

B1

Source Material

2018



Name _____

More Japanese may be studying abroad, but not for long

BY JAMES MCCROSTIE - SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES, August 9, 2017

With summer's heat blanketing Japan and school out, it's study-abroad season for those students lucky enough to escape the humidity.

Depending on how you look at study-abroad statistics, the airliners flying students overseas are either half-full or half-empty. Government pamphlets show that increasing numbers of Japanese are going abroad to study. However, a close look at the data reveals that looser definitions are inflating the numbers — and that most students aren't spending much time overseas anyway.

Sunnier stats from JASSO

In 2013, the Cabinet set a goal of doubling study-abroad totals by 2020, raising the number of university students studying overseas from 60,000 to 120,000 and the number of high school students from 30,000 to 60,000.

The government wants more students to study abroad in large part because Japanese firms hoping to strengthen their overseas operations are struggling to find enough workers with the required language abilities and international experience.

To help meet the goal, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) launched "Tobitate! (Leap for Tomorrow)," an initiative whereby government money and corporate donations will fund 10,000 scholarships for university and high school students to study overseas.

Students are spending too long looking before they leap, so government efforts currently resemble more of an awkward lurch. According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development figures cited by MEXT, the number of Japanese enrolled in overseas universities fell from 60,138 in 2012 to 53,197 in 2014. From 2004's peak of 82,945 the number has fallen 36 percent. MEXT survey data shows the number of high school students studying overseas fell 15 percent from 2013 to 2015. A MEXT spokesperson confirmed there are no plans to lower the 180,000-student goal.

But faced with steadily declining OECD numbers, MEXT now emphasizes more favorable figures. For example, Tobitate pamphlets use data from the Japan Student Services Organization, the quasi-autonomous agency responsible for scholarships and student loans.

JASSO tallied 84,456 Japanese studying at overseas universities in 2015, up from 36,000 in 2009. JASSO counts students participating in exchanges at overseas universities and colleges, including short-term intensive language courses, cultural exchanges and research trips.

What's more, JASSO's website instructs universities to record originally scheduled study-abroad terms, regardless of whether a student returns home early. This means a student who intends to spend a year abroad but returns after four months still gets recorded in the one-year-abroad column.

JASSO also doles out government-funded study-abroad grants and loans that aren't part of Tobitate scholarships. In fact, the relationship between JASSO and MEXT can sometimes

appear a little too cozy. In March, a 48-year-old retired MEXT bureaucrat working as a JASSO policy planning department director received a warning after an investigation into MEXT violations of rules governing amakudari (“descent from heaven”), the practice of giving jobs to retired civil servants. Two out of five members of JASSO’s board of directors are also retired MEXT bureaucrats.

When less is more

Trips lasting under a month make up nearly all the increase in JASSO’s numbers. Between 2009 and 2015 the percentage of Japanese studying abroad less than a month increased from 46 of the total to 61 percent. Fewer than 2,000 Japanese studied overseas for more than a year, according to JASSO’s 2015 figures.

Responding to emailed questions, a JASSO spokesperson admitted that a three-day, two-night trip to a foreign university would be counted in JASSO’s statistics as long as it was for research, cross-cultural experience or language study. JASSO provides funding for trips as short as eight days.

According to Yukiko Shimmi, an assistant professor and international education adviser at Hitotsubashi University, the rise in short-term study abroad is because JASSO funding mainly covers short hops overseas. “The government hasn’t provided much support for students who do a long-term study-abroad, especially for those who seek academic degrees at foreign universities at the undergraduate level,” she explains by email.

Information on JASSO’s website shows it offered 45 undergraduate degree, 128 graduate degree and a whopping 24,100 short-term study-abroad scholarships this year.

In addition to financial reasons, Shimmi believes Japanese get discouraged from overseas study by busy academic schedules and the time required for clubs, part-time jobs and studying for qualifications that could come in useful when job hunting. The high language test scores required for long-term study-abroad present another formidable barrier.

The government must also defeat demographics as Japan’s pool of potential study-abroad candidates evaporates. The number of 18-year-olds has been dropping since 1991’s peak of over 2 million. Projections see the number falling below 1 million in 2031.

