

# THE BOOKS ISSUE

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*Favorite books on journalism*

*Prosperity and spying: books reviewed*

*Nobel Prize winner Akira Yoshino; press freedom roundup*



*Fine dining*



*Open for lunch and dinner*

*Closed weekends*

*In this issue*

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**Cover illustration:** Andrew Potheary

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Members,  
The year 2019 has been one of the most active years in recent history for those covering news in Japan. We have experienced world class summit meetings, such as the G20 and related ministerial meetings, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, and numerous bilateral summits including one

between Japan and the US)

Japan played host to the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics is just around the corner. The games will bring exciting assignments for journalists, reporters, camera crews and others.

Japan also hosted various international symposiums and seminars, with top speakers and panelists projecting their insights on the political, economic, military, and energy outlook for Japan, East Asia, and the rest of the world.

Add to that domestic events—topped of course by the new Imperial era, Reiwa, that came with the abdication of former Emperor Akihito and the enthronement of Emperor Naruhito, embellished by the attendance of royalty and political leaders from around the world.

All of these news events took place while local and national elections (although with few surprises) were held. Political scandals, resignations, new Cabinets, very unfortunate natural disasters that devastated regions, all kept reporters very busy on a daily basis.

Diplomatic news had flocks of reporters chasing updates on the strains Japan has with South Korea, and the continued confrontation with North Korea.

Continued stress points in Okinawa over the US military bases also fed the headlines. Regional territorial disputes continued to make writers wonder about which generation might eventually see a solution to such problems. Last but not least, bilateral activities that perhaps appeal only to limited audiences kept us busy covering extensive small-scale visits to Japan by delegations from various countries.

All in all, it seemed as though the world was coming to Japan and Tokyo became a little United Nations hub.

In the center of all of this activity stands the FCCJ with its world-class correspondents covering and reporting on events. The club has been the backbone of coverage with its subsidizing of the FPIJ (Foreign Press in Japan) body specialized in pool coverage and access to the foreign correspondents, and helping all the media in Japan, including non-FCCJ members.

With that and with the help and cooperation of Japanese media colleagues and authorities, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the “hub” coverage will continue in the New Year.

I would say that being in Japan has been a flourishing business for the international media, and that this will continue. If you belong to the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan—where history meets the future at the present—and take advantage of the world-class facilities at our new premises, your job and work will certainly be made easier and more interesting. Our Nijubashi Marunouchi building provides a prime location to meet your logistical needs. The FCCJ’s nearly 1800 members drawn from all categories of media, and from business, finance, academia, government and beyond are, along with our dedicated staff, in the right place to continue our mission of being at the center of the news.

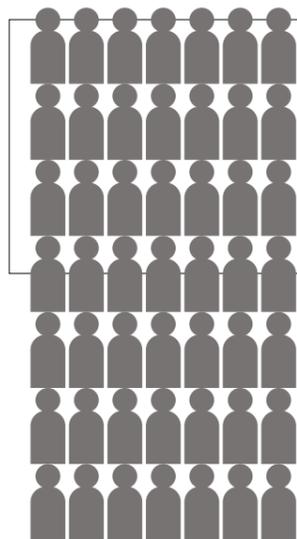
As a “returning” president of FCCJ, I feel a sense of great honor to be part of all this and to be a member of FCCJ. I have no doubt our club will continue its success story in 2020, one of high news activity for Japan and for the FCCJ.

I wish you all a Happy New Year (calendar and lunar) in 2020 and hope that the FCCJ will gain a gold medal for being the center of news making in Japan.

— **Khalidon Azhari**

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

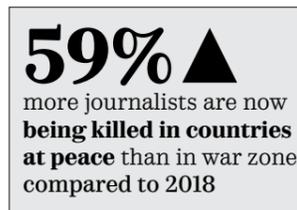
## Reporters Without Borders yearly round-up: ‘historically low’ number of journalists killed in 2019



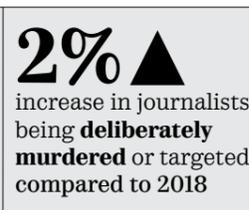
**49** journalists were killed in 2019

**44%** decrease compared to 2018

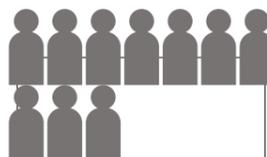
Compiled every year since 1995, the annual round-up of abusive treatment and deadly violence against journalists is based on precise data covering the period from Jan. 1 to Dec. 1



**59%** more journalists are now being killed in countries at peace than in war zones compared to 2018



**2%** increase in journalists being deliberately murdered or targeted compared to 2018



**10** journalists killed in Mexico  
No change compared to 2018

China alone holds a third of the worldwide total of arbitrarily detained journalists.

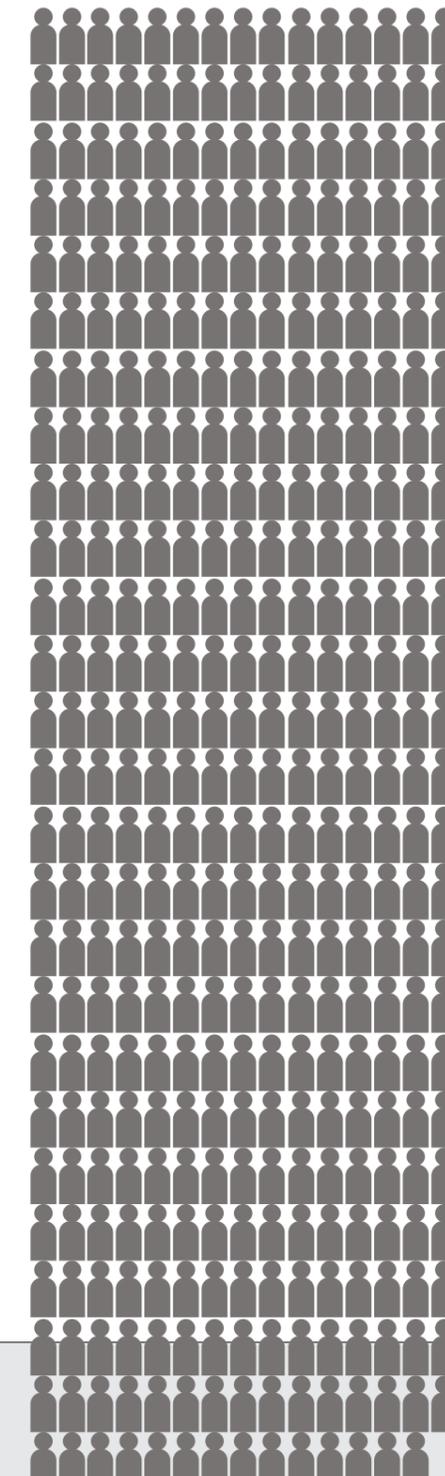
**389** journalists are currently in prison in connection with their work



