficulties are what ultimately pushes girls into this business. Osaka University's professor of Sociology and Gender Studies, Kazue Muta, suggests that Japan's patriarchal society creates a "mentality that the young and seemingly innocent are valuable and more alluring." There is a sense of forbidden attraction that allegedly makes school girls more sexually attractive.

In the past year, the human rights and ethics of the whole scheme has been brought to the attention of both local authorities such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)

and the international community, such as within the United Nations. The sexually exploitative nature of JK businesses in Japan has been likened to human sex trafficking and a form of child exploitation, which is heavily frowned upon. However, is enough action being taken?

Many people just do not seem to see it as an issue. Photographer Yuki Aoyama, whose Instagram account is fittingly named "school-girlcomplex", claims that it is just business. Furthermore, a freshman from the University of Tokyo commented that the lack of strong opposition is because it has been this way for so long that nobody really acknowledges it as an issue. Furthermore, unlike some western countries, such as the United States, where the sexualisation of young children, which could be construed as child pornography, is heavily frowned upon, this culture is widespread throughout Japan. The openness of this *joshikousei* fetish blurs the line between the potentially harmful aspects of this culture, and makes it difficult for Japanese people to both recognise and deal with the problem. At the same time, it is also difficult to differentiate between benign and malicious businesses. Establishments like maid cafes are seen as comparably safer as young girls may sit with customers, but only in a non-private shared dining area and strict rules prohibit any form of physical contact.

Nonetheless, recent action looks to close down these establishments, reports Tomomi Abe from *The Asahi Shimbun*. Approximately 190 JK businesses exist in Japan, and in the past year the MPD has taken to raiding these establishments and interviewing the girls. Furthermore, *Japan Today* reports that Tokyo's Metropolitan Government looks to ban under-18 JK businesses with



A typical street in Akihabara, young girls dressed as maids (left) can be seen advertising a maid café (right). Photo by author.



A stall displays a variety of young-looking cartoon girls in swimwear, exemplifying a high demand for this sort of image. Photo by author.

their new municipal ordinance which has come into effect July 1st. However, Dr. Muta points out that this paints the root of the problem to be the girls taking part in these businesses rather than penalizing the men having sex with high schoolers. In addition, these stricter regulations may just "push these activities underground" and therefore further endanger the girls, says Jun Tachibana, founder of not-for-profit Bond Project that aims to support young women experiencing problems such as sexual abuse.

Tachibana reinforces the point that these girls are still children and that help should be targeted towards providing emotional support for girls who feel cornered either from domestic or school-related problems. In an interview with "FIT (Financial Industry in Tokyo) for Charity", Tachibana discusses this project and how it operates. The project focuses on talking to girls either in person, if they encounter a vulnerable looking girl in the streets of Shibuya, or online by making themselves widely known and easily contactable by showing up on internet searches when someone types phrases like "I want to die" or "I want to disappear".

Another example of actions which focus on the social difficulties that make girls vulnerable to the JK business, is the "*Watashi-tachi wa Kawareta*" (私たちは買われた) exhibition by Yumeno Nito. This name translates into "We were Bought" and aims to make viewers aware of sexual exploitation and abuse that girls in the JK business face. Furthermore it aims to erase the myth that girls join the JK business with a light heart and simply for extra pocket money or boredom. It aims to expose the disturbing reality of the entire operation.

other than their mother tongue.

Towards the beginning, they felt embarrassed when they could not speak English fluently, but they learned to overcome their unease and fears and practiced to improve their English. Now, they all feel confident that they can express their thoughts and communicate under most circumstances.

"I often make mistakes when I first learnt English, and my friends would laugh at me. But I was glad I brought them happiness ... having the environment to speak English and learning it in a fun way is quite important," said Huang Zihan, a female student from Beijing.

"My mother has always been trying to encourage us to speak in English," said Lam Yi Nok, another

student from Hong Kong.

Surprisingly, Zach Lin, a student from the University of Illinois, said, "I can't say I'm very confident in English, even now, since it's still not easy for me to follow the speed of native speakers." A common theme, as I've discovered through my survey, is that non-native speakers of English start off embarrassed when making mistakes in English. The difference, though, is overcoming that fear - that nervousness - and actually trying to put yourself in those situations to improve your language skills.

In conclusion, there are three main points we can learn from: First, in order to learn to speak English, we should practice conversations more outside of school by watching dramas, listening to news, and talking especially to native speakers of



Studying English at school. Photo by Betty Thang.

the language. Secondly, every one often feels embarrassed when he or she first learns a language. However, they can work to overcome it by accepting that mistakes might be made and that it is more important to move past that embarrassment and keep on practicing. You require "thick skin" to learn to speak a language. Finally, confidence in English varies from person to person, but with the right amount and type of practice, we can learn to confidently communicate in any type of situation.

Why White 'Works' Right: White Privilege in Japan in the Employment Sector

By Dhriti Mehta



Teaching in Japan. Photo by Angie from Chiba, Japan | Wiki-media Commons.



'A Caucasian Craigslist': sample advertisements from Craigslist, Tokyo. Image edited by author.

"It's the 21st century and I thought none of it mattered anymore... until I came to Japan and started being treated as a demi-god, just because of the color of my skin!" said Dave*, a 25-year-old JET teacher from Canada.

White privilege in Japan is indeed the unspoken reality.

There has been much discussion around the world about the privileges Caucasian people tend to receive in contrast to the treatment given to people of other ethnicities. Unfortunately, this topic has not been actively covered by the media in Japan even though it is a hot topic for foreigners in Japan.

Being a foreigner in Japan in itself gives a unique perspective into this sea of homogeneity, wherein

there is always the so called 'special treatment' given to the 'Gaijins', the Japanese word for foreigners. Interestingly, this behavior of Japanese people towards the foreigners contributes to the overall issue of white privilege.

Six out of the ten Japanese people who were surveyed in Shibuya said that the first image that comes to their mind with the term 'Foreigner' is that of a White Caucasian in their late 20s. This is quite surprising since the official facts and figures tell a different story. According to the annual immigration statistics published by the Government of Japan, foreigners in Japan are predominantly from China and Korea with a total of approximately 9 million, a figure which is over nine times the number of American travelers entering Japan in 2015. However, this does bring us to the understanding of how the Japanese view foreigners.

A young university student from India currently studying at a university in southern Japan had an interesting story about his application to an English Language school as a part-time teacher, a job for which he got rejected while his German classmate got selected. The surprising factor here is that even though the Indian, a native speaker of the English language, got higher points on his English proficiency tests wasn't given the job because 'he didn't look like a native speaker unlike the German boy'. In the blunt words of the Director of the English Language school, "people would prefer learning English from a man who is white". It is also common to see advertisements for English teachers on Craigslist (Tokyo) also often explicitly state their strict requirement of 'Whites apply only!'

This attitude of believing in a supposed superiority of the Caucasian race, suggests the basis of discrimination towards other races. This behavior is most often revealed in employment. Most Eng-

lish language conversation cafes, bars and even restaurants prefer to hire only Caucasians.

Even in the Japanese entertainment industry, it is intriguing to see mostly white people being hired as models and actors. On questioning one such model recruiter, Shutaro, it turns out that the reason why most companies want to hire Caucasian models is because their presence arguably makes their product seem 'more international'.

Katerina*, a Russian immigrant, also had a similar story. She came to Tokyo two months ago and is currently hired as a hostess at a hostess bar in Shinjuku. Her club has a strict policy of only hiring white women in their early 20s, predominantly from East Europe and other Western countries.

These are not stand-alone incidents. White privilege in Japan is witnessed too often in everyday life and not just limited to the case of employment. The idea of racial equality specifically in times of globalization has only recently been introduced in an otherwise predominantly mono-ethnic Japan. Over the years this has unfortunately resulted in making people ignorant or incompetent to deal with the fast-growing multi-ethnic country Japan is on the path to become, especially in light of the Tokyo Olympics 2020.

The first step towards finding solutions is to actually open up the discussion on ethnic equality in Japan which has been avoided for far too long. The need of the hour is to encourage culturally informative and ethnically stimulating discussions in order to forge an accepting and eventually appreciative multi-ethnic workforce in Japan where employees are not subjected to discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity.

*Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

Enter University to Work?

By Sachiko Kawano

Nearly 80% of the students in Komaba engaged in some kinds of part-time jobs in 2014, according to

Balance study and part-time work. Photo by pixabay.



a survey conducted by the Student Life Research Office of the University of Tokyo, and some of them spend most of their free time working. Some students even seem to prioritize earning money over taking classes. Is this what students dreamed of when they entered university? Although it may be necessary for students to take on part-time jobs to make a living and to earn enough pocket money, we sometimes need to reflect on our lifestyle and make sure that the original aim of university education is scholastic pursuits.

The survey carried out in 2014 revealed that about one third of the students started working out of need. One PEAK

student said that scholarship is not enough to cover the cost of living in Tokyo, where commodity prices are relatively high. Another student who is already busy with his swimming club activities juggles multiple part-time jobs because he needs money to attend competitions and to hang out with his teammates.

Gaining real life experience from outside work can also be their motivation in addition to financial necessity. Many students serve as a cram school teacher and private tutors; teaching children often helps with their own studying and improves their knowledge. Even working for an industry that is not related to their major or academic interests could be a good chance to experience the world. One student advancing

Bi: Expanding Art and Gender

By Eugene Song

Within the fast-paced, quotidian routine of lectures within UTokyo's scholarly atmosphere, art may seem ambiguous, and often times, underappreciated. One however only needs to catch a glimpse of students practicing their dance choreographies in front of the cafeteria, or overhear the resonating harmonies of student choirs to realize that artistic expression is very much present in Komaba campus. Among the most animated manifestations of students' passion for art is Bi (美): a series of creative talks - a team of students that facilitates discussions on art by inviting artists from the contemporary Tokyo art scene.

On April 14, 2017, Bi successfully completed its eighth chapter, 'art and gender' on Komaba campus. The session was full of vital conversations that reconsidered notions of gender and expanded the meaning of art.

"I will begin by speaking from my own perspective as a female musician" said Maria Takeuchi, the first featured artist. As a multi-instrumental music producer, Takeuchi started off as a bass player, when she realized that "there weren't enough established female artists I wanted to follow in new media art and music production." Takeuchi confessed that she often found herself "underestimating female artists, comparing them to male artists."

A similar realization was shared by Jayda B, the

second featured artist. As a DJ and the founder of 'Bae Tokyo' Jayda B noticed that "not only were there no female DJs, but the environments in the club scene were not made for the wider gender spectrum."

The commonalities between the two featured artists however, were not only limited to *realization*. Using their respective experiences of gender norms as sources of artistic inspiration, both artists developed novel ways to *express* the challenges and complexities of gender, as well as their convictions for how society should treat gender.

During the session, Takeuchi showcased her latest project AS.PHYX.IA - a cinematic blend of choreography, music and motion capture technology. Inspired by the powerful concept of a "mother in a battlefield," the film explores themes of struggle, isolation and maternal love, thus, refuting ingrained gender stereotypes that underestimate women, while unapologetically embracing femininity and its strengths.

As well as its focus on gender, Jayda B's Bae Tokyo expands the boundaries of art. Rather than limiting itself to a single genre of art, Bae Tokyo provides a platform for the junction of music and event management, supporting "djs and artists regardless of race, ethnicity and sexual identity."

"As a woman myself, it is always so empowering

to hear about the process and journey of other women in their craft and work", said Manasa Sitaram, founder and former chair of Bi. "What I really appreciated about both speakers' crafts is the inherent skill involved. In a world where the consistent rhetoric of women is labelled, 'emotional', it is wonderful that all our guests not only embraced that label but also backed it up with legitimate, hard skill. Who says women can't do it all?"

