

Myriad Leaves

JLGC Newsletter

JULY 2009

Kanto Matsuri,
Akita Prefecture ©JNTO
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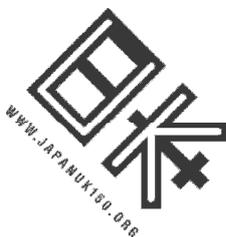
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Myriad Leaves is the English language title for the earliest collection of Japanese poetry, *Manyōshū*. It contains 4,516 *waka* poems, the last of which is dated AD759. There is uncertainty over the intention of the title: it could mean either 'Collection of ten thousand leaves' or 'Collection for ten thousand generations'.

JLGC Website **Blogging events in Japan's public sector**

JLGC has dipped a toe in the water of new media and joined the blogging fraternity, which also includes the Local Government Information Unit and the National Association of Local Councils among its ranks. The JLGC blog, which resides at <http://jlgc.wordpress.com> and features not only news on the centre and our parent organisation CLAIR, but also news on local links between the Britain and Japan from a wide variety of sources. Topics are not solely reserved for local government, recent posts have included the Tokyo 2016 Olympic bid, broadband access in both countries and even British government ministers' fondness for the Japanese bullet train. Point your browser to the blog today and don't forget to add us to your RSS reader if you have one.

Recent topics have included

- The latest developments in Tokyo's bid for the 2016 Olympics
- JLGC exhibiting *Paro*, from Toyama prefecture, the "therapeutic robot seal" designed for helping the elderly and people with dementia at the LGA conference in Harrogate
- JLGC staff representing Tokyo Metropolitan Government at the 2009 Plenary Meeting of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, in Copenhagen
- Suganami Ward in Tokyo using flowers to design out crime in urban planning
- Kuzumaki, Iwate prefecture, is making use of twelve wind turbines and three wind power plants to generate power for local residents
- Transport Minister Andrew Adonis' recent visit and observations on high speed rail and the regions in Japan

JLGC Activities**JETAA-UK AGM Manchester**

Director Noboru Fujishima, Assistant Director Seiki Kimura and PR Officer Keith Kelly attended the UK JET Programme Alumni Association AGM in Manchester at the end of March this year. JETAA UK helps support JLGC and the Embassy of Japan in supporting the JET Programme in the UK, sending UK graduates to Japan to work in English education in public schools and international activities within communities. Worldwide JETAA has an alumni base of around 50,000, thought to be among the largest alumni group of any programme. At this year's busy AGM a lot was discussed about activities by the different chapters within the regions of the UK, best practice in event organisation, changes to the way funding for events is applied for and future projects for JETAA. A new committee was voted after some members are stepping down from their positions. JETAA is active throughout the UK in supporting returnees and successful applicants before departure to Japan. For more information on JETAA visit <http://www.jetaa.org.uk/>

JLGC Activities**Japan Day for Scottish SMEs**

The University of Glasgow Innovation Network is a £2.7M initiative designed to increase engagement by Scottish companies in innovation, product development and new supply chains. One of its main aims is to help link Scottish companies into international supply chains. To help achieve this, a "Japan Day" was organised for Scottish SMEs considering entering Japanese market. The "Japan Day" provided a unique opportunity to find out about various support programmes offered by Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation. There was a chance to hear from representatives from the Consulate General of Japan in

Edinburgh and Japan Local Government Centre London, plus European Representatives of Japanese local governments also attended the event. Further, there were informal one-to-one meetings arranged to seek advice from these participating organisations to address specific needs of interested parties.

JLGC Activities**Research Trip to Brandenburg in June 2009**

Brandenburg is dealing with the same problems that are prevalent in Japanese local authorities today – demographic change, shrinking cities and disparities between local authorities, with some thriving and many in difficulties.

Director Noboru Fujishima and Research and Policy Manager Irmelind Kirchner visited the cities of Potsdam and Cottbus, the largest and second-largest cities in Brandenburg respectively, which present very different pictures. Potsdam is a growing city, benefiting from its proximity to Berlin, its rich architectural heritage and a very high proportion of academics working in the city. It strives to be at the forefront of providing excellent child-care services to promote a good work-life balance and to attract those highly-qualified but demanding academics to settle in the city, which in turn makes Potsdam an attractive location for businesses and organisations in the knowledge economy.

