Welcome to the 1998 June edition of JET Streams. This edition is being distributed to more than 6,000 JETAA members and 2,000 returning JETs. Current membership of JETAA now stands at about 34% of all those who have participated on the JET Programme. 50% of JETs who left the programme in 1997 joined JETAA and once again membership is expected to grow from August.

We hope that new members will take an active part in their local chapter of JETAA and activities can continue to expand as they have done this year.

JET News

As of July 1998 there will be 34 countries on the JET Programme. The new countries to join are: Bulgaria, Holland, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Poland, Switzerland and Turkey. In amongst the group of new JETs are ALTs from China and Korea.

This year in March the first Conference for Returning JETs was held. Third year JETs were invited to participate at this three day event in the Sunshine City Convention Center, Ikebukuro, Tokyo. Around 160 JETs came to listen to presentations centering on how to prepare for, and cover aspects concerning life upon returning home. Guest speakers from JET participants' home countries representing a variety of organisations and industries came to speak. For JETAA members who are interested in getting involved in this event next year please contact CLAIR at the address shown below. We are looking for speakers and are open to suggestions for what JETAA members think would be useful for returning JETs.

CLAIR News Online

Starting with the April issue of CLAIR News, this bimonthly newsletter sent to current JETs has become available on the Internet via CLAIR's homepage, <http://www.clair nippon net.ne.jp>. It is called "E-CLAIR News" or "Electronic CLAIR News". Back issues will also eventually become available on line.

Please be aware that because anybody on the Internet will be able to access E-CLAIR News, some articles including sensitive information only intended for the JET community have been excluded from the homepage edition. It is not an exact replica of the paper version.

This newsletter contains the latest information from CLAIR and is updated 6 times per year. So far for the latest information on pension fund or tax issues check it out.

As for JET Streams, this is already available on the home page including back copies from June 1996.

Unfortunately entry updates for JETAA membership cannot yet be made directly from CLAIR’s homepage. Apologies for any inconvenience this may cause and in the meantime please send updates to: jet-aa@clair.or.jp

Japanese Study

From May 18th until June 30th a sample Japanese study programme will be available on the Internet. Initially this will be for a trial period. It has three levels from basic to advanced and we're interested in your comments. The more positive responses we get the greater chances that we will be able to produce these types of programmes in the future: <http://www.yuki.net/jet> The password for both blocks is "jet98". Please note if your computer doesn’t have Japanese capability you will not be able to access the page properly.

Web Pages

JETAA is rapidly developing on the Internet. Two years ago there was just one chapter which had a site. Within a year 8 new chapters had sites and by the middle of May 1998 15 new chapters had web sites with at least a further 5 planned to start up before the end of June. For information on each chapter’s site see pages 9 & 10 which also have regional reps’ contact details.

Picture by Denise Elvina, Kanagawa-ken

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Prize Winners
A total of 62 entries were received for the Sixth Annual JET Programme Essay Competition, including 6 from JET Alumni. The judges awarded prizes to the following ten entrants:

1st Prize:
Jonathan Stoel (1st Year ALT, Hyogo)

Special Prize:
Wade Carlton
(3rd Year ALT, Fukuoka)
Paul Cowling
(1st Year ALT, Saitama)
Jared Critchfield
(1st Year ALT, Gunma)
Kay Hammond
(1st Year ALT, Kyoto)
Thomas Lechner
(ALT 1995-1998, Kumamoto)

Honourary Prize:
Laura Denison
(3rd Year ALT, Fukushima)
David Flack
(3rd Year ALT, Tottori)
Clive McNaught
(1st Year ALT, Kyoto)
Cary Dipietro
(1st Year ALT, Aomori)

The First and Special Prize winning essays will be published in the Summer 1998 edition of the JET Journal. Congratulations to the prize winners and many thanks to everyone who submitted essays. Once again this year one of the JETAA members received a prize. For those alumni who are interested in submitting an entry into the next competition please see the extra sheet for more details.

INNER LANDSCAPES
by Kay Hammond

A sea of wind rippled across the rice fields whispering for silence.

I felt the simplicity of it sweep aside my jumbled thoughts. Coming to a land where I can not dance with the language, my voice has been stilled. Destiny had requested my presence in a small town in which I am the only foreigner. When you can not speak, you listen for what the words have previously obscured. The rice fields, mountains, rivers and people have taught me much about my own inner landscape.

The strength of a paper lantern
At the end of the O-bon festival period lanterns are placed in the water to guide the ancestors' spirits back to heaven after their few days of visiting the homes of relatives. This spectacle is joyously watched by many along with fireworks. From where I sat, I saw five lanterns drifting quietly with all the time of eternity. There were two red ones that I thought of as my mother and father and there were two yellow ones I thought of as my brother and sister. The four of them were near the sea wall. The fifth one, a yellow one, was much further out to sea. I thought of that one as me. Tears welled in my eyes when I thought of the lantern positions as resembling my life in Japan. I was not sad; I was recognizing the distance between those I love and myself. My family was far from me and by the safety of a solid sea wall. I was on my own out at sea with no other lanterns near me and no sea wall to guide me.

