

# ht

 Inside

# Oshougatsu

# Chinese New Year





9



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All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, musings, poetry, prose and any ideas to improve the Hyogo Times for the betterment of the Hyogo JET community.

Submit by the 15th of each month to: [publications@hyogo.ajet.net](mailto:publications@hyogo.ajet.net)

Visit us online!

## Message from the Editor

### Hey again Hyogo

Well, winter may not be over, but the worst is, so here's to rising temperatures and melting snow (... for those of us who'd rather sweat than shiver)! Got some good stuff for you this issue, hope you'll find it agreeable. Though the winter was cold, verily it was full of many events; so many, in fact, that we're going to have to save some for the next issue (be eager!). The travel featured this month (Miyajima!) is one of my personal favorites, and some of the photos in this issue are absolutely killer. If you want to leave feedback (or attempt to answer the Maigo In Hyogo challenge), stop by the Hyogo Times website and leave a comment!

Still working on improving the Hyogo Times, as always, so if you have anything you want to see (or contribute), you know where to find me. As it happens, we are still strapped for "Getting to Know Random JETs" profiles, so do us a favor and share yourself!

We are now taking submissions (experimentally at first) for a JET classified section, so if you are trying to hawk something, or find yourself searching for an object you think other JETs might have, give us an email, and we'll see what we can do.

We're also accepting submissions of active Hyogo bloggers to create a Hyogo blogroll on the HT website! If you write, link us up!

As always, if you have events going on, let us get them on the calendar for you! The calendar is updated regularly on the Hyogo Times website: [www.hyogoajet.net/hyogotimes/hyogo-times-events-calendar](http://www.hyogoajet.net/hyogotimes/hyogo-times-events-calendar).

Otherwise, try to keep your wits about you as you as winter pretends to end early...

Let the good times roll,

*Lemmon*



## Message from the PR

### Hello all!

Welcome to March!  
Everybody have their plans for Golden Week?

This is the time of year when I start going a little stir crazy. The warm weather starts coming in, but you never know if it's coming to stay or just being a big tease. Let's hope it moves in early this year!

As many of you may now know, the Sumo event in Osaka has unfortunately been cancelled. But never fear! There's always something interesting going on in Japan-land. The first two weeks in March, Nara will be celebrating Omizutori, which is a water festival celebrating the beginning of spring and cleansing of sins. Also, be on the lookout for blossoms! While the famous cherry blossoms don't come around until April, earlier blooms such as the lovely plum should be starting to make their appearance.

We are looking for location ideas for upcoming AJET events. If you have a favorite restaurant, museum, park, beach, hiking trail, or anything in your area that you want to share with others, please let us know! We want to make sure we aren't always having events in the same places, and we would love to help you plan and get the word out about your event.

Finally, anyone who has an interest in being more involved during their time on JET, we're currently looking



for new recruits for Hyogo AJET PR! If you're even mildly interested and/or have any questions, please send us an email at [pr@hyogo.ajet.net](mailto:pr@hyogo.ajet.net). Even if you're not interested in a "full time" position, we're always looking for people who are interested in planning the occasional event and helping us get all of Hyogo involved.

Cheers,

*Sarah Lewis*

## Message from the Online Editor

### Dear Hyogo,

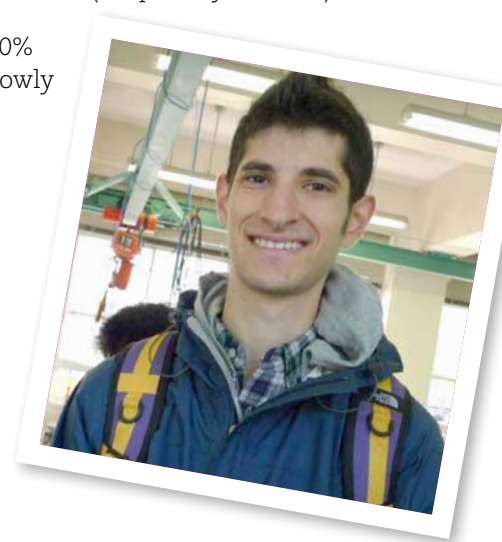
How has your month been? It's been a busy few weeks for the Hyogo Times' new site – already we're up to almost a thousand hits, and that's just site visits. For individual page loads the number is closer to 3000! We've been uploading new articles, adding features, fixing bugs, and changing the design around, among other things.

You might notice that not all of this month's articles are on the site yet. The reason is that we're staggering their release. Only by the end of March, for example, will you be able to find all of March's articles on the site. This will not only encourage people to check out the PDF, but also give casual readers new articles to find on a regular basis. While we're on the

topic of things not appearing, I'll also mention that the Random JET feature is staying exclusively in the PDF (for privacy reasons).

We're not at 100% yet but we're slowly getting there. Thank you for your patience as we work to make a site we can all be proud of.

*Jonathan Shalfi*



## Useful information

### HYOGO PAs

078-362-3026

Mail: [hyogo\\_pa@yahoo.com](mailto:hyogo_pa@yahoo.com)

URL: [www.hyogoajet.net/wiki/Living\\_Guide](http://www.hyogoajet.net/wiki/Living_Guide)

### JETLINE

03-5213-1729

Call the JETLINE and talk to a CLAIR Programme Coordinator about anything you like. We are former JETs, and can answer most questions regarding the programme, and will try to help with any issues or questions you have regarding the workplace, or life in Japan. Hours are Monday – Friday, 9am – 6pm Japan Standard Time.

### AJET PSG

050-5534-5566

Need to talk? Call the AJET Peer Support Group, a free, anonymous listening and referral service for JETs by JETs, every night of the year from 8pm – 7am.

### TELL (Tokyo English Life Line)

03-5774-0992

Call the Life Line for free, anonymous, and confidential telephone counseling from 9am to 11pm, 365 days a year. Trained volunteers can offer counseling and support, as well as information on a broad range of English-speaking services in Japan.



## Shodo Basics

In my article last May, entitled My tutelage in Japanese graffiti, aka Shodo, I gave a very brief introduction to Japanese calligraphy, and some points on brush stroke principles and techniques. This time I want to introduce and describe some of the basic styles of shodo, and highlight their differences.

I have been practicing three different styles of shodo for over two years. Two of them change as the difficulty level increases; usually more difficulty means the characters and writing style become more cursive, and thus harder to read. The kanji style I currently practice is gyosho, semi-cursive, while the kana I practice is basically a cursive style of hiragana writing, using older hiragana characters. The third, and my favorite style, shinwayo is a free style which includes both kana and kanji in cursive style. All three require different brushes, with the kana needing to be written on super thin paper.

Subject matter also differs: kanji, as it originated from China, uses mostly older Chinese characters which Japan does not use. At the basic level, it is 4 kanji characters written from top to bottom, right to left. As difficulty increases, so does the number of kanji, and

