



# NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN

January 2015, Volume 47 No. 1, ¥400

## POP GOES LOLICON!



*Matt Alt reveals how prepubescent females secretly*

*topped giant robots from Japan's pop culture pantheon*

Predictions  
2015 as  
foreseen by our  
correspondents

Press Clubs  
How Hong Kong's  
FCC has remained  
relevant



> THEME.08  
> CAR

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ANDREW POTHECARY

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From the President

明けましておめでとうございます。本年もよろしくお願いたします。Wishing you all a healthy and prosperous 2015 in this Year of the Sheep (with Goats and Rams also qualifying.) Good news on the prediction front. The planets are aligning and the forecast is for calmer, more peaceful times ahead. I agree it's hard to imagine. Japan's secrets law, censorship, growing threats to freedom of speech and press, FCCJ boycotting, etc. are worrying indeed. But I can't help throwing a dash of peace, humor and hope into the bad news mix.

Peacemakers do emerge in troubling times. Soon after the LDP and Komeito boycotted the FCCJ during the December elections, I was invited to meet with the new Cabinet Office Director of Communications Kenko Sone. It was a gesture of cooperation. He promised to make efforts to bring more ministers to the Club, and hopefully the prime minister at a later time. We promised to improve our press conference emcee-ing. With our doors open to a growing variety of "journalists," it is important to clearly identify legitimate press during the Q&A. (For details please read David McNeill's story in this month's *Number 1 Shimbun*.)

On a wider scale, the Emperor also appears to have stepped into a peacemaker's role. During a news conference ahead of his 81st birthday on Dec. 23 he spoke about his hope that Japan goes forward in the world "as a stable, peaceful and sound nation, in mutual support not only with neighboring countries but with as many of the world's countries as possible."

Will the ultranationalists bend to the Emperor's gentle call for pacifism? Listening to their snarls booming from van speakers as they crawled past NHK in Shibuya last month sent a wave of chills up my spine. How to neuter the extremists? A scalpel wielding the power of humor seems to be one answer.

A case in point is Sony, which may get the last laugh on the *The Interview* censorship threat. As I write, the film is being released on digital platforms and at independent movie theaters in the U.S. and tickets are already sold out. That the movie features two wacky, unscrupulous TV journalists plotting the assassination of the century makes the laugh bittersweet. But I had a good laugh watching the trailer, knowing that freedom of speech and artistic freedom has prevailed – in this case – thanks in part to headlines fueling

consumer interest and outrage.

On censorship and public rebuke, I laughed with disbelief when vagina artist Megumi Igarashi was arrested again for distributing "obscene" data, despite Japan's flourishing pornographic manga and anime industries. Igarashi spoke at the FCCJ last July. Hopefully another petition or forum is in the works demanding her release.

The FCCJ Members Forum, launched in December, is your place to voice concerns, complaints and suggestions for the Club to the Board of Directors. It's also a vehicle to share job opportunities, trends in journalism, event happenings and many other topics. The forum was established partly as an alternative to Facebook with hopes that members will keep private FCCJ issues private. Although we are now a *koeki shadan hojin* (public interest association) offering services to the public, we remain a private Club. Please give the FCCJ Members Forum a try. More information is available on the FCCJ website front page.

Finally, choice quotes from *The Interview* on bad-ass journalists: "They hate us cause they ain't us . . . They're just peanut butter and jealous."  
— **Lucy Birmingham**

FROM THE ARCHIVES



THE PRINCESS, THE PRINCE AND THE MODEL



**Sept. 29, 1969. Britain's Princess Margaret in conversation with Club President Ugo Puntieri (ANSA) at a press reception. As the younger daughter of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, she was the only sibling of Queen Elizabeth II. Her husband, Lord Snowdon, is behind her, accompanied by Puntieri's wife in her native Korean dress. Although personable and charming, Puntieri's autocratic presidency of the FCCJ was a contentious one described in detail in the FCCJ history book. He ran for re-election in 1970, but was soundly defeated.**

PRINCESS MARGARET WAS no stranger to controversy. Following an earlier romance with war-hero Peter Townsend – a liaison frowned upon by the royal family and much criticized – she married photographer Antony Armstrong-Jones in 1960. He was made Earl of Snowdon in 1961 and she became officially "HRH The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon." It was in that capacity that the royal couple visited Japan in connection with a promotional "British Week," designed to attract interest to British technology and products.

HRH and her husband attended a reception in their honor at the FCCJ toward the end of their hectic nine-day visit. It was scheduled by a member of the British Embassy's organizing team who also happened to be an Associate member of the Club. He was Princess Margaret's cousin, Prince William of Gloucester, who in 1968 at age 27 had been assigned to the commercial section of the British Embassy in Tokyo.

Rumor had it, however, that another reason for her visit to Japan was to intercede in a reported romance between Prince William and Zsuzsi

Starkloff, a divorced Hungarian model who was the mother of two children as well as Jewish. This background apparently made her unacceptable to the Royal Family.

I can attest to the romance being true, for I had gotten to know William at the Club, and I also had occasion to meet Zsuzsi with William at Anne

Dinken's Kosher Deli near Roppongi. There was no doubt about their loving relationship.

William had a longstanding relationship with her until his death in an aircraft accident in 1972. Long an avid pilot, he was competing in an amateur air show race in England.

— **Charles Pomeroy**

TALES FROM THE ROUND TABLES



THE DISAPPEARING OFFICER

**From now until our 70th anniversary in November 2015, we will turn these pages over to the history of the Club, both of the many esteemed and important guests who faced us – and the world – from the FCCJ dais and of the many Members who have made the Club such a fascinating place to be.**

"KNOWING SCHOLARLY RACONTEURS like Geoff Tudor gives history an immediacy that links us all to the continuum of life in Japan. "One of Tudor's many tales regards his late friend and mentor – the 'very grand' Major-General L. Rowley Hill, who first built cordial relations during a posting here in late Meiji, when Japan was busy building a world-class navy on the British model. He returned in 1925 as the British Embassy's Military Attache. "How the tide had turned. When the Taisho Emperor passed away

the next year, Hill received orders to attend the funeral, paying due regard to the Emperor's honorary status as a Field Marshal of the British Army. Custom meant that Hill, as the top ranking officer in Japan, should follow immediately after the Emperor's cortege. The Imperial organizers, however, thought a place at the head of the foreign military contingent over a kilometer to the rear was more than good enough. After intense diplomatic negotiations, British tradition prevailed. "But that was not the end of the matter. On the day of the event, a number of 'bemedaled and beribboned' Japanese military officers appeared determined to deny Hill his agreed-upon place. Then the great Admiral Togo, hero of the Russo-Japanese War that had catapulted Japan onto the international stage, and who had spent some time in Britain, entered