Cottbus by contrast is a shrinking city: from a population of 128,400 in 1990 it has gone to just about 100,000 today; and maintaining this number (which is necessary for retaining the designation as 'large city') has only been achieved by mergers with neighbouring villages. By 2020, the city expects to have about 86,000 inhabitants. In 2002, the city decided on its overall concept for adapting to these circumstances: by making the city more compact and developing the inner city areas, areas at the fringes can be built back. However it also means upgrades to existing infrastructure and not just getting rid of unoccupied housing. Since 2002, already 7,800 housing units have been taken down, the areas made into green spaces and some designated for possible future development, where the location is suitable.

Further talks were held with the Institute of Local Government Studies of the University of Potsdam - with which JLGC has built links over the past three years - the Brandenburg Association of Municipalities, with persons involved in exchange with Japan in Cottbus and with the undersecretary of state for international affairs at the Brandenburg state chancellery. The latter meeting was very useful in terms of ascertaining the state of the Brandenburg-Saitama partnership, and starting first discussions about the upcoming celebrations in 2011 of the first treaty of amity and commerce between Prussia and Japan, which followed similar treaties with the US and the UK.

Japanese Local Government**Local Information Channels on You Tube**

Osaka Prefecture, Aizuwakamatsu city in northeastern Japan and the northern port city of Hakodate are among the local authorities that have gone online in attempts to benefit from self-made clips on YouTube, believed to have more than 20 million frequent viewers across Japan. Osaka prefectural government opened an official "movie news" YouTube channel in February in place of the public relations TV and radio programs. Municipal officials of Aizuwakamatsu, a Fukushima Prefecture city of nearly 130,000, hit on this idea during the course of discussions on how to open video archives to the public. Hakodate, a southwestern Hokkaido city known for its night views and exotic sightseeing places, has gained popularity for the YouTube clips it launched last November in a tie-up project with a local production firm. You Tube believes 20 to 30 local governments across Japan are using the service as part of public relations.

Guest Article

The Oze Marshland Environmental Protection Initiative

Oze Conservation Office, Department of Forestry and Environmental Affairs, Natural Environment Division, Gunma Prefecture. Translated by Keith Kelly



The Oze Marshland, an 8km² high altitude marshland in the Oze National Park spreading through the four prefectures of Gunma, Fukushima, Niigata and Tochigi is an area of distinctive natural beauty as well as a valuable educational resource and precious ecosystem. It is a specially protected national park and habitat to protected species, and was registered in the Ramsar Wetlands Convention in November 2005. The issue of protection in and around Oze has been engulfed in many disputes both pre and post-war such as the issue of hydro-electric power production and highway development.

Over the years there have been a number of environmental measures put in place for the protection of Oze including traffic limitations, drainage controls, woodland restoration, and waste management controls, and more recently environmental education for tourists visiting the area. The number of people visiting Oze has changed over time, dropping from the 1996 peak of 640,700 to less than half this figure in 2005. The figure in 2008 was 350,600. The frequency of visitors to the area also varies depending on the time of year with spikes occurring during the mizubashou (skunk cabbage flower) flowering period in late June, the nikkou-kisuge (yellow alpine lily) flowering period in mid July, and the autumn leaves period from September to October. However, plans are underway to encourage more evenly spread use of the area throughout the year.

Main Activities in 2009

Oze Natural Environment Research

The Gunma Prefecture Oze Protection Committee, made up of experts from a number of fields, has been conducting research on Oze environmental protection since 1966.

Oze Preservation Foundation

Founded in 1995, the Oze Preservation Foundation conducts a number of environmental related activities including lessons for visitors, restoration of vegetation, public facilities management, environmental research, and an annual summit. It also gives financial support to environment related activities.

Yama-no-Hana Business Centre

The Yama-no-Hana Business Centre was established as an administrative base for the use and protection of Oze, and provides information on the environment and environmental protection to visitors. It also carries out nature meetings and slide lectures, gives safety guidance for hikers, and maintains board-walks and public toilets. The business centre is open from the 10th of May to the 28th of September.

Oze School

Funding is provided to primary and middle schools in Gunma prefecture that participate in the Oze School, an educational programme set up so that all children in Gunma can visit Oze for environmental education.

Promoting Environmental Education in Oze

Various activities will be undertaken at the Yama-no-Hana Business Centre to promote its use as a place for environmental learning, including guided tours for families, support for the Oze School, and training for those people interested in becoming guides.

