

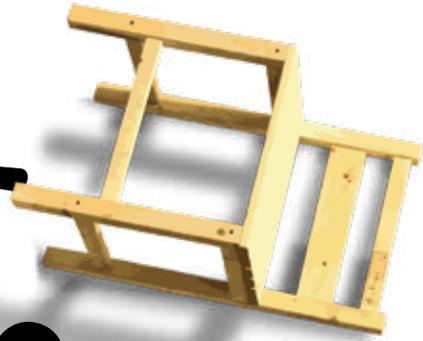
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Art flags and *continuing*



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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Members,

I assume that some Members will have read the recent mail saying I will soon be leaving Japan and hence have stepped down as president of the FCCJ.

Danish journalist Thomas Hoy Davidsen has been chosen as the new Club president, but I have been allowed the opportunity to write this final message. Someone who is halfway out the door is typically not of much interest to those that remain, so I want use this space to introduce Thomas.

Before that, I need to address some other matters. We had a complaint from Associate Member Shuji Yoshida earlier this year about being served wine that he said was spoiled and improperly labeled. An investigation has found that Mr. Yoshida's two complaints were accurate, and on behalf of the FCCJ, he has my apologies, as well the apologies of General Manager Marcus Fishenden and F&B provider Silvano Borroni. Despite the rumor mill that kicked in over this incident and certain individuals making other allegations involving wine served in the Club, a panel comprising the two kanji and the co-chair of the F&B Committee found the incident involved just three bottles of wine. Once discovered, all others in the batch were disposed of. The GM and F&B provider have given assurances it won't happen again.

While on the topic of complaints, the GM has informed the Board about some recent incidents that can only be characterized as abuse of staff members. Be very clear that membership of this Club does not come with some right to be abusive to others. Such cases will be reported to the Board and action taken if needed.

Back to the new president. Thomas has been a member of the FCCJ since 2012 and I first met him when we were both on the Professional Activities Committee, vetting potential speakers for press conferences at the Club.

He works for the daily Danish newspaper *Jutland Post*, though like most journalists he now lives and breathes in the 24/7 news cycle that the Internet demands. It's to be noted that while many news organizations were cutting staff in Japan, his paper kept him on (a clear sign of his journalistic abilities) and as a result he was on hand to report from Tohoku after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Consequently, his newspaper had the first-hand reports of the disaster that most other news outlets in Scandinavia lacked.

Thomas is the first to say that he finds the prospect of being president of the FCCJ somewhat intimidating, but I'm convinced with the support of the Board and the Members, he is just the sort of younger journalist that the Club needs to remain

relevant. He is a whiz at social media and has inspiring ideas for what the Club can do in marrying the *Number 1 Shimbun*, the FCCJ's new website and our social media accounts. Whether you use social media or not, that is where the audience is and that's where the FCCJ needs to be to remain relevant to that audience.

The FCCJ produces that special thing called "content" and has a huge reservoir of content from thousands of press conferences and speakers. We need to get that content onto the radar of new generations. The number one priority of the Club is to bring in Members, and that means staying relevant to new generations. That does not mean ignoring traditions, but it also does not mean hankering for some perceived golden age. It also doesn't mean taking the easiest route of all: to sit on the sidelines and just complain.

The maxim is that "people don't like change," which is an odd statement, since according to current understandings of physics and the second law of thermodynamics, everything is in a state of constant change, which would include the FCCJ hamburger. However, in the case of the latter, you can do something about it by filling in comment cards in the dining room with suggestions and requests. These are fed back to the GM, the F&B Committee and the kitchen.

The new Club is an opportunity to build on the FCCJ traditions while also facing up to the challenges confronting journalism as a whole. It bears repeating that journalism is like an insurance policy: you don't realize how much you need it until basic democratic freedoms and civil society are under threat.

Who would have predicted at the end of 2018 what is now taking place in Hong Kong? Who can predict what will be happening in Tokyo in six months? Whatever does happen, journalists will be there to report on it, and in many parts of the world they are being illegally detained, imprisoned and murdered for those activities.

The FCCJ may have been sustained on hamburgers and pickled herring over the years, but that's not what it's built on. It's not a social club. Too often the Board gets dragged into matters that take the focus away from what the Club's fundamental function is—journalism. Thomas has the task of keeping the focus on that function. I wish him every success in that and ask again that you support him in taking the FCCJ into 2020.

I end with my thanks for the support of so many Members over the years and their contributions to the Club. I wish you every success, good health, and may the second law of thermodynamics treat you kindly.

Best regards,

– Peter Langan
ex-FCCJ President

“The new Club is an opportunity to build on the FCCJ traditions while also facing up to the challenges confronting journalism as a whole.

• • •

Journalism is like an insurance policy: you don't realize how much you need it until basic democratic freedoms and civil society are under threat.”

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

How do we get the Club out of this downward spiral of complaints, pessimism, looking back instead of forward? The Club seems to be suffering from collective depression. The occasional Member trying to stop it soon loses his or her enthusiasm due to the negative attacks of members who—while claiming to have the best interest of the Club at heart—do everything they can to take the Club back into the twentieth century.

With the benefit of hindsight there is no doubt that the Club in its recent past has made some unfortunate decisions. Moreover, execution of such decisions has not always been particularly successful. Yet that is where we are at the moment, and objectively the Club is in a good position to reclaim some of its old glory with a number of active programs, a prestigious location, and modern facilities.

The world of media has changed and this Club will never again be the correspondents' club it once was. But that does not mean the end of the Club as a journalists' club. It is an opportunity to make the Club more inclusive. First of all, bring more of a broader range of journalists and writers to the Club. Secondly, bring interesting business people to the Club as Associate Members.

