

*Beyond Japan: Looking back a year on*

Report by Oliver Moxham

**Summary**

- Over 4,000 plays across 60 nations
- Weekly audiences of 70-100 listeners
- Accredited by senior scholars for accessibly presenting their work
- Featuring in syllabi of respected universities and institutions

**Introduction**

The first *Beyond Japan* episode came out a year ago in June 2020 as a digital alternative to the Centre for Japanese Studies research seminar series halted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pilot was a brief 15-minute episode with Professor Simon Kaner, a tester to see what the appetite would be for a podcast dedicated to sharing the interdisciplinarity of Japanese Studies. With our first series completed at 46 episodes strong, that appetite has been confirmed and has seen increased engagement with the Centre for Japanese Studies contrary to the predicted impact of COVID-19. We now have a regular weekly audience between 70-100 listeners engaging with content new and old, as well as active followers sharing our content and the CJS profile across social media. *Beyond Japan* is a testament to the successes of UEA and the Sainsbury Institute in digital engagement and an asset to its continued outreach, unhindered by the extensive restrictions of the past year.

**A new approach to Japanese Studies**

When I recorded the first episode with Professor Kaner, I could not have predicted the scope the series would come to encompass. However, regardless of topic, I have endeavoured

to have at least one question in every episode which places the topic beyond the context of Japan, whether in the broader discipline or in a transnational sense. I was inspired to take this approach from going to Japan-related conferences and being overwhelmed with the sheer range of topics, yet finding that when I shared with non-academic colleagues that I studied Japan they would assume my interests were based in such stereotypical topics as anime, samurai and so on. Ultimately, I wanted to convey that Japanese Studies is not actually limited to Japan, but rather turns Japan into a launching pad for topics which cover globally important issues which anyone would find pretty fascinating if they could get past the stereotypes. With 46 episodes covering topics from the anthropology of hauntings to the identity politics of cross-dressing to debates of race and belonging, the first series of *Beyond Japan* has shown the myriad of issues both popular and unknown that can be unpacked in a half-hour discussion on a Japanese case study.

