

The Graduate School of Social and Cultural Studies at Kyushu University's Ito Campus is an extremely diverse body. The 70 or so academics come from backgrounds as varied as mineralogy and forestry through to Spanish and second language acquisition. My host was Dr Akashi Sugiyama, a cultural studies specialist who had spent some time at the University of Leicester. Kyushu University has recently relocated many of its departments, including the SCS, to a site some 10 miles from central Fukuoka. Most of the short-term foreign students are accommodated in halls of residence on or near the site. The department has a room set aside for visiting scholars and students, this was sometimes home to two or three students, mostly working on MAs and PhDs in their home countries and visiting Japan for 2 to 6 months.

My research project looked at the working practises and careers of television camera operators in a local broadcaster in Fukuoka. Coming from a television news background myself (I was a camera operator for the Japanese networks before becoming an academic) it was fairly straightforward to get started, once the company had been convinced of my *bona fides*. The introduction of a family friend with connections to senior company staff was indispensable in this regard – personal introductions are very important in Japan. The staff were very welcoming and curious as to what I was doing hanging around the newsroom.

Initially the camera operators had no idea what I was trying to do, like many craft-like occupational groups the practises, skills and values which enable them to work efficiently are so internalised as to have become invisible. As I discovered, many were disinclined to reflect on their work in any other than practical terms; had they 'got the job done', was the editor satisfied with the pictures, what did the camera desk editor say, etc. Nevertheless my time spent at the company, either just chatting informally with staff or on news-gathering shoots around the city, led to many insights and contributed greatly to my understanding of how camera operators see their work.



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