As I regarded the scene before me, its character changed. Despite the distance, the five lanterns were still on the same sea of life. Besides, it was probably a bit boring by the sea wall and more rewarding on an adventurous sea even though there was nothing stable to hang on to. I reflected on how lucky I was to sail the same sea with people I love. I love my sister's sense of humor and blunt outlook on life. "More doing and less thinking" she advised me as she knew I would analyse every experience. Perfect happiness radiates from photos of my brother's face as he holds his first child. All the love he received from our parents is about to be gifted to the next generation. I love every countless detail that my parents have done to help me become the adult I am today. Just knowing I have these people in my life brightens my world. I appreciate my own determination to find a way through the hardships and adjustments. I'm out at sea, but I am sailing. Other lanterns, whoever they are, can see my light. I am showing them the beauty of the open sea and letting them know that there is always another lantern out there to sail to.

Just the right fan
I had been looking for a fan to distance me a little from the oppressive summer heat, but not just any fan. I would
only buy just the right one. I wanted the fan to be more than something to wave away the heat with. My fan would represent a beautiful thing from Japan. However, no fan seemed to be the right one. Nor would any temporary fan suffice. Like the stroke of a perfectly inked kanji, it would be attained in one stroke, no corrections.

Selection still eluded me when I received a fan from the head of the Board of Education. I labored for an hour drawing a thank you cartoon in my fledgling Japanese. Somehow, I sensed that this was important and I needed my artwork to express the sincerity that my language could not. My creation read: "The story of the Fan. When I came to Japan it was hot. I wanted a fan. In Kyoto it was hot. I wanted a fan. I looked and saw many but there was not just the right one. In Fukuchiyama it was hot. I wanted a fan. I looked at many but there was not just the right one. Where could I find the right fan? Then here I was given the right one!" I colored in several self-portraits of me looking for fans. I folded the paper into an origami tray before presenting it as a return gift. The unexpressed truth was that I would not have chosen such a fan myself. It had a simple blue and white design and appeared quite ordinary. I had envisaged my ultimate selection to be a dazzling display of color, elegant golden highlights and worthy of a place in an exhibition.

I stopped and thought.

This kind and gentle man had given this particular fan to me. I did not believe that any particular occasion evoked an obligation. I felt that it showed that he was thinking of me. Perhaps he also showed that he appreciated the efforts I had made in coming to Japan and that he wanted me to be as comfortable as possible. It was not worthy of place in an exhibition, but it found a place in my heart. I did not feel the need to search any more. It was indeed just the right fan.

Even autumn comes to the rice fields

As August gave way to September, the enthusiastic green of the rice fields faded to a tired yellow. The fields were visited one last time as the rice was gathered. The fields were left alone. The initial enthusiasm with which I was greeted had also faded as daily life once again reclaimed people's attention. I felt alone. Empty fields. But the rice fields were not empty; they held the promise of a new harvest. Why let the field of my life lie dormant? I had the ability to cultivate. What would I choose to grow? I cultivated English, Japanese, cultural exchange and friendships. I will share my harvest all year round.

No one is foreign to the river

In my small town I felt as if I had recently passed through being "new and different" to being just "different". I felt like a jigsaw piece in the wrong box. I took my trouble to the river. I waded over the round rocks until I was knee deep in the gentle strokes of the water. Instead of trying to bring order to my thoughts, I simply stood and waited for the river to teach me something. The current skipped past, the trees waved and fish continued to swipe at potential meals. The presence of a non-Japanese person was just part of the picture. My differences did not matter, to the river, nobody's does. I had found a place that would always welcome me. No one is foreign to the river.

**O-negaihismasu River-san**

Friendships were quickly made during the prefectural orientation. Some of those connections also broke as the "Hi, how are you?" phone calls became outnumbered by the "Hi, I want something" calls. Such a problem tugged at my mind as I turned to the river. "I need your advice", I said to the river by throwing a rock in. A friendship was ending and with it a source of support was drifting away. "Choose a stone that resembles your problem" the river inspired me. I picked one with rougher edges than the other stones and held it in my hand. The odd shape of the rock resembled the disharmony I was feeling. I looked at the stone on my flat palm. I realized that, like the problem, the stone was relatively small and easy to deal with. I had been placing too much focus on it. I threw the stone into the river and walked away. I let the friendship end and walked away.

**Submerged rocks also have beauty**

It is an effort for me to speak Japanese and an effort for others to simplify theirs. On days when making the effort seems too great the result is silence. It had been a difficult day of feeling ignored at the office. I was taking a walk when the river called to me. I practiced the now familiar ritual of throwing in a stone to announce my presence and to request a favor, splash, o-negaihismasu. I sat quietly on a rock by the water's edge. It did not take long for the river to teach me today's lesson. Among the waves agitated by recent rain, three small rocks managed to point their tips above the water's restless shuffle. The delicate ripples they created were barely visible within the swirl of the river's other thoughts. The little ripples had attracted my attention, as I felt similarly small within a group of people who were busy with other things. I saw the beauty of the rocks beneath the water. Even though they were initially lost in the turmoil, they still made their small contribution. Even though I get lost in the activity, I can still make my contribution to those who sit near enough to notice. I am also part of the river.

So, too, my students are submerged rocks. In the turmoil of adolescence, Japanese conformity and the struggle to learn English they often look lost. The class clown of the second year throws his sense of humor at his classmates and dissolves their effort to concentrate into a mass of giggles. Later, at the cultural festival he performed the conductor's role in the class song and brought the group together as efficiently as he had earlier scattered them. The Japanese teacher sees him as a troublemaker, I see him as a submerged rock. In a recent class he pulled out the large paper blue eyes I
made to illustrate a sentence in the textbook long ago. They amuse him still. Maybe some of my ripples have reached him, too.

