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IN JAPANESE STUDIES

Vol.13

SPECIAL ISSUE

BEYOND JAPANESE STUDIES: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND COVID-19

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[Special Issue] Beyond Japanese Studies: Challenges, Opportunities and COVID-19

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Japanese names are written in first name–surname order, in accordance with English-language convention. The long vowel sound in Japanese is indicated by a macron (e.g., kōtsū), unless in common use without (e.g., Tokyo).

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Foreword

By Keiji Shono
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Welcome to Volume 13 of *New Voices in Japanese Studies*, the journal's first-ever special issue. I am delighted by the calibre and timeliness of the work contained in this volume, which illustrates how the lens of Japanese Studies can help us to view and understand some of the pressing challenges and changes faced by global society in our present moment.

The Volume 13 special issue comes on the back of an online symposium held earlier this year, co-presented by The Japan Foundation, Sydney and the University of New England. The symposium was titled "Beyond Japanese Studies: Challenges, Opportunities and COVID-19", and was designed to provide a forum for early career Japan scholars in Australia, New Zealand and the broader Asia-Pacific region to consider ways of extending the reach and relevance of their research. The symposium attracted a level of interest beyond expectation: 28 abstract submissions, 16 presenters (more than originally planned), 180 registrants and a distinguished keynote speaker—sociologist and migration scholar Professor Gracia Liu-Farrer of Waseda University. As these numbers demonstrate, the project resonated with many in the Japanese studies community for the way it sought to address emerging needs.

Since its inception, *New Voices in Japanese Studies* has been dedicated to providing a platform for outstanding research by emerging scholars with ties to Australia and New Zealand. In another first for the journal, this volume extends that remit to include authors from the broader Asia-Pacific region. The combined locations and backgrounds of the authors in this volume, together with the subject matter they take up, represents a vast regional network which encompasses Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, Guam, India, Japan, Laos, the Philippines, Singapore, USA and Vietnam. In this way, not only does the volume discuss the transnational relevance of Japanese studies today, it also enacts it.

This special issue and the symposium it stems from were both produced under the shadow of COVID-19. Nevertheless, the contributors and editors alike have weathered the challenges of the pandemic era to produce a piece of work that will stand as an important record of the Japanese studies landscape at this time, as viewed by early career scholars. I would like to thank the article contributors, firstly for their participation in the "Beyond Japanese Studies" symposium, and secondly for continuing that momentum with their article submissions

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and following through to publication. I would equally like to thank the blind reviewers who gave so generously of their time and expertise to help bring out the best in these authors and their work. I also extend my thanks to the review authors, who call attention to significant new texts in the field of Japanese studies and highlight their value for others.

Finally, I would like to thank the production team for this volume. This year's guest editor post was unprecedented in scope, incorporating both the symposium and this volume within a lean timeframe. My deepest thanks go to Volume 13 Guest Editor Dr Gwyn McClelland for his enthusiasm and sustained commitment to this complex extended project. I also acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the *New Voices in Japanese Studies Series* Editor, Elicia O'Reilly, who departs the journal with the publication of this volume, as well as the indispensable efforts of web and layout designer Kevin Vo.

I trust that this volume will serve its intended purpose of highlighting the broad contemporary relevance of Japanese scholarship in our local region.

September, 2021

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By Gwyn McClelland
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Guest Editor, *New Voices in Japanese Studies*, Volume 13

Japan-oriented researchers are today conscious that due to ongoing changes in the academic landscape they must consider how their work goes beyond Japanese Studies. Depending on their research interests, they must highlight how their research reverberates more widely. What is the relevance of 'global studies', trans-national and trans-cultural aspects of the human, natural, economic and physical world? Simultaneously, we are increasingly aware of how the COVID-19 pandemic has already transformed, and continues to transform, academia. This Special Issue, *Beyond Japanese Studies: Challenges, Opportunities and COVID-19*, represents the thirteenth volume of *New Voices in Japanese Studies* and is the result of an ambitious project which has extended throughout the past year.

In late 2020, **Series Editor Elicia O'Reilly** and myself discussed a virtual symposium which we envisaged could lead to a Special Issue of this journal. The idea became reality and Elicia and I hosted the *Beyond Japanese Studies: Challenges, Opportunities and COVID-19* co-presented by The Japan Foundation, Sydney and the University of New England (UNE) in February 2021, fully online. The symposium was opened with a Welcome to Country led by Anaiwan (Armidale) elder Uncle Colin Ahoy, Professor Jane Edwards (UNE), and a welcome from The Japan Foundation, Sydney director, Mr Keiji Shono. We were grateful to Professor Gracia Liu Farrer from Waseda University for her presentation of a keynote speech. The intention of the symposium and the following Special Issue was firstly, to support and encourage Early Career Researchers (ECRs) with an interest in Japan, and secondly, to contribute to the ongoing global conversation about prospects and avenues for thinking 'Beyond Japanese Studies'. The call for abstracts for the initial symposium was wider than previous calls made by this journal, and the range of scholars selected were from further afield. We are excited that the authors of papers within this volume represent a broad range of locations and perspectives from across the Asia-Pacific region.

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Fifteen Early Career Researchers, including four PhD students and eleven recent doctoral graduates, presented at the symposium on a wide range of topics including race and identity, civil society, anthropology, geography, digital ethnography, linguistics, LGBTQA+, migration history and international affairs. The online public audience included participants from around the world, taking in Australia, Japan, the United States and South-East Asia, and incorporating more than 120 people over the two days. Following the symposium, a selection of the presenters were invited to submit a full paper—either an article, or discussion paper—for inclusion in this Special Issue, *Beyond Japanese Studies*.

Doing fieldwork in Japan is a common strategy for research within Japanese Studies. In the first article in this issue, **Shu Min Yuen** of the National University of Singapore writes on the basis of intensive anthropological research in Japan, interviewing in the trans community. Yuen writes that careful fieldwork can cause us to question our own assumptions while shedding new light on varied phenomena. Raising the importance of critiquing a hegemonic 'Eurocentric' outlook, Yuen also emphasises the value of the marginality of her own research field by its capacity to disrupt an often heteronormative or apparently homogenous surface of society. Yuen's qualitative insights add depth to her discussions. The second article, written by a law scholar, reorients us to the Mekong subregion of Asia. **Nobumichi Teramura** of the University of Brunei Darussalam and The University of Sydney showcases a somewhat forgotten potential of Japanese law, beyond the archipelago of Japan. In the Mekong, especially Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, he writes, Japanese legal scholars have for many years offered legal technical assistance and varied support, and yet this contribution is often neglected in anglophone scholarship. Teramura deftly describes the current context of this subregion in terms of economic change and impacts due to COVID-19, reviewing an expansive range of literature and offering suggestions for potential areas of future involvement. The third article is written in direct response to the impacts of COVID-19, contributed by **Joshua Schlachet** of the University of Arizona. Schlachet draws on his own research of late Tokugawa health manuals to make three provocations. He asks, "Can you question science in a pandemic?"

Two discussion papers follow the articles, the first courtesy of **Maria Cynthia B. Barriga**, an oral historian and recent PhD graduate who relates Japanese Studies from the point of view of the 'Nan'yō', an imperial-era term for the South Seas. By integrating examples from her own research on historiographies of the Philippines, Barriga shows the relevance in postcolonial Davos and Guam of reading and interrogating Japanese-language documents, and questioning who is Japanese in the case of mixed identity Filipino-Japanese and CHamoru-Japanese *mestizos*. **Swati Arora** contributes the second discussion paper in this issue, as a PhD researcher who was in Japan as a Japan Foundation Fellow when she found herself wondering how to manage her fieldwork upon the onset of COVID-19. While the experience caused significant difficulties, Arora remains upbeat about the possibilities of online digital research and summarises concisely the continuing research about how to manage such challenges in the future.

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The final part of this volume incorporates three book reviews. There is a certain symmetry from the symposium to the journal issue as the first book reviewed is authored by **Gracia Liu-Farrer**, given her involvement as keynote in February 2021. **Aoife Wilkinson** of The University of Queensland reviews Liu-Farrer's 2020 book, *Immigrant Japan*, which stands to greatly enhance our understanding of immigrant experiences in, and contributions to, contemporary Japanese society. **Allison Alexy**'s *Intimate Disconnections*, the second book reviewed, opens up the world of marriage and divorce in Japan. **Laura Clark** of The University of Queensland writes that the book will become 'canonical' for contemporary scholars within and beyond Japanese studies. The final review concludes the volume with my own appraisal of a new handbook in the field of Japanese Studies: *Studying Japan*, edited by **Nora Kottman** and **Cornelia Reiher**.

My hearty congratulations to The Japan Foundation, Sydney upon the timely publication of this volume, and for its ongoing and integral support of Early Career Researchers and PhD candidates in the region. Personally, it was an exciting project to be involved in as Guest Editor. The publication also required significant collaboration, and I would like to thank especially the expert reviewers and of course, the authors, for the efforts by which they participated in the work toward the production of this issue. Lastly, I am enormously grateful to Series Editor Elicia O'Reilly for her energetic and tenacious commitment to this project.

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From Marginality to Possibility: Doing Transgender Studies in Japanese Studies

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ABSTRACT

Area studies has been described as having lost its significance and legitimacy in the 21st century globalised world. However, research has shown that the strengths of area studies—empirical research and context-sensitive knowledge—remain relevant not only in helping us to understand our contemporary world, but also in challenging the hegemony of theories and concepts developed in Euro-American contexts that have come to dominate both academic and general writing. In this paper, I draw on my research on the transgender community in Japan—an area of study that is relegated to the margins of both Japanese studies and trans studies—to show how the tools of area studies play an important role in expanding the conceptual boundaries of trans studies, and how the lens of transgender can expand or complicate existing knowledge on the culture and society of Japan. I highlight how Japanese transgender identities and cultures are shaped not only by global processes, but also legal, medical, cultural and social conditions specific to Japan. I argue against the assumed universal applicability of Eurocentric conceptualisations of gender/sexual non-conformity, and in doing so I call attention to the ways in which the fields of transgender studies and Japanese studies can enrich each other. More than ever in these precarious times, we need to emphasise the strengths and overcome the weaknesses of our field(s), so that we may be better equipped to turn marginality into possibility.

KEYWORDS

area studies; contemporary; FTM; gender; human rights; Japanese studies; law; marriage; queer; queer asian studies; sexuality; transgender

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INTRODUCTION

As a Japan specialist based in a Japanese Studies department in a university in Asia, I am frequently asked by my peers based in social science disciplines about the future of my department, and by extension, my career. Given the drastic decline of area studies and Asian Studies in North American, Western European and Australian universities since the 1990s, their concerns are not unwarranted. Area studies was institutionalised at universities in the United States during the Cold War years to support US military and political needs, and is frequently criticised for being essentialist, descriptive and neo-imperialist. In the post-Cold war era, area studies has, according to some, increasingly become "a second-class enterprise in the university context" (Chua et al. 2019, 45) that is hopelessly caught in a vicious cycle of decreased funding, dwindling student numbers and loss of "academic legitimacy" (32).

The precarity of my academic career, however, results not only from the (perceived) declining relevance of area studies in the 21st century academy, but also from the marginal status of the subject of my study—trans and queer in Japan—within Japanese/area studies.[1] I remember feeling awkwardly out of place at a literature panel that I was assigned to at a major international conference on Asian Studies several years ago—my paper was on the representation, embodiment and practices of transgender masculinity based on my ethnographic fieldwork in the trans male community in Tokyo, while the works of my fellow panellists, all literary scholars, did not deal at all with gender or sexuality. While this may have been a slip-up on the part of the conference organisers, I could not help but agree with what Howard Chiang, Todd Henry and Helen Leung observe:

> "although scholars and activists have begun to examine long-standing histories and the politically engaged nature of trans cultures across the diverse societies of Asia over the past two decades […] such work remains at the margins of Asian studies, rather than receiving the spotlight."
> (Chiang et al. 2018, 298)[2]

If studies on trans and queer lives are marginalised in area studies, the reverse is also true: the focus of queer/trans studies has mainly been on North American and Western European societies (Jackson et al. 2005, 299). Even when queer lives in Asia are addressed, they tend to be studied as local phenomena to be explained by Euro-American theoretical paradigms (Chu and Martin 2007, 483). However, as Huso Yi reminds us, "caution must be used both in attempts to globalize US-dominant concepts of minority, and attempts to project modern, western notions of homosexuality into regions where these notions are inappropriate" (Yi 2005, 308).

1 I use the terms 'trans' and 'transgender' interchangeably to refer to people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Queer is used here as an umbrella term for non-normative configurations of gender and sexuality, as well as in a deconstructive sense to refer to practices and positionalities that may have the potential to destabilise or challenge normative ways of being and knowing.
2 It is worth mentioning that the establishment of the Society for Queer Asian Studies as an affiliated organisation of the Association for Asian Studies in 2016 marked a significant moment in the recognition of the academic value of queer Asian studies.

Although area/Japanese studies may be "struggling" (Ting 2020, 69) to maintain its relevance in today's academy—some have even suggested eradicating it entirely (see for example Chua et al. 2019; Chow 2002)—as Gavin Walker and Naoki Sakai remind us, the end of area (in the sense of "schema area" or "regime area") does not mean "the end of the importance of specific knowledge, linguistic study, or historically particular circumstances" (2019, 20). Working at the margins—and intersection—of area studies and trans/queer studies, I am constantly reminded that area studies is 'passé' and that research on queer in Japan has little value. I find solace and inspiration in the works of scholars researching gender and sexual non-normativity in Asia. These scholars, even if they do not necessarily identify as areaists, have recognised the significance of and used the tools of area studies to intervene in the exclusion of Asian queer lives in both queer studies and Asian studies (see for example Jackson 2000, 2001; Martin and Ho 2006; Sinnott 2004; Chiang 2012; McLelland 2005). By focusing on the historical, linguistic and cultural specificities of queer Asian lives, these works demonstrate how non-normative gender and sexual identities and cultures in the Asian region have been variously shaped by local histories, as well as the legal, medical, cultural and social conditions specific to each location/culture. In so doing, they "resisted situating developments taking place across the societies in […] Asia in terms of western developmental narratives" (McLelland 2018, 1273), and contributed to a reorientation of how scholars think and write about non-normative gender and sexual configurations, embodiments and practices in ways that de-privilege paradigms developed in North American and Western European contexts.

If the context-sensitive insights into the power formations, cultural expressions, social structures and processes of societies provided by area studies can contribute to a "deparochializ[ing] of US- and Euro-centric visions of the world in the core social science and humanities disciplines, among policy makers, and in the public at large" (Szanton 2002, 2), then trans/queer perspectives will also enrich area studies by bringing to the fore new issues and ways of thinking that area studies has traditionally overlooked. As pointed out by some, area studies, which takes an area and its population as the object of its inquiry, has a tendency to over-emphasise the fixity and coherence of an area when "the stability and continuity of culture areas and their diverse populations [have, in fact, been] held together in tenuous ways and through struggles that have privileged the interests of majority populations […] at the expense of marginalized others" (Chiang et al. 2018, 299–300). The recently published edited volume *Queer Korea* (Henry 2020) shows us one way in which this shortcoming of area studies can be overcome. The chapters highlight how "practices of non-normative sexuality and gender variance have been consistently ignored or thought away" in both popular thought and academic writing in Korea (8). In accounting for these overlooked aspects of Korean society and history, the book contributes to a queering of the "nationalistically heteronormative" Korean Studies (8), thus illustrating how queer approaches can contribute to destabilising the assumed coherence of an 'area'.

The work by queer Asian studies scholars has shown, and continues to show, that there are possibilities in marginality, and that marginality can be turned into possibilities. In the following sections, I draw on my research in the trans community in Japan and offer some thoughts on how my experience working at/from the margins helped me re-think my approaches in the fields of Japanese studies and trans studies. In particular, I discuss how Japanese studies can help to re-orient how we conceptualise trans practices and embodiments, and how trans perspectives can not only enhance, expand and/or complicate existing knowledge on the culture and society of Japan, but also provide some hints as to how we can take Japanese studies beyond its current boundaries.

RETHINKING TRANS THROUGH THE LENS OF JAPAN

My research focuses on trans men, or *efu-tii-emu* (エフティーエム; the Japanese transliteration of the English term 'FTM' or 'female-to-male'; hereafter, 'FTM') in Japan. I explore how trans men experience and negotiate inclusion in a society that continues to marginalise those who do not or cannot conform to prevailing gender and sexual norms.[3] During my fieldwork, which took place between 2013 and 2018, I visited numerous places and attended various events organised by and/or for trans men, predominantly but not exclusively in Tokyo. They included FTM bars, various businesses owned and run by FTM-identified people, drinking parties, matchmaking events, peer-support sharing sessions, outdoor picnics and barbeques, home parties and music promotion events for an FTM idol group. I also attended photoshoots sessions of *Laph*—the only FTM magazine in circulation in Japan today, and the key site of my fieldwork. Depending on the scale of the event, at each of these events, I met anywhere between twenty to more than a hundred trans men and their partners.[4]

As a non-Japanese and non-trans person, and given the lack of in-depth studies on trans people—and especially trans men—in Japan in English-language academic scholarship, prior to entering the field I could only form a mental picture of my would-be informants through the lens of trans and queer studies based in Euro-American contexts that were available at the time. I had assumed that these theories and concepts on trans and queer would also apply to trans men in Japan. It turned out that this was not the case. I assumed that my informants would be keen to celebrate their transness, and use it to fight against the rigid gender system in Japan; after all, queer is defined as "against the regimes of the normal" (Warner 1993, xxvi). As such, I was surprised when I found the bold statement "We are normal" (僕たちは

3 I am aware that many trans people in and outside of Japan may not identify with the term 'FTM', but almost all trans men (a term which I am using interchangeably with 'FTM') whom I met during my fieldwork referred to themselves and other trans men using this term.
4 My fieldwork in Japan was first conducted between January 2013 and January 2014; I subsequently made several trips back to Tokyo from June 2014 through 2019. In addition to conducting participant observation at social events organised by and for trans men, I also conducted in-depth interviews with twelve trans men between 2013 and 2014. While my position as a non-Japanese and non-trans researcher from an overseas university relegated me to the status of an outsider, the border between outsider and insider was never a clear one for me: my perceived foreignness to Japanese and trans culture actually eased my entry into the FTM scene, and spurred the eagerness among many of my informants to share some aspects of their culture (Japanese and/ or FTM) with me. My familiarity with the Japanese language and cultural practices further allowed me to quickly develop a rapport with my informants. I am, however, mindful that I can never speak of my informants' experiences from their position.

フツウです) in the editorial of one of the issues of *Laph* (Akito 2010, 61), and when informant after informant told me that all they want is to get married, have children, and lead an 'ordinary life' just like any other Japanese man. I could not help but wonder, why was the producer of a queer media product desiring, and creating the desire for, normality, instead of questioning and dismantling 'normal'?

From my participant observation at various FTM social events, and from my analysis of back issues of *Laph* and Japanese trans autobiographies, I found out that most of my informants prefer to—and in fact can only afford to—live 'under-the-radar' as gender-normative, 'ordinary' men (legally and/or socially) in their everyday lives. While there certainly are trans individuals and activists in Japan who reject the state-endorsed medico-legal discourse of transgender (see below), and who live openly as gender non-conforming persons, most of my informants chose not to come out or only come out selectively about their trans backgrounds. The transgender masculinity that is represented in, endorsed and promoted by the FTM magazine *Laph* is also one that emphasises naturalness, averageness and 'ordinariness'" (for a more detailed discussion, see Yuen 2018).

However, my informants also do not deny their trans backgrounds or reject connections with the trans community. Many of my informants were quite happy to mention (to me and to their trans peers) their birth names and pass around photos of themselves in their sailor suit uniforms during their high school days.[5] During the weekends or after work, they participate in social activities such as drinking parties that are organised by and for trans men, and in so doing, they carve out a space for themselves to live as trans, and for a sense of community and belonging to a collective sociality of FTM trans people without undermining their male public selves (for more, see Yuen 2020).

While many queer scholars have repeatedly emphasised the need to resist normativity and trouble the status quo—which influenced the way I had thought about trans people in Japan prior to entering the field—it remains a fact that in many parts of Asia where being openly queer is not an available option, normativity is something that gender/sexual non-conforming people need to negotiate and seek to achieve, rather than resist, in order to survive (Yau 2010). Todd Henry (2020), John Cho (2020) and Layoung Shin (2020) have noted that even with the advancement of the gay and lesbian movement in South Korea since the mid-1990s, many queer Korean people prefer to stay invisible in society by not visibly manifesting a queer identity and avoiding open participation in LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) advocacy activities. When measured against the Anglo-Western model of rights and visibility, South Korea may appear 'backward'. However, as Henry (2020) argues, in a society where homosexuality is still highly stigmatised, adopting the Euro-American form of out-and-proud politics is not a viable option for these queer Koreans. It can "endanger one's ability to please kin networks, maintain intimate relationships, and succeed (or even survive) in the labour market" (Henry 2020, 30).

5 This was another unexpected finding as I had (falsely) assumed, based on my understanding of Jason Cromwell's (1999) research on trans men in the United States, that birth names are a source of insecurity for trans men and a "painful" reminder of how society sees and what society expects of them as females (2).

Similarly in Japan, prejudice and a general lack of public understanding of gender and sexual non-conforming people continue to limit the life choices of many trans people. Yet, my informants do not concern themselves with demanding rights or lobbying for the de-medicalisation of transgender, even though many other trans people do. The abovementioned choices and practices of living publicly as men and participating in the FTM scene privately are, as I realise after spending some time in the field, strategies that my informants adopt to gain self-validation, economic survival and social membership as both trans and men. To my informants, the fact of being trans does not eclipse the myriad of identities that they may have, including their identity as men (and vice-versa). Like their gay and lesbian counterparts in South Korea, living socially as gender-normative men and privately as trans, rather than actively engaging in rights-based activism, has been perceived by many Japanese trans men to be the best or only way to ensure their liveability and survival in mainstream Japanese society. This reveals a different narrative of FTM lives in Japan—an alternative transgender modernity that does not necessarily diffuse from or converge towards a Western narrative of progress that has visibility, rights and recognition as its end point.