The discussions did however gravitate towards femininity, despite the more intricate and larger theme of "gender." Sitaram emphasized: "as wonderful as our speakers were, the session did not fully encompass the magnitude of a topic like art and gender. Crucial to any discussion on gender is to take note of intersectionality, the male presence, those who don't subscribe to gender roles or labels at all, and the list goes on."

On the other hand, this focus on femininity exemplified the fluidity of art, as well as Bi itself. Rather than giving unilateral lectures, Bi facilitates a discussion-friendly environment. Participants come in with uniquely rich sources of artistic and moral contemplation, and interact with each other. "As such," said Sitaram, "the direction that 'art and gender' could have gone in is entirely dependent on those who attended, their backgrounds, perspectives and so on."

It was during the discussion, when the audience voiced their personal insights, that I realized the often unnoticed intimacy of art in our lives. While the topic of gender is often discussed in purely academic contexts at university, it can (and should) also be approached through art and open dialogue. Indeed, "art does intersect seemingly every avenue of our lives," said Sitaram. "It is important to embrace that".



Students watching the behind the scenes video of Maria Takeuchi's latest artistic project, AS.PHYX.IA. Photo by Abhishek Gupta.



Multi-instrumental artist, Maria Takeuchi. Photo by Abhishek Gupta.



DJ and founder of Bae Tokyo, Jayda B. Photo by Abhishek Gupta.

to the Faculty of Medicine recently began working at a café in addition to her job as a private teacher because she does not want to become a doctor who is medically literate but ignorant of how society works.

However, one should consider the disadvantages of doing part-time jobs as well; for example, it takes a large amount of one's time and energy. Personally, I became a teacher at a small local cram school first and then began working for a baseball stadium several months later. It took a while to make up my mind when applying for the stadium job because the idea that the main mission of a university student is studying and not working flit through my mind. At the end, my curiosity and admiration for the service industry overcame my

hesitation, and I decided to take on that job.

A male student on a scholarship from his local municipality thinks that he should rather spend time taking classes and doing assignments than work part-time. He said that he wanted to show his feelings of gratitude to those who support him by his academic achievements. He felt sad to see some of his friends delight themselves in earning more and more money and devote themselves to their side business so heavily that they eventually started to cut classes. As many senior students and working adults have told me, those who did not study much in university like his friends often realise later in their career that they missed precious opportunities to learn specialized knowledge, which we cannot obtain in our daily life.

Reasons for taking on part-time work and the extents of the need for earning one's money are different from one person to the next. Therefore, it is unwise to simply declare whether working is beneficial to students or not. One thing that is clear from interviewing these students is that overdoing part-time jobs never make things better and it is important to balance your learning and working. One senior student in the first year of the master's program said to me, "I experienced various part-time jobs and they did me good, but I sometimes regret that I should have taken classes more seriously and studied harder as an undergraduate. Knowledge that you think will not be useful might become important in your future research, so don't miss your precious opportunities to improve yourself."

Locating Japanese fashion through the windows of a Swedish brand's Shibuya Store

By Eugene Song

Reminiscing its humble beginnings as a small scale denim producer, the Swedish fashion house ACNE Studios released a new denim line named Bla Konst. The surprising catch however is that its first physical store is located in 1-10-8 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan; a considerable distance from the brand's roots in Stockholm.

What made ACNE Studio's announcement unique was the ostensible irony; the brand's decision to germinate the first seed of its kind in Japan ran counter to the brand's heartfelt purpose of retracing its Swedish roots. Yet, a visit to the Bla Konst store in Shibuya somehow dissipated the incongruities, highlighting the global appeal that Tokyo - specifically, the fashion centers of Shibuya, Harajuku and Aoyama - maintains for fashion brands and consumers.

In the 1970s, the center of Japanese fashion and youth subcultures shifted from Shinjuku to Harajuku/Shibuya. The area's proximity to Bunka Fashion College ensured a constant stream of trendy, experimental styles. Fashion publications like FRUiTS Magazine publicized these new trends, directing global attention towards Harajuku. The level of fervor was indicated by "pedestrian paradise" (Hokosha Tengoku): the policy of closing down the long stretch of Omotesando from cars on Sundays, in order to allow fashion aficionados (usually around 10,000 people) to freely mingle. Throughout the 80s and 90s, Shibuya and Harajuku became the intersection of fashion, photojournalism and youth subcultures, embodying a magnetic allure for all types of styles and audiences.

In 1998, "pedestrian paradise" came to an end, suggesting to some that Harajuku/Shibuya had lost its appeal as a fashion hub as well as a powerful public realm for Japanese youth subcultures. The increasing presence of mass production brands and foreign fashion houses - often portrayed as antagonistic trespassers, threatening the sanctified realm of rebellious Harajuku youth subcultures - augmented skepticism about Harajuku's distinctive colors, and hence the uniqueness of Japanese fashion in large. Many feared that Japanese fashion would be subsumed under the broad, vague category of 'global fashion'. On the contrary, these changes also suggested the culmination of global recognition of Japan's fashion culture. After all, what we today consider 'essentially Harajuku' fashion is a hybridity of distinctly western styles and the unique interpretations of Tokyo's fashion design students.

The Bla Konst store seems to embody this mixture of seemingly disparate elements. The store, located between Shibuya and Harajuku, at the heart of Tokyo's fashion retail scene, is on the first floor of a surprisingly unassuming office building - the only indicator of its presence being the brand's poster and a light blue neon sign that reads: "WE ARE HERE". This theme of contrast is carried throughout the store, where the

distinct but simplistic elements of the blue floor, metallic furniture, white walls and red staircase seem to echo the Japanese (and Scandinavian) minimalist's message: "less is more". Leaving the shop to reconnect with the bustling atmosphere of Shibuya, previous skepticism turned into a conviction that the brand's decision to launch its new denim line in Tokyo was somehow right. The symbolic opening of the Bla Konst store suggests a new Japanese fashion culture in the making - one that seems to be a unique mixture of Japanese particularity and global trends. ACNE Studios, in its efforts to retrace its roots, seems to have ironically, but surely, shed light on the continuously evolving core identity of Japanese fashion: a novel mixture of elements foreign and domestic, mainstream and non-mainstream.

Yet, a change in trends can leave a bittersweet aftertaste. With the accelerating pace of change in Tokyo, directly witnessing the entirety of Harajuku dressed in the youth subcultures' tribal outfits seems like an impossibility: a relic of the past, only accessible through old magazines and images. A sense of betrayal seems to have been the underlying emotion that made some people declare that Harajuku is now "dead". Simultaneously however, to impose perpetuity in an art form that strives on ever changing trends seems equally, if not more unfaithful. While inclusive of the past and future, fashion, by its definition, is of the present moment - a fact that the pioneers of Harajuku fashion understood. Those visual relics were, after all, attempts to capture the present, transmitting a message that those people were there at that specific moment.

While it may be unreasonable to expect the complete resurgence of old subcultures, expecting new subcultures, influenced by those trends in the past, to emerge is perfectly reasonable. Perhaps, the Bla Konst store's light blue neon sign, which attracts the eye much more than the brand's logo on the glass door, is a reminder of fashion's simple truth. A statement that asserts the present in all its complex creativity and influences, across time, space and people: "WE ARE HERE".



ACNE Studio's new Denim Line (Bla Konst) Store in 1-10-8 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan. Taken by author.

Does Higher Education Make People Dumber?

By Miya Huang

"Today...you must be so dumb. Everyone in Today is dumb."

This was the reaction of a ramen shop master when he found out that I study at the University of Tokyo. Of course, the master was just being humorous and meant no harm. However, I find truth in his joke when I reflect on it.

I believe I have grown substantially both intellectually and as a person since starting studies at the University of Tokyo. Some of my original ideas have been reinforced, some have been remolded, and other new ideas are continuously formed. I feel as if I am getting smarter. But, am I?

Does higher education really makes us smarter? Or does it actually make us dumber?

From a personal point of view, higher education can make a person dumb in one good way and two unpleasant ways.

"How can becoming dumb be a good thing?" you might ask. I would say, higher education makes a person realize that everyone is dumb relative to the unlimited knowledge in the universe. Hence, one would stay humble. There is a famous Chinese idiom saying that "A man of great wisdom often appears slow-witted". The philosophy behind is quite complicated. In

short, it means that a wise man does not show off his ability to the full extent to prevent being schemed by others out of jealousy. Dumbness, is the ultimate state of wisdom in this idiom.

The first unpleasant scenario is when higher education over-facilitates the feeling of inferiority for a student. It is easy to get drowned in the ocean of knowledge. In university, you might realize everyone around you is so much smarter than you, and passing all the subjects is no longer a guarantee even if you were a straight A student in high school. Students lose their confidence when comparing to one another. Though the feeling of inferiority is inevitable and fosters per-

Addressing Negativity Towards “Kikokushijo”

By Anna Matsuo

“I don’t like kikokushijo.” Some local Japanese students are frank about their opinions on kikokushijo. When I ask why, a typical answer might be “because they didn’t struggle to learn a language. They never had to study to become fluent.” That every kikokushijo learned their second language naturally and did not struggle, I believe, is one of the many major misconceptions and stereotypes about kikokushijo that must be addressed on our college campus and by the Japanese society at large.

Kikokushijo (帰国子女) is a Japanese term for Japanese children who lived abroad for a period of their life (most likely due to their parents’ business assignments) and since then have returned to Japan. As globalization races forward and Japanese companies send more and more employees overseas, the number of kikokushijo, or returnees, have increased every year.

I, myself, am a kikokushijo. I was born in Chiba prefecture, and moved to the United States when I was six years old. Just last autumn, I moved back to Japan to attend PEAK at The University of Tokyo. Thankfully, I have not yet met anyone who has been particularly hostile to me because of the fact that I am a returnee-- especially as a PEAK student who doesn’t have too much interaction with local students, I dodge the risk of meeting those who may hold biases against kikokushijo. But recently, I learned that there are, in fact, many kikokushijo that are *ippansei* (一般生; students on the local-student track) at The University of Tokyo and other universities in Japan. I had the opportunity to speak with them about the biases and negativity kikokushijo face, and here are three reasons and arguments for why *ippansei* supposedly dislike kikokushijo, along with some counterarguments from our perspective.

1. “Kikokushijo like to show off.”

Some local Japanese people feel that kikokushijo are trying to show off when we speak about our time abroad or mix English words and phrases in our conversations. As, J, a kikokushijo student at UT says, “in Japan, not many people are bilingual so when you are able to speak English you are seen as special, different, and sometimes

sonal growth, it can lead to hostility, depression, insomnia and even suicide if the feeling rises exponentially and is not managed properly. College can drive you crazy, or even kill you by making you feel dumb.

The second unpleasant scenario is when higher education over-generates the feeling of superiority. There are students who find courses too easy for them and think the professors and classmates are not on par with their standard. Some people often say deep philosophical things and feel as if they are smarter than others. Their ego implies that they have not yet attained the wisdom in simplifying things. A truly intelligent person can



Kikokushijo look just like local students - so what is it that's different? UCL Institute of Education | Flickr.

privileged.” But the truth is, sometimes we really don’t have anything else to talk about from our childhood, or we can’t remember some words in Japanese. To take these actions as “showing off” doesn’t seem fair to us. After having grown up in two or more cultures, kikokushijo hold a multicultural identity. Much of the way we speak and act were picked up while growing up abroad. Hence, our actions are sometimes seen as unnatural to the rest of Japanese society. Despite the fact that we identified as Japanese when we were abroad, we are suddenly considered unnatural in Japan. An understanding that we are not trying to “show off” when we talk about our times abroad would be greatly appreciated.

2. “Kikokushijo get into University more easily than local students.”

