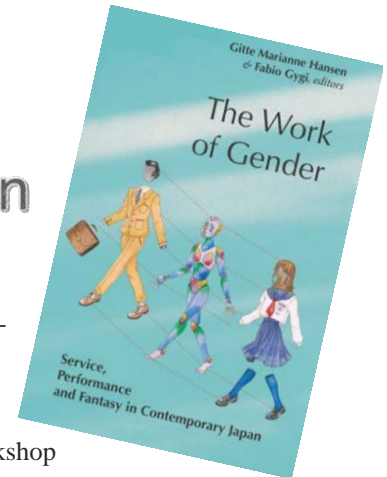


JAPANESE@NEWCASTLE

EDITED BY FUMIKA CARTLIDGE

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New book on Gender, Service and Fantasy in Japan



Reader in Japanese studies, Dr Gitte Marianne Hansen has co-edited a new book on gender in Japan with lecturer in anthropology (SOAS, University of London).

Generously funded by The Great British Sasakawa Foundation in 2018, the work for this book began with a workshop hosted by Dr Hansen at Newcastle University.

Dr Gitte Marianne Hansen, Reader in Japanese studies

The chapters in *The Work of Gender: Service, Performance and Fantasy in Contemporary Japan* are written by junior scholars and are based on long-term fieldwork in Japan, mostly as part of their doctoral research. Each chapter looks at a particular situation in which work, gender, and commodification intersect; each then provides an analysis in terms of power, agency and fantasy. What all the chapters have in common is an unwavering commitment to ethnographic research of Japan – the insights presented here are the results of visceral encounters in the field that go beyond just interviews and observation.

In the opening chapter, 'Serving Gender' by Marcello Francioni, it is service itself that becomes gendered behind the counter of a gay bar in Tokyo's gay district, Shinjuku Ni-chōme. In the following chapter by Marta Fanasca, the perspectives of consumers and staff is taken a step further: by training as a *Dansō*, a cross-dressing escort, Fanasca both became the object of her inquiry and the object of desire of those who booked dates with her. In her chapter 'Professional Amateurs: Authenticity and Sex Work' in a 'Delivery Health' Shop, Nicola Phillips enters the world of women who work for Deadball, a sex delivery service specialising in *busu* women (often a coded expression in Japan for chubby or middle-aged). While at Deadball it is women who provide service, in Maiko Kodaka's chapter, we see how in the fan communities of pornography aimed at women, it is the youthful men who perform a carefully choreographed service and become the object of the female gaze. Performances of a different kind are the subject of Robert Simpkins' contribution on gendered spaces of street music on the streets of Kōenji, West Tokyo. While at first glance the street musician's ethos seems to be defined by a search for authentic artistic expression, a closer analysis shows that in order to be successful, one has to calibrate one's performance in ways that conforms to police surveillance, neighbourhood noise awareness and public expectations, all of which are revealed to be highly gendered experiences. The final chapter by Lyman Gamberton takes us back to the original question of the work of gender in an everyday context. His project investigates how transgender individuals negotiate their everyday lives and future gender trajectories in light of the draconian gender reassignment law that enforces a conservative and stereotypical understanding of the gender binary and the gender/sex system.

LGBT Life in Tokyo

Mitchell Culham, BA Modern Languages, German, Spanish and Japanese



Japanese society is known to value homogeneity so being seen as 'different' isn't something desirable for the majority. Thus, before going to Japan, I didn't really know what the situation would be like for LGBT people. I would say that the situation for LGBT people there is very unique to say the least, on one hand there isn't a lot of public awareness or understanding of what LGBT is, for example, many people don't know the difference between gay and transgender, yet personally I felt a lot

more comfortable walking down the street holding a man's hand in Japan than I would in the UK. I feel like in Japan the chances of being a victim of a hate crime is extremely low, given the low crime rate anyway and that people generally tend to keep strong opinions to themselves. Moreover, there is not a really strong religious opposition to LGBT in Japan like in some countries. However, Japan is the only G7 country that does not legally recognize same-sex unions on a national level. In March 2021, a district court in Sapporo ruled that the country's non-recognition of same-sex marriage is unconstitutional. However, just the other day the Osaka court ruled that marriage only means male-female unions. So, I think in Japan there is a long way to go before equality is reached. Despite their struggles, the LGBT people

of Japan sure do know how to party. I spent nearly every weekend going to the clubs in 新宿二丁目 (*Shinjuku Ni-chōme*), an area in central Tokyo which is known as having the highest concentration of queer venues in the world, there are around 300 establishments there ranging from bars and clubs to cafes and bookstores. Dragon men is my club recommendation, but don't buy drinks in the club as they're expensive. Go to the seven