Most of all, bring younger Members to the Club. No previous board has ever identified and sounded the alarm bells about the gradual aging of the membership. We are taking in a good number of new Members but we are losing Members to natural causes faster that we can replace them and this process has been going on for more than 10 years.

These membership statistics, however, can be addressed in a positive way by good marketing. What is much more difficult but of higher priority at the moment is to pull the Club out of its present depressed, negative state. Many seem to be scared of new initiatives, afraid of the future. Old customs and practices cannot be changed. The internal fiefdoms have to be maintained.

Will Members who have—often justified—complaints take on a positive, pro-active role and either take or support initiatives to reactivate the Club and truly take it into the twenty-first century? Will they, for instance, join committees, help organize events that will bring more young people to the club, identify possible new Members?

– Willem Kortekaas
Associate Member & Treasurer

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The man who moves markets



George Soros, controversial financial guru, international investor, and philanthropist, making a point at a professional luncheon on Jan. 17, 1996, with FCCJ president Jim Lagier (AP) looking on. In the preceding year, Soros had published a book, *Soros on Soros*, presenting his views on financial theory, political analysis, and morality, along with personal reminiscences that summed up his life's work. He had become known worldwide for his financial acumen after shorting the British pound in 1992, achieving a profit of over \$1 billion, and for his wide-ranging liberal philanthropy.

Soros was born in 1930 into a family of Hungarian Jews that changed its name in 1936 from Schwartz to Soros to avoid antisemitism. He survived the Nazi occupation through subterfuge and emigrated to the UK in 1947, where he attended the London School of Economics. After working in merchant banks there and in the US, he established his first hedge fund in 1969.

His success there was followed in 1970 with the establishment of the Soros Fund Management and the renaming of his earlier fund as the Quantum Fund, which became a major source of his huge wealth. He credits his theory of "reflexivity," which takes advantage of boom and bust economic cycles, for his success as a strategic investor.

As a philanthropist, Soros was influenced by Austrian-born British philosopher Karl Popper's open-society concept. He began his philanthropic career in 1979, funding scholarships for black university students in South Africa and for East Bloc dissidents to study in the West. In 1984, he set up a foundation in Hungary—followed by others in Eastern Europe and Russia—that blossomed into his Open Society Foundations (OSF) network. OSF's goal was to transform closed societies into open ones and protect existing open societies. This network eventually extended to over 50 countries as well as two regional areas of Africa.

Controversy has dogged the multi-billionaire. His financial coups have led critics to call him a currency speculator. He's been accused of manipulating markets built on his reputation as "the man who broke the Bank of England" in 1992, some believe his off-shore Quantum Fund is organized to avoid taxes and accountability. His philanthropic contributions, according to conservatives, includes supporting left-wing causes worldwide as well as the liberal media. In the US, conservatives malign him for opposing Republicans and supporting Democrats.

Soros, who has married three times, divorced twice, and fathered five children, remains active.

– Charles Pomeroy
editor of Foreign Correspondents in Japan,
a history of the Club that is available at the front desk

The power of symbols: art vs. censorship

An exhibition of censored artwork in Nagoya city triggers a furious debate on artistic expression

By David McNeill

The artistic director of the Aichi Triennale 2019 had few illusions when he began to plan an exhibition called “After Freedom of Expression.” By choosing exhibits that poked painfully at some of Japan’s most tender spots—war crimes, subservience to America and the status of the imperial family—Daisuke Tsuda told the FCCJ on Sept. 2 that he wanted to “provoke discussion” on the health of freedom of expression in the country. Even he was taken aback, how in the three days after the exhibition opened on Aug. 1 at the Aichi Arts Center in Nagoya, the organizers were blitzed with hundreds of angry phone calls and emails. Protestors shouted at staff or symbolically poured liquid on the floor, threatening to burn the exhibition to the ground. One man, later arrested, faxed in a handwritten threat to firebomb the exhibits in the same week as an arson attack on a Kyoto animation studio that killed 36 people.

“It was very frightening,” recalls Shihoko Iida, the Triennale’s chief curator. What surprised her, she says, was that so many of the demonstrators were women. Though the center had planned for the blowback by hiring extra staff, they were quickly overwhelmed. As public servants, custom dictated they must give their names if callers requested and listen patiently to tirades that could stretch for over an hour.

Far from being a spontaneous eruption of public fury, the campaign against the arts festival appears to have been coordinated. Many callers appeared to be reading from scripts downloaded from the internet. “The staff could hear the pages rustling,” says Tsuda. Protestors had the same talking points, which echoed the rhetoric of conservative politicians, notably Takashi Kawamura, the mayor of Nagoya and a member of the ultra-right lobby group, Nippon Kaigi.

KAWAMURA MADE A HIGHLY publicized visit to the exhibition, where he zeroed in on a statue of a Korean “comfort woman” by the husband-and-wife sculptor team Seogyong and Unseong Kim. Officially titled “Monument to Peace,” the statue, Kawamura intoned, “tramples on the feelings of the Japanese people.” His intervention seemed to egg the protesters on. On Aug. 3, Tsuda and the Governor of Aichi Hideaki Omura closed the exhibition, citing public safety issues.

Divorced from its context, the reaction to the statue, showing a beatific girl sitting beside an empty seat (so visitors could sit at eye level) seems misplaced, even bizarre. But the controversy has far less to do with the exhibit’s artistic merits than its ability to trigger well-worn political responses. “We’re not talking about art here, in the sense of artworks

and their meaning or effect,” says Ayelet Zohar, a professor of art and history at Tel Aviv University who is following the controversy. “It is about [what it signifies] and what it does to politicians who understand very little about art and its subtleties, but can recognize a specific symbol when confronted with it.”