Kikokushijo are thought to have “cheated” the normal entrance examination process because they have a completely different (westernized) admission process, which is supposedly “easier.” Maybe we didn’t spend hours every day at a cram school to prepare for the center examination or entrance examination for 3+ years, but we, too, did study hard for our respective standardized tests such as IB, SAT/ACT, and CBSE/JEE (standardized tests in India). Not only were we expected to do well on those tests, we needed to have a near-perfect GPA in school and have participated in many extracurricular activities to even be considered admission. *Ippansei* should not easily say “kikokushijo don’t have to be as smart as us to get in.” One admission process is not easier than the other. According to Professor Yujin Yaguchi, Director of the Globalization Office and professor in the College of Arts and Sciences, it is unfair to judge kikokushijo by applying standards of Japanese high schools,

explain the most complicated concept to an illiterate person. A good writer is capable of writing thousands of pages, yet writing skill is determined by whether a writer can present his/her ideas in a concise manner. Usually, these self-satisfied students feel superior and tend to look down upon those who are inferior by their own biased definition. Their self-appreciation can prevent them from getting the most out of education.

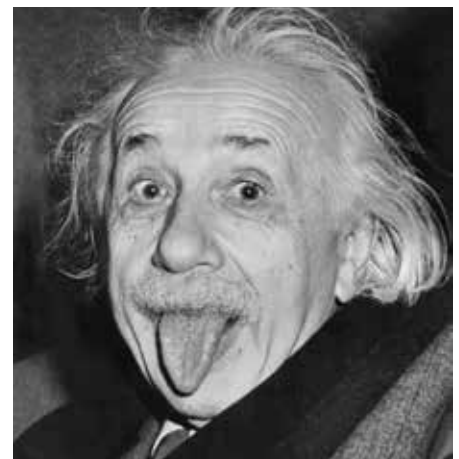
Neither inferiority nor superiority can make us dumb in a good way. The key is finding a balance between the two, which will guide us to becoming a person of great wisdom who appears to be dumb.

and although the idea of a different admission process is to diversify the student body, that does not mean kikokushijo are any less than the *ippansei* academically. “Students are obsessed with the entrance part,” he said. “It doesn’t matter how you got in, it’s how you perform.” Students should have faith that the university will choose students fit for the academic level of the school, and stop internalizing the admissions myth. From a faculty perspective, there is no obvious difference in academic levels between a typical *ippansei* and a typical kikokushijo, according to Professor Yaguchi.

3. “Kikokushijo didn’t struggle to learn a second language.”

This is just not true at all. Of course, I admit that I had it easier because I went overseas when I was a first grader, which meant that my academic and linguistic starting point wasn’t too far behind that of the American kids’. But for other returnees, it wasn’t as easy. “Since I went to live in the US for the first time when I was a junior in high school, I couldn’t understand what teachers and my friends were saying at first,” a kikokushijo student in the *ippansei* track, H, recalls. For her, the language barrier was just a part of the cultural barrier. The language and culture barrier can affect even a gregarious and eager student who likes to interact with their new surroundings. They may struggle to understand grammatical or cultural differences in connotation that come naturally to a native speaker. Thus, cultural immersion can be both a blessing and a hardship to overcome for kikokushijo.

By addressing these stereotypes, I hope that the local students will come to understand that kikokushijo are not immune to hardships and are not trying to brag about their English/past experiences abroad. As H says on the topic of admission, “I believe that everyone has had different kinds of hard times...So I don’t think it’s reasonable to conclude which is harder or smarter.” It is not reasonable to compare kikokushijo and local students’ educational and cultural background with the same standards. The important thing, then, is to shed light to those differences and understand where the individual is coming from.



Hopefully, higher education can guide us to become a person of great wisdom who appears to be dumb. Photo by Galaxy fm.

Feeling More Love in the Air on Campus

By Anna Matsuo

There are about four male students for every female student at the University of Tokyo. UTokyo is still notorious for its low female enrollment, even after having increased from its all time low of 16% in 2012. The unfortunate phenomena can be attributed to many things, but the primary factor is the stigma that girls who attend the University of Tokyo can't find boyfriends because boys will be intimidated and feel threatened by their intelligence. This unfortunate discrimination is reflected in the university student circles that prohibit UTokyo girls from joining. I have heard that even in circles that allegedly allow female University of Tokyo students to join, they don't receive the correct information on meeting places and dates. There is definitely a perception that intelligent girls aren't sought after.

How does this affect the dating scene of the university? After having lived in the United States for most of my life, my first surprise was that the University of Tokyo seems much more conservative— there is no hookup culture like American universities. In a 2015 survey conducted by the Cabinet Office, it became clear that nearly 40% of single males in their 20s and 30s aren't looking for a relationship. Since about a decade ago, the term “herbivore men (草食系男子・soushoku-kei danshi)” has been used to describe men who have no interest in getting into a relationship.

So, if some boys are herbivorous and some boys want to find girlfriends that go to women's colleges instead of fellow UTokyo students, where does that leave us UTokyo girls? I interviewed two female students, two males students, and one female professor on their opinions as to why that is.

F1 : April-entry student, single
F2 : PEAK student, in a relationship
M1 : April-entry student, single
M2 : April-entry student, in a relationship
P : female professor

Do you think that UTokyo boys prefer girls from other colleges? If so, why? What kind of girl is desired by UTokyo boys, in your opinion?

F1: I don't think that's necessarily true. There is that image because UTokyo boys have a hard time finding opportunities to interact with UTokyo girls compared to girls from other universities. There are plenty of UTokyo girls who are pretty, and I hear of many class couples.

F2: The image of UTokyo girl is “studious and not fashion forward”... in the worst terms, not very lady-like— which is not true. But because of that image, boys go towards the women's universities that have the image of being lady-like and making wonderful wives.

M1: I don't think they prefer girls from other colleges. UTokyo boys date girls from other universities because there are no nice girls left in UTokyo. Mostly, UTokyo boys are shy, so extroverted and friendly girls are desired.

M2: I don't think so. It's true some UTokyo boys prefer girls from other colleges. One of the reasons is these girls are more used to something like dating, so it's easier to date them than with UTokyo girls. But the main reason why some UTokyo boys date girls from other colleges is because there are a limited number of UTokyo girls. They just want more chances to date girls.

Do you think UTokyo girls, or the younger generation girls are interested in dating?

F1: Yes! All of my friends (girls) and I talk about this!

F2: Yes, yes. In my circles and clubs, that makes up 90% of the conversation. Because they can't find guys in University of Tokyo but would like to.

M1: Yes, yes, yes! Humans are animals. Animals have instinct that they want to pass on their genes. You have to get in a relationship to do that!

M2: Yes. UTokyo girls are interested in dating as well I think.

P: I see some articles and advertisements that encourage younger women and men, but particularly women, to start planning their future as early as possible—future as in family planning. I don't know how those campaigns have been received by real young women but I can see this trend.

Would it be hard for UTokyo girls to find a boyfriend in UTokyo? How about other colleges, in general? How would they find suitable boys?

F1: I think UTokyo girls will have a harder time finding a boyfriend outside of Tokyo during their time in college. This is because college boys might not like that their girlfriend is smarter. UTokyo girls should expand their social life by joining circles and committing to those circle activities.

Can't Curry On!: Deconstructing the Myth of “Indian Curry”

By Dhriti Mehta

It is evening time and the sun is about to set. The students have returned after a long day of classes and are looking forward to the food they will be eating tonight. I squint at the saucepan in which I have been simmering vegetables for the past ten minutes. “Hmm, maybe this needs more spice”, I think to myself. And then suddenly- I hear footsteps. Lo and behold, my worst fear as an Indian living abroad is about to come true. I hear someone creeping up behind me and before I can cover my ears which are pained by hearing these words every time I am in the dorm kitchen, the person behind me exclaims,

“Are you making Indian curry!?”

A little back story now. I have lived in India and eaten Indian food all my life, so when I first came to Japan and heard from all my friends who come from different parts of the world about this delicious food known as ‘Indian curry’, I was surprised as to how I never came across it. Excited to try this oh-so-*oishii* (the Japanese word for delicious) dish, I went with my friends to Shibuya

to try out ‘Indian curry’ at their favorite Indian restaurant. And boy, was I disappointed.

Indian curry, as it turns out, is just about anything and everything which looks like Indian cuisine to the world outside of South Asia. Therefore, if you ask any South Asian who has no experience of living abroad, don't be surprised if they don't know what you're talking about.

Historically coined by the British who colonized India, *curry* was a word they coined in lieu of make remembering the names of individual dishes redundant. While this practice was convenient for people outside of South Asia who did not have to worry about pronunciations and the daunting task of remembering names, today it has become a problem for South Asian cuisine as it is threatening the very diversity and identity of our food and culture.

Another widely held belief which bothers most Indians living abroad is the question posed almost every time we mention food. “Oh, do you

eat *curry* and *naan* every day?”

The short answer is no.

As for the long one... as a Japanese person, have you ever been asked if you eat sushi every day? Or as an Italian, questioned if all your three meals consist of spaghetti? Well, you have your answer.

In order to understand what we do not eat, you also need to understand what we do eat on a daily basis. However, it would be wrong to point out one definite set of food items, as the typical Indian meal differs across the length and breadth of India. While North Indian meals consist of cooked vegetable or meat dishes, a kind of *dal* (lentils and pulses) and *roti* (flat bread), South Indian cuisine has more rice and coconut-based dishes such as *Dosa*, *Idli*, *Vada* and *Uthappam*.

To understand some basic differences in the kinds of “curry”, let us take a look at the three most commonly found dishes on the menus of Indian restaurants.



Both male and female students at the University of Tokyo seem to be interested in having relationships... what keeps them from it? Flickr | Creative commons.

F2: A lot of them go outside of UTokyo or date within their class. They don't branch out much out of their class or circles. There's not really a way to interact. I think the best way is to join more things (on campus) and not be scared to talk to guys.

M1: It is easier for UTokyo girls to find a boyfriend in UTokyo than for girls in other colleges because there are plenty of good boys left in UTokyo like me (haha). I don't know about other universities.

They could find suitable boys through maybe 逆ナン (gyaku-nan: short for gyaku-nampa, which is when a girl hits on a guy)?

M2: It's not hard at all, rather easier to find UTokyo boyfriend than in other colleges considering the balance of girls and boys in UTokyo. As for how they could find suitable boys I don't know....

Do you think girls shy away from applying to or enrolling at UTokyo because of the worry that they won't be able to find a boyfriend or maybe even a husband in the future?

P: Yeah. That kind of stereotypical image has been spread, unfortunately. My male colleagues aren't like that because they treat me as their equal, but maybe to young people or men outside of academia, highly educated women are intimidating.

F1: Yes, I also thought about that, but I decided not to be worried because I know there are female graduates of UTokyo who have gotten married and have families .

F2: I think there are two types [of girls]—those who don't care about relationships and focus on their academics/careers and then those who are more focused on the well-rounded academic and relationship balance.

If they know they aren't going to work in the future, they might go to uni to find a partner or to have fun. They might go to Tonjo (Tokyo Women's University) or Ponjo (Japan Women's University) because there are a lot of circles that are between students from those two universities and UTokyo guys for meeting potential partners.

M1: It is not only a problem within UTokyo. In Japan, intelligent women tend to be avoided. Japanese men want to protect their partners instinctively, so men do not want women to be superior to themselves. I think some girls hesitate to apply for UTokyo because they know women intelligent enough to enter UTokyo are not popular.

M2: I think so. They are definitely worried about whether they could have a boyfriend or a husband in the future, but if they are capable of passing the UTokyo's entrance examination, they'd prefer entering UTokyo even taking the risk of being single in the future because being a UTokyo student helps them much better in other things such as their careers.

If you are currently dating, how do you maintain a balance between schoolwork and your relationship?

F2: Studying together. Also, spending time in group settings with other friends at school.

M2: I'm not balancing between them at all. I'm just crazy about hanging out with my girlfriend. Spending time with my girlfriend is my number one priority.