As seen from the assumptions that I brought into the field, an uncritical application of Euro-American theoretical paradigms onto the Japanese context is problematic and even imperialist (by erasing other ways of knowing, doing and being trans). It can also create a "hierarchy of experiences and subjectivities" (Leung 2016, 435) with the West—constructed as more 'advanced' and 'progressive'—at the top. In fact, this can be observed in some English-language media reports and articles on the latest developments concerning Japan's gender and sexual minorities. For example, in a recent 84-page Human Rights Watch (2019) report on Japan's gender recognition law, the author emphasised that the law, which "rests on an outdated and pejorative notion that a transgender identity is a mental health condition" and which enforces sterilisation of trans people, is "abusive" (3) and "regressive" (11). The report makes an urgent call for Japan to reform its laws (including removing the requirement to undergo surgery before qualifying for legal gender change) to be in line with international human rights standards and best practices of "modern medicine" (8). This, in effect, creates an image of Japan as backward and pre-modern.

In Japan, gender reassignment surgery, or sex reassignment surgery (性別適合手術 or SRS) as it is commonly called in Japan today, became recognised in 1996 as the legal and appropriate medical treatment for the condition of Gender Identity Disorder (GID), or '*seidōitsuseishōgai*' (性同一性障害) in Japanese.[6] In 2004, trans people gained the right to change their legal gender in the *koseki* family register (戸籍) under the "Exceptional Treatment Law for People with Gender Identity Disorder" (性同一性障害者の性別の取り扱いの特例に関する法案; hereafter, Exceptional Treatment Law) after completing

6 In Japan, GID is understood as a medical condition marked by a disjuncture between one's gender identity and one's biological sex. For more on the guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of GID in Japan, see Nomiya et al (2011, 14-19), and *Nihon seishin shinkei gakkai* (2006). Regarding SRS, although the term 'sex reassignment' has come under critique for reinforcing the notion that the truth of one's gender lies in one's body/genitals, and is increasingly being replaced by 'gender reassignment', 'gender confirmation' or 'gender affirmation' in the anglophone sphere, it remains the dominant term in Japan for referring to the family of surgical procedures that trans people are required to undergo in order to change their legal gender. As such, while I acknowledge the problems with this term, in this article, I refer to sex reassignment rather than its more recent variants in light of the context of my discussion—that is, contemporary Japanese society.

sex reassignment surgery and fulfilling a list of other conditions.[7] Despite the international move towards de-pathologising transgender in recent years, Japanese law continues to insist on a GID diagnosis and sex reassignment surgery as the key requirement for legal gender change. One common critique of the situation in Japan is that Japan is the only G7 country that maintains such a stringent requirement, and as such, there is a crucial need for it to 'catch up' to the standards of other first-world countries. This stance is highly reminiscent of the "tradition-modernity split" that Grewal and Kaplan (2001) observed in their international study of sexuality, where "the United States and Europe are figured as modern and thus as the sites of progressive social movements, while other parts of the world are presumed to be traditional" (669).

While there are indeed limitations to the law and the medical model of GID upon which the law is based (I will elaborate on this in the next section), criticising Japan on the basis of its departure from so-called modern international standards (of human rights and medicine) may risk what Mark McLelland (2005) would call a "transcultural reductiveness"—that is, "a tendency to locate the sexual ideas and practices of 'other' societies along a continuum of sameness or difference from those of the west" (4). No doubt, understandings and articulations of LGBTQ in Japan are to some extent Western-inflected (Shimizu 2007). For example, '*seidōitsuseishōgai*' is itself a term and concept translated from the English term 'Gender Identity Disorder', and the diagnostic criteria for *seidōitsuseishōgai* in Japan was adopted from the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) published by the American Psychiatric Association. However, as illustrated by the assumptions that I had brought into the field at the beginning of my research, explaining, measuring and criticising Japanese trans experience and culture in the language of those in Euro-American contexts can end up privileging Euro-American sexual identities and cultures. In effect, Japanese trans people, their cultures and practices become (problematically) constructed as backward, outdated and in need of liberation. To overcome "Western hegemonic interpretations of queerness and of non-Western sexualities [and genders]" (Wilson 2006, n.p.), it is therefore crucial that anyone writing about trans people in Japan (in fact, in any culture) recognise the role of not only global processes, but also local histories, socio-cultural processes, and medical and legal conditions in the shaping of their identities, practices and communities.

The strict conditions, including enforced sterilisation, stipulated in the Exceptional Treatment Law have certainly attracted criticism, including from within Japan itself. However, as Japan's first trans female politician Aya Kamikawa (2007) highlights, the requirement that the trans person making the legal gender change has no children (commonly known as the 'no-child condition') was critical to the passage of the law as it was used to appease the conservative members of the leading Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the

7 Under the Exceptional Treatment Law, the following five conditions must be fulfilled before an individual can change their gender in the family register: (1) to be above twenty years old, (2) to be unmarried at the time of application, (3) have no child, (4) to be deprived of gonad or gonad function, (5) to have genitalia that resemble the sex to which they have been reassigned. The 'no-child condition' was the most opposed condition among trans people, and this regulation was eventually relaxed in 2008 to "no child below the age of 20". For details on the Exceptional Treatment Law, see Taniguchi (2006); Harima et al. (2007); Kamikawa (2007, 104–34); Suganuma et al. (2010, 419–37).

opposition parties.[8] For the conservative LDP members, the family register is an inviolable sacred document that is the source of "Japanese family values" (Kamikawa 2007, 113). These are the people who have repeatedly rejected the bill to revise the civil code to allow married couples to have separate last names, and it was these people that the lawmakers, lawyers and activists who campaigned for the passing of the law needed to convince. Without the no-child condition, and other conditions such as sex reassignment surgery and the requirement that applicants are not married at the point of application, the law would result in same-sex marriages and families with two fathers/mothers. This is an outcome that would destabilise the heteronormative family and gender binary systems, and to which the conservative politicians would definitely object. From this brief backstory to the passing of the Exceptional Treatment Law, it is clear that any critique of the law needs to take the socio-political context of Japan into consideration, and not assume the universality of the transgender experience, nor draw conclusions on the basis of sameness or difference from so-called 'international standards'.

RETHINKING JAPAN THROUGH THE LENS OF TRANS

Just as area studies can enrich other disciplines—in this case, Japanese studies enriching transgender studies—our understanding of an area can also be enhanced by looking at the area through the lens of transgender. As Susan Stryker (2006) highlights in the first volume of *The Transgender Studies Reader*, the Foucauldian notion of "the insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (12) is one key methodological concern of transgender studies. For Stryker, the potential of transgender studies lies in its ability to recover both knowledges and subjective experiences of trans people, and in so doing, "recapture, for use in the present, a historical knowledge of particular structurations of power" (13). Following Stryker, in the rest of this article, I will show how the trans voices and experiences that I have unearthed in my research reveal a simultaneous recognition and regulation by the Japanese state of the transgender subject in the late 1990s/early 2000s. This finding can in turn bring to light the operations of neoliberal governmentality in the managing of gender/sexual difference and diversity in Japanese society—a topic that has largely been excluded from the discussion on diversity in Japan.

For a large part of its modern history, Japan has maintained a self-image of an ethnically, culturally and linguistically homogeneous nation. Not only has this discourse of monoculturalism and monoethnicity been reproduced and reinforced in national policies, senior politicians such as former prime ministers Yasuhiro Nakasone and Tarō Asō have also time and again publicly claimed that Japan is a homogenous country with no minorities (Burgess 2007).[9] Such claims of monoculturality have resulted in the belief that (ethnic and cultural) differences do not belong in Japanese society, and that assimilation is the only alternative to exclusion (Chapman 2006, 91).

8 Aya Kamikawa [上川 あや; b. 1968] is an elected municipal official in the Setagawa ward assembly. She was first elected in 2003, and is currently serving her fifth term in office.
9 Yasuhiro Nakasone [中曽根 康弘; 1918–2019] was prime minister of Japan and leader of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) from 1982 to 1987. Tarō Asō [麻生 太郎; b. 1940], also an LDP member, was prime minister of Japan from 2008 to 2009, and has served as deputy prime minister since 2012 (still current at the time of writing).

In the 1990s and 2000s, an alternative to assimilation and exclusion emerged following rising claims of discrimination and injustice from ethnic minority groups, as well as the increasing presence of migrant workers in Japan. These culminated in an ostensible recognition of the country's diverse ethnic and social composition through *tabunka kyōsei* (多文化共生; 'multicultural co-existence'), a Japanese notion of multiculturalism that emphasises harmonious co-living between the Japanese and foreigners. On the one hand, the adoption of *tabunka kyōsei* policies appears to suggest a positive move towards a recognition and inclusion of difference in Japanese society.[10] On the other hand, however, minorities, and only specific groups of minorities, are included and tolerated as 'others' who are expected to learn to co-exist in harmony with the Japanese (Chapman 2006; Chapple 2011; Kawabata and Yamamoto 2020). Significantly, *tabunka kyōsei* discourses focus mainly on foreigners or ethnic 'others'—in other words, on difference that has been constructed as coming from 'outside' of Japanese society. Meanwhile, 'internal' differences within Japanese society such as disability, gender variance and non-normative sexualities continue to remain excluded from the parameters of '*tabunka*' (多文化; lit., 'many cultures') (Flowers 2012, 529). In this way, through the strategic inclusion of some differences in the name of harmonious co-existence, diversity is contained by the authorities.

The Japanese state's agenda of managing rather than "recognizing differences and the resulting tensions that are manifest in such contexts" (Chapman 2006, 100) becomes especially apparent when we consider the simultaneous recognition and regulation of trans people via the Exceptional Treatment Law during this time of the 1990s/2000s. The Exceptional Treatment Law (passed in 2003 and promulgated in 2004), while signifying the Japanese state's recognition of trans people as 'ordinary' citizens who are deserving of rights, also acts as a means through which trans people are rendered governable. Under the law, the transgender subject is defined as one who suffers from the medical condition of GID and desires sex reassignment surgery to change their physical sex. These conditions, and a few others (as mentioned earlier), must be fulfilled before a trans person is allowed to change their legal gender in the family register, a powerful state apparatus that identifies, defines and documents people as legal subjects and citizens of the Japanese state.[11] In the process of making trans people verifiable and thus governable, the law produces specific regulatory practices (psychiatric counselling, hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery) that discipline potentially unruly "trans bodies and narratives into fixed and permanent states" (Repo 2019, 15).

Even if the state's understanding of trans may not necessarily reflect trans people's realities, it is only by conforming to the state's disciplinary practices that trans people become intelligible to the state and are permitted to become

10 In the late 1980s and 1990s, local governments, especially in municipalities with a high number of foreign residents, started engaging with the idea of '*tabunka kyōsei*' by implementing various initiative to support their foreign residents. Some of such initiatives include creating enquiry hotlines in foreign languages, providing support and advice on living in Japan, and organizing multicultural events and activities. It was only in 2006 that the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications started promoting and supporting intercultural cohesion at the local level across the nation. In 2007, Miyagi prefecture was the first municipality to issue an Ordinance for the Promotion of Multicultural Society (多文化共生社会の形成の推進に関する条例), which obliges businesses and residents in the prefecture to provide their support in creating a "multicultural co-living society" (多文化共生社会) (Miyagi Prefectural Government 2021).

11 For more detailed discussion on the Japanese family register, see for example Krogness (2014).

legitimate subjects (by having a proper/corrected record in the family register). This is illustrated by my informant Kazuma's (pseudonym used) experience in making up parts of his personal history so that he could receive the GID diagnosis he needed to live legally as a man:

> "I had to indicate on the form 'when I started feeling this way' or 'when I began desiring to become a man' in order to get my hands on the diagnosis letter to support my application to change my gender in the family register […] But for me, it wasn't a matter of at what age I started feeling this way. I had always been like that; or rather, I always thought I would grow up to be a man."
>
> (Kazuma 2013)

Despite the gaps between the criteria and his experience, Kazuma was able to navigate the process and receive his GID diagnosis, granting him the legal right to change his gender on the family register. However, trans people who cannot or refuse to receive a GID diagnosis and/or undergo sex reassignment surgery, or whose gendered practices and embodiment fall outside of the binary of male and female, will continue to remain unaccounted for and be excluded from the rights and privileges that come with legal gender change.

Following the promulgation of the Exceptional Treatment Law, sexual diversity became listed in 2004 on the agenda of human rights education and enlightenment by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ; 法務省) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT; 文部科学省).[12] However, the latter has made no move to formalise the teaching of sexual diversity in the classroom (Watanabe et al. 2011, 97). Such a hands-off approach towards human rights and diversity by the MOJ as well as other governmental bodies resonates with Timothy Amos' (2011) analysis of the government's stance towards the human rights of *burakumin* (部落民; a historic group of social outcasts). As Amos highlights, at the level of the state's discourse, human rights is portrayed as something that should be learnt and nurtured "at home, at school and the workplace" (177). In other words, it is something that should be dealt and engaged with at the individual or everyday institutional level, rather than something that the state is responsible for. This most likely explains why sexual diversity and human rights were not, and will not, be formalised in the official school curriculum.

The government's tokenistic and cosmetic approach to recognising and including trans people in society is further revealed when we examine how the law affects the lives of trans people at the level of the everyday. My informant Kazuma, whom I mentioned earlier, recounted to me that he attempted to enrol in a healthcare-related certificate course at a vocational school multiple times, but was rejected because of his trans background. Despite having updated his official documents following his legal gender change, he was not

12 In the early 1990s, Japan's pursuit for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council contributed to its active involvement in human rights domestically and internationally. The announcement of the UN Decade of Human Rights Education (1995-2004) in 1994 also led the Japanese government to establish human rights centres and pass laws relating to the promotion of human rights in Japan. It was within this context that sexual orientation and GID came to be included in the list of "Major human rights problems" (主な人権課題) in the MOJ and MEXT's "White Paper on Human Rights Education and Enlightenment" (人権教育・啓発白書) following the enactment of the Exceptional Treatment Law in 2004 (MOJ and MEXT 2004). However, although MEXT issued a memo to all schools across Japan "to provide consultations for and to be considerate to the

able to change his given name as recorded on his university certificate, causing him to be outed as trans on occasions when his university certificate must be produced, such as when applying to the vocational school. As Kazuma points out,

> "I graduated from a public university, and unlike private universities, public universities do not allow a name change on their certificates. Because of the nature of the course that I wanted to enrol in, the interviewers told me that it's going to be a problem if other students find out that I'm trans, and if that happens, the school will not be able to deal with it."
> (Kazuma, 2013)

Kazuma's case further highlights the superficiality of the government's approach to dealing with trans issues in society. Although the government appears to recognise the gender identity of trans people through the Exceptional Treatment Law, the universities that it funds ironically do not allow transgender graduates to change their names on their certificates, causing their trans backgrounds to be traceable in records that, more often than not, work to their disadvantage, entrenching discrimination.

Thus, the recognition of transgender subjects by the state is simultaneously a *regulation* of gender variance that in turn brings about, and even encourages, new forms of exclusion. The narrowly defined nature of transgender subjectivity, and the stringent conditions that need to be met before a trans person can have their gender legally recognised presents a strong signal that there is no room for gender ambiguity in Japanese society. The lack of government support for sexual diversity and transgender human rights education further reveals the state's neoliberal stance in constructing exclusion or discrimination as an individual matter, especially for those who fail or choose not to conform to the traditional gender economy of male or female. On the surface, the Exceptional Treatment Law suggests a paradigm shift towards a liberal acceptance of gender variance in Japanese society. However, when we consider the normalising logic of the state's recognition of gender variance that comes intertwined with regulation, these are recast as a neoliberal agenda of social control and assimilation. Recognition, and the associated rights and privileges, while bringing about inclusion (as legal Japanese subjects via the family register), can also be a means of discipline and control, and even exclusion, for those who fail to conform to the 'correct' way of being trans. Examining the processes by which trans bodies are produced, disciplined and governed thus brings to light a complex situation. Trans people's struggles for validation as gendered subjects conflict with the state's attempt at containing the perceived threat of gender/sexual diversity—a situation that the current *tabunka kyōsei* discourse (including its critiques to date) has failed to capture.

feelings of students with GID" in April 2010, research reveals that knowledge about the existence and/or content of this memo is actually very low (Yasuda 2010, 72). For example, a survey by Sex and Human Rights Network ESTO in October 2010 shows that only 39 percent of the school nurses from a sample of 251 elementary schools in Akita prefecture said that they have seen the memo from MEXT (Takahashi 2013, 349).

CONCLUSION

This paper was motivated partly by a desire to defend the academic legitimacy of Japanese studies, a field that I remain deeply passionate about despite its increasing marginalisation in the academy. However, I am by no means arguing for a return to an essentialist, neo-imperialist or homogenising way of understanding culture. As Morris-Suzuki (2019) observes, area studies has moved on from such 1950s-style way of conceptualising the world (213). My focus on the local and specific also does not represent an automatic rejection of global and transnational influences. Rather, my aim in this paper is to show how the tools of area studies play an important role in expanding the conceptual boundaries of trans studies, and how the lens of transgender can helpfully complicate existing knowledge on the culture and society of Japan. Probing into the less-often heard narratives and struggles of trans people (albeit a particular group of trans men predominantly located in Tokyo) in Japan has enabled me to see beneath the surface of a heteronormative and apparently culturally homogenous (recently more visibly multi-cultural) Japan that the Japanese state, social institutions and even some scholars have constructed and tried to sustain. My examination of how trans bodies are brought into subjectivity and simultaneously disciplined (through regulatory practices such as sex reassignment surgery) reveals how the Japanese state is invested in defining and categorising its population into male or female subjects to upkeep the heteronormative family and gender-binary system. Behind the seemingly liberal recognition and inclusion of trans people in Japanese society is, in fact, an attempt at managing and containing a perceived threat to social cohesion that gender transgression might bring. The desire among my informants to live as 'ordinary' men may be seen as a manifestation of such state control and regulation. Their shuttling between their public male selves and private FTM selves can also be seen as a strategy that they adopt to ensure economic and social survival in a culture that has yet to fully accept gender/sexual non-normativity.

From the perspective of Euro-American queer theory, my informants are likely to be seen as 'unqueer'. However, as I have tried to demonstrate in this article, an uncritical application of theories conceived in a different culture onto the Japanese context is most likely bound to fail. Even if concepts such as 'GID' and 'FTM' were originally borrowed from the United States, and even as some Japanese LGBTQ activists have embraced the language of rights, liberation, normalisation or antinormativity (rhetoric commonly used in North America and Western Europe) in their efforts to push for social change, we need to remember that there are many trans people in Japan (and elsewhere too) who "do not always rely on well-known logics of public visibility or espous[e] antinormative politics as their modus operandi" (Chiang et al. 2018, 300). As such, researchers should always consider the complex dynamics between global trends and locally situated socio-cultural and political conditions that have come to enable and limit the imaginations, articulations and lived realities of trans people in the areas/cultures that we study. And area studies, with its emphasis on empirical research and contextual knowledge, provides us with the tools to do just that.

In her closing remarks to the virtual roundtable "The 'Rebirth' of Japanese Studies", Japan scholar Paula Curtis urges "members of a global Japanese Studies community" to rethink our profession and facilitate the rebirth of our field (2020, n.p.). When our position in the academy is pushed to the margins of the margins, what can we do, individually and collectively, to ensure the survival of our field and safeguard our livelihood? Perhaps it is in such precarious times that we need, more than ever, to emphasise the strengths and overcome the weaknesses of our field(s), as I have done in this article. We need to think beyond Japanese studies, both in the sense of engaging with other disciplines as well as breaking through the traditional, and at times problematic, way of doing Japanese studies. In doing so, I envisage we will be in a better position to turn marginality into possibility.

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APPENDIX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Kazuma. 2013. Interview by author. Digital recording in Japanese.
November 23.

GLOSSARY

burakumin (部落民)
a historic group of social outcasts in Japan

Exceptional Treatment Law
Exceptional Treatment Law for People with Gender Identity Disorder (性同一性障害者の性別の取り扱いの特例に関する法案); stipulates the conditions that must be fulfilled before an individual can change their gender in the family register in Japan

FTM (エフティーエム)
female-to-male transgender

GID
Gender Identity Disorder

koseki (戸籍)
family register

LDP
Liberal Democratic Party; a leading conservative political party in Japan

LGBTQ
lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer

MEXT
Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (文部科学省)

MOJ
Ministry of Justice (法務省)

no-child condition
a term used to refer to the requirement under the Exceptional Treatment Law for People with Gender Identity Disorder that a trans person making a legal gender change has no children

seidōitsuseishōgai (性同一性障害)
Gender Identity Disorder

SRS (性別適合手術)
used in Japan to mean gender reassignment surgery (from 'sex reassignment surgery')

tabunka kyōsei (多文化共生)
lit., 'multicultural co-existence'; a notion of multiculturalism that emphasises harmonious co-living between the Japanese and foreigners

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Japan as a Source of Legal Ideas: A View from the Mekong Subregion of ASEAN

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ABSTRACT

Much has been written about Japanese law within the context of Japan. Less is known about the application of Japanese legal models outside Japan. A prevailing view among some commentators is that Japanese law scholarship does not offer insights that are useful beyond Japan-based legal studies. Other scholars challenge this perception by invoking Japan's legal development aid projects in the Mekong subregion of ASEAN—especially in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. These projects have been in operation for over twenty years and aim to foster the economic growth of host countries. This article aligns with the view that Japanese law exists beyond, and is influential outside, Japan. It calls for further action by legal specialists to re-examine and re-assess the corresponding influence of Japanese positive law in these countries, both in improving the transparency of those legal systems and enhancing communication among local, comparative and Japanese law experts.

KEYWORDS

ASEAN; Asian law; Cambodia; comparative law; COVID-19; economics; international relations; Japanese law; JICA; Laos; law; legal technical assistance; Southeast Asia; Vietnam

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1. INTRODUCTION

Japanese law has been the subject of research for over a century by non-Japanese scholars and lawyers, both because of its important status in comparative legal studies, and as a consequence of interest in particular aspects of Japanese culture and society and Japan's strong economy.[1] Scholars within the field have long been self-aware about the factors that influence interest in Japanese law (e.g. Beer and Tomatsu 1978, 2–5; Haley 2010; Ginsburg 2010). However, Japanese law has less often been perceived as a source of legal thinking with application outside Japan (see Taylor 2001). Quite a few commentators see Japan as a successful example of legal transplantation based on Western models, such as the legal systems of Germany, France and the US (Graziadei 2019; Siems 2019, 865), and are drawn to the specific institutions, culture and environment of Japan, and by extension see its experience as inapplicable to other countries (e.g., Givens 2013; Colombo 2014).[2] To the extent that they see Japan as a source of legal influence, their primary focus tends to be on its dissemination of a modern German-style legal system to its neighbouring countries, and not on how Japanese law itself has influenced legal thought in those countries (Lei 2012; Kischel 2019, 55, 689, 699, 728–35). This confinement of Japanese law and legal institutions to Japan's domestic sphere by scholars writing in English is curious because over the last five decades Japan has become both an influential and sizeable provider of official development assistance (ODA) internationally—including significant programs of legal technical assistance in Asia.

