

# JAPAN NOTES



NOTE 26 SUMMER 2011



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## Japan America Society of St. Louis raises over \$10,000 for earthquake victims!!!

The March 11th earthquake and tsunami that struck the Tohoku region of Japan was one of the most devastating disasters in Japan's history. Thousands of people have perished as a result of the calamity, and even though it has been several months since the event, relief efforts are still continuing. According to the Japanese government, the catastrophe could be the most costly on record—exceeding \$300 billion. This comes as little surprise, considering that the energy released from the massive earthquake alone has been said by the U.S. Geological Survey to be enough to power the city of Los Angeles for an entire year. In the past four months, Japan America Societies across the United States have raised several million dollars to assist the relief effort in Japan. The Japan America Society of St. Louis has also contributed, raising \$10,984 as of June 30th, 2011. The warmth and kindness of the society members has been shown throughout the duration donations have been collected, and Japan has been able to quickly recuperate with the support of people like you. The Japan America Society of St. Louis would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who has put their time, money and effort into helping Japan recover. Your compassion is appreciated!



## JAS 2011 SPEECH MEET

On April 30th, 2011, several Japanese language students from around the St. Louis area gathered to participate in the fourth annual JAS Speech Meet. All were nervous, yet excited to stand in front of an audience and speak in Japanese. There were two competition levels—beginner and advanced.

Below are the results of the meet! Great job to everyone—your courage and proficiency in speaking Japanese shines!

### Beginner Level

Shirley Damti (STLCC)—First Place  
Mary Reidhead (UM-St. Louis)—Second Place

### Advanced Level

Sneha Tambe (Washington University)—First Place  
Kayla Strauss (UM-St. Louis)—Second Place  
James F. Cook III (Webster University)—Third Place



## TURMOIL IN TOKYO

**Kayla Strauss, student assistant for the Japan America Society of St. Louis, was in Tokyo during the Tohoku Earthquake. In this article, she recalls her experience:**

During Fall 2010, I studied abroad at Kansai University in Osaka, Japan. I had been awarded the Boren Scholarship for International Study. While there, I enhanced my comprehension of Japanese and met people from around the world. The afternoon of March 11<sup>th</sup> saw me in Tokyo. I was to meet with the Senior Advisor to the U.S. Ambassador of Japan to discuss U.S. – Japan relations, and had left my hotel to buy an outfit for the occasion. It was a glorious day. As I walked from Hatagaya to Shinjuku, I enjoyed the sunlight. It was starting to warm up, and the smell of plum blossoms accented the air. I was excited for spring. Soon, I could go flower viewing with my friends and go to the beach! Kamakura, Shirayama, Okinawa... An exchange student alone in the world's biggest city, I felt like I could do anything.

Not having much money and also being tall, I went shopping at Uniqlo. Uniqlo is comparable to H&M, offering high-style fashion at a reasonable price in many sizes. The closest Uniqlo was on the 9th floor of Takashimaya Department Store. After looking at some business attire, I browsed the spring collection, which was full of oversized shirts with Disney characters on them. Looking through the racks, I giggled to myself about the affinity Japanese women have for things *kawaii*, or cute.