These are the real voices of people at the University of Tokyo. After hearing the opinions of the four students and one professor I interviewed, it's become clear that 1. male students of University of Tokyo would be more than happy to date female students also attending University of Tokyo, given they actually find someone they like, and 2. although UTokyo girls have an image of being studious and unconcerned about relationships, some are, in fact, looking for romance. If circles were more open and unbiased towards UTokyo girls and classes were accepting of in-class relationships, there'd be a lot more love in the air on our campus.



WikiCommons (for all three).

Dal (Lentil soup)

Dal is the most commonly found everyday dish in a North Indian meal, usually for lunch and dinner. There are various kinds of Dals made from different lentils. A popular choice in restaurants is Dal Makhani, a delicious and creamy preparation of whole black lentil and red kidney beans.



Murg Makhani/Butter Chicken

No one is a stranger to the delight which is Butter Chicken. As one of the most popular Indian 'curries' in Japan, Butter Chicken is a spicy and tangy take on cooked chicken. Instead of calling it a chicken curry, it is simply known as Butter Chicken.



Roti/Chapati

Naan is most often eaten in restaurants by Indians too, whereas Roti, a round wheat-based flatbread is the staple bread in North Indian meals at home.

A common and honest mistake is to name the Indian dishes as a repetition of their translations. Examples would be "Chai tea" which literally translates to "Tea tea" or "Naan bread" which is "Bread bread". The use of the word 'curry' is similar to this pattern, and is quite redundant and generic when added to the above examples (Dal as Dal curry).

Navigating through this list of dishes may seem like an arduous task, but to truly enjoy Indian cuisine, one must also acknowledge and be respectful to the cultural value and variety in the names of the dishes rather than maintaining unawareness as an excuse for culturally ignorance. Although times have changed and the world is a

melting pot of culture, we must also realise the importance of stopping to recognize and appreciate individual cultural differences. So now put this new found knowledge to use and head over to the nearest Indian restaurant to enjoy the delicious cultural experience that India has to offer to your taste buds.

EXPLORING JAPAN

A World Beneath Your Feet

By Jessica Ge

It is estimated that some 40 million people in Tokyo use the railway system in their daily commute. For these passengers, the existence of *ekinaka* (駅中) are an everyday sight. *Ekinaka*, literally translated as “inside the station”, is the term used for the shopping malls found inside train stations.

In the early 2000s companies like Japan Railways (JR) began to expand the commercial benefits of train stations and take full advantage of their vast underground space. Tokyo train stations now contain a myriad of stores selling food, clothes, souvenirs, books, plants, homeware, the list goes on. These can be accessed from virtually anywhere above the ground, as the streets of Ginza, Shinjuku, and other popular areas are littered with train station entrances.

It's common for daily commuters – businessmen, students, everyday city-goers – to stop by at one of many cafes, restaurants, or bakeries for a quick snack or meal on their way home. In some cases travellers may also find themselves going to a train station with the specific purpose of eating a certain dish. As Dhriti Mehta, a PEAK freshman at the University of Tokyo, points out, “Sometimes I will go to Tokyo Station just to eat at this vegan restaurant found only in Tokyo Station.” The restaurant in question, T's TanTan, is particularly popular among vegans in Tokyo having trouble finding completely vegan dishes. This goes to show that while an *ekinaka* may be a simple convenience stop for some, it can be a destination for others.

However, money-wise, shoppers looking for

a good deal might find themselves looking in places other than in *ekinaka*. Takuma Furukawa, a sophomore at the University of Tokyo, commented that clothing shops in train station shopping malls are more limited in choice and higher in price, driving him to shop elsewhere – above ground perhaps. Furthermore, the abundance of souvenir items in train stations indicate that at least some aspects of *ekinaka* are more targeted towards gifts-on-the-go.

So next time you're at a loss about where to eat or where to explore, look into Tokyo's train stations and see what they have to offer. Whether you're looking for food, books, or just cool things to look at, these *ekinaka* are bound to have something in store for you.



Train station goers take some time to shop at one of *ekinaka*'s many shops. Photo by author.



The steady stream of train station goers contrasts with *ekinaka* restaurants offering a pause in their busy lives. Photo by author.



The daily rush in Shibuya train station. Photo by author.



The smell of freshly baked bread draws in many travelers. Photo by author.

Surprising Findings Underground

By Hanna Hirakawa



Senju Hiroshi's *Waterfall*, an exhibition captivating visitors on the go. 2017. Photograph by author. Tokyo.



Close up view: Softly lit *Waterfall* whisks viewers to a mystical world. 2017. Photograph by author. Tokyo.

Tokyo is famous for its numerous cultural and art museums, but who would have thought to find some underground?

For commuters in Japan, the most common mode of transport is the public train system operating both above and below ground. Maneuvering through these packed stations can be an exhausting drag during rush hour, especially in the morning. However, some of these stations show a different face during other hours of the day, when intense human traffic subdues. The change is something art lovers would definitely take delight in.

Imagine passing by an entire wall of displayed artwork on your way to school or work. Well, this actually exists in reality; immediately stepping out from the Takashimaya direction ticket wicket at the Shinjuku-sanchome station, you are greeted by Hiroshi Senju's *Waterfall*, a vast image of the original painting. Wandering tourists and businessmen on the way home stop by to take in this stunning view. The curious exhibition

continues on at other subway stations of the Fukutoshin and Ginza lines. At the Nishi-Waseda station, you will be awed by Akira Yamaguchi's *Figure of Underground Railroad*, a brilliantly illuminated masterpiece of stained glass. Even through the late night hours the artwork glows with a soft golden light, welcoming home those who live nearby by the station.

Each artwork imbues each station with a distinct ambiance, but why showcase them underground, let alone at subway stations of all places? The artistic displays are managed by the Metro Cultural Foundation (MCF), a separate entity branching from the transportation-running Tokyo Metro system. This organization manages the Subway Museum and supports other public events such as the Metro Concert and Metro Cultural Exhibitions. Their goal is to contribute to the lively culture of Tokyo and in effect, to enrich people's daily lives through music, art, traditional culture, and etiquette education.



Souun Takeda's *Hope* exhibits energy with a modern taste. 2008. Photo by Tokyo Metro Co. Tokyo.

So, what was their aim in installing these artworks? According to MCF, the purpose behind each artwork or series differ. Some of the works are distinguished more so as “public art” and thus seem to place less emphasis on their creators. The previously mentioned *Figure Underground*, Kei Amatsu's *Fly to the Universe* at the same Nishi-Waseda station and Kenji Yoshitake's *Sunny to Rain to Sunny* at Kita-sando station are categorized as such works. Other stations feature pieces that clearly mark the artist's style, providing viewers a rare opportunity to appreciate art of well-known artists. Among such works are the *Waterfall* and Souun Takeda's *Hope*, an energetic work of Japanese calligraphy.

Therefore these days, hopping onto the subway is an alternative way to enjoy art in this busy city. Anyone who is up for a unique art museum experience or simply for an underground adventure can grab an all-day metro pass and be on the go.



Akira Yamaguchi's *Figure of Underground Railroad* welcoming visitors with a soft glow. 2008. Photo by Tokyo Metro Co. Tokyo.

Yayoi Kusama's Eternal Soul

By Lexa Brieck

Stepping into the exhibit is a journey into a world in which reality and fantasy blur, wherein polka dots and vibrant colors create a maelstrom of emotion and sensation. The National Art Center of Tokyo in cooperation with TV Asahi and The Asahi Shimbun is currently displaying Yayoi Kusama's "My Eternal Soul" exhibit until May 22, 2017.

The exhibit presents nearly 80 years' worth of Kusama's creations. What sets this exhibit apart from many of her previous ones is the fact that one of Kusama's most recent collection of artworks, "My Eternal Soul" – a series of 132 paintings starting in 2009 – have never before been showcased. From ceiling to floor, fantastical patterns and depictions of the human face are painted across every surface. Looking at the paintings from a distance, some of the shapes and patterns seem to be floating above the rest. Stepping closer, it is clear to see that they are illusions created by contrasting colors and clever patterns. In the center of the exhibit room stands three sculptures. At first glance, they seem to be brightly colored flowers. Stepping closer, one is able to see eyes protruding from the inside of the flower. Kusama is known for her polka dot artwork as well as incorporating eyes into many of her pieces. These patterns stem from her upbringing. Kusama was born in 1929 in the

Nagano Prefecture. She grew up in an abusive household and had problems with her womanizing father. At the young age of ten, she began to have vivid hallucinations and transferred these images over into her artwork.

Moving into the next room, the ambience completely changes. Instead of the brightly colored painting and sculptures, one sees paintings created during and depicting the World War II period. The room's lighting is dimmed and much of the pieces lack the sense of vitality and excitement that her more recent works instill in the viewers. The exhibit creates a timeline of her life. Kusama describes her childhood as an "adolescence [spent] in closed darkness" as she was required to work in a military factory during World War II, sewing parachutes for the Japanese army. Moving from dark, grayscale paintings, the next room shows the period of Kusama's life in which she became obsessed with "self-obliteration" (covering herself and other objects in polka dots or matching patterns and attempting to fade into the background). She was studying in New York City during 1957-1972 where she gained reputation for her "self-obliteration" works and as an avant-garde fashion artist. The rest of the rooms in the exhibit continue in such a pattern: a chronological showing of Kusama's artwork throughout her career.



The National Art Center, Tokyo, Flower Sculpture in Kusama Exhibition, Photo by author.

One "must-see" at the exhibition is Kusama's *Mirror/Infinity* rooms. From a bright, sunlit hallway, visitors enter a darkened room. At first, it is hard to see anything at all. Then, lights hanging from the ceiling turn on all at once. Mirrors cover every surface in the room. With reflections bouncing in every direction, it is like a never-ending Christmas illumination show. Walking through that room is like floating through space with thousands of stars.

The exhibition contains many other fascinating creations. From sculptures of boats and an infinity mirror ladder to paintings of pumpkins and video art, there is much to appreciate. By visiting the exhibition and seeing firsthand the world of illusionary artwork stemming from Kusama's hallucinations, you might experience a shift in your perceptions of reality and fantasy, leading to an understanding of how personal expression can create everlasting representations of our life philosophy – our "eternal soul."

What makes you international

By Cameron Lam

A few decades ago, Japan used to be the strongest country in Asia. It is however now overtaken by China in economy and by Korea in show business. Many people argue that this is because Japan failed to internationalise; a proof would be the establishment of international programmes like PEAK at university level in recent years. As a student, I offer my discoveries so far of Japan's global elements in Tokyo during my first year of stay.

• Music

One does find the presence of music from other countries in Japan. The most distinct and recognisable form would probably be the song choices at karaoke. Japanese karaoke offers a massive range of song choices. From Chinese to Korean to English (sometimes German and Italian, too), they cover three of the world's largest music industry. Also, all songs come with subtitles in the original language with katakana phonetics. That means if you are Japanese you can sing along with all the songs available at the karaoke. As someone who frequents the karaoke with multinational friends (Japanese, Korean, English, German...), we always have a good time as one of us sing in their native tongue while the rest of us form a backing choir by following the katakana awkwardly. Moreover, Japan is usually included in international music tours. Coldplay visited Japan in March 2017 and Ed Sheeran in November. Even the world's DJ festival Ultra comes to Japan annually.

• Art

Of course, you will find samurai armours, katana,



Mori Art Museum's homepage

noh theatre masks, ancient scrolls and scripts at the Tokyo National Museum. But Tokyo has much more than traditional Japanese art for ye refined spirits. The popular Ghibli Museum in Mitaka contains your favourite Ghibli characters and models. This museum provides an alternative to art enthusiasts who are searching for artworks outside of the realms of fine art and classical pieces.

