

Research Activity Report
Supported by “Leading Graduate Program in Primatology and Wildlife Science”
 (Please be sure to submit this report after the trip that supported by PWS.)

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Affiliation/Position	Primate Research Institute/D5
Name	Rafaela Sayuri C. Takeshita

1. Country/location of visit
International Seminar house, Yoshida Campus, Kyoto University, Japan
2. Research project
Conserv’Session #15 “Masked Monkey: The Evolution of Darwin’s Theory”
3. Date (departing from/returning to Japan)
2017. 2. 10
4. Main host researcher and affiliation
Rafaela S.C Takeshita, Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University
5. Progress and results of your research/activity (You can attach extra pages if needed)
Please insert one or more pictures (to be publicly released). Below each picture, please provide a brief description.

For the first time I could organize a movie screening at Conserv’session. The film “Masked Monkey: The Evolution of Darwin’s Theory” (2014), shot in Jakarta, shows the appalling conditions both humans and animals involved in a (sadly) very common business in Indonesia: monkeys wearing masks and being trained for entertainment in street performances. Unlike previous sessions, this documentary did not include comments or opinions from scientists or experts in the issue. It was purely showing the point of view of an observer. Due to the difficulty in finding experts on the topic willing to discuss this issue, I decided to take the role of discussant, with the help of my friend and colleague Saeko Terada, also from the Primate Research Institute. Following the movie, I talked about the current situation of monkey performance in Indonesia, and then I presented some information about cultural roots and potential consequences of the use of monkeys for entertainment for both monkeys and humans. In sequence, Saeko Terada explained the current regulations for animal handling and welfare in Japan.

The movie showed all the steps involved in monkey performances in Jakarta. From capture, selling, training, and performing, monkeys live in horrible conditions such as dirty small cages, and receive physical punishment when they disobey their trainers. They are forced to get dressed with children’s clothes and wear a doll’s mask during their performances, which include using a toy gun or riding a toy motorcycle. One of the monkeys was refusing to collaborate with the humans, and got confined to a small dirty wooden cage, whereas a second, “obedient” monkey, was kept outdoors, chained to a wall. The monkey trainers even called a sort of priest to pray for the “disobedient” monkey’s sins. The film also showed the appalling conditions of the people running this business. Small houses and overcrowded dirty streets were the main scenarios of the documentary. Many people were filmed taking a nap on outdoor wooden planks, or walking barefoot. It was clear that the main reason driving this business is need for money. By the end of the movie, one of the trainers was having trouble to earn money and decided to start a different monkey performance. He put on a gorilla mask, black gloves, and walked around the street carrying around a music box. In the last scene, we could see the release of one of the monkeys to the wild.



Fig 1 Monkey performances in Jakarta, from *Masked Monkey: The Evolution of Darwin’s Theory*
 (Photo credit: Maegan Fitzgerald)

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In the presentation, I explained that monkey performances are currently banned in Jakarta due to the actions of a non-governmental organization called [Jakarta Animal Aid Network](http://www.jakartaanimalaid.com). Since the ban in 2013, they have rescued over 150 monkeys in Indonesia. But there are still illegal trades and many monkeys are still kept as pets. On the other side, the use of monkeys for entertainment in Japan is legal. I had contacted Dr. Gabriela Daly, a cultural-anthropologist from University of St. Andrews, to learn about the cultural perspective of monkey performances in Japan. She explained me that the Japanese society has influences from animism, in which objects, places and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence, and therefore Japanese believes that both humans and animals are capable of having mutual affections and therefore can interact. On the other hand, western societies have a purist point of view, where there is a dichotomy between nature and culture, and therefore they see monkeys as belonging to the wild, with their conspecifics. According to Gabriela, the personification of the animal represented in Japanese anthropology brought some positive points to Japan. For example, they were the basis that pushed Japan forward on studies that found that nonhuman primates possess complex cognitive abilities and other similarities to humans.



Fig 2 Campaign against monkey performance (jakartaanimalaid.com)



Fig 3 Monkey performance in Shoudoshima (Kagawa Pref., Japan)
Photo credit: RSC Takeshita

However, we also need to consider the point of view of animal welfare in this practice. Monkey performers walk bipedally approximately 2-3 km per day (Hirasaki et al. 2004). But nonhuman primates are not adapted to bipedalism to the same extent as humans, thus morphological alterations observed in trained include changes in hindlimb bones, lordosis (which are maintained even in normal pronograde posture and locomotion), and other bone remodeling changes (Nakatsukasa et al. 1995). In addition, monkeys might have a higher level of stress due to the increase in the energetic cost of bipedalism (Nakatsukasa et al. 2006) social isolation. When I saw a monkey performance, I also observed that the monkey performer did not received positive reinforcement during training, produced constant vocalizations and grimaces to the trainer, and had clothes with bite and scratch marks, probably caused by the monkey in discomfort.