and warmly shook Hill's hand, announcing, 'You will march with me.' "The official newsreel shown later in theatres across the country carefully followed every detail of the spectacle. The camera panned the somber countenances of each mourner in the procession – but somehow skipped the British officer following just behind Togo. The Imperial officials had the 'last laugh,' making Hill the only dignitary entirely erased from the official Japanese history of the funeral. "The very hilarity of such crude censorship, of course, is precisely what still makes Major-General Hill an enduring hero in the annals of Tokyo gaijin life. "A latter legend who frequented One Shimbun Alley, on the other hand, would not be denied his official history – simply because he wrote

most of it. He was the inimitable John Roderick, whose AP career spanned over 50 years. He first shot to prominence, in fact, in the 1940s while living in a cave with Mao Zedong and the communist guerillas. "Jim Lagier, who had previously been in Japan in the late 1950s with the U.S. military and knew a thing or two about regional history, arrived in 1993 as the new AP Tokyo bureau chief, and made a courtesy call to Roderick's beautifully restored farmhouse in Kamakura. "Is this the legendary John Roderick?' enquired Jim at the door of his great *sempai*. "Without hesitation came the reply from within: 'Yes, it is!' "Though Roderick was to continue to write for many years, there came a time when Jim thought it necessary to broach a delicate subject. 'John,' he

said, 'you look great, and we want you to live 100 more years. But you are so famous that I would be reprimanded if we did not have a preparedness on you.' "A preparedness?' came the bemused response. "You mean an obituary?" "Of course, that was exactly what Jim meant, and he assigned the young Joe Coleman, himself a future Tokyo bureau chief for AP, to do the interview. "The piece, describing the most illustrious of careers covering Asia, clearly found favor. Thanks largely to Jim's enduring storytelling legacy in Shimbun Alley, it is still affectionately remembered to this day as something Roderick himself thought 'almost worth dying for.'"  
— **The Shimbun Alley Whisperers**

# WHEN OTAKU ATTACK: ADVENTURES IN SUBCULTURE

by MATT ALT

## A NEW YORKER ARTICLE ON AN AMERICAN POP STAR'S ANIME-INSPIRED MUSIC VIDEO BLOWS THE LID OFF JAPANESE POP CULTURE'S DIRTY LITTLE SECRET...

かわい

Nobody talks about *lolicon*. Not publically and certainly not in the mass media. That's kind of the whole point. A Japanese portmanteau of the phrase "Lolita complex," it refers to comics and animation featuring illustrations of what, to many Western and even domestic eyes, are alarmingly young girls engaging in often scandalous behavior. Even among aficionados it's largely about the thrill of the illicit and underground, something to be giggled at, whispered about, and quietly consumed, but never ever to be discussed among the squares of mainstream society.

Yet that's exactly what singer Pharrell Williams did — he of the inescapable, quintuple-platinum selling single "Happy" — with the video for his most recent single "It Girl." Produced by artist Takashi Murakami's Kaikai Kiki collective and co-directed by Mr., a longtime Murakami collaborator with a predilection for painting young schoolgirls, it is the polar opposite of its family-friendly predecessor.

As sexy lyrics play in the background, a bevy of bikini-clad anime lolitas frolic in the surf while the hip-hop star's animated avatar alternates between playing peeping tom and seducer of the youngest of the lot. This is pretty tame stuff by Japanese standards, where the flesh-and-blood equivalent of anime girls, "idol groups" like AKB48, rule the airwaves. But seeing it in an American music video threw me for a loop. How on Earth did we get from "Happy" to here?

I suspected even Pharell himself didn't know. Convinced that few Americans would be able to decipher Mr.'s pastiche of Showa-era juvenile delinquency and sexuality, I pitched and sold a short piece about it to the *New Yorker*, who ran it on their website. Near as I can tell from a search of their archives, it was the first time lolicon had ever been discussed in their pages.

Perhaps inevitably, given the confluence of pop music and perversion, the article took off. Within 24 hours it was catapulted to the top spot on the *New Yorker's* Most Popular articles list, giving me the pleasure of unseating the likes of Anthony Bourdain, even if only for a day or two. The online reaction was largely positive save for a flurry of furious comments on the magazine's Facebook page, many of which sounded angrier about their favorite publication discussing cartoon sexuality than the article's actual content. The usual aggregator sites rushed out with cut-and-paste remixes of the article. The *Atlantic* included it in a round up of weekly highlights; *Esquire* introduced it as one of their "long reads of the week." My piece had thrust Japanese pop culture's little secret into the spotlight.

A week later I had an unexpected surprise when Takashi Murakami posted a translation, along with a pointed critique in Japanese, on his public Facebook page. Mr.'s goal, Murakami wrote, was to construct a "landscape of an innocent summer dream," though he realized, "it was very possible to imagine that this dream would seem like a nightmare when viewed from the stance of someone like the author of this article."

But many of his comments focused on the issue of responsibility. "Lolicon . . ." he wrote, "emerged from Japan's cultural castration after losing the war in the Pacific." It was the result of "Japan's impotence as a puppet nation of America," welling up out of modern society "like festering pus."

Then he questioned my bona fides: "is it culturally 'just' that this deformed culture is now being criticized for its very deformity from an American viewpoint? Is it 'just' for a nation to use its own culture as the sole yardstick by which to measure another nation's deformed culture, while completely setting aside the fact that it continues to profit from fabricated wars? Connecting lolicon to pedophilia makes logical sense, but I think it can be argued that in Japan, which cultivates deformed culture, perhaps the aspiration for pure beauty may take such a form; that it can't be understood using solely the Western criteria."

Perhaps, but I can sure as hell try. I wholeheartedly agree that over-reliance on one's own cultural yardstick often leads to what is commonly derided as "wacky Japan" reporting. And I while I can agree that the lolicon genre emerged from a subculture of "impotent" losers, they weren't losing out to America, but to their own society.

Otaku is a hip buzzword around the world today. But mainstream Japan long treated these subcultural super-fans with ambivalence bordering on hostility. In their earliest incarnation, the decade from 1979 to 1989, the otaku were the antithesis of "cool Japan," the dark yin to Japan Inc.'s incandescent yang. The macho, blinged-out financial tyrannosaur that Bubble-era Japan had evolved into wanted absolutely nothing to do with nonconformists who eschewed the trappings of adulthood for sexual relationships with cartoons.

Lolicon didn't just materialize out of thin air. Japan has a long history of lowbrow parody illustration, such as the famed 18th century "fart battle" scrolls, or Hokusai's legendary "Dream of the Fisherman's Wife," featuring a nude woman being pleased by an amorous octopus. In Japanese art, the refined and the vulgar have always co-existed side by side. This tradition never really ended. Unlike the U.S., with its draconian Comics Code Authority, Japan's vibrant manga industry has until very recently operated almost totally unfettered by any sort of official oversight or regulations at all.

For many years in the postwar era, manga were very broadly divided into three categories: those for boys, those for girls, those for adults, each with their own distinctive art styles, and never the trine shall meet. But while publishers kept the content separated, there was a great deal of crossover among the readership, and more than a few young men found themselves entranced by the beautifully sophisticated "clean" look and romantic plotlines of manga intended for the fairer sex.