Mayor Kawamura is part of a political movement that regards the mainstream view of Japan’s war in Asia in the 1930s and 1940s as self-debasing and masochistic. In Feb. 2012, he said the 1937 Nanjing Massacre never happened (a snub to four former Japanese prime ministers who made pilgrimages of atonement to the Chinese city—most recently Yasuo Fukuda). The movement’s activists leap into action over any suggestion that Asian women were pressed into sexual servitude by Japan’s wartime army. Many say the women were prostitutes and accuse South Korea and China of stoking anti-Japanese feeling by refusing to put the issue behind them.

DESPITE A “FINAL AND irrevocable” deal between Japan and South Korea to end the dispute in 2015, the issue continues to poison bilateral ties. South Korea triggered a major row by scrapping a fund partly set up by Japan to compensate the surviving comfort women. A ruling last year in South Korea’s Supreme Court on Japan’s use of wartime conscript labor rubbed more salt on raw diplomatic wounds. The court ordered Nippon Steel and Sumitomo Metal Corp. to compensate four Koreans. Japan insists that all compensation claims were settled in the 1965 treaty that established diplomatic ties between the two nations. But resentment at Japan’s colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula from 1910-1945 still runs deep. At least a dozen similar suits have been filed against Japanese companies.

Arguably, the statue is among the more anodyne exhibits in a show defined by transgression. Katsuhisa Nakagaki’s “Portrait of the Period—Endangered Species idiot Japonica,” a dome-like installation, contemptuously lambasts the Japan-US military alliance. Meiro Koizumi’s “Air#1,” a portrait of the Imperial Family with all its members erased, nods to the ghostly space they occupy in the collective Japanese unconscious. Yoshiko Shimada’s twin portrait of the Showa Emperor with his face scratched out, then burned, also unsurprisingly infuriated nationalists.

All have previously run afoul of timorous curators. Shimada’s portraits, for example, which she created to raise questions about the taboo against the use of the emperor’s image, were returned by Toyama Modern Art Museum in 1993. The point of Aichi, said Tsuda, was to drag such pieces out of dusty warehouses and back into public view—the title of the exhibition implies it was a second chance to sample them.

In one sense, the reaction by the Japanese establishment bore out the worst fears of the Aichi curatorial team and seemed to confirm the old dictum that censorship reflects a society’s lack of confidence in itself. Yuka Okamoto, one of the curators, called the shutdown an act of “artistic violence”

and blames not just the shifting political climate under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe but a worldwide clampdown on freedom of expression.

THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE was mealy mouthed at best. Yoshihide Suga, the chief cabinet secretary, called the threats against the exhibit wrong “generally speaking.” A month later, the Agency for Cultural Affairs pulled ¥78 million in subsidies for the Triennale because of “inappropriate procedural matters.” Education Minister Koichi Hagiuda, who is in charge of the agency, denied he was in effect telling the mob that threats of violence work.

Yet, the shutdown also helped answer Tsuda’s call for a wider audit on the health of artistic freedom in Japan. Angry debate spilled out into public view. Hideaki Omura, the governor of Aichi Prefecture criticized Kawamura, calling his demand that the exhibition be closed “unconstitutional” and pledging to legally fight the subsidy withdrawal. (The prefecture is paying roughly half the ¥1.2 billion cost of the Triennale). Dozens of artists in Japan, South Korea and around the world boycotted the Triennale. Some spoke at a forum, organized by the prefecture to discuss the row. “Censorship thrives on fear and insecurity and silence is its accomplice,” said Mexican artist Monica Mayer. She advised the organizers to prepare “offensive strategies” against attempts at further suppression.

These strategies were in place when the show reopened for a week on Oct. 8. Phone staff rotated every two hours to avoid over-exposure to toxic callers, and they were allowed to hang up after 10 minutes. Metal detectors were introduced at the entrance. The number of visitors was limited by a lottery system for a guided tour, complete with a lengthy exposition on each exhibit. Photography was restricted and posting snaps on social media was banned. Still, the protests continued, totalling 10,000 often abusive phone calls, faxes and emails by the week of October 9th. Some callers threatened to film staff and put the videos online. Nagoya’s Kawamura, meanwhile, announced the city was refusing to pay its share of ¥33.8 million for hosting the event.

THE TACTICAL REOPENING ANSWERED criticism that Tsuda and the organizers were in over their head from the start, when they decided to poke Kawamura and his ilk in the eye. Tsuda acknowledged that the exhibition was “extremely challenging” in a “society rife with intolerance” towards different opinions and attitudes. “It is precisely because of the value we set on freedom of expression that we worked so hard to overcome numerous difficulties and realize this exhibition,” he said.

The row comes roughly a decade after similar controversy over the documentary *Yasukuni*, directed by Li Ying (with the help of ¥7.5 million in funding from the Japan Arts Council). More recently, *Shusenjo*, a crowd-funded documentary on the comfort women issue, directed by Miki Dezaki, has also been threatened with violence. The result in both cases was that a larger audience has seen the film than would have otherwise. It’s unclear if the same will apply in this case. Once the exhibition ends, the censored art may be returned to storage, waiting for a curator brave enough to risk the consequences of another public viewing. ●