eleven across the street drink a strong zero then go back into the club, chatting with everyone outside of seven eleven ends up being some of the best parts of the night anyway. Through going here every week, I had the opportunity to meet some amazing people and listen to their



stories about growing up LGBT in Japan. I met some of my best friends for life there who I still talk to and meet up with now. It was also great for my Japanese as when I was drunk I was less scared of making mistakes and I even made really good friends with a Japanese guy who doesn't speak English which helped me improve so much. Thus, the club is not just a space for inebriation but also linguistic development, in the

famous words of Suda Sensei 'Mitchell-san you got so good at speaking Japanese by always going to Tokyo gay bars'. Going to Shinjuku Ni-chōme has also inspired my current postgraduate research that looks at what impact engaging in the LGBT communities of *Shinjuku Ni-chōme* has on motivation to learn English.

My First Year at Newcastle University

James Page, BA Hons Chinese/Japanese Studies



Hi, I'm James, a student excited to go into my second year of study in September 2022. I entered Newcastle University on the Combined Honours program which allowed me to study a combination of Japanese and English Linguistics however after completing my first year and trying out both courses I am now continuing my degree as a Single Honours Japanese Studies student.

As can be seen by my decision to focus all my studies on Japanese alone I have had a great time studying the Japanese modules and have learned a lot at a speed I would not have been able to achieve studying on my own at home. Other than studying the language I really enjoyed the Japanese History module I completed in my first semester and am looking forward to being able to do more History/Culture modules in my second and third years.

It is no surprise to say that studying an Asian language is very demanding for a native English speaker like myself so I will admit I did find the language a little overwhelming to begin with and it did at times feel like I was making little progress when studying on my own, however this is all a part of the learning process. After completing my first semester I barely scrapped 50% of my assessment but after sitting an exam for the first time I was able to improve my self-study techniques and improve my score by a huge amount at the end of my second semester. I think this shows how important it is not to get discouraged if you find University challenging initially (Most people do but probably won't admit it) It's all a part of the process and you will learn and improve as the year goes on.

During my second semester my language skills had improved significantly, and I was able to try to put my skills to use at the Anglo Japanese society's weekly 'Oshaberikai' (meet ups) where I had some great times practicing my communication skills with some of the Japanese exchange students and fellow Japanese Language student from both my year and the year above. Next year I absolutely intend to befriend some of the new Japanese exchange students from the very start of the year to show them around the city and help each other out with our respective languages. I would absolutely recommend that next year's first year students come along to the weekly meetups to have a drink with some of the Japanese exchange students and the second years for some practice and advice for the course.



A Long Time Coming: Our Unique Year Abroad in Japan

Emily Horst, BA Hons in Japanese/Chinese Studies

Al Thomann, BA Hons in Modern Languages, German, Spanish and Japanese



As we write this, about three days have passed since we returned from our study abroad placement at Dokkyo University. Though returning home was bittersweet, we cannot understate how amazing an experience our time in Japan was, and we do not regret a moment of it.

Our year abroad began online, in classes taken over Zoom in the early hours of the morning. Though this formed a challenging learning environment, particularly as our first exposure to remote learning (having taken a year out of education in the hopes of Japan reopening its borders), it also allowed us to experience a more personal kind of education:



where it would perhaps be possible to blend into the crowd in an in-person class, joining an online class meant we were always front and centre, and this increased our engagement with the classes, which we felt was beneficial, if sometimes somewhat intimidating (Al's classes were one-to-one during the first semester!). Eventually, rumours of the borders re-opening began to make their way to us through our teachers, and in March, we began frantic preparations to obtain visas and enter Japan.

The fateful day came in early April; though

our flight was not at the most convenient time of day to say the least, we persevered, and were finally able to depart for Japan. Upon our arrival, our entry into the country went smoothly, and we moved into our accommodation and began our time in Japan. After over two years, to be able to study in person again was very welcome, and it was amazing to finally meet our teachers and classmates in person, in what felt like more of a reunion than the first meeting that it actually was. Though it was somewhat difficult to adjust back to in-person study (carrying the correct textbooks and folders, fitting in chores around classes and assignments, and so on), we quickly got back into the swing of things, and were able to make the most of our time at Dokkyo, both during and outside of class time, thanks to various opportunities provided by both staff and students: Dokkyo offers an International Communication Zone where Japanese and foreign students can partake in language exchange in a casual environment, and many of the Japanese students were eager to make friends, organising trips and at one point even hosting a welcome party for our cohort.