In 1979, an artist by the name of Hideo Azuma self-published a series of comics that he drew in a soft and feminine style, but with plots straight out of porno films. They're tame by modern standards (one of the very first, drawn by his assistant, involved Little Red Riding Hood getting it on with the Big Bad Wolf). But Azuma's risqué creations sparked a phenomenon at Comic Market, then and now the world's largest convention for self-published manga artists and their fans. In the years following, dozens upon dozens of imitators flooded the scene, each attempting to one-up their competitors.

The professional publishing world took note. By 1982 a series of specialty magazines had emerged to service the untapped market. Suddenly lolicon was

**"Is it 'just' for a nation to use its own culture as the yardstick to measure another nation's culture?"**

everywhere, even in the pages of the otherwise mainstream *Shonen Champion* magazine, which sold millions of copies every week. Designed purely by and for domestic otaku, none of this stuff was ever sold abroad. Which is why, even after a childhood spent ravenously consuming import-

ed illustrated sci-fi and action fare from Japan, I was utterly taken by surprise when I encountered lolicon in its home country for the first time, years ago.

The fad had largely faded by the end of the Eighties, when its never proven but highly publicized implication in the 1989 case of a notorious serial killer of children drove the final nail into its coffin. Still, the concept of "girls' comics for boys" stuck. Over the years it percolated and evolved in subcultural circles, re-emerging roughly a decade later in a de-sexualized incarnation dubbed "*moé*" (a pun based on a homonym for "burning" and "bursting into bud"). Today, in the second decade of the 21st century, the sci-fi action-adventure shows I grew up on are the marginalia and *moé* featuring super-cute teenaged girls are the mainstream. So mainstream, in fact, that even such staid organizations as Japan Rail or the Japan Self-Defense Forces use perky anime-girl mascots. And the largely unspoken truth is that all of this started with a whole bunch of sexed-up illustrations of little girls.

For in an ironic twist, the otaku essentially won the cultural war by default. Their tastes, once so vilified, became the mainstream's. The sultry sirens of postwar screens have been supplanted by cartoon girls like the ones in Pharell's video; domestic rock 'n' roll has been edged off the charts by the flesh-and-blood equivalent of cartoons, idol singers like AKB48. And if there was any question as to whether all of this represents Japan's face to the world, AKB48's architect Yasushi Akimoto was recently named to the organizing committee for the opening ceremony of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Indeed, the nation's penchant for things "deformed," as Murakami puts it, has grown into perhaps its most well-known characteristic abroad. Better known by its Japanese name of *kawaii*, it translates very generally into "cute," but doesn't neatly overlap with Western uses of the word. It's essentially a visual shorthand, using clean lines, rounded shapes, exaggerated eyes, and adorably squashed proportions to convey childish purity and innocence. What started simply as a drawing style has become so ingrained that it has been transformed into the equivalent of a Photoshop filter that can be (and is) applied to nearly anything. When the *kawaii* filter is applied to illustrated romance stories, you get *shojo manga* (girl's comics). When applied to pop music, you get idol bands. When it is applied to product branding, you get characters like Hello Kitty. And when it is applied to pornography, you get lolicon.

Murakami's parting salvo expressed "hope that [the *New Yorker* article] provides a chance for America, which continues to act as the world's police force, to re-evaluate its future endeavors in light of seeing the end result of castrating a country." There's something very lolicon about the concept of framing frolicking pre-teen girls as a critique of the U.S. military-industrial complex. So too in the ambivalence about lolicon's existence, the idea that blame for its creation needs to be placed, wherever it may land. Whatever the case, there's no questioning one fact. Lolicon and its descendants are the bedrock of Japan's modern entertainment culture. The world of Cool Japan is shouldered not by a lone Atlas but rather countless scantily-clad cartoon schoolgirls. ●

Matt Alt is a Tokyo-based writer and translator. He is the co-author of *Yokai Attack!* and other books on Japanese culture.

# Things that go baaaaaa!

## Our sheepish predictions for 2015

*The call for members to look in their crystal balls and make some calls about news they expect to see happening in the next 12 months resulted in some woolly answers. Maybe it was the proximity to the elections, but our newsworthy prime minister and his controversial policies easily won a majority of the mentions. Here they are. According to our contributors, this is what you have to look forward to when you read the news in the next 365 days.*

**Property Prices Collapse in China. Investors Fleeced.**  
– Gregory Clark

Shinzo Abe will issue a revised Murayama Statement on the 70th anniversary of WWII, saying that Japan's policy of liberating Asia from white colonialism had caused "tremendous damage and suffering" to the people of many countries, but particularly to Japan. "In the hope that no such mistake be made in the future, I regard it my duty to fudge these irrefutable facts of history, and express my feelings of profound mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad. But particularly at home."  
– David McNeill, the Irish Times

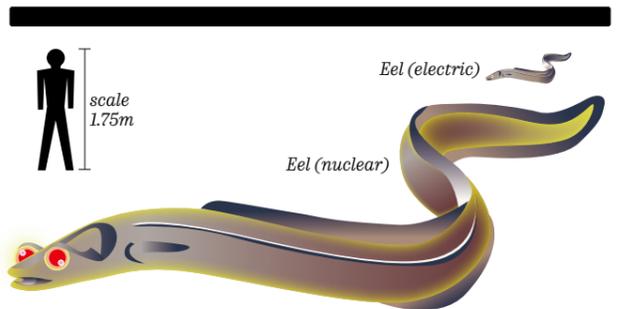
**Vladimir Putin sworn in, in Washington, as President of the United States of China.**  
– Benjamin Fulford

Headline shared by NHK, the Yomiuri Shimbun and the Sankei Shimbun, Aug. 15: "World marks 70th anniversary of the end of the newly redesignated Great East Asian Unfortunate Misunderstanding"  
– Richard Lloyd Parry, the Times



The special secrets act that went into effect last Dec. 10, under cover of the snap elections (which cost ¥7 billion), will slowly muzzle Japan's already lap-dog press, Abe will continue to whip the Asahi and all opposition media, and by the time no one is available to report that freedom of the press is dead – the FCCJ will hold their first & last Investigative Journalism awards. The committee will send next year's predictions from jail, in a letter that is heavily redacted.

– Jake Adelstein, the Daily Beast, etc.



A giant, eel-like animal was spotted by fishermen off the coast of Kashiwazaki, Niigata. They said it reached a length of 30 meters and had glaring red eyes. Scientists are analyzing the fishermen's photos. Some are raising the possibility that radiation from the nearby nuclear power plants have caused a normal eel to grow 50 times its normal size . . .

and . . . Haruki Murakami wins the Nobel Prize!

– Yosuke Watanabe, Kyodo News, Beijing

Corporate chiefs in the public stocks as government names and shames the most tightfisted.

– Tamzin Booth, the Economist

Police baffled as Japanese pop star claims he didn't buy drugs from a foreigner in Roppongi.

