

Perspectives

THE JAPAN FOUNDATION LONDON

Bridging the Gap

Japan-UK Study Centre planned for Disaster Risk Reduction

In recent years, the focus of disaster management has repositioned to include a greater emphasis on the need to work towards disaster avoidance rather than responding to disasters once they have occurred. This shift was reflected at the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction (UNWCDR) at Kobe in January 2005 with the signing of the Hyogo Accord. The need for greater inclusion of prevention had been all too obvious in terms of both increases in disasters and of improved awareness of the causes of disasters. Whilst major disasters are ancient phenomena and recent 'increases' are also down to more efficient reporting, many of the developmental causes that lie behind contemporary crises are often avoidable. For example, natural environments that provide coastal defences have been depleted through development, marginalised high population density communities live in dangerous locations, building design is inadequate, and nutritionally susceptible populations have compromised immunity to disease.

It is increasingly understood that management of the hazard or threat of disaster, such as the nature of an earthquake, tsunami, hurricane, drought, or disease organism may be beyond our capacity, but reduced human vulnerability to these is achievable. Beyond these types of physical environmental hazards other threats such as terrorism can arguably also be avoided or mitigated through improved prior vulnerability reduction and better-informed risk management practice. The potential increase in interest in the risk reduction agenda is therefore vast. Furthermore, avoiding disasters rather than reacting to them when it is too late not only saves lives but also billions of funds for emergency relief and reconstruction of infrastructure and livelihoods.

Vulnerability reduction or building resilience is however dependent on an education based on the knowledge of survivors, practitioners and researchers, and to date there is still a remarkable dearth in the amount of the education sector given up to this agenda. Consequently, one year on from the world conference at Kobe, Japanese



Kobe after the quake. Source: www.niksula.cs.hu.fi/~haa/kobe.html

and UK academics came together for a Japan Foundation funded seminar at Northumbria University to address the education needs in disaster risk reduction practice. Some key principles for knowledge and learning in this field include that disasters consolidate development issues and can accentuate learning.

Academics working in this field know that it is the practice-based approach that guides the study of disaster management through a combination of emergency services and local development initiatives that involve the community. This is why it has been important to integrate some of the world of emergency response, development practitioners, local authorities, communities and the education sector. Processes of learning through practice, principles of participation of people who are at risk, and attention to the multiple actual, relative, or perceived influences on disaster risks underpin this approach. As such disaster risk management thinking is encouraging proactive disaster risk policy and practice. This is essentially a transboundary development that must learn from different practices and cultures in a bid to maximise risk reduction more globally.

“As disasters and uncertainty about disasters proliferate, there is clearly a need to reinforce a grounded core of collaborative research, teaching and learning in disaster risk management.”

The Northumbria University Disaster and Development Centre (DDC), with accompanying programme of studies in disaster management and sustainable development together with the Disaster Prevention Research Institute (DPRI) at Kyoto University and other Japanese University partners seek to address this through establishing a Japan – UK study centre for disaster risk reduction. This will provide an opportunity to bridge gaps between practitioners, researchers and policy makers, building on experience from two parts of the world and for third countries. Varied contexts for local practice and policy lead research will support educational provision that responds to demand for action in a global agenda of improved human security and well-being.

**Dr Andrew Collins, Director,
Disaster and Development Centre
Northumbria University**

Director's Note



The Japan Foundation London office lies very close to Russell Square and visitors from Japan often ask me about the history of this famous

square and why it is so called. Everyone is impressed by the fact that the name is related to the famous philosopher, Bertrand A. W. Russell.

Russell Square was laid out in 1800, and was named after the ground landlords, the Russells, Earls and later Dukes of Bedford. The Russell family dates back to the 14th or 15th Century. John Russell flourished in the reign of Henry VIII and was created Earl of Bedford in 1550 and William, the 5th Earl was created Duke of Bedford in 1694.

Russell Square, one of London's largest squares, was set up by Francis, the 5th Duke. The Russells took a great interest in London's environmental work acquiring most of Bloomsbury and establishing many formal bourgeois squares. They also turned their hands to nearby Covent Garden.