The Oze Mobile Classroom

Staff from the Oze Mobile Classroom are sent to primary and middle schools in Gunma prefecture to help raise environmental awareness in children and instil an appreciation of their natural environment.



Japan Study Tour 2009 - Tokyo and Hokkaido - 16th to 26th November

Applications are now open for the Japan Local Government Centre's Japan Study Tour. The tour aims to foster a deeper understanding of Japan, its culture and system of local government, and encourage the exchange of ideas and information. It is an ideal opportunity for senior officials from local government and related organisations in the UK.

Under the topic of regional regeneration through hosting international events participants will examine and discuss strategies to maximise the potential of international events to encourage business and tourism in a region, so it is recommended for those people with an interest in this area.

The tour will take place from the 16th to 26th of November, beginning with a visit to the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) in Tokyo where participants will learn about the relationship between central and local government in Japan. Following this will be a trip to Hokkaido prefecture, the northernmost island of Japan with a population of 5.5 million and known for its natural beauty. Here participants will learn about Japanese local government, and participate in visits and meetings, including a trip to Tōyako, the host town of the 2008 G8 summit. In Hokkaido participants will also have the opportunity to experience a short home stay with a Japanese family and visit a number of famous local sites.

Accommodation, travel and food expenses in Japan during the tour will be covered by CLAIR, but participants must bear the cost of the flight between the UK and Japan.

Further information, including an application form and a provisional schedule, can be found on our website: www.ilgc.org.uk.

Deadline for applications: Friday 7th August 2009

Limited to approximately 10 participants

Enquiries: Jason Buckley

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Topic

Japan's Aging Society The Example of Gunma Prefecture

Nursing and Senior Citizens Policy Division,
Gunma Prefecture Department of Health
and Welfare.

Translated by Keith Kelly



Current population changes in Japan will contribute to significant challenges to Japanese society and the economy over the coming decades. Over the next few issues of ML we will look at the background to this and how local authorities and public services provision are attempting to tackle the issues in question.

This issue looks at the recent initiatives and restructuring plan focused on care for the elderly by local authorities in Gunma prefecture, 2 hours north of Tokyo.

Health and Welfare for the elderly: Countermeasures by local authorities (Gunma prefecture)

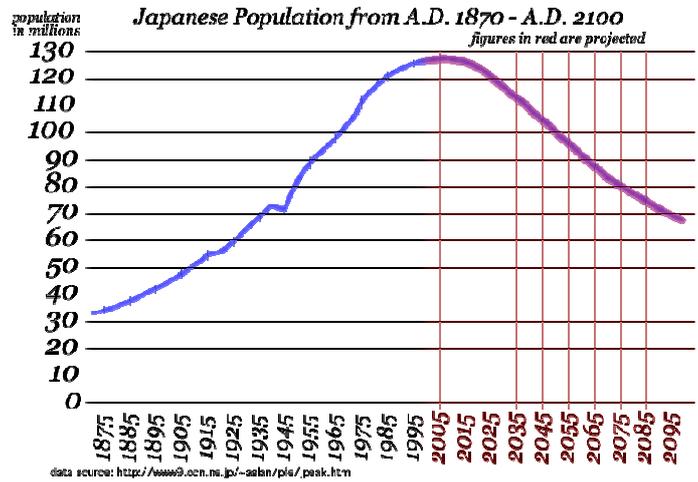
According to the 2005 figures, compared with the previous year, Japan's total population fell. Except for one period during WW2, this is the first time since the beginning of the Meiji period that this drop in population has occurred. It can be said that Japan is in the process of becoming a "depopulated society". Furthermore, Gunma prefecture's total population, after its peak in 2004, started to contract, and is now approaching the status of a shrinking society.

Together with this, the number of senior citizens is growing faster. By 2015 the "baby boom" generation will all be senior citizens. The increase in senior citizens on top of the shrinking of the population means the rate at which Japan is becoming a grey society is speeding up. The rate at which the current generation is burdened by supporting the older generation's population (the percentage of the population in working age divided by the population over 65) is also rising faster. As a result, maintaining the system of "the great number of currently working generation supporting the smaller number of the elderly" will become difficult and it will become necessary to press for reforms in a number of areas.

