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Vol. 031 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU – PhD candidate Hannah Bayley

We asked PhD candidate Hannah Bayley, a 2014 International Placement Scheme (IPS) fellow of the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), her research interests and her fellowship experience at the [International Research Center for Japanese Studies \(Nichibunken\)](#) in Kyoto. Hannah is currently writing up her PhD dissertation in Music and Film Studies at Keele University.

Hannah, what are your research interests and what projects you are working on now?

My research interests include screen music and sound, Japanese horror cinema, Japanese culture, adaptation and appropriation theory, and film remakes. I am currently writing up my PhD which offers a reconceptualization of the roles of sound and music in Japanese 'ghost' cinema, also known as *shinrei-mono eiga*, and how that differs from other traditions elsewhere in the world, especially considering the number of American film remakes that have emerged.

How did you become interested in your research field?

During the final year of my Dual Honours undergraduate degree in Music and English, I undertook the Shakespeare into Film module and discovered Japanese film adaptations of Shakespearean tragedies. My English Literature dissertation presented an examination of music in international adaptations of Shakespeare, which included Satō Masaru's score for Kurosawa Akira's *Kumonosu-jō* (Throne of Blood) and Takemitsu Tōru's score for *Ran*.

Following on from this early research, my academic interest in Japanese film music moved into a more contemporary realm and my research for my Masters degree compared music and sound in *Ringu* and its American remake. With a large amount of existing scholarship analysing visual representations in Japanese horror cinema, my interest lay around the analysis of sonic practice in a number of these films and how music and sound could heighten culturally specific representations of ghostly presentation. This was what led me to pursue doctoral research.

Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years? 10 years?

I see myself continuing to teach in the Higher Education setting, and I would like to have undertaken further fellowship opportunities in order to realise a number of research projects I have in mind, inspired by my time on the IPS fellowship. I would like to have published a book collection collaborating with other scholars working in the area of contemporary Japanese film music.

What was your most memorable moment during your IPS fellowship in Japan?

Thanks to the support of staff at Nichibunken, my host supervisor, [Professor Hosokawa Shuhei](#), and a researcher friend from Kyoto University who helped me arrange an interpreter, the most memorable moment of my IPS fellowship was getting to interview three prominent film and video game composers; Shimizu Hitomi, Kawai Kenji and Ashiya Gary. It was fascinating hearing about their compositional processes, and collaborations with other industry colleagues.

What is your advice for students or early career researchers considering to do research in a different country or culture?

Do not let language barriers put you off, there will always be support from staff and colleagues. I managed to pick up functional

Japanese through immersion in a variety of research opportunities, although it also helped having a certificate in language competency.

I would also recommend that students or early career researchers contact the institute at which they are considering undertaking a research project to find out what language support provision they have available. Once there I recommend keeping a research diary. I came back to my home institute with a suitcase full of resources. I even shipped home a couple of boxes!

The cataloguing took me a while to complete after my placement. However, it also served as a reminder of how being able to examine culturally specific traditions of ghostly and horrific representations in the Japanese arts in the 'field' has enriched my understanding of how they have shaped examples of sonic practice in Japanese film.



PhD candidate Hannah Bayley

Hannah Bayley is currently writing up her PhD in Music and Film Studies at Keele University. Hannah's research is supervised by [Professor Nicholas Reyland](#), [Dr. Neil Archer](#) and [Professor Alastair Williams](#), and is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. In October 2014 Hannah undertook a five-month fellowship, funded by the AHRC, at the [International Research Centre for Japanese Studies](#) (one of the six member institutes of NIHU) in Kyoto. Hannah currently has an article under review titled Sound and Techno-Horror: Kairo and Pulse.

In her free time Hannah enjoys researching about the Way of Tea (Chadō, Sadō or Chanoyu, literally "Hot Water for Tea"), following participation in a matcha tea ceremony in Japan, going to the cinema, and teaching piano.

Twitter: [@bayleyhn](#)



Vol. 032 Expanding research horizons abroad: An interview with associate professor, Mutsuhiko Matsuda

We asked Mutsuhiko Matsuda, associate professor in the [National Museum of Japanese History \(Rekihaku\)](#), who went on a research trip to the Republic of Korea to tell us about his memorable events and research activities in Korea. Matsuda went to Korea as part of the National Institutes for the Humanities' Program for Young Researcher Overseas Visits. This Program sends young researchers taking part in the Institute's [Transdisciplinary Projects](#) to research institutes abroad and aims to promote international cooperation and to develop internationally minded researchers.

Matsuda-sensei, what are your research interests and what projects you are working on now?

At the moment, I am helping with preparations for an exhibition tentatively titled *Japan and Korea: Connected by the Sea*, based on results of Rekihaku's collaborative research project called "Comparative Study on Cultural Framework of Living,

Religions and Rituals Related to Sea between Japan and Korea”. The exhibition will be jointly held with the National Folk Museum of Korea, a Rekihaku partner institution.

Japan is composed of a chain of islands, whereas Korea is situated on a continental peninsula. The Japanese and Korean cultures are quite different, and yet they share elements in common as well. In this collaborative research project Japanese and Korean scholars sought not only to shed light on cultural differences and similarities related to the sea, but also to clarify the background to such contrasts and resemblances.

I wish to widely share with the general public what the participating researchers felt, discussed, and deliberated after visiting different locations in Japan and Korea. The exhibition, *Japan and Korea: Connected by the Sea*, will be held at the National Folk Museum of Korea, in Seoul from October 2019 to February 2020 and then will be held at Rekihaku between March to May 2020.

What first got you interested in this research area?

Rekihaku has been running an exchange project with the National Folk Museum of Korea for a decade, and in 2015, I was put in charge of the next five-year program of the exchange project. Our program team set a goal to mount a joint Japan-Korea exhibition within the five years, featuring comparisons of maritime life and culture in Japan and Korea. After that, to prepare for the exhibition, I launched the collaborative research project mentioned earlier.