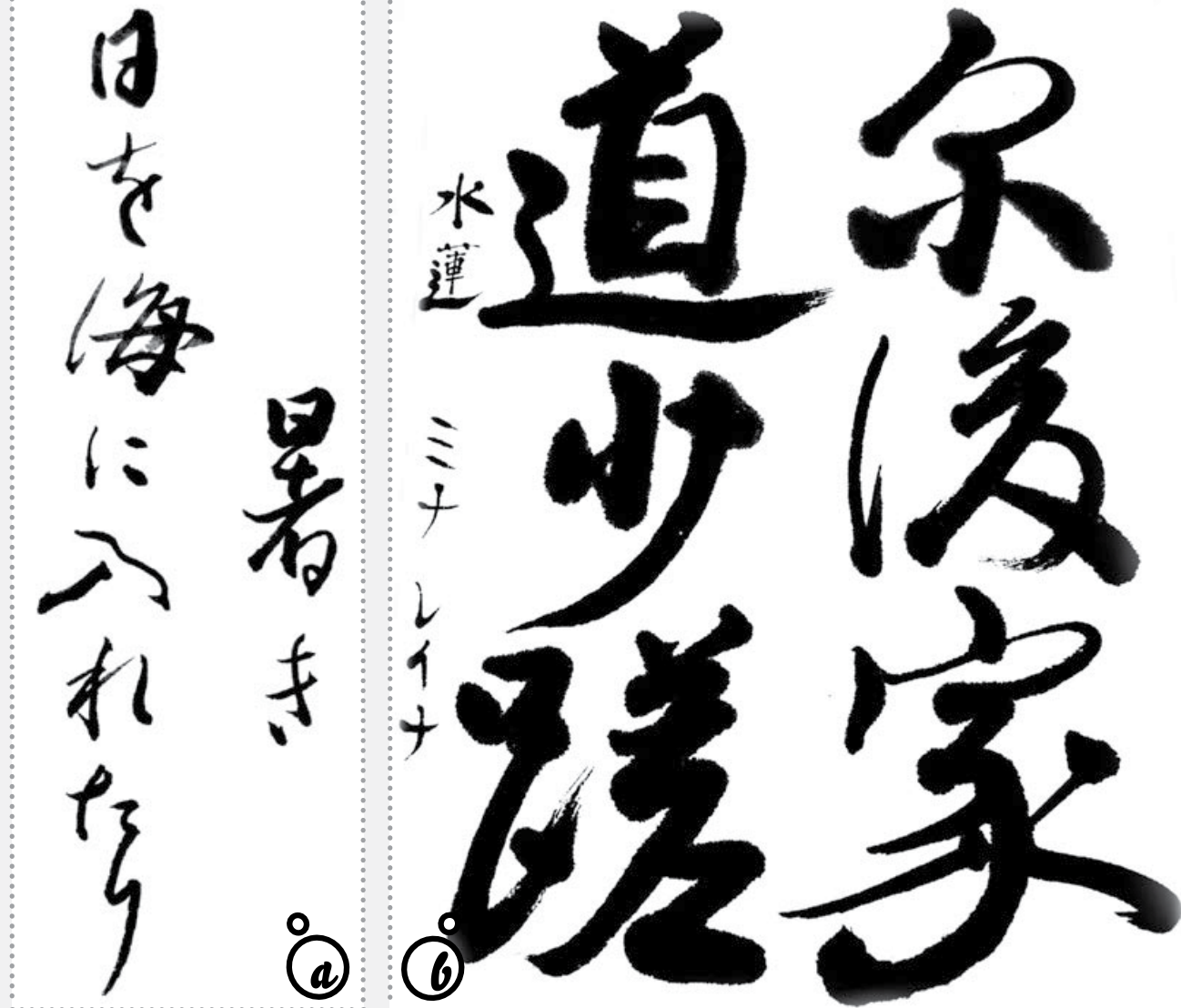
balance becomes more difficult to control. Kana subject matter is most famously known to be hand-written letters, but can also include poetry like waka and haiku. What is most difficult about kana is that the characters are almost a continuous, fluid line, each letter continuing into the next character and following the flow of stroke order. This means that you hardly lift your brush off the paper, from the first letter at the beginning of the line of the waka or haiku, to the bottom of the page, which makes brush pressure and flow more challenging to control.

Darker and using less ink, almost dry sumi (India ink) is more beautiful. A popular subject matter of shinwayo is haiku which has both soft fluid kana paired with oddly shaped, simplified kanji. Larger and less symmetrical, shinwayo style looks best with dark ink as well as “kasure” style, having the line fade as the ink runs out. Kanji is always dark and clean. Too much water in the sumi means splotches and the paper absorbs too much, bleeding out the lines you’ve made. The most difficult point for all three is the balance. Many calligraphers say you must visualize how you will form your characters and where you will

arrange them before touching your brush to the paper. This is an example of how Zen Buddhism uses calligraphy to clear the mind: having a single chance to create and execute a work perfectly, otherwise known as hitsuzendo. This is why the enso, the famous circle of enlightenment known in zen calligraphy, is so difficult to achieve, and also an example of the importance of the artistry in writing the characters in addition to the meaning of the kanji.

This is why before Japanese tea ceremonies, it is essential to pause while seated in seiza and contemplate the shodo and ikebana altar, to clear one’s mind to prepare to receive the tea.

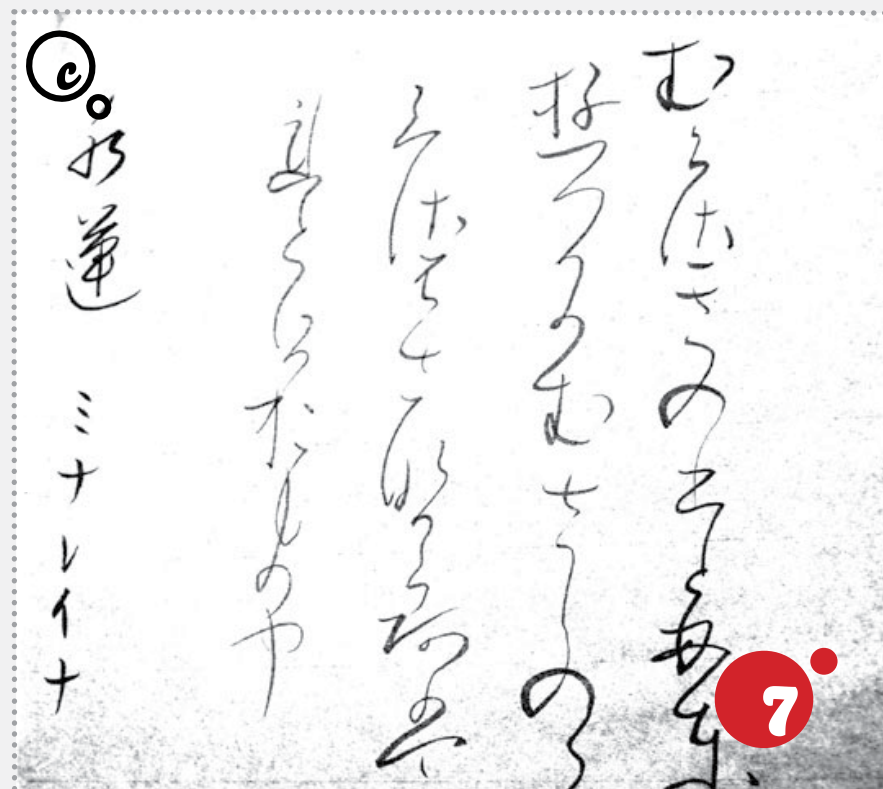
Japanese calligraphy has become an art form that has spread amongst many bodies of work. Since its Chinese origins, Japanese calligraphy has developed and branched out, creating new styles including both older characters and simplified ones. Most artistic calligraphy cannot be clearly read except by a skilled or experienced eye. These days, you can see Japanese calligraphy done in various mediums and oeuvres, from



street artists asking passers-by for inspiration, modern artists’ eccentric oeuvres using kanji in different perspectives and arrangements. The largest and most important difference from Western calligraphy is that kanji imparts meaning, and sometimes more than one, which is useful to an artist’s commentary.

Raena Mina

Photographs:  
A: Shinwayo  
B: Kanji  
C: Kana





Hehe...

## Life After the B.O.E.

BY DAVID NAMISATO (AOMORI-KEN CIR, 2002-04)



### The Lifer

#### About David Namisato

David Namisato is an illustrator in Toronto, Canada, and a former CIR (Ajigasawa-machi, Aomori-ken, 2002-04).

David's recent projects include children's picture book, *Fly Catcher Boy* written by Rebecca Kool and published by Gumboot Books, *Gabe and Allie in Race Through*

*Time*, a time travelling Canadian history comic appearing in *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*, illustrating Archie characters for trading card company 5finity Productions, and of course the monthly *Life After the B.O.E.* comic.

[www.lifeaftertheboe.com](http://www.lifeaftertheboe.com)

Paul Schuble's

### I-word play

まい  
1000枚の  
は  
葉っぱが  
ある場所  
はしょ  
はどこ  
でしょう?

Answer: 千葉 (ちば)

"What place has  
a thousand leaves?"

The answer is the  
Japanese prefecture  
Chiba, because it's kanji  
(千葉) mean thousand  
and leaf, respectively.

Travel Japan!

Miyajima.....



## Miyajima, Hiroshima-ken

### Miyajima is one of the Nihon

Sankei, one of the three most scenic places in Japan, and is definitely my favourite place. Miyajima is situated just outside Hiroshima and is reached by ferry. The ferry takes only about 10 minutes and you can soon see what the island is most famous for – the giant red torii (shrine gate) floating in the water.