The Mori Arts Museum in Roppongi keeps its exhibits fresh by changing the theme every few months. Out of my two visits there, I was lucky to have seen artworks about "the space" and paintings of different styles. The first exhibition featured artworks from around the world and art from as early as 16th century, expressing the artists' interpretation of space. The second exhibition features paintings from 16th to 18th century Central Europe. Referred by the museum as "Old Masters", artists like Ruben and Titian are introduced to the audience through their work.

An ongoing stream of events in Tokyo is always

available at your fingertips awaiting for you to explore. All information is available on the Japan Times website among other places: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/events/categories/art-guide/> Featuring events from "The Art of Disney" to "Mannequin History Exhibition", surely you will find your cup of tea.

• Drinking

Japan most certainly surprised me with its variety of liquor and the incredibly cheap price. A walk around Don Quijote or BIC Camera will have you dazzled by shelves and shelves of liquor with affordable prices. Vodka from Poland, whiskey from Taiwan, wine from Germany... Japan offers a liquor experience that you would not expect. Japan is the heaven for amateur bartenders who want to try out recipes. Be it a special liqueur or a liquor of specified origin, Japan has them all. As a whiskey fan, Japan has definitely amazed me with its whiskey collection. One can purchase Scotch in Japan with a price comparable if not cheaper than that in Scotland. Coupled with its local whiskey industry, Japan offers a unique and global drinking experience. Caution though, the drinking age in Japan is 20, which is older than many foreign countries.



A small whisky collection (all bought in Japan). Photo by author.

Why doesn't my Japanese make sense?

By Shoko Sano

Even as a Japanese person in Japan, when you visit a different place, you sometimes confront the situation where your word does not make sense to people there or you get something completely different from what you imagine for that word. One of the reasons for this miscommunication is that there are different dialects in the country, and the same thing can be said in several ways. It can be confusing and can sometimes cause problems between you and them.

Here are examples of such words and multiple meanings the words have.

1. Name of plaster

All images from Wikimedia commons.



This is an indispensable plaster that you turn to when you get injured on your leg or finger. Surprisingly however, this has six names in Japan. They are called 'Sapio' in Hokkaido, 'Kattban' in Tohoku and the west of Japan, 'Bansoukou' in central Japan, 'Bandaid' in Kanto (Kanto plains) and Kansai (Greater Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe area), 'Kizuban' in Toyama, and 'Libatape' in Kyushu.

2. Shoes students wear at school

These types of shoes are used by Japanese elementary school students at school and these are indoor shoes (which



may one of Japanese culture; when people go inside the classroom or house, usually they change their shoes to the inside ones or take them off.) that children have to wear. This has two names. They are 'Uwabaki' in Kanto, Chubu, Chugoku, the south of Shikoku and Kyushu, and 'Uwagutsu' in Hokkaido, Kansai, and the north of Shikoku and Kyushu.

3. The content of 'Egg Sandwiches'

In Kanto, *tamago* (egg) sandwiches have scrambled egg in the middle, but in Kansai, in the middle you'll find boiled egg salad with mayonnaise. So when you order a tamago sandwich in Kanto, you will get something with salad rather than egg.



4. Tanuki for your noodles

Usually, people associate the word 'tanuki' to the animal because tanuki means raccoon dog in English. In Kanto, otherwise, when used at in a soba noodle shop, it means soba noodle with no topping except for tempura scraps. The origin is that the word 'tanuki' got shortened from the word 'Tanenuki' in old days which literally means no toppings of tempura.



On the other hand in Kansai, tanuki means soba noodle with deep-fried tofu for the topping.

In Kansai, the word 'Tanuki' for soba noodle is used for the distinction from the word 'Kitsune' which literally means udon noodle with deep-fried tofu.



5. What's difference between 'Shirataki' and 'Ito-konnyaku'?

Both words indicate the same thing, but the names are different in Kansai and Kanto.

In old days, in Kanto, people dissolved Konnyaku-powder with water and made it formed into strings. They would have called it 'Shirataki'. On the other hand, in Kansai, people cut plate konnyaku into strings of konnyaku. They used to call it 'Ito-konnyaku'. 'Shirataki' and 'Ito-konnyaku' originally have indicated different food, but now they both show the same thing which is the Kanto version.



These different types of Japanese are just examples. We have different cultures or history even in the single country, so both Japanese and foreigners should be flexible and acceptable to that fact at communications with others.

RUN. TOKYO. EXPLORE.

By Miya Huang

"The very basic core of a man's living spirit is his passion for adventure. The joy of life comes from our encounters with new experiences, and hence there is no greater joy than to have an endlessly changing horizon, for each day to have a new and different sun."

-Christopher McCandless (hiker)

This is my favorite quote.

Unlike a lot of the foreign students in the University of Tokyo, I did not come to Japan to study because I was a big fan of Japanese culture such as anime, manga or tea ceremony. Indeed, I came here because I knew nothing about this place. The idea of living in a completely foreign place sounded exciting to me. Since I think of my college life in Tokyo as an adventure, both physically and mentally, I decided to explore this mysterious city by running since the first week I arrived here. Compared to walking, running to explore is quicker and makes one feel more like a local instead of a tourist. With that slight increase in adrenaline level, you decide which way to turn based on your gut feelings instead of your travel

book or Google map. Moreover, it is a great way to relieve stress and freshen one's mind. Running is my way to find inspiration. Here are some of the interesting incidents that happened during my runs.

Story 1: Soaked up in the Rain

It was my first run to Shibuya. That night, my friend and I decided to venture into the crowds unplugged. Originally, we planned to go and come back the same route. However, a dark, mysterious alley intrigued us and threw us off path. Along that alley, we saw a lot of family-style restaurants, *izakaya* (Japanese-style bar) and love hotels and ended up on a busy street with no idea of where we were. Then, all of a sudden it started raining buckets. Empty handed, we could not count on Google Map. Our only option was to ask. The problem was, both of us were novices in Japanese. All we could do was to keep asking "Komaba-Todaimae wa doko des ka" ("Where is Komaba-Todaimae station?") to random people on the street. However, we did not understand 90% of the things they replied in Japanese and actually ran further away from

home. In fact, we asked eight different people, including a policeman, before we finally got home drenched from being caught in the heavy rain for two hours. Getting lost in heavy rain in an unfamiliar city was certainly an interesting experience. It was my first time to get in touch with local Japanese people. Not sure if I made a good first impression looking like a drowned rat.

Story 2: Run for Cookies and Karaoke

One time me and my friend were running along the street opposite to Harajuku station. A banner advertising "karaoke for free cookie" caught our attention.

"We can definitely do this! We've run for 20 minutes already, now I'm ready to sing and eat!" said my friend. So, we went in. The staff said we can either sing one song together and get a small cookie each, or we can sing solo and get a huge cookie each.

"So, if we sing individually first and then sing one together, we can get a big one and a small one?" "No, you can only get one cookie, but you can sing as many songs as you want!" said the staff. Fair enough. Free karaoke with one piece of

Japan's Dirty Little Secret

By Bobby Wen

How much do you know about the toilet habits of the Japanese? In the land of the old, new and sometimes outright weird that is Japan, toilets are a lot different from your usual western style toilets.

Toilets in Japan are split into two kinds-Washiki, a traditional Japanese style (和式) and Yōshiki (洋式), which is deemed western style. This article will explore all you wanted and maybe never wanted to know about toilets in Japan.

The first washlet was introduced by the Toto Company in the 1980s. The growth of the washlet industry coincided with the bubble period of the Japanese economy, explaining their widespread prevalence today. Introduced in 1997, the Toto Washlet Zoe was listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the most sophisticated toilet in the world. Fast forward to today, the Toto Washlet Neorest 600 is considered one of the most advanced toilets in the world, boasting many advanced features and costs up to \$5000 USD. One is even said to be owned by American actor Will Smith.

Nowadays, a whopping 81.2% of Japanese households are installed with western style sit down toilets, according to a study conducted by the Cabinet Office of the Japanese government. What makes them different from toilets commonly found in western countries, however, is the presence of the high-tech "Washlet" (ウォッシュレット, *washuretto*). For those who don't know, the washlet is an attachment often found on Japanese toilets that have a vast variety of functions, most popularly the "bidet". It also usually

comes with other high-tech capabilities such as deodorising, seat warming, front bidet wash and drying. The *Otohime*, Japanese for Goddess of Sound, is usually found in women's toilets, which mimics the sounds of flushing to disguise the actual sound of toilet use.

When I first came to Japan, I did not understand the purpose of washlet as I thought that the water which washes the behind came up from the toilet water. I did not get why people would want to soil themselves with the dirty water from the toilet. However, what actually happens was that a small pencil size nozzle is protracted out from the washlet and shoots water from a 43° angle that prevents the water from splattering back onto the nozzle. It is also has a self-cleaning function which washes the nozzle and the bowl with electrolysed water for further comfort of the mind.

Talking with my Japanese friends, the biggest secret I uncovered was how few of them used the washlet regularly despite their widespread existence. I had imagined that given their prevalence, every Japanese people must have been using the washlet on a regular basis. Keita Arimitsu, a 4th year at UTokyo, is a staunch advocate. He says that "he loves it and cannot live without it." Others, however, rarely use it and some have never tried.

Statistically speaking, a sample study conducted by loex Co., 67.7% of the Japanese people responded that they use or have used the washlet. However, another study showed 40% usually do not use the Washlet. This is especially true when it came to public toilets, as results showed only



A traditional squat toilet. Photo by Chris73 | Wikimedia Commons.



A squirting washlet. Photo by Chris73 | Wikimedia Commons.



A Japanese toilet function. Photo by Chris73 | Wikimedia Commons.

9% would use the functions in a public toilet. Of those that do not use the Washlet, the top reasons cited were that toilet paper alone seemed enough, as well as the fact that it seems unnecessary. What is interesting is that of those who do not use it, 64.5% believed that it was unhygienic. Women, in particular, were more likely to express concerns over the cleanliness of the nozzle.

Whatever your toiletry habits are, using a Washlet in Japan is definitely a cultural experience not to be missed. I for one am glad that there is a warm seat to greet me every time I sit down. It just makes the whole experience, well, a little bit more enjoyable.

Did you know? The Japan Toilet Association celebrates an unofficial Toilet Day on November 10, because in Japan the numbers 11/10 (for the month and the day) can be read as ii-to(ire), which also means "Good Toilet."

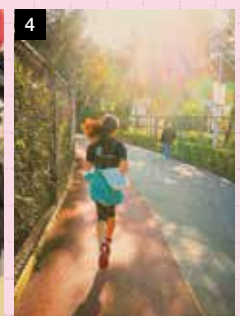
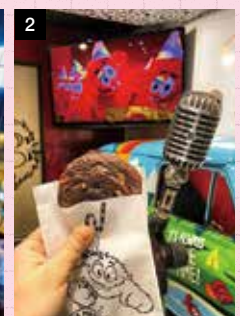
warm chewy cookie, what more could we have asked for? What is the purpose of running? To eat more! That's the spirit!

Story 3: Bumped into a Party

"Holy moly! Tomorrow's Halloween Party, what are we going to wear?" my friend kind of freaked out a bit when she realized Halloween was a day to go and she had no costume to wear. "Let's run to Shibuya to get costumes!" I said. Running to Shibuya the day before Halloween was probably the worst idea ever. It is just like volunteering to get squeezed into pulp. Starting from around October 29, Shibuya would be occupied by people dressed in Halloween costumes at night, and eventually become a massive street party on the night of Halloween. We did not even need to walk, because the massive crowd composed of "zombies", "Tenga", "President Trump" et cetera pushed us forward. Although our running plan was destroyed, we got out costumes and accidentally walked in one of the grandest parties in the world.

Running is a quick and exciting way to get to

know the soul of a city. Sometimes things go wrong and your plans will have an unexpected turn, but I can guarantee the joy you gained from this surprise will trump that gained from your original plan. Just like in life, the best memories is often not something we planned, but something unexpected. Time to grab your sneakers, get out of your comfort zone and see where your feet will lead you to! Trust me, you will never expect what you will run into.