– Fred Varcoe

Confirming rumours that the Kantei is home to a fellow traveler, Akie Abe replaces Kazuo Shii as leader of the Japanese Communist Party.

Her husband, Shinzo, remarked: "When I said I wanted more women to take up senior positions in public life . . ." and . . . A veteran English member of the Foreign Correspondents' Club provokes his compatriots, and delights his German colleagues, with publication of his latest tome: *Don't Mention the Roar: Falsehoods of the 1966 World Cup Final.*

– Justin McCurry, the Guardian

Concerned about the lack of intelligent news from Japan, international media

moguls will pump millions of dollars into beefing up their Tokyo bureaus and the salaries of Japan-based freelancers will skyrocket. FCCJ hacks will use their Visa black cards when ordering at Andy's place.

And on a serious note. . . Japanese engineers will announce they've made a dramatic breakthrough in solar panel technology that drastically increases the efficiency of solar panels, creating a second solar energy boom worldwide.

– Eric Johnston, the Japan Times

Auto parts supplier Takata Corp. goes bust under the skyrocketing cost of replacing its defective airbags worldwide. But global auto manufacturers, led by Honda, Toyota and Nissan, ride to the rescue, forming a coalition to bail out a supplier that is truly too big to fail. This comes even as the number of global recalls eclipses 20 million vehicles and engineers and regulators fail to pinpoint the root cause of the exploding airbags.

– Hans Greimel, Automotive News

Beijing produces centuries-old evidence showing a volcanic island Japan says is emerging off its east coast is actually a chunk of Shanghai that was towed to the Pacific and sunk by Tokyo. This is being gradually pumped up from the ocean floor to give the impression of emerging "volcanically." The action is hurting the feelings of the Chinese people and revealing Japan's incorrect attitude to geology. . . . (Meanwhile, the FCCJ disappears in a puff of logical smoke as several members accidentally sue themselves.)

– Huw Griffith, AFP

SPLASHED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES?

**Abe Calls Snap Election, Asks Voters to Decide Whether He or Akie Should Take Out Trash**

Japan's Globetrotting PM Visits Antarctica, Proclaims Penguinomics

**NYT Editorial Brands Abe "Dangerous Human Centrist" For Not Doing More to Help Penguins**

Abe Declares Kono Statement to be State Secret, Will Prosecute Any Mention of It

**Asahi Shimbun Admits It Cannot Verify Tojo's Claims, Retracts 1945 Stories that Japan Won War**

Sankei Shimbun Says No Documentary Evidence That Japan Lost War, Proclaims Victory

**Yomiuri Shimbun Apologizes for Using Term 'Defeated' To Refer to Japan's Status at End of WWII**

Tamogami Says Leftist Girls Better Looking After All, Joins Communist Party

– Martin Fackler



**One or more members of the FCCJ will be arrested for violating the new state secrecy law; the Number 1 Shimbun will be forced to go underground; FCCJ members will be required to sing "Kimigayo" at the start of cocktail hour.**

– Bob Whiting



As debate rages around the vagaries of falling oil prices, the yen and polar bear populations, sea levels are confidently predicted to continue their up, up, up trend this year.

– Mary Corbett

Abe claims Abenomics is on track; recession is "temporary blip." Japanese leader dismisses world's foremost economic theorists' fears as "groundless."

– Julian Ryall, the Daily Telegraph

Japan to solve population problem with intelligent robots. "Immigrants, women, old people too much trouble," government spokesman says. "Robots do as they are told."

– Andrew Horvat

Prime Minister Abe Steps Down as Market Loses Patience with Abenomics.

– Teddy Jimbo, Video News Network

Sony exits TVs amid huge losses, smartphones could be next . . . and . . . Major contractors embroiled in Olympics graft probe.

– Tim Hornyak, IDG News Service



laaaaaaabe



# Pio d'Emilia

by GAVIN BLAIR

The humble necktie.

It was this small sartorial requirement that Pio d'Emilia maintains was one of the decisive factors that swayed him away from the legal profession and into the media. "As a journalist you can live in the same world as lawyers, but don't have to wear a necktie," says d'Emilia. "I just hate them. Even now I only have three or four, and they were all gifts."

Japan was also a major reason, he concedes. He became captivated during his first visit to the country in 1979 by the lack of rights for detainees, the thesis subject for his legal studies back in Italy. "I was interested even in the rights of terrorists and I was interested in the Red Army Faction. I saw the interrogations and detention cells used by the police in Japan."

Having been given permission to witness a police questioning, d'Emilia recalls being puzzled at the large number of people in the room. "There were eight people, a prosecutor, police etc. I asked where the lawyer was and was told there was no lawyer; I was so shocked. So I asked how long someone could be held without access to a lawyer."

D'Emilia recalls that due to his nascent Japanese ability at the time he misunderstood the answer as 23 hours. Upon realizing it was actually 23 days, he "nearly had a heart attack," he says.

He contacted an editor at the Italian magazine *L'espresso* with the idea for what would become his first article, quickly followed by "something about Nissan." He says, "That was the turning point from Pio d'Emilia troublesome lawyer to troublesome journalist."

Despite the disapproval of his mother – he hailed from a family of lawyers – he returned to Italy to study journalism, then returned to Japan in 1982. D'Emilia spent a few years covering the People Power Revolution in the Philippines, where he would later receive a medal from the victorious President Cory Aquino, though not for his journalism. "I saved one of her friends by getting them through a checkpoint of [Ferdinand] Marcos' men. I had borrowed a diplomatic car from a friend and used that to get through."

Five years in Rio de Janeiro followed, where he covered the whole of South America, before returning to Italy and a stint teaching contemporary Japanese politics at Rome University. This led to him getting involved in Italian politics and the efforts of Romano Prodi to end the stranglehold of the Christian Democrats on power. When the Democratic Party of Japan was formed in 1998 with the intention of doing the same to the Liberal Democratic Party's dominance, d'Emilia moved back to Tokyo to work as an advisor to Naoto Kan. "Being very interested in social issues, culture and politics, rather than economics, I see many similarities

between Japan and my country: awful, corrupt governments and great people."

After Kan was, he says, "lured in a different direction by the nefarious Ozawa," d'Emilia returned to journalism in 2000. He remains a staunch defender of Kan and believes his treatment at the hands of the Japanese media when he was prime minister during the triple disasters of 2011 was "terrible," when he should have been hailed as "a hero."

Over the last decade reporting for SKY TG24 TV, d'Emilia has covered the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, the Tohoku tsunami of 2011 and the typhoon in the Philippines in 2013. He found the most recent of the three the hardest to handle: "It was seeing the rotting bodies, many of them children. When I arrived in Tohoku the bodies were mostly already covered up."

Officially based in Beijing for the last three years, d'Emilia has kept his apartment in Tokyo and travels between the two as the news takes him. The situation for foreign journalists in China has improved a lot in recent years and he says he now has "absolutely no problem in general reporting and access to people," though there are still certain taboos such as religion, dissidents and human rights beyond a certain point.