DAVID McNEILL

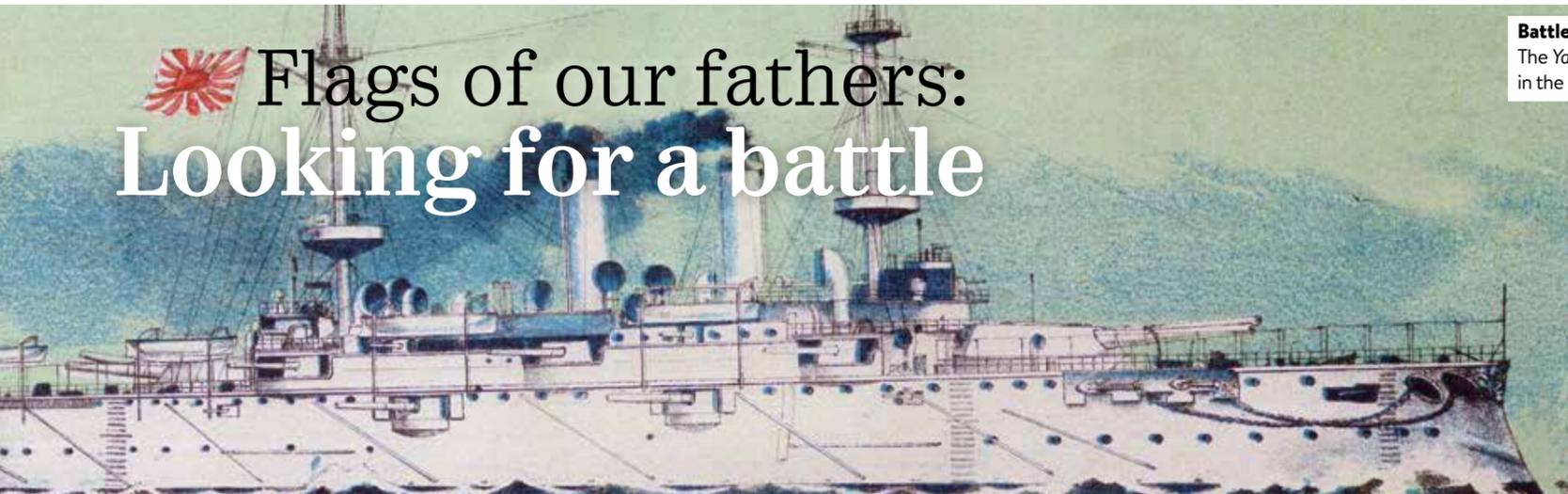
David McNeill writes for the *Irish Times* and the *Economist*, and teaches media literacy at Hosei and Sophia Universities.



The face of controversy
Seogyong and Unseong Kim’s “Monument to Peace” – a seated woman next to an empty chair for people to sit beside her – which Nagoya’s Mayor, Takashi Kawamura said, “tramples on the feelings of the Japanese people.”



Flags of our fathers: Looking for a battle



Will the squabbles over the possibility of seeing the Rising Sun flag at next year's Olympic games turn into a real battle—or fade in the onslaught of the next controversy?

By Mark Schreiber

My late friend, Adrian Johnston, born in 1934 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, served in the Korean War and developed a great affinity toward Japan. Years later, he would still visit at every opportunity, taking time off from his jewelry manufacturing business to enroll in Japanese-language summer school courses.

In the late eighties, on one of his trips here, he phoned me, sounding puzzled.

“Do you think Japanese are becoming more right wing these days?” he asked.

“I can’t really say I’ve noticed,” I replied. “Why are you asking?”

“I’ve been watching this marathon on TV just now,” he told me, “and the spectators on the roadside were all waving Rising Sun flags while cheering the Japanese runners.”

It took a moment before it dawned on me. It was obvious my friend had confused the corporate flag of the *Asahi Shimbun*—sponsor of the marathon—for the Rising Sun flag. The Rising Sun flag, with rays emanating from a red circle, was and is still used by the Japanese military, as opposed to Japan’s official national flag, a red circle in the middle of a white background. The *Asahi*’s version has rays emanating from a quarter of a red circle in the lower corner.

It seems the similarity had revived traumatic childhood memories of the Rising Sun flags he saw as a boy in UP newsreels and John Wayne movies like *Back to Bataan* and *The Sands of Iwo Jima*. I patiently explained the *Asahi*’s involvement and added that its corporate logo notwithstanding, the newspaper’s political positions were, if anything, the diametric opposite of right wing.

But since the above exchange nearly 30 years ago, I can’t recall one conversation I’ve had with anyone on the topic of Japan’s Rising Sun flag. It’s an image I rarely see, and as far

as I know, it cannot be found on a public flagpole anywhere in the Tokyo metropolis, certainly not at the National Diet building or the Ministry of Defense in Ichigaya.

YET IT HAS BECOME the hot spot of the latest controversy between this country and its closest neighbor.

It began with two fairly low-key events in late August. The first came when officials from the Korean Sport & Olympic Committee on a visit to Tokyo lodged a complaint with their hosts. They wanted a proactive ban put in place to keep displays of the Rising Sun flag out of Olympic venues. Then, the same week, another Korean group representing handicapped athletes protested the design of the medals for the Tokyo Paralympics, which it claimed “evoke the image of the Rising Sun flag.”

These South Korean groups and other critics of the flag see its continued use by the Japan Self Defense Forces as evidence that unlike Germany, where symbols of the former Nazi regime are prohibited by law, Japan has not engaged in serious efforts “to eradicate militarism” since the war. Now the flag issue is being lumped with such other festering historical points of contention as “comfort women” and forced labor during the war.

On Sep. 5, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga remarked at a press briefing that Japan saw no need to take action to halt displays of the flag.

A week later, Seoul’s Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism announced it had written to IOC President Thomas Bach expressing “disappointment and concern” that the Japanese organizers have not taken steps to ban displays of the flag.

On Sep. 23, the head of the Chinese Civil Association for Claiming Compensation from Japan chimed in with a letter to the IOC that made similar demands. The same day, North Korea’s official government newspaper, *Minju Choson*, predictably jumped into the fray, criticizing Japan for “Plotting to transform the ‘war criminal Rising Sun flag’ into a ‘symbol of peace.’” On Sep. 30 the Yonhap news agency reported that legislators in South Korea’s national assembly passed a resolution urging a ban, by a vote of 196 to 3.