The torii being in the water means that the whole island is sacred, as the gate symbolises the entrance to the island. Itsukushima shrine is also situated over the water facing the floating torii. The torii appears to be floating, and it really is, as it isn't fully secured to the sea floor, just balancing. At high tide, you can see the torii floating, and water under the Itsukushima shrine. When the tide is low, you can walk right out to the torii. I recommend viewing the torii at both high and low tides, and Itsukushima shrine is best visited at high tide.

There are many souvenir shops on the island where you can buy some reasonably priced souvenirs and beautiful wooden products. Momiji manju are the local speciality, soft bread filled with red sweet beans all in the shape of an autumn leaf. If red beans aren't your favourite, there are plenty of others to choose from – I tried chocolate, custard, green tea, and banana. If you'd like to bring something back for your co-workers or friends, they will love these momiji manju, and will immediately know where you visited!

I love trying local foods in the places I visit, and Miyajima is no exception. I ate many oysters (kaki), as they are a local food; on Miyajima there are many stalls selling fresh barbecued oysters. I also ate them fried at a restaurant. Miyajima being part of Hiroshima-ken also means Hiroshima style okonomiyaki, which is slightly different

from Osaka style, as it has noodles inside along with normal toppings – I had oyster! The momiji manju are delicious and it is worth trying a few different flavours. I also tried deep fried momiji manju – delicious!

There are many festivals held on Miyajima during the year. I was lucky to visit once during the oyster festival which is held in February. My friends visited Miyajima during the fireworks festival in August, and their photos were amazing with fireworks behind the torii.

Mt Misen is the tallest mountain on the island and can be reached by two connecting ropeways for ¥1800 return. There is a free bus to take you to the first ropeway station leaving from behind the shrine, just follow the signs in English. It takes about 5 minutes to get to the ropeway station and then 15 minutes each way. Once

you reach the last station, if you feel like hiking, it is about an hour to the top of the mountain. Even if you just walk around at the last ropeway station, the views of the islands are amazing, and in winter you can see many monkeys. Sadly, when I have visited in summer and early autumn, there have been no monkeys around.

To stay overnight in Miyajima is very romantic. As the sun sets behind the torii and the day tourists leave, it becomes much quieter and more peaceful. Wild deer roam the island during the day and sleep on the walkways at night. We stayed in a convenient and well priced ryokan which had both Japanese and western rooms. The only problem with staying is that there is only one small general store which isn't open late, and many other stores and restaurants close early when the tourists go home. However we found a few okonomiyaki restaurants and a small izakaya that stayed open later. The other option is to eat at your ryokan. There is also a camp ground on the island called Miyajima Tsutsumigaura Camp-jo. From the pier you can take a bus to the campsite 10 minutes away. There is a shop, bath, showers, toilets, and a covered cooking area. Just watch out for the wild animals,

especially deer which love to eat anything and everything!

Miyajima is a place to enjoy in any season and I definitely recommend a visit to this beautiful island.

### Where to stay

#### Yamaichi Bekkan Ryokan

- From ¥7875 per person per night (depending on the season)
- Breakfast is ¥1050 (western or Japanese style) Dinner ranges from ¥3700 up to ¥8400
- <http://yamaichibekkan.com/english.html> 082-944-0700

There are many other ryokans on the island that vary greatly in price. It can get very busy in peak seasons so it is best to book ahead.

#### Miyajima Tsutsumigaura Camp-jo

- Camping is ¥300 per person. You can also rent tents (¥2060 to ¥3360) or cabins (¥14,830 to ¥49,440)
- (082) 944-2903

### How to get there

We drove there, which takes about 3½ hours from Himeji, and around ¥4100 in tolls if you are driving a kei car.

#### Trains from Himeji

The shinkansen takes 1 hour from Himeji to Hiroshima, then a train to Miyajimaguchi takes 25 minutes - total cost = ¥8400 (one way)

The local train takes about 5 hours (depending on times) from Himeji to Hiroshima, then a train to Miyajimaguchi takes 25 minutes – total cost = ¥4700 (one way)

Ferries run up to ten times an hour; last ferry returns at 10:40pm. ¥170 one way.

Lauren McRae



## Border Troubles *Japan vs. Korea/China/Taiwan/Russia*

**There is an old proverb that** “fences make good neighbors.” A fence plus a large body of water in between would seem to make even better neighbors, but in Japan’s experience this has not been the case. An archipelago nation consisting of literally thousands of islands, Japan is embroiled in three island ownership disputes with its neighbors: Korea, China/Taiwan, and Russia. The contested islands may be small in size – and in some cases devoid of human life – but control over the islands brings political and economic payoffs that are huge.

Rather than closely inspecting the competing ownership claims, let us instead briefly examine the recent history of the disputes and their current state. For each disputed territory, the Japanese name will be used (but the naming convention favored by the disputing party will be presented in parenthesis, followed by the English name).

### **Takeshima**

**(Dokdo, Liancourt Rocks)**  
**Korea vs. Japan**

Takeshima is a group of small islets located in the Sea of Japan (or East Sea, from the Korean

perspective). After the liberation of Korea at the end of World War II, the then ruler of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, established the “Rhee Line” which delineated Korea’s maritime borders and included Takeshima inside those borders. Japan protested and many tense years followed as South Korean patrol boats confronted Japanese fishing vessels resulting in several arrests and in some cases the deaths of Japanese fishermen. The US – not wishing to put itself in the middle of a fight between two close allies – refused to get involved and it took several years for the two countries to defuse the violent encounters, with the sovereignty issue being left unsettled. As of today, South Korea maintains physical possession over the islets.

### **Senkaku Retto**

**(Diaoyutai, Pinnacle Islands)**  
**China/Taiwan vs. Japan**

The Senkaku islands are uninhabited islands located in the East China Sea, physically close to Taiwan, mainland China, and Okinawa. At the end of World War II the islands were part of a group of islands, including Okinawa, occupied and

administered by the United States military. At the time it was very much American soil. The U.S. dollar was used as currency and cars drove on the right side. Eventually, the U.S. military governorship was dissolved and the Okinawan islands, including the Senkaku Retto, were handed back to Japan. The territory near the island is rich in fishing and natural gas resources.

In September of this year an incident occurred near the islands involving a collision between a Japanese Coast Guard patrol vessel and a Chinese fishing boat. The Chinese boat and its crew were detained and its captain arrested. After strong protests from the Chinese government the vessel and all of its crewmen were eventually released. The episode sparked a series of anti-Japan demonstrations inside China. Back in Japan, the government’s refusal to release video of the incident led to fierce internal criticism and eventually the video was leaked onto YouTube, further inflaming public sentiment and weakening Prime Minister Kan’s support. The United States has again refused to take any side in the sovereignty dispute,

though Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that the US views its mutual security treaty with Japan as applying to the Senkaku islands.

Of the three disputes this is the only one where Japan holds the advantage of physical possession. Some analysts have noted that beyond the fishing and gas resources to be gained, China is eager to use the dispute as a means of extending their naval power in the Pacific. The ultimate aim is thought to be the withdrawal of American naval and air power from the region and the establishment of a political/economic ocean boundary well west of Japan behind which China will retain de facto administrative power vis-à-vis the Chinese Navy.



### **Hoppô Ryôdo**

**(Kuril'skie ostrova, Kuril Islands)**  
**Russia vs. Japan**

The Northern Territories (Hoppô Ryôdo) are four islands located very close to the northeast corner of Hokkaido. They are a part of the Chishima Retto (Kuril island chain) which runs all the way from Hokkaido to the Kamchatka peninsula. The islands were occupied by the Soviet Union at the end of World War II and Russia retains control over them presently. At face this appears to be the one most readily solvable of the three disputes, but a final solution has remained elusive.

Russia has offered to return two of the smaller islands in exchange for settling the dispute but Japan continues to press for the return of all four. Soon after the Senkaku incident, one of the islands was visited by Russian President Medvedev, which drew a strong rebuke by the Japanese government. In an interesting historical footnote, a permanent peace treaty ending World War II between Japan and Russia has never been concluded in part due to this territorial dispute.