I had no previous experience in Korean studies, but as I researched fishery sites and the use of marine products in Korea, I noticed many similarities with Japan. The similarities stem, of course, from the shared cultural foundations of the East Asian region and the commonalities of our natural environments. But what’s also notable is how the activities of Japanese fishermen expanded into Korean waters in the prewar period. As a researcher interested in the mobility of fishermen, I decided to approach my analysis from the perspective of the modern-era activities of Japanese fishermen in Korean waters.

What was your purpose in going to Korea with the NIHU Program for Young Researcher Overseas Visits?

I planned to look into the current state of sea-related historical and cultural resources in Korea—technologies, beliefs, rituals and the like and based my research at the Center for Social Sciences, [College of Social Sciences, Seoul National University](#). My plan also included looking at efforts by museums and administrative bodies in different parts of the country to preserve and pass down such resources to younger generations.

My visit to Korea was part of my research I was undertaking for the Transdisciplinary Project “Development of Cross-Cultural Research Bases for Studies of History and Culture.” Our goal is to define models of and conditions for establishing bases for passing on to the next generation the diverse historical and cultural resources of regional communities and accordingly to make concrete suggestions for achieving those models and conditions. So, the task I set for the project was to conduct a comparative study of the preservation and transmission of historic cultural resources, focusing particularly on East Asia.

What was the most memorable event of your stay in Korea?

That would be fieldwork I did concerning the Lunar New Year festival (Seollal) in Hwangdo, Anmyeon, situated in Taean County, South Chungcheong Province. It is an around-the-clock festival that takes place at a village hall dedicated to the spirits of the ancestors, and is presided over by a group of *mudang* shamans invited by the village. Presenting prayers and singing in a

trance-like state, the *mudangs* ask the gods for peace and security and large catches of fish in the new year. Amid intense cold, a bull is killed and carved as a sacrifice. The experience of joining the mudangs and villagers as they danced, warming themselves with hot soup made from the meat and unfiltered sake made by the villagers, was completely new to me.

Another memorable event was when I went to observe a festival in Wando, located in Wando County, South Jeolla Province. On the day of the Daeboreum festival celebrating the first full moon of the lunar first month, people visit individual households while ringing handheld bells and beating drums. The older women there were full of energy, drinking and dancing happily. Apparently in Wando, it is a day when women may express themselves freely—which contrasts with festivals in Japan, where women are often most active behind the scenes. One older woman, looking happily inebriated, kissed me on the cheek when I told her I was from Japan.

Do you have any advice for students and young researchers who are considering research abroad?

I would encourage young scholars to go abroad, not only for the immediate and direct benefits to what they are currently working on, but also to expand and enhance the horizons of their studies. The scope of any research broadens in proportion to the amount of material we have for comparison, and this is true not only in folklore but in other fields.

Although I specialize in Japanese folk customs, not Korean studies, the four and a half months in Korea turned out to be an extremely important experience because the fieldwork I did there expanded my horizons as a Japanese studies scholar. For instance, focusing only on Japan could prevent me from recognizing whether a certain phenomenon is inherently Japanese or is perhaps something more universal. But now—with my experience in Korea—when I am engaged in research on any of many different topics in Japan, I often recall similar cases that I encountered in Korea or experience amazement at how seemingly similar phenomena may have strikingly different significance in the two countries.

Mutsuhiko Matsuda, Associate Professor, National Museum of Japanese History

After majoring in modern literature at the School of Letters, Arts and Sciences I, Waseda University, Matsuda received his Ph.D. in folklore studies at the Graduate School of Literature, Seijo University. His books include *Hito no idō no minzokugaku: Tabi kara miru nariwai to kokyō* [The Folklore of Human Relocation: Considering Occupation and Native Place from the Viewpoint of Travel] (Mutsuhiko Matsuda, Keiyūsha, 2010), and *Yanagita Kunio to kōkogaku: Naze Yanagita wa kōko shiryō o shūshū shita no ka* [Kunio Yanagita's Relationship with Archaeology] (Hiromi Shirata, Yūichirō Kudo, Mutsuhiko Matsuda eds., Shinsensha, 2016).



Vol. 033 My hopes for the NIHU International Prize in Japanese Studies

Japanese studies overseas, we sometimes hear, has gradually declined in response to the long-term stagnation of the Japanese economy, at least in comparison with previous times and with the research being generated by other countries about themselves. I think we would all agree that sustaining broad international interest in Japanese studies and Japanese culture and expanding and enlivening the activity of scholars is necessary for the healthy development of Japanese studies both in Japan and overseas. As part of such endeavors, awarding recognition to researchers overseas who are pursuing Japanese studies at a high level holds great meaning, both for the internationalization of Japanese studies and for the international promotion of understanding Japanese culture.

In January 2019, the [NIHU International Prize in Japanese Studies](#) was newly established, with the support of the Kuraray Foundation, with the aim to promote the development of Japanese studies and deepen the understanding of Japanese culture internationally. The prize will be awarded to researchers based overseas who have shown outstanding achievement in Japan-related scholarship in literature, language, history, ethnology, folklore studies, the environment and other fields related to the human culture studies and have made great contributions to the international development of Japanese studies.

The recipients of the prize will be invited to the award ceremony in Tokyo and in addition receiving a certificate, commemorative gift, and a cash award of \$20,000, will be requested to give a commemorative lecture to share the results of his or her research.

Recipients will be nominated by recommendation and selected by a screening committee composed of both NIHU personnel and outside experts. Recommendations will be received not only from universities, inter-university institutes, and scholarly associations related to humanities research within Japan but also from institutes and other entities overseas with which NIHU has collaborative ties.