At that moment, I felt a tremor. I thought there might be a sumo wrestler in the store, and looked around. However, as the shaking quickly intensified, I knew it was an earthquake. In a panic, the Uniqlo staff beckoned everyone to gather in the veranda. I struggled to do so—having a difficult time keeping my balance. Before I could grab onto a nearby pillar, I fell to the ground. The sound of dishes in an adjacent cafe crashing against the floor echoed throughout the building. People were covering their heads and shrieking in terror as the chandeliers above flickered. Some were videotaping the quake, while others frantically tried to make calls. Meanwhile, the earth's oscillating surface hummed beneath. The main quake lasted for at least 5 minutes, causing all of the elevators and escalators to stop working. If people wanted to leave, they had to use the stairs. A few minutes later, a message came over the intercom, warning "Just now, there was a severe earthquake, but this building is earthquake safe. However, because there is a chance for aftershocks, please take caution." Since there is nowhere safer to be in an earthquake than inside an earthquake safe building, most stayed in the store, including me. As the message had warned, there were many aftershocks, and so I sat in a corner near an emergency exit. Next to me were a mother and her two children. All of us were confused, and had nothing to do but sit and wait. Due to the quake, all cell phone networks had heavy traffic, so it was impossible to send texts or make calls for a few hours. As time passed, there was nothing to do besides look at clothes. With 12 floors, luckily there was enough to keep us busy. Yet, inside I was afraid there would be another quake. The first one was so terrifying, especially since it was the first real quake I ever experienced. There was an early morning quake in St. Louis a few years ago, but to compare the two would be like comparing a minnow to a humpback whale. This quake caused significant damage and outages, so nearly all of the trains and subways in the Tokyo area were shut down. Consequently, the millions who commute to Tokyo had no way to get home. Most people in Japan do not drive, and nearly all of the buses and taxis had already surrendered. Where did people go? What did they do? They camped out in stores, stations and offices. Not knowing when the trains would start running, much less if another disaster would strike, people assumed the worst and went to convenience stores to buy goods for the next few nights. In Takashimaya, hundreds gathered in the stairwells and hallways, talking about what happened and desperately trying to get their phones to work. Getting hundreds of sales per hour, the sweaty vendors in Takashimaya Grocery looked both jubilant and worried.

It was around 7:30 when I finally gave up on waiting for the trains to start and decided to make the 30 minute walk back to Hatagaya. I was joined by thousands of others, and felt like a sardine as I squirmed through the city. In the usually bustling Shinjuku, nothing could be heard except for sirens. As we rushed across Koshu Kaido Avenue, it was like everyone was trying to escape

from something, but did not know what from or where to go. As soon as I got to my hotel, I hurried to get my computer and use the wi-fi in the cafe to contact my family. I knew they would be worried sick if I did not contact them soon. The cafe was packed since no one had anywhere to go. Seeing a tsunami warning flashing at the bottom of the TV screen, I remembered that tsunamis usually accompany strong quakes and felt chest pain. Before I got to my hotel, I had no way of knowing what had happened in the Tohoku region. Seeing towns just a few hundred kilometers north being swept away came as an utter shock. I realized that this disaster was one of the largest to have ever hit Japan. Having such a long and eventful day, I went to my room after letting my family know I was safe. I watched the news as I got ready for bed. Seeing the newscasters wearing helmets made me chuckle a bit, but as they reported the unfolding nuclear disaster in Fukushima, I bit my fingernails. Not able to turn it off, I fell asleep with the TV on. Before going to Tokyo, I had made many plans. As I mentioned earlier, I was to meet with the Senior Advisor to the U.S. Ambassador of Japan. I was also going to attend a forum called "Global Voices from Japan," and was looking forward to a trip to Kamakura. However, since none of the trains were working and most places were closed, I couldn't do anything. So, I had nothing to do except wander around while seeing how the biggest city in the world reacted to one of the most disastrous events in its history.

The next morning, I walked to Shinjuku in hopes that some trains would be running. I was disappointed to see 回送 (out of service) next to all of the trains. While waiting, I walked around the station in search of something to do. Most stores were closed, with signs saying "Due to the earthquake, today we are closed." on their doors. Even Yoshinoya, one of the most popular fast food chains in Japan, had its lights off. Almost every convenience store was stripped of its goods, and even though the weather was gorgeous, there was hardly anyone outside. Being the case, the few days I was in Tokyo passed slowly. I was relieved once the night came I was scheduled to return to Osaka. I managed to make it out of the city right as the rolling blackouts started. The bus I was on was full of tourists who were in Tokyo and decided to go to Osaka since it was further away from the epicenter. When we arrived at Umeda station, I felt as if I had returned from another planet. I could not comprehend what had happened.

