INSIDE: Discover Mount Koya, Culture Shock 101, Dragonfly Forge
O
d

ut of the forest of the imagination he emerges, at first slinking belly-down along the
danthen floor, then rising to walk on two feet like a man. With craft and cunning,
dhe shifts his shape to survive and never passes up a prank. The seasons turn to
years as the world changes around him. Still he watches with a round belly and a jovial
grin until the forest vanishes and he stands at the feet of skyscrapers in shop doors
watching schoolgirls and salarymen pass him by. He is Tanuki, one of several shape-
changing animal tricksters called henge (hen-gay), from Japanese folklore. Very old but
quick to adapt, he has stood the test of time and remains a beloved symbol of fortune.

Tanuki proves the perfect metaphor for Japanese culture. Like henge, Japan, too, is
quick to evolve. Now the nation that birthed the stoic samurai is known as an ultra-
modern nexus of pop culture. Yet outside the cyberpunk of the city, and even tucked
within its core, the seed of tradition remains. The costumes of Harajuku cosplayers
are inspired by kimonos and the music of pop idol Utada Hikaru by enka folk songs. Glance
down a Tokyo side street to see a century-old shrine still standing.

These contradictions seem to spark a certain fascination among Americans with the
complexities of Japanese language and culture. They’re certainly what drew me to
Japan. But what I knew of its culture was only what I had seen in anime or learned in
language classes. I wanted a firsthand experience to see if my American preconception
of Japanese life was anything like the real thing. For ten months in Tokyo I lived sink-or-
sink, but returned amazed, enlightened, and still craving a connection with Japanese
culture.

TANUKI MAGAZINE (SSRN 0000-1294) is a once-in-a-
lifetime publication by Grady Overviewte Publish-
ing, Inc. If the magazine has an actual staff and
budget, it might be registered with the U.S. Patent
and Trademark office. But please, you know that du-
plication without proper credit is copyright infringe-
ment—so just don’t do it. Reprints of this edition are
$20. Contact tanukimagazine@gmail.com.

TANUKI 2005
JUNE 2005
CONTENTS

Features

Culture Shock 101
International exchange students learn that culture shock isn’t always what they
expect. The big surprises vary—from the classroom to the city streets and
beyond. by Kathryn Ortland

PhotoEssay: Inner Sanctum
Discover the hidden pathways of Mount Koya, a sacred Shingon Buddhist
pilgrimage site in the mountains of Wakayama prefecture. by Kathryn Ortland

When Anime Attacks
It’s been almost eight years since Pokemon battled its way into the animation
world, and part cowboy, Micha
el Bell has made a name for himself as
one of America’s few smiths of Japanese s
words.

Light as a Dragonfly
Part-samurai and part cowboy, Michael Bell has made a name for himself as
one of America’s few smiths of Japanese swords. by Kathryn Ortland

From the Editor

Editor-in-Chief: Kathryn Ortland
Art Direction: Design: Kathryn Ortland
Copy Editors: Justin Speyer, Chris Pearce
Contributors: Erin Gerecke, Chris Pearce, Rachel Mohr, Alex Swanson, Justin Speyer

Departments

Odds & Ends

Reviews

Cuisine

On the Go

Hajimemasho

Clothe Yourself

On the Go
Hajimemasho

FRESH BREW, FRESH BREEZE

Travelers brave enough to venture from civilization to the wild depths of northern Okinawa Honto will find a rare treat nestled high in the mountains of Yambaru. The sign for Hiro Coffee farm, on Highway 70 just north of the Fukuchi Dam, seems pleasantly out of place. On this stretch of nearly uninhabited wild land, there are few amenities. Who would expect a coffee stand offering its own beans as fresh brew?

Hiro Coffee, thankfully, is no Starbucks. It’s the real thing. From the road, you can see past the cali, office, and facilities down into the fields where coffee plants glitter in the morning dew. Owner Hiro Adachi has been nurturing his crop from start to finish for eleven years now, one of only a handful of Okinawan coffee farmers.

He welcomes guests warmly and in perfect English to the tiny shop, which, with two cozy tables and a door that provides questionable protection from the hillside’s high winds, more closely resembles a shack than a café. For 400 yen you can get a delicious pot of hot coffee good for several cups and enough to serve two people (or one coffee fiend) quite easily. Hiro will throw in a basket of complementary cookies just to sweeten the deal.

HARAJUKU GIRLS

Gwen Stefani seems to be impressed with Tokyo street fashion. In her latest solo album, Love Angel Music Baby, released November 2004, Stefani gives tribute to the gothic kawaii of Tokyo Harajuku, even dedicating an entire song to these “Harajuku Girls.” MTV.com reports that the artist’s spring 2005 L.A.M.B fashion line will include a branch of Japanese-inspired accessories called “Harajuku Lovers” that will feature illustrations of her pint-sized posse. The line’s HP digital camera is already popular online.

DANCE DANCE SHUTTER CHANCE

According to Wired magazine, the latest in tech trends from Japan combines pulsing music, printout photo booth stunts with Dance Dance Revolution-like action for a fairy photo experience. The new machine, called Ublala purikura, has a typical 400 yen price tag for one go-round. For the ‘dance dance’ variety, select ‘DIY’ pedal course and rock out to J-pop or American favorites like “Hey Mickey” while pandas dance on the screen. When the electronic voice croons “shattaa chansu!” (shutter chance), stamp on the floor pads to take either a close-up or full-body photo. While going solo may be too embarrassing, big groups can end up with smashed feet!

TAIKO FEVER

America’s video game industry has imported—and miniaturized—another Japanese arcade classic. Taiko Drum Master for the PlayStation 2 includes two mini tako (Japanese drums) and thick sticks for tapping out the rhythm of a variety of hit songs. The small but entertaining roster of songs in the game can be played single-player or head-to-head with a friend in easy, normal, hard, and oni (demon) modes. The winner is the player who accumulates enough points to clear the stage. Though this tiny, well-built home version will never match the sheer entertainment value of giant arcade drums, it comes close to being just as addicting. ($58.99)

HAMSTER HIJINKS

Take everything you ever knew about anime, light it on fire, throw it out the window, and sit down with a strong drink. It’s time for Ebichu the Housekeeping Hamster. Ebichu is a pet, penky—that’s right—hamster, who (guess what?) keeps house. But please, before you jump this series with Pokemon and Hamtaro, read on. All cute first impressions aside, any seasoned anime viewer will know before watching it that something is amiss with Ebichu; it’s produced by Gainax. Ebichu is one of the few modern Japanese cartoons to be nearly banned from prime-time television for offensive content. No, the series is not pornographic, but with the crude volume of adult humor and sexual visuals in each episode, it comes close. What does a hamster have to do with sex? In short, Ebichu is a diligent and well-meaning critter taking care of her Office Lady master, a woman teetering on the edge of marriage and dating a hopeless loser. Whatever hijinks ensue revolve around Ebichu’s master’s dysfunctionality sex life and Ebichu’s penchant for perverted blunders. It’s worth watching, if just for the horrific shock value.

