



ht

hyogo times

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.....*Inside*.....

Maiko-ing around

Once a JET, you're a JET all the way

Rugby: Japan style.

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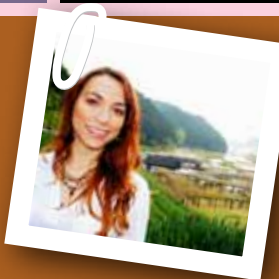
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Goodbye's...
...and Hello's



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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



Message from the Editor

I have a confession to make.

I am not even close to being able to comprehend that I have less than a month left on my JET contract and house cleaning is suffering as a result. I'm still making lists of things that I need to do, and when I have time to actually do something, I get distracted and watch Community. I think the 'proper cleaning' is what will really indicate my life in this little part of Hyogo is coming to an end. I don't want to accept that. I know that I can do little things; take down photographs, posters, pack away books, but it will make my house feel like less of a home just a little too soon. I have a horrible feeling that reality will come crashing through the door far too late and I'll find myself faced with two days of no sleep and a lot of bleach.

School carries on with teachers worrying about 警報 (keihous) cancelling school when they really need all the lessons they can get to cover everything on the tests. I'm joining them this time around as I decided to do Show and Tell interviews as part of the end of term tests, but they have to be done during class time. I'm nearly done with it all, but the daikyu resulting from a postponed 体育祭 caused a fair amount of stress that I could have done without. As I write, the end of term test is yet to be recorded, but I think I've got that down now and it shouldn't take long.

And as we enter the final stretch of the first term, you'll hopefully all be finding yourselves with a bit more time (unless you're moving countries...) and can therefore take a few moments to have a gander at this, the July (and my last) issue of the **Hyogo Times!** Miso Green provides some helpful tips for those on their way out (or just wanting a bit of a clear-out) along with ideas for keeping cool as the temperatures rise. We have not one, but two movie reviews along with a rugby match report that makes me want to go and watch rugby. In the kitchen, a wonderful looking green tea cheesecake is being whipped up and over in Kyoto it's time to play Maiko dress-up. There's much more besides, including reflections on time spent in Japan, more from the Mochi Diaries and of course Love and Relationships. Finally, we have an introduction to some of the goings on of the JET Alumni Association, courtesy of the New York chapter, that shows JET life most definitely continues post-contract.

Enjoy July!

Qmi

Hello x 2!

Message from the PR

As the summer heat comes into bear for another time in Japan, it's time to say farewell to many of the people we have come to know and love. As I begin my third year on the JET programme, many of the people who I began my journey with have decided to say sayonara to these beautiful islands. So I would like to say thanks to you all for being a positive part of my journey, as I hope I was to yours.

I would especially like to mention Anna, my fellow Brit, Hyogo AJET PR, and general all round awesome person. I have fond memories of getting squiffy on a random, warm and sunny, Saturday afternoon, looking over the lovely city of Kobe from Kitano, and drinking incredibly strong beer! One of many great memories. Thanks Anna.

I would also like to say thanks to Henry (former AJET PR) and Imogen (HT Editor). Imogen has been working very hard as the editor of this here magazine and will be replaced by Charlotte Griffiths.

Thanks for your hard work Imi, and Charlotte, I'm sure you will do a great job! Oh and if anyone is interested in contributing to the Hyogo Times, please contact [Charlotte](#) and let her know.

So as we say farewell to many lovely people, we also get ready to welcome all the new guys and girls who will be replacing them. Hyogo has one of the biggest JET populations in Japan, and that doesn't include Kobe which has a separate BoE. So consider this your official welcome! Though we are pretty spread out our facebook page is fairly active. So if you have not already done so please join our Hyogo AJET group.

It's at this time of year the current JETs try and figure out how to not go crazy with nothing to do at school and the hot, hot, generally aircon-free, heat. However, new peeps will most likely just find themselves trying to get lives in order whilst taking in the wonders of Japan in the immediate vicinities.

To those who will be in Japan in July here are some things that may help hold the crazies at bay... at least a little:

The 12th Kobe Love Port Festival
[Kobe Meriken Park](#)
Sun Jul 14 – Mon Jul 15

Manto Fire festival
[Tajima](#)
Wed Jul 24

Ashiya Summer Carnival
[Hanshin](#)
Sat Jul 27

Takeno Fireworks festival
[Tajima](#)
Tue Jul 30

More details can be found [here](#).

I hope you all enjoy the summer, all the best.

Peter Hein-Hartmann

Feature



*Maiko-ing around**

Maiko-ing around

When I moved to Japan last

summer I remember spotting a woman dressed in a kimono on the train and thinking to myself "I've spotted my first geisha! But why isn't she wearing her makeup?" Later I was informed of my rookie mistake. In fact, she was no geisha, but rather an ordinary Japanese woman on her way to a festival. Another media-influenced preconception I had was that all geishas had white faces. I was surprised to learn that the girls with white faces were in training to become the well-known geisha, but they are actually called maiko.

Much to my disappointment, this country isn't overpopulated with geishas, or maikos for that matter. But a percentage of Japan is made up of tourists and natives alike who are curious about what goes on behind the white face paint.

It's easy to play dress up here, just look at the evidence provided by the rising cult of cosplay and what not. So if it's easy enough to walk

around in a maid's outfit and call it your job, then it's no surprise that you can transform yourself into a geisha in the making. And what better place to undergo this extreme makeover than Kyoto, the birthplace of these Japanese icons!

We easily booked and found the popular Shiki Sakuraten Studio, which is located directly opposite the Kiyomizumichi bus stop. The day was a rainy one, typical of June in Japan, which unfortunately meant no frolicking around Kiyomizu Temple in geisha gear.

The formalities were settled as we entered and optional extras were arranged. We began the process by stripping down to our underwear and covering up again with a thin, light robe to protect our modesty. We were lead to four make-up chairs with only white and red powders and creams waiting for us. A make-up base was applied generously, followed by a red balm. Then came the real deal.