Experiencing life in Japan, both academically and culturally, has been a phenomenal experience. In all our classes and all our excursions, we have found countless opportunities for personal growth, but also enjoyment: lifelong new friends, breath-taking new places, one-of-a-kind experiences (we worked up the courage to go to an



My year as president of Anglo Japanese Society

Elena Shen, BA Hons Chinese/Japanese Studies



The start of my second year of university saw the loosening of covid measures and I was finally able to participate in face-to-face lessons and meet my classmates. I was eager to make new friends and meet more Japanese people, so I decided to join the Anglo Japanese Society.

The first event we had was a moon viewing (お月見) event. This was where I met the people who were going to become my best friends for the first time. It was a lively night and almost all exchange students from Japan,

Japanese language students from Newcastle, and other students interested in Japanese culture came and gathered in the Exhibition Park. The huge crowd of young students were all very shy to begin with, but after a few ice-breaker games we were all able to open up and strike up conversations with people next to us. Free snacks were passed around groups, and we got to know each other little by little.

Throughout the year, we've also had a variety of other interesting events. Nearing the end of 2021, we held a Christmas party to celebrate the end of year. Collaborations with Korean and Chinese society allowed our members the opportunity to participate in the wider Asian community of Newcastle University. The karaoke event around Easter gave us the opportunity to enjoy music from all around the world, and deepen our friendship as a society. After our exams in June 2022, we held a joint boat party event with Durham University's Japanese society and students from both universities were able to de-stress celebrate the end of exams.

The soul event of our society, the activity that really brought Japanese students and British students together, and forged the bridge of cultural exchange, was the routine weekly oshaberikai



(おしゃべり会). Members of our society and their

friends gather in the pub outside university, have drinks, watch football, laugh, chat, and have a great time together. I would go to the pub every Thursday after I finish university, get myself a pint of beer, and see whoever is at the pub that day. As the president, I would introduce myself to everyone around chat with whoever is present that night. Thanks to my responsibility as a committee member to mediate between people at our society, I was able to make so

many friends, whether it be Japanese, British, or international students. Thursday night became something I look forward to every week.

At the end of my second year, I can safely say that it was the best decision for me to become part of the Japanese society at Newcastle University. The friends that I've made, the things that I've learnt about Japan, the enormous improvement in my spoken Japanese, and the invaluable memories we made together would never have been possible without the Japanese Society.



Speech at SunnyCon

Ella Parsons, BA Hons Modern Lang & Linguis



This year at Newcastle has been very busy, being that it was my first year on campus (my actual first year was completely online). Despite my unconventional experience at university so far, my Japanese proficiency has grown in leaps and bounds. When I first arrived in Newcastle, I knew only a few choice words; now I can converse naturally with my Japanese friends, I can read over 500 kanji, and I will soon be travelling to Kobe for my Year Abroad. When Casey-sensei sent out an email asking for volunteers to do a talk during SunnyCon about studying Japanese at

Newcastle, I jumped at the chance!

I was put in contact with Lei and Zack, two graduates of Japanese at Newcastle, and together the three of us planned a presentation. Lei would talk about Japanese cuisine and culture, Zack would give an insight into what doing a PhD in Japanese Studies and what a Year Abroad in Japan is like, and finally I would teach everyone the very basics of the language. We met up on Zoom to divvy up the sections and have a little rehearsal, and a couple of days later, I turned up at the convention in St. James' Park, excited and slightly nervous...!

First, I gave a little introductory fact file about Japan: its population, its currency, and the meaning of Tokyo's kanji: 東京, eastern capital. Then Lei talked the audience through the different regions of Japan and their culinary specialties – did you know that because Okinawa is such a distance from mainland Japan, it developed its own distinct diet, influenced by heavy American military presence during the Second World War?

Zack then told everyone about their studies on the representation of gender in *Boku no Hero Academia*, a popular anime, and what it's like to study anime as part of your degree. They also talked about Japanese everyday life, for example the hyper-efficient public transport system and the many functions of コンビニ (conbini), convenience stores. We had a fun true-or-false quiz about seasonal festivities in Japan, and then it was time to talk about the language.

First, Zack explained the writing system of Japanese, showing everyone the hiragana chart and helping them to practice some pronunciation all together – I have to say, they really nailed the Japanese 'r'! Then it was over to me to teach everyone how to introduce themselves, and we went round the room getting to know some of our audience. After teaching them the greetings, and then going through the numbers 1 to 21, we had everyone

play a game of '21' for a prize of Japanese snacks.

It was a super fun and memorable experience, especially because the public speaking element really put me out of my comfort zone. But it was to help other people learn about Japanese, so it was completely worth it!



JAPAN FOUNDATION

My experience as a teacher assistant at the Japanese Club

Iunia Ichim, BA Hons in Modern languages, Japanese / Chinese



My name is Iunia Ichim, I am a stage 4 student at Japanese studies. This year I started working as Fumika Cartlidge's assistant once a week at the Japanese club which took place at Gosforth East middle school. I was excited from the start to work as her assistant because I always loved working with kids, and I also loved her as a Japanese teacher during my years at Newcastle University. Because I previously gave private Japanese lessons in Romania during my third year, I had some experience with teaching children.