GRAND KABUKI SEATTLE

The colorful elegance of Japan’s Grand Kabuki Theatre will make a rare appearance in Seattle this June as the centerpiece of the Boeing Dreamliner Arts Festival, a showcase of contemporary art in Asia and the United States. The revered Chikamatsu-za troupe will make two special performances at Seattle’s Paramount Theatre before continuing on their first nationwide U.S. tour.

Chikamatsu-za will perform Sonezaki Shinju, ‘The Love Suicides at Sonezaki’, a famous piece by the troupe’s namesake, playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon. The poetic story follows the doomed love of merchant-clerk Tokubei and his lover Ohtsuki as they resolve to die. Also on the program is “Tied to a Pole,” a rousing comic dance that stages a poignant contrast with the sorrow of Sonezaki Shinju.

Kabuki is perhaps the best known of the Japanese performing arts, famous for elaborate costumes, dramatic acting, and in-depth exploration of human emotion. To create an authentic atmosphere for the exclusive presentation this June, the Paramount Theatre will specially construct a kamishiki and custom Kabuki sets.

The eighty members of Chikamatsu-za will bring the play to life with evocative dance and striking poses in the refined kamigata style traditional to the Kansai region. Kamigata forgoes dramatic stylization common in kabuki storylines and focuses instead on heroes played by gentler actors. Nakamura Danjuro III, one of Chikamatsu-za’s legendary players, is among the few practicing Kabuki actors remaining in modern kabuki. Danjuro, now in his 80s, will reprise his signature role as the courteous Ohtsuki in Sonezaki Shinju.

This will be Grand Kabuki’s first appearance in Seattle since the 1990 Goodwill Art Festival, also sponsored by One Reel Productions. The performances mark the beginning of an international warm-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.
How To

Pray at a Shinto Shrine

There are thousands of Shinto shrines across Japan, some as large as the goliath Meiji Jingu in Tokyo Harajuku, and many more tiny shrines tucked into neighborhood alcoves. To properly pay respects (or just look like you know what you’re doing), follow these simple steps:

1. Enter the shrine through the sacred gateway, called torii, which marks the dwelling of Shinto divinities.
2. Take the ladle in your right hand, dip water and pour it over the left. Then reverse.
3. Take the ladle in your right hand again, and dip water into your cupped left palm. Sip from your palm; quietly rinse your mouth and spit the water on the ground. Rinse dipper and return to original position.
4. Follow the walkway (sando) to the shinden (sanctuary) and stop in front of the altar. Bow lightly, then approach.
5. Ring the bell to catch the attention of the deity.
6. Toss a coin into the offertory box. Any amount is fine if given with gratitude, though five yen coins are customary.
7. Bow twice, formally and deeply, in respect for the deity.
8. Clap hands twice to again attract the deity and purify your presence through sound.
   - You may wish to close your eyes and bow your head, or simply make your request in silence.
10. When you have finished praying, bow deeply once more. Move back three steps, bow lightly, and withdraw.

Lastly, before you perform the above ritual, be sure it’s a Shinto shrine you’re visiting and not a Buddhist temple. Shrines are marked by red torii or a pair of guardian dog statues at the entryway. Temples lack the gates, but often have posts or buildings marked by the Buddhist character manji (卍). The prayer ritual at a temple is much the same with a few critical differences. First, there is no chuzoya. Second, and most importantly, do not clap when standing in front of the Buddhist altar. There is no bell to ring as there is no need to summon the presence of the Buddha. Give offering, bow with respect, pray silently, bow again, and return.

Clothe Yourself

T-shirt Trip-ups

A tribute to incomprehensible Asian tees likely to embarrass you and your friends.

We love ‘em; you love ‘em. But would you wear ‘em?

Illustrated by Alex Swanson

Every foreigner who spends time in Japan will become familiar with the phrase “baka (na) gaijin,” which means, literally, “stupid outsider.” So why not label yourself as a pre-emptive strike? Unfortunately, much of the effect of this shirt is lost on Americans wearing it in their home country... where no one can read it and they’re not “outsiders” in the first place. Hmm.

Hook-ups “Yellow Fever” (Zumiez, $19.99)
Japanese culture influenced skateboard legend and designer Jeremy Kline’s “Hook-ups” line. Particularly, as he puts it on one shirt, “bitches and sake.” Unfortunately Kline wasn’t influenced enough to spell-check his half-katana, half-gibberish signature (left). Quick, someone take his temperature!

Perhaps this dude’s “Yellow Fever” was misdiagnosed.

Diesel “Ultra-Violent Sun Block” (Diesel Jeans, $19.99)
This tee features a classic “Engrish” phrase topped by some whacked-out katakana.

Well, it certainly is interesting, if odd.

J-List “Baka Gaijin” (jlist.com, $15.95-$16.95)
Every foreigner who spends time in Japan will become familiar with the phrase “baka (na) gaijin,” which means, literally, “stupid outsider.” So why not label yourself as a pre-emptive strike! Unfortunately, much of the effect of this shirt is lost on Americans wearing it in their home country... where no one can read it and they’re not “outsiders” in the first place. Hmm.

Fashion Victim “Animé Junkie” (Hot topic, $18.00)
Ironically the kanji on this shirt means abso-friggin-lutely nothing in Japanese. We asked our Chinese friend what he thought, and he deduced that the character was the ultra-simplified form of a Chinese kanji that means “junk” or “rubbish.” Ahem. Well, if the creators of this “fashion victim” T-shirt were trying be ironic, they’ve succeeded.

Fashion Victim “Moda Fina” (Hot topic, $18.00)

June 2005 Tanuki | 7
On the Go

Ticket Watch

For a small country, Japan has gained great notoriety in a good many things: party thieves, priests, and prices, to name a few. It is one of the world’s most expensive countries and travel within borders is no exception. However, with careful planning a spendthrift can avoid some of the steepest surcharges. All of Japan’s major rail companies offer a variety of bargain buys. But like the country’s complex network of rail and subway, these passes are often confusing and may not be what you expect.

When considering discount travel in Japan, always keep universal travel tips in mind. Shop around for the best deals. The Japanese government and rail companies have gone to great lengths to make discounts competitive for almost everyone. Before you traverse the land of the rising sun, check out these offers or visit the ticket services counter, Midori no Machi-gouchi (see logo to the right), at a Japanese train station.

Japan Rail Pass

Who can get it?: Foreign travelers under “Temporary Visitor Status” to the country. (Read: tourists)
What is it?: A pass for free travel on any Japan Rail train and limited JR busses and ferries.
Cost and duration: The 7-, 14- or 21-day pass is available as either “regular” or “Green.” Duration and type must be chosen at time of purchase and cannot be changed. The Green pass allows travelers use of reserved seat Green cars on limited trains. It’s a nice luxury but often unnecessary except in rush/hour travel times.
Price: for the 7-day pass is 28,300 yen or 37,800 yen (Green); 14 days, 45,100 yen or 61,200 yen (Green) and 21 days, 57,700 yen or 79,600 yen (Green).
Raves: Allows travelers free and unlimited transport on the most widespread network of trains in the country. This rail pass seems comprehensive, but the truth is that Japan Rail doesn’t reach every destination.
Rants: It may not be used on the JR “Nozomi” shinkansen (bullet train) or the JR Bietsu train from Hakata to Fukuoka. Additionally, there are many other non-JR train, subway, and bus lines that do not accept the pass.
Notes: Japan Rail is comprised of six independently owned rail companies local to certain areas of Japan. Most of the JR companies offer their own less expensive, localized passes.