*Colin Fukai*





## News from your National AJET Rep!

### Hey Hyogo JETs, hope your

winter vacations have been great! Now, I know all the ski trips, Valentine's chocolate, naked men melées and graduation ceremonies are wrapping up, but check out what's happening this month in Block 6!

We have a fundraiser this month. Conveniently named "March of Dimes," the plan is simple:

- **March 1:** start collecting ¥10 coins (and get your friends, coworkers and well-wishers to donate!)
- **March 31:** count up your money and send it in to be donated

### See? Simple.

### The good kind of simple.

To spice this up a little bit, those participating in the fundraiser are encouraged to join the "march" up Inari Mountain on Saturday March 12 (yup, you see where I'm going with this). Once we finish the 4km walking course, we will have dinner in Higashiyama and take a more leisurely stroll to see the lanterns in the Gion area. If you live far away or your legs are too gelatinous to take you straight home, you can join the group going to SPA WORLD! If you've never been, just imagine an onsen-version of Disneyland or USJ but smaller-scale, cheaper, and way more relaxing. Sorry, no light parades, but if you're going on the lantern tour you'll be covered.

Proceeds will go to Baan Unrak Children's Village, the cornerstone of Go M.A.D. (Make A Difference). It's a wonderful orphanage in rural Thailand that aims to be as self-sufficient as possible – the children help to grow their own food and take care of animals (they even have a puppy nursery) – but the majority of expenses come from health and medical care. Because the children are not legally considered Thai citizens, health care workers demand a lot of money just to visit the orphanage and see them. I was honoured to volunteer with other JETs this past Christmas at Baan Unrak, which is why I decided to do this fundraiser for this particular organization. Go M.A.D. is an international web-based organization founded and run by teachers on the JET Programme and their Japanese friends. E-mail me to register for this fundraiser!

In the National AJET Council world, we are currently drafting surveys for the Opinion Exchange this spring with CLAIR and the three ministries (MEXT, MIC, MOFA). Please keep your eyes open for those, especially if you're a senior high ALT – the "[Teaching] English in English (working title)" survey will need your input. We are also looking for awesome Japanese teachers, friends, and colleagues to reward

for dedication to increasing international awareness within their communities. The AJET Teaching Awards and Internationalisation Awards Programmes will accept nominations until April 2; fill out the forms and nominate people you know!

And for those of you who have fewer classes and more free time to peruse the Interanet, check out the Aussie National AJET Group on Facebook and the brand-spanking new forum at that lists all of AJET's Special Interest Groups. New groups include Writers, Muslims in Japan, and Japanese Religion and Meditation.

That's all from me for now. Stay warm everyone, keep drinking lots of miso soup and matcha tea. Spring is just around the corner... isn't it? Shoot. I wasn't paying attention on Groundhog Day; I got too wrapped up thinking about the movie. Ah you'll be fine. Soup and tea.

### Sifton Anipare

Block6@ajet.net

*Sifton is the 2010-11 National AJET Representative for Block 6 (Hyogo, Kyoto and Shiga). She currently resides in Kobe and lives on bubble tea and a secret stash of Tim Horton's coffee from home. Her reactions during suspenseful TV shows, movies and anecdotes are rumoured to be quite entertaining.*

## Maigo in Hyogo

**If you run around Japan long enough you're bound to see or hear about this store, but in this photo it's the building itself that's important. What used to be here before American-man-size clothing?**

(that's your hint >:D)



## Christmas Ramen

### My brother came out over

Christmas break, which mainly achieved two things:

- It completely destroyed any hope I had of migrating to warmer climates for the two weeks.
- It gave me an excuse to do a lot of ramen-related traveling in the Kansai region.

In the short time he was here, we managed to visit five ramen-related establishments, including the Momfuku Ando Instant Ramen Museum. Since I've already written about three of the places (Ippudo, Jalan Viva Rock, and Jalan: the Original), I'll limit this to new stuff.

I've written in previous issues about the ramen fair on the 10th floor of the Kyoto Station ESTA (where Tsukemen TETSU is still one of my favorite *tsukemen* places), but my bro had never been there. Despite being in a prefecture known for a style all its own, we opted for a *tonkotsu* ramen chain, located out of Hakata, called Ikkousha

(博多一幸舎). A quick glance at the menu revealed a tasty looking black sesame seed version, as well as one of the most ridiculous *chashu-men* bowls I'd ever seen. Many places offer *chashu-men*, which is your base ramen with extra pork, but some take it to extremes. Ikkousha is one such place. They blanket the ramen in thin strips of the stuff, effectively cutting off the rest of the bowl from view.

The soup at Ikkousha is what you'd expect from a proper Hakata chain good enough to be featured in the Kyoto Station Ramen Park. It's chock full of flavor without being overwhelming, and really compliments the noodles and toppings. A fine, fine bowl, but not unlike other major Hakata chains, such as Ippudo.

The Momofuku Ando Instant Ramen Museum is a tribute to the man who invented instant ramen, a true pioneer and savior to poor college students everywhere.

If you've ever eaten instant noodles either in a cup or in a block, you've tasted the fruits of this man's labor.

There's a mockup of his old house, information on how he first developed his process, and an example of every cup ramen every made by Nissin. You can also take a virtual tour of the process as if you were a noodle, watch old commercials, and learn about how they developed cup ramen for space travel. Perhaps the coolest corner is the do-it-yourself cup ramen. You purchase a cup, design it, and proceed to fill it with your choice of ingredients. Unfortunately, it was the holidays and there were about a hundred kids running around while their parents waited in line, causing a wait of up to an hour. We said nuts to that, and went on our way, but I still want to make my own cup ramen one day.

Andrew Tamashiro



## The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

by Junot Díaz

### Yes.

That is the first thought that comes to mind when I think of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. The second thought? F\*\*K yes. I don't know if it was the cursing in the book, the overdose of attitude, or the look into a family that

*"Ghetto-nerd at the End of the World"*

makes you scared as s\*\*t, but boy did I feel saucy after reading this. It's written with a flare that could light the book itself on fire; Junot Díaz knows what he's doing. The story will make you want to kiss someone when things go well, and drink a few shots of whiskey (and find a weapon) when they don't.

I can't even properly give this book a teaser, because I'm terrified of revealing something. What I can tell you is that from the beginning we are pushed into the life of Oscar Wao, an overweight nerd who is obsessed with science fiction and falling in love. The introduction to the book warns us of the power of "fuku" (a terrible curse) and "zafa" (its cure). Though we constantly want happiness for Oscar, we are pretty aware of the futile nature of that hope. The dialogue is fast, witty, and often times full of f-bombs and name-calling. From past to

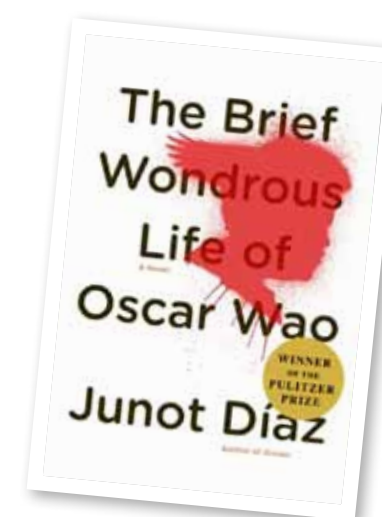
present, we delve into Oscar's world, wanting to hold him close when things are rough, and wanting to slap him over the head when he does something stupid. Though, don't let the title fool you – the novel is about Oscar, but it's also about Oscar's life and the people in it. I was very confused for a few minutes when reading; I started thinking Oscar had had a sex-change or something, before I realized we were now hearing from his sister, Lola. So, the narrative changes and flows differently, and despite my minute of "what the f\*\*k?" I found myself rather intrigued to be spending time with other characters and following through on their anecdotes.

The book provides footnotes here and there to help us understand some important historical points for the Dominican Republic – the conflict, the hate, and the infamous dictator Trujillo. The footnotes often read just like the novel, and you may not even notice you've left the story to read more about 'what actually happened'. For those with any background in Spanish, you'll have your fair share of profanity spewing out in many chapters – sometimes delightful

and other times making your head spin. There are also – thanks to Oscar's obsession with anime – some Japanese gems. It feels like being let in on a secret when you can understand them, as most of them won't come translated in the book; you may want to brush up on your Spanglo and Japonese.