In the last decade, however, we have seen a new stream of scholarship that focusses on Japan's role in the modernisation of legal systems in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Taylor has suggested that reviewing Japan's legal technical assistance since the mid-1990s in Southeast Asia is important (Taylor 2001) because it reveals "ongoing tension between a western/globalized vision of rule-of-law assistance and the political imperatives at the national/local level" (Taylor 2009, 164). Taylor's thesis anticipates the need to assess the impact of Japanese positive law in a recent hotspot for comparative legal studies: the Mekong subregion of ASEAN.[3] Tamura (2019), meanwhile, reminds us that Japanese contributions to modernising law in Southeast Asia are not new: Dr Tokichi Masao—a prominent Japanese jurist and the General Legal Adviser to the Kingdom of Siam—made a significant contribution to the codification of civil laws in Thailand in the early 20th century (54–55). Tamura also refers to how Thai commissioners drafted the 1925 Revised Civil and Commercial Code of the

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1 See generally The Australian Network for Japanese Law (ANJeL)'s bibliography on Japanese law research, available at: https://www.anjel.com.au/research. See also the bibliography on 'Gender and Law Scholarship in the Law in Japan Field' (Levin and Hiraoka 2020).

2 Legal transplantation means "the moving of a rule or a system of law from one country to another" (Watson 1974, 21). See also Section 5.1 below.

3 The Mekong subregion comprises Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand (Ho and Pitakdumrongkit 2019).

Kingdom of Siam, using the Japanese Civil Code as the foundation for their reception of the German Civil Code (2019, 57ff).[4]

Since before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mekong subregion had been gaining new economic prominence as multinational enterprises have been increasingly relocating their factories from China to countries along the Mekong River such as Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (Teramura et al. 2021, 356). They have done so, of course, in the shadow of US-China geopolitical and economic tensions. As a result, increased global attention has been focusing on their growing economies and developing legal systems (e.g., Arcibal 2021; Walsh et al. 2021). This trend accelerated following the emergence of the pandemic, as the Mekong subregion remained (at least in the early stages of the crisis) relatively COVID-free (Dahles 2020; Teramura et al. 2021, 356).

Japan's national ODA agency, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (hereafter, JICA), has had a presence in the Mekong subregion since the 1990s. JICA is an independent administrative institution under Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) with decades of experience in the modernisation of law in the Mekong subregion through its legal technical assistance projects (Kitagawa 2006, 254–56; JICA 2014; Nottage 2019a, 204–07). For many of the countries hosting legal technical assistance projects, JICA has been the most influential foreign donor and development partner. In particular, the private law frameworks of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos have been heavily influenced by Japanese legal advice provided through JICA projects (Kaneko 2019, 155; JICA 2014, 5–6).[5] One consequence of this is that Japanese legal concepts and design have influenced the private law of those countries to a much greater extent than is generally understood, as discussed in Section 3 below.

This article seeks to draw more attention to the role of Japanese law as a source of legal ideas and infrastructure in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, particularly in the context of their growing importance for economic activity in the pandemic era. It explains how Japanese law has shaped the private law of these countries, using Cambodia as an example. It argues that recognising the influence of Japanese law in these jurisdictions can benefit legal scholarship, particularly in comparative law, and calls for further work to critically examine and analyse the influence of Japanese law in these countries. The implication of this is the potential to shift the idea of Japanese law as confined to the Japanese archipelago.

2. EXTENDING JAPAN'S REACH THROUGH LEGAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

JICA was established in Japan in 1974 with the mission to work on human security and quality growth under the Development Cooperation Charter, a

4 The ultimate goal of the Thai commissioners was to adopt the German Civil Code in the Revised Civil and Commercial Code of the Kingdom of Siam, but they instead decided to follow the Japanese Civil Code—a simplified and modified German-style Civil Code—as "almost nobody possessed sufficient knowledge [of] the German civil law" in the "Siamese world of legal profession at that time" (Tamura 2019, 59).
5 Private law is the area of law governing relationships between individuals. See also Section 2 below.

foundation of Japan's ODA policy (JICA 2009; MOFA 2015).[6] As with other development agencies, JICA's focus for many years was on the creation of physical infrastructure in developing countries (Lancaster 2010, 29, 34). However, it changed its direction in the 1990s when Japan's ODA flows shifted more toward soft infrastructure such as education and law (Taylor 2005, 255). JICA commenced its legal technical assistance projects in 1994, initially in response to a request from the Vietnamese government to support its law reforms for the Doi Moi (renovation) policy, which introduced a market-oriented economy to Vietnam (ICD 2020, 7, 10). As of July 2021, eleven Asian countries have asked the Japanese government for legal technical assistance, and their governments have recently been working closely with JICA on various law reform projects amid the COVID-19 pandemic.[7]

Japan's legal technical assistance projects have been conducted through JICA as part of its broader portfolio of technical cooperation projects, which cover education, governance, health, disaster management, peacebuilding, gender and poverty reduction, among other areas.[8] Japanese legal technical assistance involves JICA's parent ministry (MOFA) and other Japanese government institutions and ministries including the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), through its International Cooperation Department (ICD) and its satellite organisation, the International Civil and Commercial Law Centre (ICCLC), as well as the Supreme Court, Public Prosecutor's Office, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (Nichibenren), the Japanese Federation of Industries (Keidanren) and Japanese university law faculties (Taylor 2005, 261; ICD 2020, 2).

For JICA, the primary rationale for legal technical assistance projects has been that a well-designed legal system is essential for economic development (Yamada 2001). Thus, the immediate aim of the projects has typically been to help countries improve their legal systems as a way of transitioning to a market economy, by supporting: (i) the drafting of basic laws; (ii) the establishment of judicial institutions for the operation of enacted laws; and (iii) the capacity-building of legal professionals (ICD 2020, 3). The long-term goal of these projects, as stated by the Cabinet of Japan and ICD, is to assist host countries in achieving quality growth based on the rule of law and protection of human rights (MOFA 2015, 6; ICD 2020, 5).

Despite these aspirational aims, external evaluation of the projects has been mixed. On one hand, their respect for local ownership and partnership with host countries has been positively evaluated (Nicholson and Hinderling 2013, 304, 308; Kuong 2018, 285). This reflects the Development Cooperation Charter's emphasis on recognising the host states' sovereignty and self-help

6 The Cabinet of Japan determined the Charter in 1992, and later revised it in 2003 and 2015 (see MOFA 1992; 2003; 2015). The origin of JICA and Japan's ODA may trace back to the start of the Japanese government's affiliation with the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific in 1954 (MOFA 1994).
7 Respectively, these countries are Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, China, Nepal, Timor-Leste, Myanmar and Bangladesh (MOJ n.d.[b]). For the latest updates on JICA's law reform activities in these countries, see JICA's official social media posts: for example, https://www.facebook.com/jica.phapluat2020/ (for Vietnam) and https://www.facebook.com/jica.legal.laos/ (for Laos).
8 Details of Japan's technical cooperation projects are available at: https://www.jica.go.jp/project/english/subject/index.html.

efforts.[9] On the other hand, one consequence of such a level of respect is that Japan did not emphasise rule-of-law principles in its legal aid in the early days of the legal technical assistance projects, and this could be considered a weakness in its programming (see MOFA 1992; 2003). Some commentators perceive this approach as representing Japan's "lack of advocacy for substantive or thick rule of law principles" (Nicholson and Kuong 2014, 174). Others, however, point out that a lack of rule-of-law ideology is actually useful because it enables transitioning countries to undertake market-strengthening legal reforms without "complicating normative constraints such as a focus on human rights or democratic reform" (Taylor 2005, 269).[10] This observation is still salient, considering that Vietnam and Laos are formally socialist single-party states, and Cambodia is a de-facto single-party state.[11]

As Nicholson and Hinderling (2013) succinctly put it, rule-of-law promotion itself has been the subject of diverse critiques, including: "its ethnocentricity; whether it sufficiently admits context; whether it admits and works with the plurality of legal systems; its colonial roots; its portability and whether it has a positive impact on either economic growth or delivery of democratisation/ human rights" (275). Presumably these criticisms, and other geopolitical and historical considerations such as Japan's own wartime and colonial history, made Japan hesitant to prioritise rule-of-law promotion or even use the term 'rule of law' in the early years of the legal technical assistance projects (Kuong 2018, 274–76). Japan's 2003 ODA Charter, for example, included no mention of 'rule of law', although it features prominently in the 2015 version of the Charter.[12] While experts agree that Japan has progressively engaged in the debate about the place of rule-of-law promotion in aid projects (Taylor 2005; Kuong 2018; Nicholson and Hinderling 2013; Nicholson and Low 2013; Nicholson and Kuong 2014), it is an imprecise instrument for judging the ultimate value of Japan's legal technical assistance projects.[13]

To date, a significant number of codes and laws have been established or reformed in host countries through the legal technical assistance projects, with support from JICA and other government bodies. In particular, the outcomes of the legal technical assistance projects in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are arguably outstanding in terms of their scope and comprehensiveness.

9 For example, the revised 2015 Charter provides: "In its development cooperation, Japan has maintained the spirit of jointly creating things that suit partner countries while respecting ownership, intentions and intrinsic characteristics of the country concerned based on a field-oriented approach through dialogue and collaboration. It has also maintained the approach of building reciprocal relationships with developing countries in which both sides learn from each other and grow and develop together. These are some of the good traditions of Japan's cooperation which have supported self-help efforts of developing countries and aimed at future self-reliant development" (MOFA 2015, 4).

10 Some commentators go even further, suggesting that economic self-interest is the major critical motivating factor for Japan's (and also other donors') foreign aid policies (Schraeder et al. 1998). However, it is unclear whether this argument targets the legal technical assistance projects.

11 See Article 4 of the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and Article 3 of the Constitution of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia stipulates in its preamble that the country is to be a multi-party liberal democratic regime. However, Cambodian People's Party (CPP) has been in power since 1979 and currently holds every seat in the legislature (Reuters Staff 2020).

12 The 2015 Development Cooperation Charter refers to 'rule of law' in multiple instances (MOFA 2015, 2, 6, 8, 10, 15).

13 Host countries are similarly divided on this point. For example, in one study, several local interviewees from Vietnam praised JICA for its politically neutral approach and for not strongly advocating judicial independence and the rule of law (Nicholson and Low 2013, 27). In contrast, some Vietnamese experts have criticised JICA for focusing on "technical assistance" only and not pursuing "an idea" (Nicholson and Kuong 2014, 174). Cambodian interviewees were similarly divided on this issue (Nicholson and Low 2013; Nicholson and Kuong 2014).

Focusing mainly on private law, in Vietnam alone the projects have assisted in drafting and reforming the 1995, 2005 and 2015 Civil Codes, the 2004 and 2015 Civil Procedure Codes, the 2008 and 2014 Civil Judgement Execution Laws, and the 2004 and 2014 Bankruptcy Laws. Further, they contributed the drafting and reform of the 2007 Civil Code and 2006 Civil Procedure Code in Cambodia, as well as the 2018 Civil Code in Laos, among other initiatives (ICD 2020, 6–7).[14] The implication of these reforms is that day-to-day transactions taking place in these jurisdictions are now regulated by legal norms which were established with Japanese law experts' support.

3. THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JAPAN'S LEGAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS

One practical result of Japan's sustained engagement in legal reform is that Japanese legal ideas now arguably form part of the legal pluralism in countries that are important targets for foreign investment and legal practice. The following section considers the economic background against which the projects have been conducted in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos and then gives a worked example of how a Cambodian project unfolded, and with what results.

3.1 Economic Resilience in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The economic growth of Vietnam in the last 30 years has been striking and continues apace, even in the face of a pandemic. From 1990 to 2019, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) increased from 6.5 billion to 262 billion USD, with an average annual growth rate of 6.8% (World Bank 2021d). The COVID-19 pandemic has more recently hit Vietnam hard, but it is one of the few economies where a recession is not expected, in view of a GDP growth rate of 2.9% in 2020 (World Bank 2021c). The country's economic resilience can be explained by the behaviour of its domestic economy and its external sector (World Bank 2020, xi). The domestic economy has so far managed to avoid a serious slump, thanks to its success in containing the spread of the virus (World Bank 2020, xii; Duong 2020a, 2020b). As at 5 July 2021, the number of confirmed cases in Vietnam remains comparatively low, having just surpassed 28,470, and the number of related deaths is also low, at 146 (WHO 2021d).[15] Mobility restrictions were eased at least in the early stages of the pandemic, so their impact on domestic consumption was significant but not fatal (World Bank 2020, xii; Leung 2020). The external sector has been performing well because of export demand and foreign investment (World Bank 2020, xii), which the restructuring of global supply chains has reinforced since the beginning of the US-China trade war and (ironically) the pandemic (Reed 2020; Boudreau and Nguyen 2020).[16] Hence, international businesses have been eyeing Vietnam as an emerging manufacturing hub, with rising expectations underpinned by the country's vast network of free trade agreements (FTAs).

14 For further detail on legal and judicial development projects in Cambodia, see Teramura (2021).
15 In comparison, Australia had recorded a total of 30,610 COVID-19 cases and 910 deaths as at 30 June 2021 (Department of Health 2021).
16 The early stages of the US-China trade war were marked by the imposition of tariffs on Chinese goods by the Trump administration. Tensions continue under the Biden administration, "extend[ing] beyond trade to encompass a range of geopolitical and human rights issues" and with tariffs largely remaining (Zhou 2021).

Cambodia's economy, while harder hit by COVID-19, is also promising. From 2000 to 2019, the country's GDP increased from 5.2 billion to 27 billion USD, with an average annual growth rate of 7.7% (World Bank 2021d). It managed to curb the first outbreak of COVID 19, as demonstrated in its small volume of cases as of 19 March 2021—1,541 confirmed cases and one death (WHO 2021b). This success was thanks to its effective initial response strategy, including aggressive testing, contract tracing, travel restrictions and school closures (Chheng 2020). Unfortunately, the number of cases later surged to 59,978 confirmed cases and 881 deaths (as at 5 July 2021) during the second wave (WHO 2021a), forcing the country's densely populated areas to implement further restriction measures in 2021 (Post Staff 2021). Moreover, the virus plunged the country's economy into a recession with registered negative GDP growth of minus 3.1% (World Bank 2021a). The garment industry, the country's growth engine, was severely hit by supply chain disruption in China and the cancellation of orders from the European Union (EU) and the US due to the pandemic (Chheng 2020). Another economic engine, the tourism sector, has also been hurt severely due to domestic and international travel restrictions (Chheng 2020). However, opportunities are evident for Cambodia to achieve a rapid and robust recovery as the country has the potential to become a hub for global supply chain restructuring (Master et al. 2018).

The country is attractive to investors because of its openness to trade, as well as its liberal economic policies, social stability, growth potential and competitive labour costs (KPMG 2020; Swiss Re Institute 2020). Losing preferential access to the EU market can be a disadvantage (see European Commission 2020), but the loss may be leveraged by the surplus from the Cambodia-China FTA offering Cambodia preferential access to China's rapidly recovered domestic market (Thul 2020; Elliot 2021). Moreover, the US-China trade war may help Cambodia elevate its position in the global value chain, as its strong relationship with China may attract Chinese and other factories to its shores for exporting goods and items from Cambodia to the rest of the world (Phea 2020; Primiano and Po 2020). If Cambodia is able to overcome its alleged legacy problems such as lower productivity, expensive electricity and unofficial fees, and adapt technological innovations (Amarthalingam 2020) in addition to the challenges of COVID-19, the country has the potential to lead the global economy in the virus-economy recovery race.

Finally, Laos likewise has strong growth potential. The country increased its GDP from 1.7 billion to 18 billion USD between 2000 and 2019, recording an average annual growth rate of 7% (World Bank 2021d). The year 2020 was indeed a challenge for Laos as its economic growth declined to an estimated minus 0.4% (World Bank 2021b), despite the country's low number of COVID-19 cases—2,630 confirmed cases and three deaths as at 5 July 2021 (WHO 2021c). Lockdown measures hit the service sector hard, remittances dried up and the unemployment rate rose to 23% (World Bank 2021b). Nevertheless, there are some positive factors. The country maintains political and social stability, low labour costs, liberal economic policies and an extensive FTA network, which are advantages (OECD 2017). Due to its close ties with China and its participation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), its infrastructure has been improving (Sims 2020; Keola 2021). The country's lengthy borders with China, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar may also help it to integrate with these larger economies. The factors discussed above have the potential to make Laos a legitimate low-cost export base from which to sell goods within the region and beyond, for manufacturers seeking to diversify from existing production bases in China, Thailand and Vietnam (US Department of State 2020b).

3.2 Japanese Law as Part of Legal Pluralism: Cambodia

In Cambodia, JICA has been conducting a 'Legal and Judicial Development Project' since 1996 (MOJ 2021). One achievement of the project is the promulgation of the 2007 Civil Code, whose drafting process demonstrates how Japanese legal ideas became integral parts of the country's foundational law. In the drafting process, a group of leading Japanese legal scholars—the Working Group (WG) for the Cambodian Civil Code—played a vital role (Morishima 2003, 7). First, they prepared a detailed proposal of the new Civil Code based on the Japanese Civil Code and civil laws of other countries such as Germany and France. This is because Cambodia had no existing codified civil law that could be used as a basis of the new Code, due to the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge period (Sakano 2021, 57). Second, they explained the proposal face-to-face to the Study Group (SG) for the Cambodian Civil Code that was established within the Ministry of Justice of Cambodia, to obtain feedback from Cambodian legal elites. Third, they drafted the Civil Code in Japanese, based on comments of Japanese and Cambodian experts. The draft Civil Code was then translated by the Cambodian SG into Khmer, with the support of JICA staff who were fluent in Khmer (Sakano 2003).

The extended commitment of Japanese law experts underpins the pervasive influence of Japanese legal thinking on the Cambodian Civil Code. We can analogise this to the process of transmitting legal knowledge and ideas through interactions between legal academics and students in a legal education setting, where some commentators suggest that "[l]aw school curricula provide a framework not only for academic studies, but also for the student's construction and interpretation of the intellectual and ethical parameters of the law" (Ross et al. 2016, 70). In other words, what law lecturers teach students affects the latter's consideration of the law.

Thinking about this in relation to JICA's legal technical assistance project in Cambodia suggests two levels at which Japanese legal advisors may have exerted influence over the Cambodian Civil Code. The first layer was produced by the WG, consisting of senior Japanese law professors who were trained and educated in the world of *Nihon-hō* [日本法; 'Japanese law'] (Morishima 2003, 7; Sono 2001; see also Section 4.1 below). That the WG prepared the proposal and drafts of the Civil Code inevitably means that these documents reflected legal thinking developed by Japanese scholars who were driven by and attached to Japanese legal ideas. The second layer was created by the SG, formed by elite Cambodian lawyers. The SG commented on and translated the proposal and the drafts of the Code under the guidance of the Japanese law experts. By that we can understand that the Cambodian experts reviewed and modified the draft Code, consciously or unconsciously drawing on the legal thoughts recommended by the Japanese law professors. In practice, the Japanese law scholars reported that they considered approaches from various legal systems, apart from those of Cambodia and Japan. However, we also know that Japanese legal academics are prone to evaluate non-Japanese legal systems through 'Japanese' lenses that are distinct and rarely adopted in the outside world (Sono 2001, 56–58). As a result, the doctrinal—or what lawyers sometimes call 'black letter law'— contribution of the Japanese Civil Code to the Cambodian Civil Code is physically manifested in the commentary found in various official documents, such as in the unpublished Japanese-language commentary on the Cambodian Civil Code, which explicitly states which provisions of the Code are based on which corresponding articles of the Japanese Civil Code.[17]

This example of Japanese-influenced Civil Code reform in Cambodia is not an isolated one. In Cambodia, similar law reform approaches have been taken to establish the Civil Procedure Code and other laws (Takeshita 2003), due to the serious lack of human resources in the legal sector caused by the civil war (Phallack 2012, 8). In Laos, an Advisory Group consisting of professors from top Japanese law schools guided the preparation of 2018 Civil Code (Irie 2020, 65ff). In Vietnam, recommendations from leading Japanese law experts led to reforms and revisions of various aspects of the Civil and Civil Procedure Codes (Kawashima 2019; Kaneko 2019). Thus, Japanese legal models are part of the legal pluralism among the countries along the Mekong River.

3.3 (Re-)Assessing the Influence of Japanese Law in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos

Despite the extensive work by Japanese legal experts assisting Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in drafting and revising their main bodies of private law over 20 years in the ways outlined in Sections 2 and 3.2 above, a general perception exists among (mainly western) government officials and international legal experts that these countries continue to be influenced primarily by French and Soviet civil law traditions deriving from their colonial and Cold War experiences.[18] We could view these perceptions as postcolonial stereotypes used by international institutions, or as ways of casting these states as having limited legal certainty and a weak rule of law.[19] These perceptions impose an arguably unwarranted reputational cost on countries seeking to attract international investment of the kind that may enhance the further economic growth of Southeast Asia (West and Leong 2019, 65–67).

Part of the reason for the persistence of outdated perceptions about the doctrinal legal architecture in these economies is most likely due to a lag

17 Author's interview with local practitioners, 25 August 2021.
18 For example, for the US government's view, see US Department of State (2020a, 2020b, 2020c). See also Forsaith (2016, 73), Harrington (2016, 161) and Melwani (2016, 415). It is worth noting that JICA has advertised its legal assistance projects in English—the language those government officials and international commentators are most broadly familiar with—on various platforms such as Facebook and webpages: https://www.facebook.com/jica.phapluat2020/; https://www.facebook.com/jica.legal.laos/; https://www.jica.go.jp/project/english/cambodia/014/index.html; https://www.jica.go.jp/project/english/cambodia/025/index.html.
19 For example, the Rule of Law Index 2020 ranked Vietnam 85th and Cambodia 127th (World Justice Project 2020, 6–7), and the Corruption Perception Index 2020 ranked Vietnam 104th, Cambodia 160th and Laos 134th (Transparency International 2021).

in legal scholarship that delivers sufficiently detailed analysis of both the current private laws of those countries and how they operate in practice. Certainly, law and development scholars have researched the legal technical assistance projects delivered along the Mekong River, focusing on the projects' methodological and theoretical aspects (see Section 2 above). These include a comparison of Japan's projects with the agendas of other donors (Taylor 2005; Nicholson and Hinderling 2013; Nicholson and Kuong 2014); local experiences of court-oriented law reform guided by JICA and other international donors (Nicholson and Low 2013); project implementation in host countries (Kaneko 2010; Kuong 2018; Kaneko 2019); and Japan's evolving experience as a rule-of-law donor (Taylor 2012). However, what these otherwise valuable contributions do not do is to delineate the contour of Japanese legal influence in a way that is useful for international businesses and lawyers needing to understand the positive law of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (see Section 1).