Following, I felt guilty as everyone around me was talking about what happened up north. Why had I come out with just a sore hip, when people just a few hundred kilometers north had lost their homes, families, and friends? I tried to ease such feelings by helping to raise money at my university. While I felt good about contributing to the relief effort, it was hard for me to put what happened behind me. I did not have the energy or motivation to do much after the quake, and had post traumatic stress. With the coverage of the Fukushima meltdown being blown way out of proportion by the American media, my family and friends demanded I return home. My mom told me if I stayed in Japan, I ran the risk of eating contaminated food, which could lead to infertility or cancer. Even though what Japan had been through was nothing to be brushed aside or taken lightly, I was baffled and confused about reports by CNN and other American news sources. What was reflected in the Japanese media often contradicted what was in the American media, and I had no clue what to believe. In the end, both my university and family convinced me to return. Even though I did not want to leave Japan, considering what I had been through as well as the risk of aftershocks, part of me thought it best to go home. Looking back on it now, I really regret the decision I made, but all I can do is move forward and keep convincing myself that everything happens for a reason.

What happened on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 will never be forgotten. It is a disaster that affected so many people in so many ways. However, looking on the bright side, I think Japan has grown and will continue to grow as a result. The strength and resilience of the Japanese people has been shown. The Tohoku earthquake and tsunami also caused Japan, a country notorious for isolating itself in times of hardship (i.e., after the 1995 Hanshin quake that struck Kobe), to depend on other countries. The assistance Japan received could help ease and strengthen relations between Japan and other countries. An important thing to remember for anyone struck by calamity is that even if you fall, you will be able to get back up again. After all, 失敗は成功の元 or "failures lead to success."

## A Wizard Shrine Charms Girls and Women

Laura Miller, Ph.D.

A young woman named Misako spoke to me about a legendary man: "He has long hair, and is slim and tall; He's a real *ikemen!* (hot dude)." Was Misako gushing over a famous J-Pop singer or TV celebrity? Actually, the subject of her praise was a wizard who lived centuries ago, a court practitioner of occult science named Abeno Seimei (921~1005). Seimei was part of a cadre of official astrologers and divination experts during the Heian period (794~1185) called *onmyōji*. Misako joined millions of girls and young women who became avid fans of a fictionalized Seimei after reading a series of novels entitled *Onmyōji*, written by the science fiction writer Yumemakura Baku. Eventually, there was a flood of additional *onmyōji*-themed anime, manga, films, TV dramas, and critical essays.

A thirteen-volume manga series published between 1999 and 2005 that was written by Yumemakura Baku and lavishly illustrated by the girls' comic artist Okano Reiko sold more than five million copies. There was also a successful 2001 feature film starring Nomura Mansai, also entitled *Onmyōji* that similarly targeted a female audience. A friend told me she recalls looking at many Seimei girls' manga, and was shocked to see the medieval images I shared with her that depict the historic Seimei, who by current standards was not an *ikemen* at all. In

medieval paintings and statues of the celebrated magician, he reflects a Heian-era model of attractive masculinity, with a middle-aged, plump face and thin eyes. By contrast, the Heisei-era Seimei has flowing locks, a tall youthful body, and a beautiful face.



One unusual outcome of the *onmyōji* boom was the revival of a small Shintō shrine in Kyoto, the Seimei Jinja. Although there are many shrines in Japan dedicated to Abeno Seimei, the site in Kamigyō Ward became one of the most popular destinations for female devotees. Founded in 1007 by the Emperor Ichijō, Seimei Jinja was built where Seimei's residence once sat. When I first visited in the late 1970s, it was shabby and run-down. Although the main building had been restored, the grounds of the narrow lot were worn and weedy. By 2005, however, the shrine had been completely renovated with bright landscaping, sparkling statues, and brand new paintings. It was also experiencing brisk sales of shrine goods. The crowds of enthusiastic female visitors to Seimei Jinja caught the attention of the news media, which began reporting on the phenomenon in 2004.