Following Suga’s remarks, other government officials and organizations fell into line. In a press conference on Sep. 6, Education Minister Masahiko Shibayama stated, “We are aware that claims have been raised that it carries a political message, but it is regularly flown, for example, during

Battle stations

The *Yashima*, built for the Imperial Japanese Navy in the 1890s, in a print belonging to the author.

joint military exercises with other countries. Banning it from being brought into [Olympic] venues is not being considered, and I am in agreement with chief cabinet secretary Suga on this.”

JAPAN’S MINISTRY OF FOREIGN Affairs, meanwhile, posted a PDF file on its web site under the title “The Rising Sun Flag As Part Of Japanese Culture.” It explained, “... the design of the Rising Sun Flag is seen in numerous scenes in daily life in Japan, such as in fishermen’s banners hoisted to signify large catch of fish, flags to celebrate childbirth, and in flags for seasonal festivities.” It added, “For more than half a century, these flags have been playing an indispensable role to show the presence of the Self Defense Forces vessels and units, and are widely accepted in the international community.”

On Sep. 24, Masanori Takaya, spokesman for the Japan Olympic organizing committee, defended the flag to reporters, “The design of the Rising Sun flag is widely used in Japan and does not convey any political message. We are not planning to ban it from being brought into the venues.” Takaya nonetheless did not entirely rule out proactive measures, stating, “From the perspective of preventing trouble, our guidelines are to consider measures that might be necessary for dealing with the issue.”

Some local media took the side of the flag’s detractors. “In general, where else can one see the Rising Sun flag other than at hate demonstrations?” wrote author Koichi Yasuda in *Shukan Kinyobi* on Oct. 11. “Last month, at a rightist demonstration demanding Japan sever diplomatic ties with South Korea, you could see as many Rising Sun flags in the crowd as the Hinomaru. And what was their intention? Harassment and intimidation.”

WHILE THE PRESENT CONTROVERSY represents the first time Koreans have demanded the Rising Sun flag be banned *inside* Japan, protests outside the country began several years ago, with mixed successes. In 2013, a female Korean student in France successfully led a campaign forcing the retail chain Fnac to remove a promotional poster bearing an illustration showing the rising sun motif together with a comic character brandishing a Japanese sword.

At a soccer game played in Suwon, South Korea in April 2017, supporters of the Kawasaki Frontale club nearly provoked a post-game riot by waving the flag. After the game, Korea took its complaint to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), which ruled that use of the flag constituted a “discriminatory offense.” The Kawasaki team was fined \$15,000 and obliged to play a home game to no audience.

Yoshiaki Sei, author of the book *Soccer and Patriotism*, believes that permitting Rising Sun flags to be waved at Olympic events isn’t worth the potential downside. “If Japan were to garner negative reactions from the international community or formal complaints from foreign governments, it’s possible that Japanese teams will get penalized,” he cautioned in *Weekly Playboy*. “I think the organizing committee’s decision [not to ban the flag] is an extremely risky one.”

HOME-GROWN PRIDE

Tatsuo Kobayashi, 63, is president of Tokyo Seiki, Inc. He is the fourth generation in his family’s flag-making business, which was founded in 1937.

Kobayashi’s Japanese flags are entirely home-grown, and as proof he offers photos from his factory in Gunma, where the flags, produced using the silk-screen method, are run off on an automated assembly line.

Rising Sun flags constitute only a miniscule amount of TOSPA’s total business, and there’s no evidence of any surge in demand. Overall sales of Japanese flags and those of other nations (of which TOSPA produces 206) will no doubt benefit from next year’s Olympics.

Rising Sun flags are sold via the company website, and as far as Kobayashi can tell, their buyers appear to be individuals rather than organizations. TOSPA offers the army flag (where the red dot is positioned at mid-center) in five sizes, and the naval flag (with the off-center dot) in 32 varieties, including sets with flagpoles. They are constructed of durable, wrinkle-free polyester.

An impressively large naval flag is the largest item in the catalog, measuring 140 x 210 cm and priced at ¥19,500, which is probably suitable for flying on the mast of a destroyer or coast guard patrol boat.

Kobayashi declined to comment on the current political squabble—which caught him unawares. “For some 50 years, nobody’s raised any issues about those flags. And then all of a sudden this happens,” he said, shaking his head in bewilderment. (M.S.)



MARK SCHREIBER

Essayist Keiko Kojima, writing in the Sept. 14 edition of the weekly magazine *AERA*, was adamant in her opposition to the flag. “What kind of person would wave the Rising Sun flag in the Olympic Stadium?” she asked. “At which game, under which situation, and for what intended purpose would they wave it? During the summer, a time when we mourn the many who died beneath that flag at home and abroad, it’s a sight I don’t want to see.”

South Korea’s raising the issue of Rising Sun flags seems to have caught Japan unprepared. The Japanese government has made clear it’s taking a hands-off position, trusting the nation’s sports fans—who have shown exemplary behavior during the Rugby World Cup—to do the right thing. It will be interesting to see how this story develops. But if one thing’s certain, no one wants next year’s games marred by acts of violence, whether by exuberant fans or rowdy nationalists. ❶

Mark Schreiber currently writes the “Big in Japan” and “Bilingual” columns for the *Japan Times*.



Randy Schmidt CBS

By Julian Ryall

Randy Schmidt is a difficult man to pin down. One day he's in Hong Kong, filming confrontations between protesters venting their fury at the city's government and riot police—who have, in recent days, shown an alarming propensity to use live rounds at very short range—and the next he's off to India for another assignment. After that, he might be back home in Tokyo for a few days. But it's very possible that something else is going to crop up somewhere else in the Far East and he will be living out of his backpack once more.