### **A global, diverse audience**

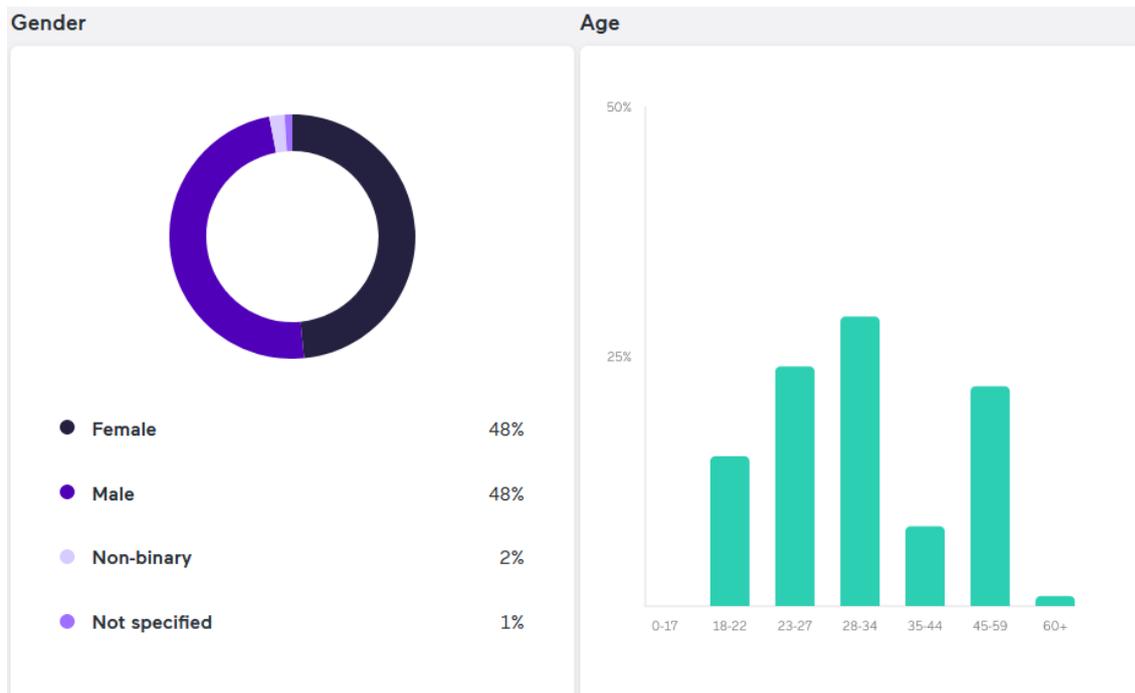


*Beyond Japan* has taken the cutting-edge research presented at the research seminar series beyond the originally localised audience to listeners across the world. As of September

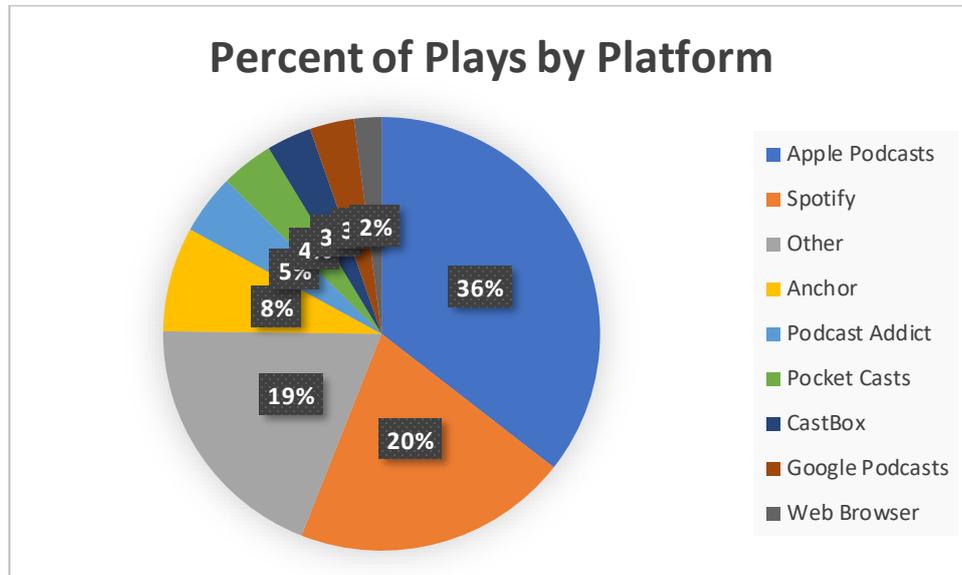
2021, *Beyond Japan* episodes have been played over 4,000 times by listeners in 60 nations, our top 3 being:

- 1) United States of America (33%)
- 2) United Kingdom (28%)
- 3) Japan (13%)

Our listeners also come from all ages and backgrounds, appealing to both men and women in equal measure and holding popularity across a range of age groups:



This wide reach is credited to the wide availability of *Beyond Japan*. It is currently accessed across 8 platforms, the most popular being Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Anchor:



*Beyond Japan* is also available on the CJS YouTube channel to maximise outreach to those unfamiliar with podcast servers. This has seen the channel gain 114 subscribers, 3,300 views and 327 hours of viewing time over the past year, an undeniable success in increasing the online presence of Japanese Studies in Norwich.

### **Feedback**

For this report, I reached out to all former interviewees of the podcast to ask their opinion of the series and I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of positive feedback I received. The full list of feedback is available at the end of this report, but I have highlighted some key notes in this section.