It's a must read. Seriously. I mean, how can you not get engrossed in a novel that's first chapter is titled "Ghetto-nerd at the End of the World"? Right? Right. Though, don't plan to sit back and relax – you're going to want a place to hide and a few shots of booze with this one.

Caitlin Orr





Oshogatsu

# しょうがつ お正月 :: Oshogatsu :: New Year

**A very belated** あけましておめでとうございます (akemashite omedetou gozaimasu: Happy New Year), and welcome to 2011! If you're like a lot of Australians, your クリスマス (kurisumasu: Christmas) probably completely overshadowed New Year and if you're like me, you rang in 2011 with a nice casual barbeque or something to that effect. お正月 goes a bit beyond grabbing a spare gas bottle and firing up the grill; it's steeped in tradition from the food to the festivities and needs to be planned far in advance. Let's have a look and see how it works on this side of the pond – before, during and after the countdown to midnight.

When people refer to お正月, they mean the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of January, an auspicious period of public holidays that's also known as 三が日 (さんがにち sanganichi: "3 days"). During this time, it's customary to head out to a local shrine or temple for what's called 初詣 (はつもうで Hatsumoude), the first shrine visit

of the year. This can be done at any time throughout the お正月 period, but many people head in early for New Year's Eve and stay beyond the countdown. The point of this is to pray for good luck in the new year and often to buy おみくじ (omikuji: fortunes) to see what's in store.

Generally these predict several different "levels" of luck from 大吉 (だいきち daikichi: excellent luck) all the way down to 大凶 (だいきょう daikyou: terrible luck). As I mentioned earlier, bad luck omens are tied to trees or racks and left on the shrine grounds to try and stop them coming true; any others you can take with you. Some, like those in the photo above, are based on your birth date – simply choose the right day out of the 365 available and see what you can expect.

While you're there, お酒 (おさけ osake: sake) is often provided and even minors are permitted the odd sip for the occasion.

As midnight approaches, if the temple has a bell it will toll it 108 times in what's known as 除夜の鐘 (じょやのかね joya no kane: "New Year's Eve Bell"); the tolls are supposed to rid the listeners of each of the 108 temptations according to Buddhism. The festivities continue long into the night – during お正月, late nights and long sleep-ins are the norm.

For most families though, the preparation for this nice lazy お正月 starts a few days earlier with what's known as お節料理 (おせちりょうり osechi ryouri: New Year dishes). If you cast your mind back, you may notice that the “節” 漢字 (かんじ kanji) is the same as that of 節分 (せつぶん Setsubun); in both cases it indicates a division, whether it's between seasons or years. To commemorate this division, food is prepared and eaten that's unique to the お正月 period. It's notoriously time consuming and difficult to

make which is why it needs to be organised ahead of time. In fact, there's an obligation to make sure it's all done well before the New Year – January 1st is intended to be a day everyone can relax rather than being stuck in the kitchen. It's also customary to clean the house from top to tail and pay off any debts in the dying days of the old year, so that you can start the new one fresh materially and mentally. While they're at it, a lot of families decorate their houses with 注連飾り (しめかざり shime kazari: straw ornaments) in the leadup to お正月.

As you might expect from all this hard work, time constraints mean a lot of families now buy pre-made お節料理 from スーパー

(suupaa: supermarkets) and デパート (depaato: department stores). Invariably it's made with extremely high quality ingredients, so this isn't a particularly cheap way to do it; I'm told people who order it in the shops can expect to pay up to ¥20,000 (about \$240) for some of the more luxurious dishes. Given that, it's hardly surprising that bigger families tend to get together and make everything themselves to save money. Entire magazines and cookbooks like the one above are dedicated to this process.

Each of the rather indulgent items that make up お節料理 have an auspicious meaning, most of which revolve around prosperity, longevity and happiness; I'm not sure



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how seriously these meanings are taken these days, but in the hardship of ancient times they would have been taken in absolute earnest. Lobster, for example is traditionally seen as a symbol of longevity due to a lobster's appearance of a long beard. 昆布 (こぶ *kobu*: dried kelp) is associated with happiness through a play on words of sorts - it's associated with the word “喜ぶ” (よろこぶ *yorokobu*), which means to rejoice or be glad. Tangerines are served with leaves still attached to the top of them, to symbolise new life and birth; similarly, 数の子 (かずのこ *kazunoko*: herring roe) is seen as a symbol of having many children. Several of these things are placed on top of a three-tiered rice cake on a stand called お鏡餅 (おかがみもち *okagamimochi*: literally “mirror rice cake”), which is in itself seen as a symbol of prosperity and happiness.

Once all the celebration of お正月 has run its course, I'm told you get a bit sick of all the rich food to the extent that on the 7th day of January, it's customary to eat what's known as 七草粥 (ななくさがゆ *nanakusagayu*: “7 herb gruel”). This is a delicious but very modest rice porridge that marks the end of the indulgence of お正月 and a welcome return to the usual routine. A week later on the 15th, families take

their 注連飾り down, burn them at a nearby shrine and place the ashes outside their houses to keep evil spirits away; this is known as どんと焼き (*donto yaki*). Similarly, any お守り (おまもり *omamori*: charms) that have been protecting your family over the year can be burned and replaced with fresh ones.

Cleansed, purged and protected, you're now ready to face the new year. You may be kicking off in an even luckier position as well, depending on your first dream of 2011. There's a Japanese saying that says “一富士、二鷹、三茄子” (いちふじ、にたか、さんなすび *ichi fuji, ni taka, san nasubi*: “first Mount Fuji, second a hawk, third an eggplant”). Dreaming of any of these three is considered very fortunate; if you dream of all of them you must have had a more interesting New Year's Eve than I did.

Mike Sharp

Today's 初詣 photos were taken by Len – more of his Japan photography can be seen here: <http://nighthawk663.deviantart.com>.





# The Coke and Pepsi Game

## This is a great game for

upper elementary school students (and possibly younger JHS students, depending on the size and personality of the class), and requires very little prep. The goal is to get the kids to hear subtle sound differences that don't exist in Japanese, for example, "cut" vs. "cat."

First, teach the kids a few of these word pairs (pictures help), and try to get them to hear the subtle differences. The words I used were cat/cut, fit/feet, boat/bot (as in robot), but you can use anything.

The kids pair off. Then they make 2 lines, one along either side of the room, facing each other (ie one partner in one line, the other partner in the other, so every kid should be directly across from and facing their partner).

Assign one line one half of the words (cat, fit, boat) and the other line the other words (cut, feet, bot). Each word has an accompanying gesture. You can make up your own. For example, for "cat" the students have to kneel on the ground

and act like a cat. For "fit" they have to strike a body-builder pose and flex their muscles.

Once the kids understand the words and the gestures, the game begins. You say one of the words ("fit!"). The kids in the "fit" line then have to run to their partner and do that gesture. The slowest pair is out! (I usually wait until after the first 3 or 4 words before I start calling kids out, so no one gets out on the first try). Keep going, eliminating pairs until you have a winner.

Because this game involves a lot of running around, you'll want to be careful to keep good control over the class! They can get really into the game!

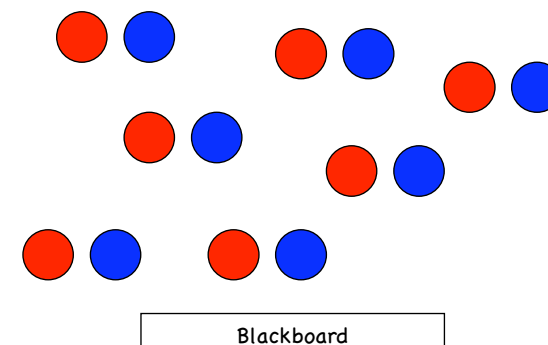
In case you're wondering why it's called the "Coke and Pepsi Game," I'll tell you! I adapted this from a game I used to play at Bar Mitzvahs as a kid. It's the same basic idea, pairs face each other in lines. One line is "Coke," the other is "Pepsi." When the DJ says "Pepsi," the Pepsi kids run to their partner and sit on their knee. Same thing when the DJ says "Coke."