Notably, one barrier to communicating legal transformation in the subregion is a linguistic one. Most of the resources related to Japan's legal technical assistance projects and their end products are available only in Japanese and local languages (Teramura 2021).[20] Official commentaries and certain textbooks on the Cambodian Civil Code and Civil Procedure Code are written only in Khmer and Japanese (JICA n.d.). Many Japanese academics, some of whom have worked as advisors for JICA and ICD, have authored research contributions on the projects—but again, these are only available in Japanese.[21] This is legitimate for these kinds of projects, most of which have modest budgets, especially considering their scale (Nicholson and Kuong 2014), and that they are delivered based on agreements between Japan and host countries whose official languages are not English. Although the projects have occasionally used English as a tool for enhancing communications between the project officers and the local representatives (Maruyama 2006, 360), they have encouraged the exchange of opinions in the languages of the host countries and Japanese in order to minimise misunderstandings (Ochi 2007, 107). Some anglophone scholars have analysed Japanese-language materials in order to write about the JICA projects (Taylor 2006; Taylor 2012), but this is not common among English-speaking Japanese law experts (Sono 2001, 52), and only a handful of Japanese commentators have authored English language articles on the implications of Japanese law in the Mekong subregion (Kawashima 2019; Kaneko 2019; Teramura 2021). Therefore, when we consider factors that have contributed to the low profile of Japan's legal technical assistance in the subregion to date, the problem of language cannot be underestimated.

More recent work has begun to bridge this gap in anglophone scholarship. For example, Hai Nguyen (2019) has introduced key features of Vietnam's 2015 Civil Code (Nguyen 2019), touching upon Japan's assistance in the drafting process. Meanwhile, Trinh Nguyen (2018) has analysed specific conflict-of-laws provisions in the Code, implying that the provisions were

20 For example, Japan's ICD has a website listing notes and reports written by the legal experts who have participated in the legal technical assistance projects, but the language is Japanese (see MOJ n.d.[a]).
21 For example, see search results from the Japanese research database, Cinii: https://ci.nii.ac.jp/search?q=%E3%83%99%E3%83%88%E3%83%8A%E3%83%A0%E6%B0%91%E6%B3%95&range=0&count=20&sortorder=1&type=0 (accessed on 12 February, 2021).

inspired by Japan's Act on General Rules for Application of Laws.[22] Based on his experience as advisor for the assistance projects in Vietnam, Kawashima (2019) has also offered an overview of Japan's support for drafting and amending the 2004 Civil Procedure Code. Further, Monichariya and Tanaka (2002) have offered a succinct summary of the (draft) Civil Code and Civil Procedure Code in Cambodia, which were also prepared through Japan's assistance projects. Teramura (2021) writes about rules of direct jurisdiction in Cambodia, referring to the salient influence of Japanese law in those rules. The commonality of these works is that they refer to Japanese influence, but do not directly examine the extent of that influence from Japanese legal ideas in local positive laws and practice. This points to the need for more comprehensive and systematic study of the considerable influence of Japanese private law in those countries.

4. THE INTELLECTUAL IMPLICATIONS OF JAPANESE LAW BEYOND JAPAN

Viewing the extension of Japanese law into the Mekong subregion as brought about by the JICA projects, and as an element of the legal pluralism in the host countries, offers both conceptual and geo-political implications for legal studies. It not only expands the conceptual horizon of Japanese law, but also provides new insights on competition between countries and institutions investing intellectual and physical resources in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

4.1 Rethinking the Concept of Japanese Law

The practical expansion of Japanese law into the doctrinal law of the Mekong subregion then raises the question of how this might affect the way in which we conceptualise 'Japanese law' for scholarly purposes. When one undertakes the study of Japanese law, s/he first needs to think of what 'Japanese law' is. This is not a straightforward task because, as Taylor correctly points out:

> "Japanese Law exists in our minds and in our writings, but it maps very imperfectly the worlds of jurisprudence and legal practice, as they exist in Japan. 'Japanese Law' is not a neutral label; it comes with built-in inferences, drawn from our own locale and from those of colleagues with whom we share the 'field'."
> (Taylor 2001, 11).

Keeping this conceptual plasticity of Japanese law in mind, Nottage proposes a taxonomy with three major streams of Japanese law scholarships: '*Japanisches Recht*', 'Japanese law' and '*Nihon-hō*' (Nottage 2001). Nottage defines '*Japanisches Recht*' as teaching and research of Japanese law in Germany, which revived impressively in the 1980s thanks to the rapid expansion of the Japanese economy as well as Japan's trade and investment links with Germany (Nottage 2001, 17). 'Japanese law' comprises of legal studies on Japanese law practiced in the English-speaking world, especially in the United States,

22 Act No. 78 of 2006, entry into force on 1 January 2007. The other legal instruments referred to by the author as inspirations of the conflict-of-laws rules are Rome Convention on the Law Applicable to Contractual Obligations of 19 June 1980, and Regulation (EC) No. 593/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 on the Law Applicable to Contractual Obligations (Nguyen 2018, 344–45).

Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Nottage 2001, 17–18). According to Nottage, this stream of scholarship has concentrated heavily on commercial law. Finally, '*Nihon-hō*'—which means Japanese law in the Japanese language—consists of "mainstream studies of Japanese law within Japan" (Nottage 2001, 19). Common to all three streams is their focus on and emphasis of legal issues within the territorial borders of Japan. In fact, a strength of '*Japanisches Recht*' scholarship has been its ability to deal with black-letter texts of Japanese positive law (Nottage 2001, 17). 'Japanese law' scholarship was developed by academics who had first-hand experience in Japan (Ginsburg 2001, 32), and Sono—a leading scholar of '*Nihon-hō*'—comments crucially that the main concern of that stream of scholarship is the law as it is practiced in Japan, pointing out that it has been reluctant to take on the challenges of globalisation (Sono 2001, 56).[23] In other words, whether they have used German, English or Japanese, the three bodies of scholarship have more or less viewed Japanese law as the phenomena taking place on the shores of Japan.

However, Taylor recommends a different vision of Japanese law, referring to the exportation of Japanese legal ideas through legal technical assistance. Taylor states:

> "My own view is that we will need to rethink the field as it is constructed outside Japan, as the boxes 'Japan' and 'Japanese Law' become increasingly linked to other jurisdictions […]. We can see this already in…the regional transfer of law through legal aid development. In short, Japan is no longer 'four main islands' of law, and 'Japanese Law' or a hybrid version of it can occur both inside and outside national boundaries."
> (Taylor 2001, 13)

This conceptualisation of Japanese law has the potential to stretch the boundaries of Japanese legal ideas and usher in a paradigm shift for Japanese law sub-disciplines whose main subjects of study have tended to be the internal affairs of Japan. Assessing the influence of legal technical assistance projects on the evolution of private law in Mekong subregion will provide a venue for testing the validity of Taylor's thesis about Japanese law.

4.2 Rethinking Geopolitical Competition among Donor Countries and Institutions

A second implication of work on Japanese legal influence in the Mekong subregion is the potential to contribute to scholarship on geo-political competition for ODA. About 15 years ago, Taylor noted the surge in technical legal assistance provided by developed countries and global bureaucracies to transitioning economies in ASEAN (Taylor 2006). Intentionally or unintentionally, these donors compete with each other, spending on law reform projects, arguably to strengthen their audit and control in the targeted economies (Taylor 2006, 83–85). This competition has been particularly fierce in the Mekong subregion. For example, as of 2005, the law reform donor

23 The persisting inward-looking nature of '*Nihon-hō*' was revealed recently (again) in the opening ceremony for Japan International Dispute Resolution Center (JIDRC)-Osaka in which only the Japanese language seemed to be used to promote Japan as the next hub for international dispute resolution (Claxton et al. 2021, 250).

agencies and institutions active in Vietnam were: US Agency for International Development (USAID), AusAID, Canadian International Development Agency, Danish International Development Agency, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Maison du Droit of France, the European Union (EU), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and several United Nations (UN) agencies (Edagawa 2020, 7). Since then, some agencies have finished (or suspended) their projects in Vietnam, but many donors are still operating in the country, joined by a few new cooperative institutions.

According to Edagawa (2020), apart from JICA, the donor agencies that had already determined in 2020 that they would operate beyond 2021 include: Korea International Cooperation Agency, EU, Deutsche Gesellescha ft fuur Internationale Zusammenarbeit, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Bank (8–16). There appear to be tensions among these donors, but this has not always been the case (Takeshita 2004; Kaneko 2006, 13–14; IDPPD at JICA 2012, 39–41). From time to time, they have arguably supported each other to deal with rule-of-law issues in the Mekong subregion cooperatively. Nevertheless, the fact that many foreign agencies have been implementing law reform initiatives in the same region may imply that various countries have intersecting interests there. As one of these initiatives with complicated political backgrounds, JICA's assistance projects in the subregion are worth investigating further because JICA has distinguished itself from other donors by its respect for local sovereignty and emphasis on self-help.

5. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

New discussions on Japanese positive law's influence in the Mekong subregion offer both opportunities and challenges for practical and scholarly engagement with Japanese law in its expanding sphere of influence. In the subsections that follow, we consider how those are likely to be experienced by three stakeholder groups in particular: (i) scholars of comparative legal studies, (ii) Japanese law experts and (iii) local practitioners.

5.1 Scholars of Comparative Legal Studies

First, looking at the Japanese influence on legal reform in the Mekong subregion offers the comparative law community a new arena for testing the salience of existing concepts of 'legal transplants', which are part of the traditional canon for comparative law (Cairns 2013). 'Legal transplant' is a metaphoric term adapted to capture 'the gradual diffusion of the law or the continuous nature of the process that sometimes leads to legal change through the appropriation of foreign ideas' (Graziadei 2019, 444).[24] JICA's legal technical assistance would be categorised as a legal transplantation in that it 'exports' Japanese legal models to host countries (Kitagawa 2006, 255–256; Nottage 2019a, 204–207). However, normatively, scholars have argued

24 An alternative term, 'circulation of legal models', has often been used outside the common law world (Graziadei 2019, 444).

that it is important that 'legal transplants' do not entail neo-imperialism or interventionist implications which (un)wittingly cause the trivialisation, if not annulment, of local customs by importing donor countries' legal models. So, for example, Kaneko claims:

> "Western donors led by such influential development agencies as the World Bank and the ADB have been eager to 'transplant' particular legal models, whether common law or civil law, … [while] Japan's [legal assistance] case offers one unique dimension to the studies on legal and judicial reforms: that is its highly respectful stance towards the local customary orders."
> (Kaneko 2008, 50)

Taylor concurs, pointing out that,

> "The Ministry of Justice has…*aimed at not directly transplanting the Japanese national legal system, but—through repeated consultative interactions with the counterpart country—sought to effect the 'unforced legal technical assistance' suited to the needs and conditions of that country.*"
> (Taylor 2012, 240; emphasis added)

Perspectives from comparative lawyers may be useful in understanding how the transmission of legal institutions, ideals, ideologies, doctrines and rules have been triggered by different actors with different effects (Graziadei 2019, 472), and the assistance projects in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are ripe for that style of analysis.

A by-product of engaging the interest of the wider comparative law academy could be improved communication and collaboration between comparative law and Japanese law scholars, which historically has been underdeveloped. For instance, Mattei has claimed that:

> "Japanese law scholars discuss among themselves, rather than participate in the general enterprise of understanding law in a comparative perspective. I believe that such a marginalization has too high a cost for the comparative law community."
> (Mattei 1997, 8)

One might argue that Mattei's statement may no longer be valid today; however, Colombo (2014) has also noted a corresponding general lack of interest in Japanese law among comparative law scholars (735–36). More recently, a group of leading European comparative legal scholars working on Japanese law stated:

> "Historically,…the relationship between the legal system of Japan and those of continental Europe (especially France and Germany) has been strong. […] It is somewhat surprising, in a globalized, predominantly English-speaking environment, to acknowledge how many Japanese law professors still devote time and energy to learn French or German (and sometimes both) to carry out what they consider proper legal research in their fields of interest. *The*

situation in Europe reveals an asymmetrical attitude: Japanese law studies are conducted by a relatively restricted number of individuals who make the study of the Japanese legal system their main or at least one of their main research interests."

(Colombo et al. 2020, 5–6; emphasis added)

It is open to debate whether the cause of this asymmetry is due to the isolationism of Japanese law scholars, the Western-centric posture of comparative lawyers, or the linguistic barriers discussed earlier.[25] However, new fields of study open up new possibilities.[26] Since JICA's projects are explicitly schemes of legal transplantation, they fall within the research area of comparative law experts, many of whom may not yet have developed an interest in Japanese law due to being largely unaware of such projects.[27] Input from Japanese law scholars will be essential to allowing comparative lawyers to deepen their understanding of the projects, given their strong grounding in both Japanese law and the languages used in vital pieces of documentation (see Section 3.3).

5.2 Japanese Law Experts

A second opportunity that this work presents is for Japanese law scholars to discover new audiences. At one time, Japan was the world's second-largest economy and accounted for one-sixth of the global GDP, but this is no longer the case (see World Bank n.d.). The growth in studies of the Japanese legal system in the latter half of the 20th century (e.g. von Mehren 1963; Vogel 1979; Baum 1996; Ramseyer and Nakazato 1999), and the admiration they professed, illustrated the kind of global attention that Japan was receiving at that time. The present-day Japanese economy is currently the world's third-largest economy with the GDP of 5.065 trillion (in 2019); however, it accounts for only one-seventeenth of global GDP, or a quarter of the US GDP (World Bank n.d.). A super-ageing society and immigration reluctance are predicted to maintain such a trajectory (Nakagawa 2019; Tomohara 2019; Burgess 2018). Thus, Japanese law should develop new dimensions in research to find new audiences.[28]

25 With reference to isolationism among Japanese law scholars, Upham observes: 'Scholars of Japan[ese law]… more frequently consider themselves close intellectual colleagues of other American scholars of Japan than of other American scholars of foreign law and even within the law school world are more likely to associate intellectually with colleagues working on areas of common interest in domestic law such as corporations or legal sociology than with colleagues specializing in, e.g., French or German law' (Upham 1997, 640). It has also been widely accepted that comparative legal studies and general jurisprudence are western and anglo-American focused (Twining 2009, 10; Husa 2021, 8). While some suggest that today's comparative law scholarship is characterised by pluralism as to the kinds of legal systems compared and the methodologies adopted (van Hoecke 2017, 280; Husa 2021, 9), most scholars working within the discipline are from the West. For example, see the Notes on the Contributors in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Law* (2nd ed) (Reimann and Zimmermann 2019, xiii).
26 Note that, outside of Japan, there are several comparative law expert groups that have been working seriously to overcome the marginalisation of Japanese legal studies, including but not limited to The Australian Network for Japanese Law (ANJeL; https://www.anjel.com.au/), The Center for Japanese Legal Studies at Columbia Law School (https://jls.law.columbia.edu) and The Centre of Expertise on Japan at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law in Hamburg (https://www.mpipriv.de/centre-of-expertise-japan).
27 For the status of JICA's assistance projects in legal studies, see Sections 1, 2 and 3.3.
28 There are other topics that make Japan deserving of international attention. For example, see recent developments in the field of international dispute resolution (Teramura and Nottage 2018; Claxton et al. 2019, 2021).

5.3 Local Practitioners

A third group likely to benefit from developing this new body of work is local legal experts for whom new knowledge of Japanese-inflected local law will be useful. Legal practitioners and academics working in Mekong host countries will be able to take advantage of discussion on the influence of Japanese law as an opportunity to address ambiguities in their legal systems. A key example is Cambodia, where lawyers do not perceive the doctrine of precedent (the binding nature of prior judicial decisions) as being important or convincing because judgements are not regarded as sources of law in the country—and are also not published (Teramura 2021, 202–203).[29] Accordingly, lawyers in Cambodia tend to rely on authoritative sources such as official commentaries and textbooks to analyse legal questions (Teramura 2021, 203).[30] Sometimes, comments on legal provisions in such texts briefly point out that the provisions are based on particular norms in Japanese law, but fall short of clarifying how Japanese legal ideas support the norms, or how the corresponding situation would be resolved under Japanese law.[31] Detailed knowledge of how Japanese law has shaped Cambodian codes and laws would be useful to local legal practitioners in this context. This may prompt Cambodian lawyers facing complicated legal issues to consult relevant legal research by Japanese law experts, thereby deepening their understanding of Cambodian private law and allowing them to undertake purposive interpretation of certain articles in the codes and laws.

Of course, local experts should not be passive in debates about Japanese law's influence: input from local practitioners will be vital for assessing the compatibility of Japanese legal ideas with current legal practice in each country.[32] Several years have passed since the codes and laws referenced above were finalised by local and JICA experts, and so it is likely that the legal practice of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos surrounding those legal instruments has evolved. As a practical matter, this may have diluted the direct impact or understanding of Japanese legal concepts on local practice, while the relative weight of insights from local lawyers may have increased. Further, there may have been divergences from the original intention of the drafters, especially in the legal systems that do not strictly follow the doctrine of precedent. Hence, the time is ripe for comparative and Japanese law experts to collaborate with local experts in analysing local laws, which were established many years ago based on Japanese legal ideas but most likely have continued to evolve with local input since then.

There are rich empirical possibilities here, including discussion with local government officials and local scholars involved in law reform projects beyond those supported by JICA about how the effects of the reforms are being felt. Importantly, in these contexts neither Japanese nor comparative law scholarship can advance without local expertise and respect for local ownership of law reforms (see Sections 2 and 5.1 above).

29 Note that the courts in Vietnam and Laos do not strictly observe the doctrine of precedent either (Sakai and Kamata 2017; Ito 2020, 47).
30 This was reaffirmed in interviews with local practitioners that were conducted by the author while working as a legal consultant at a Cambodian law firm.
31 For example, see official comments on Articles 32–38 of the Cambodian Code of Civil Procedure (MOJ 2006).
32 However, private practitioners are not necessarily well positioned to take part in non-profitable research projects. See, for example, Teramura (2020, 19).

6. CONCLUSIONS

This article has argued that JICA's legal technical assistance projects have functioned as vehicles for exporting Japanese legal models to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and that these deserve more attention from legal experts within and outside those systems, as more global audiences and stakeholders turn their eyes to the Mekong subregion. In doing so, it will be necessary to rethink the concept and reach of 'Japanese law', which promises practical and intellectual benefits to multiple legal communities. Language may be an obstacle, but it is not an insurmountable challenge. As this paper has argued, an important step for expanding Japanese law research beyond Japan will be to provide a detailed and critical overview of the assistance projects delivered in the Mekong subregion, starting with a review of relevant Japanese language documents. That research could then be followed by careful examination of Japanese law's influence on the respective private positive laws of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. It would be hoped that comparative legal scholars, Japanese law experts and local practitioners will individually and/or collaboratively undertake such research sooner rather than later, to assist (albeit indirectly) the Mekong subregion and ASEAN to strengthen and bolster their economies in the prolonged period of uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic—opportunities do not wait. In this way, Japanese legal studies may further extend its reach to comparative and Southeast Asian legal studies and discover new frontiers.

This kind of inquiry—Japanese law's influence in the positive laws of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos—is likely to find some degree of hybridity: contemporary Japanese law itself is built on foreign (non-Japanese) legal concepts (Nottage 2019a, 202–04) and so legal ideas imported from Japan into the Mekong subregion can be seen as 'Japanese products', 'Western products refined in Japan' and/or 'purely Western products used in Japan'. As such, labelling all legal doctrines coming from Japan as originally or intrinsically Japanese is inaccurate (see for example Nottage 2019b, 157–59). In their reception locally, of course, influences from local legal traditions and customs should not be undervalued, as repeatedly emphasised by JICA and Japanese law experts to date. Those who consider addressing Japanese law's influence in ASEAN legal systems need to be aware of these limitations.

GLOSSARY

ANJeL
The Australian Network for Japanese Law; an Australia-based group of expert comparative legal scholars with research interests in Japanese law (https://www.anjel.com.au)

ASEAN
Association of Southeast Asian Nations

EU
European Union

FTA
free trade agreement

GDP
gross domestic product

ICCLC
International Civil and Commercial Law Centre; satellite organisation of the International Cooperation Department of Japan's Ministry of Justice

ICD
International Cooperation Department; located within Japan's Ministry of Justice

Japanisches Recht
A stream of scholarship dedicated to the teaching and research of Japanese law in Germany (Nottage 2001, 17)

JICA
Japan International Cooperation Agency; an independent administrative institution under Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mekong Subregion (of ASEAN)
Comprised of the countries that are located along the Mekong River: Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand (Ho and Pitakdumrongkit 2019)

MOFA
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan)

MOJ
Ministry of Justice (Japan)

Nihon-hō [日本法]
lit., 'Japanese law'; a stream of scholarship consisting of "mainstream studies of Japanese law within Japan" (Nottage 2001, 19)

ODA
official development assistance; Japan's national official development assistance agency is Japan International Cooperation Agency

SG
Study Group (for the Cambodian Civil Code); a group of Cambodia legal elites established within the Cambodian Ministry of Justice to review drafts of the Cambodian Civil Code

WG
Working Group (for the Cambodian Civil Code); a group of leading Japanese legal scholars who worked under the Japan International Cooperation Agency to draft the Civil Code of Cambodia

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Can You Question Science in a Pandemic? Provocations on the History of Health (and Food) in Japan After COVID

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ABSTRACT

This article, through a series of provocations and anecdotes from my research into dietary health in early modern Japan (1600-1868), makes the case for transhistorical thinking as a productive analytical mode, allowing the past to speak to present concerns in creative and unexpected ways. As this volume seeks a fresh approach to Japanese Studies post-pandemic, addressing this tension between past and present, I argue, offers a productive way to turn the challenges of COVID-19 into opportunities for greater impact and interconnection. Now, however, is a bad time to question science. Vaccine hesitancy, resistance to mask mandates, and the overall politicization of commonsense health guidelines among a substantial plurality of the population indicate a sustained mistrust of health science expertise precisely when belief and compliance would do the most medical and social good. Doing the history of health in Japan through a transhistorical lens, I argue, exposes how a set of social divisions and challenges that may appear through a presentist lens to be as novel as the virus itself, and tied inextricably to the demands and paradoxes of modern state-based public health regimes, are in fact variants of issues that have been faced in dramatically different historical circumstances. This article follows these themes through three broad provocations that resonate between health's past and present, drawn from the nineteenth-century history of diet and nutrition in Japan: skepticism of doctors and a critique of medical expertise; prioritising preventative versus retroactive care; and balancing health with opening the economy.

