



Back Issues 3 : Vol.021 ~ Vol.030

- ① Vol. 021 Rediscovering the Use and Value of Japan-Related Resources Recovered in the West
- ② Vol. 022 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU
– Dr. Andrew Houwen
- ③ Vol. 023 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU
– Assistant Professor Helena Čapková
- ④ Vol. 024 Interview Series
“Yukinori Takubo, New Director-General,
National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL)”
- ⑤ Vol. 025 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU – Senior Lecturer Oleg Benesch
- ⑥ Vol. 026 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU – PhD student Lance Pursey
- ⑦ Vol. 027 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU – PhD candidate Jo McCallum
- ⑧ Vol. 028 Five things you should know about Japanese era names before the end of Heisei
- ⑨ Vol. 029 Arts and Humanities Research Council International Placement Scheme alumni
gathered in Tokyo
- ⑩ Vol. 030 Five things you should know about Expos,
now that Osaka has won the bid to host the 2025 World Expo



Vol. 021 Rediscovering the Use and Value of Japan-Related Resources Recovered in the West

Many historical Japanese artifacts, such as the marvelous art and craft specimens collected by Philipp Franz von Siebold in Japan, which he then took back to Europe with him, are currently held in the collections of overseas research institutes. To promote the surveying and study of these Japan-related documents and artifacts, Japan's National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) has undertaken a research program called "Japan-related Documents and Artifacts Held Overseas". Under this research program, there are four research projects and a project that promotes the dissemination of research outcomes obtained by each of the four research projects.



As a part of the research program, a symposium, "[Rediscovering the Use and Value of Japan-Related Resources Recovered in the West](#)" was held on Saturday, June 3, 2017 at Kyushu University's Nishijin Plaza. This 30th NIHU Symposium was convened to discuss how we might raise awareness in Japan of existing Japan-related historical materials overseas and how the use of such artifacts may be encouraged in their respective source communities.

Professor Shigemi Inaga of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (aka Nichibunken), a lead researcher of the dissemination project, took the podium to give a brief overview of the four research projects. Then, presentations were delivered from each of the four research projects on the latest research findings pertaining to the Kyushu area.

The first presentation was delivered by Associate Professor Frederik Cryns of Nichibunken, who discussed the initial encounter and friendly relations between the Dutch and the citizens of Hirado, Nagasaki. His findings were based on the results of a survey of documents from the Hirado Dutch Trading Post, now in the possession of the Nationaal Archief in The Hague. The next talk, delivered by Professor Kazuo Otomo of the National Institute of Japanese Literature, touched upon documents relating to the prohibition of Christianity in the Edo Period, now in the keeping of the Father Mario Marega Collection in the Vatican Apostolic Library, and spoke about the prospects for their study. After that, Associate Professor Kazuto Sawada of the National Museum of Japanese History, delivered a lecture based on his study of children's boat captain costumes collected by Siebold from the Nagasaki Kunchi festival. Professor Sawada discussed how different influences of kabuki costumes could be seen on the boat captain costumes depending on when the children's costumes were manufactured. Finally, Associate Professor Yoshiyuki Asahi of the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics spoke about the Japanese linguistic culture and its characteristics as inherited by Japanese who emigrated to the Americas.

In the panel discussion, the panelists who joined Professor Inaga included researchers, government officials, and tourism industry stakeholders, such as Professor Mayuko Sano of Nichibunken/ University of Nagasaki, Associate Professor Yoshinori Iwasaki of Kyushu University, Akihiro Sato, the Director of the Cultural Affairs Division of the Oita Prefecture Board of Education, and Senior Researcher Mayuko Kono of the JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co., with Project Assistant Professor Yuriko Kikuchi of NIHU, serving as moderator.

The panelists exchanged their observations and ideas from a variety of perspectives on possible methods for communicating and sharing research results delivered by the "Japan-related Documents and Artifacts Held Overseas" research program. These included the academic value of Japan-related documents and artifacts that are in the keeping of other countries, the importance of documenting these materials of global significance to attract interests in Japan's rural areas, points to highlight when making use these materials as tourism resources, and the importance of curators who bridge between the academic community and society. The panelists also discussed the means of utilizing these fruits of research in ways that would revitalize local economies and societies.

Highlights of the symposium can be viewed online on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvIYXBaLfXc&t=5908s>).

Yuriko Kikuchi
Project Assistant Professor
Center for Information and Public Relations, National Institutes for the Humanities



The symposium in session



Vol. 022 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU – Dr. Andrew Houwen

We asked Dr. Andrew Houwen, a former International Placement Scheme (IPS) fellow of the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), his research interests and his fellowship experience at the National Institute of Japanese Literature (NIJL) in Tokyo. Andy is currently a JSPS postdoctoral fellow at Tokyo Woman's Christian University, Japan.

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

My research interests are comparative literature, more specifically the relationships between English and Japanese poetry. I am currently researching for a JSPS-funded book project on Ezra Pound and Japan, which looks at how Pound, one of the most prominent Anglophone poets of the twentieth century, influenced and was influenced by Japanese literature.

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

In the next 5 years I see myself working as an associate professor at a Japanese university. I hope to have published my book project by then and to have produced a few more academic articles in this area of research. In the next 10 years, I hope to find a more permanent position in Japan or, if that is not possible, elsewhere.

What do you wish you would have known on your first day at Kokubunken (NIJL)?

The staff at NIJL were extremely friendly, welcoming and accommodating. Regarding matters of research, I could find no fault at all with the institution.

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

My most memorable moment was deputy director-general at the time, Tanikawa-sensei, and a researcher, Negishi-sensei, taking the time to show me around the second-hand bookstores looking for poetry books in Kanda together with a prominent modern Japanese poetry critic, Wada-sensei. Contacts with leading researchers in their fields can lead to many meaningful connections for my own research and offer excellent opportunities for dialogue between different research fields such as English and Japanese poetry.

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

My advice for students and early career researchers would be to make as many connections as you can when you are in Japan. It will really benefit the quality of the insights you can make in your area.

Dr. Andrew Houwen

Andy is a JSPS postdoctoral fellow at Tokyo Woman's Christian University, Japan. Andy grew up in the UK and obtained his Master's from the University of Oxford and his PhD from the University of Reading.

He is currently working on a research project that focuses on the relationships between Ezra Pound and Japanese literature. The project builds on the findings of his 2013 article, 'Ezra Pound's Early Cantos and His Translation of Takasago', which was published by Oxford University Press's Review of English Studies and received the 2014 Ezra Pound Society Article Prize. Since then, Andy has also had a peer-reviewed article published on Basil Bunting's translation of Kamo no Chōmei's Hōjōki and has a book chapter on 'Ezra Pound and Japanese Literature' due to appear in The New Ezra Pound, published by Cambridge University Press.

In his spare time, Andy likes to read, explore cities, visit art galleries and museums, or go hiking in the mountains.