A Taoist symbol called *gobōsei* (the pentagram), a five-pointed star meant to represent the interaction of the Five Elements, was one of Seimei's favorite signs. At Seimei Jinja it is ubiquitous, adorning architecture, lanterns, roof tiles, and various shrine accoutrements. Because of its magical power it is also used on amulets and other shrine items to confer protection. The renowned tea master Sen no Rikyū (1522~1591), who once lived on the grounds, is said to have prepared tea using water drawn from a small well still found at Seimei Jinja. Today, the Seimei Well has been completely rebuilt with fresh stone designed in the shape of a pentagram. Visitors believe the water has magical properties. Seimei Jinja was the fortunate recipient of escalating attention due to Seimei's popularity in mass media. Because of its savvy marketing of attractive shrine votive plaques (*ema*), oracle lottery papers (*omikujji*), and good luck talisman (*omamori*), it soon became one of Kyoto's most prosperous shrines. Women's and girls' magazines often feature articles on the shrine with information on what type of unique good luck amulets and souvenirs one can get there.

The shrine management was not at all shy about capitalizing on the Seimei boom. There is a series of newly commissioned paintings that line one wall of the grounds, with scenes from folktales about the celebrated soothsayer. The ten paintings illustrate stories about how Seimei employed his skills to protect the capital, manipulate spirit helpers, and forecast the future. Unlike images of the historic Seimei we find in other shrines and in medieval scrolls, the Seimei in these paintings stepped right out of the pages of girls' manga. An example of how the paintings suggest an effort to appeal to a new type of shrine audience is the illustration of a wizard battle between Abeno Seimei and Ashiya Dōman, another court *onmyōji* and Seimei's rival. In the legend, Seimei and Dōman face off in a challenge devised by the emperor in which the two wizards must attempt to divine the contents of a closed box. The new Seimei Jinja painting presents Seimei as a handsome young man with a smooth face and aquiline profile, no different from the characters one finds in girls' manga. This is in marked contrast to another famous representation of the scene, one found in Hokusai's *Manga Sketchbook* from 1814. In that illustration Seimei and Dōman are odd looking middle-aged men with moustaches, sideburns and bushy eyebrows.

At the shrine's main kiosk, female shrine attendants (*miko*) sell sanctified amulets and charms, many of them updated and redesigned with a red pentagram, or with other designs that appeal to young women. For example, one may purchase a silver pentagram necklace or *uchiwa* fans delicately adorned with the Chinese bellflower, a five-pointed purple flower often associated with Seimei because of its resemblance to the pentagram. Hung above and near the kiosk are votive plaques (*ema*) signed by Yumemakura Baku, Okano Reiko and other notable artists, writers and celebrities. At one point the movie poster for the film *Onmyōji* was tacked up near the restrooms. A new addition to the grounds is a tiny pavilion named the Bellflower Retreat, located near the front gate. Here one may purchase the shrine's officially licensed products, including key chains, cell phone straps, exorcism wands, incense, feng shui compasses, Seimei resin figurines, and CDs. The interest in Seimei-related items and souvenirs spilled out



from the shrine itself, and a local businessman who once sold neckties converted his nearby store into the "Onmyōji Original Goods Shop." Mr. Tashima, the owner, told me that while his former necktie shop was barely making it, his new business had proved to be quite profitable. He commissioned his own line of postcards,

posters, T-shirts and occult objects that carry the image of a cute, manga-like Seimei figure.