**17** journalists killed in Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan

**50%** decrease compared to 2018

**12%** increase compared to 2018



FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Grand Champion and TV talent



**Wakanohana, who had achieved sumo’s highest rank of yokozuna (Grand Champion) the previous year, made the FCCJ’s New Year celebration a special event on Jan. 29, 1999, by cracking open a sake cask with Bob Neff (Business Week) and Haruko Watanabe (Press Foundation of Asia). This was not his first professional luncheon at the Club. He had appeared with his younger brother in February 1994, as the “Waka-Taka” siblings—a label derived from their earlier sumo names of Wakahanada and Takahanada—who had spurred greater interest in sumo.**

Born into a family of sumo greats—they were sired by Takanohana I (born Mitsuru Hanada) who also became their stablemaster—the Hanada siblings (born Masaru and Koji Hanada) made their first appearance together as sumo professionals in 1988. When the two brothers joined their father’s stable they were subject to the same rules as their fellow trainees, including living in the communal area and calling their father *Oyakata* (Stablemaster).

Koji, the younger sibling with a larger physique, became Takanohana II and a *yokozuna* in November of 1994 and Masaru, as Wakanohana III, achieved the same high rank in 1998, making them the first siblings to share that title. (Over time, however, their sibling relationship became strained and culminated in a falling out after the death of their father in 2005.)

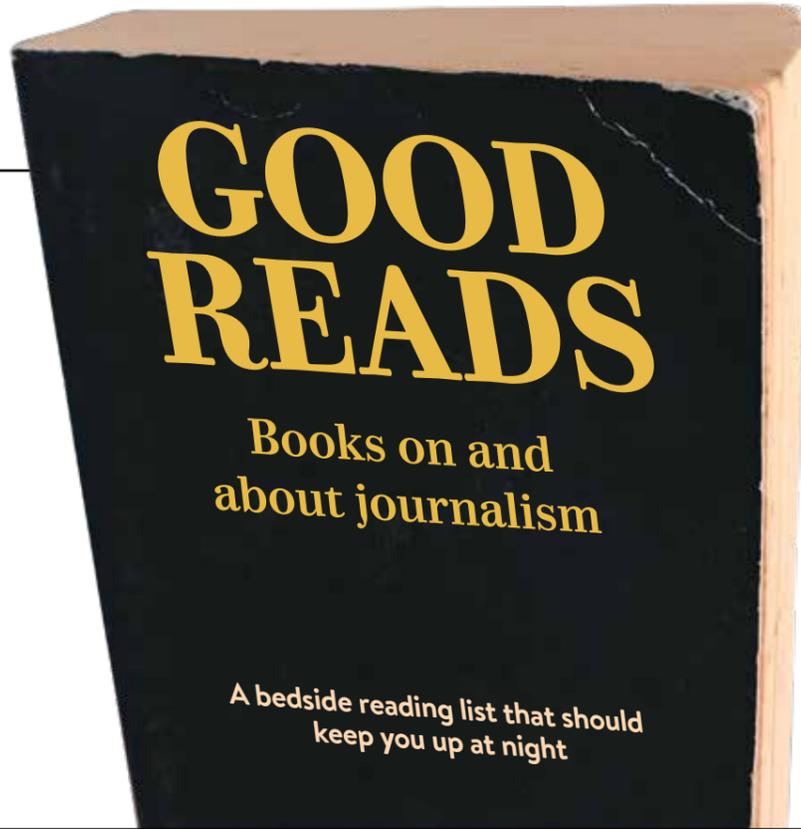
Wakanohana, who had won five tournament championships as a longtime ozeki, (champion) prior to becoming a *yokozuna*, retired in 2000 after injuries brought an end to his sumo career. He briefly served as a member of the Japan Sumo Association, then reverted in name to Masaru Hanada and went on to make a short-lived attempt to play professional American football.

Returning to Japan, he became a television personality and restaurant owner. Unfortunately, his restaurant chain that specialized in *chanko nabe*, a kind of hotpot that is a favorite dish of sumo wrestlers, went bankrupt in 2010, but he remains active as a television personality.

Masaru Hanada married in 1994 and fathered four children, but that marriage ended in divorce in 2007. He later remarried and fathered one more child with his new wife.

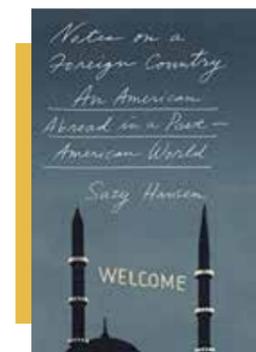
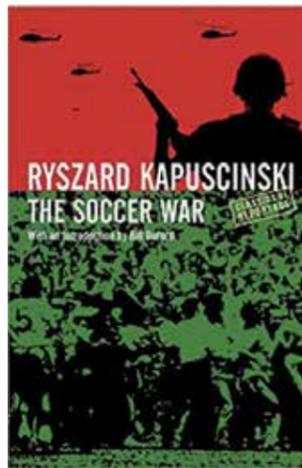
— **Charles Pomeroy**

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



On the face of it, Ryszard Kapuscinski's **The Soccer War** is a mess, a series of loosely connected sketches about now remote characters and episodes from Africa and Latin America in the 1960s. But no book I know, better or more honestly captures the chaos, fascination and futility of foreign news reporting, especially the reporting of conflict. "We always carry it to foreign countries, all over the world, our pride and our powerlessness," the great Pole writes. "We know its configuration, but there is no way to make it accessible to others. It will never be right. Something, the most important thing, the most significant thing, something remains unsaid."

Richard Lloyd Parry, *the Times*

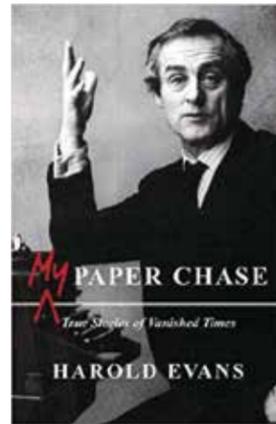


**Notes on a Foreign Country: An American Abroad in a Post-American World**, by Suzy Hansen (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017). "A brave and disturbing account of what it means to be an American in the world during the first decades of the 21st century," said the Pulitzer Prize jury when nominating my fellow Istanbulite's part memoir, part journalism debut book on Turkey, as a finalist in 2017.