By rewarding the achievements of outstanding Japanese studies scholars, the NIHU International Prize in Japanese Studies will contribute to the enhancement of international appreciation of those achievements, heighten interest in Japanese studies, and by extension promote the accurate evaluation of Japanese culture. We also hope that it will provide encouragement to young scholars seeking to pursue Japanese studies.

In the fall of 2019, after rigorous screening, we will announce the first recipient of the NIHU International Prize in Japanese Studies. Through this prize, we look forward to broadening the international potential of Japanese studies and the deepening and further growth of research on Japan.

Text: Makoto Sato (Executive Director, NIHU)



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Vol. 034 Five things to know about Hina-Matsuri, the Doll Festival

In Japan, March 3 is known as Hina-Matsuri, the Doll Festival—a day when people celebrate the birth and pray for the healthy growth of their daughters. Its history as an annual event dates to the Edo period (1603-1867), when it began as a form of play for young girls of the nobility. In fact, it did not become common for ordinary households to put up these unique doll displays for their daughters on this date until after World War II. Hina dolls are not really toys for children to play with, but figurines that sit on a multi-tiered platform, attired in costumes modeled after the ancient Imperial Court.

In the postwar years, celebration of the Doll Festival and the display of hina dolls spread throughout the country. Today public-scale Doll Festivals have caught on as a popular tourist attraction in several parts of Japan, often developed for that purpose. We interviewed Shin'ya Yamada, Associate Professor of the Folklore and Folklife Division at the National Museum of Japanese History (Rekihaku), about the origins of the Doll Festival and how it has evolved over time.



Where did the Doll Festival originate?

There are a number of theories about the origins of the Doll Festival, but they fall roughly into two categories. One theory is that it began as a cleansing ritual to wash away impure or inauspicious conditions. There is an ancient purification ceremony known as misogi-harae in which one breathes on a straw doll and casts it into a river to rid oneself of impurities.

The other theory is that the Doll Festival began as a kind of hiina-asobi, playing house with dolls (hiina, meaning “small doll,” changed over time to hina, the word used today). Offerings would be made to standing paper dolls propped against a wall. That form of play gradually spread from young children to older girls and women, eventually evolving from a game into a decorative display. It wasn't until the late Edo period that people began decorating their homes with hina dolls as a special celebration on March 3, as we do today.

Did Edo-era women all display hina dolls like that?

No. From the outset the Doll Festival was a pastime of the nobility, and the same was true during the Edo period. It began to enjoy broader popularity only in the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taisho (1912-1926) periods. With the growth of an urban middle class consisting largely of company employees, parents began spending more money on their children, and that included buying hina doll sets for their daughters. Whereas these sets had only been available for purchase at certain shops at a certain time of year, now department stores were selling them as well. People would also display scrolls with paintings of hina dolls or hina dolls made out of clay in place of the hina doll sets. After World War II, as the entire nation began to enjoy economic prosperity, the practice spread even to parts of Japan that had never had a tradition of displaying hina dolls, and mass production of the dolls took off.

What happened after the Doll Festival grew popular throughout the country?

For many households, the doll displays took up too much space, or no one was interested in setting them up after the young girls in the family had grown up. That was when the festival began to be celebrated as an annual public event.

For example, the town of Katsuura in Tokushima Prefecture holds a Big Hina Dolls Festival every year (February 18 to April 8, 2019). Dolls no longer in use are donated for display on a pyramid-like stand eight meters high, with 100 tiers—25 tiers in each of the four directions. This event, which was launched in the 1980s, now attracts visitors from the surrounding region as part of a growing nationwide trend of holding seasonal festivals of this sort. In other words, hina dolls that would otherwise be discarded

now enjoy new life as a tourist attraction.

What other Doll Festival-related events are there around Japan?

The Katsuura Big Hina Dolls Festival takes place in the city of Katsuura in Chiba Prefecture (February 22 to March 3, 2019), which drew its inspiration from the festival held in the town by the same name in Tokushima. In this event some 30,000 hina dolls are displayed on the stone steps of shrines and other locations around the city. Since it's not far from Tokyo, the festival attracts some 200,000 visitors and has become a major tourism asset. At another event, the Hina-Nagashi or "Doll Floating" at Awashima Shrine in the city of Wakayama, hina dolls are placed in boats and floated out to sea.

We hear that there is a rare hina doll display at Rekihaku too. Can you tell us about it?

Rekihaku has in its collection a doll set and accessories once owned by Princess Kazunomiya, the eighth daughter of Emperor Ninko, who reigned from 1817 to 1846. However, we only display it every two years, and unfortunately it's not on view this year.

Princess Kazunomiya's doll set consists of a male and female doll in the yusoku-bina style, dressed in exact replicas of Heian-era (794-1185) court costumes. Dolls of this type were favored in Edo-era Kyoto, then the royal capital. The two dolls in this set wear exquisite reproductions of the finery worn by kugyo, nobles of the highest rank among those serving at the Imperial Court. The dolls are accompanied by some 80 accessories and ornaments that make this display particularly spectacular.

One item, for example, is a game of go complete with a set of tiny go stones less than 1 mm in diameter, about the size of sesame seeds. There is also a shogi (Japanese chess) game with similar-sized pieces. One of the pleasures of viewing this doll set is to get a look at these elaborate and meticulously rendered accessories.



What was originally a pastime for women and girls of the Edo-era nobility evolved in postwar Japan into an event celebrated by families from all walks of life. Today Doll Festivals even serve as a tourist draw. Though it's tempting to think of the Hina-Matsuri as an ancient tradition that has survived intact over many centuries, a close look at its history reveals it to be a comparatively recent practice that has changed with the times.