KEYWORDS

contemporary; COVID-19; Edo period; health; history; Japanese studies; nutrition; nourishing life; print media; transnationalism

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INTRODUCTION

Now is a bad time to question science. As the COVID-19 pandemic rages unabated, vaccine denialism and failure to comply with public health rules stem, in part, from a politicised skepticism over the validity of scientific findings. Similar concerns drive the repudiation of climate change, which has gripped a distrustful public and conservative political coalition in the face of overwhelming scientific consensus. In the United States most acutely, this crisis of trust in expertise reveals the fragility of public belief in science—particularly health science—and the complex social structures by which it is formed, maintained and increasingly undermined.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed new and unanticipated challenges for Japanese Studies, not only in the accessibility of archives but also in the basic formation of our research questions. Archives and national borders will reopen, in time, and current disruptions to the rhythms of life and work, both monumental and temporary, will one day feel like history themselves. For now, as we reflect on the future of Japanese Studies, and of bridging our work across global borders, many of us with the privilege to do so remain stationary in our homes. Pandemic lockdown, in this sense, offers an ideal moment to remind ourselves that there are all kinds of borders to cross in research besides just spatial and national ones.

Yet for those of us in the history of health, and in my own research on the social composition of diet in Japan, the intertwined medical-economic-societal response to the novel coronavirus will have lasting implications that force us to confront the presentness of research that previously resided safely in the past, supposedly insulated by layers of chronology and thus alterity. The contentious nature of health guidance, especially when it involves social and economic trade-offs, compels us to search for precedents, to plumb the past for answers, to seek solace that our questions are not new.

As this volume, and the symposium from which it emerged, seek a fresh, interdisciplinary and border-crossing approach to Japanese Studies post-pandemic, addressing this tension between past and present, I argue, offers a productive way to turn the challenges of COVID-19 into opportunities for greater impact and interconnection. This article, through a series of provocations and anecdotes from my research into dietary health in early modern Japan (1600–1868), makes the case for transhistorical thinking as a productive analytical mode, allowing the past to speak to present concerns in creative and unexpected ways.[1] It also represents an attempt to work through what I understand to be a new and existential question raised by the pandemic: what does one do when one's scholarly arguments about the past arrive in a place counter to deeply held beliefs about right behavior in the present, and specifically about believing in and following best practices for public health set out by doctors and scientists? Can an otherwise well-intentioned humanistic study that questions the objectivity of science

1 Specifically, my research focuses on the period of Tokugawa rule in Japan, known variously as the Tokugawa era/period and the Edo period. I take the view that the Edo period began following Ieyasu Tokugawa's victory at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 and ended with the Meiji Restoration in 1868, when the Meiji period (1868–1912) began.

risk undermining our own convictions about the collective social value of biomedical knowledge at a time when it is already under fire for very different reasons? Put more succinctly, can you question science during a pandemic?

My field of research pursues this question by tracing the emergence of dietary common knowledge in late-Edo and early-Meiji Japan, and by investigating how ideas of eating right became both a popular phenomenon and a matter of grave concern among trained medical experts and amateur culinary enthusiasts alike. Beginning in the eighteenth century, Japan witnessed an unprecedented explosion of popular interest in dietary advice, compiled in commercially printed manuals, pamphlets and guides to household know-how, dedicated to practices for promoting wellbeing known collectively as 'nourishing life' (養生). Beyond simply informing people how to eat right, such guidance expanded the concept of a well-nourished body to include economic productivity, status hierarchy and moral cultivation. Dietary health, as such, was never value-free, nor was it reducible to an objective, scientific relationship between nutrients and their physiological outcomes in the body. Instead, guidance on eating right conveyed priorities about how well-nourished bodies were meant to act in the world, whether as agricultural workers, samurai bureaucrats, or merchant consumers.

By questioning science, I refer to two interrelated ideas. The first is science as a historical problem of hegemonic discourse that entered Japan during the public hygiene campaigns of the early Meiji period and, in doing so, overshadowed a broad-based popular culture of preventative health that came before, and in modified ways, lived on after.[2] This historical process, to which I will return below, carried a strong semi-colonial connotation, both adopted based on Western precedents and, soon after, wielded by the Japanese imperial state in its own colonies.[3] The second idea is of science as a methodological quandary: is it the most appropriate and relevant framework through which to understand the relationship between food and health in Japan's early modern context? Among the goals of my research into the history of dietary health in Japan has been to critique scientific nutrition through a humanistic and historical lens, to interrogate subjects of purported objective truth often reserved for those who study scientific fact. My work on the social dimensions of dietary health in Japan emerged, in part, from U.S. food historian Charlotte Biltekoff's call to "consider nutrition itself—not just its practice but its content—as a product of history" (see Biltekoff 2013, 5–7). Even without this scaffolding of medicalised public health knowledge, Japan's past shared many concerns with today's pandemic-stricken world.

Yet the COVID-19 pandemic and the uneven variety of human responses to it puts a research goal of critiquing historical understandings of science at odds with my own normative response in the present that presupposes a welcomed hegemony of scientific knowledge: you *should* wear a mask, you *should* get a vaccine, scientific consensus exists whether you believe in

2 How one defines science in early modern Japan is, of course, complicated. There were a variety of orientations towards health and disease in the Tokugawa period that relied on empirical findings and practical application, including *materia medica* studies (本草学) and imported European knowledge filtered through Dutch merchants (蘭学). For the purposes of this essay, my definition focuses on the late-nineteenth century experimentation that accompanied Japan's entry into the world of modern nation-states.
3 See, for example, Lynteris (2011).

it or not. Vaccine hesitancy, resistance to mask mandates, and the overall politicisation of commonsense health guidelines among a substantial plurality of the population indicate a sustained mistrust of health science expertise precisely when belief and compliance would do the most medical and social good.

Here in the United States, faith in what used to be agreed-upon science appears shaken by recognition of the deep social consequences of our actions or inactions. According to survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau, as of February 2021, nearly 25% of unvaccinated adults "probably or definitely will not" receive a COVID-19 vaccine, and only half will "definitely" get it. The top two reasons for hesitancy, at 50% of respondents or more each, are "Concerned about possible side effects" and "Plan to wait and see if it is safe". Further down the list are "Don't trust COVID-19 vaccines" (approx. 20%), "Don't trust the government" (18.5%), and other reasons that similarly suggest a distrust of expert opinion (File and Mohanty 2021). According to a meta-analysis published in the New England Journal of Medicine, only 58% of Americans trust health professionals as a source of information on the coronavirus vaccine, and no medical or political institution scored above 50% trustworthiness (Steelfisher et al. 2021, 1484–85). The pandemic has birthed a crisis of confidence, unprecedented in living memory, that threatens to subvert public health responses to it.

To be limited by living memory in our search for a post-pandemic Japanese Studies, or a way out of divisive mistrust of science, however, would be a missed opportunity to think with history towards a deeper context for the socio-political resonances of the coronavirus. In pursuing such a transhistorical approach, I do not mean that we must fall back on a naive history-repeats-itself-ism, nor can we simply look to the past for ready-made answers to today's problems. I aim instead for a recognition of resonances and a—perhaps cathartic—acknowledgement that inhabitants of the past grappled with similar questions. Doing the history of health in Japan in this way exposes how a set of social divisions and challenges that may appear through a presentist lens to be as novel as the virus itself, and tied inextricably to the demands and paradoxes of modern state-based public health regimes, are in fact variants of issues that have been faced, and at least temporarily resolved, in dramatically different historical circumstances. In this sense, looking to our interlocutors in the past can reveal that their concerns about health speak to our own today, even if they sometimes arrived at very different conclusions.

The remaining pages sketch three provocations, drawn from the nineteenth-century history of diet and nutrition in Japan, each meant to arouse a conversation on resonances between health's past and present: skepticism of doctors and a critique of medical expertise; prioritising preventative versus retroactive care; and balancing health with opening the economy. Using the history of nutrition to think through present concerns over vaccination may seem, at first glance, like an apples-to-oranges comparison, especially given Japan's own history with vaccination campaigns in the nineteenth century, smallpox chief among them.[4] (Similarly, in the American news media, the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic has been the historical comparison of choice.) My goal, however, is to highlight the diverse and varied approaches to healing and treatment employed in the past that may not conform to current biomedical definitions of medicine, in order to offer a historical perspective on the present resistance to COVID-19 measures that has emerged in the U.S. and other contexts.

The history of diet and health in Japan, though it may not provide ready answers to the problems of COVID-19, does reveal how relevant our questions prompted by the pandemic have been before. This is exactly the messy process of looking across borders, not just national but chronological, methodological and ideological. With this in mind, I contend that you can question science during a pandemic, from an academic perspective, even when unfounded skepticism otherwise abounds. To do so, however, requires us to acknowledge that belief in expert medical knowledge and its promise of concrete outcomes for individual bodies is only one of many historical ways of understanding health.

PROVOCATION ONE: SKEPTICISM OF DOCTORS, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, IS NOTHING NEW

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, skepticism over the qualifications of trained medical professionals charged with our collective care has spawned anew among a polarised public, stoked by the rhetoric of political officials up to and including the former President of the United States. "People are tired of hearing [Dr. Anthony] Fauci and these idiots," Donald Trump asserted on a 2019 campaign phone call, "all these idiots who got it wrong" (Haberman and Crowley 2020). To greet an unimpeachable medical career with suspicion and antagonism, it would seem, is a result of adjudicating debates over whom to trust within a contentious public—as opposed to professional or institutional—domain. Yet to isolate such skepticism as a byproduct of the state of contemporary political disputes obscures longstanding debates about medical qualifications that reemerge intensified in times of crisis. In early modern Japan, in lieu of any unified accrediting institution, the domain of popular print and public information was precisely where such debates over medical authority took place. Whereas COVID-19 disinformation and denialism has thus far served to erode public faith in commonsense public health measures, a generally skeptical outlook on doctors perpetuated by Edo-period print media called into question not necessarily the content of medical advice itself but those who dispensed it, painting them as deserving of doubt and disbelief.

In early-nineteenth century Japan, heightened anxiety over whom to trust with one's health was a symptom of the increasingly intertwined—and increasingly ambiguous—relationship between information, particularly in print, and authority once dietary commentary began to flood the popular

4 From a contemporary biomedical perspective, examining histories of vaccine-driven response to epidemic disease could provide another useful point of comparison. For more on early modern vaccination campaigns in Japan, see Jannetta (2007).

publishing market (Takizawa 2003; 1993). In particular, I refer to 'nourishing life texts', a genre of guides or manuals that both fed off and shaped growing public interest in health and longevity, and which were produced by publishers and commentators with varied levels of health-related expertise. As purveyors of information on health proliferated, so too did distrust, amateurism and misinformation that raised questions about the qualifications of medical experts and the value of their professional knowledge. Unlike the tomes of elite knowledge that held the secrets to medical practice in Japan before the Tokugawa period, the simple, vernacular guidebooks that circulated during the nineteenth century were often texts by amateurs telling other amateurs how to choose from among professionals. The distrust toward medicine and its practitioners that some nourishing life texts encouraged was a result of their authors' orientation toward food and lifestyle as prevention of illness.[5]

Authors of dietary health advice in early modern Japan, particularly those without medical backgrounds, encouraged readers to view doctors with a dose of skepticism and suspicion, sometimes bordering on outright hostility. Guidebooks were preoccupied with the quality and motivations of purveyors of bodily care. Many nourishing life manuals, including the immensely popular *Yōjōkun* [養生訓; 1713] by the celebrated natural philosopher Ekiken Kaibara [貝原　益軒; 1630–1714], contain sections on 'choosing a doctor' (醫撰), which explain how to distinguish a competent professional from an untrained quack who is just out to collect money (Kaibara 1972 [1713]). In cases when consulting a doctor was necessary, exercising responsibility over one's own health extended to selecting a doctor who had the patient's best interests in mind (Sakai 2003, 144).

Takeharu Miyake [三宅　建治; dates unknown] was particularly critical of medical practitioners in his *Japanese Household Secrets* [日本居家秘用; 1806 (1737)]. "In today's world, there are few doctors with clear understanding," he suggested. "Many doctors these days butter you up, show a kind face and tug at your heartstrings" (Miyake 1806 [1737]b, 35).[6] Most, he claimed, were clouded by the biases of their lineage and advanced through patronage and connections rather than achievement. He compared the doctors of his day unfavorably to those of the past, suggesting that they guessed at diseases and cures, prescribed ineffective medicines and dispensed incorrect advice (37). As a remedy, he argued it was up to the reader to keep physicians honest. "Those who take up medicine as a profession should put their hearts into it and determine the truth," he suggested. "The ill should also put their hearts into the way of medicine. When someone in the household is sick, one should select [the right] doctor and help care for them" (43).[7] To safeguard against lazy or unethical behavior, patients had to know enough about medicine to be their own advocates, to judge for themselves the quality of care they received.

Even from these limited examples, we can sense a transformation in the practice and popular perception of medicine itself, further complicated by the

5 For more on emergence and rationale of this emerging dietary health movement in early modern Japan, see Schlachet (2018, 105).
6 「今乃醫者おほくハ諂ふものありて面をやハらかにして人乃心をとり…。」All translations mine unless otherwise indicated.
7 「醫を業とする人にて心を用ひ真理をさとるべき事なるべし病家も常に醫乃道に心をよせ病ある時醫を撰ひ看病の助とすべし。」

fact that the category of doctor in the Tokugawa era was broad, indefinite and only partially comparable to the standards of medical professionalisation in the present.[8] Because the medical profession crossed the boundaries of the status system and lacked an official certification structure, being a doctor often came with a degree of social mobility, or at least an indeterminate position within the hierarchy (Umihara 2014, 2–5).[9] Although high-ranking doctors in service of the shogunate or the imperial court tended to come from samurai families or the Buddhist priesthood, if a rural doctor was noticed for his talents, he could be promoted into the service of a prominent family or even the government (Sakai 2003, 46).

The behavior that nourishing life guides interpreted as laziness or dishonesty was likely a product of the economic pressures and uneven training facing physicians without the luxury of official employment. Unlike domainal doctors who often received a stipend for their services, local doctors in towns and villages throughout the archipelago had no such status protection and had to survive on their own talent and effort (Umihara 2014, 2–5). Conversely, expanded access to previously esoteric medical expertise was due, in part, to the proliferation of knowledge on *materia medica* that flourished from the second half of the eighteenth century, making it difficult to pin down a single, encompassing definition of an Edo-era doctor. As Alessandro Bianchi suggests, because "scholars and intellectuals were no longer the only persons with access", doctors became a subject of criticism from both a skeptical public and a newly ascendant mode of preemptive care (2014, 66). Thus, flexibility in the category of 'physician' led to unevenness in the quality of care one might receive, or at least fuelled the perception that not all doctors were deserving of trust or respect.

PROVOCATION TWO: PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN A CURE

Since early in the pandemic, preventing the spread of COVID-19 using public health interventions—including mask wearing, social distancing, and now vaccinations—has received outsized attention compared with innovations in medicative treatments for patients who have already contracted severe cases of the virus. Though public buy-in in the United States has been mixed at best, the oft-quoted imperative to 'bend the curve,' to prioritise preventative over retroactive care, demonstrates how maintaining health has been mobilised as a strategy to preempt infection. As inhabitants of Edo Japan both experienced and anticipated the outbreak of epidemic diseases, it is clear that the emerging genre of vernacular dietary guidebooks at the time opened a rift between two groups. On the one side were the promoters of food-based deterrence of ill-health, and on the other, the purveyors of medication and curative interventions, who already occupied a less unified or concrete social and professional space than physicians of today.

8 Vernacular information proliferated in medical writing during the Tokugawa period as well, though much of it may have served as primers for aspiring physicians and practitioners. For more on text and knowledge transmission in Tokugawa Japan, see Trambaiolo (2015).

9 Given the lack of an official physician licensing system in Tokugawa Japan, Umihara raises the provocative question: "in a society with no gauge to measure the capability of a doctor, what are appropriate means to evaluate it correctly?" (2014, 2).

Nourishing life guidance in the Edo period held a consciously preventative orientation that prioritised self-care as a strategy to avoid getting sick in the first place. Medicine and food were often set as oppositional categories, and nourishing life authors deliberately sought to distance the dietary regimens they recommended from 'medication,' even when discussing the prevention of specific diseases. Miyake noted in *Japanese Household Secrets* that when one properly nourishes one's body "it removes diseases on its own. This is the essential point of healing the not-yet-ill and is an important aspect of nourishing life" (Miyake 1806 [1737]a, 47).[10] By practicing proper habits and eating right, illness could be stopped before it started.

Ekiken Kaibara and Takeharu Miyake saw a kind of 'violence' (攻撃) in medications, which could damage the stomach and cause the ill to lose their appetite (Kaibara 1972 [1713]; Miyake 1806 [1737]a, 62). Even famed Dutch studies physician Genpaku Sugita [杉田 玄白; 1733–1817] commented on preventative practice versus retroactive treatment in his *Seven Wrongs of Nourishing Life* [養生七不可; 1801] to recommend that "one should not take medicine when nothing is wrong" (Sugita 1917–18 [1801], 6).

Taking medicine to ease digestion meant that the damage was already done, personal responsibility unfulfilled. "After you have damaged your stomach and taken medicine," Ranzan Takai [高井 蘭山; 1762–1839] mused, "isn't it far too late to nourish your diet?" (Takai 1994 [1805]). These guides reveal a tension between diet, as a preemptive program of health maintenance, and medicine—particularly herbal medications—as a potentially harmful last resort to undo bodily damage accumulated through insufficient self-care. "The fact that people now know that medicine medicates people but do not know that food medicates people," Ranzan continued, "can be said to be [a sign of] the decline of the way of medicine" (Takai 1994 [1805], 23–24). Not only did the diverse authors of dietary guidance distinguish between food as preventative and medicinal treatments as retroactive, they drew into question the fundamental premise that one heals and the other does not.

Diet, for these authors, when managed proactively, was healthy; medication was belated and even dangerous.[11] As methods for the belated treatment of an illness one had allowed to develop, by contrast, medicine and herbal medication came into increasing friction with the preventative impulse of eating right. In exploring this change, I seek not to minimise the breadth or import of medical knowledge in the Edo period but to eschew a narrative that plots nourishing life on a trajectory toward increasing medical and scientific rationality. Back in the present pandemic context of lingering opposition to precautionary measures—mask wearing and vaccines most of all—looking to Japan's past highlights how the recurrent dichotomy between preventative and curative approaches cannot be understood as simply another vector of contemporary political polarisation, though polarisation certainly contributes.

10「身体を養いその病おのづから除くべしこれ未病を治する要領にして養生の大事なり。」
11 Despite the urging of dietary advocates, herbal medications were, by all accounts, quite popular and widely used in early modern Japan, both domestically produced and imported from China. See Trambaiolo (2013, 299–324).

PROVOCATION THREE: ON BALANCING HEALTH AND THE ECONOMY

Among the politicised debates that consume news cycles and the attention of politicians under COVID, perhaps the most contentious has been the false choice between safeguarding the populace from illness and re-opening the economy. Following uneven rounds of quarantine lockdown, fear of medical disruption to the socio-economic imperatives of work and commerce have driven government responses at the local and national level in the United States and elsewhere. Yet the stubborn persistence of the idea that prioritising health and safety runs counter to demands of the global and national economy obscures a history of balancing individual livelihood and collective economic activity that, in Japan's case, extends back to before the advent of modern public health. Both in acute response to outbreaks of epidemic disease and as a baseline state of health maintenance through dietary practices, an economic conceptualisation of illness and its costs was ever-present in early modern Japanese discourses of health without either succumbing to a zero-sum notion of body versus money.[12]

Early modern Japanese nourishment guidance writers from so many diverse backgrounds and intellectual lineages came to care, think and publish about diet to the degree they did because, from an economic standpoint, a well-nourished body meant a working body, implicating eating habits in maintaining collective stability. Whether intellectual-bureaucratic tasks, agricultural labor, artisanal fabrication or commercial transaction, there was a productive role to fulfill for members of every status group. As historian Katsuya Hirano writes, "the regime's long-term survival depended on the extent to which the body could be successfully conceptualised and mobilised as a productive force" (2011, 507). The social architecture of the Tokugawa period was constructed, in part, on the assumption that healthy bodies were capable of fulfilling their prescribed roles—that is, of working. Instead of eating right for the sake of personal well-being, the logic of Tokugawa-era health compelled one to eat in such a way as to keep one's body in good working condition.

Popular writers like Nanboku Mizuno [水野　南北; 1760–1834], a commoner physiognomist dedicated to determining people's fortunes through eating habits, envisioned dietary reform as a force for self-improvement in health, social standing and economic livelihood. For Mizuno, discretion in diet was so powerful that it could overcome fate. "Even if you are destined to be poor," he claimed, "when you are aware of [potential] poverty and strictly arrange for yourself a diet of simple food as if you truly were poor, you can escape and achieve boundless fortune through your own choices. This is called 'making your own fortune.'"[13] One's personal health decisions, in other words, could dictate whether consumption became an engine of wellbeing or of physical, and by extension socio-economic, degradation.

Characteristic of early modern Japanese dietary guidance more generally, Mizuno's conception of the impact of eating habits on livelihood was not solely focused on personal financial gain. He also understood proper nourishment

12 In the case of epidemic disease response, the economic conceptualisation of bodily health was generative of a variety of representations and meanings in popular culture. See Gramlich-Oka (2009, 32-73).

13 「貧窮の相あるとも己より貧窮を知りて真に貧窮の如く麁食を以て食を厳とするに定る時は自撰と貧窮を免れ相運金限をうる此を自福じ得といふ。」See Mizuno (1812, 17).

to be fundamentally connected to the material role of the body in the Tokugawa workforce and economy more broadly. In a series of lessons framed as hypothetical question-and-answer sessions with concerned patients, he received the following complaint: "Recently my stomach has been in pain, day and night. I am experiencing great suffering, and *I cannot do my job*" (Mizuno 1991, 107). At the heart of this imaginary patient's concern is the fear that the pain caused by improper regulation of his digestive health would hinder his performance in the real-world economy.

