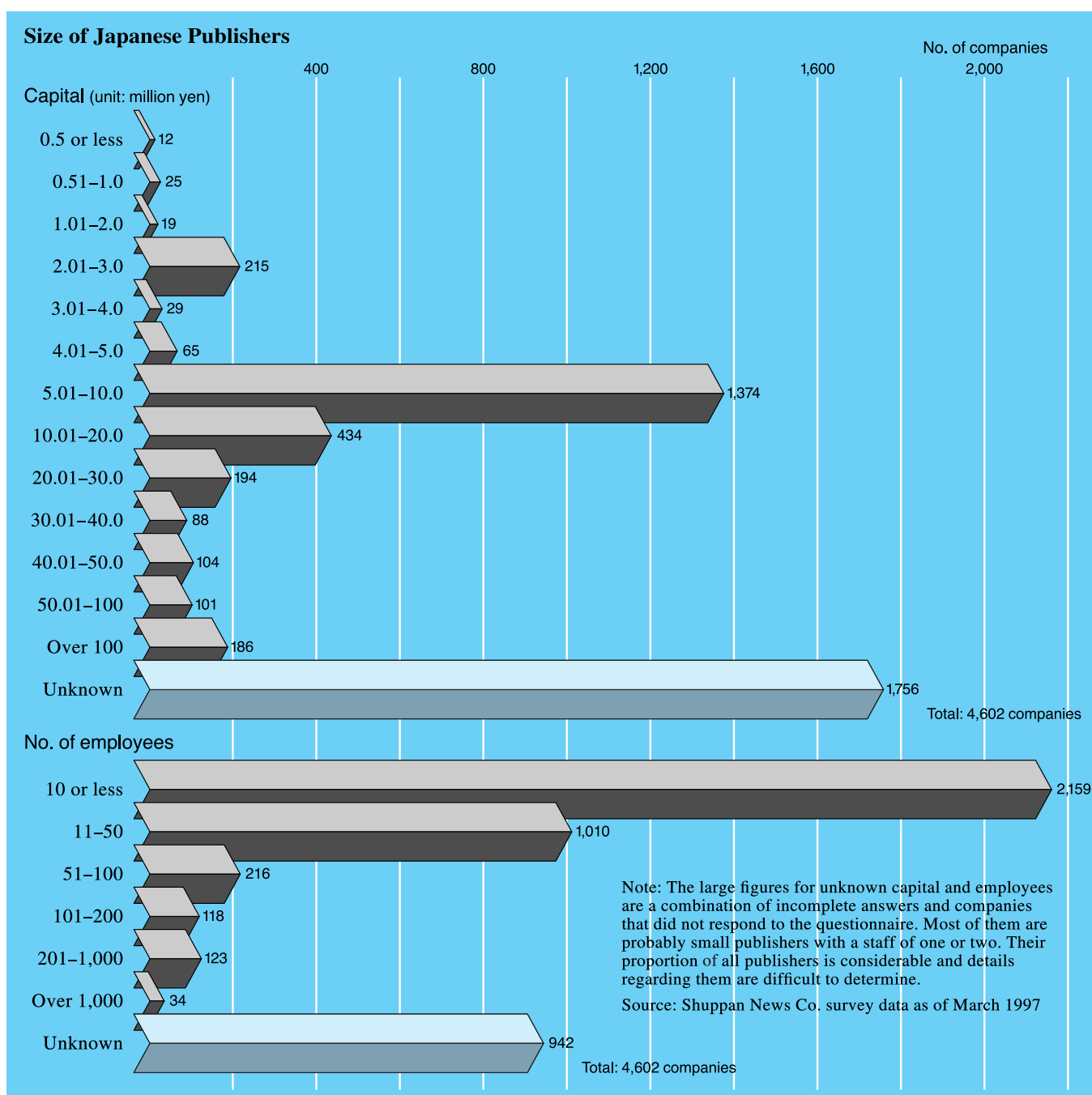




Japanese Book News

NUMBER 21
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Children and Suburban Society Today
The Future of Publishing 4: Electronic Publishing
Japanese Period Fiction in the World



