

Japan America Society of Minnesota



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The Tsūshin is a membership publication of the Japan America Society of Minnesota

August 2021 Vol. 30, No. 9

Recap: Kamishibai/Storytelling with Minneapolis Ibaraki Sister City Association



Karl Reinhardt,
MISCA President

On Thursday, July 8th, JASM joined the Minneapolis Ibaraki Sister City Association (MISCA) for a presentation of three *kamishibai* stories. *Kamishibai* is a Japanese form of storytelling told mainly through illustrations. There is text on the back of the illustrations which the storyteller recites.

The evening began with MISCA

President Karl Reinhardt giving an overview of MISCA's history and the various events they hold throughout the year. He then passed the proverbial mic off to Karen Kersting, the storyteller for the event.



Karen Kersting

After giving a brief history of *kamishibai* storytelling in Japan, Karen shared the night's first story, *Kaguya-hime*, otherwise known as *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*. In this familiar Japanese tale, a baby is found in a bamboo stalk. She quickly grows into a beautiful princess, her beauty attracting many princes. Nevertheless, she can't stay on Earth and some heavenly figures come to take her away in the end.

The second story, *The Mother Cat (Neko no Okaa-san)*, is based on a true story of a mother cat attempting to rescue her five kittens in a fire in NYC in March 1996. The mother bravely rescues all the kittens, ensuring their safety and survival.



In the third and final story, *Peach Boy (Momotaro)*, a boy is found in a peach and finds himself having to defend his land from some terrifying demons. With the company of the local animals, Momotaro defeats the demons and brings peace to his village.

JASM would like to give our greatest thanks to Karen Kersting and MISCA for bringing us this amusing form of Japanese storytelling that we all very much enjoyed. We hope to discover more fun stories in the future!

Upcoming: Shinshunkai Summer Throwback

Obon is an annual summer festival to commemorate our ancestors. While we had to cancel our usual in-person Obon Festival in Como Park, we are instead inviting you to join a festive online event, scheduled for the third week of August.

This festival is a throwback to our Spring Festival, Shinshunkai, which we celebrated in March. We greatly appreciate the artists and performers who have agreed to join this event as well. **From Sunday, August 15th until Saturday, August 21st** you can enjoy videos of performances at any time you want. If you saw these great performances back in March, please let your friends and family know how good they are. Now is their chance to see them!

Sunday, August 15th -21st

\$8: Non-Member

Free: Member

The ticket is not refundable, but transferable.



Please sign up today by clicking [here](#) or scan the QR code!



Shinshunkai Summer Throwback

Aug. 15- 21, 2021



Featured artists and performers (from the picture top left):

Ensō Daiko (Formerly MU DAIKO)

Damien "Nijiya" D'Luxe

Thunder Wave

Kazha

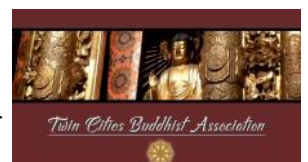
Tomoko Drake, Dango making

Kendama Institute

Yuki Tokuda

Momokusu Iwata, Shamisen Player

Twin Cities Buddhist Association



Report from a Mondale Scholarship Recipient: Lydia Rose



Lydia Rose,
Mondale Scholarship
Recipient 2020-2021

Hello JASM members. My name is Lydia Rose. This May I graduated from the University of Minnesota where I majored in Technical Writing and Communication and minored in Japanese. A little over a year ago I was planning to spend fall semester of my senior year studying abroad in Osaka, Japan. However, that simply wasn't possible. Initially I thought that I could postpone my plans, but again my program was canceled.

However, I was able to find an online program through CET for this summer. While it wasn't what I

had planned, I have learned so much and am so thankful that I was able to take advantage of this opportunity.

Over the course of the program, I have had my usual grammar lessons, but also lessons on Japanese culture such as holidays and traditions, pop culture, geography, etc. all entirely in Japanese.

The biggest project we had was a speech presentation. It was a long and difficult process, but the most



rewarding aspect of it was conducting research interviews with several Japanese students and teachers. For my project, I chose to talk about the differences between American and Japanese mascots. This made my interviews very entertaining since many interviewees laughed and smiled while telling me about their favorite mascots.

My favorite thing about the program has been having a language partner. My first meeting with my language partner was the first time that I had ever had a conversation with a native Japanese speaker who didn't also know English. Up to that point, I had never realized how much I depended on my teachers and fellow students knowing English. It forced me to be more creative and think more critically about what mistakes I might be making to cause miscommunication.

