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Surviving with Companion Animals in Japan

Life After a Tsunami and
Nuclear Disaster

Hazuki Kajiwara



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Palgrave Studies in Animals and Social Problems

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Because other species make up the economic, sociological, emotional, and moral fabric of society, they play important roles in countless social problems. Some criminal activities have connections to animal abuse and fighting. Income inequality and discrimination have historically influenced pet prohibitions in rental housing by disproportionately affecting residents with low incomes. Confined livestock operations, animal hoarding, dog bites, and zoonotic disease transmission have public health and environmental implications. Wildlife poaching and the illegal traffic in endangered species threaten conservation efforts and defy international law. Because animals lack voices and social power, they cannot attract attention to the social problems that involve them. Incorporating animals into the study of social problems provides a clearer understanding of what groups and individuals consider problematic, how problems emerge on the social landscape, and what solutions might address them. This series transforms the scholarly analysis of social problems by focusing on how animals contribute to and suffer from issues long considered uniquely human. For further information on the series and submitting your work, please get in touch with Leslie Irvine (University of Colorado Boulder, USA) at Leslie.Irvine@Colorado.edu.

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PREFACE

The idea of writing an entire book about the tsunami, Fukushima melt-down and its impact on animals actually came to me from a chance encounter at the Kentucky Horse Park near Lexington, Kentucky, in 2015, a place where there were beautiful racehorses under blue skies, nearly the opposite of the conditions around Fukushima or other places hit by tsunami in March 2011. In the park's clubhouse, I happened to be sitting beside a man who introduced himself as a semi-retired lawyer. After a discussion about law firms in television shows, he asked me about my doctoral dissertation research that I had presented at a nearby Eastern Kentucky University a few days earlier. Having listened to my overview of what had happened to companion animals in Japan following the tsunami, he associated Chernobyl with Fukushima and said very seriously.

Unfortunately, nuclear accidents will surely occur someday, somewhere in the world. So your research would be referenced in even 50 or 100 years. Do your best, write good thesis and then publish it in English so that people around the world can read it.

Although his comments may have been little more than polite encouragement for a fledging Ph.D. student in sociology, I was strongly moved that this otherwise ordinary individual halfway around the world from Japan knew about Fukushima and felt that my particular story of animals and their guardians under such circumstances was worth telling. That simple exchange gave me the conviction that my research about natural

and nuclear disaster was relevant not only to Japan, but also to understanding the situation wherever similar disasters might occur. So, in some way this book is the outcome of a momentary encounter with a stranger many kilometers from home. His words were kept encouraging me always during the writing.

After graduating in the late 1980s from Tokyo's Hosei University worked as a free-lance journalist for over two decades. I wrote about working women, foreign workers, child abuse, teenage prostitution, and many other social issues. I was able to travel overseas and to complete several novels. Although I had been interested in animals as a child, my family lived in company housing which did not allow pets. My life as an animal's guardian began as an adult; one stormy summer night on a street in downtown Tokyo I came across a kitten crying in a cardboard box. Since then, my husband and I are always running a mixed family of humans with non-human animals, as there has been a constant supply of life-threatening kittens or adult cats from the streets.

In 2000 I formed the Pet Lovers Meeting, a small nonprofit organization that sought to help people grieving the loss of a pet. The previous year, my cat had passed away by lymphoma after prolonged chemotherapy. At that time, few Japanese concerned themselves with such grief. Formed as a self-help group with others whom I had met at the animal hospital while their pets were receiving chemotherapy, the Meeting sought to provide an empathetic space where those who had lost a pet could share their experiences. Finding inspiration in the work of the Pet Bereavement Support Service run by the Blue Cross in the UK, the group established a "pet loss hotline" in 2003 which had received 1300 calls as of January 2020. About 40% of the callers mentioned dissatisfaction with the way veterinarians had communicated with them. To improve the situation, we began in 2005 to offer veterinary students the opportunity at their veterinary college to engage in a simulated session with a pet's guardian. Volunteers act as pet owners with a stuffed dog or cat in a veterinary medical communication class. After a role-playing session, the volunteers give useful feedback to the students. All activities of the Pet Lovers Meeting continue to be conducted by volunteers.

I have been living with animals for a long time and working to support Pet Loss grief, but never wrote about animals as my job. Companion animals existed only in the territory that was set aside as my private life. I studied as informal audit student Medieval philosophy and Death and life studies at the Uehiro Division for Death & Life Studies and Practical

Ethics at the University of Tokyo from 2007 to 2011. Still, it had only been personal enjoyment or interests.

However, that way of organizing the world in my mind was changed dramatically as I viewed the live coverage given to the March 2011 tsunami, and then over the days and months that followed.