There were always a lot of other rules too, like if the DJ said the name of the Bar Mitzvah kid, everyone had to fall to their knees and yell, "we're not worthy!" Or if the DJ said "peanut butter" partners had to switch places, things like that. I pretty much played this game every Saturday during the year I was 13.

Enjoy!

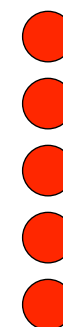
*Miriam Truppin-Brown*

## Step 1: Kids pair off



## Step 2: Pairs make lines facing their partner

This team's words:  
CAT  
FEET  
BOAT

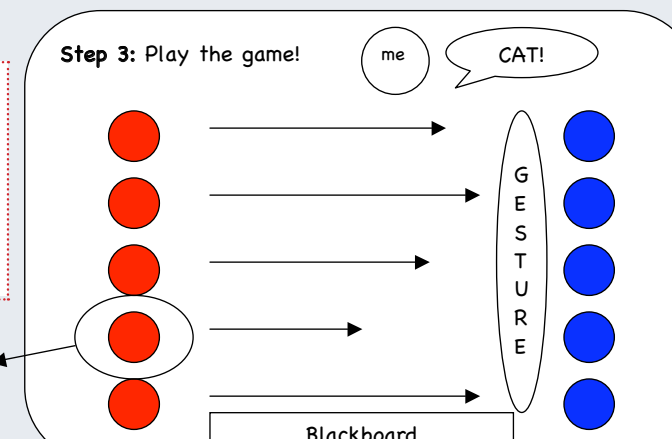


This team's words:  
CUT  
FIT  
BOT

## Step 3: Play the game!

This team's words:  
CAT  
FEET  
BOAT

Slowest pair is out!



This team's words:  
CUT  
FIT  
BOT



# My Darling is a Foreigner

**I HEART T-POINTS** to hold my interest for very long (I was actually reading a separate series, by the same author, about learning English) the film remained on my radar as “required viewing.” I was particularly interested in whether or not the film accurately represented the mixed dating experience. Furthermore, having made very poor decisions in the past that lead to a long separation from aforementioned **totally awesome** girlfriend, I secretly hoped to learn some things that might help prevent any further stupidity on my part.

*My Darling is a Foreigner* (2009) is a romantic comedy directed by Ue Kazuaki, starring Jonathan Sherr as Tony Laszlo and Inoue Mao as Oguri Saori (who are both real people). If nothing else, the film proves that the romantic comedy is a universal(ly clichéd) genre; *My Darling is a Foreigner* follows a pattern familiar to anyone that has seen a Hollywood love story. The couple meets, falls in love, has a falling out and fixes everything in the last few minutes (thanks

to some motherly advice and a mad dash to the airport). This plot structure is to be expected from virtually every romantic comedy; no points are gained here, but none are lost either.

The director did make some questionable editing decisions, however. For example, the film occasionally cuts to amusing reflections from other (real life) mixed couples in order to present additional perspectives on being in a relationship with a non-Japanese. Although enlightening and entertaining, the director should have cut one set of these testimonials (or added more). The interviews both open and close the film to good effect, yet another is found awkwardly alone in the middle. Likewise, there are some short animations, in the style of the original manga, at the beginning of the movie. However, these vignettes make their final appearance very early on. These asides could have enriched the film if employed throughout; instead they left me with the impression that the structure of *My Darling is a Foreigner*



lacked balance. Fortunately, these are minor complaints that hardly mar the film. Instead, I strongly believe this movie has the potential to improve the status of foreigners in Japanese media for a number of reasons.

First, Jonathan Sherr plays Tony Laszlo very admirably. Of particular note is his command of Japanese, which is the most impressive I have ever seen from a foreigner in a Japanese movie. There are Americans in *My Darling is a Foreigner* that do speak poor Japanese; however, they are meant to be dramatic foils of Tony. Therefore, I never felt insulted by them (even *after* I realized they were captioned in *katakana* in the Japanese subtitles) and that is a big step for the Japanese entertainment industry. Unlike many films and other media that treat foreigners like 外人 (the bad

kind of foreigner), this film treats them with respect if they rightfully deserve it. Sherr may not give Oscar-worthy performances scene after scene, but should be lauded nevertheless for his strong acting in a nonnative tongue. I hope other directors are watching and learning what we are capable of.

Second, the subtitling left me with the impression that *My Darling is a Foreigner* was something special. The joke is finally on the Japanese, as they hear the world through Saori (who has been failing English since elementary school). The Japanese subtitle track transcribes Tony's lines in *kanji*, without a drop of *katakana*. On the other hand, the subtitling does not even bother captioning any English unless it is crucial to the story. Instead, when Saori (and presumably the Japanese audiences as well) are confused, it simply says [English]. The message is clear; she is lousy at English and Tony is superb at Japanese. Saori is the one that should be laughed at from time to time, because Tony is not cannon fodder for jokes. This is a small point that most foreign viewers will probably never experience. However, Japanese audiences might finally realize that foreigners need not merely serve as running gags in commercials and movies.

The language issues are minor ones at best, however. Tony, in actuality, *knows* a lot of Japanese

but does not always *understand* it (the same goes for his grasp on Japanese culture and even women). Jonathan Sherr makes big strides as far as a foreigner in popular media is concerned and with luck he will be the exception that becomes the rule. The more important aspect of the film, in my opinion, is the morale it teaches; that “foreigner” and “Japanese” are not useful categorizations for **people**. In the midst of her pseudo-breakup with Tony, Saori reflects that for Japanese people, relationships with foreigners might be impossible. However, her mother is quick to educate Saori about the difficulties experienced in her own marriage; she and her husband did not always understand each other either. In spite of being Japanese, they were just as much strangers as Tony and Saori were. “Japanese” and “foreigner” have no bearing because every person is alike in that they are unique. Both Saori and her mother needed to learn that lesson to find true happiness with their partners. *My Darling is a Foreigner* asserts that in order to make relationships work, one must look beyond superficial labels like nationality and focus on the person on the inside. Are you listening, Japan?

There is something in *My Darling is a Foreigner* for everyone to learn from, including those in Japanese-foreigner relationships, and the



average Japanese person (whose opinion of foreigners might be colored by our less-than-respectable appearances in other films and television programs). The story here is much like my own; my girlfriend said she found the movie believable because in a way, we had already lived it. She liked the message as well: Japanese? Foreigner? That doesn't matter. Her last comment was that she hopes there is a *ダーリンは外国人 2* about married life and having children. I might be in trouble...

Thanks for watching!

JJ Cappa



## The Times, They Are A-Changin' (slowly)

### I started off a recent class

with a series of celebrity photographs and asked the students to identify what they had in common. The celebrities included Ellen Degeneres, Portia de Rossi, Angelina Jolie, and Ricky Martin, so perhaps you already know the answer. The students, on the other hand, listed off a bunch of adjectives like famous, beautiful, “American,” and “white.” As a hint, I showed them one last picture—of Haruna Ai. At which point the students let go a horrified “Eeeeeehhhh?!” followed by “Mottainai!” It was because I expected this answer that I decided to teach this LGBT awareness class.

A group discussion revealed that most of my students (approximately 400) were unaware of the distinctive groups within the LGBT community and assumed, rather, that all of them were transvestites. They also believed that all LGBTs are physically unattractive, prompting their “what a waste” response to the celebrity photos. They moreover thought that there are no LGBT individuals in their communities simply because they do not personally know of any. My comment that, statistically speaking, there are at least

a few among their classmates and their neighbours prompted another series of surprised *eehs*.

I extended my inquiry to my community for the sake of writing this article, interviewing several adults ranging from their 20s to 60s. Although they did not share the students’ misconceptions, they were not much more accepting. First of all, none of them knew the Japanese terms for “heterosexual” and “homosexual.” They used the colloquial term “futsuu” for heterosexuals instead, suggesting that non-heterosexuals are abnormal. The older interviewees were particularly harsh, claiming that they would not associate with LGBT individuals should they move to their communities and would have given up on (although not disowned) their children had they confessed to being LGBT. The middle-aged adults showed a more flexible stance, claiming that they would support their children no matter what and would interact with their LGBT neighbours. They would not, however, support a bill calling for gay marriage or adoption rights.