It's a punishing schedule that is particularly hard on his wife and 9-year-old son Dylan, but he still gets that familiar kick out of what he does. "I love it because there is so much variety, and you get to do so many things that most people don't get to do," he said. Originally from Saratoga in California, the 56-year-old Schmidt is now both cameraman and editor contributing to all CBS news programs from the region. "I like the thrill of breaking news assignments on location somewhere and doing lots of live-shots, and I like taking my time and shooting and editing feature stories."

Covering the news is not, however, the career that Schmidt intended after finishing a degree in motion pictures and television at UCLA. "My initial interests were in Hollywood motion pictures, as a cinematographer, director or screenwriter," he said, and his first position was as an artist and animator on a stop-motion animated short titled, *Frog and Toad are Friends*.

"I worked at 20th Century Fox for the producer of *Die Hard* and other action movies, but I was mainly performing screenplay analysis, which was too much of a desk job for my liking," Schmidt said. "I also worked for a small production company in Los Angeles which did TV news coverage within the United States for Japan's Fuji-TV network." The company was run by a Japanese woman who was effectively the Fuji-TV news correspondent. Schmidt's coverage included the infamous Kazuyoshi Miura murder case in the mid-1980s, in which a Japanese businessman allegedly had his wife murdered in order to collect insurance money.

Schmidt's work for Fuji-TV gave him an opportunity to visit Japan for two weeks in 1986, followed by similar spells in 1987 and 1992—and that helped piqued a boyhood interest in the country that he traces back to the 1967 James Bond movie *You Only Live Twice*.

"Even then," he said, "I never really thought about moving. But in 1996, dissatisfied with my career not really taking off in Hollywood, I thought I would have an adventure for a year and move to Japan." Making that leap in pre-Internet times was far more tricky than it is today, and Schmidt found it difficult to find information on living and working in Japan. He had no job lined up and was in the catch-22 position of

"YOU GET TO DO SO MANY THINGS THAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T GET TO DO"

not being able to get a job without a working visa and not being able to get a working visa without a job.

"But then I got lucky," he said. "I started to get freelance work with CNBC as a cameraman-editor and five months after arriving, I landed a staff

cameraman-editor job at the Tokyo bureau of CNN." Schmidt stayed with CNN until massive editorial cuts in late 1997 reduced the Tokyo bureau from 13 positions to just 5. After five years, including a stint with Reuters and lots of freelancing, he set up his own production company, American Ronin Productions, that worked with all the major English-speaking networks.

In February, 2006—on the strength of shooting an interview with Madonna for CBS—Schmidt was hired to work at the broadcaster's Tokyo bureau, covering all of Asia, including China for up to six months of the year and North Korea. "I travel as much as seven months of the year," he said. Until two months ago he even maintained a China Resident Journalist Visa, which requires journalists to physically be in mainland China for 183 days of the year.

Technology has made Schmidt's life significantly easier. His equipment is far lighter and more compact, SD video has changed to HD, and multiple hard cases of editing decks and monitors have been whittled down to a single laptop. It also helps with personal relationships. "I was 43 when I took the CBS News job and started travelling extensively," he said. "It's tough, especially on my young son, but we chat once or twice a day via Skype and play chess remotely online. An hour ago, he kicked my ass."

North Korea remains Schmidt's "most fascinating" assignment. He has been to Pyongyang on eight occasions and once to Wonsan, when the North Korean regime invited the Western media to record the destruction of tunnels at its nuclear test site.

Another favorite is India, where in 2013 he covered the Kumbh Mela festival, with 40 million people descending upon a village for a religious event that is believed to have been the largest gathering of people in history.

Documenting the impact of the Tohoku disaster in March 2011 was especially tough work. "It was simply shocking to see how much damage was caused by the tsunami," he said. "All the lives lost, towns wiped out. Ships littered all over the place."

"There is a cliché that cameramen are somewhat immune to the horror of what might be happening in front of them because you are working and sort of 'watching TV' in your viewfinder," Schmidt said. "This is true to a certain extent, but we are certainly not oblivious to what's going on and often see it closer up than most others." ●

Julian Ryall is Japan correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*.

Investigating the story of the century

In the third and final installment of this series, we look at the need to investigate suggested solutions, how to cover human adaptation and how to explain geo-engineering

By James Fahn

BIOFUELS

The development of biofuels—derived from vegetation and thus, in theory, consuming as much carbon as they emit—was once seen as the most promising alternatives to fossil fuels. But the bloom is off the rose for several reasons. Most biofuel initiatives require a lot of land and fresh water, resources that are increasingly in short supply, potentially increasing food security concerns. The development of biofuels is often expensive when compared to the energy density of the fuel produced. This has led some critics to consider biofuel development a boondoggle, more of a subsidy for farmers than a way to prevent climate change.

Biofuel made from organic waste (also known as “biogas”) is generally considered a clean energy source. And there is still hope that biofuels can become a more effective solution in the future; for instance, if they can be derived from food waste, cellulose, or algae, which may require fewer amounts of land and water, or if they can be turned into aviation fuel, for which there are few alternatives at the moment. But as with all proposed solutions, journalists will need to investigate whether they turn out to be more hype than help.

CARBON REMOVAL, CAPTURE, AND SEQUESTRATION
Increasing our capacity to store carbon is going to be a

crucial component of our effort to prevent climate change. So far, this has mostly been done by trying to grow trees and protect forests—sometimes through offset programs like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+). Such projects can contribute significantly to forest preservation and the regeneration of degraded landscapes. On the other hand, they sometimes conflict with the interests of forest-dwelling people, and their links to carbon offsetting efforts are not always clear, creating tensions that suggest abundant potential for journalistic inquiries.