Thick, blindingly white face paint was layered onto our faces, necks and upper backs. Then quite softly, the whiteness was spread evenly. The next part was the best. My eyebrows were modified with red pencil, red eye shadow cornered my eyes and finally the signature ruby red lips were painted on. A touch of mascara and black winged eyeliner was all that was left to complete the face of a maiko. Now for the dress up.

I chose a long, heavy, elaborately designed, purple kimono for my photo shoot to come. First, my chest was padded so that there was no shape to me, then I was tied tightly into an assortment of robes. In the end I was having a hard time breathing normally and sitting on a chair was stressful as I was carrying a large draped obi on my back. Kimonos are very beautiful items of clothing but they sure are heavy and not particularly comfortable! I felt more like a sumo than an elegant, graceful entertainer.



Say cheese!

But the show had to go on and all we needed now was the wig. The glossy, perfect hairpiece was the most painful part! It was heavy and weighed down even more by the numerous accessories dangling off it. It was definitely an experience to have one sitting firmly on my head.

Now for my close up! The photographer positioned us for our individual photos in very peculiar ways, all exceedingly fake and wooden; holding a fan in one photo then a parasol in the other. We were itching (not just because of our wigs) to take photos of our own, so once the official shoot

was finished we ungracefully tumbled into a tatami room and proceeded to juggle cameras so we could post the perfect pic on social media.

After returning the wigs and kimonos, the laborious task of removing maiko makeup came upon us. An unfathomable amount of baby oil was used to reveal our real faces again.

A good two hours was spent being pampered by our own makeup artists, dressed in traditional robes

and then it was all topped off with the photo shoot; a very successful girls' day out. And for you guys out there thinking you're missing out, there's a samurai session to keep you busy too.

It was a mixture of culture and dress-up fun; definitely one to put on and tick off your Japan Bucket List.

Cherie Pham



a clean, scalding-hot slate

For this month's Miso Green, I'd like to divide my attention to two audiences: those that are leaving the JET program and those that are staying. Your upcoming summer battles are very different, but I believe that I have ideas for making them tolerable in minimally impactful ways.

Part 1 *Simple solutions* *for beating the heat*

Air conditioning is certainly not the most environmentally-friendly innovation, but in these intolerable summers, even I can't avoid using it sometimes. Our schools are relatively merciful with it, but they keep it at temperatures high enough that you can expect to still break a sweat. However, in the name of the environment, I've been utilizing these methods to beat the heat and still avoid waste. They really do help.

- **Atomize with peppermint oil.** Menthol has natural cooling properties and masks odors rather well (hence its presence in gums and toothpastes). Put a few drops of **Kodera Peppermint Oil** in an atomizer with some water, and spritz your skin when hot (avoid your eyes!) The spray will not only refresh your skin, but has the added benefit of acting as an insect repellent.

- **Powder yourself with cornstarch.** I praised cornstarch as a face powder in last month's article, but its usefulness is not limited to the face. Cornstarch is a primary ingredient in some baby powders for its absorbent properties, and it's translucent on the skin, so powder it anywhere you're prone to sweating and chafing to stall the effects of the heat.

- **Take ice & beverage concentrates.** Besides air conditioning, we probably spend the most money and create the most waste with beverages in the heat. Water alone often isn't enough to quell the side effects of a Japanese summer, so if you want to avoid hundreds of unnecessary PET bottles, try making a beverage concentrate to mix with water and ice on the go. Here are some recipes for **strawberry lemonade**, **sweet tea**, and a **sports drink**, but you should certainly try experimenting. If you don't want to take the time to make concentrates, you can still avoid lots of plastic by buying powdered Pocari Sweat.

- **Try my deodorant recipe!** Just to reiterate for those of you who might have missed it **last month**, I have a great recipe for all-natural (and actually effective) sweat-absorbing deodorant. It's awesome. Give it a shot!

- **Unplug your appliances.** Most people nowadays know that power cords, even when their appliances are powered off, continue to draw energy from their outlets if left plugged in. But perhaps most of us don't consider the heat that those stray cords also produce. To reduce the amount of heat you create in your apartment, unplug every unnecessary appliance when not in use.

- **Get a small dehumidifier.** Sure, it's another appliance that creates heat, but pulling the moisture out of the air in your apartment will make it feel cooler, and keep bugs and mold away. Also, if you spill something on your tatami, placing the dehumidifier next to the spill will make sure mold doesn't grow on that spot.

- **Encourage a cross breeze.** If you open windows on two different sides of your apartment and put a fan between them, on many days, the breeze it creates is pleasant enough that you won't feel the need for air conditioning. Even if you are desperate for icy air when you come home, creating a cross breeze for 10 mins before turning the A/C on to flush out all of the hot air that has accumulated during the day means that your A/C won't have to work nearly as hard to cool your apartment, thus saving energy.

- **Store produce properly.** Have you noticed produce, even in the fridge, starts to rot much faster than usual now that it's summer? The plastic bags that they come in are not necessarily made for storing them and each plant likes to be stored in a different manner. Furthermore, you can rescue some of your sad-looking produce! Leafy greens already wilted? Try putting them in a bowl of ice and water for about an hour; many of them will perk right up.

- **Buy a freezer pillow.** With a truly cold pillow and a cross breeze, I can sleep like a log on a warm night with no A/C. Some drugstores have awesome non-gel cool pillows that somehow don't gather condensation as they lose their cool. With this ¥800 investment, you'll save thousands in energy costs.

- **Use your air conditioner in "dry" mode instead of "cool" mode.** Even for me, there are days that are ungodly hot, and I'm compelled to use the A/C. But I don't especially like the feeling of artificial cold as a replacement for the heat... thus, on the most ferocious of hot days, I use the "dry" setting on my A/C. The "dry" setting is intended for dehumidification, but it also has a temperature control. The effects are not nearly as strong as cool

mode, but that's a good thing as far as I'm concerned.