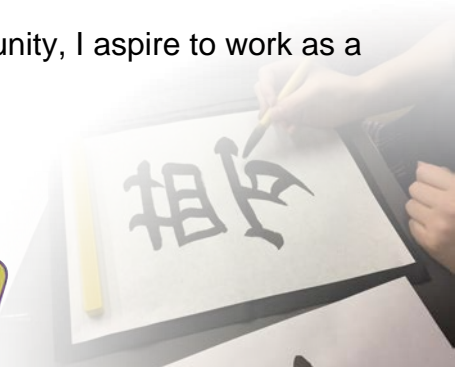
However, this was my first time working in a classroom scenario with so many children. Although at first, I was a bit nervous about it I discovered that it was nothing to be worried about as the kids were wonderful and always very excited about learning the Japanese language and culture. I am really happy that Fumika sensei always encourage me to be creative at my job and asked me if I have any game suggestions for the classroom or any ideas we can add to the lesson. This gave me a lot of drive to do my best as an assistant and to make the lessons fun for the students.

When I was a child, my teachers were not that passionate so, I thought that school is boring. Now, I wish to change that perception of school for the kids so I always try to think about what kinds of activities would make the children participate and enjoy the lesson. I am very happy to be able to work along with such a passionate and creative teacher who does the same for her every lesson. To me personally, working there was very rewarding, and I gained a lot of experience.

I can say that it was fun and even relaxing since the kids are very nice. I was actually a bit surprised to see how calm and engaged the children were during the lessons considering their age. They memorized the words for the previous lessons and were so curious and sociable.

One activity that I organized for example was a game for learning vocabulary. Fumika sensei allowed me to come up with some ideas for the lesson so I made a list of game ideas that will help the students practice vocabulary in an efficient way. I sent her the list and she chose vocabulary bingo. I created and printed some bingo sheets with the words in Japanese. The game went better than I thought all the kids were so eager and competitive to win and get stickers as rewards.

Because of this beautiful experience and valuable opportunity, I aspire to work as a teacher in the future and I strongly wish to continue working for the Japanese club along with Fumika sensei. I strongly encourage anyone that likes working with children to give the Japanese club a try as an assistant as it is a wonderful and fun experience.





Mitchell Culham, BA Modern Languages, German, Spanish and Japanese



Before moving to Japan, I researched about what it is was like being vegan there and the online discourse surrounding the topic was that it would be impossible to maintain this diet in Japan. When thinking about Japanese food, the first things that come to mind tend to be totally incompatible with veganism like sushi and sashimi or meaty ramen. However, to my surprise it was no where near as hard as I was expecting. For many, one of the first places that you will visit in Japan is the コンビニ and actually there is a

small selection of things that vegans can eat there, we don't have to miss out on the staples like onigiri as there is *konbu* onigiri, which is a rice ball with a seaweed filling coated in a nori sheet, as well as salted rice balls and grilled rice balls. However, one time I did get excited when I saw a pot of 'soy chicken' in the *conbini*, just to get home and google the ingredients to find out that it was real chicken and soy chicken mixed together (google translate image function will be your best friend for deciphering ingredients of things), so there is still a long way for Japan to go before it is a vegan paradise but it is not the hell hole some people would have you believe. You may feel a bit left out when your friends are digging into 'fami chiki', which is the fried chicken found in family mart's hot food section, but you'll just have to make do with a hash brown, which in Japanese they call ハッシュドポテト. Trust me; potato will be your best friend during your year abroad. My Japanese friends would often mock me for ordering chips in a sushi restaurant. The conveyor belt sushi places can be a good place to go for group meals as there you will find some vegetable sushi like *kanpyo* (gourd root). Coco Ichibanya is a Japanese curry chain restaurant that also has a vegan menu in a lot of stores (they call it vegetarian curry but if you look at the allergen list it contains no animal products). Moreover, just because you're vegan doesn't mean you have to miss out on the Japanese classics. There is an amazing vegan ramen restaurant in Ueno Station in Tokyo called T's tantan. Although Tokyo is probably the best place for vegans in Japan, the *conbini* options are found all over Japan and for those of you in *Kansai* there is a really good vegan place in Osaka called where I tried vegan *karage* called Paprika Shokudo and in Kyoto I went to a *Shojin Ryori* restaurant and tried some traditional Buddhist monk vegan food. Even in some more smaller places I found vegan options so you should be fine, enjoy Japan and if you're brave enough try *nato*, its vegan and delicious!

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