This connection drawn between the health of the populace and the condition of personal and national economies continued into the early Meiji period, when nourishing life practices remained a topic of popular concern. In his health manual *An Encouragement of Nourishing* [養生のすゝめ; 1876], Yoshiharu Uratani [浦谷 義春; dates unknown] makes the point even more directly:

> Nourishing life is the beginning of health, [and] health is the foundation of industriousness and perseverance, good fortune and long life. By first putting their bodies in order and prospering in their professions, people generate assets and serve their ruler and parents in loyalty and filial piety. It is for this reason alone that the results of their industriousness and perseverance, in the long run, benefit the nation.[14]
> (Uratani 1876, 4)

By encouraging a healthy, functioning body, dietary guidance aligned individual aspirations for personal and household prosperity with state goals of economic productivity and a willing observation of social roles and rules.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS TRANSHISTORICAL HEALTH IN JAPAN, POST-PANDEMIC

Dietary guidance in early modern Japan framed the responsibility for maintaining one's health as part of a collective societal imperative, not as a solely personal decision. My research into the social dynamics of diet in this context reveals how health was neither strictly individualistic nor unconcerned with broader notions of community and economic cohesion. Authors of health guides, and guidance on eating right in particular, conceived of well-nourished bodies in the context of collective social, moral and economic wellbeing. The Meiji-era national mobilisation of healthy bodies was, in part, an extension of these early modern sensibilities about health oriented toward the collective public good, even if not directed by biomedicine or statecraft. Ultimately, these provocations have been a narrative about taking care of oneself for the benefit of the social good—about what the body could become in the world when properly fueled—even if they fall outside of our expected norms of faith in medicine and state-sponsored public hygiene campaigns grounded in modern scientific inquiry.

As this volume seeks an interdisciplinary, border-crossing future for Japanese Studies, this article argues that studies of Japan's past have much to say about the pressing concerns of our global present, if we are willing to ask tough

14 「養生は健康の始め健康は勉励忍耐と福運長寿の基にして人々先身を修め其業を昌にして以て其産を興し君親に仕へては忠孝を盡し、或は勉励忍耐の結果遂に国家の裨益となる。」

questions of ourselves and diversify our definition of borders. Reflecting on the future of Japanese Studies from a health history perspective, the COVID-19 pandemic forces us to rethink not only our future research methods but our very research questions, balancing rich and specific studies of Japanese society with tensions that extend beyond borders, whether national or temporal. No longer can we afford to wall off the past from the present, asking of each only what we presume to be their privileged concerns. Like the eclectic expertise of early modern Japanese medical knowledge or the heterogeneity of its dietary recommendations, we could instead embrace a chronological omnivorousness, never reserving a say in contemporary social problems only for eras and areas that we deem sufficiently recent and, therefore, relevant. Our questions are not new, nor will our answers be without a recognition of the resonances of history.

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DISCUSSION PAPER

Reorienting Japanese Studies with Views from the Nan'yō

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how Japanese studies can expand its relevance, approached from my perspective as a Philippine postcolonial historian. In the course of my research on the Japanese locals of Davao and Guam, Japanese studies has been essential. Japanese imperial history has provided me with a regional perspective that transcends the limits of Philippine national historiography and has given me access to source materials about the localities under study. As I became invested in Japanese studies, I realised that Philippine historiography has much to contribute back. A Philippine perspective can question the limits of the concept of who is Japanese, particularly in the case of Filipino-Japanese and CHamoru-Japanese *mestizos*. Moreover, Japanese historiography, which is still in many cases limited to the archives, may source alternative approaches or methodologies from its Philippine postcolonial counterpart, which has for decades been experimenting with methods of writing more inclusive national histories. More broadly, by conversing with specialists of areas with which Japan has been historically connected, I suggest that Japan scholars can not only extend Japanese studies' relevance beyond its own field but also infuse it with new ideas and approaches.

KEYWORDS

Asia-Pacific War; Guam; history; Japanese imperial history; Japaneseness; migration; multiethnic identity; multiracial families; nan'yō; Nikkei; Nikkeijin; Philippines; postcolonialism; social and cultural identity; World War II

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NEW VOICES
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DISCUSSION PAPER

INTRODUCTION

Japanese studies can be relevant beyond its own field. However, in order for this to happen, Japan scholars need to converse more with other area studies specialists working in and on the Asia-Pacific region. As a Philippine historian researching the Japanese locals of Davao (a Philippine province) and of Guam (an island in the Marianas), I propose in this paper a means of expanding Japanese studies through such conversations.[1] A Philippine and CHamoru postcolonial perspective in Japanese history can reconfigure not only the concepts of 'Japan', 'Japanese' and 'Japanese studies', but also those of 'Filipino' and 'CHamoru'.[2] Japanese studies (and area studies in general) are not nationally bound fields that can be studied in isolation. Rather, Japan is part of a global network of constantly moving people, correspondence, goods, ideas, policies, armed forces and so forth (see Appendix).[3] Seen in this light, Japan scholars have much to offer to and learn from specialists of areas with which Japan has been historically connected.

To show this potential, I first introduce my research and my discipline. Next, I share how Japanese studies—especially its concept of *nan'yō* (南洋; lit., 'south seas')—and Japanese-language source materials on Davao and Guam have been useful to my research. Then, I point out how my research and my postcolonial approach is useful for Japanese studies specialists, particularly those researching the history of the Philippines and Guam. Nations emerged historically in contexts influenced by continual movements across borders, and therefore do not exist in a vacuum. A global approach to writing history recognises this by allowing a nuanced view of the past and making space for its complexities. My reflections as a Philippine historian show that considering Japanese studies can assist in a global approach to studying both Japan and the Philippines. I conclude the paper by suggesting a view of Japan as part of a larger network and of Japanese studies as an evolving body of scholarship that is in conversation with other area studies specialists.

THE JAPANESE LOCALS OF DAVAO AND OF GUAM

My research focuses on the Japanese locals of Davao and of Guam during the rapid imperial successions of the 1940s (see Barriga 2020). Both located

1 In this paper I use 'Japanese locals' to refer to people of Japanese ancestry, including settlers and their children, living in Davao and Guam.
2 CHamoru are the indigenous people of Guam. This paper follows the orthography set by Kumisión i Fino' CHamoru yan i Fina'nå'guen i Historia yan i Lina'la' i Taotao Tåno' (Commission on CHamoru Language and the Teaching of the History and Culture of the Indigenous People of Guam). In this orthography, CH is considered a single letter and thus is capitalised together as the first letter of a proper noun (Kumisión 2020). Compared with the alternative spelling of 'Chamorro,' 'CHamoru' is closer to the pre-Hispanic language spoken on the island and has been associated with a more assertive stance towards CHamoru self-determination (Taitano n.d.). With the intensification of this movement in recent years, the use of 'CHamoru' instead of 'Chamorro' has been increasing, and was especially apparent in the 2021 Marianas History Conference.
3 Japan's historic interconnectedness with a global network that extended beyond 'the Japanese empire'—including states and territories such as Taiwan, Ogasawara, Korea, Manchukuo (present-day Manchuria) and the Nan'yō Guntō (南洋群島; South Sea Islands)—can be seen in the works of Mariko Iijima (2018) on Japanese coffee producers in Taiwan, Hawaii and Saipan. This interconnectedness can also be seen in Eiichiro Azuma's (2019) work on Japanese colonial settlers who moved from the US to other parts of the Americas and East Asia. In a more reflective vein, Japan scholar Sheldon Garon writes of how "serendipitous discoveries in the archives" have shaped his own research experience and can support a global approach to history (2020, 252). The Appendix to this paper features a map illustrating a selection of shipping routes that passed through the Asia-Pacific region, thereby providing a snapshot of this interconnectedness.

in the western end of the Pacific Ocean, the Philippines and Guam were insular territories of the United States during the first half of the 20th century, and at the same time were part of the *nan'yō*—the area into which imperial Japan would soon expand. Japanese settlers began arriving in Davao in the early 1900s. In the 1910s, Japanese businesses expanded, sparking a problem whereby Japanese enterprises were accused of illicit land acquisition, and the Filipino elites of aiding them. By the 1930s, Davao was economically dominated by Japanese businesses, and varying levels of competition and partnerships emerged between Filipinos and Japanese labourers, landowners, entrepreneurs, public officials and professionals. The Japanese figured prominently in the island society of Guam at the time too, though not reaching the same level of economic dominance and controversy as those in Davao. More importantly, by the 1940 census, most Japanese of Guam were of mixed Japanese-CHamoru parentage. These details raise many questions. How did these Japanese locals experience the Asia-Pacific War and its aftermath? How did their relationships with their fellow Filipino and CHamoru locals change when Japan invaded Davao and Guam in 1941, occupied it under strict military rule, and then lost it to the returning US forces in 1944–45? How did their sense of belonging in the locality shift during the rapid imperial transitions of the 1940s? I have sought to answer these questions in my research to date.[4]

As a Philippine historian, I approach my research from a postcolonial perspective. Since the 16th century, the Philippines had (nominally) been governed under the successive empires of Spain, the US and Japan, and much of its archival materials were written by and for the colonisers.[5] To counter colonial history, Philippine historians have been pouring their efforts into writing a national history that is meaningful to Filipinos, and not just to the foreigners who happen to be in—or passing by—the islands. This has resulted in a national history that is anchored in anti-colonial movements such as the Philippine Revolution against Spain, the Philippine-American War and the anti-Japanese Filipino guerrilla resistance.

Such an Us-versus-Enemy grand narrative poses major problems to the development of the national historiography. Specifically in the context of the Asia-Pacific War, the Filipinos who collaborated with the Japanese military have been long condemned for betraying Pilipinas, our Mother Nation. Sympathetic historians argue that the Filipino leaders who collaborated with Japan did so to cushion the Filipino people from graver tragedies and to fashion a nation independent of foreign incursion (e.g., Jose 1999, 1998; Yellen 2019). Others show that Filipino volunteer armies allied themselves with Japan with the hopes of liberating the Philippines from the US (e.g., Terami-Wada 1999; Quibuyen 2011). But what of the Filipino-Japanese *mestizos* (mixed-race people) who held "'dual (or even more multiple) sentiment' [sic] of belonging" (Yoneno-Reyes 2011, 236)? What of the hybrid Davao settler zone?

4 The complexity of social relations at the local level is evident in oral histories both by Filipinos in Davao (e.g., Vallejo 2009) and Japanese repatriates in Japan (e.g., Maruyama 2008), and in primary sources such as those written by the Davao Japanese Association chapter presidents to the Japanese military immediately after its invasion of Davao in 1941 (Mori 1993). Besides the author's aforementioned dissertation (2020), see also Barriga (2015).

5 Although the empires imagined the entire Philippine archipelago as their territory, Spain did not govern most of Mindanao Island, the Mountain Province and many other localities. Likewise, throughout the Japanese Occupation (including the Independent Philippine Republic under Japan), pockets of areas controlled by Filipino anti-Japanese guerrillas proliferated.

To write a history of Davao in the tumultuous 1940s, I necessarily had to liberate myself not only from empire-focused colonial history, but also from its monolithic counter-narrative of Filipino nationalist history. My brand of postcolonial historiography, thus, zooms in on Davao, taking into consideration the various ethnic, national and regional sentiments of belonging that converged within it. The Japanese and the Filipinos in my work may be nationals of Japan and of the Philippines, but they are first and foremost locals of Davao.

EXPANDING PHILIPPINE HISTORIOGRAPHY THROUGH JAPANESE STUDIES

The Philippine historiography of the Asia-Pacific War holds up 'the Japanese' as the enemy which invaded the nation and against which the Filipinos prevailed. To study the Japanese locals of Davao in a manner that neither condemns nor defends 'the Japanese', I searched for a non-Philippine locality with which to compare Davao. The logical choice was Guam, the only other place that shares the same historical experience of being colonised by Spain, the US, Japan and the US again.[6] However, as I ventured in my research towards Guam, concerned friends warned that if I continued, I would lose funding, publication and employment opportunities. Guam, they warned, is in Oceania, well outside of Asia and Asian studies.

What allowed me to overcome this barrier was the concept of *nan'yō*, a term used by the Japanese empire from the late 19th century to encompass the region that spanned Southeast Asia and Micronesia.[7] Combining a *nan'yō* perspective of the region with the US imperial history that is well-established in the Philippines, I came to view Davao as being 'between two empires': it was connected to the US and Japan as well as to the Philippines (see Appendix).[8] Likewise, Guam was linked not only to the Marianas but also to Manila, continental US and (indirectly via Manila or Saipan) Japan. In this view,

6 The Philippines declared independence from the US in 1946, while Guam remains as a US territory today. Understandably, much has been written about Guam's political status as an 'unincorporated territory' of the United States, and its decolonisation and CHamoru self-determination movements. As I detail in "Towards an Interconnected Pacific" (2018), these themes are tackled not only by Guam scholars, but also by their counterparts in Japan. Meanwhile, the legacy of US colonialism remains in the Philippines (e.g., McFerson 2002). Interestingly, while there have been studies that find parallels between the Philippines and Japan (e.g., Fujiwara and Nagano 2011) and Guam and Japan (e.g., Matsushima 2016) as places under the US sphere of influence, very rarely are the Philippines and Guam discussed together. One rare example is Shigematsu and Camacho's *Militarized Currents* (2010), a collection of essays foregrounding the connections forged by the US and Japanese imperialism in the Asia-Pacific.

7 In his seminal work, *Nan'yo*, Mark Peattie (1988) traces the Japanese imperial history in the region from 1885 to 1945. After World War I, the League of Nations mandated the administration of the former German-occupied Micronesia to Japan. Calling the area 'Nan'yō Guntō' (南洋群島; South Sea Islands), Japan established the Nan'yō-chō (南洋庁; South Seas Bureau) for this purpose in 1922. As historian Wakako Higuchi (1987) explains, Japanese officials distinguished between 'inner *nan'yō*', which pertained to the Nan'yō Guntō, and 'outer *nan'yō*', which pertained to the region beyond (29 n5). Pacific studies scholar Yumiko Imaizumi (2014) notes that, for Japan, the Nan'yō Guntō was a base from which to economically expand to the outer *nan'yō* (276–77). In her explanation, 'outer *nan'yō*' referred to places in Southeast Asia where Japanese communities flourished economically. In this definition, Davao was part of the outer *nan'yō*. Meanwhile, Guam occupied an outlier position, belonging neither to the Nan'yō Guntō (because it was under US administration) nor to the outer *nan'yō* (because of its geographical location).

8 Eiichiro Azuma's *Between Two Empires* (2005), which showed the transnationalism of Japanese immigrants in the US during the decades leading to World War II, was instrumental in forming my framework. However, as Kiichi Fujiwara and Yoshiko Nagano's (2011) edited anthology *The Philippines and Japan in America's Shadow* recently reminded me, the idea that the Philippines was in between the US and the Japanese empires was advanced long before by Theodore Friend (1969) in his *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929-1945* (cited in Fujiwara and Nagano 2011).

Davao, Guam, Japan and the US were all associated by various flows of people, ideas, money and goods crisscrossing the Asia-Pacific. In brief, the imperial history of Japan (and the US) provides a regional perspective that allows me to transcend the limits of both Philippine historiography and Asian studies.

In addition to this regional perspective, knowledge of the Japanese language and access to Japanese resources are essential for my research. Many primary sources related to Philippine history are written in the Japanese language and housed in libraries and archives in Japan. It was to access these that I began learning the language and acquainted myself with the National Diet Library, Cinii (a Japanese database of journal articles and books) and the digital repositories of universities in Japan. Once I had access to the source materials, I soon learned that fellow Philippine and Guam historians appreciate the information I can offer, as very few of them can access Japanese collections and read materials in the Japanese language. For example, in 2018, I wrote an English-language paper which reviewed and contextualised Japanese works about Guam written from the 1920s to the present.[9] This historiographical paper appears in *Pacific Asia Inquiry*, a journal published by the University of Guam. Despite the limitations of the paper, the editor of the issue acknowledged:

> "In my opinion, this article is necessary reading for anybody interested in how Guam has been viewed by Japanese authors, editors and readers over time. Particularly noteworthy is its analysis of the manner in which Japanese perspectives have changed in recent decades to a much more sympathetic concern with the social and cultural needs of the island."
> (Gugin 2018, 7)

To understand our neighbours, to know how to respond to them, and to place ourselves within the history of the Asia-Pacific region, Filipinos and CHamoru find value in the knowledge of the Japanese language and in Japanese source materials.

APPROACHING JAPANESE STUDIES FROM A PHILIPPINE PERSPECTIVE

Philippine and Guam historians likewise have much to offer Japanese scholarship. Among the works on the history of the Japanese in Davao, there are common assertions which a Philippine perspective can reassess and nuance. The plethora of histories on the Japanese in Davao are undergirded by the presupposition that people of Japanese ancestry—be they *issei, nisei, sansei* or, generally, Nikkeijin—are Japanese or want to be recognised as Japanese (e.g., Hayase 2014; Ohno 2015).[10] In his chapter on the Japanese residents of Davao during the Japanese military occupation of the Philippines, historian Shinzo Hayase (2014) asserted that Okinawans and Filipino-Japanese individuals, having been discriminated against in Japanese society, served Japan with much enthusiasm to prove themselves at par with the Japanese from the mainland (174). Similarly, Shun Ohno (2015) asserted that the Nikkeijin who

9 See Barriga (2018).
10 These terms derive from Japanese and denote first-generation Japanese migrants (一世), second-generation (二世), third-generation (三世), and persons of Japanese descent (日系人), respectively.

remained in post-war Philippines hid their Japanese identity in fear of Filipino anti-Japanese sentiment, reclaiming it decades later with the help of Japanese activists who lobbied for their recognition by the Japanese government. But, why would these Filipino-Japanese have served Japan in the ardent desire to prove themselves Japanese when they were born and raised in the Philippines by Filipino mothers and most likely had never seen Japan? If the Nikkeijin who remained in the Philippines were so persecuted by Filipinos after the war, how did they survive? If they survived by the aid of pro-Japanese indigenous Filipino communities, then why did they have to hide their Japaneseness? Or, did they hide it only from certain people in certain contexts?

Following Taku Suzuki's (2010) observation in his work with Japanese Bolivians, I highlight "the fluid and situational senses of belonging they experienced in the places they lived and worked" (183). In my study, I found that, in contrast to Ohno's contention in his *Transforming Nikkeijin Identity* (2015), Nikkeijin identity did not oscillate in a dualistic way between the absolutes of being Japanese and being not Japanese. Being Filipino and being Filipino-Japanese must also be considered. Here, identities are consistently shifting, contended and relational. To my question of what befell the Japanese of Davao during the successive imperial transitions surrounding the Asia-Pacific War, I found that their identity and sense of belonging shifted between being Japanese, Filipino and *mestizo*. During the most violent months of 1944 and 1945, these shifts were characterised by conflicted loyalties and senses of belonging. Ohno's intergenerational study of the Philippine Nikkeijin spanned a century's worth of history and remains an important work; however, the reality is more nuanced than his analysis allows. From this example, it is evident that a Philippine perspective—or more broadly, a view from the *nan'yō*—can expand Japanese studies' approach to studying 'Japanese identity'.

Besides prompting us to reassess common assertions, Philippine (and CHamoru) postcolonial historiographies can also enrich how historical methods are approached in Japan. As mentioned, many primary sources on Davao are written in the Japanese literature. Even in English-language sources, written by Americans and Filipinos from outside Davao, Japanese pioneers are most often hailed as the developers of the Davao frontier. As Yu-Jose and Dacudao (2015) have shown in their article in *Philippine Studies*, the narrative of Davao's development has become one wherein the Japanese are visible, while Filipinos are invisible—an invisibility not uncommon in colonial histories globally. If such is the state of the archives, then Philippine historians (like historians of other colonised or decolonising places globally) *must* search for alternative methods of writing history.

Spurred by the need to augment not only colonial history but also Manila-centric national history, Philippine historians have for many years experimented with methodologies. In the 1950s, when public school teachers nationwide collated local histories, most employed oral interviews due to the lack of historical documents.[11] In the 1970s, to support his critique of Philippine historiography, Alfred McCoy (1977) conducted interviews alongside analysis of documents. Around this time, William Henry Scott

11 Housed in the Philippine National Library, this collection is officially called "Historical Data (Philippines)" and popularly referred to by Philippine historians as "Historical Data Papers."

(1978), a Philippine historian focussing on the 16th century, proposed to purposefully search for Filipino agency within colonial documents by reading archival materials against the grain. Meanwhile, Reynaldo Ileto (1979), another Philippinist, used the *pasyon* to write a "History from Below" (ch. 1), telling the history of the masses and not only the literate elites.[12] In short, it is a foregone conclusion in the Philippines that writing history requires more than verifying, cataloguing and stringing together data from historical documents.

Postcolonial perspectives and methodologies such as these should prove useful to Japanese historians, many of whom are still very much reliant on the archives (Bowie 2018, 860), just as they have proven useful to me in my own work. Recognising the scarcity of Philippine voices in the archives, I realised that in order to understand the complexity of Davao's Japanese locals and move beyond an image of them as "second-class citizens [of Japan]" (Hayase 2014, 174) residing in "Dabao-kuo" (149), then I too needed to employ alternative historiographical methods from the former *nan'yō*.[13] For example, in my research I refer to the *Dabao Shimbun*, the wartime Japanese newspaper of Davao, for insights into Davao society and events of the time. Shinzo Hayase has pointed out that *Dabao Shimbun* was a branch of *Manila Shimbun*, in turn "managed by the Tokyo Nichi-Nichi Shimbun and Osaka Mainichi Shimbun publishing companies" (2014, 153). Hayase finds that the newspaper "concentrated on information about Japan and the world…all for the purpose of helping local Japanese residents keep in touch with their homeland" (154). Although I am familiar with this background and general trend, when using this source I choose to focus on the aspects related to Davao, regardless of how small the space they occupy in the broadsheet—for example, the ads by local businesses, movies screening at the local theatres, and notices about missing children. Hayase published numerous useful research tools and catalogues, and his 1984 dissertation remains a classic even for Philippine historians studying Davao. I defer to the breadth of this knowledge of archival materials; it has provided me with a solid foundation for my methodological experimentations. However, I am also careful not to dismiss the details of local life in Davao that this source can illuminate. To write a history that does not perpetuate a hegemony of the literate and the elite, nor of the colonial archives and the structures that created and sustain them, postcolonial methodologies—so-called 'reading against the grain' and using alternative sources—were essential to my research on the Japanese in Davao and Guam. Historians of Japan, especially those studying minorities and migrants, might also find these methodologies useful.