Part 2 *Departures & Arrivals*

As for those of you that are leaving Japan, I'm sure that you are busy cleaning and making important choices of what to throw away. For those of you whose successors will inherit your apartment, my biggest piece of advice is this: Give your successor a clean slate. Less is more. I figured that giving this advice would be smart to do now since you have a month left in Japan, and you will be able to throw stuff away on the appropriate recycling day.

It may seem counterintuitive that I, as someone concerned with the environment, am asking you to throw things away. The big reason for this is that clutter is often a huge obstacle when you're trying to cut down on waste. Having a lot of excess things tricks our minds into thinking that we need more than we actually do. I've found that filling my home with few, simple, classic, aesthetically beautiful items is more peaceful, and leaves me feeling less and less of a need to shop. Furthermore, your extra stuff need not go to the landfill.

Get rid of unnecessary duplicates. Do you have more than four pieces of any piece of dinnerware? Chances

are good that your successor won't need the excess. Reduce your stock and free up space. Then, if more people show up for a party, you can ask them to bring their own dinner set... it's really not that inconvenient!

The same goes for bedding; reduce your stock to only the pieces you and guests have used in the last year, but throw out ones that are clearly stained, or if you have no idea how many people have slept on them. If your own futon is questionable, perhaps you can ask your successor if you might buy a new one on their behalf, and they can pay you back. If they are already buying things off of you, this shouldn't be too hard, and it will be wonderful for them to sleep in a truly clean bed their first night here.

If you don't plan to or can't sell your unwanted items, dispose of them in the least impactful way possible. Here's a good order of operations to go by:

- Ask around to see if anyone you know could use them.
- Join **Kansai Freecycle**, and send a mass email to many potential takers (they really need more active users!).
- Take your unwanted items to a recycle shop for resale. You may get a little money for them, but don't expect it.



...continued

- Disassemble the item into recyclable parts (for example, wire, nails and screws, even forks, can be saved and recycled on metal pickup day).
- If all else fails, throw your unwanted items out with bulk.

Reduce unnecessary paper for your successor. Scan and name important documents like manuals and building information and recycle the paper. That way, your successor can peruse them before they come, and never need to worry about losing them. Also, put a sign on your mailbox that says something along the lines of: チラシなどは要らないです (I don't need flyers, etc) to prevent them getting unnecessary mail.

If you're on the fence about an item, ask! Soon you will be in contact with your successor, and they'll probably have a lot of questions for you. What a prime opportunity for you to ask about what they truly need! Don't assume that your successor needs or wants that tennis racquet that your predecessor left behind after using it twice and you have never touched, but have kept around just in case. Ask if he or she thinks they might use certain items. Good luck on your departure from Japan!

And that's all I have to say about that. In addition, I have two people to thank this month. First, (this is a little late but) thank you and congratulations to former Himeji City JET Jaclyn Threadgill, winner of the "Combini-Free Week" challenge. Jaclyn has won a bokashi starter kit! Here's what she had to say about her experience.

"I made an effort not to shop at conbinis for a week, and also to try and avoid buying single-serving packaged foods at the grocery store. The combini part wasn't so difficult. I don't shop at conbinis very often, and when I do, it's generally for small purchases (ice cream, nikuman, late-night milk or eggs). Sometimes I like to stop at the combini on the way to work for a between-class snack or a coffee. In my combini-free week, I took fruit instead. I left a jar of my favorite instant coffee at work. It wasn't so hard to change my routine, and it saved me a little money, too.

But applying the mindfulness about single-serving packaged foods to my grocery store trips was harder. So many times, I just wanted to grab a little tray of nigiri sushi at the grocery store on my way home from work. Or a sandwich. Or an onigiri. I can't clearly recall, but I maaaay have fallen off the wagon once. Just once. I swear. But really,

the egg sandwiches and onigiri are pretty easy to make at home (and not very time consuming), so I have no excuse.

Anyway, I'll definitely try to avoid buying single-serving packaged foods in the future... but I imagine this will get much harder in the summer, when it's particularly difficult to ignore those seductive 7-11 Black Thunder ice cream bars."

Finally, a big, warm thank you to the outgoing HT editor, Imogen, for not only helping bring Miso Green to life this year, but for being supportive and understanding despite the fact that I have NEVER turned an article in on time. Thanks for everything.

Uluwehi Mills
miso.green.ht@gmail.com



Feature

This experience hasn't been easy, but it has easily been the best and most rewarding experience of my life. Always being a commuter student, this was the first time I had truly been on my own. Unlike a lot of participants on the JET Program, I had already been to Japan several times and had an intimate familiarity with this country. Despite that comfort, it couldn't prepare me for what it was like to be wholly autonomous in my finances, in charge of the state of my physical as well as emotional well-being, and for fulfilling the expectations I was hired for: an area in which I was not professionally trained.

In all honesty, over the course of two years, I haven't handled these changes perfectly or even gracefully at times. There were months when I found my paycheck only just arrived in time. In the winter months I succumbed to a previously unknown sedentary lifestyle, huddling under blankets and drinking hot chocolate. I let myself become distraught as holidays approached and important events took place back home. And although I had my trepidations, I felt like I had satisfied the job expectations, but fretted over not feeling personally fulfilled by my work.

However, even if I didn't handle all these things perfectly, I did handle them and in time, flourished. Just being accepted into the program gave me a sense of accomplishment as I had fulfilled my long-time goal of moving to Japan. When those early setbacks happened I was able to reach deep down within myself and together with the support of loved ones, have seen this dream through. Being from a tropical climate and given my aforementioned obstacles in the cold-weathered, event-filled season, I began to greatly identify with and embody the famous quote from Albert Camus, "In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer."