Bertrand, 3rd Earl Russell, was connected to the Russell family, and lived for a time near the British Museum. He must have often taken a short walk to Russell Square, books under his arm, and passed some time reading under a tree.

As I write this, I can see through my window the tall London plane trees in Russell Square, their bare branches reaching afar with two or three remaining brownish fruits hanging together on each stalk. An earlier fall of hailstones has left their stalks glistening and trembling in the wind. Spring might be close at hand.

In this edition of *Perspectives* we report on some of the Japan-related events and activities that we have been promoting, from the important symposium on Disaster Risk Management featured on page 1, to the successful Stringraphy tour late last year. We are looking forward to seeing more of you at future events, as Spring arrives at Russell Square.

Fumio Matsunaga
Director General

Obtaining Pictures:

Production and Display in Edo Period Japan

In autumn 2005, the Japan Foundation kindly funded me for six weeks of research in Tokyo, during which I worked on a project (which remains on-going) entitled *Obtaining Pictures: Production and Display in Edo Period Japan* and on which I hope to submit a book-length manuscript this coming summer.

Many scholars, students and enthusiasts of Japanese art have long regretted the absence of a single study covering the painting and prints of the Edo period. There are many detailed studies and a few wide-ranging introductions to Japanese art as a whole, but there is very little that constitutes both a readable introduction and an analysis of sufficient depth to show not just how Edo art might look, but also why it looks as it does, and what its appearance might mean. *Obtaining Pictures* aims to be such a book.

I hope to structure the book in three parts. The first will deal with mechanical issues, that is, how and where pictures might be bought, who bought what, and how much they would expect to pay for it. Part one will also consider issues, appropriate themes (what was right when) and



Otsuka Giho, *The Dream Painting of Kunitomo Ikkansai*, early 19c. private collection

rotating displays. None of these questions has ever been properly outlined in English.

The second part will be a study of the formal schools, namely, Kano, Tosa, Rinpa (or Rimpa) and Nanga. These are all well-known and are discussed studies in several European languages, but nevertheless, *Obtaining Pictures* will present them in a new light, and will off-set one against the other, as cannot be done in single-subject monograph, to show how, together, they made up the world of elite representation. This second part will also have a section on Buddhist painting (and it will include portraiture, much of which was religiously commemorative); virtually all studies of the Edo arts fail to take Buddhism seriously – with the sole exception of writings on Zen painting – and the period is routinely defined in terms of secularisation, which is not correct.

The third part of *Obtaining Pictures* will look at popular arts, notably genre painting (*fuokuga*) and, of course, 'pictures of the floating world' (*ukiyo-e*).

I show here the image that I hope to use for the cover illustration. For me it shows a profound orientation of much Japanese (and indeed all East Asian) picture-making, that is interestingly at variance with that of Europe. It is not a famous work of art, perhaps, but that is part of what, to me, makes it revealing. Kunitomo Ikkansai, a samurai from Nagahama, is shown wearing his formal dress; he holds a painting that records a response to a dream he had – that a bird he had painted had flown off the silk; it was a dream in every sense. Not being a very excellent artist, Ikkansai had his artistic aspiration depicted by a professional, Otsuka Giho. Here we meet a concept of painting as creation, which can stand in opposition to the European notion of painting as replication.

Timon Screech,
SOAS, University of London

Database Available

Japanese Literature in Translation

A database of Japanese works of literature that have been translated into other languages, mainly between 1945 and the 1990s, is now available on the Japan Foundation website. It is searchable by author, title of work, translator, or other keywords and the basic unit of the database is the work rather than the publication. It is free of charge to all users worldwide at the following URL: www.jpf.go.jp/cgi-bin/jlsearch.cgi

Crossing Boundaries: Japanese Films Adapted from Manga Seminar at the ICA

In conjunction with the Japan Foundation's touring film programme, "Comic Proportions", a seminar was held at the ICA on 5 February. The five panelists from the UK and Japan included Yudai Yamaguchi, Director of, *Cromartie High School*, that had just enjoyed its European premier on this Japan Foundation tour.