Ilgin Yorulmaz, freelance

My first instinct is to recommend **Scoop** [the 1938 novel by Evelyn Waugh], but let me instead suggest **My Paper Chase**, the autobiography of former *Sunday Times* editor Harold Evans. It's a guide to campaigning journalism as it ought to be done: with an eye for news and a desire to help, not to win prizes or push a political cause.

Robin Harding, *the Financial Times*.



Recall the nursery rhyme: "When she was good, she was very, very good, but when she was bad, she was horrid." Journalism is a lot like that little girl, and that's why I've always included Evelyn Waugh's classic comic novel, **Scoop**, on my syllabus for a Foreign Correspondence course. Exaggerating images from his own coverage of the war in Ethiopia in the 1930s, the British author held a fun-house mirror up to our profession—in such memorable fashion that once you've read this book, you'll never go to the front without a supply of cleft sticks.

Bradley Martin, *the Asia Times*

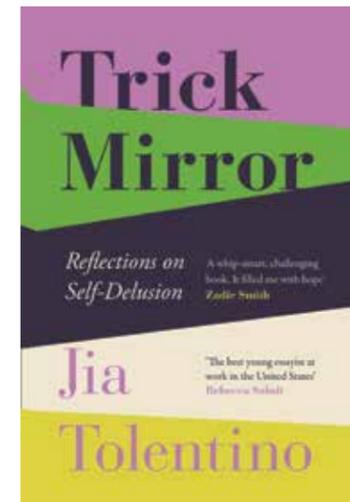


**Stick It Up Your Punter! The Uncut Story of the Sun Newspaper**, by Chris Horrie and Peter Chippindale, is both hilariously entertaining and horribly frightening. It's the story of how the unscrupulous Rupert Murdoch and the bullying, obnoxious, foul-mouthed editor Kelvin MacKenzie turned a sleazy tabloid into a media goldmine that manipulated public opinion with its populist approach, and even played an oversized role in British politics in the eighties. Ring any bells? First published in 1990, it was updated to include the Leveson Inquiry in 2012. As eye-opening as it is raunchy. And no, I've never looked at MacKenzie as a role model.

Gregory Starr, editor, *Number 1 Shimun*

Tom Rachman's **The Imperfectionists**, a suite of short stories about a fictional international daily based in Rome, is nothing short of devastating, both for its unflinching portrayal of the industry as well as its utterly authentic portraits of the paper's managers, staff and readers. You won't find a better novel about the death of newspapers.

Tim Hornyak, freelance



I recently read and really enjoyed Jia Tolentino's **Trick Mirror**. It's a collection of essays, including several about journalism in the social-media and digital age. It is a thoughtful meditation on the state of the industry, the new forces shaping it and the responsibilities of journalists in the current political era.

Abby Leonard, freelance

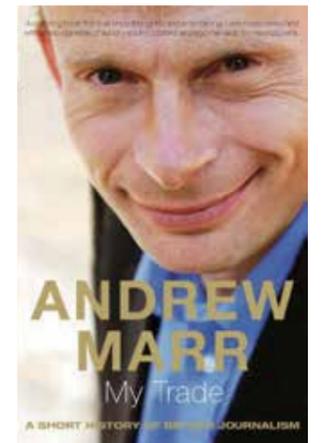
**Sorcières, la puissance invaincue des femmes** (Witches, the unbeaten power of women), is by Mona Chollet, a journalist for *Le Monde Diplomatique* in Paris, and a French feminist figure. In this book, she shows through a study of the mythology of witchcraft and the history of witch-hunting how society still sees women who are free and independent as evil witches. (It should appear in English soon.)

Johann Fleuri, freelance



How about Matt Taibbi's **Hate, Inc.: Why Today's Media Makes Us Despise One Another**? If you can read this and not want to switch to some other line of work, you've really got the bug.

Isabel Reynolds, Bloomberg



Andrew Marr's unputdownable **My Trade: A Short History of British Journalism**, which I was given for Christmas some years ago. The award-winning BBC political correspondent was previously a print journalist for a number of publications, and the book is a compelling ride through the past combined with amusing and alarming anecdotes from newsrooms and the "front lines" of the business.

His conclusion is worth repeating: "Reporters are what journalism is about. . . . Never mind the arguments about ownership and regulation. A journalism which is based on vigorous honest reporting is in good health; one that is not, in decay. It's as simple as that."

Julian Ryall, *the Telegraph*



**Search for a New Order: Intellectuals and Fascism in Prewar Japan**, was written by my college roommate, Miles Fletcher. In 1968, at Ann Arbor, he had already started to do research on the life of Shintaro Ryu, an economist who acted as advisor

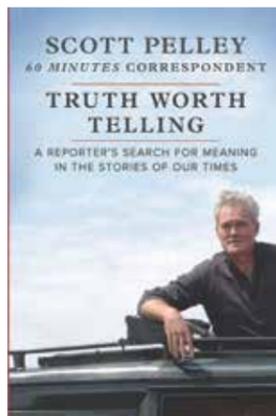
to Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoye, while writing columns for the *Asahi*. Ryu spent the war years as the *Asahi*'s Berlin correspondent. After returning to Japan in 1945, he rose to become the paper's editor in chief.

Fletcher was among the first scholars to point out that many Japanese intellectuals prior to WWII were active supporters of the government and worked hard to promote what they saw as Japan's legitimate interests. His book shows that there is not one right way to be a reporter and that we need to judge our colleagues not only by the choices they made but by the choices they felt they had.

Andrew Horvat, freelance

As a CBS "60 Minutes" television correspondent and former anchor of the "CBS Evening News," Scott Pelley has had decades of amazing experiences. In *Truth Worth Telling*, he relates countless intriguing anecdotes from his career as an extremely ethical journalist. He also tells us about the struggles of his early career and how he refused to accept "no" for an answer.

Randy Schmidt, CBS



**Fiesta (The Sun Also Rises)**, is Hemingway's first full novel. The semi-autobiographical tale of a foreign correspondent in Paris and his friends who travel to the running of the bulls in Pamplona is as remarkable for the complete absence of journalistic work done as it is for the sparse writing style that came to define the author. The protagonist is apparently unencumbered by deadlines or demanding editors, and gives no thought to pitching a feature about his trip to Spain. This leaves him free to pursue his true passions: drinking, fishing, bullfighting and more drinking.