Vol. 023 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU

– Assistant Professor Helena Čapková

We asked Assistant Professor Helena Čapková, a former International Placement Scheme (IPS) fellow of the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), about her research interests and her fellowship experience at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto. Helena is currently Assistant Professor at Waseda University in Tokyo, where she teaches art history.

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

Since obtaining my PhD in 2012, I have been continuously building on the research and network of artists and projects that I uncovered during my postgraduate research in Japan as an IPS fellow and Europe. My research interest is transnational visual culture that lived in Japan and Central Europe in the 1920s and 1930s.

Among a number of ongoing projects, if I had to pick one, I would choose my research on the Japanese Bauhaus connections. This project recently became a part of a large international project called "[Bauhaus 100/ Bauhaus Imaginista](#)". Under this project, the history of modern Japanese design inspired by the Bauhaus will become internationally recognized and I am thrilled about.

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

I am hoping to stay in the field of art history and Japanese studies, developing research projects and teaching, which I enjoy very much.

What do you wish you would have known on your first day at Nichibunken?

I should have been much more relaxed and comfortable. Nichibunken is a really exciting and inspirational place for a young researcher. I had a fantastic mentor, Professor Inaga who was incredibly helpful during my fellowship.

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

There were a few. But one would definitely be the discovery of a correspondence from a Czech architect, Bedrich Feuerstein to a Japanese architect couple, the Tsuchiuras, that I didn't even imagine would exist in a private archive. I was able to obtain photocopies of the letter, but only because there were colleagues who were supportive and made introductions that would make it happen. I think being introduced to the right people is key to making discoveries, especially in Japan where networks play a significant role.



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

Referring to my previous point, network! As IPS fellows, young researchers are in the best position to be introduced to a wide network of colleagues that will prove indispensable in their future careers.

Assistant Professor Helena Čapková

Helena Čapková is an Assistant Professor teaching art history at the Waseda University's School of International Liberal Studies of the in Tokyo. She received her PhD. at the TrAIN (Transnational Art Identity and Nation) Research Centre of the University of the Arts in London. Her research focuses on the exchange within the artists' network that connected Japan and Central Europe in the interwar era. Other areas of interest include: Transnational Visual Art Studies, Japonisme, Modernism, 20th Century Architecture, Design and Photography. She received her undergraduate and postgraduate training in Art History and Japanese Studies in Charles University, Prague and SOAS, London.

Helena's publications focus on the role of progressive education within modernism which include: Transnational networkers - Iwao and Michiko Yamawaki and the formation of Japanese Modernist Design (2014), Bauhaus and tea ceremony: a study of mutual impact in design education between Germany and Japan in the interwar period (*Eurasian Encounters: Intellectual and Cultural Exchanges, 1900-1950*, 2016). Helena has written a book about Czech purist architect and progressive stage designer Bedřich Feuerstein and Japan (Bedřich Feuerstein - Cesta do nejvýtvarnější země světa, Kant/Aula, Praha, 2014).

In her free time, she enjoys going to see exhibitions and to the theatre with her Japanese friends.

Vol. 024 Interview Series



“Yukinori Takubo, New Director-General, National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL)”

Professor Takubo came into office as director-general of NINJAL in October 2017, following the retirement of Professor Tarō Kageyama, who had served as director-general for eight years since 2009. Kageyama's leadership coincided with the time when the institute made the transition from an independent administrative institution to its current status as an inter-university research institute corporation.

In 2018, NINJAL celebrates the 70th year since its founding. The institute has been engaged in studying and documenting the state of the Japanese language as it is used in various regions and over the course of history, as well as in organizing materials and making them available in the form of databases. Tachimoto, president of the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) asked the new director-general about his ambitions for accumulating and improving basic research over the long-term as well as what kind of shorter-term results he hopes to show in the course of NINJAL's six-year plan period between 2016 and 2021.

Interviewer: Narifumi Tachimoto
President, National Institutes for the Humanitie

1. Ambitions and Prospects for the Institute's Six-year Plan

(Tachimoto) NINJAL went through the difficult transition from an independent administrative institution to an inter-university research institute corporation. I see those eight years as a time during which NINJAL became an institute for language and linguistics research of which Japan can be proud. How do you see the Institute's standing today?

(Takubo) Indeed, NINJAL accomplished a great deal during its time as an independent administrative institution (2001–2009),

and among the achievements of that period were a number that stood out in an international context. Unfortunately, however, the institute was not able to project those achievements for appreciation outside Japan. When former director-general Kageyama took NINJAL's leadership, he was determined to remedy that situation. He himself demonstrated high English proficiency and a large number of English publications came out at the institute under his leadership, greatly contributing to NINJAL's international reputation.

(Tachimoto) Four more years remain in the current six-year plan period, which began in 2016. Please share with us your ambitions for what NINJAL can achieve during these years.

(Takubo) NINJAL celebrates its 70th anniversary in December 2018 and in October next year its tenth anniversary since becoming an inter-university research institute. So we are taking the opportunities of these 70th and 10th anniversaries to hold a number of events over a period of about six months. We are currently in the process of plans that will represent the summation of NINJAL up until now, including its time as an independent administrative institution, and also chart its path forward into the future.



(Tachimoto) So you hope to carry on Kageyama's programs laid out in the six-year plan? And will this approach be reflected in the events to commemorate the founding of NINJAL?

(Takubo) Yes. I have been sitting in the steering committee of NINJAL's six-year plan and the theme that will run through all our activities during this period will be "Data Driven Language Research." This theme will be the overarching topic which current projects across many different fields and research specialties will need to refer to. At the same time, from among those projects, we will select a few that have particular potential for development and simultaneously draw up programs for the next six-year plan starting 2022.

2. NINJAL and Linguistics Research

(Tachimoto) I am sure those ambitions will guide your leadership at NINJAL, but I would like to ask you about a difference in the



mission of the institute between the time it was an independent administrative institution and what it is today as an inter-university research institute. I believe it is the difference between "*Kokugogaku*" (Japanese linguistics) and "*Gengogaku*" (linguistics), but could you explain that to us? I realize that the institute continues to call itself the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (*Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo*), in Japanese using the word "*Kokugo*."

(Takubo) Yes, I suspect that former director-general Kageyama wanted to change the name to the *Gengogaku Kenkyujo* (National Institute for Linguistics Research). "*Kokugo*" ends up sounding a little confining.

The *Nihongo Gakkai* (Society for Japanese Linguistics), for example, was previously the *Kokugo Gakkai*. There was a disagreement between members who sought to relativize the Japanese language in the context of world languages—the advocates of calling it the *Nihongo Gakkai*—and those who emphasized "*kokugo*," based on philological research, urging that

it remain the *Kokugo Gakkai*. A vote among the members was held and the name was changed to *Nihongo Gakkai* in 2004. I have heard that a number of members left the society because they could not agree with the idea of relativizing the Japanese language.

What should be done about NINJAL's name, I do not quite know what to say, as I am not part of that particular debate.

