

International Japanese Studies Lecture Series

International Japanese Studies Group at Kanagawa University

The International Japanese Studies Group in the Institute for Humanities Research at Kanagawa University is pleased to announce its autumn lecture series schedule.

All meetings in this semester will take place from 15:30 to 17:00 in 6019 on our Minatomirai Campus. All talks will be given in English. Preregistration at least a day in advance for those coming from outside the KU community is greatly appreciated. Please use the QR code on the information page for each talk. If you are coming from off campus, please also register as a Guest at the Information counter near the entrance before coming up to the room. (Preregistration is not necessary to attend talks online, when offered.)

Inquiries (お問い合わせ): James Welker jrwelker@kanagawa-u.ac.jp

Autumn 2025 Schedule

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—Yen-yi Chan, Sophia University

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—Quintana Scherer, Kanagawa University

Our 2026–2027 lecture series will begin in April or May. Please watch for an announcement in March.



Sankeien

Honmoku, Yokohama, December 2024

(Photo by James Welker)

Presence and Performance: Devotional Images of Shaka and His Sacred Body in Medieval Nara

Yen-Yi Chan

Assistant Professor
Faculty of Liberal Arts, Sophia University

Wednesday, 24 September 2025 (In Person Only)

15:30–17:00

Room 6019

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: The Kamakura period (1185–1333) witnessed a renewed interest in Shaka (Sk. Śākyamuni), which was particularly prominent among a group of monks associated with the religious communities of Nara. These monks regarded Shaka not merely as a sage of the distant past, but also as a savior actively present in this world. Their understanding of the Buddha drew on the *Hikekyō* (*Compassionate Flower Sutra*), which gained currency in the twelfth century. Scholars have often interpreted this devotion to Shaka as a reaction against the widespread belief in Amida, an argument largely grounded in textual sources. This presentation takes a different approach by examining visual representations of Shaka, including carved icons, painted nirvana scenes, and relics or reliquaries, particularly those associated with the monk Jōkei (1155–1203) and his broader social circle. Born from the Southern branch of the Fujiwara clan, Jōkei entered Kōfukuji at a young age and was among the religious leaders who revived Shaka worship in the twelfth century. This talk investigates the relationship between these visual representations and the vision of Shaka articulated in the *Hikekyō* and Jōkei's teachings. I argue that these images and objects made the Buddha's body present and performative, enabling devotees to envision his existence across multiple spatial and temporal realms. Furthermore, they reveal a new devotional program in which the image of Shaka was integrated with that of Amida, not in opposition but in a complementary relationship that reflected the pluralistic soteriology embraced by clerics in Nara at the time.



Standing Shaka Buddha by Kaikei, ca. 1210. Wood with gold and cut gold leaf. H. 81.8 cm. Kimbell Art Museum.

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Monstrous Obsessions: The Undercurrents of Desire in the Aesthetics of Izumi Kyōka

Alejandro Morales Rama

Assistant Professor, Department of Spanish, Kanagawa University

Wednesday, 22 October 2025 (Hybrid)

15:30–17:00

Room 6019

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: Izumi Kyōka (1873–1939) was a writer of novels, novellas, and plays that developed a unique Romantic style opposed to the rise of naturalism in the literature of Meiji Japan. His oeuvre was largely popular among women, due in part to his depiction of suffering yet beautiful and brave women. On the other hand, he is known as one of the foremost representatives of the fantastic genre in the Meiji Japan. Kyōka's awareness of injustice and discrimination is mostly encapsulated in the female characters that inhabit his stories, who, oftentimes, are linked to uncanny events and monstrous figures which the male protagonist encounter.



“Ghost of Otsuya” (1926) by Yama Rokurō. Published in *Kuraku* to illustrate Izumi's *Mayukakushi no rei*. Used with permission from Club Cosmetics.

This talk discusses three of his later works: “Magic” (*Yōjutsu*, 1911), “The Story of Three Who Were Blind” (*Sannin no mekura no hanashi*, 1912), and “A Silent Obsession” (*Mayukakushi no rei*, 1924); and focuses on Kyōka's concept of twilight, which he proposed on his 1908's essay “The Taste of Twilight” (*Tasogare no aji*). This talk proposes that this concept is the key to understanding the inner workings of his novellas belonging to the fantastic genre, since it sets the basis for a different way of knowing which opposes the epistemology of Civilization and Enlightenment of the Meiji period by creating liminal spaces where fixed identities are threatened.