(Interview by Ayumi Koso)



Hina dolls and accessories formerly belonging to Princess Kazunomiya (collection of the National Museum of Japanese History, Edo Period H-40)



Hina doll accessories: Towel rack, mirror stand, comb stand, basin, tissue paper stand and four-handled basin, gargling basin and tooth-dyeing accessories (collection of the National Museum of Japanese History, Edo Period H-40)



[Shin'ya Yamada](#), Associate Professor, Folklore and Folklife Division, National Museum of Japanese History.

He specializes in folklore and cultural anthropology with a particular interest in funeral rituals and the concept of death in Japan, as well as in the relationship of tourism to annual festivals and other traditional events. He studied law and sociology at Keio University and earned his Ph.D. in sociology at Keio.



Vol. 035 New Food Culture Created by Communities and Cities

Five years have passed since washoku was added to the Intangible Cultural Heritage List of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). There are now [an estimated 120,000 Japanese restaurants outside of Japan](#), a twofold increase in the last 10 years. [The number of visitors to Japan in 2018 surpassed 30 million people](#), a threefold increase in the last 5 years. Local foods rank third in terms of what tourists want to do at sightseeing destinations, as the international gaze on Japan's food culture expands to regional Japan.

In Japan, Tsuruoka city in Yamagata Prefecture was registered as Japan's only UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in 2014. Regional foods and food culture are gaining renewed recognition, and the food culture industry is being promoted in collaboration with cities in efforts that are underway to link it with regional economic growth and cultural development.

On December 4, 2018, the National Institutes for the Humanities, in association with the [Ajinomoto Foundation for Dietary Culture](#), held a symposium entitled "How Japanese local food cultures contribute to the sustainable development of local

communities” at the Ajinomoto Group Takanawa Training Center in Minato-ku, Tokyo. The symposium brought together food producers, consumers, researchers, and the government to consider policies that ensure resources such as regional foods and food culture are preserved in the future.



The symposium kicked off with a presentation by Masayuki Okuda, owner/chef of the Italian restaurant [Al-ché-cciano](#) in Tsuruoka city, and Okuda discussed initiatives to bring vitality to communities through food, based on his own experiences. [Professor Satoshi Ishikawa](#) of Tokai University followed this and discussed how marine resources should be sustainably utilized through cooperation between researchers, fishery operators, and the government, and how communities should be vitalized.

The panel discussion started with Dr. Norie Tamura, Senior Researcher of the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN), describing North America’s Food Policy Councils¹. Under the moderation of [Professor Hein Mallee](#), Deputy Director-General of RIHN, the panelists provided multifaceted perspectives on how to sustainably make use of food resources, including the importance of knowing one’s own community well and having confidence to sustainably use resources, and of being proud of one’s own initiatives to protect regional resources by having them evaluated externally. Other topics included reassessing conventional urban food systems that separate producers and consumers and the need to build social systems that can supply food sustainably by building new food systems that incorporate consumers.

¹Food Policy Councils comprise government, consumer, and business representatives to address urban issues such as town building and the environment comprehensively by resolving issues of regional food systems.

Text: Yuriko Kikuchi



Presentation by Masayuki Okuda



Presentation by Professor Satoshi Ishikawa



Symposium in session



Vol. 036 Expanding research horizons abroad: An interview with associate professor, Hatsuki Aishima

We asked Hatsuki Aishima, associate professor at the [National Museum of Ethnology](#), Osaka, who went to England on a research trip to tell us about her memorable events and research activities. Aishima held a visiting fellowship at [the University of Manchester](#) in fall 2017 as part of the National Institutes for the Humanities' Program for Young Researcher Overseas Visits. This Program sends young researchers taking part in the Institute's Transdisciplinary Projects to research institutes abroad and aims to promote international cooperation and to develop internationally minded researchers.

Aishima-sensei, what are your research interests and what projects you are working on now?

I am studying the relationship between aesthetics and body culture of the urban middle classes of Egypt by engaging with the communities of karate practitioners (athletes, instructors, as well as parents/siblings). In recent years, with the spread of the neoliberal economy policies, it has become difficult to distinguish the middle classes from the lower stratum of society based on education and income alone. I look at the various ways in which Egyptian middle classes employ the ideas of being "cultured" as a marker of their social class belonging.

Against the backdrop of this trend, I have observed some members of Egyptian middle classes take part in karate trainings as the way to enhance their moral values and aesthetic sensibilities. In Egypt and other countries of the Middle East, karate is an immensely popular extracurricular activity for children. With the support from the Young Researcher Overseas Visits program, I conducted an ethnographic research on Muslim migrants and their children in the UK who are practicing karate as a key to explore issues of globalization in the Middle East.

What first got you interested in this research area?

I first learned about the Middle East from a girl who had emigrated from Iran to Canada. I became close friends with her when I went to Vancouver on a one-year exchange program during my second year of high school. My interests in the Middle East and Islam grew while listening to her stories about "home." At that time, I was not aware how Persian and Arabic differed, but I was fascinated with the beauty of Arabic script my friend wrote.

When I entered university, I took Arabic as my second foreign language elective. We had classes only once a week, but that exposure to the Arabic language sparked my interest in the history and culture of the Middle East, so much so that during the summer of my third year I went to Cairo to take Arabic language courses. Everything was fresh and new on that first visit to Egypt and the one-month stay passed quickly. Egyptians say that the one who drank the water from the Nile is bound to return. Having pursued my career as a Middle East studies specialist, indeed I continue to visit Egypt regularly.

What was your purpose in going to England with the NIHU Program for Young Researcher Overseas Visits?

I went to England on the NIHU Program to conduct an ethnographic research of a karate club in Manchester to examine issues of globalization in the Middle East. Manchester is a city that has a high concentration of Muslim residents. In line with the NIHU Area Studies for the Modern Middle East which consider human migration and knowledge flow across borders as important indices of globalization, I seek to understand the globalization of the Middle East by examining how lifestyles in the UK have affected the aesthetics and body culture of Muslim migrants from the Middle East.