The Japan Foundation

Japanese Book News is published quarterly by the Japan Foundation mainly to apprise publishers, editors, translators, scholars and libraries of the latest trends in Japanese publishing and selected new titles introduced with brief descriptions of the content. Articles and information included provide a window for Japanese books that contribute to the reservoir of human knowledge and the advancement of mutual understanding between Japan and the rest of the world. New titles are chosen for annotation by members of the advisory board from among notable current publications for their potential interest to readers in other countries, insight into Japanese society, institutions, attitudes, and culture, and perspective on issues and topics of domestic as well as international concern. The opinions and views expressed in the essays and new title summaries are not necessarily those of the Japan Foundation or the advisory board.

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From the Editor

Our times are besieged by serious and complex problems. Some are very close to home, overcrowded living conditions, impersonal communities, families whose members are scattered or estranged, fierce, even merciless, competition for the privilege of good education. Recent incidents, such as the shocking murder of a twelve-year-old primary school student by a fourteen-year-old boy in Kobe last year, have reminded us that the brunt of these problems is being felt by children. Something is happening that cannot be explained simply by the pressures of the education-credential-obsessed society. Freelance writer Yonahara Kei looks at the background and psychology that shapes the lives of children in Japan today.

Our series, begun in No. 18, on "The Future of Publishing," looking at the prospects for the publishing industry at a time when some believe the vigorous introduction of the electronic media and computer communications portends the "disappearance of books," is concluded with a second article by Aiba Atsushi (first article appeared in No. 19). He scrutinizes the hard decisions publishers have to make to survive in the mass culture, mass media, electronic communications age.

In fiscal 1997, the Japan Foundation inaugurated a publication program for translation of Japanese fiction in collaboration with publishers. The first title, to come out in May this year, under this program is the English edition of Shiba Ryōtarō's *Saigo no shōgun* (*The Last Shogun: The Life of Tokugawa Yoshinobu*). Although the period fiction of which Shiba's works are representative has had a strong following among Japanese readers from long ago, few works are known overseas. Literary critic Saeki Shōichi offers some insights on this long-popular genre.

Japanese Books Abroad looks at India this time, with a report on Japanese books available in that country as observed by the director of the Japan Foundation New Delhi Office.

For the "In Their Own Words" feature this time, writer Shiina Makoto, known for his colorful, easy-reading fiction and essays, ponders the translations of his works.

Japanese Book News address:
http://www.jpf.go.jp/e/4_04menu.html

Children and Suburban Society Today

Yonahara Kei

The pressures of urban life and the academic-credential-oriented society on children have been topics of concerned debate and many publications in recent years, but the summer 1997 murder of a twelve-year-old school boy in Kobe raised issues focusing attention on the suburban dream and the picture of the “happy family” Japanese struggled so hard to capture in the fifty years since the end of World War II.

The murder was freakish from the beginning. The severed head of the victim had been placed at the gate of a junior high school, a message that read “The game has begun” stuffed in his mouth. The body was discovered on a nearby hill. Speculation raged and numerous portraits of the murderer’s character and motives were proposed. Some suspected a connection with a series of unsolved incidents that had occurred in the same area that spring; one little girl had been assaulted with a blunt weapon, another had been knocked down from behind, and yet another had been stabbed and killed with a knife. A week after the head was found, the murderer sent another message to the mass media. It berated television announcers for pronouncing his name incorrectly, and declared that he was an “invisible entity” (*tōmei na sonzai*). The message went on to express his fury and loathing for Japanese society and its education system. The statement was filled with difficult phrases and sophisticated terms and appeared to have a consistent logic.

It came as a tremendous shock to people throughout the country when a special news flash announced a month later that a 14-year-old boy had been arrested for the crime, a student of the junior high school where the victim’s head had been found. Subsequently, it became clear that he had also committed the other crimes.

How could a boy of fourteen commit such acts or compose such an adult-sounding message? What did it mean had happened to young people? These questions were debated in the media for weeks after the arrest.