“Youth 18” tickets (Seishun juhachi kippu)

Who can get it?: Despite the name, this ticket is available to everyone, regardless of age.
What is it?: Five one-day tickets that allow for free all-day travel during and around school breaks.
Cost and duration: 11,500 yen for five tickets that can be used (roughly) March 1- April 10, July 20- Sept 10, and Dec 10- Jan 20.
Raves: Each ticket allows for unlimited boarding and unboarding of any trains during one 24-hour period. You can ride all day!
Rants: The “Youth 18” ticket is only good on normal or limited-express trains, so long distance travel will take much, much longer.

Excursion tickets (Shyuru-ken! Furi-kippu)

Who can get it?: Japanese residents and visitors alike.
What is it?: Furi-kippu allow for travel on JR lines to and from a specific destination, such as Hokkaido or Kyushu, and unlimited Japan Rail travel within the area.
Cost and duration: Cost and duration vary based on destination.
Raves: Excursion tickets are an inexpensive way to travel there and back from a far destination, with five days to a week of free travel in-between.
Rants: Excursion tickets are best for travelers with a “home base” and a specific destination in mind. Some flexibility in travel time is recommended. If trains fill up the tickets cannot be applied to airfare.

Useful Travel Phrases

What’s the fare for _______ station?______ Station wa doko desu ka?
What is the fare for _______ station?______ Station wa doko desu ka?
Where can I get the train for _______ station?______ Station wa doko de noremasu ka?
Where is platform number _______?______ Dookureba in deshou ka?
Is this train bound for _______?______ Ki no densha wa doko de noremasu ka?
Where is platform number _______?______ ki no densha wa doko de noremasu ka?
How long does it take? (To get there)______ How long does it take? (To get there)

Vocabulary

Ticket– (きっぷ) kippu
One-way– (往復) ichiway
Round-trip– (往復) ichiway
Fare– (運賃)yuhen
Station– (駅) eki
Train– (電車) densha
Platform– (ホーム) houmu
Station worker– (駅員) ekyun

Student discount (Gakuwari)

Who can get it?: Students on exchange in Japan for longer than six months with a valid university ID and “resident alien” card.
What is it?: A coupon for tickets with destinations of 100 kilometers or farther.
Cost and duration: Gakuwari applies 20 percent off long distance tickets for students and can be used 10 times per academic year.
Raves: There’s no catch. Students can apply for up to four at a time and the coupon is good for three months after it is received.
Rants: Students must receive coupons prior to purchasing tickets and coupons may only be used on non-reserved train seats.
Anne Paremeter no longer felt at home in her homeland. At 20 years old, the University of Oregon sophomore was overwhelmed by academic and familial obligations. In the spring of 2003, desperate for change, she signed up for a ten-month exchange in Japan the way one might register for the army, eager to see the world and unsure what the future might hold.

Anne went to Japan seeking clarity. Instead, she found confusion. Like most Americans, Anne knew little of what to expect from Japan, beside what she had learned in two years of language study. From the moment she stepped off the plane, surprising details captivated her: from the tangle of power lines above twisted Tokyo streets to the fact that there were Japanese people everywhere.

By losing herself in one of the world’s largest metropolises, she had hoped to find direction. But Anne struggled amid the constant flow of the city and the chatter of a still-foreign tongue. As the novelty of sake, subways, and strangers faded, Anne’s emotions began to fray at the edges.

Her host family, three generations living in a small suburban home, didn’t seem to understand her. Their well-meaning hand-holding and tediously slow explanations only succeeded in undermining Anne’s patience while making her feel incompetent. People on the street talked down to her too, expressing genuine surprise at her slightest attempt to speak their language. Behind her back they gawked, stared, and took pictures. Anne fought her confinement in the role of gaijin (outsider) but she couldn’t avoid the sudden celebrity her American figure and sandy brown hair, which she had otherwise considered normal, suddenly afforded her. Some days the attention made her feel like a princess, others like a cheap call girl.

“Exchange students face the same stressors as local students: academic obligation and peer pressure.”

Out of curiosity and in preparation for her journey, Chiharu joined an English-speaking bible group in Japan. They told her about the surprises she might expect from America: greasy meat, unsafe streets, and trashy TV. But despite her initial trepidation about danger lurking around every corner, Chiharu has found acclimating to America remarkably easy.

The comonadrum of being a university student abroad

Living Abroad, Learning Abroad
Chiharu and Anne are not alone. Every year thousands of students from around the world make their first venture overseas. During the 2002-2003 school year, nearly 180,000 American students studied abroad and the following year, 357,000 international students came to America. According to the Institute of International Education, over half of America’s visiting students annually come from Asia. Fourth on the list is Japan, which sends roughly 12 exchange students to America for every one it receives.

The popularity of American university exchange with Japanese students is partially a product of the saturation of Japanese media viewed America as perilously powerful and Americans as overweight, individualistic, and unpredictable. Fascinated by the conflict between Japan’s obsession with Americans and its criticism of them, Chiharu sought out the truth. When she entered Waseda University in 2003, she decided to test the mandatory English language education she had received since middle school. She chose political science as her major and headed abroad to experience America firsthand.

Lost between life & learning:
by Kathryn Ortland

Five thousand miles away, as fall term 2004 opened at Anne’s home institution, 21-year-old Japanese exchange student Chiharu Momoi enrolled in her first American university course. Unlike Anne, Chiharu grew up experiencing the pop culture and politics of her future host nation through movies, music, fashion, and news. She knew the Japanese universities are also favorably regarded as some of the most prestigious institutions worldwide. But American students with a cultural or educational interest in Japan are much rarer.

This year, another crop of exchange students will frantically get ready for a term, a year, or longer overseas. But no amount of preparation can train them for the real trial of living abroad: acclimating to a foreign culture. For some, acculturation will be difficult and extended process; for others, a simple matter of a few weeks. Yet even the most seasoned travelers can expect to experience some frustration adjusting to a foreign culture. The awkward transition from outsider to insider—culture shock—can give powerful perspective in a changing world.

International students face many problems, and not all of them are related to being abroad. They must deal with a range of difficulties common to all overseas travelers: insufficient language skills, prejudice, homesickness, and culture shock. But aside from these universal burdens, exchange students also face the same stressors as local students. Namely, academic obligations and peer pressure.

Students in a Strange Land
Unlike Anne, Chiharu hasn’t experienced much social culture shock, but she has had difficulty adjusting to the American university system. This is her first experience with English immersion in a classroom setting and she finds the workload staggering. Not only that, but classroom expectations are so different from those of a Japanese university that she sometimes doesn’t know what to do. Many of her peers, sent from other Tokyo university programs, acknowledge the same difficulties.