Manchester is England's second largest metropolis and a very cosmopolitan place where many languages are spoken. I chose to conduct my fieldwork at the [Manchester University Shotokan Karate Club](#) because their trainings are held within walking distance of a neighborhood called "Curry Mile" where many Muslims live.

What was the most memorable event of your stay in England?

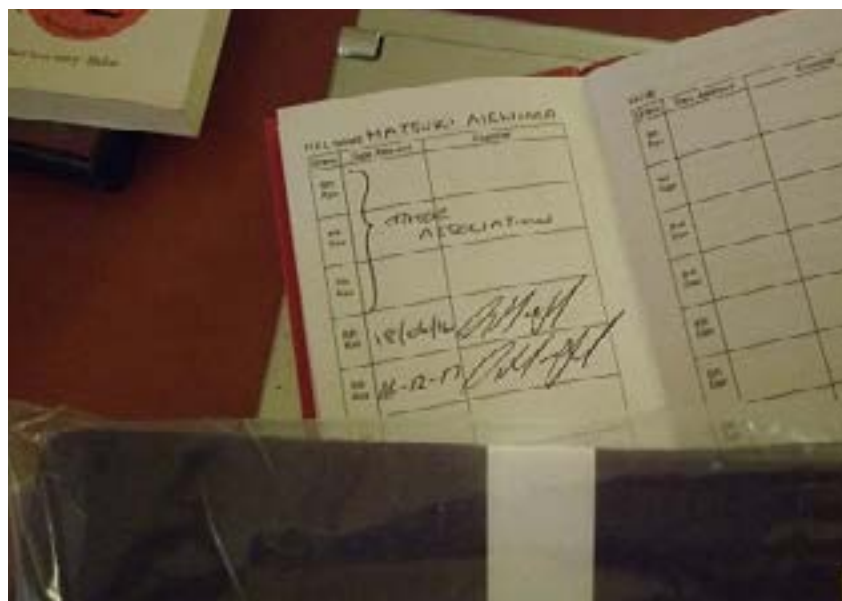
Before my fieldwork of a karate practitioners' community in Manchester, I had assumed that there would be many difficulties for Muslims in observing their faith as well as living as "ordinary citizens" in the UK. But through my recent fieldwork, I observed that the karate practice is helping them to build new social ties transcending value systems and social class.

For example, after the last training before Christmas, I went out with the dojo members to eat at a Chinese restaurant. In Japan when we go for Chinese food as a group, we would order large dishes to share, but in England guests order their own meal. This is because if you are Muslim, for example you wouldn't eat pork or drink alcohol, and if you were vegetarian, or had an allergy, you would need to watch what you order. But even though they don't share dishes, the dining together is still very meaningful. I was impressed how Muslims enjoyed their food and conversations with their dojo-mates over coke and vegetable fried noodles that they ordered, while non-Muslims, including myself, enjoyed beer and roasted pork.

Do you have any advice for students and young researchers who are considering research abroad?

I have had encounters and discoveries that I never expected by studying Arabic and English, and living in a number of different countries. Of course, it can be difficult when one ventures away from familiar ground, but I hope anyone who has the chance to engage in research overseas will embrace the experience.

Muslims often quote a phrase Prophet Muhammad taught his followers "Seek knowledge even unto China as the quest for knowledge is indeed obligation for all the Muslims." Compared to the people living in the seventh century Arabian Peninsula like Muhammad and his Companions, we of the twenty-first century take for granted that goods and information from around the globe are at practically our fingertips. But there is quite a gap between the information you can obtain about other countries via the media and the knowledge you can acquire by actually visiting those places by yourself.



A signature in KUGB passport for reaching the 5th Kyu (rank) and a purple karate belt awarded.

[Hatsuki Aishima, Associate Professor, National Museum of Ethnology/Sokendai School of Cultural and Social Studies](#)

After receiving her DPhil in Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford, Aishima taught Modern Islam at [the University of Manchester](#), and joined the faculty of the [National Museum of Ethnology](#) in July 2016. She specializes in social anthropology and modern Islamic thought. Her current research focuses on aesthetics and body culture of the urban middle class based on ethnographic engagements with karate practitioner communities in Egypt. Her publications include [Public Culture and Islam in Modern Egypt: Media, Intellectuals and Society](#) (IB Tauris, 2016) and "Consciously Unmodern: Situating the Self in Sufi Becoming of Contemporary Egypt," in [Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal](#), 18.2, pp. 149-164..



Vol. 037 *The Tale of Genji* to computer science

An exhibition about the *The Tale of Genji* opened in March 2019 at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. This is the first exhibition in North America to feature Genji-inspired works of art ranging from the 11th century, when the legendary novel was written, to the present.

The Tale of Genji has not only inspired artists. A researcher who became interested in Japanese literature thanks to Murasaki Shikibu's masterpiece is engaged in a project that brings the fields of literature and computer science together by developing a system for computerized recognition of cursive Japanese script. We asked Tarin Clanuwat, a project researcher at the [ROIS-DS Center for Open Data in the Humanities](#), how her encounter with *The Tale of Genji* led to her current project utilizing computer science.



What first inspired you to do research on *The Tale of Genji*?

I came across a Thai translation of *Asaki Yume Mishi* (a manga adaptation of *The Tale of Genji* by Waki Yamato). I was already interested in Japanese culture, particularly the ancient culture of the Heian period (794–1185), and had studied Japanese since I was in elementary school. But when I went to libraries in Bangkok to learn more about the Heian period, they had virtually no works of classical Japanese literature on hand. That's when I discovered there was a manga based on *The Tale of Genji*.

Then my dream of studying in Japan came true when I received a Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship and entered graduate school at Waseda University. From the outset my plan was to study *The Tale of Genji*, but to be honest, I knew nothing about scholarship on the work.