- 1 One item checked on my bucket list of Things To Do Before You Die - "getting lost in heavy rain in Shibuya". Image by Moran Brenn.
- 2 "Cookie Monster" in Harajuku - the cookie shop we discovered during our run. Image by author.
- 3 Trying out Halloween costumes after "running" to Shibuya. Image by author.
- 4 Running can relieve stress, freshen one's mind and help find inspiration. Image by author.

Pizza in Tokyo: The Hidden Gems of Shibuya

By Ela Bogataj Stopar

Finding pizza in Tokyo is difficult.

At least finding reasonably sized, reasonably priced pizza available relatively near Komaba campus is. With prices for deliveries from popular restaurant chains usually ranging above ¥1500 and mini pizzas sold in cafés hardly accounting for an adequate lunch, European-style pizzerias are somewhat of a rarity. However, as a European in Japan, sometimes looking for a break from traditional Japanese meals, I also find them to be a necessity. Based on recommendation from other PEAK students and my own experience, I embarked on a journey through the streets of Shibuya to find three excellent pizzerias.

On the basement floor of Shibuya-Ekimaie, there is an easily missed restaurant by the name of Miami Garden. Even on a Saturday afternoon,

the comfortably small room wasn't crowded and the wait before the meal wasn't long. The menu, available in English as well, offers a choice of about ten different kinds of pizza priced between ¥1100 and ¥2000 – amounts that I have found to be the standard in the kind of restaurants I was looking for in Shibuya. Drinks, on the other hand, were surprisingly expensive with fruit juices costing above ¥700, in spite of the fact that they came in the usual quantity of 200mL and were not exceptionally delicious. The ham and rucola pizza was quite tasty, although I missed the presence of cheese on the soft dough; turns out, if it's not explicitly listed on the menu, the topping is probably not there – regardless of the somewhat deceptive photographs that can be found on the menu. Miami Garden is a perfect choice for spending time with a small group of friends, or having a rest after a shopping spree in Shibuya.

When circumstances call for a pre-exam stress eating escapade, an American-style buffet called Shakey's is the place to go. An all-you-can-eat lunch or dinner menu for an adult costs about ¥1100, including pizza, pasta, salads, and drinks, all of which come in varieties; in particular, it is with the pizza that the cooks get the most creative. The choices change regularly, varying from your average pepperoni and cheese pizza to the more bizarre vegetable and meat combos, such as the corn and Bolognese sauce pizza, as well as interesting dessert pizzas with toppings including marshmallows, white chocolate or cinnamon to top off the delicious meal. As the buffet works on a self-serve basis, the pizzas are served sliced and the customers can help themselves to however many slices of their pizza of choice they desire.

Behind the festive – Getting to know Kosuge village through the Genryu-matsuri

By Cameron Lam



The Girl Who Played with Fire: The finishing firework and performance at night. All photos by Xuan Truong Trinh.



performances offered by local villagers are run throughout the day. At night, the festival climaxes in a massive bonfire and breath-taking fireworks. This year's theme being fire, there is also a spectacular performance by the fire dancers.

As an *otaku* in Komaba, I don't usually go out of the vicinity of Shibuya-Komaba-Shimokitazawa. Hence when I found a chance to go out of the concrete jungle of Tokyo, the two-day trip to Yamanashi-ken for the *Genryu-matsuri* (源流祭; lit. Festival of the Origin of the River) is an invitation I could not turn down.

The festival is held in *Kosuge* (小菅) village, a paradise with only about seven-hundred inhabitants about three hours of public transport away from the urbans of Tokyo. The festival was created some tens of years ago with the original intention of having people who left the village to return once every year. The festival, however, became a big success, attracting about ten-thousand participants including foreign tourists and Japanese travellers. The festival of "water and fire and gourmet" is held on 4

May every year with a new theme every year. Each year, stalls and onstage



Hilly Kosuge: The river where the name "genryu" – "Festival of the Origin of the River" came from. The river continues into the hilly terrain of Kosuge, mountains filled with overpopulated man-planted trees which cause landslide.

As a Japanese local matsuri, Genryu-matsuri will give you an authentic taste of Japanese culture. The beginning of the festival is marked by fireworks at 11am, while the food stalls begins selling food as early as 10:30am. Local food with amazing aroma and exotic flavours are for sale at the festival, which includes *sansai*, *konyaku-sashimi* (konjac sashimi), *shikaniku* (venison)... the one that tops everything, however, is the huge barrel of Japanese *sake* made by the villagers. The food and the sake for sale at the festival are all local products which the villagers are proud to offer. While you are dazzled by the refreshing taste of *sansai* decorated with the fragrance of local *wasabi*, you will also witness the genuine smile on the face of the villagers, feeling glad that tourists are impressed by their effort. With traditional Japanese music performed by local primary school students on the stage, at this point, all we see is a joyful rural village holding a massive festival with stunning performances and delicious gourmet. However, the festival is not only a mere event for everyone to have a good time.

After visiting every food stall and having enjoyed the performances, we are then introduced to the social and environmental issues of village Kosuge. In a presentation by a local villager, it is said that the village is facing problems of aging



Handmade mochi: Villagers making red bean paste mochi fresh from scratch.

population and low birth rate – 45% of the village population being 65 year-old or above, while only three babies were born last year. The festival is actually a method devised to battle such problems. The villagers also hold annual events that welcomes people from the city to interact with local villagers for hopes of marriage – a village-scale speed-dating event, so to say.

A tour by a volunteer worker, Truong, also exposed some environmental problems of Kosuge. The biggest challenge faced by the village yet is the lack of flat soil for farming. As a rural village far from cities, a certain degree of self-sufficiency is important to keep the village functioning without relying too much on supplies from the city. The hilly terrain of Kosuge, however, makes elderlies climb up and down the mountains every day to farm, only to harvest enough just to sustain themselves. Coupled with environmental hazards like landslides, much work has to be done to salvage the village from its currently unsustainable state.

While the Genryu-matsuri is no doubt an exciting event for tourists, it is also a call for attention by the villagers. Through holding a festival, Kosuge village attracts not only tourists' attention to the beauty of the village, but also attention to the challenges faced by the village. The question of whether Kosuge can still sustain itself in the future remained unanswered. However, for one I am impressed by the optimism of the villagers. Amidst the crisis of the village, one can nonetheless feel the virility of the villagers at the festival, their welcoming smiles and genuine kindness.

A slightly classier choice for a romantic dinner, or simply a relaxing meal away from the rushing crowds of Tokyo, is La Soffitta. With its Mediterranean décor, complete with herbs hanging off the ceiling, La Soffitta is a lovely Italian restaurant located a mere five minutes' walk from the Shibuya train station. The prices for rather large pizzas, as well as various kinds of pasta, range between ¥1000 and ¥2000. The meal may be accompanied by a high-quality wine that tends to be more expensive than the food itself, or a non-alcoholic beverage of choice priced around ¥500. The cheese pizza which I tried came with a cup of honey for flavor and was extremely delicious, although the very thin crust had trouble balancing the strong taste of the toppings as well as carrying their weight.

Pizzerias in Tokyo may be few and far between,

but they hold themselves to an extremely high standard. Japanese pizza chefs usually study their craft in Italy, working hard to replicate the original tastes as precisely as possible¹. In fact, there have even been some to win international pizza competitions held in Italy. Makoto Onishi, who won the Pizzafest Competition in Naples twice, says that the scarcity of "true" pizzerias in Tokyo is the reason why Neapolitan pizza is unknown to so many Japanese, and is motivated by the idea of spreading the Neapolitan pizza culture across Japan².

No matter how long you stay here, there are always new and incredible things to be discovered in Tokyo. Next time you get tired of the campus cafeteria, grab a friend and let yourself be pleasantly surprised by the mysteries hidden in secret corners of Shibuya.



A delicious pizza Margherita. Photo by Yoshihide Nomura | Flickr.

¹ Counihan, C. et al. 2013. Food and Culture: A reader. London: Routledge. p. 445

² Kondo, A. 2006. "Champion chef spreads Naples pizza culture here." The Japan Times. Available at: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2006/02/22/national/champion-chef-spreads-naples-pizza-culture-here/#.WRfvGIGPDD>

Best Places to Live in Tokyo: Find out this year's top five chosen by Tokyo locals

By Ji Hee Song

When it comes to deciding where to live, countless agonizing days await, weighing the pros and cons to make the best choice. It is even harder to reach a conclusion if there is a wide range of choices particularly like in Tokyo. Tokyo, one of the most populous metropolitan areas in the world, is divided into 23 special wards and 26 cities, each with its own atmospheres.

To rescue those wonderers, Japan's real estate agent SUUMO conducts its annual report on the best neighborhood in Tokyo that locals would most want to live in. Started in 2010, this year's survey is based on a questionnaire of 3,996 people across Tokyo areas (including those living in a.k.a. "Greater Tokyo Area") aging from 20 to 49.

Take a look at top 5 finalists from SUUMO's 2017 research.

5. Shinagawa (SUUMO's 2017 survey score 346) Shinagawa, a central hub for transportation and businesses is making its first appearance in the top 5. It ranks second for the station with the most number of train lines in Tokyo and also a center of western style businesses, especially known as the birthplace of SONY.

The construction of a new station, "Shinagawa New Station" and shops attracted the Tokyo locals to choose it. Last September, there was

an announcement on the construction of a new station between Shinagawa and Tamachi station (expected to open in 2020) and many shops have recently opened inside 'Shinagawa Dining Terrace' and 'Food&Time Isetan' which makes this neighbourhood convenient not only for transportation but also for living.

4. Meguro (SUUMO's 2017 survey score 366) This cozy, quiet and convenient district has always been loved by Tokyo locals. A large residential district in southwest Tokyo, Meguro is favorably situated for transportation, located on the JR Yamanote line. However, the relaxing atmosphere of Meguro makes it hard to believe that it is only two-stations away from incessantly busy Shibuya. Famous cafes and shops along with an abundance of green spaces attract many Tokyo locals to dream of living there.

3. Yokohama (SUUMO's 2017 survey score 460) Although it is not actually part of Tokyo prefecture, its appealing flavor and history is charming enough to make Yokohama ranked third for three years in a row. Yokohama is Japan's second largest city with a population of over three million and was one of the first ports opened up to foreign trade which is still retained today in its international architecture. Minato Mirai, the central business district of Yokohama, is the most modernized area in Kanagawa prefecture with

only office buildings and apartments that have been built in the last 30 years. From large shopping malls to beautiful oceanic scenery, it is no wonder that Yokohama is favored by locals.

2. Ebisu (SUUMO's 2017 survey score 511) Last year's winner had to step down this time. Ebisu where many headquarters of many international companies and embassies are located nearby, was ranked second on the 2017 survey. Located on the JR Yamanote line and Hibiya Line, only a station away from Shibuya and Roppongi, Ebisu is also an accessible place inside Tokyo. Furthermore, a high-end but relaxing atmosphere with favorable amenities including Yebisu Garden Place, a major entertainment, retail and office complex, explains why Ebisu is favored by Tokyo residents.

1. Kichijoji (SUUMO's 2017 survey score 586) Kichijoji reclaims its throne in this year's rankings, which is no surprise considering it was No.1 from 2013 to 2015. Situated in the western suburbs of Tokyo, Kichijoji is an ideal choice for residence as it is close enough to the central wards, yet far enough to stay calm and peaceful. JR Chuo line and Keio Inokashira line link Kichijoji directly with central parts inside Tokyo making it convenient to live. At the same time, it is a fashionable neighborhood with many unique restaurants and shops and is also home to the famous Ghibli Museum and harmonious Inokashira Park.