(Tachimoto) NINJAL conducts a wide variety of surveys and it has acquired an immense wealth of data, part of which I believe is made available in the form of various corpora. Could you describe to us the research going on at NINJAL?

(Takubo) Take, for example NINJAL's 1960s research as found in the book *Hanashi kotoba no bunkei 1* (Research of Sentence Patterns in Colloquial Japanese (1)), "*Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo hōkoku*" 18 (1960). That was a very theoretical work, in which Professor Fujio Minami, for example, presented his original theory about the structure of Japanese.*¹ Fifty years have passed since then but research is still going on based on his idea about the structure of Japanese. And finally now world linguistic studies are catching up with his research. Today, the very lively linguistic research that is going on based on the theory of hierarchical structure of Japanese sentences, too, is based on the theoretical research accumulated by Minami as discussed in *Hanashi kotoba no bunkei 2* (Research of Sentence Patterns in Colloquial Japanese (2)) "*Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo hōkoku*" 23 (1963), and is being studied in Japan and overseas. I myself have published several articles on that subject.

(Tachimoto) I am indeed eager to see the ways that NINJAL's 70-year history and traditions can be built upon and made better known under your leadership.

(Takubo) Yes, we have, for example, the numerous language maps including dialect grammar maps and vocabulary maps compiled as a result of nationwide surveys led by Professors Takeshi Shibata*² and Tokugawa Munemasa.*³ We are now digitalizing the maps, and these are sure to provide valuable new materials for comparative linguistics research. There are now studies that can use such materials to explore the historical relationship between languages, the language family, using algorithms originating from modern biology research. These studies could not be possible without NINJAL's accumulated data. The data we have collected over the years is tremendous in quantity.

(Tachimoto) That's right, and it also goes way back in time as well. Even from the viewpoint of a non-specialist in this field like me, it is really impressive.

(Takubo) But in fact we presently only have but a very small part of all our data available to the public. We are still in the process of organizing it.

(Tachimoto) From about when has NINJAL been digitizing its resources?

(Takubo) Oh, it has been going on since the beginning. From the early phase of its 70-year history, computers and statistics were used in the tallying of the data. Since very early on NINJAL has not only hired science-trained experts in computer science to support its digitalizing projects, but integrated informatics, statistics, and other fields of science into its humanities-based endeavors.

(Tachimoto) So you would say that forms a firm footing for the current projects you have in informatics and other collaborative research?

(Takubo) Yes, that's right. Joint research with the Institute of Statistical Mathematics has been going on at NINJAL from a long time ago. We work with them in the planning of dialect surveys and in the processing of the data collected.

(Tachimoto) What directions do you see for dialect research at NINJAL from now on?

(Takubo) In dialect research, we basically treat a dialect as a discrete language and record data. Japan has thousands of dialects, and our approach is to treat each one as a distinct language system; that is what makes our approach different from so-called dialectology.

Dialectology adopts a comparative language approach, so it begins with something regarded as standard Japanese and looks at what differs from the standard. At NINJAL—whether this is what you would call the linguistic approach, I am not sure—but that is the way the younger generation is being trained. For example, if you do field study in a particular area, you record the language in that locale as a whole. You create a dictionary, write down the grammar, and create texts. Then all the documentation is then digitalized. Audio and video recordings are also made, and the language (dialect) is thus recorded as a whole.

Also, one aspect of dialect studies is the concern with endangered dialects and languages. So sometimes research doesn't just stop with recording the language. If the local community wants to revive the dialect, the researchers may study methods by which they could assist in that process.

NINJAL's mission today, in fact, is shifting its weight over to the latter kind of research. Younger-generation linguists are trained not so much in dialectology as in linguistics. So at the same time as conducting systematic recording of language, there are quite a few of them who are working with communities to learn how those dialects can be reinvigorated.



3. NINJAL and Japanese Language Education

(Tachimoto) Of course, there are many universities and other institutions engaged in research on Japanese language education and teaching methods. As an inter-university research institute, what are NINJAL's main activities in this area?

(Takubo) What we are doing now as far as Japanese-language education is concerned, rather than study of teaching methods, is working to understand the features of Japanese as it is spoken by non-Japanese and making available the findings of the research to practitioners in Japanese language education.

Another project we have, deals not with Japanese as it is taught in textbooks, but focuses on real Japanese as we actually speak it, and the findings are utilized in Japanese language education. This is a form of long-term basic research aimed at learning about Japanese as spoken by non-Japanese, what kinds of Japanese non-Japanese should learn, and what aspects of Japanese are difficult for non-Japanese when they study the language. These are topics that are probably not dealt with much outside NINJAL. Those engaged in actually teaching Japanese do not have the leeway to study such issues; teaching Japanese is quite an exhausting profession.

(Tachimoto) You yourself were involved in teaching Japanese in South Korea, I believe.

(Takubo) Yes, I taught Japanese for two years in South Korea and eight years at Kobe University—a total of ten years. In teaching Japanese in Japan, we cannot use a foreign language. Even if we have Chinese, American, and Indonesian students in our classes, a single tutor will not be able to explain in Chinese, English, and Indonesian. So we have to use Japanese in teaching the language. So how do you get across the meaning of the words and phrases students have not yet learned? Some teachers have come up with very skillful ways of doing so.

(Tachimoto) That's a very tough challenge.

(Takubo) We are currently considering a new joint research project with the National Institute for Physiological Sciences (NIPS) in Okazaki, Aichi. It is said that communication works, not just because of words but because of understandings established before any words are spoken, that is the existence of some kind of rapport (such as relations of mutual trust) among the participants. We are now considering whether we can work on the mechanisms of this with a brain scientist at NIPS.

4. Direction as an Inter-University Research Institute

(Tachimoto) I see. That is the kind of joint research with research institutes outside of the NIHU umbrella that is increasingly being called for, but what is your position regarding collaboration with other NIHU institutes?

(Takubo) We are still at the stage of exploring to what extent we can engage in such collaboration. We do now already have a number of ways we cooperate with the National Institute for Japanese Literature (NIJL). Some scholars at NINJAL work in bibliographical research, so we have an arrangement for direct access from the NINJAL database to images in NIJL's database. It also looks as if greater cooperation with the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto would be beneficial as well.

(Tachimoto) Yes, NINJAL-Nichibunken collaboration was something I was just about to ask you about.

(Takubo) Prior to taking up my present post at NINJAL, I attended a research group called "Debates on the Origins of the Japanese Language: Light and Shadow in the History of Japanese Linguistics."

(Tachimoto) Who was the organizer of the seminar?

(Takubo) It was Professor Toshiki Osada.*⁴ He had previously been at the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN) in Kyoto and had set up a research project going on in collaboration with RIHN. Then some of my former students from when I was teaching at Kyoto University (2000–2016) started a study group at RIHN, and they created what they call the Descriptive Linguistics Study Group (*Kijutsu Gengogaku Kenkyukai*) and hold seminars on not just Japanese but description of various endangered languages. With the cooperation of RIHN professors, they keep that [seminar](#) going even now.