Currently the number of healthy elderly people continues to increase, but at the same time confirmation of how they will obtain support and nursing care is necessary. By 2015 the current baby boom generation will retire, and from thereon it is thought there will be great changes in society and the economic environment.

Below, current changes and trends in the makeup of the prefectures population:

Gunma Prefecture's Population	National		Gunma Prefecture	
	2008	2015	2008	2015
Total Population	127,703 000	125,430,000	2,014 000	1,961,000
Working Age Population	82,334 000	76,807 000	1,275 000	1,181 000
Over 65 population	28,211 000	33,781 000	453 000	537 000
Aging Rate	22.10%	26.90%	22.50%	27.40%
Old Age "Dependency" Index	34.30%	44.00%	35.50%	45.50%



Changes in the Population of Japan, with a shrinking overall population and an accelerating elderly population a double punch exacerbates the pressure on public services

The increase in healthy pensioners

There are several trends which together compound the difficulties inherent in changing population patterns. One is the rise in life expectancy.

The definition of over 65 as "elderly" is said to have been established by the wide use of a statistical survey by the UN in 1956. However, we cannot apply the same standards to the elderly from that time to the current generation. During this time the life expectancy of the elderly has greatly lengthened, and this is because the number of healthy pensioners has increased. By looking at a comparison of life expectancies, the equivalent life age for someone aged 55 in 1956 is the equivalent of someone currently 65 in 2007, and equivalent of 65 to 75, 75 to 85 for the respective dates. In other words, when it comes to life expectancy, the current elderly generation have in comparison with the generation of the same age in 1956 got ten years younger. Despite this it is questionable whether or not the increase really is in healthy elderly people.

Challenging the stereotype of what it is to be "elderly"

80% of the elderly are healthy. Also, financially, for per capita earnings per household, there is not a great difference in the average per capita household income for this age group (taking into account households including single persons over the age of 18). Furthermore, according to a recent national opinion poll, 80% of the elderly are generally happy with their lives. Offices in charge of organising activities for this age group have seen a dramatic increase in the number of users looking to get involved and use the local facilities.

Initiatives throughout Gunma Prefecture concerned with the elderly

In Gunma prefecture from March of 2009, on the basis of the newly formulated Gunma Elderly Health Welfare Plan, with the aim of providing comprehensive nursing and support services, welfare reforms for the elderly are being introduced. A new service supply system, aims to achieve a level of service, which responds to all needs .

The basis of the decided plan of action rests on the following

pillars. The Elderly Welfare Plan, through an implementation of prefectural and local council bylaws, is a comprehensive plan for elderly welfare throughout the area. Each prefectural and local authority together, while producing separate policies for their own needs, are currently finalising complimentary plans about their service for the elderly and nursing to make needs clear in respect of “*who, who for, what, how, how much*”. Specifically the plan agreed across the prefecture is not just a comprehensive and systematic revision, but also has the aim of coordinating and supporting the connections between neighbouring local authorities.

A “Prefectural Elderly Health and Welfare Board” of 31 members will be established which will have representatives from the local authorities as well as professionals from health and social welfare as well as public interest groups and academia.

Plan for the coming years

The future structure of has been planned for on the basis of the local laws and ordinances, for 2014/2015 fiscal year (the new plan starting at the end of the current plan), with the current planning period covering three years from 2009/2010 to 2011/2012. The Fundamental objectives are:

1. Nurturing a healthy and active elderly community
 - Promote the benefit to society of elderly people, such as visits by elderly friendship clubs to other groups
 - Engage in support activities to support various types of independent bodies, nurture a society of longevity through the active use of these organisations
 - Encourage the public participation of the baby boom generation
2. Attempt to promote the importance of an active lifestyle for the elderly and the promotion of nursing itself
 - Effective use of existing regional rehabilitation facilities
 - Continue promoting an active lifestyle to combat senility
 - Support initiatives for self-initiated, self-monitoring health plans for the elderly
3. Creating a “sphere of daily existence” in which people can always live safely
 - Maintain the “sphere of daily existence” with the nursing services needed
 - Ensure a 24 hour, 365 days a year “peace of mind” service through small scale multipurpose services with continual access
 - Support the running of regional support centres to act comprehensively to deal with issues outside of nursing (i.e. dependency on treatment, independence in daily life issues)
 - Aim at strengthening the application of laws covering registered licensed elderly care homes
4. Raise the quality and service foundation of nursing services
 - Aim at locally based service maintenance
 - Systemic maintenance of the nursing insurance system
 - Support systematic change from long term care beds
 - Comprehensively promote adequate nursing staffing level policies with Gunma prefecture career advancing arrangements, specific for the region’s needs.
- 5 Supporting people’s lifestyles in the regions for the elderly with senility
 - Accelerate the coordination between nursing homes and treatment systems
 - Maintain a system of “Early discovery, early diagnosis” (such as through regular medical examination)
 - Spread accurate knowledge about dementia through the promotion of regional cooperation
- 6 Construction of a local supportive network
 - Promote the facilitation of an alert system throughout the area
 - Promote support for regional activities through independent bodies such as old people’s clubs