The chair, Dr Julian Stringer, opened with a definition of 'adaptation' remarking that in film choice of sound was as important as the visual form. Panelist Yoko Ono emphasised the long history of mutual interaction between films and manga. Live action film adapted from manga could be traced back to the mid 1920s and not only were manga, with their rich story lines, a source of inspiration for film makers but they also guaranteed a ready audience of manga readers for the adapted films. It was thought that small production budgets in Japan made it more likely for manga depicting everyday life to be adapted for recent live action films than for science fiction

that may require complicated sets. Jasper Sharp followed Yoko's presentation, focusing primarily on cases from Gekiga in the 1960s and 1970s.

One can argue over the extent to which adapted films should remain faithful to the original manga. Panelist, Paul Gravett, explained how in *Nowhere Man (Muno no hito)* the film changed the end of the story missing the very point the manga artist wanted to make. Yudai Yamaguchi, having literally grown up with manga culture, said he had not made *Cromartie High School* because it was a popular manga but because he felt the manga work could be an interesting source for the film. The first part of the film had been quite faithful to the original manga with the latter part his own creation. Manga and film were different in form and purpose, and should be treated as such. His concern was how to make his work interesting as film rather than how faithful or otherwise it might be to the original manga. In film the 'image' of the character of the original manga was quite often transformed and a new world reinvented.

Junko Takekawa
Senior Arts Programme Officer

Stringraphy

Kazue Mizushima's Ensemble amazes and enchants UK audiences

Last November the Japan Foundation toured Stringraphy Ensemble to St Andrew's Hall, Norwich, London's Lilian Baylis Theatre Sadler's Wells, Cardiff's Millennium Centre, and the Sage Gateshead.

"Dozens of silk strings and paper cups play music". The first reactions I received to my initial description of Stringraphy were mixed. But all shared a common feeling of "bewilderment". Host venue programmers were in no way convinced that this was a recipe for a full house and press and marketing nearly went astray. Stringraphy just could not be pigeonholed into any existing art category in the UK.

Although audiences numbers were modest, to my joy and surprise, the response from those lucky enough to encounter this special event was extremely positive. Over 91% described it enthusiastically as "enchanted" "original"

"amazing" and "enthraling". One remark, in particular, "It was the best thing I could ask for my 10th birthday", instantly made me smile. The carefully choreographed performance of music, movement and visual elements, especially the original works, were much admired even if adaptations of favourites, like Chim-Chim Cher-ee, may have seemed overly 'cute'. The commentary by Kazue Mizushima, Stringraphy's founder, intrigued everyone, as she explained how the various sounds are produced with such simple materials. The only pity was that after each performance we needed to prevent people from eagerly touching the strings, so fragile is the instrument itself.

What began as a struggle to find suitable homes for a production that was difficult for potential venues to initially comprehend, resulted in my being most fortunate to work with four prestigious UK organisations. Presenting Stringraphy to the

Performing Arts Japan for Europe:

Grant results

This year saw the Foundation's first attempt to award grants to those European organisers wishing to arrange Japan related performing arts projects. From a total of 17 applications Europe-wide, the London Office alone received 9 applications from UK organisers, an overwhelming number compared with those received by our European counterparts. We are therefore pleased to announce the following successful applications:

Touring Grant

Ryoji Ikeda: European Touring 2006

Forma Arts and Media Limited

Grand Kabuki with Ichikawa Ebizo

Askonas Holt Limited

OKI Dub Ainu Band – the Ancient

and Future: Sound of the Ainu

Far Side Music Ltd

Collaboration Grant

Japan in Scotland 2

Traverse Theatre Ltd

The city that never sleeps – The city of rain

doo-cot Ltd

The Bee

Soho Theatre Company

The deadline for this year's Performing Arts Japan for Europe Programme has been tentatively set around October 2006.

For further information, contact Junko Takekawa,
E-mail: junko.takekawa@jpf.org.uk



London Performance, Sadler's Wells

UK was not at all a simple and straightforward task, neither for me nor for the six members who had to repeatedly pack and unpack, set up and dismantle strings and cups (with utmost efficiency!) and to travel from one region to another in just two weeks...