In The Psychology of Culture Shock, authors Colleen Ward, Stephen Bochner, and Adrian Furnham write that a significant difference in the
Anne, like most students studying abroad in Japan, was far from fluent when she arrived. She found solace in her English language classes at Waseda University. The Japanese teaching was style a welcome reprieve. But, just as Chiharu struggled with her academia, Anne, too, struggled with a frustrating balance.

“The major thing that was missing in my life in Japan was being good at things,” she says, as he recalls the first day she rode the train alone. Her host father, a tiny man in his 70s, took her from Suginamiya station to Takadanobaba, a seven-minute ride on the Seibu Shinjuku line. At the end of the day, alone on the platform with no one to talk with others in the same boat. 3. Talk with others in the same boat. 4. Integration: The once "foreign" country now feels just like home. Many students never reach this phase because it often takes years of living abroad to fully integrate.

1. Comfort Level
2. Normal level of wellbeing
3. Time spent overseas

UPS & DOWNS

The Phases of Culture Shock

1. "Honeymoon". The initial "high" or euphoria at arriving in a new country. The first few days or weeks may seem like a trip to Disneyland.
2. "Critical!". The bulk of culture shock arises from frustration toward everyday tasks which may suddenly seem difficult or impossible. When first adjusting to the "new" way of life abroad, feelings of anger and irritability will often arise toward host nationals or their cultures.
3. Understanding and Adjustment: Previously confusing customs begin to make sense. Though it may still be difficult, daily life is no longer a chore.
4. Integration: The once "foreign" country now feels just like home. Many students never reach this phase because it often takes years of living abroad to fully integrate.

13 Ways to Deal

You can best learn about your host country if you (1) get to know your host nationals. It’ll help you to keep from getting down if you (2) don’t spend too much time alone and (3) keep busy, especially with clubs or groups. Don’t forget, though, to (4) make time for relaxation. It can be frustrating, but (5) expect to be treated as a stereotype and (6) allow extra time for everyday tasks. (7) Talk with others in the same boat to relieve pressure but (8) avoid generalization—it will only make you feel worse in the long run. (9) Do something you’re good at to remind yourself of your capabilities. If you’re in a rut, (10) take a trip to a place you haven’t been, (11) analyze your thoughts in a journal, or (12) write a letter home. Alone or all else, (13) be patient.

Preparring for Life Abroad

Despite the ups and downs of culture shock, many students either extend their stay abroad or later emigrate to the nation where they were educated. For all the stress Chiharu has endured at the hands of her professors, she’s already considering an American graduate school. And although Anne admits she never quite became accustomed to the Japanese way of life, she has applied to teach English for the JET Program in Japan after she graduates this spring.

In fact, she’s looking forward to her next bout of culture shock. Anne considers an integral part of the overseas experience.

“To be shocked by something means that you’re learning something huge,” she says. “Every shocking experience I had in Japan was positive because it gave me a different insight.”
This mountaintop monastic town is the center of Shingon Buddhism, a sect introduced to Japan in 806 C.E. by Kobo Daishi, better known as Kukai after his death. Despite its remote location and probably because of it, Mount Koya remains a favored pilgrimage site of the Japanese. Women weren’t allowed on the mountain until 1872, but these days a train runs from Osaka’s Namba station directly to Koya-san. It’s an ideal day trip or an even better overnight. The journey only takes two hours, but as the train leaves Osaka and winds further into the mountains, it becomes obvious why Mount Koya was, and still is, a spiritual refuge. Perched high on the side of a mountain valley, the Koya railway line overlooks sweeping panoramas paralleled only by the beauty of the Swiss Alps. From the end of the line, the last few kilometers are by a cable car so steep it’s nearly vertical, and by a bus that winds along nauseating curves to the visitor’s center.

Three large temple complexes and over a hundred temples, many of them shukubo, temple lodgings, now stand in the small mountain town. Many of Koya’s population are monks (left). Over 500,000 people make the journey to each year, some pilgrims in earnest, and others tourists eager to escape the sweltering summer heat in Koya’s cool alcoves.

Okuno-in, the inner sanctum of Mount Koya where Kobo Daishi is interred, is considered one of the most sacred sites in Japan. At the front of the Okuno-in is the Toro-do, or lantern hall, where 10,000 lamps burn constant flames in memory of Kukai’s death over a thousand years ago. The temple is surrounded by Japan’s largest graveyard, a vast and beautiful labyrinth of crumbling tombstones and moss-covered statues best viewed in the glow of early morning or late afternoon. Midnight walks aren’t recommended for the faint of heart.

The five-ringed stupas atop many of the tombstones in the cemetery are called gorinto (above). From top to bottom, the tiers represent the five material elements of the world: earth, water, fire, air, and space. There is a sixth intangible element, the “knower,” that is a reflection upon the self and a concept that synthesizes Kukai’s teaching of wisdom and action.

Those who were closest to Kobo Daishi, including pupils, politicians, former feudal lords, and other loyalists are all buried in the maze of memorials. But while one end of the cemetery is a picture perfect artifact, the other is crowded with memorials constructed by modern corporations including Sharp, Toyoda and Panasonic sitting atop the graves of prominent business figures and government officials. Believe it or not, there’s even a 15-meter-high aluminum replica of the Apollo space rocket.

**NESTLED COOL, GREEN, AND GLEAMING IN THE WILDERNESS OF WAKAYAMA PREFECTURE, MOUNT KOYA IS ONE OF JAPAN’S GEMS**

**APPROACH:** Local, express and super-express trains leave from Osaka’s Namba station on the Nankai Koya line. The trip takes between an hour and a half to two hours and tickets cost 1120 yen with a surcharge for the faster, reserved seat super-express trains.
Mount Koya’s central temple complex was originally constructed by Kobo Daishi. It consists of the Kondo (main hall), Daito (great tower), Saito (western tower), Miedo, and other small temple and shrine buildings.

The Daito (left) and Saito are both rare, two-tiered pagodas that more closely resemble Indian architecture than traditional three-and-five-tiered Japanese pagodas. The Konpon Daito was rebuilt in wood and concrete in 1937 after a catastrophic fire. It signifies the world of action while the Saito denotes the world of wisdom. The Kondo, also rebuilt in the 1930s, represents the union of both wisdom and action, the central tenet of Shingon Buddhism.

Kongobuji is the head temple of the Shingon Buddhist sect. It was constructed in 1593 by Toyotomi Hideyoshi and is famous for the beautiful painted Japanese doors within.

Jizo Bodhisattva

Their eyes are watching from every corner of the Okuno-in graveyard. These sometimes creepy, sometimes cute statues are effigies of Jizo-sama, a most beloved Japanese deity, the patron saint of expectant mothers, children, firemen, travelers, and pilgrims. There may be thousands these crude likenesses nestled among the graves atop Mount Koya, some in groups numbering a hundred or more.