Real proficiency takes time

The government’s boosting of study-abroad stats by subsidizing short jaunts won’t do much to meet its goal of developing workers proficient in a second language. Although Shimmi believes short-term study abroad might benefit participants by helping “reduce their mental barrier to communicate in English,” she says, “I’m not sure if they’re effective for improving English abilities dramatically during only one month. It requires continuous effort to master a foreign language.”

A JASSO spokesperson declined to answer whether students spending a month abroad showed improvement in second-language proficiency, explaining the organization performs no follow-up investigations.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2017/08/09/issues/japanese-may-studying-abroad-not-long/#.WiEilVWWaUk>

My Cellphone, My Love

By Michael Pronko

If you think Japan is cellphone-obsessed, a recent poll found that all over the world people are closer than ever to their cellphones. A recent Time survey of eight countries reported that people nowadays feel they simply cannot live without their mobile devices. Cellphones have transformed the way we live and the way we feel.

In the countries where the poll was conducted (the U.S., the U.K., China, India, South Korea, South Africa, Indonesia and Brazil), 43 percent of people said their cellphone was the first and last thing they looked at every day. An amazingly high 68 percent of respondents said they put their cellphone right next to their bed, and another 16 percent said they placed it in the bedroom while they slept. People are becoming closer to their devices than ever before.

That might not be love, but it's close. Humans have always been fond of domesticated animals and pets -- dogs, cats, horses -- but never before in human history have people developed such close relationships to technological devices. Is that cause for concern or just an interesting shift?

Whatever the answer, cellphones are very much like an addiction. One-third of those surveyed admitted that being without their phone for even short periods left them anxious. The poll found that one in five people check their phone every 30 minutes. About the same number check their phone every 10 minutes. That anxiety and compulsiveness is similar to how people sometimes act when they fall in love.

And yet, most people in the poll felt that their cellphone was a positive addition to their lives. Just over 80 percent said they felt more safe and secure knowing they could get help anytime they needed it. Most also felt having a cellphone helped them achieve a better work-life balance, partially because cellphones made business more efficient. So, even though cellphones have become a sort of fetish, the benefits were plain.

Cellphones seem to mesh with life easily and completely. A majority reported using their cellphones while doing the most basic activities in life -- riding public transportation, watching TV or attending a party. An astonishing 17 percent said they check their cellphone regardless of whom they are dining with. Cellphones distract and focus attention. What other bit of technology is so diverse and so flexible?

Cellphones are like a screen onto which we project our needs. In the future, whether cellphones adapt to humans or humans change to fit cellphones remains to be seen. Ways may yet be found in which cellphones contribute substantially to improving our personal well-being and interpersonal relationships. Will we become closer to our gadgets or, like disappointed lovers, will the relationship between human and phone somehow break up? The end of this affair will not be anytime soon.

Shukan ST: SEPTEMBER 21, 2012

http://st.japantimes.co.jp/english_news/essay/2012/ey20120921/ey20120921main.htm?print=english

Former MLB Pitcher Kuwata Rejects Corporal Punishment in Sports

Posted on *January 12, 2013*

By Jim Armstrong National Jan. 12, 2013 -TOKYO —

Former major league pitcher Masumi Kuwata has spoken out against corporal punishment in sports following the suicide of a Japanese high school student who endured repeated beatings by his basketball coach.

"I don't think corporal punishment as a form of instruction makes one stronger," Kuwata said in an interview with national broadcaster NHK on Friday. "I think those teaching sports need to change their methods to fit the times."

The 17-year-old boy, who was the captain of his basketball team, hanged himself after being physically punished by his basketball coach in late December, the Osaka municipal board of education said Tuesday. The student told his mother he had been struck 30 to 40 times the day before he died last month.

The 47-year-old coach, whose name has not been disclosed, admitted slapping the teen when he made a mistake and said it was intended to "fire him up," the board said.

Osaka police are investigating the incident which has sparked a national debate about the place of physical punishment in Japanese sports.