Scholars studying Genji have to be able to read the old cursive handwritten script known as *kuzushi-ji*, which few contemporary Japanese readers are familiar with. How did you learn it?

I took a class in *kuzushi-ji* as part of my master's program, but I couldn't read it at all and failed the test. But I desperately wanted to learn it somehow, so I studied it by a rather unusual method. Figuring that if I learned how to write *kuzushi-ji* I would naturally learn to read it, I enrolled in a calligraphy class.

In practice, learning to read the script while practicing writing it helped me improve quickly. If you learn how to write *kuzushi-ji*, then you naturally focus on the brushstrokes when you read it as well. Because you are aware of how it was written, you internalize a sense of how to read it the way it was written.



After only three years of study, Tarin achieved fourth-dan ranking as a kana (Japanese syllabary) calligrapher.

What sort of Genji research did you pursue in graduate school?

I studied how *Genji* scholars during the Kamakura (1185–1333) and Nanboku-cho (1336–1392) periods interpreted the text, which we can see from the commentaries they added to it. There are many types of *Genji* commentaries from this era, explaining the meaning of words, poems, historical references and so on. Deciphering those texts gave me a deeper understanding of Heian

culture.

Currently you are using artificial intelligence technology to develop a computerized kuzushi-ji recognition system. What led you to do research in the field of computer science?

All the time I was in graduate school, I worked on rewriting the *Genji* commentaries in modern script. This is hard work that seems to take forever when the book is a long one. I thought that I could use my study time more efficiently if I were able to use a computer for part of that process. Then, when I was writing my doctoral dissertation, I found myself wishing I could do full-text searches through the manuscripts I was reading. But given the huge volume of extant literature, there are far too few people available to carry out the task of converting all the texts. I decided I wanted to develop a text-conversion system to solve that problem, so I started to research machine learning for *kuzushi-ji* recognition.



Results (in red) of conversion of the beginning of The Tale of *Genji* to modern kana characters by the text-conversion system developed by Tarin and her research group.

How does this new text-conversion system differ from previous efforts to develop automatic recognition of kuzushi-ji?

The automatic character recognition process typically consists of four steps. First, you digitize the document. Next you analyze the layout of the image—which areas are background, which are text, which are pictures. Then you divide the text area into its elements—paragraphs, lines, characters. Finally, you identify each individual character. But that method doesn't work well for *kuzushi-ji* because the script is cursive and the characters run together.

To solve this problem, we adopted a method that does not explicitly divide up the text. This method was originally proposed for cell image analysis in the biomedical field. It occurred to us that the overlap of characters in classical texts resembles the overlap of cells in a specimen. When we actually applied this method, we found that it recognized *kuzushi-ji* with greater accuracy than previous methods. In the future we hope to make this text-conversion system available for anyone to use.



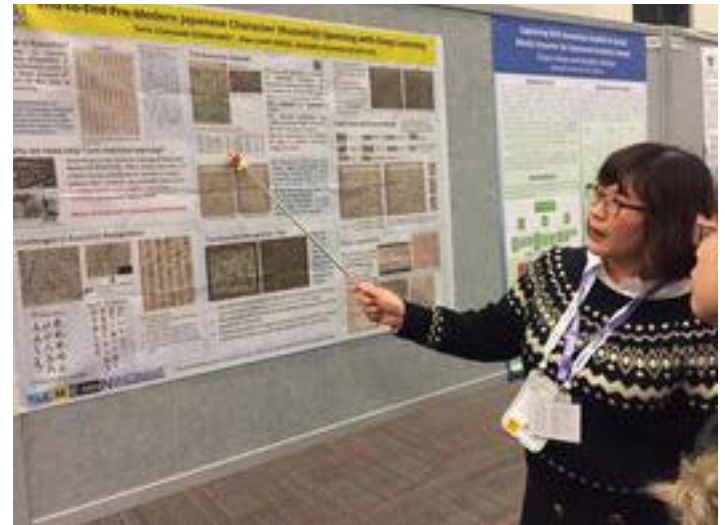
Tarin says that the use of computers to improve efficiency in converting *kuzushi-ji* will benefit not only scholars, but anyone who wishes to read classical texts but finds it hard to decipher cursive handwritten scripts.

Tarin's current research perfectly dovetails her interest in programming and the love of the Japanese language she has nurtured since her childhood days. We look forward to what further "tales" may unfold in the course of her future research.

(Interview: Ayumi Koso)

[Tarin Clanuwat](#) has been a project researcher at the ROIS-DS Center for Open Data in the Humanities since April 2018. She completed the doctoral program in Japanese Studies of the Waseda University Graduate School of Letters, Arts and Sciences in March 2018. She received the Best Paper Award from the IPSJ SIG Computers and the Humanities Symposium for her research on automatic recognition of cursive Japanese script.

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Vol. 038 Seeking a sustainable future in scenes from daily life

Many people may think of "environmental problems" as matters to be addressed by science. But in fact, we can think about what a sustainable environment and society should be just by looking at what we see right around us and at what we see in our memories. In the spring of 2019, we planned an event around this idea of thinking about environmental problems through familiar landscapes and episodes.

We organized an event titled "Let's Have a Look! Clay, Honeybees, World Food: Toward Sustainable Societies," at [Miraikan \(National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation\)](#) in Tokyo's Odaiba, on March 16, 2019. The event featured talks with research experts from the [Research Institute for Humanity and Nature \(RIHN\)](#) in Kyoto and the showing of specially prepared videos. The three sessions on the topics of ceramics, beekeeping, and food in Bhutan, began with a short, 15-minute video, after which RIHN researchers presented further background and explanation, referring to what was seen in the videos.