It is not uncommon to see Jizo statues wearing red robes and bibs, like the statue pictured at right, or surrounded by children’s toys. This is because Jizo is best known as the guardian of unborn, aborted, and miscarried babies. In Buddhist lore, the souls of these dead children are sent to hell for the suffering they cause their parents, where they are forced for all eternity to build “castles” of small rocks. Jizo rescues them from the torments of demons and hides them in his sleeves so that they may be relieved of their suffering.

The Garan

Mount Koya’s central temple complex was originally constructed by Kobo Daishi. It consists of the Kondo (main hall), Daito (great tower), Saito (western tower), Miedo, and other small temple and shrine buildings.

The Daito (left) and Saito are both rare, two-tiered pagodas that more closely resemble Indian architecture than traditional three-and-five-tiered Japanese pagodas. The Konpon Daito was rebuilt in wood and concrete in 1937 after a catastrophic fire. It signifies the world of action while the Saito denotes the world of wisdom. The Kondo, also rebuilt in the 1930s, represents the union of both wisdom and action, the central tenet of Shingon Buddhism.

Kongobuji

Kongobuji is the head temple of the Shingon Buddhist sect. It was constructed in 1593 by Toyotomi Hideyoshi and is famous for the beautiful painted Japanese doors within.
Shukubo Lodging:

Though a round trip to and from Mount Koya is possible in one day, the experience is incomplete without an overnight stay. Approximately fifty of the over one hundred temples built atop Koya-san are shukubo, temples that offer lodging and meals to travelers. Shukubo give everyone from religious pilgrims (right) to English-speaking tourists the chance to connect with temple life, an otherwise off-limits experience.

A night clean and new. All supply a comfy futon (usually with heating pad) and the option of gender separated communal bathing. The meals served at temple lodgings are shojin ryori, the traditional vegetarian cuisine of monks. Many shukubo give guests the option of rising at 6 or 7 a.m. for morning prayers or temple cleaning services before breakfast.

“It is better to travel well than to arrive.”

-Siddhartha Gautama

June 2005 Tanuki | 19
When Anime Attacks

“FOR ADULT AUDIENCES ONLY: MUST BE 18 TO RENT.”

But it all looked so innocent! I put Project Ako back on the shelf and picked up Robotech 1/2. More of the same. Scanning the few remaining Japanese animation cassettes in the “foreign films” section of my local video store, I felt unsure whether to turn back empty-handed or face the clerk without proper ID. It was 1994, I was fourteen, and my best friend had just been introduced to anime via Sailor Moon on network TV. We were hooked.

But trying to get anime in ’94 was like going on a drug run. We ran into one problem after another. First, we had to convince our parents that Robotech wasn’t porn (luckily, the video clerk either knew or didn’t care). Then, when we tired of renting the same five movies over and over again, we bummed rides off of family members to film societies at local universities where they screened bad fan-subtitled versions of Dragonball and Vision of Escaflowne. What my young heart would have given for BiffTron back then!

It’s been almost eight years since Pokemon saturated its way into the American animation scene and took over the market, grossing over $29 billion in merchandise, videos and box-office revenue. These days, shelves of every Blockbuster are stuffed with DVDs of Yu-Gi-Oh! and Cowboy Bebop, as well as re-releases of classics like Spacehunter D and Ghost in the Shell. Most major multimedia chains stock new movies as soon as they’re serialized and shipped from Japan.

You’ll hear few complaints from anime aficionados about the industry’s swing toward otaku indulgence. But it certainly is baffling. Fifteen years ago there were just two anime video cassettes available in the US, and now Japanese animation is a multi-million dollar empire. Animation companies in America, France and other nations have taken the initiative to create their own knock-offs of anime in an attempt to capitalize on the lucrative craze.

For anime in America, it seems that the sky is the limit. On January 25, 2005, VIZ LLC, a prominent distributor of anime and manga in the continental US, announced its merger with ShoPro Entertainment, an affiliate of one of Japan’s largest publishing companies. This new, yet unnamed megacorp will be able to talk to each other. But will that create blandness?

In the beginning, anime catered to much more individualized tastes. The first die-hard fans who risked the label of “geek” and embraced the Japanese term for fanatic (otaku) paved the way for the anime revolution. Though it’s doubtful they’ll receive any acknowledgement from today’s screaming teenybopper fans of TV anime, the first otaku were actually adults. Much like the Trekkies of the 70s and 80s, they were typically white males in their mid to late twenties. And true to the geek stereotype, they were often well-educated and technologically savvy. Only half of today’s anime fans are over 20, and many are between 14 and 16 years old.

The reason for the age spread is that anime offers something for everyone. Unlike American cartoons, Japanese animation comprises a wide range of genres from romance to horror and from comedy to pornography.

“We’re only slowly getting over that anime isn’t just for men,” says Levi. Now, Japanese cartoons attract a large following of both girls, who like the super-feminine shojo style, and boys, to whom rowdy, showna, and movis are marketed. As the industry grows, shojo manga is becoming more and more prevalent.

The first anime introduced in America in the 1970s included classics such as Arthame, Star Blazers, and Speed Racer. These shows experienced some popularity with a small but loyal fan base, yet never broke into the mainstream—perhaps because they were highly edited to make them “understandable” to Western audiences and lacked much of the sophistication of today’s anime.

Levi writes that anime is popular because it uses a few cutting-edge storytelling devices Americans love. First, anime has a high-tech look, and a sleek, polished art style. The setting is given careful detail, even in fantasy worlds and alternative universes. When it comes to characters, anime certainly has its calling cards. It will never stop overplaying robots, power-suits and mecha, or sexy, powerful, busty women. But even when they fall into a certain stereotype, Japanese sty-

The success of anime is not limited to TV and video. The wild marketability of shows like Pokemon and Card Captor Sakura attracted the door for movie ventures and merchandise spin-offs. In 2003, three anime features, Pokemon Heroes, Millennium Actress, and Tokyo Godfathers all qualified for Oscars. The Daily Southwest reports that between 1999 and 2002 the industry experienced a 78 percent growth.

With steady climb in anime popularity, the American animation industry has been left struggling in the dust. In response many networks have introduced “Americanized” anime, in an attempt to create shows that will generate the same interest and profit. The French cartoon (Franime?) Totally Spies has gained popularity since it was first aired on ABC in 2001 and picked up by the Cartoon Network in 2003. Even Teen Titans, another Cartoon Network show featuring American superhero stars, has taken on an Asian look. Japanese pop group Puffy Amiyumi sings a version of the theme song.

Anime is best beloved, however, for its approaches to unconventional topics. It was in the 1980s, when movies like the cyberpunk classic Akira gained a cult following, that anime took root in American soil. Once anime had established itself as a radical medium through its serious treatment of dark, deep, and grotesque subjects, it found a permanent place in the showcase of American cinema.

The “taboo” image of Japanese animation has recently faded but nevertheless opened the door for movie television series to progress from retro Robotech to hit, cutting-edge Samurai Champloo. In fact, according to Internal Correspondence Version 2 (ICv2), a news source for pop culture retailers, anime makes up an estimated 60 percent of all broadcast animation shown worldwide.

The reason for the age spread is that anime offers something for everyone. Unlike American cartoons, Japanese animation comprises a wide range of genres from romance to horror and from comedy to pornography.