Gavin Blair, freelance

**THE BOOK SHOWS THAT THERE IS NOT ONE RIGHT WAY TO BE A REPORTER AND THAT WE NEED TO JUDGE OUR COLLEAGUES NOT ONLY BY THE CHOICES THEY MADE BUT BY THE CHOICES THEY FELT THEY HAD.**



If you need to teach a class in journalism or simply just want a primer on anything from ethics and attribution

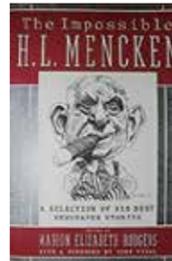
to investigative reporting and interview techniques, you must get this outstanding book. *Inside Reporting, 3rd Edition*, by Tim Harrower, is a breeze to read, accessible to anyone and a great guide for neophytes and crusty, ink-stained wretches alike. I enjoy just leafing through it.

Hans Greimel, Automotive News

**The Impossible H.L. Mencken.**

This 700-page collection of Mencken's best newspaper articles between 1904 and 1948 covers topics as diverse as the state of journalism, US presidential elections, the famous Scopes Monkey Trial, and thoughts on eating and the telephone. Dedicated to the working journalist, and with a forward by Gore Vidal, this book shows, as Vidal points out, the difference between a journalist being "Right" as opposed to being "Correct."

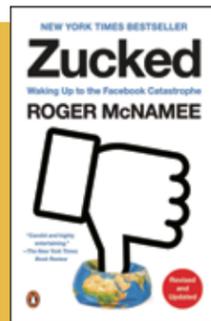
Eric Johnston, the Japan Times



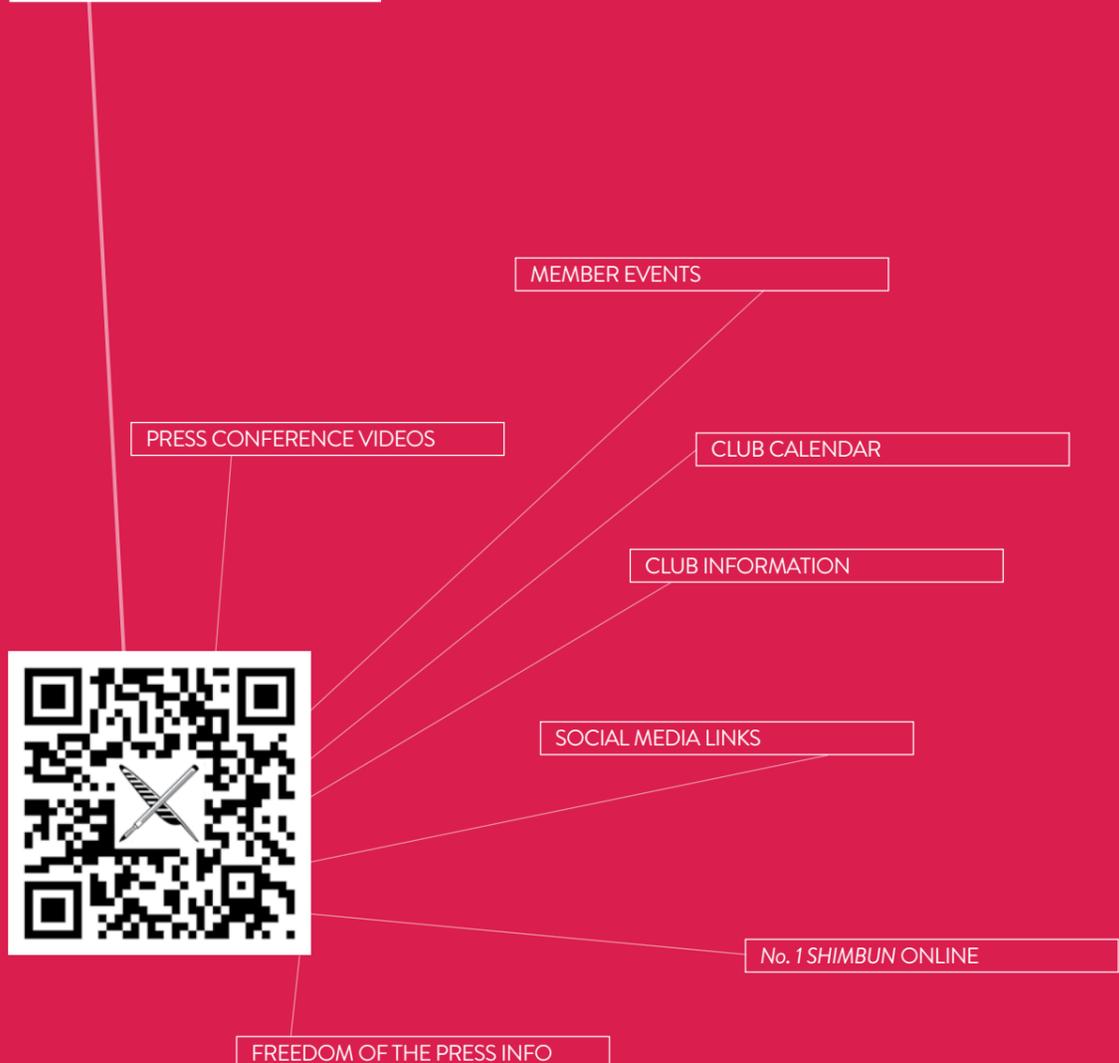
Roger McNamee's Zucked: **Waking up to the Facebook Catastrophe**. In the historical blink of an eye, Facebook has become the world's largest publisher. Some 14 years after being started in a Harvard dorm, it has 2.4 billion users and, together with Google, FB is eating journalism, both by luring young consumers away from old media and undermining its economic base.

Yes, technology always brings disruption and is often creative, but FB is a monopoly run by people with no idea of what comes next. McNamee is a former insider (his firm once owned stock in Facebook) turned Cassandra figure, warning us about a new generation of publishers that have "power without responsibility." Will we listen?"

David McNeill, the Economist, the Irish Times



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## An Impeccable Spy

### Richard Sorge, Stalin's Master Agent

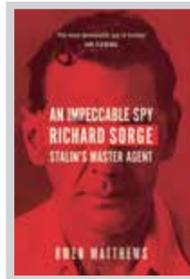
OWEN MATTHEWS' *AN IMPECCABLE SPY* is a competent but less than definitive re-telling of the story of Richard Sorge, the Tokyo-based, WWII-era Russian spy, whose mission was to keep the USSR informed of Japanese intentions in East Asia. Many people consider Sorge the greatest spy in history, and that he and his Japanese partner, Hotsumi Ozaki, saved the USSR by confirming that Japan would not open a second front against Russia in 1941.

Matthews, who reads Russian, has provided a detailed account of Sorge's colorful career by delving into the declassified Soviet archives.

Sorge was born in Baku in 1895 to a German father and a Russian mother and grew up in Germany. He joined the German Army in October, 1914. In March, 1916, Sorge was heavily wounded in fighting near Minsk. While convalescing, he read Marx and other socialist writers, and became convinced that communism was the only way to end the cycle of imperialist war.