"I'm an optimist on China and pessimist on Japan," he says, predicting that China will take over Europe economically, while Japan will "put itself at risk" through the historical revisionism of Abe and his allies. So convinced is he of the certainty of China's rise that d'Emilia, who speaks five languages, persuaded one of his six children to learn Mandarin to fluency.

## I see many similarities between Japan and my country: awful, corrupt governments and great people.



D'Emilia's personal life seems to have been as colorful and varied as his professional one. "I've had six kids with five different women and am very proud we've never had a court case. We've managed to keep this loose, enlarged family together without resorting to suing each other. Despite having made a mess, it's not a chaotic mess. Every year we get together in summer and at Christmas, all the kids and some of the mothers."

Still with the mother of his youngest child, d'Emilia notes, "if a Burmese monk's prediction comes true, I'll have one more kid."

Having recently turned 60, and with retirement somewhere on the horizon, d'Emilia says his thoughts have turned to doing "some more serious things." This has included a documentary, *Nuo Gu - In the Name of the Mother* about a matriarchal society in China. He is also working on a docu-fiction titled *A Nuclear Story - Inside Fukushima*, due out in the summer and partly based on his book, *Nuclear Tsunami*.

As for those neckties, he's still not a fan. "Even now, I try to avoid them by wearing some type of ethnic dress for official parties." ●

Gavin Blair covers Japanese business, society and culture for publications in America, Asia, and Europe.



WE ARE FAMILY

## The Foreign Correspondents' Club, Hong Kong

*Based in the former British colony since 1949, the club is finding creative ways to remain relevant through changing times.*

The Foreign Correspondents' Club, Hong Kong, gives off a very different atmospheric vibe than its Tokyo equivalent.

by DAN SLATER

evenings with a blend of nationalities and races, but the local and Asian attendees are clearly very much at ease in the global language.

While the FCCJ is settled in the top floors of a decades-old tower block in Yurakucho's "salaryman-land," the Hong Kong club is housed in a gorgeous old colonial structure in the center of Hong Kong island's Central district, one of the densest concentrations of money, people and brains in the world. No wonder, perhaps, that it has a two-and-a-half-year waiting list for associate members.

I confess to being a regular of the FCCHK when I was deputy editor of a local finance magazine in the mid-2000s. It was far more pleasant to duck into the club and enjoy their splendid menu of unabashedly colonial foods, sold at low prices, than dine at the pricey and pretentious eateries elsewhere. The fiery curries and mountainous apple crumbles surrounded by lakes of custard were just the ticket if you wanted to prepare yourself for a nap on returning to your desk.

The lingua franca of the FCCHK has remained unchanged from its beginnings. "The language at the club is English," says Tim Huxley, associate member governor and Treasurer, "both in terms of how members communicate with the staff and how members communicate with each other." Indeed, the spectacular main bar on the ground floor is populated in the

Adds a Hong Kong-born PR man who prefers to remain anonymous because of his employer's strict regulations on talking to the media: "I think the FCC lives up to its name. It is viewed by local people as a very international place where issues are discussed and written about which do not just cover Hong Kong."

The happy buzz around the club can be traced back to the economic vitality that is such a characteristic of the region. "The FCCHK benefits from Hong Kong's relationship to China and the tremendous opportunities for business that provides," says Huxley. "But Hong Kong serves as a base for the whole region. Many of our members crisscross north Asia on a regular basis, giving the atmosphere an added interest."

The FCCHK indeed encapsulates Hong Kong's enviable status with regard to China. The former colony has traditionally been a conduit into China but under a separate rule of law. Today, that still applies under the "One Country Two Systems" structure, which guarantees a great deal of autonomy to Hong Kong in running its own affairs.

This structure, defending many of the freedoms that the British bequeathed to the new rulers in 1997, is obviously of

**Club together.** Opposite: the Old Dairy Farm Depot houses the club on Lower Albert Road. Below, club comforts – the Depot was built in 1892, the Club moved here in 1982.

crucial importance to a press club, which the FCCHK at heart still is (although not quite to the same extent as the FCCJ). The Hong Kong club today is not the first channel for communicating establishment policies and ideas. Nor is it a site for regular press conferences and top speakers who wish to break news. Rather, it has become a forum for intelligent discussion over a wide range of topics. Both regular and associate members are targeted with speakers on current affairs, business and other broadly appealing topics.

When I was a regular visitor to the Hong Kong club, I was drawn by its success as a marvelous social venue first and foremost. The press aspect seemed more or less nostalgic and decorative. The workroom, for example, was (and is still) tucked away in the basement, and there is no library – in contrast to the FCCJ's excellent collection of books and magazines, and two full-time staffers.

Both club officials consulted for this piece disagreed with this view. Huxley says that journalists are a core part of the club, and that a good balance is kept with associate members. "Journalists understand and appreciate that associate members know a great deal about important issues in the region, and get a lot out of a meeting them," he says. "Probably that is helped by the fact that both parties can communicate easily in English, wherever they come from originally."

According to Neil Western, a journalist with a top news organization and First Vice President of the FCCHK, governance is firmly in the hands of the press. Membership is tiered in the usual way between foreign correspondents writing for an international audience, local journalists writing for local media and associate members. Journalistic control of the governance model is assured by a President who is always a well-regarded professional journalist, while of the remaining 16 board members only 5 work in non-media roles – currently shipping, law, food, PR and economic analysis.

Western also mentions a discounted introduction scheme in recent years to bring in journalists that has resulted in 200 new regular members so far – a big boost to the heart of the club.

I asked Huxley whether associate members feel they are unfairly subsidizing feckless journalist members, but he says that is not the case. "It is a symbiotic relationship. Both parties gain from knowing each other." In addition, while regular members do get a good deal in the early years of joining, their dues are bumped up a little every year until they are more in line with associate members.

Despite its undoubted success, however, the FCCHK does face some challenges similar to those in Japan. The two most acute issues are the changing media landscape and demographics.

For a start, the core of the traditional press club – the gifted, peripatetic and lavishly funded foreign correspondent – has almost disappeared amid the vicious cost cuts the industry has faced. In their place have appeared a swarm of bloggers, citizen activists and part-time journalists, who mingle writing with other occupations.

The HKFCC has responded with a concerted effort to get serious journalists from top media groups to join the board,

with some success. "It is important for the credibility of the club when dealing with the authorities to have established and reputable names on the board," says Vice President Western. Indeed, Reuters, Bloomberg and AFP are all represented, although print-media figures are much less in evidence.

In terms of how to cope with bloggers, activists and ex-journalists who move to NGOs, jobs that can be difficult to fit into traditional membership rules, Western says each case is judged on its merits. When it comes to making statements, the FCCHK sticks to its issues that relate directly to the media and arranges guest speakers from across the political spectrum for balance. "We're not activists, we're journalists," he says. "We are careful to restrict our comments to strictly media-related issues in Hong Kong and China."