In this ongoing project, the analysis of different works by this author, this paper utilizes the theories of post-structuralists Deleuze and Guattari, who experimented with new ways of understanding “being.” First, by using their concept of assemblage it will analyze Kyōka's

concept of twilight as a combination of setting, characters, and ideologies that allow for movements of deterritorialization, meaning a multiplication and indetermination of identities. Secondly, through their concept of becoming monster, this talk analyzes the flows of desire within the stories: voyeuristic male desires left unfulfilled in “Magic,” lustful desires that give way to jealousy and tragedy within the love triangle of “A Tale of Three That Were Blind,” and finally the obsessive desire to become the perfect wife that transcends even death in “A Silent Obsession.” Like the *obake* that Kyōka so fervently loved, the characters we encounter through the eyes of the main protagonist seemingly shapeshift, and they bring about changes in the way the male protagonists think, a change that Kyōka probably wanted to extend to his readers.

To Attend Online (Zoom):

Access the Zoom Meeting via the following Meeting ID and Passcode. **Preregistration is NOT required to attend via Zoom.**

Meeting ID: 952 9921 4976 Passcode: KUMMC

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当日は上記の Zoom ミーティング ID とパスコードでログインしてください。



Inquiries ・ お問い合わせ: James Welker jrwelker@kanagawa-u.ac.jp

Difficulties of Translating Japanese Literature into Foreign Languages: With Special Reference to Malayalam Translation of Ishikawa Takuboku's *Ichiku no suna* (A handful of sand)

Pullattu Abraham George

Specially Appointed Professor, Faculty of Cross-Cultural and Japanese Studies, Kanagawa University

Wednesday, 19 November 2025 (Hybrid)

15:30–17:00

Room 6019

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: In this lecture, an attempt will be made to highlight certain problems which were confronted by me during my translation of *Ichiku no Suna* (A Handful of Sand) by Ishikawa Takuboku (1886–1912) into the Malayalam language. Takuboku, a well-known poet of tanka and modern style poems of the late Meiji period, left a unique mark in the world of tanka poetry by making two major reforms. Traditionally tanka poems, consisting of only 31 syllables, are usually written in a single line, whereas Takuboku introduced a new style of writing tanka in three lines while maintaining the number of the syllables. Since maintaining 31 syllables while translating tanka into a foreign language is impossible, this new style of writing in three lines has given a kind of liberty to the translator as he/she can easily maintain the three-line style. Another reform Takuboku introduced was the usage of common man's language (spoken form) instead of elegant, rhetoric and classical style language.



Ishikawa Takuboku Memorial Hall, Morioka

Translation of *Ichiku no suna* into Malayalam not only gave me an opportunity to feel and realize the true intensity and depth of Takuboku's tanka, but also it made me realize the difficulty of the task of translating a literary work, especially poetry, from one language into another, as the racial or linguistic characteristics, thought patterns, cultural and historical evolution of societies, etc., are different from country to country. Prior to the translation of *Ichiku no suna*, I had translated into Malayalam several short stories and novellas of Miyazawa Kenji and Shimazaki Toson but never faced such difficulties as I confronted when I translated the above-mentioned tanka poems.

In my lecture, first of all, I will be briefly introducing various Western theories on translation and then touch on various difficulties I faced while translating. In my opinion, translation theories are not essential for producing highly accurate translation; what is required is sound knowledge of the source language and its culture, sound knowledge of the target language and its culture, and deep knowledge of the socio-cultural background of the author or poet. But still sometime, the so-called theories help the translator to determine usage of certain terms and idiomatic phrases. Translation theories, like "domesticizing," "foreignizing," "use of third language words and phrases," etc., are helpful. I have mainly applied the theory of "foreignizing" where if a word in the original (Japanese) text does not find an appropriate equivalent in the target language (Malayalam), the original word will be introduced to the readers of the translation in transliterated form. But I also used occasionally the strategies of "domesticizing" and "use of third language words and phrases."

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Meeting ID: 935 8457 1391 Passcode: KUMMC

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“Toward the Depth of the Gaze”: Taki Kōji and Discourses on Photography in Post-68 Japan