In a manner similar to the way in which Harry Potter books and films resulted in increased tourism to Oxford University locations that inspired scenes for the series, *onmyōji* media products have also stimulated interest in the Seimei Shrine. Perhaps consumers enjoy the sense that these spots link the realms of fiction, fantasy and the supernatural with an actual place that they themselves are able to experience firsthand. This draw, combined with the historic wizard's transformation into a modern icon and folk celebrity who is attractive to female consumers such as Misako, has made the shrine especially attractive. There are other factors, as well, that have contributed to the Seimei boom and interest in the shrine. For further discussion please see "Extreme Makeover for a Heian-Era Wizard," L. Miller, *Mechademia* Vol. 3, 2008: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/mechademia/summary/v003/3.miller.html> If you want to visit the Seimei Jinja, the shrine's website provides information on festivals and events, as well as a map and directions on how to get there: <http://www.seimeijinja.jp/>

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## Despite Tohoku Earthquake, Japanese Yen has kept its value

I thought that the Japanese yen would surely lose its value as a result of the Tohoku Earthquake, devastating tsunami and the debate surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant—perhaps even to 120 yen to the dollar. However, foreign investors must have thought otherwise. Mysteriously, the yen has kept its value. Actually, it has become even more valuable than before, as the exchange rate as of June 30, 2011 is 81 yen to the dollar (\$ 0.12 per yen level.)



I understand that the foreign investors who had been net buyers of Japanese stocks several months before the disaster were not deterred, and that rather they believe that Japanese stocks are a good buy because they are relatively cheap for their value. It seems that foreign investors still trust Japan and her resilience.

	Debt as % of GDP	% of Foreign Owned
Japan	204%	7%
UK	89%	30%
US	99%	31%
Spain	39%	39%
Italy	133%	46%
France	97%	59%
Germany	89%	60%
Greece	137%	75%
Portugal	99%	80%
Ireland	113%	83%

Perhaps statistics such as those on the left also explain foreign investors' faith in Japan. As you can see, Japan "isn't a strong candidate for default (not yet anyway), despite its very high debt level. " "Almost all of its debt is owned internally." - Josh Sanburn, *Time Magazine*, May 23, 2011.

(Source: Moody's Investors Service, et al.)

## JAS Sushi Club!



The JAS Sushi Club was founded by Dr. Chikako Usui in February 2011. Since then, the club has hosted monthly events at a variety of sushi restaurants in the St. Louis area. The group plans to have one meeting each month, and are looking forward to increasing attendance. If you love sushi and eating great food with great people, please come to the next Sushi Club event!

To find out more about the JAS Sushi Club, please e-mail [cisjas@umsl.edu](mailto:cisjas@umsl.edu) or visit the Sushi Club's Meetup Page by going to <http://www.meetup.com/Sushi-Meetup/>

ありがとうございます！



## Japanese Festival @ MOBOT

On Labor Day Weekend, the Missouri Botanical Garden hosts the Annual Japanese Festival. Every year, the festival gets more exciting—bringing in more attendees than the last. People from all over the country come to St. Louis to enjoy everything from Aikido to Karaoke! With the festival being so auspicious, its organizers are always in search of volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact [cisjas@umsl.edu](mailto:cisjas@umsl.edu) to receive more information. To the right is a list of organizations who are in search of volunteers.



### Omikoshi (Opening Procession)

Volunteers will help carry the *omikoshi* (portable shrine) during the opening procession. Great experience!

### Cultural Activities (Led by the Japanese Language School)

Volunteers will help operate a book and craft store as well as help out with cultural activities like *origami*, face painting, and *kendama*.

### Cooking Demonstration

Volunteers will help set up and run a cooking demonstration which features a variety of delicious Japanese dishes!

### JAS Beer & Sake Booth

Volunteers will help sell beer and sake at the Japan America Society Booth.