Kuwata, who studied sports psychology after his playing days with the Yomiuri Giants, said in the interview he was the victim of physical punishment as a baseball player in elementary school. "There were no days when you weren't hit," Kuwata said.

Kuwata, who had a brief career with the Pittsburgh Pirates in 2007, said he hopes the recent incident will lead to reforms in Japan.

"I think there is a lack of understanding," Kuwata said. "I hope this incident will not be wasted and will serve as a catalyst for reform. I hope it will lead to changes in the way we develop athletes."

Physical punishment in sports is fairly common in Japan, where it's felt it toughens up athletes. The most recent incident isn't the first that resulted in a death.

In 2009, a former sumo trainer was sentenced to six years in prison for his role in the fatal beating of a young wrestler during training.

Former trainer Junichi Yamamoto ordered three wrestlers, in the name of practice, to beat 17-year-old wrestler Tokitaizan, hitting him with beer bottles, a baseball bat and hosing him with cold water.

Tokitaizan, whose real name was Takashi Saito, collapsed after practice and died in June 2007. An autopsy showed bruises and injuries that prosecutors said showed his ordeal was not training.

<http://kwbrow2.wordpress.com/2013/01/12/former-mlb-pitcher-kuwata-rejects-corporal-punishment-in-sports/>

OECD Better Life Index - Japan

Japan performs well in some measures of well-being in the Better Life Index. Japan ranks at the top in personal security. It ranks above the OECD average in income and wealth, education and skills, jobs and earnings, personal security, and environmental quality. It is below the average in terms of housing, civic engagement, subjective well-being, social connections, work-life balance and health status. These rankings are based on available selected data.

Money, while it cannot buy happiness, is an important means to achieving higher living standards. In Japan, the average household net-adjusted disposable income per capita is USD 28 641 a year, lower than the OECD average of USD 30 563 a year. There is a considerable gap between the richest and poorest – the top 20% of the population earn more than six times as much as the bottom 20%.

In terms of employment, 74% of people aged 15 to 64 in Japan have a paid job, above the OECD employment average of 67%. Some 82% of men are in paid work, compared with 66% of women.

Good education and skills are important requisites for finding a job. Japan is a top-performing country in terms of the quality of its educational system. The average student scored 529 in reading literacy, maths and science in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This score is much higher than the OECD average of 486. Although girls outperformed boys in many OECD countries, in Japan boys scored 2 point higher than girls on average.

In terms of health, life expectancy at birth in Japan is 84 years, four years higher than the OECD average of 80 years, and one of the highest in the OECD. Life expectancy for women is 87 years, compared with 81 for men. The level of atmospheric PM2.5 – tiny air pollutant particles small enough to enter and cause damage to the lungs – is 13.8 micrograms per cubic meter, slightly lower than the OECD average of 13.9 micrograms per cubic meter. Japan does better in terms of water quality, as 86% of people say they are satisfied with the quality of their water, compared with an OECD average of 81%.

Concerning the public sphere, there is a strong sense of community and moderate levels of civic participation in Japan, where 90% of people believe that they know someone they could rely on in time of need, broadly in line with the OECD average of 89%. Voter turnout, a measure of citizens' participation in the political process, was 53% during recent elections; lower than the OECD average of 69%. Social and economic status can affect voting rates; voter turnout for the top 20% of the population is an estimated 53% and for the bottom 20% it is an estimated 49%, narrower than the OECD average gap of 13 percentage points.

In general, the Japanese are less satisfied with their lives than the OECD average. When asked to rate their general satisfaction with life on a scale from 0 to 10, the Japanese gave it a 5.9 grade on average, lower than the OECD average of 6.5.

<http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/japan/>

The Threat of Globalization

Globalization is both an active process of corporate expansion across borders and a structure of cross-border facilities and economic linkages that has been steadily growing and changing as the process gathers steam. Like its conceptual partner, "free trade," globalization is also an ideology, whose function is to reduce any resistance to the process by making it seem both highly beneficent and unstoppable.