So what has it meant and what will I take away?

This experience showed me what it's like being on the other side of the special bond shared between teachers and students. It made me identify more than ever with my country, hometown, and upbringing, thus realizing how grateful I am for them. I was given the opportunity to give something back to this country that I love so much when I volunteered in disaster-stricken Tohoku. It taught me that people from all over the world really are more alike than they are different and that learning about our differences is

fascinating. It allowed me to travel to some truly beautiful and wondrous places that I never imagined I would be able to see. It showed me first-hand that strangers who are different in every way can find themselves in a situation together and, as unlikely as it seems, will in time become their own small dysfunctional family (that's a shout out to you, my most adored Tamba family). It fleshed out the most important relationships I have with people back home as we mutually strove to maintain our bond across the globe. It reassured me that in life, things really do get worse before they get better. It forced me to grow and mature as an individual, bringing me closer to being the person I want to be.

The JET experience has meant I can smile when I look back on my life knowing that when I got this chance, I took it; when it changed my life, I let it. In two short years, it pleases me to think I've seized the day more times than some people have done in a lifetime. In other words, as cliché as it may sound, the JET experience has meant the world to me. What my world is now is because of it.

Gen Garcia
A high school ALT in rural Tamba,
Hyogo Prefecture

Once you're a JET, you're a JET all the way

Hello Hyogo-ites!

By the time you read this, you will have uttered, "atsui ne" or "mushi atsui ne" at least once to anyone who will hear it. Well, ganbare – summer has only just started!

For those of you who are returning home this summer though, you will get to leave the oppressive heat and humidity. Unfortunately, it also means leaving behind a life that you have built over the past 12 months, or more. The upside to this is you will have formed friendships and take with you memories that will last a lifetime.

Aside from remembering to file for your pension refund when you get back, we would like to encourage you to join your local JET alumni chapter. Each chapter offers different social, cultural and professional events.

JETAAi (JET Alumni Association International) has 53,000+ alumni in 52 chapters spanning 17 countries. JETAA USA (JET Alumni Association of the United States of America) alone has 19 official chapters, not including sub-chapters. Through local chapter activities, former JETs are able to promote a broader and deeper understanding between Japan and their home country at the grassroots level by being

engaged in various cultural and social activities.

As the Membership Development Chair of the New York chapter, I would like to extend an invitation to any JETs who are coming, or returning, to New York, New Jersey, or Pennsylvania. Visit our website, and like us on Facebook to see photos of past activities and information about upcoming events. You can also sign up for our newsletter by clicking "Join JETAANY" at the top of our homepage to keep abreast of any news, job postings, and upcoming events. We run an annual career forum for new returnees, a Welcome Back Reception, a meishi exchange for networking, and many more events including hikes, happy hours, a summer boat cruise, and 日本語だけ dinners throughout the year. We also keep up the traditions of hanami, bonnenkai, and shinnenkai.

Aside from the many events we have, the JET alumni community is also a great support group. One of the ways to lessen the blow of reverse culture shock on your return home is by joining your local JET alumni chapter. We are told "Every Situation Is Different," but we all have a shared experience that may be hard to explain to our friends

and family back home. Being a part of the alumni network allows you to make a smoother transition back into your post-JET life whether or not you have clear goals of where you'd like to be professionally. Staying connected to JET through your local chapter helps to build the program for generations to come. With your involvement, the JET Alumni network will only continue to grow stronger.

Assistance for finding your local Alumni Chapter:

JETAA International

JETAA USA

NY Chapter Website
and Facebook Page

Ann Chow Hyogo-ken, ALT, 2007-2009

Ann Chow is the Membership Development Chair of JETAANY (JET Alumni Association of New York) and served as the Editor of the Hyogo Times in 2008-2009.

今熊野観音寺 & 革堂

Imakumano Kannonji (15) & Kodo (19)

This month we have another Kyoto double feature! Temples 15 and 19 of the 33 temple pilgrimage are Imakumano Kannon-ji and Kodo.

First up is Imakumano Kannon-ji, which literally means “present-day Kumano Kannon temple” and it has strong connections to temple 1 (Seiganto-ji), located in Wakayama in the area of Kumano. Imakumano Kannon-ji is so named because in the 1100s, the Emperor Go Shirakawa renamed the area surrounding the temple Imakumano, and the mountain where the temple stands Shin-Nachizan (Nachizan is the mountain on which Seiganto-ji, temple 1, stands) after a vision instructed him to save people the danger of traveling all the way to the real Kumano. The journey was perilous, and especially so during the Gempei wars.

The temple area was destroyed in the Onin Wars of the late 16th Century, and afterwards priests traveled the countryside gathering funds to rebuild it. Many Emperors are buried here, including Emperor Komei, successor of Emperor Meiji.

The image enshrined at Imakumano is a small, truly secret image of Juichimen (eleven-faced) Kannon. Unlike other images that go on display every 33 years or so, this one is never

viewed; it is said to have been carved by Kobo Daishi in the 9th century, and is just 55cm high. Tucked inside this statue is another tiny one of 5cm, said to have been given to Kumano Gongen by Amaterasu, the sun goddess. (Kumano Gongen is sort of like the Shinto version (the native spirit) of the Buddhist deity Kannon, showing the Japanese syncretism of its two religious practices.) The image here is associated with curing headaches since Emperor Go Shirakawa’s debilitating headaches are said to have been cured by this Kannon. Nowadays, people come to pray for relief from headaches as well as protection from disaster and illness.

Because the temple is so associated with the Kumano Gongen, the Shinto manifestation of Kannon, there are elements of Imakumano Kannon-ji’s layout that differ from many of the other temples seen on the route. The temple has no entry gates, but instead a vermillion-colored bridge that echoes the torii gates seen at the entrance to Shinto shrines. Crossing the bridge is an act of purification, and a symbolic motion from the everyday world into the sacred space.