1. Relaxing Atmosphere of Kichijoji is always beloved. Photo by author.



2. Shining Christmas in Ebisu. Photo by Kakidai | Wikimedia Commons.



3. In the Darkness, Yokohama shines the brightest. Photo by inoc | Wikimedia Commons.



4. A beautiful Cherry Blossom by Meguro River. Photo by K H | Wikimedia Commons.



5. Shinagawa is wide awake at night. Photo by Toshihiro Oimatsu | Wikimedia Commons.

Living History of Inokashira Park

By Ji Hee Song

What comes to mind when you think of Tokyo? Renowned as a metropolis filled with skyscrapers and contemporary architecture, abundance of 'green areas' may not be your first thought. Contrary to the expectations of many visitors, the city does have plenty of green areas which offer its locals an opportunity to escape from busy city life and Inokashira Park is one of them.

Take a short walk from Kichijoji, the most beloved town in Tokyo among Tokyo residents, and you will easily find this cozy park which is not only rich in nature but also in history. Its name 'Inokashira' was given by Iemitsu, the third Tokugawa shogun in the 17th century. The name 'Inokashira' means either "source of the water supply" or "well that supplies the most delicious water" since the Inokashira Pond was the source of the first water service for Tokyo (then called Edo) until the Kanda water supply was built in 1898. In 1917, it was established as Japan's first suburban park and just has celebrated its 100th anniversary this May.

Although it does not offer drinking water anymore, it perfectly fulfill the role as a relaxing getaway. The park consists of four sections and few attractions. There is no doubt that Ghibli Museum is the most popular attraction of this park. Ghibli Museum is a museum dedicated to the famous animation studio, Studio Ghibli, which is located in the southwest end of Inokashira Park. The park also contains a small zoo where you can enjoy watching a number of Japanese species and tropical birds for a reasonable price (400 yen for adults, 150 yen for students). Lastly, never forget to ride the swan boat which is loved by friends, couples and families.

Inokashira Park has a face for every season and is beautiful in its own way. However, the most beloved season for visitors to come around is



Cherry Blossoms in Inokashira Park is renowned in Japan.



The beauty of Inokashira Park shines not only in spring but also in the other times of the year.



The famous 'Ghibli (animation) Museum' is in the southwest of the Inokashira Park. All images are by author.

spring. Chosen in the Top 100 Best Spots for Hanami (cherry blossom viewing), every spring it is crowded with people all over Tokyo to enjoy peak bloom. Moreover, it hosts two annual events: Kichijoji Music Festival, a park concert in the beginning of April by brass bands and choirs and Kichijoji Anime Wonderland which is held every October. Furthermore, every weekend many artists sell their own craftworks at the 'Art Market'.

Even though its looks have changed over 100 years, the love from locals remains still. How she continues to be loved and what kinds of story she will tell remains to be seen.

Glittering Ginza: A fantabulous girl's day out

By Anna Matsuo

Fendi, Dior, Chanel. Name it, and Ginza's got it. Ginza's Chuo-Doori, which prides itself with store after store of European brands, is comparable to the Champs-Élysées and Fifth Avenue.

My two girlfriends and I spent an afternoon living the "high life" of Ginza, and here's how it went.

1 p.m.

After taking the Inokashira line from Komaba Todaimae to Shibuya, Ginza is just 25 minutes away on the Ginza line. From the subway, we come right out onto Chuo-Doori.

One of the first stores we went into was Prada. Although I hesitated going into such a high-end store at first, I quickly came to the realization that there was no pressure to buy anything. Because Ginza is a tourist hotspot, where many tourists come every day, the stores are accustomed to people coming into their stores for tourism purposes. Thus, in Ginza, you can go into stores you probably wouldn't elsewhere.

2 p.m.

After trying on some makeup and buying an eyeliner at Shiseido, we walked into Ginza Six, which opened its doors just a few weeks ago on April 20. Large, inflatable pumpkins designed by Kusama Yayoi decorated the high ceiling. I was first impressed by how the store attendants guided crowds onto the escalator so that the

flow of customers would be smooth. "Please go up on the escalator in two rows," they called out. Swayed by the crowd, we somehow made our way up the escalators, intrigued by the amount of customers.

There were a nice selection of brands at Ginza Six— Van Cleef and Arpels, Tabio, Adidas, Yves Saint Laurent, Jimmy Choo, Barbour... the list goes on for five floors. All that glitters is gold at Ginza Six. Restaurants and cafés are located on the sixth floor, and there are a few more high-end restaurants and a lounge on the thirteenth. You can also access the Ginza Six Garden, open to the public, from the thirteenth floor. Concrete and greenery come together to create an urban garden-- Enjoy the smell of jasmine while you overlook Ginza.

3 p.m.

Tea time! We walked into Mitsukoshi, one of the most famous department stores in Japan, right across from the iconic Wako building. On the second floor of Mitsukoshi is Ladurée— the famous French macaron shop. On busy days, the wait can be two hours, but we were lucky and were led into the Rococo style tea room after a short twenty-minute wait.

We ordered the "Afternoon Tea" set (3564 per person) after much contemplation at the menu. It included one hot beverage (hot chocolate or tea of your choice), one cold beverage (orange or grapefruit juice), two macarons of your choice, two finger sandwiches, two financiers, little meringues, and a pastry of your choice per person.

The macarons (I selected the Earl Grey macaron and the pistachio macaron) were a little sweeter than I prefer them to be, but the savory financier was a great palate refresher. The two finger sandwiches were ham and cheese-- but if you are a pescatarian, you can ask them to change the

ham to salmon, and if you are a vegetarian, they can change it to two cheese sandwiches. Unfortunately, the iconic Ispahan (rose and lychee macaron) and Saint Honore Rose Framboise (rose and raspberry puff pastry) were already sold out, so we didn't get our first-choice pastries. But our second choices of Fraise Ladurée (a strawberry-shaped shortcake), Tarte Fraise Rhubarbe, and Plaisir Sucre (hazelnut and chocolate ganache cake) were delicious nonetheless. I definitely recommend this fancy three-tiered plate on a day you want to indulge and "treat-yourself".



Both photos by author.

6 p.m.

Time to leave Ladurée — our magical time is over. After spending almost three hours chatting, we decided to call it a day. Our Gossip Girl-esque day in Ginza is one for the books— and Instagram, of course.

Ginza is a must-go if you're into fashion-- and even though it's not discussed here, there is a lot more to explore in Ginza. Not into that high-end stuff? You can see Kabuki plays in east Ginza at the Kabuki-za, and Ginza is only a few minutes walk from Tsukiji fish market.

And although Ginza is a great place to explore with your friends during the day, it's quite a romantic city at night. I went to Ginza Six another time at night, and from a quiet corner of the rooftop garden, I got a spectacular view of Tokyo Tower. There's even some sitting space, so it's a great spot if you want to spend a few quiet moments with your significant other.



The History and the Present of Okutama

By Shin Tokura



Okutama hike.
Photo by author.



Great nature in Okutama.
Photo by author.

Okutama is located in the far west in Tokyo and it has great nature as opposed to the urbanized east of Tokyo. Many people go there to fish, barbecue and hike. As one of the big fans of Okutama, I go there to walk along a river every summer. I went there recently on a welcome trip for freshmen and found it even more interesting than I originally thought. I saw a lot of building ruins and unused infrastructures, such as railroads and tunnels, surrounded by the great nature. It was shocking that Okutama, which I had thought was a place of pure, untouched nature, has in fact been touched quite heavily by humans. What is more, some of those infrastructures are said to be ghost spots.

In 1957, the construction of the Ogochi Dam was set up against the local people's will. The construction did not go smoothly because the local people refused to sell their land. Eighty-seven people died during the construction, which possibly created the rumor of ghost sites, and the work was finally finished after the argument against Kanagawa prefecture about water rights. Existing abolished railroads and tunnels were used at that time to carry construction material. Okutama Lake was formed at the same time as the Ogochi Dam was built.

Surprisingly, a major railroad company called Seibu Railways bought those railroads for 130 million yen after the construction was finished. A document called "The Postulation about the Development around Okutama Lake" mentions that Seibu tried to change the Okutama area into "the second Hakone" (Hakone is one of the most popular sightseeing spots,) connected by railway to another sightseeing spot to the north, Chichibu. Their plan seemed so clear and realistic as various kinds of facilities such as a high station building, a heliport, a hotel, amusement park and a camping site were included in the planning. However, the company cancelled the project as quickly as 6 years after the "the second Hakone" plan was published because they decided Okutama Lake was a poor

sightseeing spot, after it dried up often. This is why we can still find some of the unfinished infrastructure there today.



Unused Tunnel.
Photo from Wikipedia.

Another famous unused facility is Okutama Ropeway. It started its service in 1962, a year before Seibu canceled the plan. However, it stopped operating after 4 years because they built a bridge crossing the lake. It still exists as it used to be, but the municipality is concerned that its wire might tear or its steel tower might collapse. The problem is that nobody knows which company possesses the ropeway and thus it can not be demolished legally. Interestingly, the gondola attached to the ropeway is a famous ghost site. Apparently several people have seen a woman standing in it.

As mentioned above, Okutama is popular for its great nature, but it is not only nature that interests people. Once you know more about the mysterious Okutama, your visit will be more exciting and thrilling. Although it takes about 2 hours by train from the center of Tokyo to get there, it is definitely worth the visit.

Paper Book Culture in Japan

By Yulee Kim

When I ride the train on the Keio-Inokashira Line, I see people physically holding hand-sized books to read. While studying in Japan, those scenes are quite ordinary here. As a Korean, who is more used to reading e-books than physical books for literature, it is very challenging for me to search the reason why such culture is so popular here and an attracting issue at the same time.

Historical background of paper book culture - Jimbocho

Customers in Japan can easily visit offline bookstores such as *Book-off!*, *Kinokuniya*, and *Tsutaya* in every region: Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe. How has it been commercialized so widely? According to historical materials, the history of Japan's book culture starts from Jimbocho, the most famous secondhand bookstore street in Tokyo. It is located between Yasukuni Shrine and Meiji University. There are over two hundred bookstores on that stretch of road, including a large number of second hand stores.

Jimbocho was originally famous as the samurai residential area during the Edo period. However, when imperial rule was restored in the late 19th century, samurai lost their jobs and Jimbocho's ownership got transferred to the nation for the purpose of national education project in Meiji era. Schools were established in Jimbocho and publishing companies came next. As educated people needed more books, the appearance of bookstores was naturally expected. This was the start of the bookstores in Jimbocho.

Most secondhand bookstores run on a small

scale. Almost every secondhand bookstore does not go over 10 square meters and these shops are sustained in a collective manners. This also shows Japan's groupism in entrepreneur manner: It may not be huge, but compact, deep, and long-lasting.

Customers in Jimbocho vary from young generations to elders; they may stop-by to have a look around after they finish working at a firm, or come purposely to find the out-of-print comic book.

Japan Book culture in 2017

However, the scale of sales in paper books is estimated to decline in Japan. Although Jimbocho Secondhand bookstore's existence is important in itself, the book market is changing its consumer behavior.

Table: Comparison Paper book through online order with e-book

	Amazon Japan	Book Off Online	Electronical book
Price	Various: From 1Yen (for secondhand book)	Following the Book-price-fix law in Japan. But has sales corner	Generally half of the Paper book
Delivery Fee	250 Yen for each book (Domestic)	350 Yen for each time (Free for over 1500 Yen)	None
Review	Available	Not available	Available
Page preview	Available	Not available	Available

Paper book culture in Japan is experiencing the challenge by the appearance of E-book (electronic version of printed book) along with its active marketing strategies. Even if customers want to



Secondhand bookstore in Jimbocho.
Photo by author.