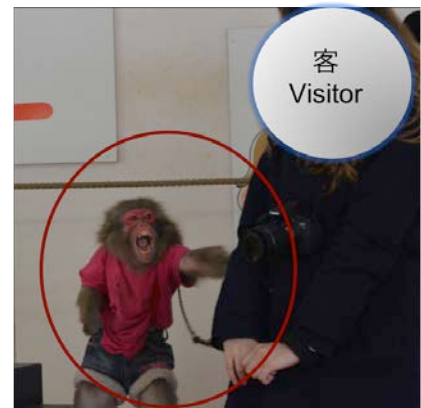


Fig 4 Monkey attacking a tourist during performance in Shoudoshima (Kagawa Pref., Japan).
Photo credit: RSC Takeshita

We should also consider potential risks to public health, given that those monkeys are in direct contact with their trainers, and sometimes with the public, to which they might display aggressive behaviors. Japanese monkeys are potential hosts for zoonotic diseases such as B virus (*Cercopithecine herpesvirus*) and represent a risk to public health (Ohsawa et al. 2002). Most macaques carry the virus without signs of disease, but it can be fatal if transmitted to humans (Huff and Barry 2003). So I was very surprised to find out that some business in Japan include monkeys as waiters in a restaurant, serving food and drinks – potential virus transmission paths!

Finally, Saeko Terada explained Japanese legislation with regard to animal management and welfare. It was very interesting to learn about all the complicated process that takes to approve and conduct such business in Japan. The presentation was very clear and made me understand why some Japanese laws are different than in the western societies – they are based on the anthropological principles that I mentioned earlier. In Japan, the law aims to maintain a symbiotic society between humans and animals, which is in line with the animist influences of Japanese anthropology. Saeko explained that, with time, the law undergone through several changes to introduce some ideas from the western point of view, such as animal welfare, which focus on improving the environment and reduce animal discomfort. In sum, Japanese laws are in constant adaptations based on scientific data, as well as changes in Japanese society.

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The discussion went on very smoothly. Before the movie, I put up the following question: “What do you think about monkey performance?” The answers I received were “complicated”, “horrible abuse”, “inhumane”, “culturally relevant but cruel”, “outdated”, “always makes me feel so sad for the monkeys, though local people seem to think it is ok”, “unnecessary”, and “unethical and cruel”. This shows that a considerable part of the audience was against this practice. We got questions in both English and Japanese, mainly about details of the regulations in Japan and Indonesia, and extended to other species. I was stunned to learn that there are rumors of convenience stores preparing to sell dogs and cats in Japan. I really hope this is not true.



Fig 5 Movie follow-up presentation by Saeko Terada and me (Photo credit: Katalin Kuntner)



Fig 6 Translation during discussion by Ryoma Ohtsuka and Miku Akiyama (Photo credit: Katalin Kuntner)

In my opinion, this event was very good. About 30 participants attended the session, among Japanese and foreigners, scientists and non-scientists. We provided Japanese simultaneous translation during the movie for non-english speakers, and the presentation and discussion was bilingual, so both Japanese and international audience could follow the whole film and presentation, and felt comfortable to engage in the discussion. At the end, it was very nice to talk individually to some members of the audience and it was really pleasant to hear a lot of positive feedback, and I believe we achieved our aim to raise public awareness in this session.

I would like to acknowledge PWS for funding the screening and my trip to Kyoto. Thanks to the Fourcolorsfilms production for providing the film, and to Saeko Terada and Gabriela Daly for contributing to the presentation and making the discussion very interesting. Many thanks to Conserv’session members, in special to Zsofia Budai for all the suggestions and encouragement with this session, to Miku Akiyama and Ryoma Ohtsuka for the translation, and to Maegan Fitzgerald and Katalin Kuntner for taking pictures. I am very grateful for having the opportunity to learn and disseminate valuable information about monkey performances, and for having the experience in organizing and leading a movie session dedicated to animal welfare.



Photo credit: Maegan Fitzgerald



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