While emotions have run high during the recent student demonstrations, for example, the FCCHK has only issued formal statements when it believes press freedom has been threatened. In keeping with this philosophy, the club has sponsored the highly regarded Human Rights Press Awards, together with Amnesty International, for the past 18 years. These awards highlight the importance of a skillful and unbiased free press in uncovering abuses, but try not to go beyond that.

Surprisingly, while broadening the demographic is a familiar headache for the FCCJ, it also features in the Hong Kong club. Members are getting steadily older, and female members are almost as few in number as Tokyo. The average age of the members is 50, while the number of under-35's is just eight percent, according to the club website. Despite targeting young local reporters, the fact is that the group is made up of essentially low-paid jobbing writers who would probably prefer to move into a more lucrative occupation. Freelance Western writers in Hong Kong find it a tough market, given the "poverty-level wages in the media industry," says Huxley, and the high cost of living in Hong Kong.

Even the positive role of the wire reporters, who are heavily represented on the FCCHK board, is not guaranteed to continue. Under pressure from high rents, some are relocating outside Central. Reuters moved to Taikoo Shing several years ago, an area that is far enough away from the club to reduce participation. And Kowloon has recently become an important competitor to Central as well.

It seems to me that the FCCHK has been smart in focusing on turning the club into a superb social venue with good intellectual content, rather than fussing too much on the purity of its journalistic pedigree. As Huxley points out, "the key is to have an engaged and diverse membership." Is it more important for a new member to be a bona fide journalist or a brilliant engineer who has designed tools for the U.S. space program? It is hard to say. Journalists are traditionally well positioned to push an agenda of transparency and honesty, but given the rapid structural changes in the industry it is not clear whether that will always be the case. All that can be said for the moment is that the Foreign Correspondents' Club, Hong Kong is an interesting study in how different groups are responding to the need for a place that helps the gathering of reliable and insightful information. ❶

Dan Slater is a Tokyo-based writer and consultant. You can read his blog at [www.thedelphinetwork.com](http://www.thedelphinetwork.com)

At the time, it was the worst earthquake postwar Japan had ever experienced. It became a lesson for a disaster-prone country.

## Two decades on: the Kobe Earthquake remembered

by ERIC JOHNSTON



A bus hangs over edge of the shattered expressway in Kobe

ON MONDAY, JAN. 12, thousands of 20-year-olds will celebrate “Seijin no Hi,” their official passage into adulthood.

For Kobe, this year’s ceremony is especially significant because it honors the first adults who were born the same year the Great Hanshin Earthquake struck on the morning of Jan. 17, 1995. A new generation with no memory of the earthquake, or what the city was like before it, has come of age.

For journalists like myself who covered the quake not as reporters who parachuted in, but as local hacks for whom Kansai was home, the memories remain vivid. The emotions we experienced – grief, joy, anger, and, like our Kobe friends, determination to get on with our lives – profoundly shaped the way we would approach our craft in the years to come. Not a few of us watched with shock and horror at the central government’s initially incompetent, and occasionally callous, response. A deep skepticism was born of the Tokyo political, bureaucratic and media-chattering classes that persist to this day.

Thus few of us were surprised that

victims of the March 11, 2011 quake and tsunami had many of the same complaints about the central government as Kobe had 20 years ago. Thankfully, the Kobe earthquake also led to fundamental changes that allowed for a more effective response to Tohoku.

Perhaps the most important was to be able to call out for assistance to individuals as well as NGOs from other parts of Japan. Before the Kobe quake, NGOs had something of, if not a bad name, then at least an image of not being something that ambitious and respectable middle-class Japanese took an interest in.

“Volunteerism” – for the upper middle and upper classes at least – meant helping the unfortunate in distant, exotic, developing countries. It took the Kobe quake to make people realize that the Tokyo politicians and bureaucrats who they’d assumed would automatically take care of things, simply would not, or could not, handle the situation in a timely manner. The scenes of devastation woke people up to the fact that a city in their own country, not Africa, or some country in Southeast Asia, desperately needed their volunteer efforts.

Many who came together to help Kobe in 1995 remained friends long afterwards. Out of their initial efforts, volunteer networks grew, splintered off, grew again and expanded. Local governments became less obstinate and more cooperative with certain kinds of NGOs, eliminating official rules and, more importantly, overcoming the kind of bureaucratic mistrust and turf wars that had prevented official coordination with volunteers. Kobe and Hyogo Prefecture became models for disaster response measures for local governments around Japan.

The Kobe quake also helped spark a technical revolution. In early 1995, cell phones and PHS systems (remember those?) were available, but were not in widespread use, at least in Kansai as they were expensive and apt to lose their signal whenever you passed under a bridge, walked into a subway station, or found yourself in a concrete building far away from a window, most people used landlines.

But when landlines became inoperable after the quake, cell phone sales skyrocketed. Suddenly, it seemed, just a few weeks after the quake, everybody in Kobe was chatting on a cell phone, which, it was eventually decided, was better than a PHS in case there was an emergency.

For Kobe itself, the quake left a mixed legacy. The world marveled at how quickly physical reconstruction occurred and how quickly people returned to their normal lives. In many respects, the city looks far better today than it did before the earthquake – new buildings, more diverse, higher quality restaurants, cafés and shopping options. Lots of young people dressed, as Kobe has always dressed, in fashions that, depending on your taste and age, are either cutting-edge or tacky. But never dull.

On the other hand, the earthquake further reduced Kobe’s already declining economic power, as firms and people relocated to Osaka, Tokyo or overseas. While the Kobe mosque and synagogue, several Christian churches, a foreigners’ graveyard, The Kobe Club, and the Kobe Regatta and Athletic Club, are visible reminders of Kobe’s historical ties to the outside world, there is a sense throughout Kansai that the city is more provincial now than before the quake.

Over the past 20 years, Kobe has struggled to keep up, and to distinguish itself as a place to study and work as well as live. This is not an easy task in a region where Osaka and Kyoto draw the most domestic and international attention. Sadly, much of the effort, and funding, was wasted on pork barrel projects like the Kobe airport.

Successful long-term disaster recovery depends upon many things. But near the top of the list is enlightened, realistic and (relatively) honest local governance. In that regard, Kobe’s record since 1995 is decidedly mixed. ●

Eric Johnston is deputy editor for the Japan Times Osaka bureau.



Club speakers Ichiro Ozawa (People's Life Party) and Kazuo Shii (Communist Party) ...

In the lead up to the election, the LDP and Komeito shunned the Club. Has Japan’s government suddenly turned shy of the foreign media?

## Behind the barricades

by DAVID MCNEILL

IN THE WELL-TRUDGED battlefield between politician and journalist it was a relatively minor skirmish but an important one nonetheless: Japan’s government effectively boycotted Asia’s oldest foreign correspondents’ club before the Dec. 14 general election. The Liberal Democrats (LDP) and coalition partners Komeito were the only two major parties not to send senior delegates to the FCCJ to explain their policies.

