**Introduction to Japanese Studies (Culture) Final exam 24 July 2019**

Write *one essay* [1200-2000 words excluding references]. Choose from the following five themes:

1. While the notion of culture as shared is important we must be mindful not to allow this idea of an ideal ‘shared’ culture to overrun the diverse realities of everyday life in every society. Japanese culture in particular has been described by Japanese and foreign scholars alike as a rather fixed and monolithic entity, yet this is rarely the case. (Stevens, Anthropology of Modern Japan, in Babb 2015:22-3)
2. Rather than view traditional techniques of the body in Japanese restaurant kitchens and those means of production that today rely to a greater extent on mechanized technologies as diametrically opposed, one can see how they are connected. The steam convection oven, while it may be taking over many tasks for which a steamer was once used, remains an extension and a tool of the itaba using it. Dorinne Kondo, in her ethnography of a Tokyo confectionary, writes that ‘machines both partake of the human world and, through their use in the work process, provide one of the ways human beings reaffirm their connectedness to one another’. Machines need not, she avers, be alienating.” (St. Maurice, “Sensing Bodies at the Center in Today’s Traditional Japanese Restaurant Kitchens”, *Japanese Studies* 38:1, 2018: 18)
3. With the lessening of physical contact and increased emphasis on the deceased as an individual comes a loosening of ritual rigidity, thus resulting in symbols becoming more malleable and open to new interpretations. Changes in society have led to the end of certain rituals –as in the case of the procession. New forms emerge that both lead to and reflect new attitudes and beliefs. These are again manifested in new ritual forms or, more often, new interpretations of previous forms and symbols. Belief systems and ideas take form in the physical shape of rites. New high-rise graveyards are the embodiment of recent ideas regarding the care and worship of ancestors. (Rowe, Stickers for Nails 2000: 374)
4. A kimono school owner summarized the experience of donning a kimono in the following words:

When you wear kimono it reaches your feelings, it enlarges your mind and makes you calm; even if you want to run you cannot. You have to move in a natural way. So, if the feelings become calm so are your thoughts. Even if something bad is done to you, you do not react immediately, you think first before you act. A Japanese woman like this guarded the Japanese household [ie]. I would like the young women to be a little like this. (Goldstein-Gidoni, Fashioning Cultural Identity: Body and Dress 2005:163)

5. They [the Japanese] also have rites and ceremonies so different from those of all the other nations that it seems they deliberately try to be unlike any other people. The things which they do in this respect are beyond imagining and it may truly be said that Japan is a world the reverse of Europe; everything is so different and opposite that they are like us in practically nothing. So great is the difference in their food, clothing, honours, ceremonies, language, management of the household, in their way of negotiating, sitting, building, curing the wounded and sick, teaching and bringing up children, and in everything else, that it can be neither described nor understood. (Alessandro Valignano during first mission visitation to Japan, 1579-82)

Note: Essays will be assessed with regard to argumentation (coherence), familiarity with readings of the course and engagement with pertaining literature, critical thinking/innovation, standards of academic writing. **Note that plagiarism will be treated as misconduct and will result in severe disciplinary action.** The final exam accounts for 40% of the entire grade. Please submit your essay by e-mail in word or pdf format with theme, word count and your name included on the first page of the essay to [klien@imc.hokudai.ac.jp](mailto:klien@imc.hokudai.ac.jp)

You are welcome to do research in the library about the topic of your choice in advance, bring notes and references to the exam and prepare citations etc. beforehand. In fact, as we will have 60 minutes for the exam in total, I highly recommend to prepare your hypothesis and references in advance so that you can focus on writing during the exam. 20-30 minutes of the final session will be used for a wrap up of the course and final discussions (what did you take away from this course, how has your understanding of ‘Japanese culture’ changed throughout the course, things you liked/did not like about the course).

Otsukaresama deshita – Have a great summer!