- Devise a regional “Nursing Day” awareness event with opportunities to develop shared knowledge about nursing
7. Reorganisation of long term care beds, ensuring staffing levels
- In order to ensure the stability of systems offering nursing services, plan for career development specific to the region, with region specific promotions to recruit staff and maintain numbers, and ensure these levels of staffing are being planned as matters of policy. Further, to elderly services across the field, secure the establishing of an office ensuring staffing structures that positively promote links between related bodies and the offices of local authorities.

2014 Targets		
Objective	As of 2009	By 2014
Percentage of service users needing high dependency nursing services in a nursing facility	38.9%	Below 37%
Percentage of high need patients using adequate nursing services	60.1%	Above 70%
Percentage of users with an individual care plan	19.4%	Above 50%

Prefectural facilities for the elderly (region wide)			
Type of facility	Accommodation levels 2009	Additional provision	Target for 2011
High needs beds (separate from general needs)	7,787	600	8,387
Elderly health care centre	5,671	115	5,786
General hospitals with geriatric facilities	1,213	– 332	881
Elderly nursing focused facilities	62	–	62
Mixed needs speciality centres	2,318	305	2,623

Local Authority Facilities (sub- regional/local)			
Type of facility	Accommodation levels 2009	Additional provision	Target for 2011
Regionally based welfare facility	136	145	281
Places for senile patients requiring integrated welfare	2,564	270	2,834
High Dependency beds	21	29	50

UK-Japan Relations

The Chōshū Five

Dr Andrew Cobbing

Associate Professor

School of History, Faculty of Arts,
University of Nottingham



One outcome of the opening of treaty ports in 1859 was a sudden influx of Japanese students into Britain. This was surprising given that, in the early days at least, travelling abroad was still prohibited under the Tokugawa regime's policy of limiting contacts with the outside world. It was only in 1860 that the shogun's government sent its first diplomatic mission overseas to ratify the new treaty with the United States, and a similar delegation to Europe followed in 1862. Yet by the early 1870s there were more than 100 Japanese students living in Britain, many of them in London.



Back row, left to right: Endō Kinsuke (27), Inoue Masaru (21), Ito Hirobumi (21). Front row: Inoue Kaoru (28), Yamao Yōzō (27).

Collectively, these men would play a leading role in Japan's drive for modernization under the new Meiji state. Studying abroad was a major undertaking, partly due to the prohibitive exchange rate but also because, until the ban was lifted in 1866, absconding overseas carried the death penalty. Those prepared to take such a risk were often samurai officers, spurred into action by the growing political turmoil in Japan. Perhaps the most graphic example, and the first to study in Britain, was a group of young men known as 'the Chōshū Five'.

Their story has elements of high adventure, so much so that a film tracing their journey was recently released in 2007. It also includes some intriguing cultural encounters with the unfamiliar world of Victorian Britain in the 'Age of Steam'. They arrived, after all, in 1863, the year that the world's first underground railway line opened between Paddington and Farringdon Street. Most dramatic of all, though, was the impact they went on to make during their subsequent careers in Japan.

In the early 1860s they were still unknown officers in the service of the Chōshū domain. They called themselves 'loyalists', as they conspired against a Tokugawa regime that had just opened the treaty ports against the will of the Emperor. In January 1863, for example, some were involved in a plot to burn down the new British legation then under construction in Edo (now Tokyo). Given their ambivalence towards foreigners, then, why make such a reckless journey all the way to London? Significantly perhaps, some had also studied under Yoshida Shōin, a charismatic teacher so convinced of his and others' need to broaden their horizons that he had tried to escape abroad himself. And senior Chōshū officials were already arming the domain by purchasing weapons and steamships from foreign merchants. The only difference in the case of this covert overseas mission was that the funds were invested in what they called 'living machines'.