And as with free trade, while globalization may sometimes yield economic benefits, both the process and economic-political regime it is helping bring about threaten progressive ends, and should be recognized as such and fought at every level. Admittedly this is a formidable task, as the economic and political power of its beneficiaries, and its momentum, are great and contesting it seems an almost utopian undertaking. But globalization has its vulnerabilities, and attacking it intellectually, at the local level of plant abandonments and moves, as well as at the national political level, can help build understanding and support for a larger oppositional movement.

Globalization is just one of an array of concepts and arguing points that have been mobilized to advance the corporate agenda. Others have been deregulation and getting government off our backs, balancing the budget, cutting back entitlements (non-corporate), and free trade.

Like free trade, globalization has an aura of virtue. Just as "freedom" must be good, so globalization hints at internationalism and solidarity between countries, as opposed to nationalism and protectionism, which have negative connotations. The possibility that cross-border trade and investment might be economically damaging to the weaker party, or that they might erode democratic controls in both the stronger and weaker countries, is excluded from consideration by mainstream economists and pundits.¹ It is also unthinkable in the mainstream that the contest between free trade and globalization, on the one hand, and "protectionism" on the other, might be reworded as a struggle between "protection"--of transnational corporate (TNC) rights--versus the "freedom" of democratic governments to regulate in the interests of domestic non-corporate constituencies.

As an ideology, globalization connotes not only freedom and internationalism, but, as it helps realize the benefits of free trade, and thus comparative advantage and the division of labor, it also supposedly enhances efficiency and productivity. Because of these virtues, and the alleged inability of governments to halt "progress," globalization is widely perceived as beyond human control, which further weakens resistance.

The Economic Failure of Globalization

AS THE GLOBALIZATION PROCESS HAS BEEN ENGINEERED BY CORPORATE ELITES, and serves their interests, they have successfully conveyed the impression that globalization is not only inevitable but has been a great success. This is fallacious. Even ignoring for the moment its distributional effects, globalization has been marked by substantial declines in rates of output, productivity, and investment growth. Under the new regime of enhanced financial mobility and power, with greater volatility of financial markets and increased risk, real interest rates have risen

substantially. The average rate of the G-7 countries (U.S., Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Canada and Japan) has gone from 0.4%, 1971-82, to 4.6%, 1983-94. This has discouraged long term investment in new plant and equipment and stimulated spending on the re-equipment of old facilities along with a large volume of essentially financial transactions--mergers, buybacks of stock, financial maneuvers, and speculative activities. This may help explain why overall productivity growth³ in the countries that are members of the OECD fell from 3.3%, 1960-73 to 0.8%, 1973-95, or by some 75%. Gross fixed investment fell from 6.1%, 1959-1970, to roughly 3.1% thereafter, or by half. OECD country annual rates of growth of real GDP fell from 4.8%, 1959-1970 to 2.8%, 1971-94, or by 42%.

But the elites have done well despite the slackened productivity growth. Because globalization has helped keep wages down, while increasing real interest rates, the upper 5% of households have been able to skim off a large fraction of the reduced productivity gains, thereby permitting elite incomes and stock market values to rise rapidly. But it was a different story for the global majority. Income inequality rose markedly both within and between countries. In the United States, despite a 35% increase in productivity between 1973 and 1995, the median real wage rate was lower in the latter year. Inequality rose to levels of 70 years earlier, and underemployment, job insecurity, benefit loss, and worker speedup under "lean" production systems all increased.⁴ Insecurity is functional. As Alan Greenspan complacently explained to Congress in 1997, wage rates were stagnant in this country because worker insecurity was high.⁵ That this high insecurity level reduced the well-being of the affected workers did not bother Greenspan, or Congress and the mainstream media.

The gap in incomes between the 20% of the world's population in the richest and poorest countries has grown from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 82 to 1 in 1995, and Third World conditions have in many respects worsened. Per capita incomes have fallen in more than 70 countries over the past 20 years; some 3 billion people--half the world's population, live on under two dollars a day; and 800 million suffer from malnutrition.⁶ In the Third World, unemployment and underemployment are rampant, massive poverty exists side-by-side with growing elite affluence, and 75 million people a year or more seeking asylum or employment in the North, as Third World governments allow virtually unrestricted capital flight and seek no options but to attract foreign investment.⁷

The new global order has also been characterized by increased financial volatility, and from the Third World debt crisis of the early 1980s to the Mexican breakdown of 1994-95 to the current Asian debacle, financial crises have become more and more threatening. With increasing privatization and deregulation, the discrepancy between the power of unregulated financial forces and that of governments and regulatory bodies increases and the potential for a global breakdown steadily enlarges.