Betrayal of the Postwar Dream

The Kobe incident will no doubt become a symbol of the story of postwar Japan, the irony that the determined and tireless pursuit of happiness, so fervently sought after the misery and devastation of the war and its defeat, should have spawned this grotesque deed.

The scene of the crime was a suburb of Kobe, the city rocked in January 1995 by a devastating earthquake and resulting fires that claimed altogether more than five thousand lives. In 1998, reconstruction work continues, cracked walls and sunken roads remain scattered throughout the city, and the landscape still seems contorted and broken.

The apprehended youth was not a direct victim of the quake. He lived in a suburban housing development, one of many known in Japan as “new towns” often created by converting hills and farmland into planned residential sub-

divisions. His new town, planned in the mid-1960s, is typical of the kind of suburban space Japanese came to know after the end of the war: tidy, neatly ordered properties, planned streets with sidewalks, and parks—the modest embodiment of the dream of advanced capitalist society.

The city of Kobe was a center of heavy industry, and workers flocked there from all over Japan. To provide housing for local workers, a “new town” was built, by carving away the hills. The boy’s father, originally from a small island in the south, came to Kobe in 1965 to find work. He worked hard and married during the height of Japan’s economic growth and was able to live in a single-family dwelling on a modest plot of land in the new suburb. To their neighbors, the family appeared to be a happy one with no outward problems. They even seemed typical of the type of family found all over Japan today.

Yet, given the kind of communities that were common in Japan in the past, there is something haunting about the neighborhood where the crime was committed. Orderly rows of apartment blocks and clusters of primly arranged houses are laid out along ruler-straight streets lined with picture-book trees, a far cry from the crowded, jumbled, teeming-with-life streets of old-fashioned urban communities. An air of cleanliness and neatness pervades the space, but it seems singularly lacking in human warmth and communal bonds. The view from a high point in the suburb offers a disturbingly predictable landscape of the lives of people there: the elementary, junior and senior high schools most of the children of the community attend in their tree-surrounded compounds, and towering against the skyline behind the suburb, the factories of the giant manufacturers where many of the parents of the children work and where many of the children, too, will likely take jobs after graduating. Anything that has to do with human vulnerability, gentleness, aging, or death is conspicuously out of sight.

Dream Suburbs of “Dual Estrangement”

Questions about the quality of life in suburban communities built in the postwar period have been debated in Japan for several years, and are a recurring theme in literature as well. Oda Mitsuo’s *Kōgai no tanjō to shi* [The Birth and Death of the Suburbs] (Seikyūsha, 1997) offers a succinct description of the path of excessive consumerism in postwar society. It also examines the dramatic changes that occurred in industry. According to Oda, 48 percent of the working population at the war’s end was engaged in primary industry (farming, etc.), but by 1970 this had decreased to 17 percent and in 1990 to a mere 7 percent. Urbanization was high paced. In 1955, at the start of Japan’s rapid economic growth, more than 50 percent of the Japanese population resided in urban areas, and by 1975 the figure had risen to 75 percent, three-fourths of the population. The same level of urbanization that the United States had reached in over eighty years Japan arrived at in only twenty-five.

A high-priority goal of postwar Japan was to attain the comforts of life embodied in American consumer society. With the surrender in World War II and subsequent Allied occupation led by U.S. forces, the entire nation began to aspire, not just after the “American dream,” but the household appliances, the lifestyle, and the culture they saw in imported movies and television programs. They yearned for the image of American suburbia. In the early postwar days when Japan still struggled under the shadow of poverty, the prosperity of the consumer society of the United States glittered, in contrast with Japan’s own lifestyle and traditions, which seemed backward and contemptible. The agricultural society of the past had offered only poverty, erasing any qualms people may have had about abandoning ancestral lands, selling them for transformation into “new towns.”

Urbanization created a lifestyle free from the sometimes-oppressive conventions of the old-fashioned rural village community. It provided venues where people found release from deep-rooted customs and often-burdensome patterns of social conscience, and it also set in motion forces of dissolution in family ties. People who sought self-actualization outside the traditional family or group and went to live in the cities and work in salaried jobs had no choice but to treat their children as individuals as well. The family lost its history, meaning, and even function as the unit of daily life, and became merely a hostel where separate individuals happened to gather.