There are other initiatives aimed at removing carbon from emissions or from the atmosphere and then either storing or re-using it. Many of these are supported or promoted by fossil fuel companies that are particularly keen on Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS). This is a process that involves capturing the CO₂ emitted during coal or other fossil fuel burning processes and storing it, typically by channeling it into underground storage facilities to prevent its release into the atmosphere. Such promises have been key to the industries’ claims of producing “cleaner” energy.

But despite all the promise, CCS has so far mostly been relegated to dubious demonstration projects, basically because it needs to be carried out on a huge scale and remains a relatively expensive process. Other engineering efforts aimed at removing carbon from the atmosphere seem to be mostly in the pilot stage thus far. In effect, it has faced the same problem as renewable energy initiatives: figuring out who is going to pay for them when the price on carbon remains low or non-existent.

That said, we are probably going to have to eventually rely on carbon removal and storage to a certain extent. We have already wasted so much time trying to reduce the world’s carbon footprint that the world will probably overshoot the Paris targets aimed at preventing catastrophic climate change, which means we may well need the “negative emissions” that carbon removal can generate. As with biofuels, journalists will need to watch this space.

ADAPTATION

Humanity has a vast task ahead adapting and responding to climate change, and the scale can seem scary. A deep look into all the resilience, and the reporting, that is going to be required could be as long as this piece. But there are a few key issues on which to keep a close eye. Much of the focus on resilience will be about fresh water: its availability and the lack thereof, and its role in floods, storms and drought. Preparing for and recovering from more devastating weather-related disasters will also command a lot of attention.

Trillions of dollars are likely to be spent on adapting to climate change—from building seawalls to restoring sand marshes—and it seems unlikely all the money will be spent responsibly and efficiently. Journalists will need to keep a sharp eye on that, and on whether politicians and planners face choices as to whether to build “hard” defenses or “soft” ones, and whether to plan for two feet of sea level rise or five or more, and so on.

But even those issues may pale compared to the potential costs of the massive human migration we’re likely to see. Only the wealthiest places will be able to pay to protect themselves. The next best scenario for people living in harm’s way will be “managed retreat.” But let’s face it, most of the time it won’t be well-managed. It will be chaotic and probably bloody. Journalists will need to watch carefully who’s making what decisions regarding whose communities get saved.

GEO-ENGINEERING

Climate change is actually an unplanned geo-engineering experiment on a vast scale, and humans are carrying out several of them. The jury is out as to whether we’ll be good planetary engineers, but the evidence so far isn’t looking too good. It’s quite possible some country, bloc, corporation, or other powerful entity might one day decide to enact some purposeful geo-engineering, with the goal of protecting itself from onslaught of climate change.

Our job as journalists is to explain the science, and investigate the human responses all around the globe that have made this the story of our time.

Some of the schemes that have been most talked about include distributing aerosols into the atmosphere or solar shades into space to slightly reduce the sunlight falling on the Earth. But there are concerns that this could also end up reducing agricultural output, and it wouldn’t do anything to prevent the acidifi-

cation of the oceans. Right now, we even lack opportunities to talk about the possibilities, as there are few governance mechanisms for global decision-making on such matters.

If all this sounds outlandish, bear in mind that 20 years ago, it was virtually taboo in environmental circles to talk about adaptation, because it was seen as distracting the world from the main goal of preventing climate change in the first place. That is roughly the position of geo-engineering today. It is considered a “moral hazard”—but who knows what desperate measures countries may turn to if some of the most dire predictions come to pass. Journalists should want to know, and would be well advised to keep an eye on any such initiatives, which could in theory be developed in secret.

As indicated by this long but far from exhaustive list of topics for journalists to investigate, climate change and all its manifestations is altering everything. It’s beginning to touch every part of our planet, from the bottom of the ocean to the top of the atmosphere, as well as every aspect of humanity’s economy and society.

Scientists, economists and people working close to nature can help explain how we are changing the world around us. Our job as journalists is to explain the science, and investigate the human responses—in many more places around the globe—that have made this the story of our time. ●

James Fahn is Executive Director of the Earth Journalism Network at Internews. He is also a lecturer at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley, where he teaches international environmental reporting. First published on the Global Investigative Journalism Network website. Reprinted with permission.

Illustration: ANDREW POTHECARY. Images from DREAMSTIME.COM

FCCJ EXHIBITION

Kengo Kuma

The FCCJ is hosting an exhibition of my work that will be something of a departure from normal. My architecture is described as “world architecture,” and I think this term is very appropriate.

The early 20th century saw the emergence of what was called “international architecture,” and in the 1980s we started to hear the term “global architecture.” But I prefer the term “world architecture,” with its connotations of world music. There are current projects involving more than 20 countries that really give me a feeling of being part of a world movement. And this is the spirit that I have tried to convey in my exhibition.

– Kengo Kuma



The V&A, Scotland



Yusuhara Wooden Bridge Museum, Japan

Kengo Kuma was born in 1954. He received his Master’s Degree in Architecture from the University of Tokyo (where he is currently a Professor of Architecture). After his time as a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University in New York, he established his office in Tokyo. Since 1990, Kengo Kuma & Associates has designed architectural works in over twenty countries and received prestigious awards. Kengo Kuma & Associates aims to design architecture which naturally merges with its cultural and environmental surroundings.

JOIN THE FILM COMMITTEE...