(Tachimoto) That is the kind of dynamic interaction among the inter-university research institutes we very much like to see.

(Takubo) I also think we can benefit from cooperation with the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku), in Osaka. Lately a few specialists in language and linguistics have joined the institute.

(Tachimoto) The inter-university research institutes also have the mission, I think, to not only pursue links with universities and institutes but also to lead universities in ground-breaking research projects. In the case of NINJAL, how can NINJAL take the lead in such research projects with universities that have linguistics departments or related courses? Have you thought about that sort of thing?

(Takubo) Right now, NINJAL works with a total of about 650 scholars, including its core faculty, members of joint research projects, and research collaborators, and more than half of these are researchers based at other universities. So for each research project we undertake, we are involving scholars from many different fields and from other universities. For example, NINJAL Professor Nobuko Kibe has students and young scholars coming from across the nation doing surveys, getting training in field survey work as well as engaging in various studies of endangered dialects and languages. This kind of project is something that would be difficult for any one university to undertake.

(Tachimoto) NINJAL has amassed a data archive of which we can be justly proud. I look forward to the ways you will be able to make its advantages and usefulness known to the world. Thank you for joining me for this conversation.



*1 Minami Fujio, former director of the Center for Japanese Language Education, NINJAL. His publications include *Gendai nihongo kenkyū* (Studies in Modern Japanese Language; Sanseidō, 1997); *Keigo* (Honorifics; Iwanami Shoten, 1987); *Gendai nihongo no kōzō* (The Structure of Modern Japanese; Taishūkan Shoten, 1974).

*2 Shibata Takeshi, Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo, Professor Emeritus Saitama University. As a researcher at NINJAL 1949–1964, he undertook surveys for Japanese language maps, and published many reports of his geographical linguistic research including *Nihon no hōgen* (Japanese Dialects; Iwanami Shoten, 1958) and *Shin meikai kokugo jiten* (The New Clear Japanese Dictionary; Sanseidō)

*3 Tokugawa Munemasa was former Professor of Gakushuin University. He joined the Itoigawa survey led by Professor Shibata Takeshi and took part in the compilation of the maps of Japanese language. Among his publications are *Nihonjin no hōgen* (Dialects of Japanese; Chikuma Shobō, 1978) and *Nihongo kenkyū to kyōiku no michi* (The Path of Japanese-Language Research and the Path of Education; Meiji Shoin, 1994).

*4 Osada Toshiki: Professor Emeritus of the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature and Visiting Professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies. Specialist in languages, especially the Munda language of India. Among his publications are *Shin Indo-gaku* (New Studies of India; Kadokawa Gakugei Shuppan, 2002) and *Indasu bunmei no nazo: Kodai bunmei shinwa o minaosu* (Riddles of Indian Civilization: A New Look at the Myth of Ancient Civilization; Kyōto Daigaku Shuppankai, 2013).



Vol. 025 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU – Senior Lecturer Oleg Benesch

We asked Senior Lecturer Oleg Benesch, a 2017 International Placement Scheme (IPS) fellow of the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), his research interests and his fellowship experience at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto. Oleg teaches East Asian History at the University of York in the UK.

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

My recent research interests have related to the use of premodern symbols and ideas in the formation of modern nationalism. Much of my work deals with the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My first book, *Inventing the Way of the Samurai* (Oxford, 2014), examined the development of bushido in modern Japan. I have just completed a second [book manuscript](#), co-authored with Ran Zwigenberg at the Pennsylvania State University, that is a history of Japanese castles in the modern period, from the 1860s to the present.

In addition to several ongoing projects related to these two books, I am increasingly looking at the uses of the past in Japan, China, and the West from a transnational and comparative perspective. The spread of nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was a global phenomenon, and different societies used the past in ways that were far more similar than is often thought. For example, the development of an idealized samurai ethic in Meiji Japan was heavily influenced by Victorian notions of chivalry and 'gentlemanship'.

How did you become interested in your research field?

My current historical interests developed during several years living in Japan and asking questions about things I saw and heard. With regard to bushido, I didn't feel that the existing literature was providing satisfactory answers to my questions about its origins. This led me to study the development of bushido in graduate school, first for an MA and then a PhD.

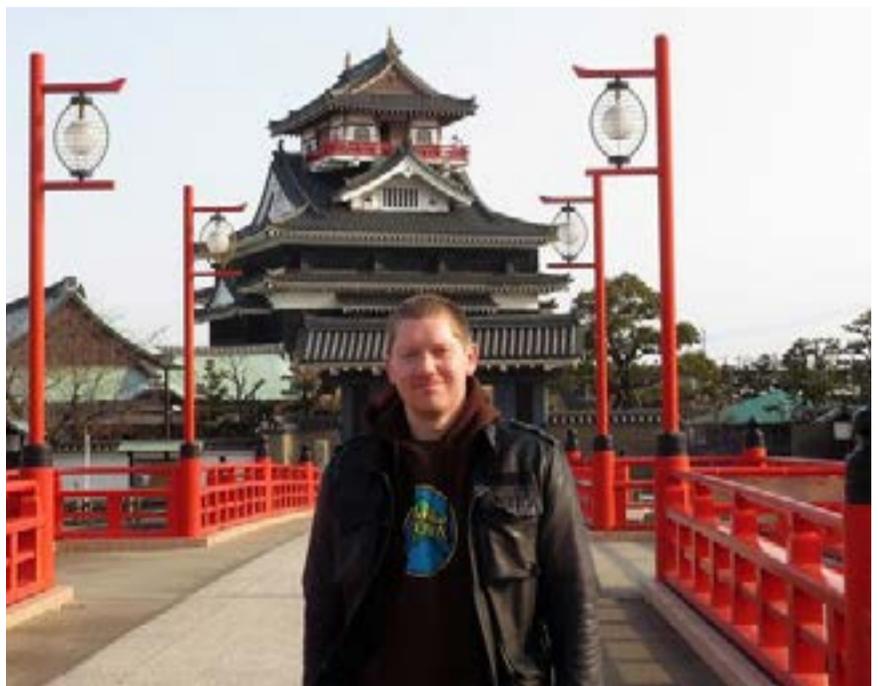
My work on castles developed from conversations with Ran Zwigenberg in Tokyo several years ago. We both felt that too little was known about the modern history of Japanese castles, as research and museums focus almost entirely on earlier periods. As we dug deeper, we realized that castles played major roles in Japan's modern development, but also that the dynamics surrounding castles in Japan were in many ways similar to those in Europe and elsewhere. The history of both bushido and castles is closely related to the formation of local, regional, and national identity in the modern period, and this is a thread that runs through much of my past and ongoing work.

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

As a historian, I try not to get drawn into predictions of the future, whether it be my own or that of the areas I study. That said, I am still engaged in quite a few research projects and would be happy if I am still pursuing those.

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

The most memorable thing about my stay in Japan on the IPS was the amazing cherry blossom season. It was considerably



longer than a moment this year, and I had the good fortune to be traveling around visiting castle sites during the peak of the season.