One problem that has galvanized concern among parents is the proliferation of teenage girls who have taken to prostitution, wearing high-school uniforms deliberately to flaunt their underage charms. Sociologist Miyadai Shinji, author of *Seifuku shōjotachi no sentaku* [The School-uniform Girls’ Choice] (Kōdansha, 1994) and a specialist on the problems of urban youth, attributes this phenomenon to the breakdown of the family and the extinction of the community. Cases of girls being sold by their parents into prostitution because of poverty were not uncommon in Japan at one time, but these schoolgirls, often from comfortably off middle-class families, willingly sell their bodies for cash to purchase brand-name goods. Although they do not represent the typical Japanese teenage girl, their very existence has shocked members of their parents’ generation. The girls themselves, however, retort, “What’s wrong with selling ourselves; we’re not harming anyone?” Because they have abandoned the traditional community and family-centered values, parents cannot cite “social norms,” and the threat that “you will be shunned by society” is now empty. “Society,” once the judge of what was permissible and impermissible, is impersonal and detached in the urban context. In his book, Miyadai points out that communication between children and their parents has become a superficial exercise. Both parties ignore what they do not want to see, and family life has become a role-playing game in which the participants portray themselves as members of a happy family.

The boy apprehended for the Kobe murder frequently went on outings with his family, yet according to media reports the parents never noticed anything peculiar about their son. They had no idea that he had repeatedly killed cats or punched younger children.

Miyadai says that such “happy families,” in which members act as though they are close, function to cover up individual despair and the breakdown of human relations. Children act as if they are conforming with their parents’ expectations and parents convince themselves they are truly communicating with their children, but in some cases both sides are merely going through the motions.

Concerning the suburbs, Miyadai writes that they are places of “dual estrangement.” In the city itself, anonymous communication is possible in such places as discos or karaoke boxes, while in a traditional community, there are long-established networks of communication related to land or kinship ties. Miyadai points out, however, that the suburbs are a world of “discommunication,” estranged from both of the above.

Sakurai Tetsuo in *Furyō shōnen* [Delinquent Youths] (Chikuma Shobō, 1997) has sketched the process by which Japan’s modern state was established and the emergence of delinquent youth. The strong controls imposed on children in the schools, he argues, deprived those suffering pressures in the family or other arenas of society of any refuge. Fights between students in the schools, once the open and natural manifestation of overflowing adolescent energies, have been transformed into insidious, underground bullying. Just as at home they play the role of happy family members, at school they feign intimacy with their classmates while covertly picking on each other. They have no choice but to either bully or be bullied. Suicides resulting from severe cases of bullying are not unusual. In order to avoid trouble, it is often observed, children work extremely hard not to stick out or be disliked in any way, and they maintain a safe distance from their friends. For children, school has become a place where their very survival is at risk. Recently the number of students who stop attending classes and obtain their graduation certificates from alternative schools is increasing.

Search for the Cure for “Invisibility”

The overseas image of Japanese children may be one of youngsters trapped in a society where academic performance is the only measure of success in life. The high numbers of elementary school children who take private piano, calligraphy or other lessons and attend cram schools until late at night is often reported. But at least commuting to cram school gives children a chance to feel they belong. Groups of school children gathered together at night after cram school drinking pop, eating snacks, and talking to each other are a common sight. Even their salary-worker fathers, who do not feel like returning home immediately after work, often stop off for a drink along the way. Children seem to find respite and solace in gathering in the dark on the way home from cram school.

Another resort for those starved for a place to belong in Japan was once harmless obsessions. The term “otaku” was coined to describe youth fanatical about some subculture hobby such as animation, computer games, or combat sports in which there was a special jargon understood only by those with the same interest. People inept at communicating with others could escape by immersing themselves in the world of their hobbies. As time went on, however,

even such subcultures were gradually commercialized and absorbed into the flourishing consumer society, and have been transformed into mass culture, so even becoming an *otaku* no longer offers any identity or self-actualization.