As educators, JETs might be interested in the statue of Komamori Daishi, or child-protecting Daishi. Kobo Daishi

opened the first school in Japan that was open to all children (and not just noble-born males). Imakumano Kannon-ji offers many services related to the health and well-being of children. Not far off, you’ll find the statue of Bokefuji Kannon, prayed to by those who wish to prevent senile dementia; this temple is stop number one on a different regional pilgrimage dedicated to this particular Kannon. In the grounds you will also find shrines to the Inari and to Kumano Gongen side by side.

The Hondo is said to be situated on the site of the original temple built in 820, where Kumano Gongen appeared to Kobo Daishi. For this reason, praying in the Hondo is considered especially powerful. The temple is also dedicated to Ebisu, one of the seven lucky gods, and is part of a seven temple pilgrimage around the mountain that takes place each New Year. Our next temple, Kodo, is home to another of them: Jurojin, god of wisdom and longevity.

Imakumano Kannon-ji is a ten minute walk from Sennyuji-michi (泉涌寺道) stop on bus 202, 207, or 208. It’s also a five minute cab ride from Kyoto Station itself, or if you feel adventurous, a 30 minute walk. From Tofukuji station (東福寺) it is a 15 minute walk.



Imakumano Kannon-ji is at the south end of Kyoto city, and Kodo, temple 19, is in the north. Kodo’s formal name is Gyogan-ji, and Kodo is a nickname referring to it as the deer-hide temple. It is the only temple on the route run by a nunnery. Their Senju (thousand-armed) Kannon image, carved from a sacred tree from Kyoto’s Shimogamo Shrine, is viewable once a year. The image is said to grant the wishes of all young girls, but especially those aged four (the “shi” connection to death making four significant) and 13 (the age when a girl becomes a young woman).

The name Kodo comes from the founding story of the small temple: Gyoen Shonin founded the temple in 1004. He, formerly a hunter, became a priest as an act of remorse when he killed a deer that had a living fawn inside her. It was his vision that led to the

cutting down and carving of the sacred tree at Shimogamo Shrine for the image enshrined at Kodo.

Though Kodo is small, you will find many small shrines within. Aside from a row of the seven lucky gods, there is a small building dedicated to Chintaku-reifujin, also known as the deity of the North Pole Star, the Hokushin Myoken Bosatsu. Sometimes depicted as a warrior, sometimes a celestial angel, Myoken is another instance of syncretism, blending Buddhism, Daoism, Shinto, and a focus on yin and yang. Chintaku Reifujin is considered a manifestation of Kannon. Near the corner, the Gorinto (massive stone thing) represents the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space. Inside is a shrine to the Light King. Next to the Gorinto is a small shrine to Shusse Benzaiten, the Japanese muse who brings success.

During Obon in early August, the temple displays the Yurei Ema, a tablet showing a young girl who was once a devotee at the temple. She was cruelly imprisoned after defying her master’s insistence that she not visit the temple and died from cold. Her family left this dedication in order to bring peace to their daughter’s spirit.

Kodo is a three minute walk from the Kawaramachi/Marutamachi bus stop, or a ten minute walk from Marutamachi station on the Keihan line.

[Imakumano Kannon-ji’s official website \(Japanese\)](#)

[Read more about the Yurei Ema at Kodo here](#)

Emily Lemmon

Men-o-pause

Finding the perfect mate is

like finding the perfect outfit for a soiree – it takes dedication, lots of effort, friends to help you and in most cases it's hidden in a fabulous vintage store in a unique 'district'. Finding the perfect mate is also like looking for a car – you have to search through the thousands of 'classifieds', have good friends to help you look, and need to test drive it one or two times and see exactly how it operates on the 'road'. Finding a perfect mate is also like finding the perfect winter sweater to pair with your pants – you have to feel snugged and warm in it, it should be fitted enough, but not too suffocating, and it has to allow you to show your sense of individuality while highlighting how fabulous they look together. Well, sometimes finding the perfect mate can be very exhausting. All these 'samplings', 'trials', 'test-drives', 'out-fit experiments' and 'sweater-runs' can be taxing on one's body

and you just need to go through **'MEN-O-PAUSE'**.

According to the Homo-Dictionary of Imported Words, 'MEN-O-PAUSE is a state of single-ness where one takes a break from the scene, steps back from the mayhem of dating life and through introspection comes to see exactly what one wants and the best way to get it.' Oh, and by the way, in a revised version of the term, it states that this also includes no hook-ups, no blow-jobs, no having 'drinks' with an ex-bf, no internet dating and no kissing. Internet pornography, however, is fully acceptable for its 'medicinal' purposes. The Lesbo-Vagi-nary of Imported Words, provides the complementary '(wo)MEN-O-PAUSE is a state where a femme (or stud, in rare cases) takes a break from her girl-hunting days.' No slumber parties allowed.

The concept of the 'perfect mate' in itself is the stressor (wait, 'stressor'... I am watching too much Criminal Minds... that sexy Shamar Moore has me so weak!). 'Perfect' denotes no flaw, no adjustment needed, ideal for ONLY me. My friends will adore him, my family will worship him, he won't leave me – never; we'll last forever and he'll rescue me from single-ness. But is there such a thing as a 'perfect' mate? Are we fooling ourselves or are we just misinformed about this new species of man? In search of love, are we asking for too much and being unfair, or is this a reasonable request? The fact that so many of us have slapped on the F.B.I badge in search of the 'perfect mate' makes me wonder if we really know what we want. Do we need to just shut the hell up, leave the dating scene and allow MEN-O-PAUSE to reset our search engine? In life and love,



why do we believe that everything has to be perfect? Perfect is boring (Daney-ann Thomas, 2011....a.k.a 'my Hag').