Mountain sensei
A promised outing had been cancelled at the planned time of departure. I felt the disappointment deeply and so I disappeared into the nearby hills. I did not know how far up I needed to walk, but I felt a sense of destiny that I was to be there that day. As I strode up the steep road I listened to music. I pushed myself uphill. The climb and the weight of the backpack I carried became a physical representation of whatever problem I was taking to the mountain. I felt like I was off on some magical adventure. I had never seen the mountain in the autumn, so I was making new discoveries in that world while also making discoveries within. The forest green was interrupted by a bright exclamation mark of a tree's brilliant yellow. "I'm different, too," I said to the tree as I took a photo of its outside and my inner feeling at the same time. I felt an overwhelming sense of the beauty of my own soul. I looked at the trees and considered them to be my friends. I felt that I had a strength within me that easily overpowered any problem that I might have here. I realized that when I say negative things about others is when I am afraid that I am not good enough. If you come from a position of positive regard for people and their own struggles, then there is no need to criticize, only to help if it is welcomed. I also realized that my struggle to learn the Japanese language is also the struggle to be understood as a person. Even in English, most of the time people do not really hear what you say, or they form judgements. I guess everyone wants to be understood, really understood. Perhaps this need to be understood is part of trying to find my place in the world, a place where my abilities are recognized and needed, where I am needed. It all sounds so selfish in a way, but everyone wants to belong somewhere. The beauty of the landscape, the music and the depths of my thoughts moved me to tears. The rivulets of various struggles converged into a stream down my face. As I returned I had a new sense of peace. The mountain had called to teach me and I was lucky enough to hear it.

Little things
It was afternoon naptime for the three-year-olds at the local kindergarten. Like popcorn removed from the heat, the bursts of energy in the room slowly settled. The teachers lay down beside the children to help them settle. I guess the goblins come to the minds of 3-year-olds even in the biggest playground they'll ever know. A little quilt wiggled its way toward me. Closer and closer it inched. The occupant was half off her futon but she was determined to nestle in. Her determination was rewarded and soon little snores announced her victory. As I lay there I reflected that fear of foreign people is truly learned. The occupant of that little quilt did not mind that I was foreign, I was a large source of comfort that would keep her safe while she slept. I marveled in the ability of children to seek the inherent good in everyone. When exactly do we lose that?

The beauty of what is not there
The autumn leaves were summer's final fireworks. Even this last spectacle was finally picked up by the wind and swept from sight. The cultural familiarity I had enjoyed, without realizing it, in my home country was also a distant season. However, the over-familiarity was also gone. English words become as familiar as breathing and just as ignored. In Japanese my friend listens intently to my words. Those words were a new language for me and are new discoveries about me for her. Even though my language skill has never been worse, I have never felt more clearly heard. I listen intently to her words. I take nothing for granted.

Our gestures become animated as we are transformed from the motionless verbal boxes of our native languages to acting comedians. We share laughter as we offer clumsy sentences to each other. Breakdowns in communication send us running for our dictionaries. We conquer the mystery of new words and share the view. Our eyes gaze into space as we both memorize the expression "O-tegaisama: I'm in the same boat". The friendship deepens faster than either of us can master our new language. Friendship thrives on more than language. We appreciate the beauty of what is not there.

Inner landscapes
My Japanese is still little more than scaffolding, but the beauty of my life here is expressed elegantly in the beauty of the rice fields, mountains, rivers and people around me. The recording of it is an offering from my soul thrown into the river that those downstream may read it. It is a paper lantern. It is a change of seasons. It is a stone that may look different from the others. It is a little thing. It is my early experience as a rural JET.

Picture by Michael Watt, Kitakyushu-shi
GRASS ROOTS INTERNATIONALISATION

GRASS ROOTS INTERNATIONALISATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: The JET Scheme & Cultural Exchange

by Clive McNaught

'Japan has studied Western history since the Meiji Restoration. But how much do we know about our own history?' [...] Unless we take an interest in our own legends and culture we shall lose our national identity.' (1)

'Your own language is yourself.' (2)

When Professor Maria Realubit argues that language is essential for a sense of identity, (2) the implications of this statement reach far beyond the classroom, and evidence of its veracity are twofold. Governments facing internal struggle over the integrity of a nation find language a crucial battleground. There is also evidence on an individual level. The more isolated a child is in its formative years the greater the chances of psychological dysfunction in later life. If children are to become truly social beings, use of language is a crucial part of their growth. If conscious learning happens through efficient communication, then language is inseparable from the process of becoming human, of becoming fully social. (3) But these processes don't take place in a vacuum. What of their context?

Internationalisation means cultural integration; the foreign with the indigenous as well as the old with the new. Attempts to 'organise' internationalisation in Japan imply an uneasiness over whether to do more, or less. But internationalisation is a chaotic process of economic and cultural diversification and subsequent reintegration, independence from which is not an option. Japan's economic relationship with its neighbours demands a constant re-structuring and re-organising from within. It is this that provides both context and spur to cross-cultural change and development. Although control over such processes cannot be absolute, decisions can of course be made to accept or encourage change which is seen as valuable, or to curtail less desirable developments. But no government or institution should overestimate its own powers in such matters, as successive French governments have found out when trying to stem the tide of 'Franglais' which is seen by some as a contamination of the French language by English. Besides, exactly what criteria should be used to make such decisions, and upon what premises should they be based? The picture is not simple.