They showed relative leniency towards marriage when compared to adoption, though. The former would not produce any negative externalities, but adoption would supposedly compromise the children’s wellbeing. Several interviewees added the erroneous excuse that adoption rights would exacerbate the depopulation problem, as if all gays and lesbians are presently producing children because such rights do not exist.

LGBTs undeniably suffer discrimination back home, but the problem seems more pronounced in Japan where gender roles are more established. The pressure to marry young and have children is especially great for the eldest son in the countryside, and social expectations of a Japanese man, as discussed in last month’s article, affect the younger sons living in the cities as well. Familial expectations aside, many LGBTs also fear losing their jobs should they confess to their sexual orientations. There seems to be a social assumption that coming out involves a physical transformation (essentially becoming a transvestite) and leaving one’s “normal” job to

work in a host/hostess bar. According to the few gay people I managed to interview, many consequently lead dual lives. They get married and have children but maintain affairs with their boyfriends or girlfriends on the side.

Many adults explained that their aversion towards the LGBT community stems from their childhood milieus; they grew up in a time when the LGBT community was basically unheard of. However, they conjecture that the youngest generation, born after 2000, will usher in a new era of gay rights because they are growing up

watching transsexuals on TV. These children also witnessed the government pass a law that allows post-operative transsexuals to legally change their sex and thereby marry members of the “same” sex. Moreover, the expectations of a Japanese man are changing among young adults with the emergence of *soushokukei* men. It has become acceptable for them to hang out with their mothers and eat cake instead of hitting on girls in Doutonbori. Gay men have also found a small supportive community among straight women, for whom the “boys love (BL)” book genre has become rather popular.

So, thirty years from now, after the children and youth grow up and the older conservative generations die off, Japan may become a supportive home to the LGBT community, providing both social acceptance and legal rights. My high school students show promising signs of growing into tolerant adults, so perhaps you could aid the process by teaching an awareness class at your school(s) as well.

Rika Sawatsky

Imagery by Richard Dunstan  
[www.personalfx.ca](http://www.personalfx.ca)





# Tôshiya

**The Japanese deem the** twentieth year of an individual's life as the one which signifies the official "coming of age." In all aspects of Japanese society, the twentieth year marks the age where teenagers are thrust into the world of adulthood, whereby they become morally, and often, economically responsible for their future. Every January, scores of teenagers experience a sudden revolution in their physical and social being, one which is marked by joyous celebrations – and in this case, long, beautifully carved wooden bows and exquisitely designed kimonos.

The event named 通し矢 (Tôshiya) is held every year in Kyôto (on the Sunday closest to the 15th) at 三十三間堂 (Sanjûsangendô), the longest wooden structure in the world. The tournament was born during the Edo period (1603-1868), when professionals and amateurs alike competed against each other as "arch" rivals, aiming their bows and arrows to targets lined against a wall sixty meters away. This tradition, held at the same temple every year, falls only two weeks

after the New Year, and a few days following the national Coming of Age holiday, celebrated annually on January 10th.

In the early hours of the morning, twenty-year old boys and girls enter into the temple gates, accompanied by their parents or younger siblings; much less, I believe, in hopes of achieving victory in this ancient competition, than in taking part in a sacred ritual which brings each individual closer to achieving a sense of personal identity in the traditional part of Japan's history. Huddled together in small groups, the archers blow warm air onto their cold hands and prepare their weapons for action, under the careful watch of friends, photographers, and casual onlookers dazzled by the beauty of the multi-coloured kimonos against the bleak January environment. With the mercury barely hovering over the freezing point, tiny snowflakes fell from the sky at odd times throughout the day. As a result, it was not uncommon to see girls clutching on to each other as they waited

patiently for their opportunity to step onto the main stage.

As contestants continued to take aim and fire into the distance, I took shelter in the temple for a while, curious to peer into the Buddhist temple which houses one thousand life-sized Kannon statues, carefully placed to form ten rows and fifty columns of immaculately sculpted golden deities. Unfortunately, photography is strictly prohibited inside the temple – a rule that was being strongly enforced on this occasion – so a picture for your collection is practically impossible... still, I must admit that the mere sight of these golden statues was simply enlightening.

Walking through the crowded temple gave me the opportunity to observe some of the more religious practices of the Japanese – who are often universally noted as being the least devout of all people, yet the most dutiful when it comes to paying homage to a shrine or temple on those particularly special occasions. At the start of the main corridor,

a Buddhist monk sat high above on a mounted throne, muttering prayers as he splashed newcomers with holy water. Exiting the temple left me behind the archers, where it was easy to take some pictures of the competition and the girls waiting for their moment to shine. I took a few shots here before heading back around to the side of the target area, where I was lucky enough to wiggle my way to the front and capture some truly incredible photographs.

The photos showcase the sharp contrast in imagery between elegance and warrior, two aspects which remain an integral part of Japanese tradition and folklore. The sight was often breathtaking, especially as the participants continuously lined up to fire arrows in a swift, harmonious motion. The vibrant kimonos featured here are only a sample of the thousands of girls who turned up for this gathering in one of Kyôto's oldest temples. Truth be told, I'm extremely glad I dragged myself out of bed on this frosty winter where I had already lost my voice and was in danger

of running a fever – conditions which were much to the dismay of the Japanese bystanders and participants surrounding me.

This "New Year's Archery" ceremony often flies under the radar of most tourists, even amongst residents/tourists in the Kyôto region. The lack of foreigners might be of interest to some people, as I dutifully observed that I was one of the very few anywhere to be seen. Even more, admission to the temple is free on the day of the tournament (normally ¥600), which is always a bonus. And, as always, there are plenty of food stalls and vending machines should you feel the pinch of hunger. Photo opportunities are excellent on the eastern side of the temple, as the girls come here to calm their nerves and unwind after participating in the tournament, posing with their friends and flashing their smiles for the cameras.

This wonderful event will undoubtedly remain one of the highlights of my time in Japan.

Next year, don't miss this exceptional chance to witness the Japanese at their most elegant and artistic – perhaps the perfect dose needed to escape the usual *matsuri* atmosphere of the Japanese at their most emotional and "uninhibited" selves. Whether you want to see kimonos up close and personal, or you just have a thing for girls carrying deadly weapons, make Tôshiya one of your must-do's in Japan.

## How to get there

Take the JR line to Kyoto station. The easiest and fastest way is to exit out the north gate and walk north for two blocks, then turn east, crossing the Shichijo Bridge, and continuing until you see the temple on your right (takes approximately 15 minutes). Alternatively, take bus no. 206 or no. 208 from the station to Sanjûsangendô-mae bus stop, or take the Keihan railway to Shichijo station (7 minute walk to the temple.)

*Daniel Bromberg*



## Getting to Know Random JETs .....

### Daniel Bromberg

I like: Traveling, Eating, Reading and Writing, and Photography

But I don't like: Waking up early, Being indecisive

I can: Speak French

But I can't: Speak Japanese

I have: A lot of fantastic and supportive friends and family back home

I want: To travel the world... who doesn't?

### More Details

School and Location in Hyogo: Higashiharima, Kakogawa  
Birthday: November 12, 1986

Born and raised: Montreal, QC, Canada

University and Degree: Concordia University, Honours History

Other jobs that you have had: Internet sales, Golf course bag shop

Travels since becoming a JET: Haven't left Japan! Hokkaido, Tokyo and Hiroshima are the highlights up to now

Travels before becoming a JET: All over Europe, Russia, Australia and New Zealand

Hobbies: Watching movies, Researching and Planning future travels

Staying another year?

It was a tough decision, but no.

### Favorites

Food: **EVERYTHING**. Seriously, it's not normal.

Sports: Baseball, golf, (watching) hockey

Music: Anything with a good beat and smart, sensational lyrics

Shop: Zara

TV Show: Californication, Dexter

Movie: Too many to list

### Random Trivia

Proudest Achievement: Winning the National Championship in 2009

Advice for the younger: Never give up – only you can decide your future.

Motto: Take it one day at a time.

I remember when...: The day I got to Japan... it feels like yesterday.

What are you drinking?

Draft beer or Jack Daniel's

Who would you like to meet? Tupac Shakur

Why should we elect you President of the World? Me? No thanks!

Best thing about Japan so far? Easy question... the food!!

If it was my last day on earth I would...: Probably finish all the stuff I never did because I was busy procrastinating.