## St. Louis Japanese Language School

Are you interested in learning Japanese? The St. Louis Japanese Language School, which is housed at Webster University, has started providing Japanese language classes to adults in addition to children as of April 1st. Curriculum includes basic conversation, reading and writing. Students will also learn about various Japanese celebrations and cultural activities. Classes meet every Saturday and there are around 45 classes per academic year. The school year follows the Japanese school calendar. **Please take a look below for more information regarding the Japanese classes offered!**

**Kokusai I (Children's classes)** - 8-18 years old  
**Kokusai II (Adult classes)** - 18 years and older

### **Class Course:**

Beginner 9:00AM-10:15AM  
 Introductory 10:25AM—11:40AM  
 Intermediate 11:45AM—1:00PM

### **Semesters:**

1st Semester: April—August (Summer Vacation: July-mid August)  
 2nd Semester: September—December  
 3rd Semester: January—March

For more information, please e-mail [stljp.principal@hotmail.co.jp](mailto:stljp.principal@hotmail.co.jp) !

You can also visit the school's website at <http://www.stlnihongo.org/index-e.html> and find the school on Facebook!



**Remember, it is never too late to learn a language!!!**

## Resources for Language Exchange!

Many people say that they don't have enough time to learn a foreign language, but within the past few years, there have been numerous websites that have been developed to help people in their foreign language studies. That's right – you don't need to pay big bucks on Rosetta Stone or some sort of other language learning software to reach proficiency. Many of these websites incorporate a wide variety of languages – from Japanese to Swahili to German. With growing globalization, it is becoming more important now than ever for young people to be appreciative of other cultures and languages.

With the rising popularity of Japanese popular culture, interest in learning Japanese language among American students has also increased. Japanese is a very beautiful and interesting language. Why won't you try it?

Some of the resources that are popular among learners of Japanese and Japanese learners of English are below! Be sure to check them out!



## Popular Japanese Proverbs

Just like many other languages, the Japanese language is full of proverbs, or "wise sayings." As one may expect, many Japanese proverbs are about perseverance and hard work. Here are a few examples!

虎穴に入らずんば虎子を得ず。  
Koketsu ni irazunba koji wo ezu.

If you do not enter the tiger's cave, you will not catch its cub.



井の中の蛙大海を知らず。

I no naka no kawazu taikai wo shirazu.



## MAKE YOUR OWN: MIZUYOKAN! (水羊羹)



Mizuyokan is a popular summer snack in Japan. It is a type of yokan (type of sweet agar that is most commonly made out of red bean paste) that has high water content and is often served chilled. There are many different flavors of mizuyokan available, including those like green tea, lychee, and mango. It is often given as omiyage.

Compared to other Japanese sweets like green tea ice cream (which is not traditionally Japanese) and pocky, mizuyokan is not popular among people from other countries. This could be attributed to the fact that it has more of an earthy, round sweetness than an intense, sugary sweetness. The texture is also just a little more consistent than jello, giving the mouth a unique sensation when consumed. Despite this, mizuyokan is healthier than many other types of sweets, being naturally low in fat and containing some fiber.

You can make your own mizuyokan easily! Just follow this recipe, and you'll be able to enjoy the discreet sweetness of mizuyokan in the comfort of your home.

### Ingredients:

- 1 stick kanten (agar agar), or 2 tsp kanten powder
- 1 1/4 cup water
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 lb (1 1/2 cup) anko sweet azuki bean paste

### Directions

Soak kanten stick in water for one hour or until softened. Squeeze the softened kanten and tear it into small pieces. Add the kanten pieces or kanten powder in 1 and 1/4 cup of water in a medium pan and bring to a boil, stirring. Turn down the heat to low. Simmer until the kanten dissolves well, stirring. Add sugar and stir well. Add anko. Stir constantly and simmer until thickened. Stop the heat. Pour the mixture in a flat container. Cool it until firm. Cut the yokan into small blocks to serve. MAKES 4 SERVINGS

A frog in a well does not know the great sea.

継続は力なり。

Keizoku wa chikara nari.

Literally: Perseverance is strength.



花鳥風月

Kachou Fuugetsu

Flower, Bird, Wind, Moon:

Experience the beauties of nature, and in doing so learn about yourself