Internationalisation implies the possible diluting of a nation or of a culture. For some it describes a state of affairs whereby that which is distinctive or different - that which provides identity - will eventually be lost as we all become increasingly similar. Fear of loss of identity is also common among minority cultures. They often fear that 'assimilation' is taking place and that this will lead to cultural obliteration. So not only a 'host' country, but also its minorities can sometimes adopt the approach of 'non-integration.'

But I wish to query whether such fears are well founded, from whichever quarter they come. Such a position ignores the question of where identity comes from in the first place; for some it may be the nation, for others, the community. But both views seem to be two sides of the same coin, and are also inadequate. Take the example of young Indians in Britain, many of whom enthuse over Bombay film. They often feel this is 'their own' culture, as opposed to 'British' culture. It seems to help fulfill a need for an assuredness in questions of identity, to provide a sense of belonging, in an environment that often doesn't want them to belong. But what of its authenticity, its 'Indian-ness'?

Bombay film is a modern merging of dance, song, theatre and acting from disparate sources within India, welded together by the influence of Hollywood and India's colonial past. Indian conservatives may be right when they say it is more international than national in character. This is just as true of a former colonial power as it is of its former colonies. The idea of a given or authoritative 'National' culture in Britain is also spurious. Indeed, what civilisation has formed without processes of blending, borrowing, importation, and intermingling taking place? These have always been crucial for the development of language, art, dance, architecture, literature, and schools of political, religious or philosophical thought and Japan is no exception.

Whilst the need for culture and the need for identity seem to be inseparable, the role - and perhaps the very idea - of a 'National' culture in such matters must at least be brought into question if we are going to understand what cultural exchange really is, and play a role in nurturing it successfully. Today, internationalisation makes possible the achievements of those such as Salman Rushdie and Yoshikichi Furui whose lives increasingly, like the rest of us in the developed world, transcend national boundaries. The cultural life of any society that relies on its economic, educational and social interaction with the world around it will increasingly be shaped by such multicultural matters. But whilst Japan is developing an increasingly important international role, much of the establishment is also working to resist the inevitable consequences of cultural and social integration that come with it. It is as though Japan cannot afford to abandon its 'Japanese-ness', its preceived 'national integrity' on the one hand, nor can it afford not to on the other. The JET scheme finds itself caught between these two tendencies. The buzz word 'internationalisation' doesn't sit easily alongside the project of excluding large sections of the population from full citizenship, and the unraveling in recent years of 'bloodline citizenship' into racial violence, social division and insecurity doesn't set an auspicious precedent. It serves to temporarily mask problems, if not actually exacerbate them, rather than solve them.
Here, I wish to indulge in a brief but pertinent digression. When taking a group of Art students around the National Gallery in London, a Black student asked me why there weren't any paintings by Black people. 'Didn't Black people paint until recently?' Well, indeed, historically they always have painted, and have produced some of the finest work in Britain. He had put his finger on quite a problem. Space doesn't permit me to relate the group's answers to this question - but forgive me if I do the same as my innocent student, and ask why there are so few Black faces on the JET scheme? Don't they apply? If not, why not? Are photographs really necessary in the initial application procedure? I shall touch on the importance of such matters later.

Is the most important cultural gap in the world today really between nations or ethnic groups? There is another gap that we too often overlook - between the sort of 'refined' cultural practice the authors previously mentioned are involved in, and 'popular' culture. One belongs to a culture that is largely the preserve of the educated, the other is a very different matter. Surely the popular cultures of India and Britain have more in common with each other than to their respective national 'high' cultures. This is true for Japanese culture as well. Tamagochi and Manga have more in common with popular English language cartoons or Western pop music, than with Kabuki or Gagaku. I shall look at such comparisons in more detail shortly, since they have a bearing on our problems.

Whilst there is something distinctively 'Japanese' about this country's culture - more so than in many countries around it, more so than in the West - even that is a product of international influence. Isolation can indeed produce refinement, but the foreign roots of Japanese culture are (usually) well documented. D.T. Suzuki points out the importance of the influence of Southern Sung Dynasty China on much of Japan's finest cultural heritage. (4) Korean, Indian and Portuguese influences of significance are also traceable. So any picture of an 'only recent' cultural invasion of Japan would be untrue. Even if it weren't, why should such a phenomenon be intrinsically bad?

A letter in the Yomiuri Shimbun in October 1997 lamented the passing of Japanese respect language amongst the young. The writer pre-supposed a monolithic Japanese culture which, she said, should be urgently defended. But as Donald Keene points out (5), even Japanese language as recent as pre-war times was very different from today's. Furthermore, Kenko was making elegiac comments similar to the letter's author back in the early 1330's. (6) Cultural life is just that: something constantly growing, changing and developing. Isolation and stasis may have been possible in the past, but such an idea now would be an absurdity. A modern hermetic culture is a self-contradictory notion. Today there is no Great Wall between 'their' culture and 'ours' - not along national lines anyway ...