The notion of the 'perfect mate' mirrors that of Santa Claus – good for kids, stories, novels, movies and the economy, but definitely bad for reality, adults and our hearts. And so, like kids and Santa, Christmas morning comes and gifts are being opened. Some kids are happy with what they receive and some are not. The kids who aren't happy are those who claim to have not gotten exactly what they had hoped/ prayed/wished-upon-a-star for. But, is it that what they actually received is a bad gift? Is it that the gift is such a misfit that you need to return it to the store? Or, should you be more eager to try-out the gift, test what it can do, compare it to what others have received. Step

back and take a scenic view of everything!

The long and short of it all is that whether you are in a committed relationship or dating, there comes a time when you need to go through 'MEN-O-PAUSE'. Sometimes, the best view one can get is from that bit farther off. Being up close, you are often blinded by your blurry fixation; or just so dependent that even if the truth is staring you in the face, you fail to believe it.

Dwayne Cobourne

ごまたまご Gomatamago

Welcome to another instalment of the Mochi Diaries, Chapter 6 Gomatamago ごまたまご! While these guys really aren't mochi but in fact intricately designed cakes, they are omiyage お土産 and so kawaii I couldn't resist!!!

During my last top to 東京 I picked a box of Gomatamago ごまたまご (Lit. Black Sesame Egg) cakes on my way home as the packaging intrigued me. Furthermore Gomatamago are a meibutsu 名物 (specialty product) of the Tokyo region, so it's not as if I would have the opportunity to purchase them again in the near future. As far as omiyage go, these are on the pricey side of things at ¥700 for a box containing eight eggs. That said, they are each individually wrapped and sizeable.

The centre is a sweet paste consisting of kurogoma 黒胡麻 (black sesame seeds) and anko 餡子 (red bean paste) which is supposed to constitute the 'yolk' of the egg – perhaps they are meant to be piitan 皮蛋 (Chinese century eggs) (^ω^). This 'yolk' is then coated in a thin layer of kasutera カステラ (castella cake), a type of Japanese cake whose origins lie in 16th century Nagasaki and trade with Portugal. It is immensely popular these days. Finally the tamago is coated in a thin layer of white-chocolate to form a delicious crispy 'shell'.

All in all I was quite impressed by this tasty treat. I imagine they would go hand in hand with a cup of afternoon tea.

The centre retained a perfect level of moistness and was not overly sweet.

If you're ever in Tokyo give a box a try!

Daniel (Jako) Jaccone

4/5



An old favorite with
a Japanese twist!

Kicchiri
Kitchen

緑茶子のチーズケーキ Green Tea Cheesecake

Ingredients

CRUST

- 1½ cups of plain cookies, crushed (Marie biscuits work well)
- ¼ cup finely chopped walnuts
- 6 tablespoons of melted butter

FILLING

- 1 packet cream cheese (200g)
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 30ml lemon juice
- 120ml whipping cream
- green tea powder (as much as you like, just check how it tastes)

CRUST

Step one

Mix all ingredients together and press firmly into a pie pan.

Step two

Bake at 175 degrees Celsius for ten minutes. Leave to cool.

FILLING

Step one

Combine all ingredients in a bowl using an electric mixer (or a lot of elbow grease!).

Step two

Put the filling on the crust and smooth the top.

Step three

Cover with aluminum foil and place in the freezer.

Step four

30 minutes before serving, take the cheesecake out of the freezer and let it defrost a little. Serve with fresh fruit.

If you don't like lemon or green tea, it is fine to leave either one or both of these ingredients out and make just a simple cheesecake.

Lauren McRae

This is my last entry for the **Hyogo Times**. I hope you have enjoyed the Japanese recipes over the past two years and continue to use them, happy cooking!

Rugby, Japan style * Wales vs. Japan

On Saturday the 8th June a

young Welsh side met a feisty Japan for an exciting first game of Wales' tour of Japan.

Osaka's Kintestu Hanazono Stadium, Japan's oldest dedicated rugby stadium, was the stage for the first game of the Japan-Wales test series. 30,000 rugby fans filled the stadium to capacity for the 2pm kick off on a scorching June Saturday. I was one of those fans.

Having bonded on my first day with Kyoto-sensei over a mutual love of the game, these last ten months I have enjoyed his regular reports on Kobe Steel Kobelco Steelers [what a mouthful] matches, as well as personalized DVDs of every Six Nations match [he knows the time difference plays hell with sports viewing]. However it wasn't until the Wales tour of Japan that we managed to join forces and go to a game.

Looking back at Wales' last tour to Japan in 2001 when the visitors dominated the relatively new rugby nation with two wins and painful point differences (10th June 2001: 64-10, 17th June: 53-30) you might be forgiven for predicting a similar walkover by the 26-time Six Nations winning side. However, add to the mix seven first-time caps on the

field for the Welsh, intense heat and humidity, and a Japanese team itching for a win after two recent frustrating losses to Fiji and Tonga in the Pacific Nations Cup, and you have one interesting match.

Of course Kyoto-sensei was supporting Japan. I, however, wore my daffodil with pride, rooting for the visiting side. A Welsh surname was enough to garner forgiveness for my treachery to the home team and we arrived at the Hanazono Stadium in high spirits, each wanting a win for our team, but far too polite to really vocalize it.

In typical Japanese style we arrived over an hour before kick-off. This proved a good call as the majority of the stadium was free seating and Kyoto-sensei had to greet all the other regulars on his way to finding our seats. Of course it also facilitated a quick stop for libations, essential to any sunny sporting event. There was a definite party atmosphere as the stadium filled and we scrutinized the teams warming up. Japan Rugby is really trying to build up support for the sport in Japan in advance of hosting the 2019 World Cup – Not only did we all come away

with promotional goodies to prove it, but I learnt that all high school rugby clubs in the country had been offered free seats at the test matches to encourage young rugby fans. It all made for a jovial atmosphere as true fans of the sport gathered, keen to get involved.