“We’re only slowly getting over that anime isn’t just for men,” says Levi. Now, Japanese cartoons attract a large following of both girls, who like the super-feminine shojo style, and boys, to whom rowdy, showna, and movis are marketed. As the industry grows, shojo manga is becoming more and more prevalent.

The first anime introduced in America in the 1970s included classics such as Arthame, Star Blazers, and Speed Racer. These shows experienced some popularity with a small but loyal fan base, yet never broke into the mainstream—perhaps because they were highly edited to make them “understandable” to Western audiences and lacked much of the sophistication of today’s anime.

Levi writes that anime is popular because it uses a few cutting-edge storytelling devices Americans love. First, anime has a high-tech look, and a sleek, polished art style. The setting is given careful detail, even in fantasy worlds and alternative universes.
Light as a Dragonfly

One of the best loved Nihen-to smiths makes his home in the Oregon countryside— but this samurai wears cowboy boots.

Just back from a bust, Michael Bell drives his silver Nissan Pathfinder up the steep driveway of his home in rural Oregon, his gun and badge resting on the passenger seat. At 58 years old, lean and graying Bell is in his second-to-last term at the Coquille Police Academy. With his long-legged swagger and western drawl, Bell resembles the classic American cowboy. But he’s not in the force for vigilante justice; he’s there to practice bushido.

Bell’s true passion is Nihen-to, the art of the Japanese sword. Since 1987, the rolling hills and valleys of Coquille, Oregon, have been home to Dragonfly Forge and the craftsman Kunimitsu, as Bell signs his blades. Police work is a pastime that allows him to walk the way of the warrior and apply the mental and physical strengths of bushido to his work. As a craftperson of blades ostensibly for samurai, Bell has taken it upon himself to live the code of a swordsman, and this attention to detail has earned him great recognition for the quality and authenticity of his work.

Perched atop a steep driveway, Bell’s residence and studio overlook lush, sweeping fields, a river, and forests. He has set up shop on nearly twenty acres, miles from anywhere, kept company by his wife, Anna; sons Nicholas, 10 and Gabriel, 20; daughter Raquel, 17; two goats, and assorted household pests and pets. Among them are myriad iridescent blue and red dragonflies, creatures famous in Japan for their quickness, lightness, and mystery, and for which the forge is named.

For the last 35 years, Bell has made a name for himself as one of America’s few traditional smiths and also one of the finest. At Dragonfly Forge, Bell builds swords from the ground up. First, he crafts his own namakagane, steel formed of sand iron from the Oregon coast. He forges this steel into traditional blades that sell to die-hard collectors for $16,000 to $20,000. Bell’s own American innovation, braided cable blades, are second to none in toughness and cutting ability, and sell to “swordsmen” for $6,500 to $9,500, depending upon embellishments. His swords are light and efficient, ranging from two to two-and-a-half pounds fully mounted and fitted with handle, guard, and ornaments.

Bell is one of few Americans and even fewer Japanese to sculpt every part of a sword from the kissaki (tip) to the saya (scabbard). With the amount of time and resources invested in each piece, Bell turns out approximately one blade every month, some taking much longer. He has a waiting list of over a year.

“I’m working at a disadvantage, to some degree, compared to the Japanese,” Bell says. “In Japan, the whole process is specialized—the smith doesn’t make the decoration for the handle, the guard, the sheath. But in my case people want highly detailed work and I have to do that all myself.”

American smiths operate without the infrastructure and support that they might experience in Japan. But even so, Japanese smiths who make a living off their work are rare. Limited by post World War II government regulations, smiths can only produce three long blade and two short blades per month. Of the approximately 350 registered swordsmiths in Japan, only about 10 percent are nationally recognized artists for whom smithing is a sole occupation. These are the best of the best, usually the winners of the prestigious yearly competition hosted in Tokyo by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Art-Sword (abbreviated NBTHK for the Japanese title). Yet Bell cannot participate in the competition, or even sell his blades in Japan. The country’s strict customs regulations bar the importation of weapons. Even now, 35 years from when Bell began his own

June 2005 Tanuki | 23
Bell bought his first sword in his early twenties while living in San Francisco. He maintained his interest in Japan by working with his hands to build replicas of nanto (short swords) and katanas (long swords) out of scrap metal. At 23, when a friend informed him of an "old man" teaching traditional Japanese sword smithing in Oakland, California, Bell begged for an introduction. Two weeks later he met Nakajima Muneyoshi, a tall, long haired man with the face and personality of Karusawa’s master swordsman, Kurosawa. Though he had been in America seven years, Nakajima spoke little English and communicated in a pidgin dialect that sometimes only he understood. Bell presented him with a luncheon he had crafted from spare parts, Nakajima looked over, handled the scabbard, nodded, and said “little lacquer OK.” With that, Bell found himself apprenticed to a master sword smith.

Nakajima, not “old” but in his mid-fifties, had been commissioned by the Japanese Sword Society of California to appraise swords, polish, and craft scabbards for the small-Walcott community of sword lovers. Nakajima was not only a skilled polisher, and restorer but also had studied and mastered all of the disciplines of Japanese swordsmithing. According to Bell, he could take an unsigned blade and identify who made it, when, and where.

When Bell took up residence at the “San Francisco School of Swordsmithing”, called “Sokodera” by his pupils, Nakajima had a clutch of five or six apprentices. Most of the students were just checking him out, but a few, including fellow apprentice Francis Boyd, became professional smiths. There were some Japanese smiths who felt that Nakajima was betraying their craft by sharing his knowledge with outsiders. But Nakajima wasn’t ethnocentric. He sensed that the Japanese doubted the serious commitment of American craftspersons, and would teach anyone with an honest interest who was willing to work long hours for little payoff.

Students at Sokodera didn’t have a Japanese forge to work at, so they struck a deal with the owner of a local blacksmith’s forge, and it was there that they did the “dirty work” of smithing — hammering, forging, and shaping blades. Bell worked eight hours every day to express his sincerity, sometimes sleeping at his bench. But Nakajima didn’t lavish his pupils with praise. He believed in tough love and expected results. He left the Bay on a commercial fishing boat. Shortly thereafter, because of falling health, Nakajima disbanded Sokodera and returned to Japan. Drinking Malls for months had done little to cure his stomach pains; two years later he succumbed to cancer.

As if he felt a calling to carry on his teacher’s legacy, Bell returned to San Francisco to open a cutlery store on 38th and Dolores, where it still stands today. In 1988, realizing his dream to become a full time swordsmith and set the plans for Dragonfly Forge in motion. Though he doesn’t maintain a Shinto shrine for forge gods or observe the Shinto faith that MacArthur, his father, the editor of the daily intelligence report for General MacArthur. Though he only lived in Tokyo for two years and never studied the Japanese language, Japanese culture made a lasting impression upon him.

A s a seven-year-old in 1952, Bell traveled to Japan with his father, the editor of the daily intelligence report for General MacArthur. Though he only lived in Tokyo for two years and never studied the Japanese language, Japanese culture made a lasting impression upon him.