At the time of writing the British Council's festival of British culture is getting under way in Japan. There is a genuinely impressive array of events; from Anthony Gormley exhibitions, classical music concerts and Mike Leigh films, to seminars on science and law. It should be interesting to trace these British cultural phenomenon back to their non-British origins. But I shall instead contrast them to British popular culture - to the local grass roots level if you like; to the Spice Girls, to larger and Vindaloos, soft porn tabloid newspapers and the Soap Opera. These are just as 'British' as their more illustrious counterparts. In comparison, Japan is again no exception - the same cultural divide is just as evident. Mike Leigh or his Japanese counterparts will never be as popular as Jackie Chan or Sylvester Stallone. Kipling will never be as popular as pornographic Manga, nor Elgar as Smap - and not because they are foreigners. Not even Chikamatsu, Mishima or Isamu Noguchi could compete for popularity there. I'm not suggesting that Britain should send Roy 'Chubby' Brown or the Spice Girls to Japan - heaven forbid. Simply that what is being presented as 'British' is really a highly selective version of the real thing. 'Authentic' British and Western culture is already here. The British Council's white, male, English version - despite it's sophistication - pales in comparison with a mere temporary curiosity when viewed alongside that which has come here in a hurry.

Picture of 'Kinkakuji' by Patricia Kitso, Kochi-ken

Lets take two examples of internationalisation at the local level in Japan. First, the plan to construct a replica of the 'Ponts des Arts', a Parisian bridge, over the Kano river in Kyoto. The 'International Society to Save Kyoto' points out how strongly opposed it is at grass roots level in the area, and argues that it is a trampling over of a historical part of the city. (7) However, at the time of writing, the project is set to go ahead. This is an example of internationalisation coming from the 'top, to the bottom.' But it also happens the other way round. For example, the debates in the Yomiuri Shimbun (8) over whether to fully incorporate foreign loan words into the Japanese language. The debate is largely academic since, at grass roots level, the language has (yet again) already changed. An official regulation here and there to prevent this won't get the toothpaste back in the tube.
Grass Roots Internationalisation

One of the Essay Competition Winners.

So internationalisation isn't a one-way, top-down process. But simply making a distinction between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' isn't enough. The process isn't mechanical. Much cultural internationalisation is consciously selected and taken up, even though it is bulk produced and aggressively marketed. Popular Culture is indeed a 'given' culture. But as such, it is a living, vital thing of equal validity to 'high' culture, despite its largely vacuous nature? Anyone's own culture - truly their own - can't by definition be something simply 'given' to them, something they passively receive. It can't be some thing top-down, like rote learning in the classroom. It must be something people make themselves in the course of social interaction. Cultural practices or artifacts are common points of contact between members of a community. They give form to that which has meaning, they are an expression of social being itself. Or at least this has traditionally been the case in rural societies. But these have been irreversibly transformed by industrialisation.

The paradox we must contend with is that in a modern industrialised society, only a few have satisfied the needs of food, clothing and shelter sufficiently to have the time and resources necessary for finer cultural pursuits that involve abstract thought or philosophising. Hence the real cultural divide between social classes. The problem for educationalists and policy makers in these fields isn't that internationalisation creates a hybrid culture (what's a non-hybrid culture?), but rather that one function it performs is to create or to contribute to a 'given' culture at one end of the social divide. Something that actually militates against a free and vital culture in the fullest sense of the term. So, whilst the effects of grass roots internationalisation are driven by the impact economic change has on social life, they are neither mechanically subservient to such changes nor totally independent from them. In other words, people form their own culture, but cannot choose the circumstances within which it comes into being. Or, instead, fails to come into being. Those involved in cultural exchange cannot afford to ignore this, since it is within this contradictory state of affairs that the personal and social identity of young people themselves also either comes into being, or fails to do so. At grass roots level in Japan, there are plenty of examples of both.

In my schools I have found ample evidence - albeit anecdotal - of happy, well adjusted children. The murder in May 1997 of 11 year old Jun Hase by a 14 year old school colleague, however, showed evidence of the opposite. Furthermore, a Ministry of Education report stated violent incidents in schools increased by 31.7% in fiscal 1996. (9) Evidently problems over identity are no less preservative in Japan than in its advanced industrial competitors, nor are they any closer to resolution.

Internationalisation, then, isn't something graspable that we can act upon. Rather it's something that a society can either cope with well or fail to cope with. If we think that teaching Japanese children how we wear outdoor shoes inside, and blow our noses in handkerchiefs is internationalisation, then we have a superficial reading of the situation. Organised 'Internationalisation Forums' and cultural exchange meetings between JETs and local schoolchildren are worthy and have their merits. But lets not deceive ourselves: such events trail behind after the fact of internationalisation rather than pave a way for it.

Infinately more formative internationalising happens when young people eat MacDonalds, listen to rock music, use Anglicised Japanese words, or cheer Japan on in the soccer World Cup. When JETs are pushed to the fore as though they are evidence of how well Japan is internationalising (for example, Western faces - usually white one - on festival parades) aren't we also at the same time part of a 'cover' for a widespread social reluctance to accept more comprehensive cultural and ethnic mingling?