First came the news about humans, not only the graphic accounts the widespread destruction visited on many towns and hamlets and their inhabitants who had been swept away, but also remarkable stories of how individuals had survived. Later information about pets and other animals began to appear. Many dogs and cats had been washed away along with their owners, but others had been left to wander around—many within 20 km of the nuclear power plants that were still in the process of melting down in Fukushima. Thousands of livestock animals left behind were simply starving to death. There were also moving stories of individuals who had survived with their companion animals. Complex emotions began to swirl up inside me as I came to know the harsh way in which many animals and their guardians had been treated. Consequently, my perceptions regarding pets changed and I came increasingly to the conviction that animals were no longer a matter of one's own private territory. I came increasingly to the conviction that the situation facing those animals and their owners was a social problem—a set of challenges that extended far beyond the ability of individuals to overcome on their own. While many who had lost a pet were experiencing various forms of grief, those whose pets had survived were struggling to look after their animals. The coverage given those matters sharpened my interest in companion animals and the provisions for their social status in Japan.

Animals are an important social issue that needed to be addressed. I was initially overwhelmed by where this new outlook was taking me. I did not know anything at all about the categories, the labels—indeed, the vocabulary—and the methods I would require in order to frame the “new world.” Although I had worked as a professional writer for more than 20 years, I lacked the tools I needed—a reality that led me in 2012 to enroll in the Graduate School of Sociology at Rikkyo University. Over the next six years I undertook research for a doctoral dissertation focused on the victims of 2011 tsunami who had companion animals and their struggle to maintain a relationship with those animals. This volume is based on that dissertation which was submitted late in 2017.

The Japanese version of this book was published in 2019 and is included in the list of references at the end of this chapter (Kajiwara

2019a). However, it should be noted that this book is not just a translation of the Japanese version; containing new information, it is more like an updated second edition.

I must end by expressing gratitude to the many who have helped me along the way. My greatest appreciation goes to the guardians, the animal rescue volunteers, and other individuals who so generously shared their experiences with me. The book is based mainly on the narratives they have provided. The stories told in their own words surprised me, saddened me, but most importantly encouraged me. Sometimes your humor amid the many trials and tribulations made me laugh, and your resilience was always inspired me. Although I cannot mention each by your names here, your collective voice rings daily in my ears and will continue to occupy a special place in my heart.

Along similar lines, I thank all the students at the Graduate School of Sociology at Rikkyo University, conference participants, and others who have given not only valuable feedback but the encouragement needed to continue with the interviews and other research which went into my Ph.D. thesis and this volume.

The International Conference Minding Animals 4 in Mexico in 2018 was a great turning point for me. Aside from receiving an award for the best student presentation, I was able to meet Professor Leslie Irvine from the Department of Sociology at the University of Colorado. Her studies on animals in disasters (Irvine 2009), the relationship between the homeless people and their pets (Irvine 2013), and other topics have been beacons guiding my research and providing frameworks for conducting sociological research on human-animal studies. I was very honored when she invited me to submit the findings from my doctoral research for this Palgrave series on Studies in Animals and Social Problems.

In that connection I need to mention that many human-animal studies experts have provided insight and encouragement. The list is far from perfect, but I especially thank to the following scholars.

At a conference in New Zealand in 2019, I was able to meet people who experienced the Canterbury earthquake in 2010 and 2011. The conference director, Professor Annie Potts of the College of Arts at the University of Canterbury, illuminated the road before me with her book about the animals and their guardians affected by the Canterbury earthquake (Potts and Gadenne 2014).

Doctor Michał Piotr Pręgowski at the Warsaw University of Technology kindly provided the opportunity to write a chapter to a volume

he edited on companion animals in various cultures (Mouer and Kajiwara 2016).

Marie-Jose Enders-Slegers, Professor of Anthrozoology in the Faculty of Psychology at the Open University in Heerlen (the Netherlands), shared not only her vast knowledge but also her experience regarding the challenges of doing Ph.D. research as a middle-aged academic. She continues to serve the discipline as the President of the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations (IAHAIO) (see IAHAIO, n.d.).

John Ensminger, author and editor of books on service and police dogs (e.g., Ensminger 2010, 2011), assured me of the value of my book even when my self-confidence wavered. His practical advice and overall support as a friend has been irreplaceable.

It is surely a lucky blessing to have a fair and thoughtful supervisor for graduate students. I was one of those lucky ones. Special thanks go to Professor Emeritus Yasuhito Kinoshita in Department of Sociology at Rikkyo University who retired to be a Specially Appointed Professor of Sociology at the Graduate School of Nursing St. Luke's International University in Tokyo. While at Rikkyo he taught me to seek nobility through the diligent and honest hard work that serious research requires. He also shared with me his deep interest in critical realism and introduced me to many useful resources.