The boycott risked breaking a long tradition of pre-election pressers by the government. It also meant that foreign correspondents had only one limited venue – the Japan National Press Club – to directly question the cabinet. The office of the LDP’s No.2, Sadakazu Tanigaki, told the FCCJ that it was powerless to change the decision, which was made at the party level.

Why? The LDP’s public relations division cited “scheduling difficulties” when questioned by the FCCJ. “We are now in the middle of an election battle,” explained a spokesperson, apparently unaware that this is precisely why such pressers are considered newsworthy at all.

There was of course another reason, though the LDP was loath to discuss it publicly. Off-the-record, several officials said the decision was prompted by

concerns among the party’s hierarchy that some of its members had “not been treated fairly” at recent events.

They noted a twitchy press conference by Eriko Yamatani, chairperson of the National Public Safety Commission. Yamatani visited the FCCJ in September to discuss North Korea’s kidnapping of Japanese citizens in her capacity as Minister in Charge of the Abduction Issue. Instead, she was grilled on her alleged connections to Japan’s hard right.

Knocked off message, Yamatani stumbled through the press conference seemingly intent on *not* putting distance between her office and perhaps Japan’s most toxic racist group, Zaitokukai. The event ended with Japan’s top cop being shouted down by a particularly enthusiastic freelance member of the press.

The presser (and its denouement) was relished by some as the sort of scrappy, rambunctious encounter that helped make the FCCJ’s reputation, such as it is. But where many saw spirited, open debate, others saw chaos. Allowing freelancers such leeway at the more scripted events run by the NPC is unheard of.

Yamatani’s encounter capped an uneasy two years for ties between the FCCJ and the government of Shinzo Abe, which has made itself far less available to the media than its predecessors. Abe himself has not been to the Club since he came with a group of LDP presidential candidates in September 2012.

That in itself is not especially noteworthy – in fact, the FCCJ has not hosted a sitting prime minister since Junichiro Koizumi in 2001. But neither Abe’s foreign nor defense ministers have made an appearance at all, and it took 19 months to get Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, who tried (but failed) to have the questions scripted beforehand.

Yamatani is one of 12 cabinet ministers to speak before the Club’s journalists in the two years since Abe took power in December 2012. That compares to 24 ministers under the three years of the previous Democratic (DPJ) government, which sent its foreign minister no fewer than three times.

The Abe government’s tepid relationship with the FCCJ hardly amounts to an organized snub, but it does point to a carefully parsed strategy of control and spin. The government has adopted a similar attitude to the domestic media, avoiding hostile outlets while favoring their conservative rivals, particularly

the *Sankei* newspaper.

Its full-frontal assault on the *Asahi* newspaper has – perhaps permanently – weakened Japan’s liberal flagship. Many commentators say NHK, the nation’s top broadcaster, has also been brought to heel by the Abe government, which has stuffed its board with fellow political travellers.

The more successful this strategy has become, the more the government’s confidence has grown: The LDP seemed heedless to charges that it was trying to suppress critical coverage when it sent “guidelines” to Japan’s big broadcasters in late November demanding “correct” coverage of the election. It was striking too that Abe avoided the one other place where he was sure to face serious interrogation – Okinawa.

In that context, avoiding the possibility of political landmines at the FCCJ seemed just common sense, and the Yamatani clash provided the pretext. As FCCJ President Lucy Birmingham says, “I feel it was an excuse. They thought ‘Why bother sending anyone to the Club?’ They might make a mistake.”

The spat has focused minds on both sides of the media divide. Birmingham says one result will be tightened rules at FCCJ press conferences to ensure legitimate journalists are given priority in asking questions. Why give the government an excuse not to come?

Meanwhile, the bad publicity generated by the FCCJ boycott – and charges that the Abe cabinet is running shy of tough questions – has both angered the government and created signs of détente. Birmingham met a Cabinet Office official in December who pledged to “make efforts” to bring more ministers to the Club.

That doesn’t mean they’ll get an easy ride. One reason why the FCCJ makes politicians nervous is that questions are entirely unscripted, and evasions can be challenged, as the Yamatani dustup showed. That’s only natural, points out Shiro Yoneyama, a lecturer at Toyo University and a member of the FCCJ’s events committee. “The idea that journalists ask what they want to ask is a normal, global standard. The ability to answer questions in an unscripted press conference is effectively an international prerequisite for politicians.” ●

David McNeill writes for the *Independent*, the *Irish Times*, the *Economist* and other publications and is a coordinator of the electronic journal [www.japanfocus.org](http://www.japanfocus.org).

On the day after the election, the Columbia U. professor offered his assessment of what lies ahead for the Abe administration and the nation.

## Gerald Curtis makes the call



Gerald Curtis at the Club

by JULIAN RYALL

AS ALL THE POLLS had indicated in the run up to election day on Dec. 14, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe secured a second consecutive landslide victory and more than enough dominance of the domestic political scene to push ahead with his pet policies and projects.

But if the outcome of a vote in which the Liberal Democratic Party won 290 of the 475 seats in the Lower House of the Diet was predictable, staring into a crystal ball to determine what the prime minister will actually do is a far

of nuclear power plants back on-line is not made easier by this election.”

The most significant positive development for the prime minister’s much-hyped Abenomics reforms could actually take place in the United States, Curtis suggested, with Congress approving progress on the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement. “If you get an agreement on TPP, it will have a huge impact on domestic policy, particularly in the area of agricultural reform,” he said.

**“The danger is that some on the right will want to find something to be proud of in a period in which there is not a great deal to be proud of”**

less exact science. Gerald Curtis, for one, believes that anyone anticipating revolutionary change on the scale of Abe’s most recent two years in office is going to be disappointed.

“Don’t look for bold new economic reforms, for the ‘third arrow’ to be suddenly shot at the bulls eye over the coming six months to a year,” Curtis, the Burgess Professor of political science at Columbia University, said at the FCCJ the day after the election.

“I think what we are going to see is pretty much more of the same,” he said. “There’s a lot in motion and things will continue, but labor market reforms? I don’t see it happening.

“Nuclear?” he added with a shrug. “They’ll get the Sendai plant in Kyushu up and running in the early part of next year, but getting any significant number

The big question in the minds of many overseas onlookers, however, is how Abe uses his new-found power to push the issues that he is really interested in: Revising the Constitution, raising Japan’s profile on the international stage, becoming more of a “normal country” and lifting the restraints on the nation’s military. “We have seen since his Yasukuni visit last December that he has been very careful and very cautious about the language he uses in talking about history,” Curtis said. “The question is, will he revert to the Abe we have seen before?”

“We can’t be sure, but I doubt it,” he said. “I think he is pragmatic and understands the high price that is paid by raising these wartime issues and seeming to excuse away Japanese actions.”

But Curtis believes there is reason for concern as we move into 2015, the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. “This is a time that should be a celebration of the past 70 years of democracy, of peace, of the huge Japanese contribution to the economic development of all of east Asia, of all that Japan has been and all that it rejected of what Japan was before 1945. The danger is that some vocal people on the right will want to find something to be proud of in a period in which there is not a great deal to be proud of, the 1930s and 1940s.”