Bell bought his first sword in his early twenties while living in San Francisco. He maintained his interest in Japan by working with his hands to build replicas of nanto (short swords) and katanas (long swords) out of scrap metal. At 23, when a friend informed him of an “old man” teaching traditional Japanese sword smithing in Oakland, California, Bell begged for an introduction. Two weeks later he

Bell hammers out a hot cable blade on the workbench. Discarded practice blades sit in the forge doorway. A bucket on the floor of his shop sits stacked full of unfinished non-commercial forge in Kirkland, Washington, during the summer of 2005. He also hopes to one day sponsor an international sword competition to rival the NBTHK.

There is a rising hope within the network of American sword smiths that Yoshihara’s dream will soon become a reality. The infiltration of Hollywood by “wire-fu” cinema and an influx of anime and Japanese pop culture in major American cities have sparked an increasingly mainstream interest in Asian traditions. The West Coast in particular is the center of gravity for sword work. Back when Bell first started making swords, America’s primary interests in Asia were still karate, kung-fu, and Bruce Lee.

According to Bell, diversity among sword makers encourages smiths to strive for better quality and innovation. He even appreciates any interest the American media might spark in Nihon-to, whether that interest begins with sophisticated blades or purely Americanized Hollywood Ninja swords. In particular, recent movies like Kill Bill and The Last Samurai have greatly stimulated the market for classic Japanese swords.

"We joke every time someone shows Highlander that there’s another order in the making," says Bell.

Though the majority of entry-level swords are mass-produced imitations pumped out in Pakistani factories, even a basic curiosity in Nihon-to holds great potential. Many people work their way up the line from cheap knock-offs to real swords, maintaining their Hollywood interest at first through catalogue collections and inexpensive decorative blades and then by commissions pieces to their own taste through swordsmiths. By the time collectors come to Bell, they already have a good idea of his technique and price range.

Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk. Whether forging a traditional or cable blade, Bell tries to create what the Japanese call an “all day sword,” a piece crafted with such attention to detail that its subtleties can be enjoyed a hundred ways as the light of day changes from dawn to dusk.
One salient feature of an excellent blade, wherever it’s made, is that it’s remarkably light. Americans, in a nation of abundant resources, tend to conceptualize swords as large, heavy, and bludgeoning. But on a rare trip through the vault of the British Museum in the mid-1970s, Bell found that every sword he held, whether Japanese, Viking, or Turkish, was so light that he could balance it on his index finger.

In Nankajima’s tradition, Bell has hatched his own clutch of appren- tices, to whom he teaches the foundation of smithing. Just as he approaches his work no differently than the Japanese, he asks the same things of his students that Nankajima did of his hand work, dedication, and resourcefulness. Bell’s oldest son Gabriel, too, is a pupil of his father’s trade when he is home from Willamette University.

Bell feels a great responsibility to preserve his craft, even if appren- tices are a gamble that guarantees no results. He dreams of building an international school with attached dojo on the land near the forge. If Bell’s dream perseveres, the American smith will not vanish like the dragonfly, a colorful flit of the imagination, but stand as a lasting icon of intercultural exchange. It is with this in mind that he rises each day to walk the path of bushido—never far from his side, his gun and badge; even closer, his love for the craft that taught him to be a warrior.

One salient feature of an excellent blade, wherever it’s made, is that it’s remarkably light. Americans, in a nation of abundant resources, tend to conceptualize swords as large, heavy, and bludgeoning. But on a rare trip through the vault of the British Museum in the mid-1970s, Bell found that every sword he held, whether Japanese, Viking, or Turkish, was so light that he could balance it on his index finger.

In Nankajima’s tradition, Bell has hatched his own clutch of appren- tices, to whom he teaches the foundation of smithing. Just as he approaches his work no differently than the Japanese, he asks the same things of his students that Nankajima did of his hand work, dedication, and resourcefulness. Bell’s oldest son Gabriel, too, is a pupil of his father’s trade when he is home from Willamette University.

Bell feels a great responsibility to preserve his craft, even if appren- tices are a gamble that guarantees no results. He dreams of building an international school with attached dojo on the land near the forge. If Bell’s dream perseveres, the American smith will not vanish like the dragonfly, a colorful flit of the imagination, but stand as a lasting icon of intercultural exchange. It is with this in mind that he rises each day to walk the path of bushido—never far from his side, his gun and badge; even closer, his love for the craft that taught him to be a warrior.

One salient feature of an excellent blade, wherever it’s made, is that it’s remarkably light. Americans, in a nation of abundant resources, tend to conceptualize swords as large, heavy, and bludgeoning. But on a rare trip through the vault of the British Museum in the mid-1970s, Bell found that every sword he held, whether Japanese, Viking, or Turkish, was so light that he could balance it on his index finger.

In Nankajima’s tradition, Bell has hatched his own clutch of appren- tices, to whom he teaches the foundation of smithing. Just as he approaches his work no differently than the Japanese, he asks the same things of his students that Nankajima did of his hand work, dedication, and resourcefulness. Bell’s oldest son Gabriel, too, is a pupil of his father’s trade when he is home from Willamette University.

Bell feels a great responsibility to preserve his craft, even if appren- tices are a gamble that guarantees no results. He dreams of building an international school with attached dojo on the land near the forge. If Bell’s dream perseveres, the American smith will not vanish like the dragonfly, a colorful flit of the imagination, but stand as a lasting icon of intercultural exchange. It is with this in mind that he rises each day to walk the path of bushido—never far from his side, his gun and badge; even closer, his love for the craft that taught him to be a warrior.
**SUSHI, FRESH AND FAST**

Philadelphia. Crop Burning. Rock 'n' Roll. Surfs Up. Sound like a flashback into an American history textbook? Nope, think again and think Japan. All of the above are names for sushi rolls. Give or take the raw fish, Americans love sushi. Low fat, low calories, chock full of nutrients and savory taste, sushi has sparked a craze across the country.

Primitive sushi, called Narezushi, was created over a thousand years ago to preserve food in pre-refrigeration days. It was made by pressing cleaned, raw fish between layers of salt and rice, which preserved the fish for several weeks. Modern sushi didn't evolve until the 1900s, when a chef named Yohei made Narezushi without fermenting the ingredients first.

Today, sushi exists in four forms: makizushi, a roll with rice and seaweed wrapped around the outside; nigiri, thin slices of fish over hand-formed balls of rice; te-maki, giant cones of nori filled with fish, rice, and veggies; and sashimi, plain fish with no rice.

Sushi has grown from an obscure foreign delicacy for the strong-of-stomach to a hip, trendy supermarket snack. It has become almost as American as apple pie. Western sushi tends to be bigger than its Japanese counterpart, a giant mouthful some-times stuffed with edictic ingredients. The names of the rolls above are just a few of those created on American soil. Some, like the popular California Roll (crab, avocado and cucumber), have made their way back to Japan in an example of a bizarre, cross-cultural food exchange.

Do Americans favor quantity over quality? Presentation over bizarre, cross-cultural food exchange. Of those created on American soil. Some, like the popular California Roll (crab, avocado and cucumber), have made their way back to Japan in an example of a bizarre, cross-cultural food exchange.