The videos were made to record the daily lives of ordinary people at a certain point in 2018. For example, the video that I recorded and edited was entitled "Quietly a Great Wave" covers a day in the life of a household in a rural village in the western part of the kingdom of Bhutan. It shows the young couple of the family waking early on a winter morning. They warm themselves with milk tea while their parents and their children are still sleeping and then head out to the barn, their boots packing down a path in the snow, to get the milk they need to make milk tea, butter tea, and cheese for the family. First, they let the young calf nurse, and when it has had a certain amount, they draw the calf away and start to milk the cow for themselves. The grandmother of the family uses the milk the calf has shared to make butter and cheese, essential ingredients of all sorts of dishes for the household.

Up to that point, the video seems to be showing a happy scene of self-sufficient local life. But in recent years, rapid urbanization and an increase in imports from India are bringing about great changes in Bhutan. We can see the impact of these changes even in the kitchen of this family. When making *kewa datshi*, a leading traditional Bhutanese dish made from potato and cheese, I noticed that along with the homemade cheese, they also added sliced cheese, which seemed have been imported from India. Their comment that “It doesn’t taste good unless we add this,” tells a lot about how changes in Bhutanese food and agricultural systems have affected changing tastes.

As reliance on imported foods increases, major changes take place in domestic food and agricultural systems. The aggravated burden on the environment of mass production of goods in factories and the contingent waste that is produced are issues that cannot be overlooked. How should we deal with this kind of phenomenon, which is found not just in Bhutan but in many other parts of the world? [Dr. Mai Kobayashi](#), RIHN specialist on food and agricultural systems of Bhutan and co-director of the “Quietly a Great Wave” video, commented as follows about sustainable food and agricultural systems:

We have to learn where the food we eat comes from and think about the impact that our choices and consumption of food have on the environment. And we have to be responsible for our choices.

Prompted by comments like these, together with questions and comments from the audience, who were mostly people living in Japan, we reflected on the situation we are in today.

Environmental problems are not something happening far away; they are closely involved with our own lives. The videos shown at this event brought into vivid focus the ways environmental issues are embedded in our daily lives. The participating researchers used videos to introduce the content of their research, helping us to place what might seem like trivial episodes in larger contexts and think more deeply about environmental issues. Perhaps it is part of the role that the humanities as a whole will be called upon to play from now on. And RIHN being one of the institutes of the National Institutes for the Humanities – a driving force of research in the humanities in Japan-, it is perhaps RIHN’s mission to create opportunities to rethink environmental issues as cultural issues.

[Kim Satbyul, Project Assistant Professor, Research Institute for Humanity and Nature](#)

Born in Korea, Kim completed her doctoral degree at [SOKENDAI](#) in 2016. Specializing in cultural anthropology, her focus of research is death and burial rituals and visual anthropology. She took up her present position in 2017.



Scenes from the event



Scenes from the event



Vol. 039 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU – PhD candidate Claudia Dellacasa

We asked PhD candidate Claudia Dellacasa, a 2018 [International Placement Scheme \(IPS\)](#) fellow of the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), her research interests and her fellowship experience at the [International Research Center for Japanese Studies \(Nichibunken\)](#) in Kyoto. Claudia is currently enrolled in a PhD program at [Durham University](#).

Claudia, what are your research interests and what projects are you working on now?

I am currently analysing Italian contemporary literature from a transnational perspective. Given the relevance of cultural interconnections nowadays, I aim to address the presence of such interplays in one of the most-known Italian authors of the XX century: Italo Calvino.

In particular, I am researching about his travels to Japan in 1976, his interest in Japanese literature and thought, and his elaboration of Japanese culture in his mature production. This fruitful and largely unexplored contact is unveiling very interesting ramifications in Calvino's development of post-Western and post-human discourses.

In general, coming from a background as a linguist, I seek to put into dialogue a philological approach to texts and a broader contextualization of them, in light of the position of Italian literature in the current global context.

How did you become interested in your research field?

My research takes root in my invaluable experience of cataloguing the books stored in Calvino's personal library in Rome, consequently unveiling several books about Japanese literature and religions. This cataloguing experience was linked to my master's thesis about the linguistic structure of Calvino's novel *Il barone rampante*, in which context I was seeking to identify eighteenth-century texts that may have influenced the author's prose.

Thus, my current doctoral project links my favourite Italian author, which I have been studying long, and a culture that I am more and more intrigued by and which I am exploring passionately, namely the Japanese.

Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years? 10 years?

I love this time of my life: I am doing what I like the most – studying – in wonderful places – Durham, in the UK, and Kyoto, in Japan. Therefore, I hope to keep having this same enthusiasm for whichever research I will be conducting after my PhD, be they academic or "simply" personal, emotional, human.

The truth is that I am probably absorbing the concept of *mujō*, 'impermanence', and I prefer focusing as much as I can on the present, rather than on the future, which I am nevertheless quite optimistic about.

What was your most memorable moment during your IPS fellowship in Japan?

I have a lot of wonderful memories linked to my experience in Japan. I visited breath-taking places, such as Koyasan and Nikkō, astonishing temples and gardens in Kyōto and Tōkyō, and met caring people which I will never forget.

One of the most powerful moments I can recall now is the [talk](#) that I gave in Tokyo, in a pub in Shimokitazawa, organized by the Tokyo Humanities Project. Not only was it in one of the nicest areas of the city, but it gave me the opportunity to spread my research to a participating and curious international audience. I really appreciated the authenticity of the questions I was asked, the feeling that I was literally disseminating my ideas to people other than academics, and, most of all, I enjoyed the fact that the

audience seemed to be truly interested in the transnational angle of my research.

What is your advice for students or early career researchers considering to do research in a different country or culture?

I would encourage them to overcome any fear, prepare their luggage and just go: the further the better! This was the first time that I experienced what it means to have a different physiognomy, to carry a name that is barely translatable in the language that everybody speaks, to come from a completely different culture. And, of course, it was not always easy: students should be ready for some blue mornings.