Only an elite perspective permits this record to be regarded as an economic success.

<https://www.globalpolicy.org/global-taxes/47948-the-threat-of-globalization.html>

Government Fails to Address Contradictions Over Japan's Nuclear Future

Kikkawa Takeo [2015.10.08]

The August 2015 restart of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Kyūshū ended a two-year shutdown of all nuclear reactors in Japan. As commentators debate whether this will prompt other plants around the country to come back online, the current administration appears unwilling to take responsibility for dealing with contradictions between the need to shut down aging facilities and the nation's continued reliance on nuclear power.

First Restart under New Safety Standards

On August 11, 2015, Unit 1 of Kyūshū Electric Power's Sendai Nuclear Power Plant reached criticality. This marked the first restart of a Japanese nuclear power plant under a new safety regime instituted—in July 2013 by the Nuclear Regulation Authority—following the March 2011 Fukushima Daiichi disaster. The resumption of operations at the Sendai plant was a closely watched event, marking Japan's return to nuclear power after a two-year hiatus.

Sendai's Unit 2 has also cleared the new NRA standards, as have Units 3 and 4 of Kansai Electric Power's Takahama Nuclear Power Plant and Unit 3 of Shikoku Electric Power's Ikata Nuclear Power Plant.

Many Japanese news organizations predicted at the beginning of 2015 that nuclear energy would make a full-fledged comeback during the year, with operations resuming at Sendai and other nuclear plants one after another. The projections appear to have been slightly too hasty, however, as restarting reactors has proved to be more difficult than anticipated.

Contradictory Views of Nuclear Power

For one thing, public opinion polls reveal that more people oppose the restart of the Sendai plant than favor it, although a sizable share of respondents say they are unsure. The interesting thing about the poll results is that, upon close inspection, they reveal contradictory sentiments regarding nuclear energy.

When asked what nuclear policy Japan should pursue, respondents most frequently choose the option of going nuclear-free over the long term. This response is far more popular than either the immediate elimination of nuclear energy or the continued reliance on it into the future. This means that most people support the use of nuclear power for the time being.

But when asked whether they support the reactivation of nuclear plants over the short term, the majority said no; not allowing plants to resume operations, though, in effect means an immediate freeze. How should this contradiction in long- and short-term public opinion be interpreted?

The disparity suggests that while many people are willing to accept a certain degree of reliance on nuclear energy for the foreseeable future, they dislike the way the Abe Shinzō administration has addressed this issue. They believe that the NRA and the utilities are being asked to deal with all the problems in restarting the plants, with the administration seeking to shoulder as little responsibility as possible and to attract the least attention. It is a view that has provoked a public backlash, resulting in a strong negative response when asked whether they favor the restart of specific nuclear reactors.

Energy Outlook Inconsistent with Policy Goals

The administration's low sense of responsibility is revealed by the new Long-term Energy Supply and Demand Outlook, approved by the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry in July 2015. The outlook foresees nuclear power accounting for 20%–22% of Japan's sources of electricity in 2030, with renewables accounting for 22%–24%, liquefied natural gas 27%, coal 26%, and oil 3%.

The outlook was drafted on the basis of the Strategic Energy Plan, adopted by the cabinet in 2014. But inasmuch as the plan explicitly states that "Japan will minimize its dependency on nuclear power," it can hardly be said to be consistent with the plan's goals.