And while Abe has made strenuous efforts to raise Japan’s international profile, particularly in Asia, where he has already visited every one of the 10 member states of ASEAN, there are still concerns that the prime minister’s revisionist views of history are linked to his vision for Japan’s future. “That is not only a concern for the Chinese and the South Koreans, it’s a big concern in the U.S.,” Curtis said, pointing to a series of articles and editorial in U.S. media – the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* – that underline just how seriously the Japanese government has to consider the image it is conveying overseas.

And nothing does more to tarnish Japan’s image in the eyes of the international community than its efforts to explain away the comfort women issue, Curtis believes – adding that he gets a lot of “pushback” when he broaches the subject with Japanese audiences, which only makes him more determined to bring it up. “It’s disastrous,” he said. “A good adage in this case is that when you find yourself in a hole, stop digging. Japan shouldn’t get into a deeper hole by defending itself on this issue.

“My point is that the concern about Abe is over his vision of this region and Japan’s role in this region and the world,” Curtis said. “Next year, the 70th anniversary of the end of the war, he will issue his Abe statement,” he added. “That’s the opportunity to explain a vision that is reassuring to the neighbors and the Japanese public, the U.S. and others.

“I don’t think he will change his basic strategy all that much; he has done some positive things in raising Japan’s international profile – but we come back again to how history issues hang over Japan like a terrible cloud.” ●

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

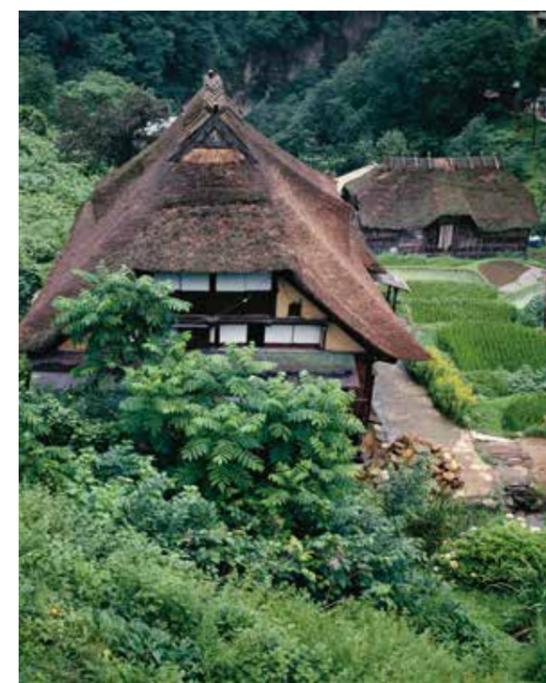
## Traditional Japanese Thatched Houses by Kiyoshi Takai



### Rethatching a Gassho-zukuri Roof – Ōizumi Family Residence (above)

THE VILLAGE OF OGIMACHI in Shirakawago, Gifu Prefecture, still retains 114 traditional *gassho-zukuri*-style buildings. In the spring of 1996, the Ōizumi family residence had the eastern side of its roof, a total area of 338 square meters, rethatched for the first time in 46 years. Three hundred people took part in the operation, mostly local people, but also including volunteers from throughout Japan. The first day was spent removing the old thatch. The second day saw the complete rethatching, which was achieved in approximately eight hours. This system of communal work, carried out without pay, is known as *yui* and it is traditional in Japanese villages to carry out major projects in this way. Sadly, thatched houses are gradually disappearing from the Japanese countryside, and once they are gone, no new ones will ever be built.

Kiyoshi Takai was active as a photographer throughout his career at the engineering/architectural corporation Taisei. After his retirement in 1988, he has been active as a freelance photographer and lecturer on photography. He has published several books.



HEARD AT THE CLUB

*“When I was a young man, I had the nebulous dream of turning Yoshimoto Kogyo into the Creative Arts Agency of Asia. Now, thanks to the Cool Japan fund, I have the chance to take the first step toward making that dream come true.”*

*Hiroshi Osaki, President & CEO of Yoshimoto Kogyo Co. Ltd., on the company's plans to expand their Japanese content business in Asia*

*(Dec. 15 at the FCCJ)*



ELECTION NIGHT



Voters may have been ho-hum about the Dec. 14 lower house election, but not the Club members who joined Michael Cucek of Temple University, Jun Okumura of the Eurasia Group and Sebastian Maslow of the German Institute for Japanese studies as the polls closed on election day. They headed an interactive discussion among the gathered journalists on the meaning of the exit polls and the results as they watched Prime Minister Abe once again lead his coalition to a big majority win.

*(Photo by Asger Rojle Christensen)*

JUMPING JANUARY!

This month sees a return to a full calendar of FCCJ activities after the more quiet days of the year-end holidays.

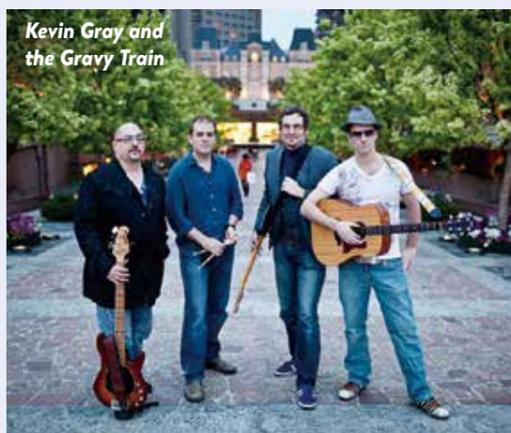
After a brief hiatus, the Club's weekend entertainment event – **Saturday Nite Live!** – will once again feature a full month of great music, including a performance by Kevin Gray and the Gravy Train on Jan. 17, from 18:30.

One of the highlights of the Press Event calendar is sure to be the 10:00am press conference on Jan. 16, with **Shuji Nakamura**,

the University of California, Santa Barbara professor who was the recent winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics for his work in inventing blue light-emitting diodes.

And the usual lively crowd is expected to attend the **“Hacks & Flacks”** New Year Party, where journalists and members of the public relations industry rub shoulders from 19:00 on Friday, Jan. 23.

Please go to the FCCJ website, at [fccj.or.jp](http://fccj.or.jp) for more events and detailed information.



*Kevin Gray and the Gravy Train*



REINSTATEMENT (REGULAR)

**MASAMI WADA** is a freelance journalist who retired from Nikkei Inc. in 2014. He joined Nikkei after graduating from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. He spent time in Sao Paulo, New York and London before returning to Japan as an executive with the Nikkei subsidiary, Quick Corporation. After returning to Nikkei in 2004, he was named President & CEO of Nikkei America for two years before becoming Executive Director for Nikkei Inc. in Tokyo.

PROFESSIONAL/JOURNALIST ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

**Richard Atrero de Guzman**, RT Ruptly TV  
**Rinjiro Sodei**, Hosei University

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