The match itself was great fun to watch and the Cherry Blossom's performance was very impressive. Despite being a second tier rugby nation, they really gave Wales' inexperienced XV a run for their money. In the first half Japan fielded a tenacious defence, making Wales struggle at the breakdown, providing the home team with two penalties, opportunities that full-back Ayumu Goromaru used to give Japan a 6-0 lead. Although Wales clawed themselves back with two of their own penalties, Japan dominated possession and were the deserved leaders at half-time (11-6) thanks to an unopposed try from Michael Broadhurst.

The twenty minute interval gave the Welsh side a much needed reprieve from the scorching heat, which had them dazed in the first half. [It was also the perfect opportunity for a snack break

for the spectators, and let me tell you Japan does sports food better than the Millennium Stadium: ice cream, curries, karaage and even a huge seafood BBQ for those who don't bring their own picnic – the novelty of this being allowed has still not worn off!]

After the break the boys in red came back fighting, determined to prove themselves despite the weather conditions. Although Japan still looked strong, Goromaru missed a couple of penalties whereas Wales' Biggar was on target. The young Welsh side seemed to finally click as Harry Robinson received a fantastic pass from Liam Williams and secured a try, converted by Biggar. The scattered Wales fans in the stands sighed with relief, but before they could get complacent Japan countered with their own converted try.

The last ten minutes were tense; Wales led 19-18. The crowd, 99.9% Japan supporters, was clamouring for a home win – although in truly Japanese form they clapped and cheered for any good play, no matter which side it came from (they really are the most polite sports fans in the world) but Wales were determined to keep their 100% record against Japan and

the replacement fly-half Rhys Patchell secured it with a well-aimed penalty in the dying minutes.

An exciting game and a thoroughly enjoyable day; we left the stadium very slowly (I recommend public transport rather than the hour queue to leave the car park) and went for an "after match function". Although Kyoto-sensei and his compatriots were disappointed with the result, we all agreed it was a hard won game for the Welsh and that it is very positive for the future of rugby in Asia to see Japan able to give a far more established rugby nation a real run for its money.

Test Series update

On Saturday the 15th June, at the Prince Chichibu Memorial Rugby Ground, Tokyo, Japan claimed an historic win (23-8) over Wales. A spectacular second half saw the Cherry Blossoms break a 40 year losing streak against the Red Dragons – a very exciting result for the future of international rugby and the 2019 World Cup hosts themselves.

Charlotte Griffiths



Unagi (The Eel) Shohei Imamura, 1997

Coverage of the last Cannes Film

Festival with all its Cote d'Azur glamour and boulevards teeming with cinematic talent left me pining for films, diamonds and a red carpet gown. The yen is not currently particularly conducive to the latter two, so I had to sate my hunger with films. As a bit of a Francophile I am desperate to see this year's **Palme D'Or** winner **Blue is the Warmest Colour**, but as there's no release date for Japan I suspect I have a long wait ahead of me. This disappointment however, has led to my new personal challenge: to watch as many **Palme D'Or** winners as possible.

The festival's most prestigious award was introduced in 1955, so that's quite a hefty list of films. Where to begin? Scrolling down Wikipedia's handy list for inspiration I was able to pat myself on the back for having

seen a fair few already, before spotting the works of a few distinguished Japanese directors. Shohei Imamura, the only Japanese director to receive the accolade twice, seemed an appropriate starting point for my filmic forage.

After Imamura's **The Ballad of Narayama** took the Cannes top spot back in 1983 he came back, at the ripe old age of 71, and did it again with **The Eel** in 1997, becoming only the fifth director to win the **Palme D'Or** twice (there have since been two more).

The Eel opens with a quintessential Tokyo salary man, Takuro Yamashita, as he commutes home, the poisonous words of an anonymous letter describing his wife's extramarital affair ringing in his ears. Upon his

return, his seemingly dutiful wife sends him off on his usual night-fishing trip with his bento. However, suspicions piqued, instead of returning the next morning as planned Yamashita comes home in the dead of night, catching his wife in flagrante with a mystery man. The mood shifts sharply as Imamura portrays a very violent murder. But don't let the gruesome opening sequence put you off or you'll miss a sensitive portrayal of Japan's everyman coming to terms with life after love, betrayal and loss.

Despite the initial scenes, **The Eel** is, on the whole, gently paced, picking up with Yamashita after eight years in prison for the crime he immediately turned himself in for. The film follows our now near-catatonic, uncommunicative

protagonist's gradual, if somewhat unconventional, opening up to emotion and human connections. The change is catalyzed by the new woman in his life, whom he saves from suicide only to have her repay him with initially unwanted assistance in his barber shop. Intriguingly the same actress, Misa Shimizu, plays both the adulterous murdered wife, and the convict-turned-barber's assistant, Keiko Hattori.

From the mentally unstable Carmen-obsessed grand-dame (mother to Keiko) to the neighbour making a landing site for UFOs, the small cast is rich with characters. This enables Imamura to portray the passions and idiosyncrasies hidden beneath the orderly surface of Japanese society. By calling Japanese conformity into question,

the spectator can contemplate the emotional issues which transcend nationality: jealousy, rage and remorse, but most importantly the endurance of hope and potential for redemption through love.

Although the rhythm of the film is generally as calm as the meandering river in which Yamashita goes nocturnal eel-fishing, Imamura shifts the tone from violence to farce, often by way of visually very 90s, and sometimes graphic, dream-like sequences. All of this can be rather disconcerting, contrasted as it is with the muted tones, discreet dialogues and repressed emotions featured in the majority of the film. However, Imamura uses this diversity to focus the spectator's attention with precision on the flaws of mankind.