I have no intention of letting this be the end of my Japanese studies. Since I graduated, I've been looking for job opportunities at companies that work with or have branches in Japan, and I hope that I will be able to continue to grow and utilize my skills at one of these locations soon.

Thank you all so much for your support and for giving me this opportunity. There were many times when I felt like giving up, but I remembered how many of you have invested your time and resources into my journey and I knew I had to keep pushing forward. ありがとうございます。

Lydia Rose

CET: cetacademicprograms.com

Mondale Award Nominations 2021



Ambassador Mondale awarding the Mondale Award 2020
(left) and the recipient, William Deef (right)

In 1997, Japan America Society of Minnesota created the *Mondale Award for Japan-Minnesota Partnership* to recognize outstanding contributions to the building of understanding, cooperation, and respect between the people of Japan and Minnesota. The award was named for — and first presented to — Joan and Walter Mondale to recognize Mrs. Mondale's decades-long effort to promote the arts in both countries, and Ambassador Mondale's service as United States Ambassador to Japan. We will continue celebrating the life and legacy of Walter Mondale through the Japan America community.

JASM hopes to continue the distribution of this esteemed award this year. If you know someone who has dedicated their efforts to the continued benefit of the U.S-Japan relationship, please nominate them!

All applications must be submitted either by email to jasm@us-japan.org or by filling out the form [here](#) by **Monday, August 16**.

Membership News (6/21-7/20, 2021)

Thanks to the following new JASM members:

Ken Takekoshi

Thanks to the following renewing JASM members:

Robert Atendido, Erin Bator, Michiko Kato Dressen, Dawn Erickson, Sarah Farley and Betty Tisel, Megan Hashizume, Robert and Reiko Imrie, Keiko Kawakami, Donald Klein, Eri Larson, Machiko Larson, Darryl and Yukiko Magree, Joseph Montgomery, Bjork and Vicki Ostrom, William Paterson, Jane Powers, Chieko Rogers, Jack Sattel and Karen Sontag-Sattel, Diana Soller, Robin Sorenson, Luke Walbert, Alfred Zdrazil

Thanks to the following renewing Corporate members:

Kiku Enterprises, Inc.

Macalester College Asian Languages & Cultures
Department

Recap: A Story of Obon with Twin Cities Buddhist Association Sangha

Joining JASM on Thursday, July 22nd were Reverend Todd Tsuchiya and Reverend Chiemi Onikura Bly from the Twin Cities Buddhist Association Sangha. They explained the origins and history of Obon celebrations across Japan, the US, and here in the Twin Cities.



Rev. Todd Tsuchiya

For those unfamiliar, Obon is an annual summer festival where one commemorates one's ancestors through various rituals such as folk dancing and singing. Although last year and this year's festivals have been cancelled, JASM's Obon Festival in Como Park has been a celebration of Japanese food, music, dancing, and family gathering, ending with the release of hundreds of lanterns into the night.

Rev. Todd opened by describing the origins of Obon and what led us to what we know it as today. He explained that Obon originates with those seeking to amend the sufferings of the dead. Specifically, upon learning that his mother had fallen into the Realm of Hungry Ghosts after her death, Mokuren, a disciple of the Buddha, looked to release his mother from her suffering. After finally freeing her, he danced with joy, and from it came the *Bon Odori* or "Bon Dance." Rev. Todd then continued to illustrate the joyous, unselfish thinking that goes into celebrating Obon before handing the baton off to Rev. Chiemi.



Rev. Chiemi Onikura Bly

Rev. Chiemi described Obon as one of the two major holidays of Japan, the other being New Year's Day. She illustrated that the customs of Obon as they are known in Japan are based on a mix of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and the veneration of the dead. She said it is traditionally believed that during Obon the souls of the dead return to Earth to enjoy the presence of the living. She then gave an overview of various Obon traditions such as the cleaning of family graves and lantern lighting.

Rev. Todd then took over to introduce the US history of Obon beginning with Hawaii in 1905 and its growth in popularity with the

introduction to the mainland by Rev. Yoshio Iwanaga in the 1930's. Obon in the Twin Cities, however, didn't begin until the 1960's when the Twin Cities Buddhist Association began celebrating it in Minnehaha Park. Rev. Todd then showed us lots of interesting old photographs from the 1960s to the 1990s of Obon in the Twin Cities. Many photos included participants several of us are familiar with and know personally.