Sorge joined the German Communist Party and later went to Moscow to work for the Comintern, the international organization that advocated world communism. In 1929, Sorge began working for the Red Army's Fourth Department military-intelligence agency, which sent him to Shanghai in 1930 and Tokyo in 1933. Sorge established his bona fides as a journalist for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and was a member of the Nazi Party, making him one of the few people—perhaps the only one—ever to be a member of the Soviet Communist Party and the Nazi Party at the same time.

ONCE IN JAPAN, SORGE assembled one of history's most accomplished spy rings. His star recruit was *Asahi Shimbun* journalist Ozaki, who had access to the highest levels of the Japanese government. He also ingratiated himself at the German Embassy in Tokyo through his knowledge of East Asia and by providing inside information supplied by Ozaki.



By Owen Matthews  
Bloomsbury Publishing  
London 2019

Reviewed by Steve McClure

The Sorge ring provided crucial information to Soviet military intelligence on four occasions. In 1938, Soviet and Japanese forces clashed at Changkufeng, near the intersection of the borders of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo (Manchuria), Korea, and the USSR. Ozaki's sources told him the Japanese did not want the conflict to escalate.

In the Nomonhan Incident of spring 1939, Soviet and Japanese forces fought a localized war on the border between Manchukuo and Mongolia. Ozaki told Sorge that Japan was intent on "solving the problem locally."

The Sorge ring's attempts to warn of the German plan to invade the USSR were less successful. Stalin ignored the solid intelligence that Sorge sourced from his high-level German Embassy contacts.

The biggest question surrounding Sorge and his network is to what extent Stalin acted on the information that Sorge supplied confirming that the Japanese would not invade Siberia. Matthews quotes a message Sorge sent to Moscow on July 12, 1941: "If the Red Army suffers defeat then there is no doubt that the Japanese will join the war, and if there is no defeat, then they will maintain neutrality."

"The version of this telegram in the military archives bears Stalin's initials alongside those of Molotov, Beria and army chief Marshal Voroshilov," Matthews writes. "A handwritten note on the bottom written by a Fourth Department official says: 'In consideration of the high reliability and accuracy of previous information and the competence of the

information sources, this information can be trusted.'"

AN ATTACK BY JAPAN on the USSR in the summer of 1941 would have doomed the Soviet regime—and changed the outcome of the war.

"Exactly what role Sorge's information played in Stalin's decision making has been hotly debated by Russian historians," Matthews writes. "But it is clear from the wide circulation that Sorge's reports received that the Fourth Department, the top members of the Politburo and Soviet Army, had finally begin to trust Sorge's information. Towards the end of September, troops began moving from the Far Eastern Military District in large numbers to fight the Germans on the plains of European Russia. . . . In all, Stalin would shift over half the available troops in Siberia to the defense of Moscow." This appears to be the first confirmation in English of Sorge's pivotal role in the Soviet leader's decision.

Sorge's luck finally ran out. The Japanese police had been trying to find the source of coded radio messages that were being sent from somewhere in Tokyo. In October 1941, they finally got a break that led them to the source. Sorge and his confederates were arrested. Sorge and Ozaki were hanged on Nov. 7, 1944.

Writing a full, well-rounded description of Sorge's career requires a thorough grounding in the political and diplomatic machinations of Japan, the USSR and Germany, not to mention the necessary linguistic skills. *An Impeccable Spy* does not come up to this mark, unfortunately. It is, however, full of interesting historical footnotes, such as a Japanese plot to assassinate Stalin, and the Lyushkov affair, which saw a high-ranking NKVD officer defect to Japan in June 1938. It also contains some unfortunate errors concerning Japanese names and places.

Matthews paints a well-rounded picture of Sorge as a player in the broad context of the years leading up to the Second World War. But what's missing is the nuance and detail provided by Chalmers Johnson's *An Instance of Treason: Ozaki Hotsumi and the Sorge Spy Ring*, which is still the best book on the Sorge case in English. ●

Steve McClure is a writer, editor and narrator who has lived in Tokyo since 1985.

## Asia's Journey to Prosperity: Policy, Market and Technology Over 50 Years

THE SECRET BEHIND ASIA'S transformation over the past half century from a mainly poor and underdeveloped region into a global economic powerhouse is that there is no secret or mystery about it. The term "East Asian Miracle" is probably misleading, there is "no such thing as an Asian consensus," and the belief that the twenty-first century will be "Asia's century" is too early to call.

This rather blunt, but essentially realistic analysis forms the basis of *Asia's Journey to Prosperity*, published by the Asian Development Bank in January. It also suggests that it will take time for Asia "to become as influential as the West has been for the past five centuries."

The work is the product of economists from many countries at the ADB led by outgoing President Takehiko Nakao, who for the past seven years has been a key figure on Asia's development scene. It represents, he says, his "passion to write Asian development history in a balanced and comprehensive manner in English by economists from Asia."

Far from dismissing Asia's economic achievements over the past five or six decades, the book argues that growth, poverty reduction, and progress in education and health have been beyond anyone's expectations. But Nakao believes that the policies pursued in Asia can be explained by standard economic theories. And these policies are not so different from those prescribed by the so-called "Washington Consensus."

Asia has pulled itself up by its own bootstraps by learning from the successes and failures of others, rejecting what does not work and building upon what does, by preferring trade openness to protectionism, adopting new technologies, transitioning from agriculture to manufacturing and services and building infrastructure and institutions.

Yet there is "no room for complacency," warns Nakao, in what is a very readable book that has been three years in the making. There remain many challenges including persistent poverty, gender gaps,



Published by the Asian Development Bank  
January 2019

Reviewed by Anthony Rowley

environmental degradation, and so on. He argues that Asia must continue to strengthen its institutions, contribute to the development of science and technology, assume more responsibility for global issues and articulate its own ideas.

The volume steers away from politics in its analysis (understandable for a multilateral development institution). But some may feel that China could learn something from Nakao's counsel in favor of caution. Those who know relatively little about Asia can learn much from this book for the context it provides on Asia's economic history.

For example, Asia produced two-thirds of global GDP (in purchasing-power parity terms) from the beginning of recorded history until the early 19th century, reflecting its large population and relatively high productivity. Chinese and Arab merchants laid the foundations of East-West commerce and scientific progress flourished in parts of Asia while Europe was being repressed by religious dogma.

This all changed after the Industrial Revolution. Except for Japan, which pursued Western-style modernization in the late 19th century, Asian economies stagnated from isolationism, colonization, weak institutions, outdated education systems, domestic conflict, and wars.