The 2012 revisions to the Act on the Regulation of Nuclear Source Material, Nuclear Fuel Material, and Reactors require all nuclear power plants to be taken out of service after 40 years, with a one-time-only, 20-year extension being granted in exceptional cases when certain conditions are met. The maximum number of years that a plant can remain in operation is thus 60 years. Of the 48 reactors in Japan as of January 2015, only 18 will be under 40 years old at the end of December 2030. If the revisions are strictly enforced, 30 reactors will need to be decommissioned by then. Two reactors are currently under construction—Unit 3 of Chūgoku Electric Power's Shimane Nuclear Power Plant and Electric Power Development's Ōma Nuclear Power Plant—but even if they come online, that would still mean just 20 reactors as of the end of 2030. Assuming that these 20 units operate at 70% capacity (which was roughly the average prior to the Fukushima accident), they would only be able to generate 15% of the nearly 1 trillion kWh projected to be required in 2030.

If the 40-year rule is applied strictly, nuclear power will meet just 15% of the nation's energy needs in 2030. The additional 5%–7% needed to meet METI's 20%–22% outlook is thus premised on either building new reactors or extending the life of existing ones beyond 40 years. Since the administration has announced that it has no plans now to build additional reactors, one can then conclude that it intends to cover the 5%–7% shortfall by extending the life of existing plants.

The 30 reactors slated to go out of service by 2030 under the 40-year rule include Kansai Electric's Mihama Unit 1 and 4 others that the utilities already decided this year to decommission, along with the 4 reactors at Fukushima Daini Nuclear Power Plant that the Fukushima prefectural government strongly wants shut down. So of the remaining 21, quite a high share (around 15) will need to have their life extended to meet the 5%–7% differential.

With so many reactors requiring an extension, the 40-year life of nuclear plants will become the exception, rather than the rule. Such a distorted application of the Reactor Regulation Act and the government outlook of nuclear power meeting 20%–22% of the country's energy needs are hardly consistent with the Abe administration's vow to "minimize" the country's nuclear dependence.

Need to Replace Aging Facilities

If the government intends to rely on nuclear power—in however small measure—into the future, it must do everything possible to minimize the dangers. The surest way of doing this is to use only the newest equipment.

As things stand, though, Japan's nuclear plants are anything but new. Half the plants (22 reactors) are boiling water reactors (BWRs), and only 4 of them are advanced boiling water reactors (ABWRs) incorporating the latest technologies. The remaining half (21 reactors) are pressurized water reactors (PWRs), but none are of the newer advanced pressurized water reactor (APWR) type or AP1000s. China, meanwhile, is reportedly ready to launch its first AP1000.

If nuclear is to play a role in Japan's energy future, the responsible thing to do would be to replace aging facilities with the latest equipment on the same site. The administration has thus far avoided making explicit references to undertaking replacements, though, and appears satisfied with quietly extending the life of existing facilities. This is sure to invite the criticism that it intends to keep the nuclear industry alive, without sticking its neck out by openly saying so.

The reticence regarding replacements, of course, is due to the administration's stated policy of minimizing the country's reliance on nuclear power—in keeping with public expectations. Replacing aging facilities would raise suspicions that the government is not serious about phasing out nuclear power. Even if it does replace older plants, it should move the decommissioning process forward and aim to reduce nuclear dependency to 15%. Construction of new facilities within a framework of as low a reliance on nuclear energy as possible is the only responsible path for future use of nuclear energy.

Shirking Responsible Debate

The government will surely be severely condemned by the public if it thinks it can continue to depend on nuclear power to meet the nation's energy needs by simply extending the life of existing reactors—despite its pledge to minimize such dependence and without updating those facilities. If the government shirks responsible debate on this issue, nuclear power is unlikely to provide even 15% of the energy supply in 2030, let alone the 20%–22% target it set for itself.

The resumption of operations at Kyūshū Electric's Sendai plant thus will not trigger a spate of restarts at other plants, and 2015 is hardly likely to mark the full-fledged return of nuclear power in Japan.

<https://www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00196/>

Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco

1. What are Japan's national symbols?

Japan is a country with a long history, rich culture and varied topography. Therefore, many symbols of Japan have developed over the years and are recognized worldwide. One of the most famous is Mount Fuji, a dormant volcano that last erupted in 1707. It is Japan's tallest mountain. Another is the red sun, as seen on Japan's flag. Cherry blossoms are also well known, as is the chrysanthemum, which appears on the crest of the imperial family. The crane, indigenous to Japan, is a symbol of peace. Cultural items such as kimono, tea ceremony, bonsai, origami and sushi are other traditional symbols of Japan.