#### *Beyond Japan in syllabi*

A number of guests mentioned in their reviews that *Beyond Japan* is not just a great resource for the lay listener, but for budding academics also. This value has been recognised by lecturers at such respected institutions as the University of Sheffield and Oxford

University, where it is currently recommended to students studying Japan from a range of perspective:

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*“Podcast episodes have been helpful in teaching students at Sheffield more about the process of academic research, as the questions developed often asked details that are not apparent in published work.”*

Dr Jamie Coates, Lecturer in East Asian Studies & Director for Undergraduate Studies, University of Sheffield

*“I have listed Beyond Japan as a potential resource in my Oxford University MSc/MPhil syllabus on Japanese politics.”*

Dr Giulio Pugliese, Lecturer in Japanese Politics and International Relations, Oxford School of Global and Area Studies

*“I also know of at least one class that assigned the podcast as optional “reading” when I guest-lectured for them, so it's circulating back to the classroom as well!”*

Dana Mirsalis, PhD Candidate, Harvard University

*“I listen regularly and could certainly see myself using these podcasts in my teaching as well.”*

Professor Bryan Lowe, Assistant Professor of Religion, Princeton University

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### *Benefitting researchers through publicity and accessibility*

A trend that became apparent from reviews was the unexpected benefits guests personally experienced following the publication of their episode, ranging from invitations to publish research to forming new connections with fellow researchers. The podcast format of *Beyond Japan* provides exceptional publicity and accessibility, allowing researchers to branch out from immediate associates:

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*“I was pleased to receive feedback from a number of people about the episode, helping me to form new connections with researchers in the field.”*

Professor David Rear, Assistant Professor at  
Chuō University

*“At a time when public engagement is becoming more important in academia, the Beyond Japan podcast sets an example of how to do public engagement right.”*

Dr Michael Tsang, Leverhulme Postdoctoral  
Fellow, School of Modern Languages,  
Newcastle University

*“I think Beyond Japan has a great series of interviews so far and it seems to me that there is really a demand for this kind of public research dissemination, not least among undergraduate and postgraduate students in Japanese studies.”*

Dr Aike Rots, Associate Professor in Asian  
Studies, University of Oslo

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*“Following the release of your interview with me, I was invited to screen my documentary film at several new venues and heard that some of my published work had been incorporated into teaching programs in Europe.*

*Overall, the experience of the podcast was very helpful for attracting more interest in the issue of migration in Japan and reached new unexpected audiences.”*

Dr Jamie Coates, Lecturer in East Asian Studies  
& Director for Undergraduate Studies, University  
of Sheffield

*“Beyond Japan has quickly emerged as one of the best podcasts in Japanese studies. The podcast makes cutting edge research accessible to a broad audience.”*

Professor Bryan Lowe, Assistant Professor of  
Religion, Princeton University

### **Where Next: The Future of *Beyond Japan***

Over the COVID-19 pandemic, I am proud to have assisted CJS and the Sainsbury Institute in proving there is a clear appetite for academic research amongst the wider public as long as it is readily accessible. Through converting CJS seminars into webinars and taking the Sainsbury Institute Third Thursday lecture series and Ishibashi Summer Programmes online, we have been overwhelmed by the global response and consistent participation.

*Beyond Japan* has homed in on the advantages of presenting the human side of research by disseminating the latest research into digestible, half-hour conversations, attracting curious members of the public as well as students and fellow academics at all stages in their career. The podcast has gone beyond its initial goal as a supplement for the CJS research seminar series, instead engaging both scholars of Japan and the general public on a global level with a growing base keen for more. We have been credited as one of the very few podcasts producing such content on a professional level and this innovation has placed Norwich at the digital heart of Japanese Studies nationally, if not globally. With the support of the Sainsbury Institute, *Beyond Japan* will continue to deliver cutting-edge research as high-quality, public-facing content for the foreseeable future.

## Full reviews

Name	Title	Quote
Dr Dolores Martinez	Research affiliate at the University of Oxford's Anthropology department	“I have no suggestions to make for improvement, just some positive things to say about the experience. Oliver prepped me well, he gave me the time to talk as much as I needed, and he listened very well. The edit was brilliant, I say that because I couldn't think of what he cut from what we had discussed. All of that points to a great experience.”
Dr Michael Tsang	Leverhulme Postdoctoral Fellow, School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University	“ <i>Beyond Japan</i> gave me and my research an opportunity to reach a broader audience on multiple platforms that a traditional academic publication could not. Oliver's interview questions gave the podcast a flexible structure within which I had plenty of room to discuss what I wanted. Making podcasts available on Spotify was also a strategic move well done. At a time when public engagement is becoming more important in academia, the <i>Beyond Japan</i> podcast sets an example of how to do public engagement right. I look forward to seeing the channel grow further.”
Warren A. Stanislaus	PhD Candidate, University of Oxford (Faculty of	“I was delighted to appear on the <i>Beyond Japan</i> podcast in 2020 to discuss the reaction to BLM in Japan and Afro-Japanese exchanges. As one of few Japan Studies focused podcasts coming out of the