Interesting Fact about me: I skipped the second grade in elementary school.

### Teaching

My top tip for teaching: Make the students laugh... it's the key to success.

When the class is too quiet I...: Just keep going. I've also just started telling stories about random things.

Bribery for students... YAY or NAY? Nah, it's not my style. I will give presents if they really deserve it though!

Funniest Story involving work: Eating lunch in the cafeteria with the students. Everyday brings new adventures and unexpected surprises...

### Miriam Rollason

I like: dancing.

But I don't like: (aka not good at) singing.

I can: juggle.

But I can't: roll my R's.

I have: a Daihatsu Move.

I want: a road bike ;)

### More Details

School and Location in Hyogo: Ikuno High School, Next to the Silver Mine, Hyogo.

Birthday: June 5.

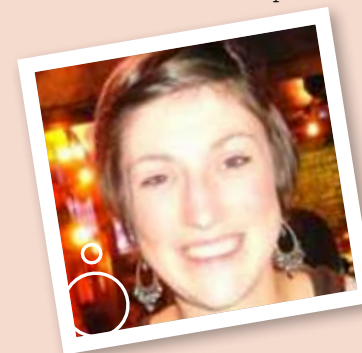
Born and raised: Isabel, South Dakota.

University and Degree: Augustana College, BA in Biology.

Other jobs that you have had: Production Assistant at a TV station, Runner for a law office, Cancer Research Assistant, Camp Counselor.

Travels since becoming a JET: Hiroshima, Thailand, Hong Kong (Amazing!)

Travels before becoming a JET: India, Guatemala, Europe areas ;)



Hobbies: Reading, painting, pottery, gardens ;)

Staying another year? Yep!

### Favorites

Food: Avocados.

Sports: Snowboarding, running.

Music: Fleet Foxes, The Decemberists, Guitarey Good Singing Women ;)

Shop: Organic food shops.

TV Show: House.

Movie: The Fountain, Mona Lisa Smile (feel good movie).

### Random Trivia

Proudest Achievement: winning a Science Fair Contest and getting to go to "Internationals" in Cleveland, Ohio. Ha!

Advice for the younger: Go after what you want. Believe in yourself. Consider other people's opinions, but never let them keep you from pursuing what you think is right.

Motto: Be the change you want to see in the world.

I remember when...: I didn't put smiley faces at the end of my sentences, but it's a vague memory ;)

What are you drinking? Coffee, cocoa, and thanks to newly acquired bar-tending skills, Amaretto Sours.

Who would you like to meet? Too many people! Maya Angelou, Greg Mortensen, Jane Goodall, T.S. Eliot, J.R. Tolkien.

Why should we elect you President of the World? I'm a genius. And I always smile ;)

Best thing about Japan so far? Snowboarding. Onsens.

If it was my last day on earth I would...: find the people I love, eat good food, and celebrate the time we had together.

Interesting Fact about me: I grew up in a town of 200 people on an Indian Reservation.

### Teaching

My top tip for teaching: Laugh always, don't take anything too seriously or too personally.

Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? I bribe a lot, sad to say. But save the big prizes for special occasions.

Funniest Story involving work: One of my students mixed up the word "absent" and "vacation" with "poisoned." When I asked where another student was, the first response was and excited "poisoned," followed by "absent" followed by, "oh, vacation." I never did find out which one was true!

I also fell flat on my back on the front steps of my school once. At least 10 students laughed good and hard!





## Happy New Year!

Festivities in Kobe's Chinatown during the first weekend of February celebrated Shunsetsu, and the start of the year of the Rabbit. Beginning February 3rd with the new moon (to end January 22nd, 2012), Rabbit years are said to be for catching one's breath after the dynamism of the Tiger. This year's Rabbit is associated with the element metal, so the fluffy bunny may have a bit of a sharp edge (perhaps dulled a little by the fact that it's yin metal, not yang this year)! Nankin-machi was thronged with visitors all weekend long, and on display were performances of dance, acrobatics, tai chi, as well as the famous lion and dragon dances.

Here's to a calm year of licking our wounds and mending fences!



## Where are they now?

### Cristy Burne

Age: 34?

Current location:  
Perth, Western Australia

Placement school(s) and location  
in Hyogo/Japan while on JET:  
Kawanishi Midoridai High  
School, Kawanishi. I edited  
the Hyogo Times during my  
second year as an ALT.

Current occupation and jobs held  
since leaving the JET programme:  
Currently writing the Takeshita  
Demons series of adventure  
books for children, featuring  
Japanese yokai (traditional  
monsters and demons from  
Japanese mythology). Also  
worked as a Technical Editor  
for a Japanese patent law  
firm in Tsukuba, Ibaraki-ken;  
editor of CSIRO's Scientriffic  
magazine (science for kids);  
and as editor-in-chief of  
International Science Grid  
This Week, published out  
of CERN in Switzerland  
(to name a few!).

Highlight of your JET experience:  
Working with my san-nen-sei  
to translate tales from Japanese  
mythology, then turning these  
stories into theatre scripts  
that they performed (in full  
costume and in English!)  
to a full-school assembly  
as part of the Bunka-sai.

How the JET programme has  
benefited you career-wise:  
My time with JET keeps  
sneaking back to benefit  
me: the editing job in Ibaraki  
(thanks to JET for my skills  
with Japanese language),  
the publishing contract in  
the UK (thanks to JET for my  
understanding of Japanese  
culture), work as a performer  
with the Questacon Science  
Circus (thanks to JET for  
my confidence in front of  
the classroom), and landing  
freelance travel writing gigs  
(thanks to JET for my Japanese  
travel experiences).

What transferable  
skills JET gives you:  
In addition to the skills  
outlined above, JET also gives  
you self-confidence, courage,  
an ability to flourish in the  
face of change, a good nose  
for sniffing out opportunities.

What advice you would give to  
current JETs for getting the most  
out of the JET experience in order  
to further their career afterwards:  
"You get out what you put in"  
is my #1 bit of advice; #2 is to  
think strategically about where  
you want to be in the future,  
and then to volunteer for and/  
or create opportunities that  
can help you to get there.

Tips for job hunting after JET:  
Don't limit yourself to jobs  
that involve Japan or Japanese.  
Instead, go for something  
you love and you'll find your  
Japanese experience comes in  
handy, probably unpredictably,  
and time and time again.





# Hyogo Times March Event Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
27	28	<b>01</b> <b>Ongoing: Doll Display</b> Yodoko Guest House, Ashiya City  <b>Ongoing: Plum Blossom Viewing</b> Various locations	<b>02</b> <b>Banshu Textile Exhibition</b> Nishiwaki Royal Hotel, Grand Hall (991 Nishiwaki, Nishiwaki City) 10:00–17:00	<b>03</b> <b>Hina Matsuri</b> About the Japanese Doll Festival  <b>Banshu Textile Exhibition</b> (As 2nd March)	<b>04</b>	<b>05</b> <b>Cultural Experience and Performance</b> Joruri puppet theater, Noh play, tea ceremony, Japanese drums etc. Hyogo House, Kobe 10:00–16:00
<b>06</b> <b>Cultural Experience and Performance</b> (As 5th March)  <b>Kasumi Crab Festival</b> Shibayama Port	<b>07</b> <b>Top Management Seminar</b> ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Kobe Seminar: 16:30–17:25 Reception: 17:30–19:00	<b>08</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> <b>Tatsuno Hina Matsuri</b> Castle Town Area, Tatsuno  <b>March of Dimes</b> Fushimi Inari & SPA World, Kyoto
<b>13</b> <b>Tatsuno Hina Matsuri</b> (As 12th March. Continues until the 20th March)	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> <b>St Patrick's Day</b>	<b>18</b> <b>Izushi Hatsuuma Taisai</b> Izushi Castle Ruins A large festival celebrating the end of winter. (Continues until the 20th March)	<b>19</b> <b>Oita JET Charity Cycling</b> Beppu to Kunisaki, then on to Yabakei, Yamakuni, through Ajimu back to Beppu. <b>Sign up now!</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> <b>Ibo River Hina-nagashi</b> Tatsuno	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>

For more indepth details about all the events, please visit our website: [www.hyogoajet.net/hyogotimes](http://www.hyogoajet.net/hyogotimes)