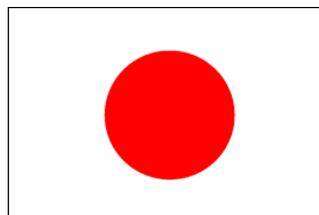
As Japan has modernized, especially following World War II, other more contemporary symbols have emerged. Japanese-made automobiles and electronics are well known and consumed world-wide. Robotic pets such as *aibo* are in high demand. Cultural icons like Pokemon and Hello Kitty have also gained popularity, not only among children. Japanese director Akira Kurosawa, Japanese animated films (anime or Japanime) and the 1950's film Godzilla are household words. Karaoke, which started in Japan, has sprung up in bars and restaurants throughout the world, and J-pop, or Japan's pop music industry, is making inroads internationally. New symbols of Japan will likely emerge as popular culture evolves.

2. What is Japan's national anthem?

Japan's national anthem, the *kimigayo*, was set to music about a century ago, but its words are nearly 1000 years old. They are interpreted as a wish for the lasting prosperity and peace of the country. Japan's national flag and anthem were designated as such under a law enacted in 1999.

5. What is the symbolism of Japan's flag?

The Japanese flag, which heralds a large red circle on a white background, is called the *hinomaru*. The literal translation of *hinomaru* is "sun disc". The sun flag has been used as a national symbol since at least the 17th century, with origins hailing back to Japan's earliest history. The *hinomaru* was designated as Japan's official national flag in August, 1999, concurrently with Japan's national anthem.



The vertical-to-horizontal ratio of the flag is set at 2:3; the disc is placed at the exact center; and the diameter of the disc is equal to three-fifths of the vertical measurement.

http://www.sf.us.emb-japan.go.jp/en/e_m08_01_01.htm#1

The King and the Farmer

By Kip A. Cates

Everybody needs money! But different people spend money in different ways. How people spend their money can tell us a lot about their priorities and the values of their culture.

When I was a student, I traveled across Asia on a very tight budget. It was exciting to visit countries such as Iran, Pakistan and India. In each country, I was curious to learn what people spent their money on and what they felt was important.

In Thailand, I came across a folktale about money called The King and the Farmer that illustrates traditional Thai values. Here's how it goes:

Once upon a time, there was a king. One day, he began to wonder how the people in his country spent their money. To find out, he went out to interview them.

The first person he encountered was a farmer. "Tell me," said the king. "What do you do with the money you earn? How do you spend the money you save?"

"Most of my money I use to buy food and clothing for my family," said the farmer. "The rest I divide into four parts. The first part I bury in the ground, the second I use to pay my creditors, the third I throw in the river and the fourth I give to my enemy."

The king was surprised at this strange answer. Throwing money in the river? Giving money to your enemy? What did it mean? The farmer explained: "The money I bury in the ground is the money that I give to charity. This is an investment for the future since my good deeds ensure that I'll go to heaven after I die.

"The money I give to my creditors is the money that I spend on my mother and father. I owe my parents everything and it's my duty to support them. The money I throw in the river is the money that I spend on gambling and drinking. The money I give to my enemy is the money that I give to my wife."

So, the farmer spends his money on four things: charity, his parents, entertainment and his wife.

The money that he invests in charity is his insurance for the future. The money that he spends on his parents is his way of repaying them. The money that he spends for entertainment is soon gone, just as if he threw it in the river. And the money he gives his wife is money that she won't let him use to enjoy himself.

Half of his money is spent supporting his family. The other half he divides between the temporary pleasures of life and the permanent treasure of heaven.

There's an old joke that goes, "Money talks ... but it usually says good-bye!" How people spend their money tells a lot about what they value. So, what about you? How do you spend your money?

Dialect Diversity

by Samantha Loong

"But you don't speak Osaka-ben," is often one of the first things people say to me when they find out that I used to live in Osaka. Then there are times when I'll say something that I think is standard Japanese, only to have someone express their surprise at my use of Osaka-ben.