The ringleader, Inoue Kaoru (28), initially recruited Yamao Yōzō (27) and Inoue Masaru (21), both of whom had some experience of navigation in coastal waters around Japan. They were joined by Itō Hirobumi (21) and then Endō Kinsuke (27). Arrangements for their passage were made through

Samuel Gower, a British merchant working for Jardine Matheson, the largest firm in Yokohama. Before they set out they cut off their samurai topknots and changed into rough sailors' clothes. Under cover of darkness on 26 June 1863 they slipped aboard a ship called the *Chelswick* and hid in the coal-hatch as they made good their escape.

Five days later the men from Chōshū reached Shanghai. It was a turning point in their journey as the bustling prosperity they saw there dampened their hopes of ever being able to drive the foreigners out of Japan. Instead it was to be as agents of reform and reconciliation that they would make their mark. For the onward journey they travelled on separate ships, two of them on the *Pegasus* and the others on the *White Adder*. After three months at sea sailing the long way around the Cape of Good Hope they finally arrived in London.

The weary travellers were received by Hugh Matheson at his house in Hampstead. He put them in touch with Alexander Williamson, a professor at University College, who allowed them to enrol in his analytical chemistry classes there. For Inoue Kaoru and Itō, however, their studies were soon cut short in 1864 when they learned of plans for an allied squadron to sail to Chōshū waters on a punitive mission in retaliation against recent attacks on foreign shipping. They rushed home to warn their domain of the futility of challenging such overwhelming odds. Although they ultimately failed to prevent the destruction of the Chōshū batteries at Shimonoseki, they did help to break down the barriers of mistrust during the negotiations with the British that followed.

Meanwhile, their three companions still at University College were branching out in their studies and taking classes in various other sciences. In 1866, Endō was admitted to hospital suffering from tuberculosis and had to be sent back to Japan, but Inoue Masaru and Yamao stayed until 1868, returning only after the overthrow of the Tokugawa regime. While Inoue spent these last years in London, Yamao travelled north to Glasgow to gain a practical training at the Robert Napier shipyard on the banks of the Clyde.

Just like a larger group of students from Satsuma who also enrolled at University College London in 1865, the men from Chōshū found that the knowledge they had acquired abroad made them indispensable to the new Meiji state. Some became prominent government figures. Itō, for example, had a hand in designing the Meiji Constitution and served four terms as prime minister. Inoue Kaoru was variously Minister of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Commerce. Inoue Masaru became known as the 'Father of the Japanese Railways' for his work as Director of the Railway Bureau. Endō became Director of the Mint Bureau in Osaka and Yamao, as Minister of Industry, developed the Imperial College of Engineering (now part of the University of Tokyo). He also helped to promote education for the deaf and blind, drawing on his experience of seeing sign language used in Glasgow. The men from Chōshū had come a long way; so too had Meiji Japan.



Monument to the Chōshū Five (and students from Satsuma) in the Japanese Garden at UCL,



Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme UK



JET Programme Experiences

Jessica Smith, ALT, Aichi Prefecture, 2005-2007

After graduating from university, I took part in the JET Programme as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) from 2005-07. I lived in Aichi prefecture, in the suburbs of Nagoya, Japan's fourth largest city.



I was placed in four high schools, all of which were reachable by bicycle from my home. In Japan, almost all students stay at school until they are at least 18, and high schools specialise in either academic or more vocational courses. At 15, final-year junior high school students sit entrance exams for their chosen high schools, and even by then their career path is often already laid out. One of my schools was a very high level academically, and teachers put high pressure on students as they prepared them for tough university applications. My other schools focused less on traditional subjects, and more on vocational courses to prepare students for the workplace, such as book-keeping, secretarial skills, agricultural and carpentry. One of my schools ran a specialist welfare course, where students learnt cooking, textiles, and childcare. Although many schools don't have an academic focus, all students in Japan take English classes right up until graduation.

I was surprised to find out that most Japanese classes have about 40 students. Teaching methods are very different from those in the UK. Lessons involve little or no interaction, and students listen and make notes while the teacher stands at the front of the classroom, very much like a university lecture. I found it very strange to see foreign language lessons being taught in this way, as I had always taken part in pair work and group activities in my own language classes when I was at school. English lessons in Japan often take place without using any actual English, as the teacher instructs students on vocabulary and focuses on the fine points of grammar in Japanese.