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	History and Pembroke College) Associate Lecturer, Rikkyo University (Global Liberal Arts Program)	UK, I believe the podcast has a significant role to play in showcasing the work of scholars at British institutions. Indeed, as a young scholar of colour, I especially value the podcast's commitment to continuously highlighting a diversity of research and researchers.”
Dr Giulio Pugliese	Lecturer in Japanese Politics and International Relations, Oxford School of Global and Area Studies	“I am a devoted listener of the <i>Beyond Japan</i> podcast and have had the good fortune of participating once as a speaker. The podcast’s range is diverse and the host, Oliver Moxham, always proves to be abreast of the debate and an engaging conversationalist. I have listed <i>Beyond Japan</i> as a potential resource in my Oxford University MSc/MPhil syllabus on Japanese politics.”
Prof Hugo Dobson	Professor of Japan's International Relations at University of Sheffield	“What has struck me is the range of subjects covered and voices included - very impressive and makes the case for Japanese Studies as a vibrant and relevant field of study.”
Dr Jamie Coates	Lecturer in East Asian Studies	“ <i>Beyond Japan</i> has been a really helpful forum for learning about what colleagues in Japanese studies are up to, as well as attracting wider interest for my own research.

Name	Title	Quote
	Director for Undergraduate Studies at University of Sheffield	<p>Following the release of your interview with me, I was invited to screen my documentary film at several new venues and heard that some of my published work had been incorporated into teaching programs in Europe.</p> <p>Overall, the experience of the podcast was very helpful for attracting more interest in the issue of migration in Japan and reached new unexpected audiences.</p> <p>Other podcast episodes have been helpful in teaching students at Sheffield more about the process of academic research, as the questions developed often asked details that are not apparent in published work. This demonstrates the importance of podcasts and similar forms of dissemination.”</p>
Dr Andrew Littlejohn	Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University	<p>“I enjoyed appearing on <i>Beyond Japan</i> very much. Forums like it help to expose our research to audiences that might not otherwise read it--like my mother, who said after listening, "I finally understand what you are doing!" I found the questions very interesting and the process well-organized. Oliver was great with communication both before and after. In short, a lovely experience and great forum for sharing our work with wider audiences.”</p>
Dana Mirsalis	PhD Candidate, Harvard University	<p>“I really appreciated getting the chance to participate in the podcast, both because it's always nice to be</p>

Name	Title	Quote
Prof David Rear	Assistant Professor at Chuō University	<p>able to talk about my research and because I think it's valuable to be able to explain my area of specialty to a general audience (from both a pedagogical standpoint and from a "people who aren't academics know about this now!" reach-of-a-podcast standpoint). I also know of at least one class that assigned the podcast as optional "reading" when I guest-lectured for them, so it's circulating back to the classroom as well! It's also been nice to have as a listener, since it allows me to sample a bunch of different scholars' research without having to read a lot (which has been a lifesaver for my severely screen-strained eyes during COVID).”</p> <p>“I was very honoured to be invited on the Beyond Japan podcast, which is rapidly gaining an audience around the world. Oliver was extremely professional in his approach, being both thorough in his preparation and also very responsive to suggestions. I really enjoyed our conversation together on the podcast. It forced me to clarify and re-think several of my own ideas as I articulated them in a format that is relatively unusual in the academic world. I was also pleased to receive feedback from a number of people about the episode, helping me to form new connections with researchers in the field. I thoroughly recommend the podcast to anyone interested in the study of Japan and hope for its continuing success.”</p>