... on Tues., Nov. 12 at 6:45p.m. for a sneak preview of the provocative new work from acclaimed filmmaker Tatsuya Mori, *i: Documentary of the Journalist*. Mori follows press-freedom folk hero Isoko Mochizuki (the “i” of the title), a reporter for Tokyo’s largest regional paper, as she crisscrosses the country, following leads and waging a lonely battle for the truth, particularly at the Cabinet Office briefings that have helped make her (in)famous. Refusing to toe the government line, she has relentlessly peppered officials with questions in her quest to get behind their smokescreens—flirting constantly with the risk of ejection from her *kisha* club. Touching on nearly every news story of note over the past year, the documentary also features a short but important scene with FCCJ’s Pio d’Emilia and David McNeill. (Japan, 2019; 120 minutes; in Japanese with English subtitles)

– Karen Severns



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Dr. Kenneth Ruoff,
Director of the Center
for Japanese Studies
at Portland State
University, Oct. 20



CLUB EVENT

The FCCJ Autumn Golf Tournament

The tournament (along with breakfast, lunch and after-party!) was held at the Glissando Golf Club in Chiba Prefecture on Oct. 4. A good game and time was had by all – and notably by Regular Member and **winner Tomoo Ito**. Keep your eyes open for future tournaments!



CLUB EVENT

Club Quiz Night!

The Club’s inaugural Quiz Night saw 20+ attendees in five teams vie for a bottle of Born saké as first prize for answering largely news-oriented questions. First prize turned out to be won jointly by two teams – the “Misfits” and the “Number 1 Shimbun” team. A rematch is therefore scheduled for Nov. 7. But any repeat or new teams can compete on **the first Thursday of the month**, which is now set aside for the quizzingly competitive and enjoyable night. There was also a Happy Hour at the bar and pub-quiz-style pizzas from the kitchen.



NEW MEMBERS



REGULAR MEMBERS

Noburu Okabe is an editorial writer for the Sankei Shimbun. He graduated from Rikkyo University in 1981, and has done postgraduate studies at Duke and Columbia universities. He was Moscow bureau chief from 1997 through 2000, reporting on the return negotiations for the Northern Territories and the transition of power from Yeltsin to Putin. Okabe was also London bureau chief from 2015 to April 2019.

His writing focuses on World War II intelligence gathering and post war territorial disputes. In 2012, he published the award-winning non-fiction book *Kieta Yalta Mitsuyaku Kinkyuuden: Jouhou-Shikan Onodera Makoto no kodokuna tatakai*, for which he received the 22nd Yamamoto Shichihei Prize in 2013. His original work was then adapted into an NHK drama in August 2016. His published works also include *God of Intelligence* in 2015 and *The UK Failure in Brexit: The Risk of No-deal* in 2019.

REINSTATEMENT



Bradley Martin, *Asia Times*, who first joined the FCCJ in 1978, has resumed his Regular Membership. A former Club secretary, vice president, and director at large, he’s the author of two books, including the novel, *Nuclear Blues*.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

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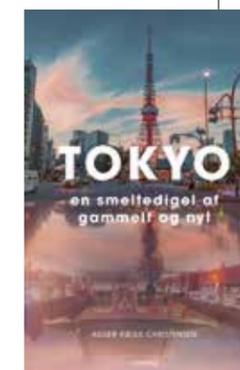
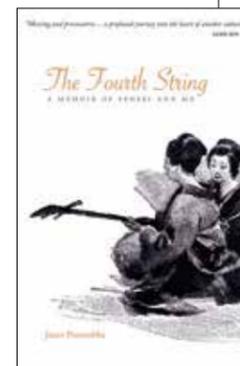
The Fourth String: A Memoir of Sensei and Me
Janet Pocerobba
Stone Bridge Press

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BOOK BREAK

Book Break: Insight into the emperor’s views

The Book Break on Tues., Dec. 10, will feature a talk (in English) about a book by his Majesty, the Emperor Naruhito, titled *Suiunshi kara Sekai no Mizu he*, (“From the History of Water Transportation to Global Water”). The event will begin with a video lecture the Emperor gave at the United Nations, followed by a speech by Kenzo Hiroki, professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies.

The book, published by NHK Publishing in April of this year, is a compilation of Emperor Naruhito’s selected speeches about water, and illustrates his activities over the years. He wrote his post graduate thesis in 1984 at Oxford



University about navigation of the upper Thames river. He also held the position of honorary president of the UN Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation from 2007 to 2015.

Professor Hiroki will share episodes of interactions with His Majesty that hint at the direction he may take as the new symbol of Japan. He will also share some views and perspectives of the emperor on such global issues such as climate

change, environment, gender equality, poverty eradication, peace, and sustainable development.

The library committee has arranged a cocktail party to meet the author starting at 6:15 pm, followed by a set dinner with one drink at 6:40 pm. Reservations are required. Book Break charges are ¥3,100 for Members (¥4,100 for non-Members). The member price is applicable to members’ guests.



Lens craft

After the typhoon

Rescue personnel walk a muddy road during search and rescue operations in the aftermath of Typhoon No. 19 (known as Hagibis) in Hoyasu, Nagano on Oct. 14. Rescue efforts for people stranded in flooded areas were in full force after the extremely powerful and deadly typhoon unleashed heavy rainfall.

by Richard Atrero de Guzman/
Sipa USA

The typhoon saw more than 60 rivers overflow and caused destruction across a widespread area of Japan. More than 100km away from Hoyasu (above left) in Sano, Tochigi (right) a woman carries her daughter through a flooded area on Oct. 13.

by Tomohiro Ohsumi



Winning smiles

Novak Djokovic takes a photo with fans after he defeated Japan's Go Soeda at the Rakuten Japan Open tennis championships in Tokyo, Oct. 2. Djokovic went on to be overall winner of the championship

by Yoshikazu Tsuno



FCCJ

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