As recently as 1966, when the ADB was established, the Asia Pacific region was very poor. Developing Asia's per capita gross domestic product was just \$330. By 2018, this had soared to \$4,903, a near 14-fold increase, while global per capita GDP tripled over the same period. As a result, developing-Asia's share of global

GDP jumped from 4 to 24 percent.

As the book observes, the role of markets and the state was shaped by changes in development thinking. After World War II, state-led industrialization and "import-substitution" strategies dominated development policy in developing countries. Nationalist and socialist ideologies had significant influence. These led to massive inefficiencies and even crises in many countries.

Japan had a tradition of a strong private sector going back to premodern merchants. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, government policies focused on establishing modern institutions and education. Although Japan resorted to "targeted industrial policy" after the war, it was mainly to address serious resource constraints during the rebuilding process.

From the 1960s, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan shifted to export-promotion and market-friendly policies. In the 1970s, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand opened up to trade and foreign direct investment, and became "high-performing Asian economies" in the following two decades.

From the late 1970s, more Asian economies embarked on far-reaching market-oriented reforms and opened to the outside world. China began "reform and opening up" in 1978, and decided to adopt a "socialist market economy" in the early 1990s, enabling 40 years of rapid economic growth.

South Asia also joined the wave of economic reforms. India started comprehensive reforms in 1991 to reduce government control, rely more on market forces, and liberalize trade, and the reforms were followed by growth. From the early 1990s, Central Asian countries started the transition toward market economies.

Development, the book concludes, "requires efficient markets, an effective state and strong institutions. Markets, prices and competition are critical for the efficient allocation of resources and creation of entrepreneurial incentives. The state is needed to establish strong institutions, intervene where markets fail to work efficiently, and promote social equity." That probably comes close to summing up the elusive Asian consensus. ●

Anthony Rowley was formerly with the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *Times of London*, and is the author of several books.

## Eric Johnston The *Japan Times*

By Julian Ryall

As the only full-time Kansai-based foreign reporter writing about Japan in English, Eric Johnston has a different perspective on the news. And after more than 30 years in and around Japan's "second city," he does not feel overly envious of correspondents who find themselves rooted to Tokyo.

"If you enjoy being an 'outside' journalist, without the constraints and often complicated loyalties to sources that 'inside' journalists, especially in Tokyo, have, then it's definitely an advantage to be in Osaka," says Johnston, the senior Kansai correspondent for the *Japan Times*. "Distance allows for a more detached, critical view of the capital and its shenanigans, and the news coming out of it."

Born in Pennsylvania, the 55-year-old Johnston studied business and communications as dual majors at the University of Pittsburgh with no thoughts of a career in journalism. But, intrigued by tales of the "economic miracle" taking place on the other side of the Pacific and books such as Ezra Vogel's *Japan as Number 1*, Johnston began taking Japanese language classes.

"To my surprise, I not only enjoyed it more than my other classes, but decided I wanted to become highly fluent," he says. "By the time I graduated in 1987, I was itching to travel and wanted an adventure."

Through a university friend from Kyoto, Johnston was able to find a job at an English conversation school in the ancient capital, enabling him to make a living while learning about Japan and picking up more of the language. Initially, he toyed with the idea of combining studying with travelling in the region.

That changed in 1988, when he was invited to write a story for a Kyoto-based student magazine, and realized he enjoyed it. A couple of years later, he was in the right place at the right time when the Osaka-based publisher of a Japanese trade magazine for the video arcade game and karaoke machine industries was setting up *Japan Amusement Monthly*, an English-language version of their publication. For the following three years, Johnston travelled to trade shows in the US, Europe and Asia, testing out foreign manufacturers' machines and writing about the latest releases from Sega, Namco, and Capcom in Japan.

IN 1994, JOHNSTON WAS asked by the *Mainichi Daily News* to write freelance articles on different aspects of the city from a foreigner's perspective. That soon evolved into a full-time position, although the English-language print version of the *Mainichi* was already under pressure by 1996.

"I was also ready to move on and do full-time reporting rather than mostly translating and editing, which had been

### "STORYTELLING THAT AIMS FOR THE TRUTH RATHER THAN RECITES FACTS WILL NEVER DISAPPEAR"

my main job," says Johnston. "So when one of the reporters at the *Japan Times*' Osaka office said he was quitting, I applied and became his successor."

More than 20 years later, Johnston knows the decision was the right one. "The *Japan Times* is the ideal place because of 'trust,'" he says. "The editors in Tokyo, from the beginning, gave me a lot of freedom to do my own stories and allowed me to develop my career at my own pace with relatively little oversight. That trust continues to be strong, if not stronger."

There are a couple of disadvantages to being based in Osaka instead of the capital, he admits. Being at arm's length from the political and economic heart of the nation makes it harder to develop relationships with sources who can provide diverse and directly informed opinions on what is happening.

But he has no plans to swap Kansai for Kanto. "I prefer researching and writing from a non-Tokyo base in the selfish dream of reminding readers, for a half second, that 'Japan' does not automatically equal 'Tokyo,'" he says.

Among the many advantages is that Osakans are notably loud, brash, and quick-witted. "People are often more direct and opinionated than their Tokyo cousins, which makes for great copy if you're a journalist."

JOHNSTON IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED in stories that examine some of the deeply entrenched political and social issues of the country from a different angle. Of the events from his career that have stuck with him, Johnston points to the 1995 Kobe earthquake and the "tension, excitement and sense of hope that climate change could be controlled that permeated the 1997 conference creating the Kyoto Protocol."

An interview with Harrison Ford in 2011 is also memorable, as well as watching US President Barack Obama pay his respects as the first sitting US leader to visit Hiroshima.

He is generally upbeat about the future of his trade. "Good storytelling that aims for the truth rather than recites a mere collection of facts will never disappear," he says. "It's a fundamental human need."

Johnston remains particularly optimistic about the future of individual acts of journalism. "But to make a difference in society," he says, "it has to continually reach a loyal community of followers who understand and accept that, unlike air, truthful information and storytelling is not free, can be quite expensive, and may not always make them 'satisfied customers.' That's a tough sell."

"That said," he continues, "I'm encouraged by reports in some parts of the world that news on printed paper is making a comeback." ●

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



KAZUKO JOHNSTON



Akira Yoshino at the Club on Dec. 20 last year

# My 'studies' with Nobel Prize winner Akira Yoshino

The lithium battery inventor taught the author a thing or two about a breakthrough that has changed the world around us

By Roger Schreffler

In October, 2010, I found myself zipping around a test track at the research center of Hiroshi Shimizu, a professor in Keio University's engineering department. He had built a prototype electric car, the Eliica, that could accelerate from 0 to 100 kph in four seconds and run at speeds of over 350 kph—faster than just about any car outside the super sports car segment. Prof. Shimizu didn't let me drive, but one of his assistants took me for a spin, and seeing or "feeling," as he would say, was believing.