My first experience of Osaka-ben was many years ago when, as a high-school exchange student in Osaka, I started a conversation with my host family. Although I had studied Japanese at my New Zealand high school for a number of years, after talking with my host family, I thought I had accidentally boarded the wrong plane and landed in a country other than Japan. The speed, intonation and vastly different vocabulary my host family were using were unlike anything I had learned in my textbook. It was fascinating, exciting and a little intimidating. For the next 12 months of my exchange, I decided to throw away my textbook and speak the way those around me were speaking. I grew to love, and more importantly to understand, the way Osaka people communicate. I have lived in Tokyo for just over two years now, and although I have grown accustomed to hearing standard Japanese every day, whenever I catch the odd Osaka-ben speaker, I feel like my day has brightened somewhat.

You see, for me Osaka-ben adds a touch of pizzaz and flavor to the Japanese language. This view appears not to be shared by everyone. A Kansai friend of mine said that her parents grew up and worked in an age where they were told not to speak in their dialect when they were job hunting in Tokyo, as it could result in employers discriminating against them. This is very unfortunate, as it seems like such a waste not to showcase and be proud of the rich and diverse local customs, dialects and cultures that Japan has. These days, Osaka-ben has gained more acceptance, but for some Tokyo people I have met, even in this day and age, they still find it vulgar and threatening.

Having grown up in Malaysia and New Zealand, where the people around me would often be mixing languages and dialects, I find both truly fascinating. In a way, Tokyo is the perfect place to come into contact with dialects from all over Japan. However, the reverse seems to be true, as the culture and language of non-Tokyoites end up diluted in the capital's melting pot.

It's quite common to see television programs featuring a prefecture's specialty food, but not much focus is placed on the dialects of each region. I think it would be even more enriching to celebrate not only what goes into our mouths, but also what comes out.

Shukan ST: July 3, 2009 (C) All rights reserved

http://st.japantimes.co.jp/english_news/essay/2009/ey20090703/ey20090703main.htm?print=no
rame

Japan to Ban Drone Flights by Individuals in Residential Areas

June 03, 2015 By RYOTA KYUKI

The government plans to ban individuals from operating drones in densely populated residential areas after a remote-controlled craft was found on the roof of the prime minister's office building in April.

An outline of the proposed rules on drones was endorsed at a liaison meeting of relevant government agencies on June 2.

The government will submit a bill to amend the Aviation Law, which currently does not regulate the operation of small unmanned aircraft, for passage during the ordinary Diet session that is due to wind up June 24.

According to the outline, only licensed drone operators will be allowed to fly the aircraft in densely populated residential areas and near airports. Individual users will be banned, in principle, from flying drones in these areas.

The revised law will also ban nighttime drone flights, in principle, to prevent accidents. This would apply to corporate operators as well as individuals.

Because drone technology is expected to create a new industry and benefit society, the outline also acknowledges the importance of setting up an industry-friendly environment for companies that take certain safety steps.

It added that an "environment in which drone operators can more flexibly utilize the aircraft" is needed.

The outline mandates the government to map out a legal system to give licenses to fly drones near airports and in residential areas for companies that meet certain safety standards.

Navigators of high-spec, larger types of drones will need to obtain a license based on their skills. Those aircraft will be required to undergo safety checkups.

Flying smaller drones will be exempt from the regulations. However, operators will be instructed to operate them under guidelines set by private industry groups.

Industry groups that already widely use drones, such as the agricultural and forestry industries, will be encouraged to set guidelines on the operation of drones.

Drone manufacturers, meanwhile, will be encouraged to develop operational programs that use GPS to limit the flight of drones in restricted areas to prevent crimes and breaches of privacy.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party is separately planning to submit a bill in the current Diet to designate drone no-fly zones of 300 meter in radius over important national facilities, including the prime minister's office and the Diet building.

Offenders could face penalties of up to one year in prison or a maximum fine of 500,000 yen (\$4,000). As some of the opposition parties also support the bill, it is likely to be enacted during the current Diet session.

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201506030035