A film which includes adultery, murder, suicide, mental instability, physical assault, fortune stealing and prison internment may sound like the recipe for a good thriller. Thanks to expert directing and casting, **The Eel** is instead a sensitive, if tense, portrayal of the paralyzing stubbornness suffered by those who shield themselves against love following betrayal and pain.

And the title? Naturally it refers to the pet Yamashita raised in the prison pond; the only one who listens to what he has to say, and doesn't say what he doesn't want to hear... intrigued? You should be.

Charlotte Griffiths

Stoker Park Chan-wook, 2013

Whilst I generally err towards

more light-hearted fare when it comes to movies, I won't deny having a soft spot for Park Chan-wook's *Oldboy*. I may have only considered watching it because I wanted to see the live octopus scene, but it turned out to be a pretty entertaining, if somewhat violent, movie. The *Stoker* screenplay was looked at with a great deal of interest when it made its way onto the scene in 2010, and when Park took it on as his English language debut, the buzz around it really started to grow.

I first came across the movie in September last year when the trailer was posted on the Empire Magazine website. It looked intriguing and beautiful; being easily swayed by others' expectations, I was excited.

After the film's positive reception at Sundance, where it premiered in January, I was delighted to find that it was not only coming out in Japanese cinemas, but would be doing so in less than six months (which seems to be the normal wait time, if a movie comes out at all...). Opening weekend rolled around and it was off to the cinema!

Side note – it was randomly being shown in the Premier screen at the Toho Cinema in Nishinomiya Gardens, but for no extra cost. That was a good perk – as is going to Toho Cinemas in general because they have ginger caramel popcorn.

From the opening scene, it was clear that this was indeed going to be a visually beautiful movie. With slow motion close-ups of crops swaying in the breeze, our heroine, India (Mia Wasikowska) introduces herself in restrained voice-over before we are transported to the day of her eighteenth birthday and death of her father. Not exactly the best of birthday presents. At the subsequent funeral, India's previously unknown uncle, Charlie (Matthew Goode), makes an appearance, and is invited to stay at the family home by her mother (Nicole Kidman). Together, the three form a triumvirate of ever so slightly crazy characters caught in a web of intrigue, hostility, lust and secrets.

Stoker is definitely one of the most precise movies I have ever seen. I think this is part of what gives the movie such a dreamlike quality. The characters seem detached from their actions and almost scientific in their observation of the world around them. The occasionally

graphic scenes sit quite oddly next to 'normal' goings on and somehow take away some of the horror that's occurring. The characters' reactions, or rather lack thereof, further heighten this feeling. This is quite unsettling when, as audience members, we tend to base our own reactions to events on those of the characters. I frequently felt unsure about how I was meant to respond to what was happening and that was very discomforting.

Maybe I was in the wrong mood that day as I'm almost disappointed in myself for not liking the movie. It's easy to see why it was so popular with 'movie people'; symbolism abounds, the performances are immaculate and the psychotic horror of the story contrasts brilliantly with the visuals.

That said, the story itself is quite predictable and whilst the characters are interesting as studies, I felt little investment in them. I would truly love to explore the layers to the movie that Park has woven together, but I just don't want to watch the movie again in order to do so. I will accept that for other people, this may be an outstanding piece of writing and cinematography. Personally, I'd rather watch something else.

Imogen Custance

Goodbye's....

So long,
farewell, またこんど, goodbye...

I'm still not entirely sure what

prompted me to volunteer to edit the **Hyogo Times** last year, but to whatever neurons fired and prompted me to give it a go, I say thank you. It's been great fun reading all the articles before the rest of the world, apparently being very British in some of my edits and writing random articles about snakes (only one recently – moving rather quickly across the cycle path as I approached, but it was only little). Writer's block when needing to produce an editor's letter has been slightly less fun, but it happens to the best of us I guess. I hope that those occasions weren't too noticeable...

I would like to thank everyone who has written for the **Hyogo Times** and put up with me badgering them for submissions and/or confirmation that edits are okay this year. Whenever I've looked at the file containing all of any given month's articles I've felt all warm and fuzzy inside. It's great to see such a range of

interests and experiences being shared with other people in the prefecture and beyond. I'd also particularly like to thank Karen who's been amazing on graphics, despite me not catching errors until the edition's basically finished – sorry m(__)m, and Dana, who basically saved my life when we lost the previous online editor in mid-October. You keep things together in a way that I never could.

As I write this, I still don't know who my successor at school is, but I do at least know who will reign over the reins of the **HT** after me. The lovely Charlotte Griffiths, a name you may recognize from the wonderful articles she's been writing over the past year, will no doubt be leading the publication onwards and upwards. I hope that she, and everyone else, has a great year. From now on I can look forward to the 1st rather than the 15th of the month like a regular person.

So fare thee well, one and all. I may yet write a word or three in future editions, but you won't have to put up with my blathering on quite such a regular basis.

It's been a pleasure.

Imi

...and hello's!

Setting all emotional...

Hello hello!

Charlotte Griffiths, your future editor, here, getting all emotional...

The year has flown by and this month marks the end of another **Hyogo Times** chapter. I'd like to say a huge thank you to Imi, our omniscient editor, for her dedication and patience over the last twelve months. However, as one editor puts her red pen down, another picks it up. I am slightly nervous of stepping into the big shoes left for me, but excited to continue the work of the **Hyogo Times** in celebrating the creative spirits and adventures of our little community. (Please help me along the way with submissions, big or small, due on the 15th of the month.)

To those of you leaving Japan, I wish you a fond farewell and safe travels, please keep in touch (no excuses now with all the interweb-thingamebobs!) and continue your JET experience vicariously through our articles. For those still entranced by the Land of the Rising Sun, I am sure you are looking forward to another fun-filled year here as much as I am. Finally, to any newbies reading this in preparation for departure: welcome to arguably the best prefecture in Japan (slightly biased, and what?).

Until August,

Charlotte



...and thanks for all the fish