The Kobe boy was an avid fan of horror movies and reader of horror stories. Several observers claimed to detect a literary quality in some of the expressions used in the messages sent to the media, but later analysis revealed that much of content consisted of quotations from novels and magazines. He could not even express the actions he committed in his own words.

The phrase "I, an invisible entity," however, is certainly very authentic. Within the "new town" suburb where he lived, he was incapable of verifying and validating his own existence.

Why did such a crime occur? It is impossible to offer any simple explanation, but we may venture to say that the indifference of the suburbs triggered within him the tragic impulse to strike out and kill. We need to very carefully examine the deeply disturbed youth created by the postwar ethos that is encapsulated within our suburban scenery. The work of reevaluating the postwar period by postwar generations has only just begun. Significantly

enough, it is those who did not experience the war who have begun probing the dislocations of the postwar period. Katō Norihiro in his work *Haisengo ron* [The Post-surrender Period] (Kōdansha, 1997) and Kataoka Yoshio in *Nihongo no soto e* [Outside the Japanese Language] (Chikuma Shobō, 1997) offer us perspectives on the so-far-unseen dimensions of the postwar period. Japanese often bemoan that drastic changes took away everything that once provided security and familiarity, but what is needed now more than anything else is a solid grasp of what has happened during the last half century.

Since the 14-year-old boy was sent to a correctional institution for psychiatric treatment, media attention has waned. Minute discussion of every detail of the gruesome murder and of the youth's abnormality was followed by a debate on the protection of his rights, but in the end thorough discussion of the issues his deed brought to the surface never took place. That readiness to put difficult questions aside speaks eloquently of the indifference of suburbanites who, relinquishing the memory of the land, have relentlessly pursued single-minded materialism in clean, tidy, and expressionless space. (*Yonahara Kei is a freelance writer.*)

Further information about the books in the New Titles section starting on page 8 may be obtained by contacting the following publishers.

Asahi Shimbunsha
Inquiries from overseas should be addressed to:
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Tel: (03) 3265-1211 Fax: (03) 3239-5482

Chikuma Shobō
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Tel: (03) 5687-2671 Fax: (048) 666-4648

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Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0031
Tel: (03) 3563-1431 Fax: (03) 3561-5922

Gentōsha
4-9-7 Sendagaya
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151-0051
Tel: (03) 5411-6211 Fax: (03) 5411-6225

Hakusuisha
3-24 Kanda Ogawacho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0052
Tel: (03) 3291-7811 Fax: (03) 3291-8448

Iwanami Shoten
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Jiritsu Shobō
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Mokuseisha
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Tel: (03) 3263-5892 Fax: (03) 3263-5893

Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha
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The Future of Publishing 4: Electronic Publishing

Aiba Atsushi

The rapid advance of electronic information-processing technology and communications via the Internet is in the process of transforming publishing, news reporting, broadcasting, and every other aspect of our media environment. Communication by electronic mail is becoming as much a part of the household as it is the office, often proving a valuable replacement for postal and telephone services. Using electronic mail sent via the Internet, it is now possible to send massive amounts of data instantly and cheaply anywhere within the country or around the world.

In Japan, as in the United States, it was universities and research institutes that took the lead in establishing the infrastructure for information communications through the Internet, and even today they utilize the new technology most actively. The number of private corporations linked to the Internet has risen sharply, but when it comes to generating electronically supplied information on the worldwide web corresponding to that provided by the mass media through publishing in printed form, it is still the universities and research institutes that are one step ahead.

Recent changes in the technological environment have prompted a shift in the focus of electronic publishing from package-type products, such as the CD-ROMs, to network-oriented products that can be transmitted via the Internet. For scholarly, especially scientific, works in particular, it is likely that network publishing will eventually be more common than that in printed form.