Whilst our welcome is always sincere and often genuinely touching, aren't we contributing to a smokescreen, to a 'buffer' as well as a bridge? Cultural exchange is virtually a defining characteristic of modern social life. Attempts to arrange or organise it too often belie its actual living scope and the extent to which it has already penetrated all our lives. It is not something that can be 'ring-fenced' or contained. This is why 'arms length' internationalisation is ultimately a self-defeating project. Unless of course, its other function is to botch up a gap between conflicting aspects of - or interests within - Japanese society. If the JET scheme's cultural exchange remit allowed it to be used as a social or cultural filter - allowing in that which is considered safe, keeping all else at bay - it would be involving itself more in obfuscation than genuine exchange.

Cultural exchange isn't about whether Japan's cultural distinctiveness is either abandoned or fortified. The dynamics of internationalisation are such that neither of these are possible. Fear of loss of 'national distinctiveness' is at best spurious, (if a 'national culture' weren't subject to change, it couldn't have come into being in the first place) at worst mischievous. If we fail to cope with the inevitabilities of internationalisation - as we will if cultural nationalisation holds sway - then we shall all really lose out; on cultural enrichment, on genuine distinctiveness, and thereby an identity itself. Japan's cultural legacy can only be assured for the future by embracing and understanding change, by open and honest enquiry by us all - especially in the classroom. If the field of education is where self expression and growth take place, and where interdependency in the fields of cultural, and scientific and industrial affairs is essential, then it is surely here that a framework can be developed within which these problems can be usefully understood and - potentially at least - constructively tackled.

This requires a great deal of openness. Choosing the easy option of avoiding controversy for the sake of short term or surface harmony can in the long term only be counterproductive. (Social and cultural tensions have a way of resolving themselves regardless of whether they are understood or not - and the less understood they are, the less likely it is that their resolution will be peaceful). But on the other hand the nurturing of creative thinking, of curiosity and motivation, of a will to experiment, are surely essential for success. Such an ethos is already the professional corner stone of the most successful of the teachers I have worked with in Japan.

I encountered a paradox, however. New Horizon textbook
GRASS ROOTS INTERNATIONALISATION

3 states, as part of the ‘devil’s advocate’ argument, that English tests shouldn’t be University entrance requirements. In class, I asked for a show of hands of those who agreed or disagreed. Not one student would commit themselves either way, despite the fact that they have very strong opinions on such matters. Is this reserve due to a trait of Japanese cultural distinctiveness? If so, then recent proposals to change Japanese curricula in favour of the aforementioned ethos (10) are exposing contradictions in Japanese education that reach out into Japanese social and political life.

A transition to experience based learning, where students produce and discover knowledge themselves under the teacher’s guidance rather than passively receive it is no small or easy matter in any country. In Japan it takes us right to the heart of the clash of cultures. My point is this: they started ‘clashing’ (internationalising) a long time ago in any case, and will continue to do so regardless. Although it would be ludicrous to assume we are the vanguard, of cultural change (I.B.M., McDonalds, etc., got here before us) our position as JETS does make us immediately relevant. If we are to help ensure that the problems of cultural change are understood, and if we are to usefully contribute to their constructive resolution, we must be aware of their difficult and delicate nature, and that we have a responsibility to show some sophistication in such matters.

The more the sum total of human cultural resources increases, the greater the potential legacy for future generations becomes. This in turn will require ever greater openness in the fields of education and cultural exchange. I’m not arguing for ‘cultural insurgency’ by JETS - Japanese children and people are expert enough at that themselves in contradictory ways. But we could all have higher expectations of what can be achieved. As Chinese students report routine serious discrimination, and Korean-Japanese who have lived here for generations regularly fare no better, can we honestly say such matters as well as their greater implications, have no relevance to us? JET essays report some wonderful ways of dealing with similar issues as they arise. But in the greater scheme of things, isn’t that like putting a sticky plaster on a broken leg?

We need to make greater use of our specialisms; sport, art, music and so on. Even just our experiences. Particularly outside of the classroom. The intake of the JET Programme should more accurately reflect the cultural diversity of our backgrounds. Simply saying that we should ‘lead from the front’, or ‘it’s down to us’ isn’t always enough. If the value and meaning of its work are to deepen, then the JET scheme at all of its levels should have a more formal involvement in the debates on curriculum changes and their implication, both internally and with the professional bodies of those we work with. It is our professional as well as individual responsibility to be an active and well informed party in open and honest discussion. Internationalisation is not a choice. We can neither stand still nor go backwards. The potential gains for us all are enormous, but failure will bring a high price to Japanese society, and to us all.

NOTES

1) Takashi Honnoyo, Shinto Priest, quoted in the Yomiuri Shinbun, Dec. 1997
2) Prof. Maria Realubit, Quoted at a J.A.L.T. meeting in Takasaki, Gunma prefecture, Yomiuri Shinbun, Oct. 29
3) Sohan Mogdil, educational psychology lectures, Brighton Univ. P.G.C.E. 1995-96
5) ‘On Familiar Terms’ D. Keene 1994
6) ‘Essays In Idleness: The Tsurezuregusa of Kenko’
7) Yomiuri Shinbun, Nov. 12 1997
8) ibid Nov. 1997
9) ibid Dec. 1997
10) ibid Nov 24 1997, ‘Time to end top-down system’,
(Jun Murao, staff writer.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Being born and brought up in Belfast for the first twenty years of my life has provided me with ample experience of inter-cultural misunderstanding and conflict, as well as a personal commitment towards overcoming such strife. It also gave me experience of the benefits and the severe social price of a segregated education. From 1996-97 I was a part time lecturer in Art and Design at the University of Portsmouth, school of Art, Design and Media, hence my interest in cultural affairs, and their social implications.