Later, while discussing the car's battery, Shimizu urged me to reach out to another researcher, an employee of Asahi Kasei named Akira Yoshino, who he predicted would one day win the Nobel Prize. I followed up in short order, requesting an interview, while trying to make myself seem more knowledgeable about battery technology than I was. The fact was, batteries are about chemistry, and chemistry was not one of my strong suits as a student.

I didn't know, frankly, the difference between an anode and a cathode or an electrolyte and separator, the four main components of so-called rechargeable batteries. I did know that Japan was far and away the global leader in both nickel-metal hydride and lithium-ion batteries, the two leading candidates to replace lead-acid, the industry mainstay. I also knew that Japan had staked out a leadership position in small applications such as personal computers, mobile phones and assorted power tools.

What I didn't know at the time was that the reason for Japan's preeminent position, in the case of lithium-ion batteries, involved Yoshino—who, while being well-known in the scientific community, was relatively unknown in the media world.

Asahi Kasei, a global chemical company, responded affirmatively to my request and we scheduled a late-afternoon interview. I arrived with an interpreter, someone well-schooled in chemistry, and we were led to a conference room.

YOSHINO ENTERED THE ROOM, and after perfunctory introductions, he immediately launched into what can best be described as a "lecture" to a college chemistry class, befitting

his doctorate in engineering and master's degree in organic chemistry. He was genial, unassuming, and focused, clearly in an educational mode.

Using a projector, he began a 15-minute slide presentation by explaining what a lithium-ion battery is. "A nonaqueous secondary battery using carbonaceous materials as a negative electrode and transition metal oxides containing lithium-ion—LiCoO<sub>2</sub>—as a positive electrode," he said.

This "student" reporter was already lost. But the "professor" had just begun. He then reviewed the evolution of primary and secondary batteries from alkaline, lead-acid and nickel-cadmium to nickel-metal hydride, lithium-metal and lithium-ion and finally to describe the characteristics of lithium-ion batteries and why they had aroused such intense interest among global automakers.

"Small and light," he noted, "with high electromotive force, high current discharge and no harmful substances such as cadmium or lead. And for energy storage applications: high charge/discharge efficiency and a low self-discharge rate."

When his talk moved to electrodes, the student gave up.

Yet electrodes, the electric conductors through which current enters or leaves a battery cell, were the centerpiece of Yoshino's research. And negative electrodes in particular were a major obstacle to mass-producing lithium-ion batteries, which by all accounts is what earned Yoshino his share of the prize.

Let's not forget, the 1980s up through the mid-1990s were the "go-go" days for the Japanese economy and, for manufacturers in general, what later came to be known as "*monozu-*

**THIS 'STUDENT' REPORTER WAS ALREADY LOST. BUT THE 'PROFESSOR' HAD JUST BEGUN. . . WHEN HIS TALK MOVED TO ELECTRODES, THE STUDENT GAVE UP.**

*kuri*" production or the art of "making things." Yoshino was representative of that period.

Yoshino began his research in 1981, working out of a small lab south of Tokyo in Kawasaki. His Asahi Kasei team discovered that polyacetylene—an organic polymer with high electroconductivity—could be used as a negative electrode material, and filed their first big patent in 1983.

"At that time," Yoshino recalled, "many researchers were working with metallic lithium and there were problems, the most serious being that the material is unstable and prone to overheating and fire." He showed old lab footage in which a test sample of metallic lithium burst into flames. The polyacetylene electrode, however, did not.

HIS TEAM EVENTUALLY ADOPTED less-costly carbon as the negative electrode material, replacing polyacetylene, and filed their second big patent in 1985. Before they were done, they amassed more than 300 patents while their carbon/lithium-cobaltate battery would become the industry standard. It still is.

Upon reflection, he said, "If my team's tests had failed I am not sure if lithium-ion batteries ever would have been mass-produced."

By his own admission, Yoshino never envisioned a world in which we depended on notebook computers and cell phones. There were none in 1980. And electric cars were out of the question. "Our main focus was camcorders," he said. "We sim-

ply couldn't envision the explosive growth of cell phones and personal computers."

Yoshino wasn't alone in trying to achieve a technological breakthrough. Lithium-ion batteries hold four times more energy than lead-acid and a breakthrough, for auto manufacturers, for example, would lead to a move away from internal combustion engines, all of which emit CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere, to electric powertrains, the cleanest of the clean.

In December, 2010, several weeks after our meeting, Nissan's Leaf, which would become the best-selling electric car ever, went on sale. Interest in electric cars had grown following the 2009 Tokyo Motor Show when almost all the Japanese automakers exhibited an array of future and futuristic electric vehicles powered wholly or partly by batteries.

Since then, of course, thanks to Yoshino's and other breakthroughs, sales have rocketed as battery costs have plummeted. Lithium batteries cost more than ¥100,000 per kWh, in 2010. Today, prices have fallen to around ¥15,000 per kWh, and Tesla and other automakers are claiming that they are fast approaching ¥10,940 per kWh—one tenth of the 2010 cost.

Experts like Yoshino are skeptical and believe that figure will be difficult to achieve in the near future, since it will depend in part on putting a recycling system in place. But that hasn't begun in any meaningful way, and most believe it won't be up and running until after 2025.

Let's look at some figures.

Since 1995, global manufacturers have sold more than 5 billion personal computers, 12 billion smart phones.

Since 2018, the number of electric cars sold has grown to more than 1 million units annually. And by 2030, most analysts expect sales to grow to more than 10 million, with some estimates as high as 15 million.

Battery production, which grew to an estimated 160 gigawatt-hours in 2019, is projected to grow to 1.5 terawatt-hours in 2030. That is 1.5 trillion watt-hours, mostly for the auto industry. This compares to 19 GWh (19 million watt-hours) in 2010, the year Nissan began mass-producing the Leaf.

So why was Akira Yoshino named the co-winner of the Nobel prize for chemistry? A battery expert in the US explains: Yoshino's Asahi Kasei team "put together the fundamental structure we see in today's lithium-ion batteries. Every lithium-ion cell in portable electronic devices on the market—computers, phones, power tools, and cameras—derives from Yoshino's research."