CONCLUSION

In my pursuit to expand Philippine historiography, my ability to draw upon Japanese studies has been essential. Besides broadening my pool of source materials to include Japanese-language texts, the geographic expanse of the Japanese empire's *nan'yō* has also broadened my perspective beyond the

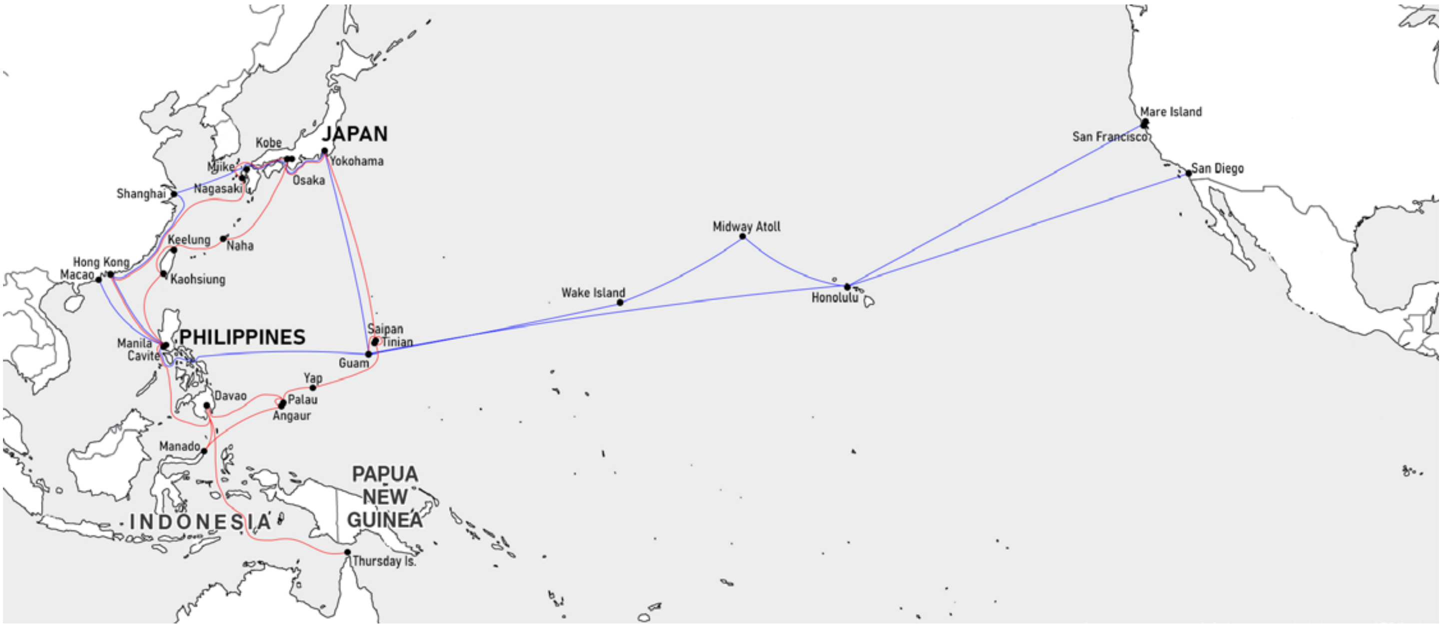
12 The *pasyon* is a Philippine epic that is traditionally chanted during Lent.
13 In 1930s, Davao was often called Dabao-kuo (ダバオ国) by both Japanese and Filipinos, after the Japanese-occupied state of Manchu-kuo (present-day Manchuria). It was a testament to the Japanese economic influence on the Philippine frontier.

confines of Philippine national history, allowing me to better position the Japanese locals of Davao within the region and to incorporate Guam as an analogous region. The more I read and talk to historians of Japan, the more I realise that Philippine historical studies too can contribute to Japanese imperial history. A Philippine perspective augments Japanese historians' approaches to studying Japanese people in the Philippines, especially considering those of Filipino-Japanese parentage. Moreover, Philippine postcolonial methodologies enable the writing of inclusive histories that extend beyond the literate elite.

While Japanese studies has significant potential for relevance to other area studies specialists, for this to be realised its scholars must continually reorient their views and methodologies as they converse with colleagues working in and on other regions—in this case, the former *nan'yō*. Seeing Japan as part of a web that spans the globe and its people as part of this web's "flows" and "vortices" (Pendleton 2020) will require its scholars to put at bay their ideas of 'Japan' and how history should be written. Nevertheless, such global perspectives enrich Japanese studies and continue to extend its significance beyond its current bounds.

APPENDIX: 'JAPAN AS PART OF A GLOBAL NETWORK'—MAP, OVERVIEW AND SOURCES

Map 1: Japan as Part of a Global Network: Focus on Davao and Guam



Base map: 'Countries Bordering on the Pacific Ocean', reproduced with the permission of CartoGIS Services, Scholarly Information Services, The Australian National University (CC-BY-SA 4.0). Route lines by the author and *New Voices in Japanese Studies*.

This map illustrates a sample of major commercial and military shipping routes from 1929 to 1940 that docked at the author's case study locations, Davao and Guam. The routes represented in the map include those operated by the US Navy and Pan American Airways that called at Guam, plus the Japanese-operated routes of the Mariana Maru (the only Japanese vessel that was allowed to dock at Guam), and two commercial Japanese shipping companies that passed through Davao. The map is by no means comprehensive;

in particular, the Filipino and American lines that stopped at Davao's Santa Ana Wharf and Sasa Airport are not reflected. However, the purpose of the map is not to provide a complete catalogue of routes, but rather to contextualise my argument with a snapshot of the interconnectivity in the region in the lead-up to the Asia-Pacific War.

The routes represented in the map are drawn from the archival sources listed below. As can be seen, most of the sources include only the stops. The route lines are supplied by the author and the editor and are intended as a guide only. Lastly, for consistency, this appendix and the map foreground present-day and internationally recognised place names. Where alternative names are used in the primary sources cited, these are supplied in square brackets below.

Japanese-Operated Vessels (Red Route Lines)

Mariana Maru

Mariana Maru was the only Japanese vessel that called at Guam's Apra Harbor. It was owned by a Japanese local of Guam, a merchant named Jose Shimizu. According the historian Wakako Higuchi (1998), Mariana Maru last sailed in 1939 (159).

- Yokohama, Saipan, Guam (*Guam Recorder*, March 1929, "Shipping Notes")

Nippon Yūsen Kaisha (日本郵船会社)

Nippon Yūsen Kaisha was one of the primary shipping companies that included Davao in its routes.

- Ura-nanyō (裏南洋) Outbound Route: Kobe, Yokohama, Saipan, Tinian, Yap, Palau, Angaur, Manado [Menado], Davao (*Nippi Shinbun*, 1 October 1935, p.9)
- Ura-nanyō Return Route: Davao, Palau, Yap, Saipan, Tinian, Yokohama, Osaka, Kobe (*Nippi Shinbun*, 1 October 1935, p.9)
- Australia Outbound Route: Yokohama, Kobe, Nagasaki, Hong Kong, Manila, Davao (*Nippi Shinbun*, 1 October 1935, p.9). After stopping at Davao, the line proceeded to Thursday Island (Kamohara 1938)
- Australia Return Route: Davao, Manila, Hong Kong, Nagasaki, Kobe, Yokohama (*Nippi Shinbun*, 1 October 1935, p.9)

Osaka Shōsen Kaisha (大阪商船会社)

Osaka Shōsen Kaisha was another shipping company that appears in archival materials from the time, although not as frequently as Nippon Yūsen Kaisha. It also operated a route that stopped at Davao.

- Kaohsiung [Takao], Keelung, Naha, Kobe, Yokohama (e.g., *Davao Times Weekly*, 22 August 1940, p. 5). Although OSK's ads in *Davao Times Weekly* do not include Davao and Manila, I have included both ports based on the map in Kamohara (1938).

US-Operated Vessels (Blue Route Lines)

US Navy

Several US Navy vessels that called at Guam followed similar routes.

- Manila or Cavite, Guam, Honolulu, San Francisco or Mare Island or San Diego (*Guam Recorder*, February 1929, "Shipping Notes"; *Guam Recorder*, Feb 1929, "Shipping Notes")
- Yokohama, Guam, Manila (*Guam Recorder*, May 1935, "Shipping Notes")
- Guam, Yokohama, Miike (in Fukuoka), Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, Guam (*Guam Recorder*, October 1938)

Pan American Airways

In the 1930s, Pan American Airways maintained a fleet of clippers, which carried passengers and cargo. Dubbed "flying boats," they traversed the Pacific Ocean, with routes stopping in Guam.

- San Francisco, Honolulu, Midway Atoll, Wake Island, Guam, Manila, Macao (also Macau) or Hong Kong (Pan American Airways [1939])

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DISCUSSION PAPER

Disadvantage or Blessing in Disguise? Field Research in Japan during COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Area studies is an interpretive research field, and fieldwork is a key enabler for area studies research projects. However, field research also results in some fundamental challenges, which are described in the varied literature available for scholars of anthropology, geography, social sciences and various other fields. Within area studies literature, there is little which deals with how to manage fieldwork without being present on the field. This paper reflects upon my experience of being on fieldwork in Japan during the global COVID-19 pandemic. It shares my experiences during 2020 and early 2021 and discusses how COVID-19 affected various aspects of fieldwork in Japan, including unexpected challenges, new opportunities, institutional support and accessing academic texts. The paper aims to give a concrete picture of fieldwork in Japan for other scholars who are yet to conduct research in the COVID-19 context. The paper maps out how the pandemic has affected the field, why it is so, and future implications while also decoding field research challenges and offering achievable solutions.

KEYWORDS

area studies; COVID-19; fieldwork; methods; qualitative research

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INTRODUCTION

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted every sector across the globe. It has challenged and changed conventional ways of living and working, including the ways in which scholars conduct field research. Field research is an ever-evolving mode of qualitative research (Saumure and Given 2008), and it is not unusual for researchers to witness tremendous methodological challenges at various stages, for reasons including security risks due to political instability and violence (Bernard 1998; Clark 2006; Sriram et al. 2009; Rrustemi 2020) as well as gender-based concerns (Isidoros 2015). Today, field research is evolving in unprecedented ways due to the pandemic. An International Association of Universities survey on the impact of COVID-19 on higher education institutions conducted in March and April of 2020 showed cancellation or postponement of 80% of academic initiatives such as annual conferences, workshops, exchange programs due to the crisis (Marinoni et al. 2020). While the rate of disruption to ongoing field research is unknown, the statistics may well be similar: COVID-19 has problematised contemporary methods of conducting research, such as accessing archives, planning and scheduling interviews, and conducting place-based research. However, the need to discover alternative research methods brings with it an opportunity to achieve solutions unimagined before COVID-19. In the scholarly realm at least, the upside of the pandemic can be understood as the reinforcement of innovative research methodologies and new ideas among researchers.

This paper reflects upon the challenges of conducting research in Japan during the COVID-19 pandemic and future implications, drawing upon my personal experience of being on field research in Japan as the pandemic began. Through the lens of my own project, the paper broadly assesses some of the challenges that emerged for qualitative researchers conducting fieldwork in Japan in the context of the pandemic, and offers some possible solutions. It also highlights how, due to the nature of my research, the pandemic became an opportunity for me to engage with the field more deeply. The paper begins with a review of the challenges posed by remote fieldwork, as documented in pre-pandemic literature. It then provides an overview of my own experience as a visiting fellow in Japan as COVID-19 emerged, and discusses the challenges and opportunities I encountered with my necessary pivot to digital platforms for data collection and networking purposes.

VIRTUAL FIELDWORK IN SCHOLARSHIP

In a recent article, Jin Sato (2020) remarks upon the historical relevance of conducting "research at a distance" as a norm, quoting early modern intellectual Yukichi Fukuzawa [福沢　諭吉; 1835–1901], who emphasised the importance of "deskwork" prior to any international fieldwork endeavour (106).[1] In the pre-pandemic contemporary context, conducting area studies without actually being in the field had become almost unthinkable due to

1 Yukichi Fukuzawa was a leading and at times controversial figure in Japan's modernisation process. He played a prominent role in the Tokugawa shogunate's first diplomatic tour of the United States in search of a new education system for Japan. His role and importance in Japan today can be seen through his presence on the 10,000-yen note, which is the largest denomination of Japanese currency.

increased mobility and accessibility to primary texts and informants (Sato 2020). This accessibility and flexibility was, however, tempered by the emergence of COVID-19, challenging norms and forcing scholars to turn to virtual field research. Some of the significant challenges documented in the literature on conducting virtual field research include rapport building, internet connectivity and participants' computer literacy. Some scholars have argued that it is particularly challenging to build rapport through virtual interaction, which affects the quality of data collected and raises potential ethical concerns (Flicker et al. 2004; Hamilton and Bowers 2006; Shuy 2003). Others contend that this is not the case (Kazmer and Xie 2008; Thompson-Hayes et al. 2009; Trier Bieniek 2012). Archibald et al. (2019) refer to concerns associated with inconsistent internet connectivity, as frequent dropped calls and poor video or audio quality can lead to misinterpretation of non-verbal communication.

In a similar vein, further literature suggests that the use of virtual platforms can make it more challenging for researchers to understand when to interrupt, offer breaks or modify topics (Saumure and Given 2008; Mealer and Jones 2014). Moreover, virtual platforms can limit how interviews are conducted, requiring greater focus on targeted questions and time considerations to acquire desired results (Irvine 2011). Crucially, it is also more likely for participants to discontinue or withdraw from a virtual interview than to cancel a face-to-face interview (Hanna and Mwale 2017). Even so, the literature highlights some advantages of virtual research, chief among these being the ability to connect with participants across the world, especially in regions where access is difficult otherwise (Saumure and Given 2008). While my experience of being on fieldwork during COVID-19 affirmed some of the challenges outlined in the literature, it also asserted the advantages. In the following section, I explore some of these challenges and advantages through the lens of my own direct experience.

PIVOTING TO DIGITAL RESEARCH AS COVID-19 EMERGED

I was in Japan when its first official COVID-19 case was reported on January 16th, 2020 (Japan Times 2020). In 2019, I had been selected for the Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Fellowship for doctoral candidates for a period of 12 months. As a result, I relocated from India to Japan in September 2019 and joined Waseda University's Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies in Tokyo as a visiting research fellow. My research project primarily aimed to analyse Japan's environmental aid effectiveness, which required sourcing white papers, interviews and other data from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan's leading aid agency.

Like other countries worldwide, when COVID-19 emerged in Japan, the Japanese government responded with a set of measures including restrictions on mobility and the declaration of a state of emergency in early April (Kyodo News 2020). This led to the closure of universities and a halt to research operations, and 'panic borrowing' in libraries that mirrored panic buying in retail stores. During this time, institutional support was invaluable. Institutions across the world shifted abruptly to online operations, and Waseda University quickly adapted to the new normal by extending remote access for online resources and allowing students in the final year of their doctoral programs to access the library with prior appointments. Moreover, the university library extended the dates for returning books, so despite the reduced mobility, at least the secondary resources required for conducting research were in place. The Japan Foundation also provided essential support during the uncertainties of Covid-19 by extending visas and housing support for fellowship recipients like myself who could not return their home countries at the end of their fellowship periods because of Covid-19 restrictions.

The sudden shift to digital communication sparked by COVID-19 created benefits as well as obstacles for scholars. In my case, a virtual setup allowed me to attend lab meetings with my host and co-supervisor in India while I was in Japan, thereby allowing me get feedback from multiple sources at the early stages of my research. I also took advantage of some of the online networking and intellectual exchange opportunities that emerged in Japan and beyond in response to the pandemic. For example, while I was based in Tokyo, I subscribed to the academic societies of Kyoto University and National University of Singapore, and this enabled me to engage with pioneering scholars related to my research field. These societies' events had been held in-person prior to the pandemic, so membership had previously been of limited value to me. However, as online events became more frequent, I appreciated the opportunities to be involved and membership of these societies came to offer more value to my research. Kyoto University and the National University of Singapore each have specific institutions and graduate schools which are actively working on environmental aid and conservation challenges, which is my own area of research. Hence, despite the pandemic I made new connections and associations which had been inaccessible to me before. This experience contributes to my observation that the whole of academia became in some ways more engaged during the pandemic, enabled by increased connectivity.

The restrictions on mobility and social gatherings led researchers around me in Japan, as elsewhere, to switch to online data collection. The pandemic made our desks the real fieldwork ground again, just when we had begun to think that "the desk [had] collapsed into the field" (Mosse 2006). Researchers with ongoing research projects requiring face-to-face interviews were confronted with the need to switch to remote alternatives due to logistical concerns. In my own case, the unexpected switch to online methods not only made me concerned about the ethics and the feasibility of my reconfigured project, but also made me question my research capabilities. Just like any other researcher, the interruption to my fieldwork caused by COVID-19 led me to adopt virtual solutions that allowed me to continue collecting data while practicing social distancing with participants.

INSIGHTS FROM CONDUCTING FIELDWORK IN JAPAN DURING COVID-19

Challenges raised in the literature on virtual data collection, such as rapport building and internet connectivity, were expected and therefore not a major concern for me. On the contrary, my primary concern was to secure interviews while practicing social distance. COVID-19 substantially lengthened the timeframes needed to conduct my research, and it was surprising to discover how much effort and initiative virtual fieldwork took. For example, fixing an appointment for an interview with a participant had previously taken a maximum of one month's lead-time, but without in-person contact and with the increased necessity of email exchanges, I found that the required lead-time grew to almost three months. Still, it is overwhelming at times to see how much empirical data can be collected once virtual fieldwork takes off. I found the ease of recording videoconference interviews to be advantageous in situations where previously I had been solely reliant on audio recordings and/or handwritten notes. Prior to the COVID-driven online shift, my interviewees had at times been reluctant to allow audio recordings, but were more open to having online video meetings recorded.

Conducting virtual fieldwork during COVID-19 in Japan increased the importance of some practical considerations, such as creating the right networks beforehand. I found myself increasingly reliant upon the 'snowball method' of recruitment in the absence of opportunities to build new networks in person. The snowball method is well recognised in social science literature as a key enabler in accessing research participants through referrals among existing networks (Naderifar et al. 2017). It is also a highly effective way to maintain interactive associations with 'key' informants, who possess the general information required to coordinate one's research project, rather than with the 'individual' informants who are associated with the various aspects of the study itself (Beebe 1995). While conducting fieldwork in Japan I found that 'key informants' are often essential to gaining access to 'individual informants'. In my case, I had a chance to meet a visiting JICA official in India at a monthly Japan Foundation New Delhi seminar prior to my fellowship. Since then, I have been in touch with him to share updates on my research. Particularly in the absence of opportunities to make new contacts on the ground in Japan, I relied heavily on the JICA contact I had made in my home country, and he became a valuable 'key informant' for my work.

When I decided to switch from face-to-face interviews to online interviews, some participants agreed to interviews via video call, while other participants preferred e-mail interviews. Hence, I suggest that it might be beneficial for other scholars to maintain flexibility in terms of the medium used for interviews, and to plan research questionnaires in accordance with participants' preferences. I noticed a correlation between my route to these participants and their acceptance rates, as well as their preferred medium for interview. For my project, I attempted to secure interviews with almost 20 participants, where approximately 50% were contacted via the snowball method. The snowball method contacts provided 100% acceptance for an online video interview, while through cold contacts I was able to secure online video interviews with only 30%, and the rest were email interviews. I noted that it is also important to handle refusals gracefully, even though they can be overwhelming. In the course of my research, I responded to refusals by emailing participants to thank them for taking the time to read my initial email and reply despite their busy schedule. Memorably, this gesture of gratitude prompted one individual to introduce me to another participant, whom I successfully interviewed later.

Additionally, as virtual field interviews rely heavily on internet connectivity, I carefully considered which platform to use for interviews. Where possible, I allowed participants to choose their preferred platform and offered flexibility in terms of interview timing. In my experience, although the pandemic affected the primary method of qualitative research, the shift to alternative methods produced trustworthy qualitative data in a timely way. Surprisingly, I found that email interviews were equally efficacious as video interviews, as they allowed me to question participants even up to three or four times, which would have very likely been only once if I had conducted face-to-face or video interviews. I had initially assumed that video interviews would be better than email for data collection and therefore aimed for video interviews in the first instance, but given the opportunity again, I would propose email interviews first.

Conducting qualitative research during COVID-19 involves other related methodological challenges. For example, qualitative research design may involve diverse methods of community engagement by the researcher(s) which incorporate the aim of building strong relationships with research participants, as well as providing them with a deeper understanding of the research project (Hrdličková 2017). Without this element of socialisation and relationship-building, the primary challenge within many of my virtual interviews was to know how to make interview participants feel comfortable, and to be adaptable and empathetic in order to establish rapport. Creating meaningful interactions and following the emerging norms of videoconferencing etiquette were also considerations. In my case, I worked on my Japanese-language speaking skills and incorporated Japanese work etiquette when starting and finishing my interviews. A crucial challenge for conducting efficient virtual field research in the pandemic era will be to find ways to build strong relationships with the help of the snowball method, while simultaneously considering suitable ethical protocols such as obtaining written consent from participants. In sum, the current situation calls for radical shifts in research design to help researchers access the benefits that face-to-face interviews used to offer and address the shortcomings of virtual field research, while taking advantage of new opportunities.

CONCLUSION

My experience of being on fieldwork in Japan during COVID-19 suggests that researchers can certainly have success with online fieldwork if research is carefully planned, if the researcher has access to online interview training and is able to be flexible, and if they can connect with 'key' informants. Hopefully, this will only become easier as resources for dealing with these challenges emerge: already, Lupton's (2020) "Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic" compiles a range of useful resources for virtual fieldwork. Even so, the appeal of in-person fieldwork will no doubt remain strong due to the inherently greater possibilities it offers for network-building and deeper engagement with participants. Finally, as borders re-open, I hope that my experience as documented in this paper also serves to highlight the importance of institutional support to safeguard the efforts and wellbeing of scholars for as long as uncertainty remains.