1) ‘On Familiar Terms: to Japan and back, a lifetime across cultures.’ Donald Keene
2) ‘Essays in Idleness’ Kenko (1330-32)
3) ‘Zen and Japanese Culture’ D.T. Suzuki
4) ‘In Praise Of Shadows’ Jun Iehiro Tanizaki
5) ‘Lost Japan’ Alex Kerr
6) ‘An Outsider’s Year in Japan’ Gary Katzenstein
7) ‘Walkabout in Japan Mary Rogers’
9) ‘Into Japan’, John Lowe

Picture by Daniel Adams, Ibaraki-ken
If you notice that any of the above regional representatives are incorrect, please contact the JETAA Liaison at CLAIR as soon as possible. It is important that we have a current address for someone in the region.
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Cead mile fáilte romhat ar ais sa bhaile from all in Irish JETAA. It would be great if you could contact the Embassy of Japan 353-1-2694244 as soon as you return, so we can put you on the mailing list for upcoming events, and for the quarterly newsletter. You can also contact Paula Kelly, Irish Regional Representative: kellypc@ted.ie

OTTAWA
Here in Ottawa, we are celebrating the Tulip Festival. This year, Ottawa JETAA has a display in the Japanese Tonami Pavilion. The display is called "Japan: Inside-Out". It consists of text and photos contributed by local JETAA members that show our unique experiences while living in Japan. It is all set within shoji door frames.

We have had a whole load of social events during the past year, including a pot-luck Christmas party, a skating party, a St-Valentine's Day party, and two sumo video viewing nights.

With an entire shift in the executive after the AGM, we are anticipating yet another active and exciting year ahead. Two weekly Japanese language classes, monthly movie nights, and cultural workshops will continue to be part of our agenda.

In the fall we are planning to hold a Welcome Party for all returnees. We are thinking of having a workshop during the day as a re-orientation back home. We hope to invite JETAA members to come and talk about their experiences when they arrived back home. We also hope that a type of career seminar to provide returning JETs with the opportunity to meet with individuals from various fields related to the JET experience. Ottawa returnnees contact Melissa Kamibayashi (contact info page 10) for more info.

REQUEST: Talented singer? Good on the guitar? Ottawa JETAA wants to hear from you with your songs about the JET Experience. We would like to make a collection and perhaps even cut a CD so contact Melissa.

WASHINGTON D.C.
JETAA DC has many exciting things planned for the summer months in order to bid farewell to the newly appointed JET participants, and for the fall to welcome back recently returned JET participants. Slated for June and July are a softball game (new JETs vs JET alumni), screening of the movie "Shall we Dance", an informal happy hour (where new JETs can ask JET alumni anything!), a formal Q & A session hosted by the embassy, and the monthly Gaikoku Gaishoku Kai. In the fall, returnees will be invited to attend a Welcome Back Reception at the embassy, the Annual Career Night, the monthly Gaikoku Gaishoku Kai, and lots more!

JETAA DC is an extremely active chapter with events that appeal to even the most discriminating tastes. In order to be informed of upcoming JETAA events, please call the JET Office at the Embassy of Japan (202-238-6772) to be added to the mailing list. Please do not assume that if you departed from Washington DC that the embassy has your current mailing information!

NEW YORK
The New York chapter of JETAA has a database of over four hundred members and is active with events every month of the year. We have monthly social gatherings (last Friday of each month), bi-monthly business meetings (first Tuesday of even months), put out a quarterly newsletter, and have an ongoing resume referral service to help our members find jobs. Our big annual social events are our shinennkai dinner, and our bowling and softball tournaments where we compete against teams from Japanese companies and organizations. Many of our members help with the JET recruitment and selection each year and we put on a pre-departure orientation in June. We also hold a job seminar for recent returnees in the fall. We participate in other local events including the Japan Society Matsuri, Brooklyn Cherry Blossom Festival, and New York cares Day. We look forward to seeing you involved!

President from July 1st will be: Yvonne Thurman (212) 996-0101, ythurman@jpnsc.com

CHICAGO
Greetings from Chicago! Summer is a fantastic time to be in the windy city. There are art and music festivals of all varieties and Chicago is celebrating the 25th anniversary of the sister city relationship with Osaka this year.

We hope you will join us for a Welcome Back Barbeque on September 19. Save the date, and contact us for details when you are in town. You can reach us at P.O. Box 11676, Chicago, IL 60611-0676. Our web page has more contact information (www.jet.org/us7.html) and lists details for upcoming events. You can e-mail Jennifer Corwin, President, at jenn@compuserve.com with any questions.

We are planning a Jobs Fair for November 7 so mark your calendar. Please contact us or check our web page for more details when the event is closer. You may contact our Jobs Coordinator Tim Finley by e-mail at TFinleyjpn@aol.com or at our P.O. Box if you want information about job opportunities and employment search strategies.

We have monthly operating/planning meeting that anyone is welcome to attend. It is held on the second Monday or Tuesday of the month at the Japan Information Center. Informal gathering with food starts at 6:30p.m., and the meeting begins at 7:00p.m. Contact any of the members listed on our web page for more information. This is a great place to make contact with other JET alumni in the area.

Hope to see you at one of our events, and wishing you a great summer!