In many cities, castles are now public parks, often planted with dozens or hundreds of cherry trees, so the atmosphere was fantastic. It was a bit strange to be looking for historically significant objects in between masses of people eating and drinking on blue tarps beneath the cherry trees, but it certainly made the whole experience more memorable.

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

I would just suggest getting out and exploring as much as possible. You never know where new ideas or projects will come from!

Senior Lecturer Oleg Benesch

Oleg Benesch is Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in East Asian History at the University of York in the UK. He is also a Research Associate at SOAS, University of London. Oleg received his PhD from the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia, and was Past & Present Fellow at the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London.

Oleg's research interests lie at the intersection of intellectual, cultural, and social history. He is especially interested in the exchange and development of ideas and concepts across societies, with a focus on interactions between Japan, China, and the West. For more information, see: www.olegbenesch.com

In his free time, Oleg enjoys spending time with family and friends, as well as exploring new areas and playing football (soccer). During his time in Kyoto, he went for cycle rides and runs in and around the city. He would often run as far as he could in a new direction, and then take one or several trains back home as a way of exploring the city and countryside. Oleg also regularly played football with students and staff at Kyoto University, as well as at a futsal court near Nichibunken. He finds this a great way to meet people from many different walks of life, especially when one has first arrived somewhere new.



Vol. 026 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU – PhD student Lance Pursey

We asked PhD student Lance Pursey, a 2017 International Placement Scheme (IPS) fellow of the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), his research interests and his fellowship experience at [the National Museum of Ethnology \(MINPAKU\)](#) in Osaka. Lance is now doing his final years of his PhD course in Medieval History at the University of Birmingham, UK.

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

My research interests are social identities in medieval China and Northeast Asia. For my PhD research I focus on funerary inscriptions from the Liao period (907-1125CE), and incorporate not only their textual elements but also their archaeological context where available.

During my time in Japan I became interested in how Chinese history is studied and researched in Japan, which I hope to develop into a larger project in the future.

How did you become interested in your research field?



My undergraduate degree was in Chinese and Japanese, and afterwards I became interested in classical Chinese. My original motivation was to read philosophical texts, but I became increasingly interested in the historical context of the texts I was reading, which inspired me to do an MA in Religious Studies, focusing on Daoism, at Sichuan University in China.

Nearing the end of my MA I was lucky enough to hear about an exciting PhD project that combined historical and archaeological methodologies. This was refreshing after spending several years looking at religious and speculative philosophical texts.

My interest in inscriptions comes from both my passion for textual analysis and my interest in the material and social contexts of texts. In contrast to other periods of Chinese dynastic history, there is a shortage of received historical material for the Liao, which means that the archaeological finds since the twentieth century have played a pivotal role in uncovering more detail about the lives of individuals from the period.

A lot of scholarship combines both artefacts and texts to paint a comprehensive picture of the Liao. I am curious to see whether these two kinds of sources when looked at in isolation paint two different pictures of Liao society, allowing us to reflect on the limitations of historical source material and historical methodologies.

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

Five or ten years is a bit far ahead to really say for certain where I might be. My hope is that I will continue to read classical Chinese texts, and use the Asian language skills I have developed in my work. I hope to have the opportunity to share what I get out of them, be it through classroom teaching, publishing or other platforms.

The IPS fellowship definitely opened up my eyes to possible future projects and opportunities internationally, and I am currently seriously considering pursuing postdoctoral study in Japan after completion of my PhD.

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

I would say my visit to the [Toyo Bunko](#) in Tokyo. It's a wonderful library with very helpful, courteous and professional staff. On my visits I was able to handle and examine rubbings of Liao inscriptions made or purchased by Japanese archaeologists in the 1930s. Some of these fragile sheets of taped-together paper are some of the only material remains of stone inscriptions whose whereabouts has been unknown for the best part of a century.

I then had the opportunity to run a workshop at Waseda University, and chose to read through these inscriptions with teachers and students, alerting them to the fact these rubbings were very accessible and they could go check them out for themselves.

That aside, the museums in Japan are great! The National Museum of Ethnology, where my placement was, gave me fresh perspectives for thinking about ethnic groups in the past and present and how to apply anthropological frameworks to my research. I was also very fortunate to catch many great exhibitions, some that directly fed into my research interests, like the Song ceramics exhibitions at the [Idemitsu Museum of Arts](#), or the Tang tomb figurines exhibition at [the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka](#). Other exhibitions expanded my interests beyond the immediate focus of my PhD, such as the Ninna-ji treasures on display at the [Tokyo National Museum](#), the exhibition of Giga (Edo period manga) at the [Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts](#), or the brilliant permanent displays at the [Edo-Tokyo Museum](#).

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

Above all, go for it. You will learn things that you did not know there were to learn. If you do go on a placement, try your best to get out and meet people while you are there.

I originally set out thinking I was going to Japan to read the volumes and volumes of work done in Japanese on my period of research. However, at the beginning of my placement I was encouraged to actively reach out to the writers of the works I wanted to read and go along to their seminars.

This allowed me to see how the practice of sinology and history is done in Japanese in person, rather than merely on the page. This helped to turn my research from something quite dead (I deal with tomb inscriptions, after all) into activities where I was engaging with living people and indeed the living traditional of Sinology in Japan.

PhD student Lance Pursey

Lance Pursey is enrolled in a PhD program at the University of Birmingham, UK to study Medieval History under the supervision of Professor Naomi Standen. Lance received his BA in Chinese studies with Japanese from Sheffield University, and an MA in Religious Studies, specialising in Tang period Daoist thought, from Sichuan University, China.

Lance is also involved in the AHRC Research Project 'Understanding cities in the premodern history of Northeast China, c. 200-1200' as a project student. His PhD research topic is epigraphy, historical geography and urban society in the Liao period (907-1125 northeast Asia); it combines GIS, database design, archaeology and history. Lance will complete his PhD in 2019. From January to June 2018, he went on the AHRC IPS fellowship to the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan.

In the weekends and some evenings during his placement Lance often trained in Aikido. He also went on long walks and visited different smaller towns in the North of Osaka, like Takatsuki and Ibaraki. He was always on the lookout for small cafes that did good tea and cheesecake.



Vol. 027 An interview with research fellows visiting NIHU – PhD candidate Jo McCallum

We asked PhD candidate Jo McCallum, a 2016 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. Jo is currently on her way to complete her PhD in the [Centre for Future Timber Structures](#), University of Queensland, Australia.

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

Having trained as an architect and a basket maker, I have an inherent interest in the relationship between craft and nature, especially common patterns and forms found in weaving and nature's structural processes (symmetry, spirals, hexagonal forms, branching, etc). I use film, photography and 3D modelling, alongside traditional craft and design techniques. Currently, I am exploring the common language between basketry and biological growth and form.