But overall, this was the most significant experience of my life, thus far. I could realise on my very skin the importance of understanding identities in their intersections, in their porosity: I think that it is only by exploring new identities and new cultures that one can find the others in oneself, and oneself in the others. If this is relevant in my academic research, it is even more so in my life as a citizen of a world that too often forgets the need for pacific dialogues and cultural encounters.



PhD candidate Claudia Dellacasa

Claudia Dellacasa is an [Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded](#) second-year PhD student at Durham University, UK, where she is working on a project about the influences of Japanese culture on Italian author Italo Calvino. Claudia is postgraduate editor of the peer-reviewed journal [MHRA Working Papers in the Humanities](#). Prior to commencing her PhD, she obtained a BA in Modern Literature and a MA in Modern Philology at [La Sapienza University of Rome](#), where she is a member of 'Laboratorio Calvino'.

In her free time Claudia enjoys travelling around historical cities and nature reserves, watching movies and reading. She also loves sports and tries to run as much as British weather allows her!

Twitter: [@Cla_Dellacasa](#)



Vol. 040 Manga's capacity to cross national and artistic boundaries

In late May 2019, the British Museum opened the largest [manga exhibition](#) ever held outside Japan.

That such a prestigious and historic institution would undertake a massive exhibition on the subject of manga—a subculture-tinged, foreign-born medium of expression generally viewed as lightweight compared to literature or drama—attracted widespread notice, and not only in England and Japan.

Manga's influence has extended across not only national borders but also literary and artistic genres. One example is in cinema. Hiroyuki Kitaura, a research fellow with a specialty in film at the U.K.-based [Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures](#), was invited to view the British Museum's Manga exhibition. We asked Dr. Kitaura about his impressions of the

show, the opening reception, and the impact of manga on filmmaking.



What impressed you most about the British Museum Manga exhibition?

The most memorable things for me were the introductory part of the show and the section titled “The Art of Manga” that focused on manga’s artistic aspects.

Upon entering the hall you first encounter the words of Alice from Lewis Carroll’s great English novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*: “What is the use of a book without pictures or conversation?” From there the displays go on to introduce Japanese manga that have Alice as a motif. “Books without pictures or conversation” refers, of course, to novels and other forms of traditional British print culture. So the exhibition uses Alice as a bridge linking British print culture to Japanese manga culture, which is based on pictures and conversation. I thought this was a remarkable way of bringing England and Japan together at the beginning of the show.

As for “The Art of Manga,” it seemed to me that this section sought to rebut the perception of manga as nothing more than entertainment for children by arguing for recognition of the medium’s artistic elements. I thought it reflected a determination on the part of the British Museum to offer a new perspective on manga.



The Manga exhibition
at the British Museum
(May 23 to August 26, 2019)

Lately it seems a growing number of Japanese films are based on manga. What do you think is behind this trend?

Long ago, film companies in Japan made movies in their own studios, with directors, staff and actors under exclusive contract, and distributed the films to theaters that were also under contract. That is how they made a profit. It was known as the studio system. However, this system ceased to function in the 1970s, when Japan’s film industry went into decline.

In its place, publishing houses and TV broadcasting companies began to make movies. Nowadays businesses from many different industries engage in filmmaking, and among them are manga publishers. It’s become the norm for several companies—notably film studios and publishers—to form “production committees” to make commercial films together. The studio hopes to get a hit by turning a popular manga into a movie, while the publisher anticipates that the film will boost sales of the manga. This trend has become especially pronounced since the early 2000s, and with it the number of manga-based films has soared.

What sort of research are you doing at the Sainsbury Institute?

I'm investigating how Japanese movies and anime found their way overseas in the postwar era. For example, the domestic market for Japanese films began to shrink in the late 1950s, prompting the studios to look to overseas markets more than they had before. In the case of the U.K., one of Japan's major studios, Shochiku, contracted with a British distributor in 1960 with the aim of making inroads into the British film market.

Do you think the current global boom in Japanese anime and other films is a result of the “Cool Japan” campaign that has been underway for the past ten or twenty years? Or is it unrelated?

I think it's important to recognize that the spread of Japanese anime and film overseas began earlier than that. To be sure, initiatives like Cool Japan promoted by the government also provide an incentive to look abroad. But to take one example, Toei Animation, a subsidiary of the film giant Toei that has been associated with such anime legends as Osamu Tezuka and Hayao Miyazaki, was founded in 1956 and has long been an active exporter of anime.

So if we wish to analyze the current status of Japanese anime and film, we have to look into the historical background. As it happens, I am currently planning a workshop [held in July] with British and Japanese researchers to explore this very phenomenon, the global spread of Japanese anime and film.



“Workshop: Historical Perspectives on the Distribution and Adaptation of Japanese Live Action Films and Anime Overseas” held in July at the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, UK.



Dr. Kitaura also mentioned that at the reception for the Manga exhibition, he was greeted by someone in costume as the Pokemon character Pikachu—further evidence that manga now span national borders and media alike in their growing role as raw material for anime and live-action films.

Having left Japan to pursue film studies in another country and culture, what's next for Dr. Kitaura? We look forward to seeing what other frontiers he will cross in the course of his research on film and anime.

(Interview: Ayumi Koso)



[Hiroyuki Kitaura](#) is a Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Fellow at Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, where he specializes in film and media studies. After earning his PhD in 2013 from the [Kyoto University Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies](#), he served as assistant professor at the [International Research Center for Japanese Studies](#) before taking his current position in 2018. He is the author of [Japanese Movies during the Growth Period of Television: Dramas in Media Interactions](#) (University of Nagoya Press, 2018). Currently writing a monthly column “From Britain’s ‘Little Kyoto’: Norwich’s Japanese Studies and Environs” for the [Kyoto Shinbun](#) [newspaper].



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