Name	Title	Quote
Prof Bryan Lowe	Assistant Professor of Religion at Princeton University	“ <i>Beyond Japan</i> has quickly emerged as one of the best podcasts in Japanese studies. The podcast makes cutting edge research accessible to a broad audience. It has exposed listeners to a diverse range of speakers covering topics from across disciplines and time periods. I listen regularly and could certainly see myself using these podcasts in my teaching as well.”
Dr Enrico Crema	University of Cambridge	“It was a great experience, and a truly great outreach initiative to be part of. Japanese is often associated with stereotypes, and I think <i>Beyond Japan</i> does a great job breaking this by having such a wide range of speakers. Looking forward to a 'second season!'”
Dr Iza Kavedžija	Senior Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Exeter	“It was a real pleasure to participate in the <i>Beyond Japan</i> podcast. Oliver is a fantastic host, clearly well prepared, yet able to steer the conversation in such a way that it unfolded with a sense of spontaneity and excitement. I really enjoyed the experience.”
Dr Aike Rots	Associate Professor in Asian Studies, University of Oslo	“I think <i>Beyond Japan</i> has a great series of interviews so far and it seems to me that there is really a demand for this kind of public research dissemination, not least among undergraduate and

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Prof Andera De Antoni	Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Ritsumeikan University	postgraduate students in Japanese studies. Oliver’s questions were very good and addressed important issues.”
Prof Andera De Antoni	Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Ritsumeikan University	“I thoroughly enjoyed our conversation. First, having the questions in advance helped me frame my answers in terms of time and of understandability. I thought that the questions were very much to the point and, while we were recording, I was grateful for your kindness in giving me the space and time that I needed to elaborate and explain my arguments in a way that was as accessible to non-specialists as possible. This was something of the greatest importance to me, given that my research touches upon very delicate issues such as discrimination and, at the same time, it can easily be spectacularised by sensationalistic takes on haunting and spirit possession. I had such experiences when I collaborated with the media - both in Japan and in the EU - on other occasions, and it was not pleasant. Therefore, I was very glad that you chose not to go in that direction. Overall, I think that the podcast is a really great opportunity for researchers and academics to reach the broader public and to give visibility to interesting research beyond the usual limited circle of specialists.”

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Name	Title	Quote
Dr Paula Curtis	Historian of premodern Japan at Yale University	“ <i>Beyond Japan</i> is one of only a very few podcasts that showcases recent research in Japanese Studies at a professional level of production. At its head, Oliver Moxham is an efficient and knowledgeable producer and organizer. Social media continues to play a larger and larger role in how scholars disseminate their work and ideas globally, particularly in a way that is accessible to the public and findable for specialists inside and outside of their fields. To this end, the continuation of <i>Beyond Japan</i> will be an important part of keeping up with these trends and offering new ways for Japan specialists to connect to one another and reflect on current issues in the field and broader events. I hope to see <i>Beyond Japan</i> continue to grow and look forward to participating once again in the future as my own work develops.”
Prof Chizuko Allen	Professor of Asian Pacific American Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa	“I would like to thank Oliver for making the process pain-free for me. I'm not an experienced presenter, especially on podcasts, but his preparations including the emailed questions made things easier for me. This is a great way to reach out to people who are interested in the topics but haven't had a chance to read about them.  <i>Beyond Japan</i> is helpful to both presenters and listeners, and I hope it goes on in the coming years.”

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Name	Title	Quote
Prof Wolfram Manzenreiter	Professor of Japanese Studies and Vice Head of the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna	“I enjoyed the experience of being on the show a lot. Oliver was extremely supportive, leaving no questions open in advance of the actual meeting for the recording. The interview was well prepared giving me the feeling Oliver himself was genuinely interested in learning more about the squared diaspora experience of Nikkei emigrants that are caught in a spin cycle between locations that are neither home nor host country to them. I believe the podcast is of great value for researchers and students alike, and due to its easily accessible content also for people with a general interest in Japan. I, myself, will turn back again and again to the podcast to make sure I don’t miss the proper content needed to enrich my own classes.”
Dr Ian Rapley	History Lecturer at Cardiff University	“I had a great time recording my episode, really enjoyed it, and moreover a couple of people mentioned listening to it. I’ve subsequently set a couple of the other episodes for my students to listen to as an alternative method of preparing for class.”