Looking at nature's structural processes, alongside Japanese bamboo weaving techniques and traditions, reveals new physical and digital ways of making architecture. Imagine large woven timber structures, like Shigeru Ban's [La Seine Musicale](#). I am

documenting and collating these techniques, patterns and forms into a visual language – a pattern formation language.

How did you become interested in your research field?

In 2011 I travelled to San Francisco to attend a wedding. I spent a few days exploring the city's museums and galleries. I was looking for a new direction; I found it in the [de Young Museum](#). It was quite a poetic experience: I saw a shadow cast across a wall – a complex, curved form, made of many different strands. When I turned the corner I came upon [Aurora](#), 2006 (madake and rattan) by [Honda Syoryu](#). I immediately viewed this piece, this practice, as a method for modelling architecture.

From the de Young, I went to The [Asian Art Museum](#), where I viewed the [Cotsen Collection](#), including a range of baskets and sculptural forms bequeathed to the Museum by the philanthropist and patron [Lloyd Cotsen](#) (1929 – 2017). I returned to the UK and began researching Japanese bamboo weaving. I also enrolled in a two-year qualification in basket making.

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



Finished my PhD and on the way to publishing a monograph based on my practice research, and the work of the Japanese bamboo weavers. These unique craft makers are so skilled – they are the keepers of a great deal of tacit knowledge – but like so many practical disciplines their tradition is dying out. Through my work I hope to raise the profile of their craft in both the UK and Australia.

There are many makers and organisations I would love to be able to work with on a long-term basis, and I am currently seeking grant funding to develop a number of collaborative projects bringing academics, architecture students and bamboo weavers together.

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

This is such a hard question to answer because the entire four-month trip was filled with moments of unbelievable luck and opportunity. Living in Kyoto afforded me a freedom I've never known before. Having time and space to explore was wonderful.

I was thoroughly supported by the staff at Nichibunken, including my supervisor, Professor [Shōji Yamada](#), PhD candidate [Masumi Oishi](#), and Professor [Patricia Fister](#). I read so many books; the Nichibunken Library is cavernous and very well staffed. I regularly made models at the desk in my little apartment, eating okonomiyaki, serenaded by the cicadas.

My fieldwork in Beppu, southern part of Japan, also gave me far more than I could have hoped for. I had planned to meet three makers during my trip, I met 17 in all. I was very lucky to be guided by three very generous makers, [Jiro Yonezawa](#), [Kenichi Otani](#) and [Takayuki Shimizu](#), all of whom shared their time and their expertise. They invited me into their homes, their workshops, and their community. Jiro also asked me to join him at the 2016 Nitten Exhibition in Tokyo, where he introduced me to many great makers, including [Honma Hideaki](#), and the revered [Tokuzo Shono](#), son of the first Living National Treasure in bamboo arts, [Shounsai Shono](#).

To say that my journey was serendipitous and rich is an understatement; it was undoubtedly one of the best times of my life.

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

Don't hesitate to apply, in fact start the application now.

I am not fluent in Japanese, far from it, but as a practice researcher my language was weaving. If you don't speak Japanese well, don't let that stop you from applying. Explore and identify your own universal language. That said, the library at Nichibunken is excellent; I found many rare English language books.

Be proactive – set-up as many introductions as you can before you go - and be sure to include a formal translation. Be open, talk to people, persist, and use Google Translate if you need to. Random encounters will lead you to contacts with an interest in what you do, they will introduce you to others, and very quickly Japan will open up to you.

Plan your trip meticulously. Make sure you have the right visa in place, then double check it with the Japanese Embassy. Buy the longest Japan Rail pass you can afford. Book your accommodation early – Nichibunken is very reasonably priced, so save your IPS money for travel. Pack light, very light (you will discover new books). It is easy and affordable to send things back via Japan Post, so buy research materials, books, artefacts, and tools. Document your trip, every day, with photos.

When you arrive, abandon all your meticulous plans and follow the research. Submit to the journey.

PhD candidate Jo McCallum

Jo McCallum is a PhD candidate and transdisciplinary practice researcher based in London, United Kingdom. In late 2016 she spent four-months living and working as an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) International Placement Scheme (IPS) fellow at the [International Research Center for Japanese Studies](#) (Nichibunken), Kyoto, Japan. Whilst there, she researched the relationship between affect and environment in the craft of Japanese bamboo weaving. During her time in Japan, Jo completed extensive fieldwork with bamboo weavers, woodworkers and architects.

Jo is completing her PhD in the [Centre for Future Timber Structures](#), University of Queensland, Australia, but began her doctorate in the AHRC-funded [3D3 program](#). She is also a member of *FoAM - Grow your own worlds*, a transdisciplinary laboratory operating at the interstices of art, science, nature and everyday life.

In 2001, Jo graduated from the [School of Architecture, University of Queensland](#) with first class honours. She also holds a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in basket making, the last accreditation of its kind in the UK. For the past 17 years Jo has lived and worked in London, gaining professional experience in a range of sectors, including architecture, the arts, craft and policy development.

Instagram [@thefabricatedframe](#)

Twitter: [@fabricatedframe](#)



Vol. 028 Five things you should know about Japanese era names before the end of Heisei

Japan uses two calendar systems to count the number of years; the Gregorian calendar and the Japanese calendar. This year, 2018 is Heisei 30 according to the Japanese style. In May 2019, a new era name (nengō) is scheduled to be adopted under Japan's calendar system, ushered in with the abdication of Emperor Akihito and the enthronement of Crown Prince Naruhito.

For a thousand years, Japanese era names have been derived from Chinese classics. One of the important meanings behind era name changes is marking a fresh start—a kind of “resetting” of the calendar. We don't come across these kind of facts and traditions related to Japanese era names that often, so we asked Masaharu Mizukami, professor of Chuo University's Faculty of Letters to share with us some basics of Japanese era names as we approach the end of the Heisei era.



What is a Japanese era name?

A Japanese era name is a title used for numbering years in the Japanese calendar system. In the same way that parents choose names for children as a way of expressing their hope for their healthy growth, in Japan, era names (nengō) are chosen to mark the passage of time. This tradition has been maintained for over 1,300 years.

Era names first came into use in China during the Han dynasty (202–220 BC) to assert and raise the profile of the ruler of the time. When the practice was introduced to Japan, people started to devise era names for their own country, separately from those of the current Chinese rulers.

Do era names have to be made of two kanji characters? Looking at recent era names like Heisei (平成), Shōwa (昭和), and Taishō (大正), the majority seem to consist of two kanji characters.

No, not necessarily. Some eras, like Tenpyō kanpō (天平感宝) or Tenpyō shōhō (天平勝宝) from the Tenpyō period (729–749) consist of four kanji characters, showing that there was no rule limiting the number of characters. But the two-kanji tradition is indeed of long standing.

Do era-name changes always coincide with the enthronement of a new emperor?

Yes, currently it does. From the Meiji period (1868–1912) onwards, it became the rule to change era names only when a new emperor acceded to the throne—a system that is called issei ichigen (“one reign, one era name”). This practice started in China during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and was later adopted by Japan.