...but it was worth it in every way!

Junko Takekawa

Gaining a Head Start in Japanese



'Nani ni shimasho ka?' - browsing for goods at a Japanese supermarket

In January, eight enthusiastic participants took part in the Japan Foundation's annual three-day *Head Start – Japanese from Scratch* course. Providing an intensive introduction to the Japanese language, this course was an excellent opportunity for language teachers and curriculum planners interested in introducing Japanese to their school to discover more about the practicalities of doing so. Participants were immersed in the language, gaining an introduction to all four skills, before being whisked off on the London – Nippon tour. The tour enabled participants to test their language skills when ordering lunch at a Japanese restaurant and browsing for goods at a Japanese supermarket.

Helen Fisher, a teacher of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) at St Edwards School in Romford, felt the course had provided 'a very good insight into how Japanese might be taught and resourced.' MFL Coordinator at Newlands School, Lionel Pianet, also felt that the course had given a 'clear view of how to introduce Japanese' at his school. Others reported that the course had been 'inspiring' and 'an immensely valuable three days.'

During the reception on the final day, participants had the opportunity to meet key figures from the UK – Japan scene and the field of education, including Dr Lid King, National Director for Languages from the DfES, JICC Director Mami Mizutori, representatives from Japan 21, the British Council and CILT amongst others. Paul Nock, Language College Director at Greenford High School, inspired guests with his talk on how successful the introduction of Japanese had been at his school since attendance at the 2004 Head Start Course.

Ben Brailsford

Forthcoming Seminar

Hidden Treasures: The Role and Significance of Japanese Art Collections in the UK

The Japan Foundation and the Victoria and Albert Museum will be holding a seminar on the theme of 'Collecting Japanese Art in the UK'. Four curators from UK national and regional museums will talk about issues surrounding the presentation, display and development of Japanese art treasures in this country. The speakers will include Gregory Irvine of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Emma Martin from the World Museum, Liverpool, Rebecca Hill from the Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery and Andrew Renton of the National Museum of Wales.

Date: 22 March from 6:30pm.

Place: The Japan Foundation, London



Laser technology generated reconstruction of Amida sculpture on display. Courtesy, National Museums Liverpool

To reserve a place, contact info@jpf.org.uk or fax 020-7323-4888, giving your name and those of any guests. Tickets will be allocated on a strictly first come, first served basis.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Events organised by, or with support from, the Japan Foundation

Now until 9 April

Parallel Realities: Asian Art Now Groundbreaking touring exhibition of work from the Third Fukuoka Triennale showing for the first time outside Asia. Featuring works by young artists including the talented Japanese Yamaguchi Keisuke. At Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery. More information at: www.c21.tv/

17-18 March

10th Annual Primary Languages Show 2006 Workshops and seminars on Primary Languages, including Ready Steady Nihongo. At Manchester Conference Centre. More information at www.cilt.org.uk

17-18 March

Symposium: What a Difference a Region Makes: Cultural Studies/Cultural Industries in East Asia. Organised by Birkbeck College and Goldsmith College in cooperation with the Japan Foundation at the Japan Foundation. Details from Keiko Bailey E-mail: k.bailey@bbk.ac.uk or visit www.bbk.ac.uk/lc/subjects/japanese

22 March

Seminar: Hidden Treasures: The Role and Significance of Japanese Art Collections in UK Museums: 6:30 pm at the Japan Foundation. See article on this page for details.

28-29 March

N-OPERA MACBETH: Britten Theatre, Royal College of Music Prince Consort Road London SW7 2BS at 7:30pm
Information: www.izuru-japan.net/

3-4 April

British Association for the Teaching of Japanese (BATJ) Spring Conference on Materials Development. More information: E-mail k.morimoto@leeds.ac.uk

7-8 April

ALL Conference Language World Conference & Exhibition, to be held at the University of Manchester. Information at www.all-languages.org.uk

2-3 May

Reunion: For Former Japan Foundation Fellows at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park. Details: E-mail Stephen.McEnally@jpf.org.uk

24 June

Nihongo Cup Japanese Speech Contest for Secondary Schools.



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