I also owe a special thanks to Monash University's Professor Emeritus Ross Mouer. Professor Mouer, who is well known for his research on paradigms for conceptualizing Japanese society, social stratification, and work organization. He first taught me about academic writing at Rikkyo University in 2014 and then later supervised me as a friend and now as a colleague. My appreciation and respect for Professor Mouer cannot be adequately expressed in any language. Suffice it to mention only that in formulating my research I often ask myself, "What would Professor Mouer do? (WWMD)". Even though I don't have a habit to think the better known "What would Jesus do? (WWJD)". He has been discussing my research, advising on how to structure my arguments, and proof-reading final texts for over five years. Thanks to him, I have come this far. Without his guidance and persistent help this book would not have been possible. With regard to the editing of this specific volume, a further thank you is owing to Sarah Pemberton who is completing a master's degree in editing and publishing at the University of Melbourne. Her proofreading in the final processes of this manuscript has been invaluable.

I have received ongoing support from Palgrave Macmillan, especially from the editor, Ms. Mary Al-Sayed, and the editorial assistant, Ms. Madison Allums. Thank you both for not abandoning me and this project along the way.

Finally, a special thanks is owing to my husband and our two cats. Thank you for always filling my life with liveliness, surprises, love, and some amount of confusion.

It goes without saying that much of our research would not be possible without outside funding. Financial support from the following Foundations are gratefully acknowledged: the Japan Post Insurance Research Foundation (2012), the Rikkyo University Special Fund for Research (2013 and 2015), the Uehiro Foundation on Ethics and Education Research (2015 and 2016), and a Rikkyo University Publishing Grant (2018).

The following paper or essay shares a part of data with this book; Kajiwara (2016, 2019b) and Mouer and Kajiwara (2016).

Tokyo, Japan
April 2020

Hazuki Kajiwara

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PRAISE PAGE *SURVIVING WITH COMPANION ANIMALS IN JAPAN*

“Hazuki Kajiwara’s *Surviving with Companion Animals in Japan* is a meticulous sociological inquiry into the day-to-day experiences of those who survived the 2011 earthquake in the Japanese region of Tōhoku, and the subsequent Fukushima nuclear power plant failure. Based on 25 research field trips spanning 5 years, this book gives a thorough presentation of the social dynamic between survivors, their companion animals, and the general public, and highlights the emotional and psychological importance of the interspecies bond. Kajiwara’s work is also timely—serving as a reminder that the negative social outcomes of natural, ecological or public health disasters are often universal.”

—Michał Piotr Pręgowski, *Assistant Professor, Warsaw University of Technology, Poland, and author of Companion Animals in Everyday Life: Situating Human-Animal Engagement within Cultures (Palgrave, 2016)*

“By advancing the concept of bonding rights through the lived experiences of survivors of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, Dr. Hazuki Kajiwara places companion animals at the centre of social, cultural, and political complexities of disaster response. Her work offers an insightful perspective on a unique event that continues to affect animals and people to present day.”

—Joshua Trigg, *Adjunct Research Fellow, Central Queensland University, Australia, and author of “An Animal Just Like Me: The Importance of Preserving the Identities of Companion-Animal Owners in Disaster*

Contexts” (with Kirrilly Thompson, Bradley Smith and Pauleen Bennett, in the *Journal of Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 10(1), (26–40))

“Hazuki Kajiwara writes with great eloquence and empathy about the harrowing experiences for people and their companion animals following the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in Japan. She offers an unprecedented and powerful analysis of the ways in which paradoxical understandings of animals in Japanese culture affected emergency and post-disaster responses involving companion animals. Her book provides a vital new contribution to global knowledge on human-animal relationships during emergencies, and compels us to demand greater protection in law for all animals caught in disasters.”

—Annie Potts, *Professor and Director of the New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies, University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and co-author of Animals in Emergencies: Learning from the Christchurch Earthquakes (2014)*

“A ground-breaking study offering a unique Asian societal perspective on the plight of guardians and their companion animals in two of Japan’s catastrophic disasters. Hazuki sensitively explores guardian stories, courageously holds government officials accountable for the oppression of the human-animal bond during crises, and soundly argues for the concept of ‘bonding rights.’ A must-read book that bolsters, stimulates, and advances an important discourse on our obligations to nonhuman animals dependent on our care.”

—Cheryl Travers, BSc, MPH, PhD Scholar, *University of Wollongong, Australia, and author of “Companion Animals in Natural Disasters: A Scoping Review of Scholarly Sources” (with Chris Degeling and Melanie Rock, in the Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, 20(4), (324–343))*

“This volume comes at a critical juncture with the coronavirus demanding social distancing and people, especially the aged, seeking companionship. Dr. Kajiwara’s research deals with the aftermath of the 2011 tsunami in Japan—an event which forced a different kind of distancing on its victims, many of whom are also aged. Her take on the human-animal relationship in capitalist societies will reorient our thinking about animal welfare and the role of animals in human affairs.”

—Ross Mouer, *Professor Emeritus, Monash University, Australia, and editor of Globalizing Japan: Striving to Engage the World (2015)*

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