Until and including the Edo period (1603–1867), however, eras were commonly changed for reasons other than imperial enthronements. For instance, it was not unusual to rename an era to drive away bad luck and to signal a fresh start after a sequence of natural disasters.



Photo: Nengō kanmon (former Hirohashi family collection, currently in the collection of the National Museum of Japanese History, Muromachi Era [1333-1568], H-63-383-3) This is a copy of a nengō kanmon dated the 20th day of the 8th month, Daiei 8 (1528).

How are new era names decided?

Era names likely have been, and still are, decided by having several specialists propose new names and then holding discussions to narrow down the list of candidates. Not much information is available about how era names are decided today, so I'm not certain of the details, but that I believe is the general procedure

We do know that starting around the tenth century, new era names were decided by knowledgeable persons from several specific families that served the emperor's court, who were known as monjō hakase. They were civil officials with specialized knowledge of the Chinese classics, similar to present-day university professors.

When deciding a new era name, each monjō hakase would submit a text called nengō kanmon, containing a candidate name and a passage of the Chinese classic on which the name was based. High-ranking officials of the court would then hold a

discussion, called nanchin, to determine which name was most appropriate.

Precedent was important in these nanchin discussions. Some kanji characters would be ruled out because it was part of an era name during which unfortunate events occurred; other kanji would be avoided because of negative connotations of some sort. The candidate name remaining after the discussion would be reported to the emperor and be officially adopted.

The era name Heisei is said to have been derived from two Chinese classics, Shiki (Ch. Shiji; The Records of the Grand Historian) and Shokyō (Shujing; The Book of Documents), wishing for peace in Japan and overseas as well as in heaven and on earth. Have the Chinese classics always been cited for era names?

No. For instance, the Reiki (靈龜) era (715–717) was named after a good omen—the sighting of a rare turtle (龜) . Another era name, Wadō (和銅) era (708–715) came from the discovery of copper (銅) . When era names first came into use, they apparently were not rooted in the Chinese classics.

I believe that citing from Chinese classics became essential with the accumulation of more era name precedents and as the name-deciding procedures mentioned earlier became well established. China was far more advanced than Japan at that time and its writing system and literature carried great authority. Therefore, the fact that a certain era name was derived from a highly respected Chinese classic would verify that particular era name. That must have been the thinking that led to the naming of Japanese eras from Chinese classics.

Lately we sometimes see news reports speculating that the new era following Heisei might be named not only from Chinese classics but also from Japanese classics raising discussions about changing the tradition of era naming. While studying records of nanchin discussions from the Edo period recently, I actually discovered evidence where Nihon shoki (The Chronicle of Japan) is cited as evidence to justify an era name.

In this sense, rooting era names in Japanese classics is not something completely new and there is ample possibility that Japanese texts might be cited for the next era name. Considering the various changes that have taken place in era-naming procedures over the centuries, such as how it became the norm to rely on the Chinese classics or to change era names only when new emperors come to power, citing the Chinese classics may no longer be essential after Heisei.



We might witness a transitional moment—a turning point in the history of Japanese era names and their renewal procedures—if a text written in Japanese is actually cited for the new era name.

Masaharu Mizukami / Professor, Faculty of Letters, Chuo University

Specializing in Chinese philosophy, Mizukami's primary research interests are the study of historical documents and artifacts of the Qing dynasty in China. A native of Hokkaido, he graduated from the Faculty of Letters, Hokkaido University and went on to complete his master's degree in the Graduate School of Letters, Hokkaido University. After completing the coursework for the doctoral degree, he became research assistant and then assistant professor in the Faculty of Letters, Hokkaido University. He also served as associate professor and professor in the Faculty of Education, University of the Ryukyus before assuming his current position in 2015.



Interviewer: Ayumi Koso



Vol. 029 Arts and Humanities Research Council International Placement Scheme alumni gathered in Tokyo

The depictions of Tokyo in a film, urban shrines, art festivals and modern Japanese poetry were the topics discussed at the second AHRC ([Arts and Humanities Research Council](#)) IPS ([International Placement Scheme](#)) alumni gathering at the National Institute for the Humanities on the afternoon of Monday, September 3, 2018.

Simone Shu-Yeng Chung, assistant professor of the National University of Singapore's Department of Architecture among other topics presented part of her PhD work where she retraced the steps of Tokyo, as depicted in the Japanese film *Café Lumière* (2003). The film is an urban travelogue of Tokyo, directed by Taiwanese film director Hou Hsiao-hsien. Chung was inspired by Japanese architect Kon Wajirō's hand-drawn sketches in *Seikatsu-gaku: Kon Wajirō Collection Volume 5* (1971) that visualize how space, such as the kitchen of a Japanese farmer's house, is used over time by the people occupying that space.

In her thesis, she managed to reconstruct the protagonist's apartment room by just analyzing the film and the city image of Tokyo from the protagonist's commute and travel on trains. Interestingly, the city image was centered around the Yamanote line, as most travelers to Tokyo become acquainted with the city through the Yamanote line.

[Andrew Houwen](#), associate professor of Tokyo Woman's Christian University's Department of English, talked about his experience in Japan as a PhD student. The three-month visit brought about an artistic and creative aspect to his research activities. As part of his PhD thesis, Houwen examined the modern reception of Japanese poetry and during his visit, he came across many collections of and secondary literature on the post-war Japanese poet Naka Tarō. He also met [Chikako Nihei](#), assistant professor of Yamaguchi University's Faculty of Global and Science Studies, with whom he now closely collaborates. The two quickly got together to start a project – the translation of Naka's poems into English – and continued to work on it after Houwen went back to the UK to finish his PhD. After almost 5 years, Houwen and Nihei have been able to produce a book out of their project this July: *Music* ([Isobar Press, 2018](#)), is a selection of their English translations of Naka's poems.

The speakers and participants had good discussions on topics such as how the popularity of destinations like Naoshima, an island in the Setouchi Sea, differs between domestic and international tourists as well as the discrepancy in visibility of internationally renowned architects, and about “traditional” Japanese-style weddings that actually do not have a long history and how the style formalized in the way we see it today around the Meiji period.

Every year, since 2009, the NIHU institutes have invited PhD students or early-career researchers in UK universities and organizations to do research for a period of 3 to 6 months as part of the collaboration between the NIHU and the [AHRC in the UK](#). Over 25 academics have used this scheme to visit Japan to collect data, find materials, do fieldwork and more. The AHRC IPS alumni gathering tries to connect the previous IPS fellows to create a network of scholars interested in Japan studies and exchange information on doing research in Japan. The first AHRC IPS alumni gathering was held in February 2018.





Vol. 030 Five things you should know about Expos, now that Osaka has won the bid to host the 2025 World Expo

Japan has won the bid to bring the 2025 World Expo to an island called Yumeshima in Osaka, a major city in the western part of the country. Final presentations were given on November 23, 2018 in Paris at the headquarters of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), which supervises and regulates the World Expos. Osaka ran against Ekaterinburg, in central Russia, and Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, to host the 2025 World Expo.