My role in the classroom was totally varied. Some teachers, particularly with higher level students, asked me to read passages and vocabulary, so that students could listen to a native speaker. In one school I was responsible for listening and speaking classes, and had to structure lessons round textbook topics and grammar points. Sometimes I was asked to talk about cultural events or life in the UK, and other times I was left to do whatever I wanted with the class. Every teacher had their own teaching style, and many of them were happy to 'team-teach' lessons with me. Other teachers, however, saw my lessons as an opportunity to sit back and leave the lessons to me. A few teachers didn't like handing their lessons over to an ALT and reluctant to invite me to their classes.

Japanese high school students are under a lot of pressure to pass frequent school as well as university entrance exams. Over 60% of students go to juku, special cram schools, in the evenings and at the weekends, which supplement their regular education, giving them more assignments to make sure that they achieve their potential in exams. Life for high school students is busy, and many are at school or juku from early morning until late at night, even at weekends.

However, there is also a very strong emphasis on extra-

curricular activities, and almost all students take part in after-school clubs. My schools had theatre, dance, journalism, tea ceremony and cookery clubs, as well as many sports teams, which met every day. I was in charge of the English club at two of my schools. At the annual school festival, every class prepares something to present to the rest of the school, such as a play, a dance, or even turning their classroom into a haunted house!

School life in Japan is totally different from in the UK - I admired the students' dedication to their studies and after-school activities, but I sometimes felt that they had so little time to relax and enjoy life outside of school. I was very lucky to have the opportunity to teach in Japan, and the JET Programme was a fantastic way for me to both learn about the Japanese education system and teach people there about how things are here in the UK.

JETAA News Sumo Charity Run



In June *writes Josy Audigier, JETAA UK Chair* some JETAA members decided to make complete fools of themselves to raise money for charity by joining the first ever Sumo run in London. The event involved nearly 140 people of all ages dressing up as Sumo and running

for 5km around Battersea park on June 20th to raise money for Gemin-i.org.

The charity in question, Gemin-i.org, is an education charity which uses innovative technology to link young people around the world. They run a global online learning community - Rafi.ki - which connects schools in over 100 countries, and gets kids working collaboratively on a range of projects covering issues from fair trade to climate change, and from migration to human rights. Rafi.ki builds understanding of these issues and encourages young people to take action. Money raised from the Sumo Run will help us develop our software to connect schools in remote areas of the developing world.

The JETAA sumos were: Sharon & Steve Rhys-Davies, Vanessa Villalobos, Neil Ramchandani, Abs Tangri and Josy Audigier. The event started with a mass inflation as everybody switched on their suits together. Now sumo-looking we all stretched and warmed up while getting used to being unable to see our feet! The run itself was less difficult than I imagined. The sumo suit has a small fan so is constantly filled with air while we ran...the only problem was the heat! Running around the park was pretty strange as we could see sumos in all direction while dog walkers, other joggers and picnicking families cheered or giggled at us. In the end everybody completed the 5km race. After the run we rode the tube home and made countless people smile, laugh or beep their horns in appreciation of how ridiculous we looked.

The run was actually really fun (if a little knackered) and so far we have managed to raise £959.90. If you like the sound of it I would encourage you to take part next year when they attempt to break the record for the largest number of inflatable sumos running together. For more information see: www.sumorun.com



Editorial

Cable Technology's contribution to Japan's rural economies

Ken Oosawa, Regional Broadcasting Section
Assistant Director, Ministry of Internal Affairs
and Communications.

Translated by Keith Kelly



Starting about 50 years ago, cable television in Japan began due to a need to overcome poor signal reception because of the country's mountainous terrain, and soon was not simply rerunning programmes, but came to be a standard medium for the active provision of

useful information about regional support, safeguarding public services and redevelopment in areas, with the introduction of a cable television office in each region, independently linked to the local towns and villages, starting the broadcasting of a "community channel".

Furthermore in recent years, due to technological innovation in the multiplication of channels and the internet, the important role for regional redevelopment in the provision of a variety of services in reaction to the particular needs of the community, through comprehensive communication media has grown. As an example of this we can point to the case of the establishment of a cable-TV station involved with town development in a semi mountainous area.