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REVIEW

Immigrant Japan: Mobility and Belonging in an Ethno-Nationalist Society

GRACIA LIU-FARRER.
Cornell University Press (New York), 2020.
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careers; citizenship; COVID-19; diaspora; foreign resident; identity; immigration; lifestyle migration; migration; mobility; multiethnic identity; nationalism; Nikkei; social and cultural identity; transnationalism

Japan will need to strongly consider foreign immigrant workers as an integral part of its future if it is to offset its current trajectory towards a quickly ageing population and dwindling young workforce. However, as Gracia Liu-Farrer explains in her recent book *Immigrant Japan: Mobility and Belonging in an Ethno-Nationalist Society*, building an immigrant society out of an ethno-nationalist one does not come without its challenges. According to Liu-Farrer, an ethno-nationalist society is one where nationalism is inextricably linked to discourses of cultural and ethnic homogeneity. In the case of Japan, this presents itself through the pervasiveness of *nihonjinron* (日本人論; theories of Japanese identity) and *tan'itsu minzokuron* (単一民族論; the myth of Japanese ethnic homogeneity) discourses. Liu-Farrer observes over the course of the book that Japan's ethno-nationalised identity has encouraged a discursive denial of immigration, and a subsequent lack of institutional and structural support to settle a growing number of incoming immigrants into Japanese society. As both the book and official immigration statistics demonstrate, the abovementioned discourses run counter to Japan's reality. In 2012, the country recorded a foreign resident population of just above two million, further growing to almost 3 million in

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2019 (Immigration Services Agency 2020). Between 2018 to 2019 alone, there was a record-breaking 7.4% increase in the the number of foreign residents in Japan, representing the peak of a wave of pre-COVID-19 immigration to Japan that had been climbing rapidly during the 2010s (Immigration Services Agency 2020).[1] It was in this context that Liu-Farrer foresaw Japan as an emerging immigrant destination, and thus *Immigrant Japan* was produced.

Immigrant Japan represents the culmination of Liu-Farrer's 20 years of fieldwork in Japan, China, Singapore and beyond as a sociologist specialising in migration studies. Over the course of those years, Liu-Farrer and her research assistants interviewed over 300 immigrants to Japan, 100 of whom feature in this book. In a welcome contribution to migration studies, Liu-Farrer's in-depth research encompasses all stages of the immigrant experience, including the motivations and challenges behind why immigrants move to Japan, their decisions to leave or stay in Japan, and their life trajectories thereafter. In addition to a wealth of qualitative interview and focus group data, Liu-Farrer draws upon a variety of primary and secondary sources to illustrate the current situation of immigrants living in Japan. This includes government statistics, secondary research data, and notably several reflections upon her own personal experiences as a naturalised Japanese citizen, migration researcher and mother living in Japan.

The overarching argument Liu-Farrer proposes is that Japan will need to move beyond its ethno-nationalist identity in order to attract and retain foreign immigrant workers in future. Throughout the book, Liu-Farrer uses her interview data to show how discourses of *tan'itsu minzokuron* and *nihonjinron* work to deny immigrant workers, families and their children space to claim equal membership within the Japanese community, from its educational institutions and industries to its everyday social and public spaces.

The first half of the book presents a broad snapshot of the lives, motivations and careers of immigrants in Japan. In chapters one and two, Liu-Farrer explores Japan as a "land of many opportunities", revealing the diverse economic, social, emotional or legal motivations that have prompted migrants' decisions to immigrate to Japan (24). In doing so, she skillfully draws attention to a glaring paradox within the immigrant experience. Liu-Farrer found that the social and cultural traits which immigrants have uniquely attributed to Japan, such as the strict work culture, have both attracted and deterred them in migrating to Japan. This finding is of particular value for contemporary Japanese studies, as it challenges popular rhetoric that frames Japan as a flawless lifestyle destination.

From chapter two onwards, Liu-Farrer explores how legal channels of migration and visa types largely predetermine immigrants' socioeconomic outcomes and levels of mobility within Japanese society. Chapter three highlights various entrepreneurial and economic strategies that immigrants employ to create successful careers in Japan, using their niche skills and

1 In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced the rate of foreign immigration to Japan. At the end of 2020, the number of foreign residents living in Japan fell for the first time in eight years by 1.4%, or 46,021 people (Immigration Services Agency of Japan 2021). At the time of writing, Japan has temporarily suspended all short- and long-term visa applications for non-Japanese nationals as a measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021).

cross-cultural knowledge, for example, to become international business leaders, foreign language teachers and restaurant owners. In contrast, chapter seven describes a phenomenon Liu-Farrer calls the "Brazilian bubble", where the children of Nikkei Brazilian immigrants who attend Brazilian schools in Japan face restricted opportunities for upward mobility due to the low socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of their parents (161).

The latter half of the book is where Liu-Farrer's work becomes most exploratory and inspiring. From chapter six onwards, she examines immigrants' varying interpretations of "home" and "belonging" (126). She draws upon a variety of social and geographic concepts to illustrate the various emotional, social and personal factors which constitute an immigrant's sense of belonging or home, within or outside of Japan. Liu-Farrer uses her concept of "emotional geography" to explore the "layered and multidimensional [nature of] belonging and immigrants' varied emotions toward both places of origin and destination" (128). For example, Li De, one of Liu-Farrer's informants who migrated from China to work in Japan, explains:

> "This is not my home…I will feel like 'this is my home' when I get off the plane in China… First of all, it is *luoye guigen* [falling leaves returning to the roots], and secondly [I am] familiar with that land, having feelings [for it]. The older I become, the more sentimental I feel. No matter how poor it becomes, it is my own home."
> (132)

This interview was conducted in Japan, where Li had been living for sixteen years at the time. Liu-Farrer presents Li's experience as a case study of a "sojourner", a person who views immigration solely as an economic project, wherein they will ultimately return to their "real" home, quite literally like "falling leaves return…to the roots" (131–32). By featuring this quote, Liu-Farrer highlights the complexity of migrants' sentiments toward their countries of origin and residence, making a case for how migration researchers and sociologists should work to account for the impact of emotion on immigrant life trajectories.

Chapters seven and eight further demonstrate the critical capacity of Liu-Farrer's work through her exploration of immigrant children's educational mobilities and identity journeys. In particular, chapter eight's exploration of adolescent immigrant identities draws attention to the lack of multicultural education opportunities for children in Japan, and on a broader scale, the complex processes young people face in consolidating mixed identities in a globalising world. For example, the chapter profiles Indira, who immigrated from India to Yokohama with her parents when she was seven. Indira explains that she feels a strong sense of belonging toward her hometown in Japan, but does not feel that she is Japanese. Like other interviewees, Indira perceives herself as a "global person with a global upbringing" (198). This cosmopolitan approach to identity formation, Liu-Farrer suggests, signals an emerging group among immigrant children who are disregarding national identity and choosing instead "to become citizens of the world" (199).

Immigrant Japan presents itself in a different context now compared with when it was first published in April 2020, during the early stages of the global COVID-19 pandemic. From late March 2020 onwards, heated criticism was directed towards the Japanese government's tight travel restrictions which prohibited foreign permanent residents of various nationalities from re-entering the country (Osumi 2020). As a result, many permanent residents and foreign-owned businesses suggested that they would leave Japan and move elsewhere once the pandemic had settled (Kopp 2020; Osumi 2020). Taking these events into consideration, it may become difficult for some to agree with Liu-Farrer's proposition that "post-pandemic Japan" will become the next global migrant destination (Liu-Farrer 2020, n.p.). Regardless, Liu-Farrer makes a convincing case when she argues that Japan's leaders need to encourage a more open dialogue about immigration and diversity within Japanese society if they truly wish to address the effects of an ageing population.

In seeking to raise the visibility of immigrants and also to deepen understanding of their experiences, *Immigrant Japan* does justice to the narratives of numerous individuals who have sought out greater opportunities and dedicated immense effort to establishing a life in Japan. Significantly, however, it documents the state of immigration to Japan before the globe was pushed by the pandemic into times of restricted travel, unemployment and uncertainty. Undoubtedly, many immigrants living in and outside of Japan will now be contemplating their futures in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and scholars with an interest in migration will be watching to see how the immigration landscape changes amid constraints on global mobility. Researchers investigating immigration to Japan in the post-COVID context would benefit from using Liu-Farrer's work as a contemporary, pre-COVID benchmark. *Immigrant Japan* is a necessary addition to the bookshelf of contemporary Japan and migration studies scholars, students and everyday persons. Liu-Farrer's work in sharing the voices of immigrants is an invaluable resource for readers who aspire to build a more nuanced understanding of contemporary Japanese society and the immigrants who have long been a part of it.

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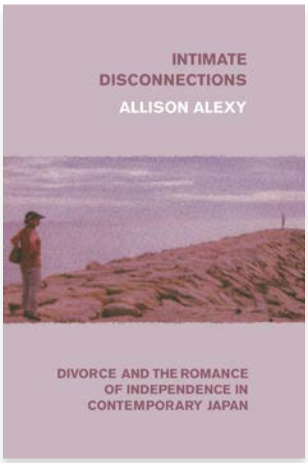
REVIEW

Intimate Disconnections: Divorce and the Romance of Independence in Contemporary Japan



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KEYWORDS

contemporary; custody disputes; divorce; family law; gender; marriage; women

Allison Alexy's monograph, *Intimate Disconnections: Divorce and the Romance of Independence in Contemporary Japan*, is a detailed yet broadly sweeping account of divorce trends that is both a fascinating and insightful read. Alexy is an associate professor of modern Japanese culture at the University of Michigan who is building a reputation as a leading figure in research on intimacy, marriage and divorce in contemporary Japan. There is a clear line of connection between this monograph and Alexy's coordination of the edited collections *Home and Family in Japan: Continuity and Transformation* (with Richard Ronald in 2011) and *Intimate Japan: Ethnographies of Closeness and Conflict* (with Emma E. Cook in 2018), with each offering incisive commentary on how dynamics in the private realm shape broader public and social phenomena in contemporary Japan. Alexy has also actively pursued open-access publishing with both this monograph and *Intimate Japan*, making her research available to those scholars relying on digital resources or with limited access.

Intimate Disconnections tells the story of divorce as both institution and practice in contemporary Japan. It largely takes up from where Fuess (2004) left off, framing this narrative with questions at the heart of both relationships and their endings: what do people want from a relationship when they decide to formalise it, how do they decide when it should end, and how do they go about ending it? Exploring these questions, Alexy interweaves analysis of current cultural, political, legal and discursive contexts with interviews and individual stories to illuminate popular perceptions of divorce and their sources, as well as the greater complexities that underlie these often-sensationalised narratives. At the centre of the work is an ongoing challenge to so-called common sense 'truths' about divorce in contemporary Japan: that once women earn more money they are more likely to want a divorce, and that men are the unsuspecting victims of this new trend. Importantly, Alexy does not simply seek to debunk these perceptions. Rather, she acknowledges the extent to which these stereotypes play out in society while also demonstrating the variations present in lived reality.

This is not a disinterested, objective account: Alexy's affection for her interlocutors, as well as her awareness of her own impact simply by being in the room, is highly present throughout and offers a well-considered articulation of contemporary anthropology. Alexy consciously places herself as researcher within the work, both in explaining her methodology and how the project came about, and also by sharing how she became known as the 'divorce lady' and hence became the recipient (consenting or no) of a multitude of tales from contemporary Japan's divorce landscape. There is some gender disparity in her interviewee numbers, with only eight male stories included against nineteen female. This reflects the fact that there are male-only spaces in which Alexy is unable to place herself, while female-only spaces and support groups are accessible to her and therefore more visible in the work. Yet, the male experience is neither sidelined nor devalued and remains central to the narrative, and Alexy is reflexive in acknowledging this disparity.

The way the work is structured invites the reader to gain a sense of divorce as an unfolding narrative that requires significant work and negotiation, and Alexy returns to certain characters multiple times, allowing the reader to develop their own relationship with the informants across the monograph. The monograph is separated into three sections: "The Beginning of the End", "Legal Dissolutions" and "Living as an X", each of which deals with a different stage in the divorce process. Each chapter combines theoretical and cultural contexts with brief (two- or three-page) accounts from her interviewees. In this way, the theoretical understandings help to shed light on complicated real-life experiences. Likewise, the separation of the material into the successive stages of divorce focuses the reader's attention onto each step of the process in its own right.

The first two chapters examine why people decide to get a divorce, looking at how successful or unsuccessful intimacies are conceptualised and revealing the sources of popular myths regarding marriage and divorce. Here Alexy highlights the thinking behind the reasons for divorce, the tensions between expectations and reality in marriage, the rise of romance discourses in contemporary popular culture and society, and the major shifts in marital expectations across generations. Firstly, the author draws our attention to the neoliberal labour market and governmental bids at reforming the gender disparity in this system, and shows how this shapes the marriage choices that individuals make. Alexy then shifts to the emergent discourses of the past two decades around how to avoid divorce and what a successful marriage is now meant to look like in Japanese society. In particular, she highlights the present-day ideal of 'connected independence' in friendship marriages, as opposed to the previous generation's 'disconnected dependence' with clearly separated gender roles. This new ideal aligns with current neoliberal and labour values but also demands versions of intimacy that were not necessarily valued by previous generations. In one striking example, Alexy outlines how relationship gurus now advocate for partners to directly say 'I love you' to each other—although some interlocutors still greeted this practice with derision.

In the second section, Alexy unpacks the legal system and its lack of support for divorced or divorcing parents, along with the complex and innovative manner in which individuals negotiate their options. In Chapter 3 Alexy looks beneath the statistic indicating that 87.6% of divorces in 2015 were uncontested, demonstrating how often-lengthy negotiations are taken between partners in order to arrive at what is legally recorded as an uncontested divorce. The absence of real oversight and power on the part of the family court to either support or manage people's divorce and post-divorce experiences is also put under significant scrutiny here. Chapter 4 focuses on issues of child custody and what is best for the children involved: the incredibly rare dual custody, or the far more common and mythologised 'clean break'. Alexy reveals to her readers the multitude of different ways in which people are navigating these challenging choices, as well as how gaps in the welfare and regulatory frameworks in this area can create additional burdens in already strained situations.

In the final, and shortest, section, Alexy looks at the longer-term consequences and outcomes of divorce. Chapter 5 focuses on the costs of divorce—in particular the risks of poverty for women, but also the social stigma that continues to be attached to divorce, which has historically been perceived in Japanese culture as a personal failure. In contrast, Chapter 6 presents a counter-narrative that divorce does not automatically equal disconnection from society. Following divorce, many of Alexy's informants actively strove to forge new connections through support groups and friendships. Further, they still desired romantic relationships and indeed many hoped to marry again someday. This section makes clear that the process of divorce can continue until well after the papers are processed, bringing with it long term material and emotional consequences. However, the final chapter offers a refreshing challenge to the 'sad, lonely divorcee' narrative, instead highlighting the many ways that divorcees continue to strive for new relationships and experiences.

I strongly recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in understanding the current marriage and divorce landscape in Japan. However, its relevance goes further than this: the book also includes excellent insights into the legal, economic, and labour realities in contemporary Japan, providing a useful overview of shifts over the past two decades. Although Alexy herself acknowledges that gender is not a direct subject of analysis, gender issues permeate the work and the narratives it tells, making it an important resource for understanding Japan's current gender-related norms and media discourses as well. For those already active in these fields, many of the statistics and popular discourses (e.g., 'relationships like air') will be familiar, however Alexy uses them effectively to create a new picture. For those who are newer to the field, this work reads as a strong companion to Tokuhiro's (2009) *Marriage in Contemporary Japan*.

A crisis discourse around marriage has emerged in the Japanese media over the past two decades. In response to this, scholars have turned their attention to both this discourse and the lived realities of marriage and divorce, both in historical and contemporary Japan. In the conclusion to *Intimate Disconnections*, Alexy explains: "[t]his book has attempted to represent the personal, social, legal, and economic work required to end a marriage in contemporary Japan, as well as demonstrate the analytical value gained by paying attention to such endings" (177). She has certainly achieved this goal, and no doubt *Intimate Disconnections* will quickly find its place as a canonical text for scholars of contemporary Japan and beyond.

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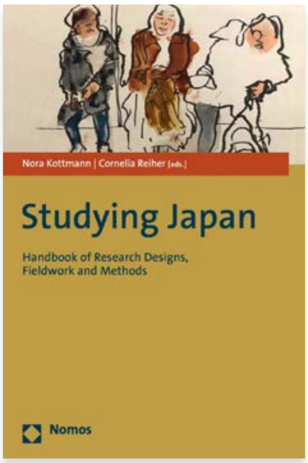
REVIEW

Studying Japan: Handbook of Research Designs, Fieldwork and Methods



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fieldwork; handbook; methods; qualitative research

Studying Japan: Handbook of Research Designs, Fieldwork and Methods claims to be, and is in my view, "the first comprehensive guide on qualitative methods, research designs and fieldwork in social science research on Japan" (n.p.). As a 'how-to' book for established and beginning scholars, it describes the ins and outs of social science research on Japan from multiple perspectives, providing definitions, examples and an up-to-date bibliography. As a methodology and research volume, this book presents an impressive breadth of material and methodological guidance, as well as expert opinion and experience.

Some more limited books on social science research methodologies in the Japanese context should be considered forerunners to this volume, for example Bestor et al. (2003), which included twenty-one contributors who were located in Northern America or Europe. But this new collection, which has originated of German leadership, is broader and much more inclusive in scope. It showcases the work of over seventy Japan scholars located at universities around the world, including the United States, Hong Kong, Europe, Australia and Japan. The backgrounds of the academics are varied: the volume is

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notable for its cross-disciplinary calibre, broad gender balance and the breadth of perspectives represented. The content will also resonate with the needs and priorities of today's scholars. To take one simple example, Brigitte Steger's essay (474–77) shares advice on how to publish research that engages with the twenty-first century media, thereby increasing reach and impact. She considers how researchers might nowadays be able to get their work into the news, referring to how her own article published by BBC Worldwide received 1.4 million individual browser hits in its English version. Steger shows how as researchers increase their popular reach, they demonstrate their expertise, likely leading to new opportunities.

The editors, Nora Kottmann (senior research fellow at the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo) and Cornelia Reiher (vice director of the Freie Universitat Graduate School of East Asian Studies in Berlin), have done an admirable job of allowing the voices of a diverse group of Japan scholars to be heard in an instructive format which allows for incisiveness and clarity. *Studying Japan* broadly guides the reader in how to approach qualitative research in Japan from start to finish. The book's chapter titles map out the major steps in planning and executing a research project, starting with "How to Begin Research" (Chapter 1), continuing on to "An Introduction to Qualitative Social Science Methods" (Chapter 5), "How to Do Fieldwork" (Chapter 6), "How to Access Written and Visual Sources" (Chapter 9), "How to Understand Discourse" (Chapter 14), and finally "How to Present Findings" (Chapter 17). Each chapter introduces a broad discussion of a topic, followed by three shorter essays which often include real-world examples that encapsulate some of the relevant issues within the discussion. The book also contains a treasure trove of links to helpful resources, as the chapters are rounded off with suggestions for further reading in addition to the list of references.

Given that there are seventeen chapters and fifty-one essays over the 500 pages in this volume, I will struggle in this review to cover the breadth of material in detail. However, I will briefly discuss a few examples of the impressive colour and diversity of approaches which are explored within each theme, and the engaging writing throughout. In Chapter 11, "How to Analyse Data" by David Chiavacci of Zurich University, the discussion begins:

> "Data analysis is like baking a cake […]. The raw data or materials you have collected are just as important to your argument as the ingredients—sugar, eggs, flour—are for baking a cake […]. Not many people will be interested in your raw data—or ingredients—as such, but an innovative argument or a good cake might bring you fame."
> (300)

This particular introduction reminded this reviewer of the Foreword to *Studying Japan,* in which Franz Waldenberger, Director of the German Institute for Japanese Studies, writes that while the book does not intend to be a bible of Japanese Studies, it might well be a book of recipes showing how to make your research "relevant and convincing" (13). On the other hand, Chiavacci goes on to remind us in his chapter that this material metaphor can only take us so far in social science research. Our positionality as researchers and the ever-present potential for difficulties and conflicts arising around power and bias do not resemble "making a cake" (309). A 'how-to' manual can take research so far, but the rest is up to the researcher.

I would be remiss not to mention some of the other notable inclusions in the volume, such as multiple reflections on ethnography and analysis of subculture, as well as considerations about emotion and affect, and how to use mixed methods in research. Chapter 9, "How to Access Written and Visual Sources: Archives, Libraries and Databases" offers a further exemplar. Here the researcher will find practicalities about accessing archives in Japan—including "tricky sources" (248) such as business documents or war memorials—and how one might use quantitative data for qualitative research. The emphasis upon know-how will certainly add to researchers' tool-kits, as will the recent online datasets and archives referenced here.

As an oral historian myself, one of the first sections I wished to look into was Chapter 7, "How to Interview People: Qualitative Interviews", written by Kottmann and Reiher. They broadly introduce the concept of qualitative interviews, including how to find interviewees, preparation for interviews, language and the process of communicating with informants, and how to be a skilled listener. They examine the question of language (it is vital) for the researcher in Japan, and include a commentary on the socio-cultural importance of expressing appreciation after interviews, amid discussion on interviewing in the Japanese context. The main chapter is followed by essays which add on-the-ground practicalities to the discussion, from three scholars who have used interviews in their own research: Christoph Brumann, Tomiko Yamaguchi (a Japanese perspective) and Allison Alexy. Each author approaches the topic from a distinctive point of view, and each of the three essays incorporates a specific subtitle which clearly alerts the reader to its focus, such as, for example, Allison Alexy's "Talking through Difficult Topics". Of the three, Brumann is more reflective and pragmatic, while Alexy expands on how the interviewer is involved in the research through their own positionality, noting that being a non-Japanese citizen comes with some advantages when carrying out interviews in Japan. Yamaguchi agrees with Alexy on this point, observing that interviewees may be more ready to open up to researchers from outside of Japan.

As a handbook, this is a book to dip into which goes well beyond Japanese Studies, like the theme of this special issue, in breadth and discussion. The reader may easily follow tangential topics throughout the text, as cross-references are frequently provided in brackets, leading from one part of the volume to another. One area not covered comprehensively and which might make a useful addition in the future is digital humanities, considering its importance for the kinds of qualitative research described in this volume. As well, one might note that this volume was written in an era which pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic, so researchers who are considering fieldwork in Japan will need to additionally take stock of the last two years in particular.

The impacts of COVID-19 have changed expectations around travel and crossing borders, and will undoubtedly have a major impact on the research methods discussed here as well as upon the expectations and needs of those whom the researcher will encounter.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that *Studying Japan* is a first of its kind, and a book I wish had been available when I was doing my own PhD. I will certainly recommend the volume to my own students, and have already found myself incorporating references to it into workshops on research methodology. Non-Japan specialists and other area studies researchers will certainly be interested in the advice and discussions about social science research. Here we have not only vignettes of research experiences and incisive advice and discussion about preparation, the process of research and the writing, but also an extraordinary source book, with references to the latest and most useful literature. This is in effect an encyclopaedia of Japanese Studies research methodologies and as such is essential reading for specialists, students of Japan and others with an interest in navigating the field.

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