Having won the bid, Osaka will be hosting the World Expo for the second time, 55 years after the first Osaka Expo in 1970. So how are World Expos different from the business fairs or trade fairs often held by corporate entities? And how long have Expos been going on? We asked Mayuko Sano, professor of Kyoto University's Graduate School of Education, to share with us the history of international exhibitions and their significance in today's context.



Please tell us about the nature of World Expos.

Expos are organized by states and are the only official events of the international community where countries are invited through diplomatic channels. The BIE, established in 1931, sanctions Expos on the basis of a multilateral treaty signed in 1928 (Convention Relating to International Exhibitions).

The story goes that the first Expo held in London in 1851 came about on the initiative of Prince Albert, prince consort of Queen Victoria. What was the motive behind early Expos? Were they intended to show off the advanced technology of the British Empire?

No, apparently the initial motive was simpler. Expos are often described as venues meant to advance national prestige in imperialistic terms—which, of course, may have been true in certain times. But the minutes of the London Expo (“The Great Exhibition”) planners’ meetings show that they were interested in arranging for a bold and large exhibition and the showcasing of a variety of goods. So initially, I believe the driving force behind early Expos was a desire to learn about the world as well as to bring in and appreciate artifacts, to place them on exhibit, and introduce them to people. Gathering goods from around the world and demonstrating industrial achievements or the latest technologies naturally led to the boosting of national prestige. That’s how I see it.

Eighty years after the inaugural 1851 Expo in London, Expos came to be based on an international convention. Why did that change come about?

Reading records from those times, it seems that Expo insiders were eager to differentiate their events from commercial trade fairs. In the early days, states had been the only entities that could handle such a large event—involving gathering and exhibiting items from around the globe—both in terms of economic power and human resources. Gradually, private actors, too, gained the capability to hold similar events particularly for commercial purposes. Eventually governments signed an international convention aiming to establish Expos as an official, non-commercial institution.

The Expo 1970 Osaka was the first-ever Expo that was held in Japan. Were there any efforts before that to host an Expo in Japan?

Yes, there were. One such effort was made during the Meiji era (1868–1912). Sometime later, a more substantive plan was launched for an Expo to be held in 1940 in Tokyo, but it never happened as the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) broke out. Preparations for the 1940 Expo had reached the point of placing admission tickets on sale. As it happened, the organizers decided to “postpone” this Expo instead of canceling it. The happy outcome of that decision was that the ticket holders for the 1940 Expo were allowed to enter the 1970 Expo. To learn more about the 1940 Expo, I encourage people to refer to the book chapter (photo below) by my colleague Kazushige Mashimaya in our volume *Bankoku hakurankai to ningen no rekishi [Expos and Human History]*.



Expo 1970 Osaka
(CCBY-SA2.0 m-louis)

The 1970 Osaka Expo was the first Expo hosted in Asia. In retrospect, what was the historical significance of that event?

In my view, each Expo reflects the structure of the international community and its issues of the time; the Expo 1970 Osaka vividly reflected structural changes in the international community. In the 1960s and 1970s, a large number of former colonies achieved independence and significantly boosted the number of nation-states in the world. In other words, there emerged a significant number of potential hosts and new official Expo participants.

It was amid such times that former British protectorate Canada hosted an Expo in Montreal in 1967 and an Expo was brought to Osaka for the first time in Asia in 1970. As the Osaka Expo theme—“Progress and Harmony for Mankind”— suggests, the rise of new nations was about to dramatically change the world, which had been controlled by a limited number of the Great Powers. It is thus important to place the Expo 1970 Osaka in the context of world history, although previous discussions have emphasized its significance as marking Japan’s economic development and joining the group of advanced nations.

The Expo 1970 Osaka was also notable for the role it played in developing talented young people who have been driving forces in various sectors of Japan since then. It offered opportunities for many of today’s best-known Japanese artists, architects, fashion designers and other professionals, early in their careers to establish their reputations.

Bringing the Expo 2025 again to Osaka will be an occasion for younger members of Japanese society to get involved in preparations, thereby gaining platforms and opportunities for fulfilling their potential. I have great hopes that hosting this Expo will bring about leaders who will direct and inspire the country for the rest of the twenty-first century.



Expos always vividly reflect the global political structure, says Professor Sano. In recent years we have seen the rise of U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration and the decision by the UK, where the Expos began, to leave the European Union. There is a growing trend toward protectionism, with countries prioritizing their own profit and prosperity over that of other nations or

the international community. All eyes are on what kind of world will be portrayed in the Expo Dubai 2020, Buenos Aires 2023, and Osaka-Kansai 2025.



Front cover of the book *Bankoku hakurankai to ningen no rekishi [Expos and Human History]* (SANO Mayuko ed., Shibunkaku, 2015). The publication is a product of a joint research Professor Sano has been conducting since 2010 with interdisciplinary scholars from Japan and overseas, and various professionals who are involved in the planning and organization of Expos.

Mayuko Sano, Professor, Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University / Visiting Professor, International Research Center for Japanese Studies

Specializing in the cultural history of diplomacy, Sano has a particular interest in international expositions. She received her



MPhil (in International Relations) from the University of Cambridge and PhD from the University of Tokyo. After serving on the staff of the Japan Foundation and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), she was associate professor at Shizuoka University of Art and Culture and the International Research Center for Japanese Studies before assuming her current position in 2018. *Bankoku hakurankai to ningen no rekishi [Expos and Human History]* (SANO Mayuko ed., Shibunkaku, 2015) is a product of the joint research she has been conducting since 2010 with interdisciplinary scholars from Japan and overseas, and various professionals who are involved in the planning and organization of Expos.

Text: Ayumi Koso

Details of Osaka-Kansai World Expo
 Period: May 3 - November 3, 2025
 Venue: Yumeshima (155 ha), Osaka
 Theme: Designing Future Society for Our Lives

*The 1970 World Expo in Osaka is the only event thus far regarded as a large-scale International Registered Exhibition (called “General Exhibitions” at the time). Expos consist of two types: International Registered Exhibitions and International Recognized Exhibitions. Which category a particular Expo falls under is decided comprehensively based on the elements such as the duration of the event and the size of the venue. The 2025 World Expo in Osaka, Kansai will be categorized as an International Registered Exhibition.

World Expos previously held in Japan

Japan World Exposition Osaka 1970
 Theme: Progress and Harmony for Mankind

International Garden and Greenery Exposition, Osaka, Japan, 1990
 Theme: The Harmonious Coexistence of Nature and Mankind

International Ocean Exposition, Okinawa 1975
 Theme: The Sea We Would Like to See

EXPO 2005, Aichi, Japan
 Theme: Nature's Wisdom

International Exhibition, Tsukuba Japan 1985
 Theme: Dwellings and Surroundings – Science and Technology for Man at Home



Inter-University Research Institute Corporation
**National Institutes
for the Humanities**