Jimbocho secondhand books area map. Photo by author.

order physical books online, they easily find out that e-books are more portable and has competitive prices compared to the same physical book. According to Nikkei Shinbun, e-book markets accounted for its sale of 1.4 billion Yen, which increased approximately by 39.3% compared to that of last year. "E-book formed a watershed in the history of paper book culture in Japan." A manager in a Shibuya bookstore said. "Although paper books keep their power in the book market, it is true that we will not be able to help admitting to the changes in the book market someday."

We have no choice but to accept our changes in consumer behavior, but still, I see the importance of paper book. How they keep their values in its physical form gives writers ideas. Existence of the offline bookstore is not just for selling the books, but for reaching the summit of cultural richness. In the summit of culture and civilization, I think bookstores have more substantial value in the sense that it keeps records written both in the past and present: generating the sustainability of the book culture. Sato, the manager who works at a secondhand bookstore in Jimbocho, says that "Although we cannot compare the exact value between e-books and physical books, we still have our value in our physical existence."

Penis Festival

By Miya Huang

You read it right. It is a festival about “penis.” There are penis sculptures, penis masks, penis-themed T-shirts, penis-shaped candies, rice sticks, chocolate bananas, et cetera. You might find it disgusting at first and think it is just another bizarre Japanese thing. Actually, this festival is much more meaningful and complicated than it seems.

The official name for the Penis Festival is Kanamara Matsuri. It is held annually on the first Sunday of April in Kawasaki, Kanagawa prefecture. The first time I saw videos about the Matsuri, I thought I was watching a X-rated film. Nevertheless, after going to the festival on April 2, 2017,

I realized it is just like any other Japanese festivals. My friends and I enjoyed the nice music with our drinks and food. We watched the penis parade (Mikoshi parade), in which men and women carried penis sculptures to Kanayama Shrine, while eating our candies in the shape of a penis. There were not only adults but also kids and elderly. The only difference was that everything was in the shape of a phallus or some modification of it. It was fun.

Where did this weird festival come from? One of the legends says the ancient Japanese goddess Izanami’s lower body got seriously injured

after giving birth to a fire god. Kanayamahiko and Kanayamahime, the gods of mining and blacksmith who are now enshrined in Kanayama shrine, healed Izanami. Since then, the two gods became known as the gods of childbirth and healing of lower body. Gradually, people start to worship them as fertility gods.

Another legend tells that a devil fell in love with a lady and hid inside her vagina. Using his sharp teeth, the devil twice bit off her newlywed husband’s penis. Out of desperation, the lady asked a blacksmith to make a steel penis. The devil broke its teeth after attempting to bite the metal

The Yukata How-To: 10 Easy Steps

By Lexa Brieck

As the summer approaches, Japan becomes home to numerous festivals, or *omatsuri* (お祭り). An abundance of stalls glowing in the warmth spilling from lanterns line the paths, and vendors call out to festival-goers in hopes of selling plates of steaming yakisoba noodles, *takoyaki* (octopus balls), and *kushiyaki* (meat skewers). The streets are bright and lively, and many wear the Japanese cotton kimonos called *yukata*. The literal meaning of *yukata* is bathing clothes, but it is worn at various events and occasions throughout the year: one of the most popular being summer festivals. Everyone should have a chance to experience wearing *yukata* at a Japanese festival at least once in their lifetime. For those of you who would like to wear a *yukata* but have no idea how to even get started, here are a few steps to put on a *yukata* easily and quickly for women.

What you will need:

- Yukata
- Koshi-himo (2) (either long pieces of cloth or one belt with clips on the end and one belt with a buckle; they are wrapped around the waist and initially support the yukata’s shape)
- Obi
- Sports bra

Optional:

- Yukata underclothes



Components of a Yukata. All photos by author.

1. Find a *yukata*. This step is all up to you! *Yukatas* are sold at various clothing stores and are more frequently seen as the summer months approach. From large shopping malls to kimono retailers and even second-hand stores, *yukatas* are easy to find. There are a wide variety of designs and colors to choose from. Even if you cannot find one at a store, online shopping is another popular option.

2. Wear the correct underclothes and put on the *yukata*. The ideal shape to have is flat when looking from the side, so wear a sports bra or underclothes that give you this shape. When putting on the *yukata*, pull your arms through the longest pieces of cloth (there should be large slits that run from your waist to below your shoulder).

3. Bring the two sides of the *yukata* together in front of you. There should be horizontal seams on both sides (right around the height of your waist). After checking that the horizontal seams are aligned, hold both front flaps of the *yukata* a few centimeters below these seam with one hand as well as the vertical seam at the back of the *yukata* near your hip with the other hand. Pull forwards and backwards at the same time to pull the *yukata* up and a few centimeters above the ankle. This step is important to ensure that the *yukata* will not be off-center and that the length is just right for your height.



Checking the Horizontal Seams.



Adjusting Yukata Length.

4. Keeping the same height, let go of the back seam, grab the both front panels of the *yukata* with either hand, and open up the *yukata* with both hands to adjust the length. This step reinforces the previous one in ensuring that the length is the same on both sides.

5. While still holding the both sides of the *yukata*, bring the left side to your right hip. When doing this step, make sure that the bottom seam of the *yukata* is at a slight upward angle.



Adjusting Length of Right Side.

6. Pull the left side away from your body and pull the right side to the left. The right side will be on bottom, so it will be the final deciding fac-

tor in the length and width of the garment. The bottom of the *yukata* should be about 2 inches (about 5 centimeters) from the ground and horizontal.



Adjusting Length of Left Side.

7. Use the *koshi-himo* and wrap it tightly around your waist. Make sure that it is beneath the extra fabric that was pulled upwards. This should be as tight as possible to keep the *yukata* in place. When tying it, tuck the ends into the band. If using a *koshi-himo* belt, use the one with the buckle and clip it as tightly as possible around the waist.



Koshi-himo.

8. Put your hands in the side slits of the *yukata* and pull the extra fabric over the *koshi-himo*. This extra fabric is called *ohashori*. It will be shown underneath the *obi*. The extra fabric should be in a line neatly pressed along the bottom. Make sure to straighten the extra fabric at the back of the *yukata* as well.



Ohashori Adjustment.

9. Use the second *koshi-himo* and wrap it under your bust. This should be tight as well; keep the ends wrapped around the fabric to hide the ends for when the *obi* is added. If using a *koshi-himo* belt, clip the first end onto the right side (slightly below the horizontal seam at the front of the *yukata*), pull it below the left side fabric and out of the opening in the kimono under the left shoulder. Then, pull it behind and around and clip it to the left side of the *yukata* around the same position as the other clip.



Second Koshi-himo Placement.

10. Wrap the *obi*. Either use an already made *obi* with velcro attachments or use the *obi* wrapping instructions after this to try it yourself.

penis and left the lady's body. The great steel penis was then enshrined in the Kanayama shrine.

There are also historical reasons behind this festival. In the 17th century, Kawasaki was a stop for people who traveled from Kyoto to Tokyo. There were teahouses which not only sold food and drinks, but also the service of prostitutes. Kanayama shrine was a popular place among the prostitutes to pray for good business and protection from sexually-transmitted diseases.

Today the purpose of the festival has evolved to praying for fertility, safe childbirth, long-

lasting marriage and even to raise funds for HIV research. Moreover, it brings people from all around the world to relax and have fun under the cherry blossom trees on this day.

Japanese often give people an impression of being conservative and introverted. However, the penis festival reveals the lively and open side of Japan. As long as you do not judge the seemingly-disgusting image of the festival, you will definitely enjoy the festival.

Kanamara matsuri is not the only festival related to the penis. There is an annual phallus festival

in Greek city Tyrnavos on the first day of Lent, and a penis-shaped bread is served. In the northern part of Nagoya, there is an annual Hohen Matsuri (Harvest Festival) in March, in which a huge wooden penis is carried from one shrine to another with women in kimono sitting on it.



The pink penis sculpture (mikoshi) named "Elizabeth". Photo by Stealth3327 (Wikimedia Commons)

The Yukata How-To: The Obi

By Lexa Briek

Imagine walking through a lively festival and hearing the sound of fireworks right above your head. The smell of matsuri food wafting through the air and the slight breeze bringing a crispness to a warm summer night. After having completed putting on the yukata, the next step is to wrap the obi belt. Many shops sell velcro obis, obis that are easy to put on (simply tying it into a butterfly bow), and even pre-tied obis. Learning how to tie your own obi, though, is a skill that will be sure to impress your friends and give you a sense of accomplishment when wearing your yukata around town.

What You Will Need:

- Hanhaba Obi (obi that is half the size of the ones used for kimonos)
- Datejime (thick piece of cloth to keep yukata in place; the one secured with velcro is the easiest with which to work)

Optional:

- Datejime (thick piece of cloth with velcro to keep yukata in place)
- Obi-ita (piece of cardboard or hard material to keep the obi from creasing)
- Obijime (cord wrapped around the obi at the end)
- Obidome (decorative item clipped onto the Obijime)
- Obi-age (scarf-like material tied around the top of the obi)

1. Secure the yukata. Using the datejime, wrap it around your waist and secure it.



Datejime. All photos by author.

2. Fold about an arm's length of the obi in half and put the ends over your right shoulder.

der. When folding, the width of the obi, not the height, should be folded in half. This is helpful later on when tying the obi bow.



Folding the Obi in Half.

3. If using a *obi-ita*, put it against your waist and then wrap the obi twice around your waist and *obi-ita* going to the left. By putting the *obi-ita* in first, it helps to secure the obi shape. If you do not own an *obi-ita*, you can skip this step and wrap the obi around your waist twice.

4. With the remaining obi fabric, fold it in a triangular shape going from the bottom-right side of the obi to the top-left side. To make this triangle, the end of the obi should be on the left side of the body and be brought upwards toward the left shoulder. This creates a seam from the bottom-right side of the wrapped obi to the top-left side. The remaining obi fabric, thus, will be mostly folded in half. This is preparation for making the obi bow.



Tying Obi.

5. Keeping the initial half-folded obi cloth at the top, tie it with the remaining length of fabric. This should be centered towards the top of the wrapped obi so that the bow tied later is higher up.



Folding the Obi.

6. Keep the half-folded end over the left shoulder and open up the other end of the obi fabric. Then, bring it toward the right side of the body, make a seam, and fold it over to the left, make a seam, and repeat the process. This should create a stack of fabric that is about waist-width. Make it as large as you want the obi bow to be.



Creating Bow Shape.

7. Put your right hand at the knot created earlier that should be located underneath the folded stack of obi fabric, and, with your left hand, create a bow-like shape. The left hand should grab hold of where the right hand is holding the knot under the fabric. The point here is to make sure that you are not bunching all of the fabric in the middle. Instead, the middle of the fabric should be pulled outward, creating two inward dents on either side of the middle and with the lower and bottom ends facing outward.



Tying the Bow.

8. With the half-folded end of the fabric, bring it over the middle of the bow created previously. Wrap this fabric completely under the tied knot and repeat until no extra fabric is left. Make sure that the fabric is folded completely in half without the ends showing. This should keep the obi bow in place.



Bow at the Back.

9. Carefully slide the completed bow around the body until it is centered at your back. At this point, make sure that the shape of the yukata underneath is not disturbed.



Finished Yukata (back).

10. Finally, use decorations such as the *obiage*, *obijime*, or *obidome* to bring more attention to your obi.



Finished Yukata (front).

Wear the completed yukata to summer festivals and take it as a chance to learn more about Japanese culture and what Japan has to offer.



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Editor's Note

Komaba Times is an English-language newsletter written by students at the University of Tokyo. Our goal is to create a place for students to voice their opinions to the university community as well as to the wider world.

This latest issue is the largest volume yet with 55 stories by 19 writers. Over this past year, journalistic integrity has been increasingly scrutinized in many countries. The writers spent quite some time discussing journalistic ethics and reflecting what they can and should achieve in their reporting.

We look forward to hear from readers and students who'd like to join our endeavor.

KOMABA*times*

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