**PC MARKET OF CHOICE** *(Eugene, OR)*

**Freshness:** (4 of 5) Made fresh daily at a mini sushi stand, but may sit out for hours. The cucumber in the roll was still crunchy when we got it.

**Rice:** (3 of 5) A decent flavor and texture, though sweeter in the maki than the nigiri.

**Fish:** (3 of 5) The fish is not unpresumptive and rubbery in the nigiri but works well in maki.

**Size/ shape:** (4 of 5) Maki are abnormally large and nigiri slightly small.

**Price and Variety:** (3 of 5) PC Market offers a good but pricey variety, with most rolls ranging from $4 to $8 and nigiri from $3 and toos better.

**Overall:** (17 of 25) B

**WHOLE FOODS** *(Seattle, WA)*

**Freshness:** (4 of 5) Made fresh daily, but may sit out.

**Rice:** (4 of 5) Has a rice texture and pleasant, sweet taste. It might be better fresher but it wasn’t too soft or dense.

**Fish:** (3 of 5) While reasonably firm, the fish lacks distinguishable flavor.

**Size/ shape:** (4 of 5) Nigiri were a bit small and makizushi a bit large.

**Price and Variety:** (4 of 5) Whole Foods sells a basic set of traditional sushi with average prices from $5 for a basic roll to $12.50 for a large combo. They also create custom party platters by request, but they’re rather expensive.

**Overall:** (19 of 25) B+

**UWAJIMA** *(Seattle, WA)*

**Freshness:** (4 of 5) Made daily but may sit out.

**Rice:** (4 of 5) The glutinous rice in the rolls hints at over-refrigeration but has a nice, slightly sweet taste in general.

**Fish:** (3 of 5) Uwajimaya’s fish is variable, ranging from well-textured to rubbery and fibrous. It’s a hit and miss.

**Size/ shape:** (5 of 5) Neither the rolls nor the nigiri are too large or too small. Most nigiri have rice, broad cuts of fish.

**Price and Variety:** (3 of 5) This Asian market sells almost everything, from Unagi rolls to combo nigiri platters. Prices range from $3.50 for basic rolls to $12.50 for some nigiri/maki combos. A fitting price range for superior supermarket quality.

**Overall:** (21 of 25) A-

**TRADER JOE’S** *(Portland, OR)*

**Freshness:** (1 of 5) Joe’s sushi is produced to last three days — that means soggy ingredients.

**Rice:** (1 of 5) Bland, squished into mush, and hardened from over-refrigeration.

**Fish:** (2 of 5) Because of the three day “time limit,” Joe’s uses no raw fish. Even with a lack of traditional sushi they score a few points for innovation. We were intrigued by mall with real Alaskan Blue Crab, and cooked fluidly with ponzu sauce, but not impressed by the flavor of the varieties we tried.

**Size/ shape:** (5 of 5) Despite sticky rice, and so-so ingredients the size-measures up.

**Price and Variety:** (3 of 5) An interesting and affordable medly. Rolls start at around $3.00 for eight pieces, and a combo-platter with three pieces each of three types of crab maki and a veggie roll plus four pieces of cooked shrimp nigiri was only $4.99. The price is right, but you get what you pay for.

**Overall:** (12 of 25) C-

**Recipe**

**NIGIRI**

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 4 cups rinsed sushi rice
- 1/4 cups rice vinegar
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1/4 cups sake or mirin (optional)
- 4" piece Kombu seaweed (optional)

**SUSHI RICE:**

In a saucepan, bring rice, water and kelp almost to a boil with the lid on. Remove kelp, reserve for other uses, return lid, lower heat and simmer an additional 20 minutes. Remove from heat, and let stand, covered, for 10 more minutes. If using rice cooker, follow directions.

Blend vinegar, sake, salt and sugar in a separate bowl. Turn rice out in a wood or porcelain bowl, and slowly and evenly drizzle dressing over rice. Stir with wooden spoon. Using a spoon or spatula, spread the rice over a tray, no more than 1/2 inch deep. Cover loosely with saran wrap and cool until room temperature.

**CUTTING NIGIRI:**

Purchase sashimi-grade tuna, salmon or other fish from a reputable local seafood market. Keep the fish chilled in the fridge for no more than a day. Do not freeze.

Prepare a santoku or sharp kitchen knife for filleting the fish. Cut the fish diagonally toward the end of the fillet, pressing downward in one clean motion. Do not saw. While cutting, do not press on the fish or handle it more than necessary. Slices should be less than 1/4 inch thick.

**SHAPING NIGIRI:**

Molded hands with wet. Grab about half an ounce of sushi rice. Form it into a bite-sized cylinder with your hands but don’t pack it too tightly.

Use two fingers to pick up chilled, sliced fish. Avoid touching it too long, as it can absorb body heat very quickly. Press fish gently into rice between thumb and forefinger. Serve immediately.
Natsume Soseki’s
Ten Nights and Dreams

The First Night
guarded by Chris Pearson

Ten Nights and Dreams is a collection of ten short stories written by celebrated Meiji period author Natsume Soseki. It was first published in Japan in 1896 under the title Yume Jūnai Goyō.

The stories are translated by some to be a written account of Soseki’s actual dreams. A Japanese version follows this excerpt.

I had this dream.

As I was sitting with my arms folded by her pillow, the woman lying on her back said in a quiet voice that she would die. Her long hair covered the pillow and the soft outline of her woman's body lying there. She didn't possibly look like she could die. But as I peered down wrapped in long lashes was a mere surface moist eyes. Wrapped in long lashes was a mere surface.

After that I descended to the garden and dug a hole with an oyster shell. It was a large shell, with a smooth, sharp edge. With each scoop loop from the moon would sparkle on the back of the shell.

Then I picked up a fragment of star that had fallen and gently set it on top of the earth. The fragment was round. When it had fallen through the heavens, I thought, the corners must have been made. There, it's being reflected isn't it?" she said, palcing the shell. It was a large shell, with a smooth, sharp edge.

Then I sat on moss. I folded my arms and stared at the round grave stone, all the while thinking about how I would be waiting like that. So I sat down. It's time to dig. I thought. I dug a hole, and placed it on top of the earth. It was a large shell, with a smooth, sharp edge.

I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wasn’t sure how many times I saw the red sun while I was sitting with my arms folded by her pillow. But as I sat down, she had this dream.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.

I wonder if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I wondered if she would turn to the west. Just as red, it suddenly rose. I waited a while and again the crimson sun slowly started to set. Then it quietly sank. Then I counted, two.
The TANUKI is a clever character from Japanese folk history. Its namesake is a real, raccoon-like animal known for cunning and survival skills. Like the fox, the mythical tanuki can shapechange, usually by placing a leaf upon its bare head. Tanuki often turn into monks or teakettles and play pranks on unsuspecting woodsmen and hunters. Today, statues of Tanuki beckon customers into restaurants, garbed in the robes and hat of a wandering monk, with sake in one hand and a false promissory note in the other.