In an ironical side story, Sony beat Asahi Kasei to market by nearly a year in 1991, with a small battery for an early version of its Handycam camcorder. Asahi Kasei, a global chemical manufacturer and supplier of separators, arguably the most important component in lithium-ion batteries, pursued a different strategy. Instead of marketing its battery technology directly, reminiscent of Sony's failed Betamax strategy in the 1970s, Asahi Kasei opted to license its technology to more than 10 battery manufacturers including Toshiba (a joint venture partner) and the former Sanyo Electric Co., now part of Panasonic.

Akira Yoshino is now teaching at Meijo University in Nagoya while still serving as a senior advisor to Asahi Kasei. ●

Roger Schreffler is a veteran business reporter who focuses on the auto sector, and a former FCCJ president.

FCCJ EXHIBITION

**Mount Fuji Through the Seasons**  
Photos by Katsura Endo



I remember first becoming aware of Mt. Fuji during a summer festival when I was three years old and my family had gone out in a pleasure boat. I still have a vague memory of a firework display and a spectacular Mt. Fuji seemingly floating in the night sky.

Every morning Mt. Fuji calls out to me. I awake, then go to see it.

I hope you will enjoy these images of a 'tranquil Fuji' in the first year of Reiwa.

**Katsura Endo** was born in Hakone, 1958. His grandfather was a landscape photographer and his father a commercial photographer. Endo took part in a climb in the Himalayas in the winter of 1979-80 and held a solo exhibition on his return. Since then, he has been involved in countless photo projects, but he considers photographing Mt. Fuji to be a life work. He has held numerous solo exhibitions both in Japan and abroad.

NEW MEMBERS



**REGULAR MEMBER**  
**Rie Hayashi**, is the managing director of NHK World Department. She joined NHK as a news reporter, focusing mostly on Japanese politics and diplomacy. From 2008 to 2012, she was a senior manager in the Corporate Planning Department. From 2012 to 2017 she held executive positions at the Global Strategy Division of NHK World Department. From 2017 to 2019, she was the director of NHK Kobe Station. She took on her present post in 2019.

**PROFESSIONAL JOURNALIST/ ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**  
**George Miller**, Temple University  
**Jin Nakamura**, Atomi University  
**Kumiko Seto**, Freelance

**Yumiko Mizuno**, Mizuno Handy Harman, Ltd.  
**Yuji Ohashi**, Mori Hospitality Corporation  
**Satoshi Tanaka**, Mitsui & Co., Ltd.  
**Yasuyo Yamazaki**, Kuni Umi Asset Management Co., Ltd.

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**  
**Yuji Aihara**, Toyota Tsusho Corporation  
**Lia Camargo**, The Third Eye Corporation  
**Kiyoshi Kawamoto**, IDOM Inc.

**REINSTATEMENT (ASSOCIATE MEMBER)**  
**Nami Fukutomi**, Landscape Co., Ltd.

JOIN THE FILM COMMITTEE . . .

. . .on Wed., Jan. 15 at 6:45 p.m. for a sneak preview of the international festival favorite *Complicity*, an authentic and moving depiction of an illegal immigrant working in Japan. Although he finds work with an understanding boss, Liang Chen lives in fear his true identity could be exposed at any moment. And he's also plagued by guilt: we learn through flashbacks that he has left his ailing mother and demanding grandmother in his native Henan, where family responsibilities had curtailed any hopes he'd had for the future. He'd come to Japan intending to work for three years, save money and return to start his own business. But a lost wallet jeopardizes his plans. *Complicity* erases cultural barriers as it touches on themes of trust, friendship and food as the catalyst for building bonds. Debut director Kei Chikaura, Chinese star Yulai Lu and legendary Japanese star Tatsuya Fuji will join us for the Q&A session. (Japan/China, 2018; 116 minutes; in Japanese/ Mandarin with English/Japanese subtitles) — **Karen Severns**



CLUB CHRISTMAS PARTY

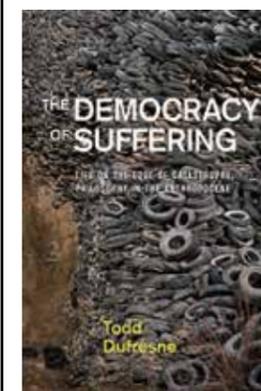


In December last year, the Club's Christmas Party was a happy and well-attended success, and families (children were, of course, central to the party and a donation ensured their attendance was free) were treated to a Christmas buffet meal, Billy the magician, music from Club Member Mary Corbett—and, naturally, Santa.



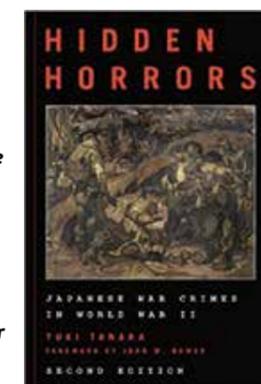
Photos: ALBERT SIEGEL

NEW IN THE LIBRARY



**The Democracy of Suffering: Life on the Edge of Catastrophe, Philosophy in the Anthropocene**  
McGill-Queen's University Press  
Todd Dufresne

**Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II: Second Edition**  
Yuki Tanaka  
Rowan & Littlefield Publishers  
Gift from Yuki Tanaka



IN MEMORIAM

Regular member **TSUKASA FURUKAWA** passed away Dec. 11 in a Tokyo hospital after a long illness. He was 87.

Furukawa was Tokyo Bureau chief for Fairchild Publications and a well-known figure on the Tokyo fashion scene.

He was an enthusiastic club participant and served on three boards and several committees.



**“ONE OF THE ISSUES IN INVESTIGATING RAPE CASES IS THAT ONLY 7 PERCENT OF JAPAN’S POLICE OFFICERS ARE WOMEN. SO THERE IS A LOT OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE POLICE.**

**I HAD TO RE-ENACT THE RAPE ON THE FLOOR WITH A LIFE-SIZED DOLL IN FRONT OF THREE MALE OFFICERS. THAT IS REALLY TRAUMATIZING”**



**Shiori Ito**, journalist, after the favorable court ruling in her rape case against Noriyuki Yamaguchi, Dec. 19



## Lens craft

### Forceful

Kabuki actor Ebizo Ichikawa performs in 'Star Wars Kabuki' to promote the release of *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*, at Meguro Persimmon Hall, Tokyo on Nov. 28  
by Tomohiro Ohsumi



### Papa

Pope Francis meets survivors from the atomic bombing in Hiroshima during his four-day trip to Japan—the first papal visit here for 38 years. He also visited Nagasaki and Tokyo.  
by Rodrigo Reyes Marin

### Mama

Bottlenose dolphin Rig swims with her 10-day-old baby at the Hakkeijima Sea Paradise aquarium in Yokohama, Nov. 17  
by Yoshikazu Tsuno



Where news is made