We at JASM would like to extend our most heartfelt thanks to Reverend Todd and Reverend Chiemi for presenting such an interesting, detailed cultural and historical look at the story of Obon.



Group photo with the speakers and the participants

*Please thank our members
with your support!*

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Becoming Global Citizens: A Story of JET Alumni Association of Minnesota (JETAAMN)

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program is a competitive employment opportunity that allows young professionals to live in Japan. As a short series in the JASM newsletter, we would like to introduce you to JETAAMN (Jet Alumni Association of Minnesota). We will explore JETAAMN members' experiences and explain what JETAAMN is doing today.



Greg Schuneman

From 2013-2017 I lived in Fukuoka Prefecture as part of the JET Program, first teaching high school students and then working directly in the Board of Education as the Prefectural Advisor for high school ALTs (Assistant Language Teachers) within Fukuoka. During those four years I learned a lot about Japan and myself, and a surprising amount about the US. It's always fun to learn about a new place, but I found that moving to Japan actually brought about a deeper understanding of my own home too.

As a fresh college graduate in a new country some of the challenges I had could be broken down into two categories: Is this a "Japan problem" or an "adult problem?" "Japan problems" can be cultural gaffes and misunderstandings, language issues, a difference of systems that one isn't used to, or even something as simple as food choices. "Adult problems" are things such as budgeting, time management, and even just working full-time. After the honeymoon period of moving to Japan, there is a possibility of mixing the two up and attributing any difficulty to the "Japan" bucket, which can lead many to have unfulfilling experiences. However, I was fortunate enough to take a break when I felt overwhelmed – with a lovely trip to Nara. It allowed me to refocus on what I love about Japan, and I learned to grow up a little bit.

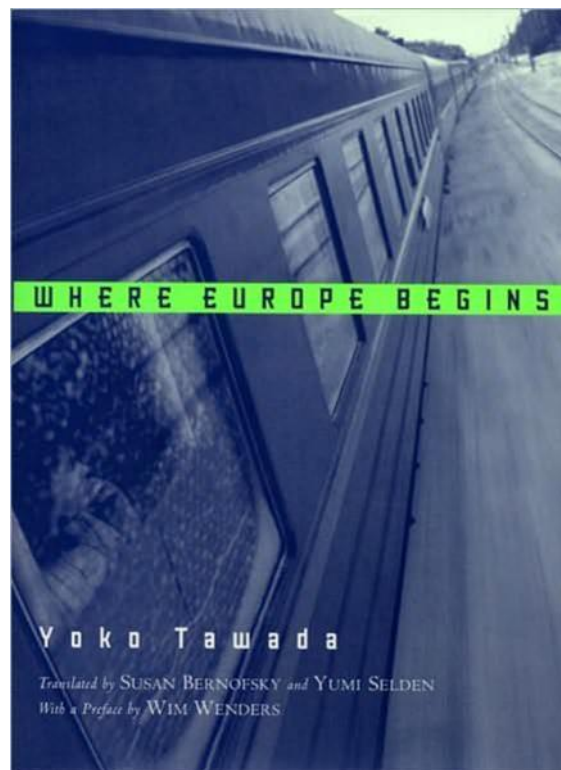
One of the biggest challenges for me that continues to this day is the study of Japanese. When I landed in Japan, I knew limited Japanese (I actually got lost asking for directions to the grocery store my first night), but I knew that in order to get the most fulfillment out of my time in Japan I should learn the language as best as I could. I challenged myself with the different JLPT levels and tried to have conversations with as many native speakers as possible. This opened many doors for me and led me to be able to do things independently in Japan. I also found a lifelong hobby by joining a judo dojo.



I would encourage anyone who is interested in the JET Program to apply. It is a great opportunity for participants to have great experiences, but this experience is a two-way street. There is a responsibility that comes with working as a JET participant. Not only are we getting experiences for ourselves, but we are also providing positive experiences for others.

Greg Schuneman

Tom Haeg's Book Review



Where Europe Begins; Yoko Tawada, New Directions Books; 2002 (English translation).

Expecting a travelogue or novel, I was not disappointed in this fine collection of short stories originally published in German magazines by a native Japanese. The preface, written by famous German filmmaker Wim Wenders, sets the tone of the book: "... this is definitely not a 'German' book... No one else but a Japanese woman could have these experiences." This begs the question: what accounts for this so-called 'Japanese woman' exclusivity?