LOS ANGELES
Keep in touch with your fellow JET alumni around Southern California by becoming a JETAAASC member when you return. We have monthly get-togethers and some of the best networking opportunities available. And best of all, there are no membership dues and every event is all natural and 100% fat free! For more information, please contact Eric Chow (echow@pcmagic.net) or Ken Witton (sahokenla@aol.com), or visit us at http://www.jet.org/la/ on the web. See you soon!

BRITISH COLUMBIA
We have monthly steering committee meetings, newsletters, preparation seminar for new JETs, re-entry seminar, career day, monthly hikes in conjunction with the Vancouver Mokuyokai Society, regular Round Table discussions on various topics to name but a few. Get in touch with us when you get back contact Stacey Rolof (contact details on page 10).
NEW ENGLAND

For all you hearty New England natives, come join NEJETAA, the New England JET Alumni Association, at their annual "Fall Baa-Baa-Kew" in September in honor of your triumphant return. For details, visit the NEJETAA website (http://www.tiac.net/users/nejetaa/html/events.htm) when you return. For those not connected, call Ethan or Sean at 617-623-6751. If you lose all this info, please call the Japanese Consulate in Boston and they'll tell you what's up.

MONTRÉAL

The summer promises to be busy. Just this past week, Montréal signed a sister city relationship with Hiroshima and we were present at the official signing, the official dinners, business seminars and the opening to an art exhibit by a Japanese "Peace" artist.

Once again we will have our buddy system for departing JETs helping them to get ready. Predeparture Orientation and our annual JET family send off reception are on the agenda. We have also approached Montréal's Shokokai to join us in a game of softball later this summer. We have put together a photo show of photographs taken by our members during their stay in Japan. The Photo Show will be launched in June at the same time as Japan Week.

Active as usual JETAA Montréal invites any returning JETs to contact us. We have some interesting activities planned for the Fall and would like to assist you in anyway that we can in career development, going back to school or just getting reoriented when you get home.

On the international front, as the hosts of the JETAA International Conference in 1997, we are assisting in the preliminary budget and organizational proposals to our sponsors for a 1998 Conference. Based on our success in getting funding the conference will be held in the late Fall in Atlanta. JETAA International provides a forum for the exchange of ideas between chapters, gives JETAA a sense of uniformity and helps us define our roles and objectives as an organization that has now over 25,000 members.

ALL CHAPTERS

For all JETs who are returning home and are interested to get involved with their local JETAA chapter please contact your regional representative and local Japanese Embassy or Consulate to find out more details of activities.

Q & A

I will be returning home after a long stay in Japan. I was a JET participant from 1990-1993 and I paid into the National Pension Scheme. Am I eligible to claim back the original payment?

The Pension Reform Bill was passed in the Diet on November 2nd 1994, and was promulgated on November 9th, 1994. In order to qualify to be considered for the lump sum withdrawal payment (the pension refund), you need to have been in Japan on or after the promulgation date, had a Japanese address on or after the promulgation date, have ALL of the following four conditions listed below and file an application within two years of leaving Japan.
1. Persons who do not possess Japanese citizenship
2. Persons who have paid National Pension Insurance or Employee Pension Insurance premiums for six months or more
3. Persons who do not have a place of residence in Japan (in order to file
4. Persons who have never had the right to receive pension payments (including allowances for the handicapped)

In the case where you have remained living in Japan after the promulgation date you would therefore still qualify for the lump sum withdrawal payment. However in the cases where you left Japan before the promulgation date you would not be able to claim the payment unless the account was reactivated.

An account can be reactivated by paying into the same pension fund and restarting employment in Japan after the promulgation date.

Explanation of how to claim the pension refund and tax deducted from this refund is available in previous issues of JET Streams, CLAIR News, E-CLAIR News and the General Information Handbook

I attempted to use the website to update my address but was confounded by the fact that you must print out the page and actually send it to Japan!! What on earth is the point of that?

When CLAIR's homepage was initially made a "send" facility was not incorporated with the JETAA membership form. It is hoped that in the future this facility will be made available (as mentioned in JET Streams Vol.8-1). Unfortunately, due to funding and CLAIR's present assessment of the level of Internet usage by JETAA members it has been postponed for the current fiscal year.

For those members using e-mail, address updates can be sent to the JETAA Liaison: jet-aa@clair.or.jp. Comments can also be sent to this address, however questions should be directed to the address shown at the bottom of the front page. Usage of Internet is rapidly increasing and CLAIR is very interested to know how JETAA would like to see this side of JET developing.

Survey of JETAA Internet Usage

Michael H. McVey (Saga-ken 1991-92) - author of Meeting the Internet Challenge has given his comments on JETAA Regional Internet Usage after conducting a survey of Regional Representatives:

It appears that access to the Internet is great enough that Chapter members could easily update their information themselves with their own account. Those members without an account could simply pass along the information to their Chapter President to do on their behalf.

The fact that a person has neither a computer nor an Internet account is also not a hindrance. There are many places where a person can go to access the Internet. Some of these places are Internet Cafes, but more importantly, many libraries in North America are getting Internet access.

Survey Results:

Regional JETAA Internet usage

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Boston 85%
Chicago 75%
Texas 85%
Denver 60%
Seattle 90%
Los Angeles 90%
Hawaii 80%
Minneapolis 80%