Elise Voyau

Assistant Professor

Department of Cross-Cultural Studies, Kanagawa University

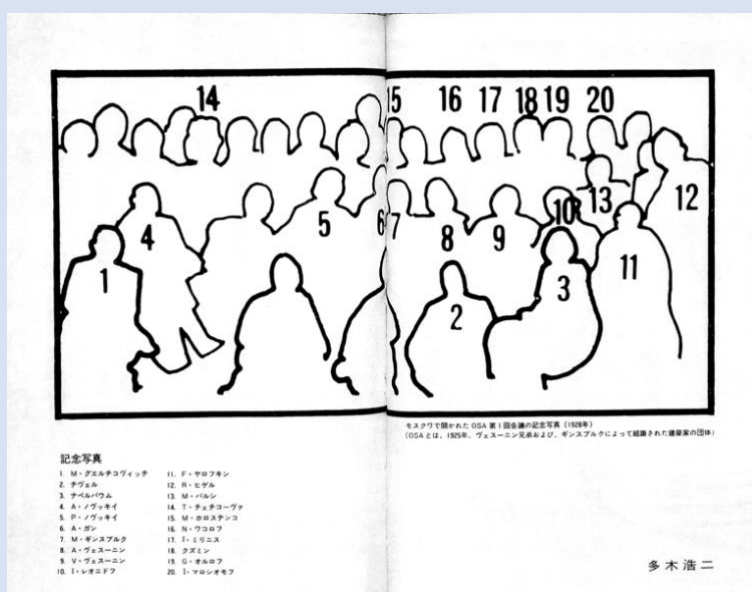
Wednesday, 17 December 2025 (Hybrid)

15:30–17:00

Room 6019

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: The late 1960s in Japan were marked by large-scale protest movements, largely led by students. Within the field of visual arts, this was also a period in which photography theory began to develop, driven by a number of influential photographer-critics—in particular those who co-founded the magazine *Provoke* in 1968: Taki Kōji, Nakahira Takuma, and Okada Takahiko, together with photographers Moriyama Daidō and Takanashi Yutaka. Although the magazine is better known today, few studies have explored what happened after, in the 1970s.



“Commemorative Photograph,” composition by Taki Kōji, published in *Bijutsu techō*, June 1974.

limiting the gaze to that of the photographer, but expanding it to include all those in media societies who consume and read images. His reflections on the place of humans in the world, on image technologies, and on imperialism and capitalism allow us to rethink the legacies of the 1960s protest movements, their mutations, and their contemporary resonances.

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This presentation focuses on the figure of Taki Kōji who, coming from an academic background, was briefly a photographer, then a curator, and a critic. His writings are generally discussed only in relation to his participation in *Provoke*, at the height of the student movements. Here, I propose to examine his work from 1972 onwards, a year that represents the symbolic end of the protests. I will especially interrogate the recurrent theme of the gaze (*manazashi*) he explored through his writings on photography, the exhibitions he curated, and his collaborations with photographers.

Thinking about the gaze compels one to question the dynamics of power between who looks and who is looked at. Taki also seeks to move away from an author-centred logic by no longer



Bodies of Proof: Little People, *Yokohama-e*, and the Imagined Foreigner

Quintana Scherer

Assistant Professor

Department of Cross-Cultural Studies, Kanagawa University

Wednesday, 21 January 2026 (In Person Only)

15:30–17:00

Room 6019

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

Abstract: In 1859, a genre of ukiyo-e prints known as *yokohama-e* appeared almost overnight. Capitalizing on domestic interest in the newly opened foreign settlement in Yokohama, artists and their publishers presented to the eager consumer a fascinating array of images of the new foreigners who had arrived on Japanese shores. These *yokohama-e* depicted the exotic costumes and unfamiliar customs of the members of the Ansei Five-Power Treaty nations: America, France, Russia, Britain, and Holland. Popular prints showed these foreigners walking the streets of Yokohama, playing games, and even hosting parties.

While scholars and collectors have long been interested in how *yokohama-e* illustrate the Japanese view of Western foreigners who arrived during the 1850s through the 1870s, the relationship between observed reality and printed image was complicated, as artists had few opportunities to observe foreign residents. This paper investigates this complicated relationship through a small group of *yokohama-e* that depict *kobito* (literally “little people”) who supposedly had arrived in Yokohama from the far-off country of Kobitojima in the early 1860s. Measuring mere centimeters tall, these imagined foreigners hailed from a fictional country. It is easy for the modern viewer to simply dismiss these prints as laughable misunderstandings or flights of fancy on the part of the Edo artist. However, like many other *yokohama-e*, these prints employed a number of visual strategies to create compelling images, seducing the viewer with their purported realism. Prints of *kobito* illustrate the ways *yokohama-e* drew on the broader Edo print culture to create works that could inform and entertain their viewers. These printed images of imagined peoples helped Edo viewers navigate a new world where encounters with foreigners was increasingly becoming a reality.



Utagawa Yoshikazu, *Kobitojima* (Little People Island), 1863. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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