Tawada's experiences trend to everyday observations around her immediate surroundings (reflection in a pond, an ear, dolls, etc.), analyzed by her bustling imagination. They develop into musings authenticated by her dreams. Since they are dreams, the reader is at a loss to pass judgment on their validity. So we just accept them and say, "Okay, why not?" While she denies being an ethnologist, she is. It seems she just can't help it.

Reader be forewarned, some of her text borders on the nonsensical and includes discordant imagery which would even make Yoko Ono blush. It can be quite abstract, subjective, and occasionally shocking. Example: "On Tuesdays I like to eat my father. He tastes of venison. Bread dough is what he's made of."

Tawada was born in Tokyo and moved to Hamburg when she was only 22. She is fluent in German and Japanese, publishing stories, poems, and essays in both languages which have accorded her numerous literary awards and prizes. Only two of the stories in *Where Europe Begins* were written in Japanese, all others in German.

Tom Haeg

2021 Obon Festival Cancelled



We would like to inform you that the Obon Festival 2021 has been officially cancelled this year due to COVID-19. The decision was made with everyone's safety in mind, since we do not feel comfortable enough yet to get

together with what would likely be a minimum of 10,000 people. We are looking forward to seeing you at the Obon Festival 2022!

Meanwhile, there will be a small program of a lantern release on the pond at Como Park this year. The date and details will be announced later on the [JASM website](http://www.jasm-mn.org).

The annual Obon Festival, the largest Japan-related festival in Minnesota, usually takes place in Como Park in August. Modeled after summer festivals held across Japan, it features stage performances, cultural demonstrations, activities, handicrafts and souvenirs, and, of course, Japanese food.

Japan America Society of Minnesota

- Membership Application ○ Change of Address
- Membership Renewal ○ Tax-deductible Donation

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I would like to make an additional tax-deductible donation of _____

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Japan America Society of Minnesota
P.O. Box 26639, Minneapolis, MN 55426

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Patron.....	\$1,000+
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Contributing.....	\$100+
Individual	\$30
Student	\$20
Household	\$50
(2 adults plus children under 18)	

Calendar

August

Shinshunkai Summer Throwback, Aug. 15-21

Become a JASM Member online

Support our mission and become a member!

1. Go to mn-japan.org
 2. At the top, hover over 'Support' then click on 'Join'
 3. Select your membership type and read the benefits and instructions.
- You can also become a member using your smartphone.

Japanese Conversation Clubs



The Japanese Speaking Club is an informal meeting for those wishing to practice Japanese. We encourage those just beginning the language as well as native speakers to participate to meet new people, discuss experiences in Japan, or simply to speak Japanese.

This group currently meets regularly over Zoom. For more details, send an email to group coordinator Will Etkin: will.etkin@atgmail.com

Check out another conversation group: **Twin Cities Japanese Conversation Meetup Group** (<https://www.twincitiesjapaneseconversation.com/>)

Note: This is a private group. In order to join, a questionnaire must be completed at the web site linked above.

The goal of Twin Cities Japanese Conversation Meetup is language fluency in either Japanese or English. This group is for Japanese language learners who want to improve their Japanese speaking skills or/and native Japanese speakers who want to improve their English speaking. Those who just want to help out are also welcome.

Parts to the meetup: 自己紹介 (self-introductions), 質疑応答 (questions and answers about language) and 会話練習 (conversation practice).

Meetings: Edina (Monday), Minnetonka (Thursday), Saint Paul (Saturday).

Since March 16, 2020 the group is holding all meetings online.

For any question about this group, please email Mariquita Anderson: mariquita@twincitiesjapaneseconversation.com



J | A | S | M

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of MINNESOTA

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通信

Tsūshin
August 2021

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a non-profit, non-political association engaged in bringing the peoples of Japan and the United States closer together in mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. Through programs and interchange, it endeavors to promote an appreciation of cultural, educational, economic, public, and other affairs of interest to both peoples. Membership in the society is open to individuals, corporations, and other organizations interested in furthering its programs.

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a member of the National Association of Japan-America Societies.

Please report any inaccuracies you find in this publication to jasm@us-japan.com

JASM July Events



Water Lantern

灯籠流し, torou nagashi

- Water lantern for send-off
- Can be seen at any places in Japan
- Became popular in US

Gozan no Okuribi in Kyoto

京都 五山の送り火 (大文字焼き)

August 16th



A Story of Obon with Twin Cities Buddhist Association Sangha



Kamishibai/Storytelling with Minneapolis Ibaraki Sister City Association