In Nishi Aizu Town, population 7,500, in the Yama district of Fukushima prefecture, towns people are taking part in various policy structures such as "Dynamic Urban Renewal", "Total Care" urban renewal, the fostering of good community relations, establishing emergency systems in which people can trust, reinvigorating the regional economy and the practical use of an information base in an attempt to attract new enterprises. These goals are supported through its own "Nishi-Aizu Cable Communications" centre run independently by the town.

In its broadcasting role, the station's community channel (in Nishi-Aizu broadcasting under the name Sayuri-Channel) endeavours to develop its broadcast content, deepen the factual base of its broadcasts, and present a wide variety of programming to the townspeople. For example, "Sayuri Channel News" is a news programme introducing local policy issues and news within the town from the point of view of people living in the area. "Challenge 100" is a programme promoting *total care* health initiatives for the elderly; "Farming Bulletin" a programme about the area's key industry, with details on improvement methods for crop management and the introductions of new technologies in the farming industry; "Town Administration Diary" providing information on neighbourhood administration and the process of projects; the "Appreciating Our Neighbourhood" regional showcase, as well as live broadcasts of regular town council meetings, live

coverage of the *Yukimatsuri* snow festival and Junior High School graduation ceremonies.

In the medical field, it plays an important role with the introduction of a home health management system through the use of the interactive functions of cable communications. Houses within the area subscribing to the cable service can connect to local hospitals and surgeries by a "telemedicine" unit for use by residents. Blood pressure and ECG measurement information is sent automatically to physicians and public health nurses, upon which the necessary medical advice can be received. As a result of this the effectiveness of early detection and prevention of disease has been demonstrated in the reduction of deaths from all kinds of illnesses, the extension of life expectancy as well as a reduction in the burden of medical expenses on the national health insurance system.

Furthermore, coordinated media planning advertising local industry to producers can also contribute to local development through the use of cable-TV broadcasting and information technology, guiding the development of technology to react to the needs of local markets, (for example locally produced foodstuffs marketed as having "Healthy Minerals" has seen a massive expansion in the market, as part of a strong Japanese trend for "organic" vegetables and macro-biotic foods). As well as this, people are able to support business in this remote rural area through the internet, with "telecommuting centres" and working from home making best use of the cable technology as a foundation for supporting people who are establishing commerce in the regions.

Furthermore, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications is giving disadvantaged regions financial aid where local authorities and third sector corporate bodies meet certain conditions. The objective of this is to address the issue of a "digital divide", the imbalance in terms of access to information between the regions, and through the promotion of using an informational base to raise the standard of living for people away from the urban centres and lead efforts to revitalise regional economies, contributing to the large scale roll out of broadband across Japan.

The Digital Future (Editor)

Only a decade ago broadband internet access in Japan was one of the most expensive in the world. The focus was not on fixed line connections but on the mobile 3G network which although advanced for mobile internet communications this meant fixed line technology, more effective for business, fell behind the rest of the world. As a result central government reacted to this by raising the use of fixed lines with the level of investment currently resulting in the world beating FTTH 1Gbps (gigabytes per second, fibre-to-the-home) network with one of the lowest price-per-megabit ratios worldwide.

Japanese business leaders have reacted to the decline of manufacturing in with strong belief in a move towards a heavy information based economy is inevitable, with strong government support in the form of a 33% subsidy to the national FTTH network, in the hope of moving Japanese consumers away from their addiction to limited 3G access. The new government "Zero Broadband Areas Elimination" policy has a target of achieving full broadband coverage by March 2011, but Japan is already a world leader in fibre-optic connections with 13.2 million connections to homes, compared with 60.5 million in the USA and 5.96 in the People's Republic of China.

The Japan Local Government Centre is the UK office of CLAIR. CLAIR is a joint organisation of local authorities, working to promote and provide support for local internationalisation.

The main functions of JLGC, London are to conduct research on local government in the UK and northern Europe, and to promote exchanges between individuals, including government officers and local government representatives in the UK and Japan. We are also involved in implementing the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, which employs UK graduates in the fields of international exchange and English language education in Japan.

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The technology has been around in Japan for many years, but now with an expectation of manufacturing continuing to decline, central government is investing heavily in getting fibre into every mountain valley in the island chain.