In the Netherlands, the publisher Elsevier Science Inc. has already launched an Internet distribution project for all of the 1,100 academic journals it puts out. This network service is available only to subscribers of the printed edition of the journals who sign up for this service. They can receive text files via the Internet of all the articles well before the printed copy reaches them. Elsevier is mainly a publisher of journals in the natural sciences, fields in which high priority is placed on the speedy release of research results, and apparently there is high demand for this immediate access to the most up-to-date information.

Network publishing is expanding not just in the natural sciences but in the humanities and social sciences as well. For scholarly publications that are suffering as their subscription lists dwindle, network publishing (where production costs are far lower than for publishing in print) appears to offer one viable means for survival. Some scholarly societies, in fact, have given up publication of printed journals or papers altogether and begun to distribute information to their members via an electronic journal they compile themselves. The digitization of academic journals that has taken place in the United States and Europe is now beginning to affect Japan as well.

What are generally categorized in the Japanese distribution system as “academic works,” incidentally, can include even introductory books for a general readership.

For the purposes of this article, I shall confine my discussion to scholarly publications used mainly for study at universities or for specialized research. In Japanese universities today, particularly for basic-level courses, students study mainly from mass-market paperbacks, or slim booklet-like texts, and these publications would not be included in the academic-work category. Specialized scholarly books or essays are of course used for higher-level courses and study at the postgraduate level, but they are rarely assigned in large numbers for student reading, as is common in the United States, for example.

Publishing of academic titles has been dropping off steadily. There are a number of reasons for this trend, but perhaps the most prominent are the changes that have occurred in Japanese society as a result of rapid economic growth and the transformation of universities that occurred following the student revolts peaking in 1968. From that time onward, a greater percentage of high-school students began to go for higher education, and institutional standards were lowered as institutions moved in the direction of “mass higher education.”

In place of the ideology of “postwar democracy” that had sustained a kind of national consensus throughout the early decades after the war, the economic growth of the 1960s and 1970s brought about a pluralization and relativization of values in Japanese society. The impact of that shift has been strongly felt in the humanities and social sciences. Pluralization prompted the segmentation of scholarly fields of study, as reflected in the trend in academic publishing, toward producing numerous titles in very small print runs.

At one time there were numerous works that were considered required reading for those studying in the humanities or social sciences. Scholars and students alike, regardless of whether they studied political science, economics, or philosophy, were concerned with certain shared issues. They were all familiar with the writings of, say, Karl Marx or Max Weber, and publication of such works made academic publishing a viable, even flourishing business. In the previous issue of *Japanese Book News*, Kobayashi Kyōji wrote that “Japanese publishers built the foundations of their businesses in the 1950s and 1960s, which coincided with one of the most extraordinary booms in the field of literature that history has ever seen anywhere”; the field of academic publishing, too, experienced a similar phenomenon at that time. The ethos that had sustained scholarly as well as literary publishing has gradually eroded, and in a sense it represents the erosion or transformation of “modernity.”

Pressing Need for Innovation

People can probably live without literature. Indeed, we may see today the advent of forms of written expression of a new genre entirely different from the modern literature with which we are familiar. Perhaps cyber punk and

new-wave forms of science-fiction writing can be called new genres of literature that are suited to the times.

Although not quite as dramatically as in the case of literature, academic publishing has felt the full force of changing times. Academic and research styles have not changed much over the years, but the results they produce have become increasingly divided into ever-smaller and more widely separated fields. The readership interested in such specialized material, more often than not, is far too small to support publishing of books or periodicals, and this has caused the commercial publishers to drift away from scholarly works as a whole.

Nevertheless, there is unquestionably a readership for the achievements of research, small though it may be, and the disequilibrium between supply and demand in academic publishing today is among the issues that haunt the Japanese publishing industry. The problem is not scholars who don't produce research of interest to numerous readers. Nor is it publishers refusing to commit themselves to specialized publications nor readers who take no interest in academic works. Rather, it is the information explosion of our times and the pressing need for innovation and change in the forms of the traditional media.

We speak very generally of "publishing," but the products publishers provide vary widely in content. What they do share is the paper which is the common medium, the printing processes that set that information in place on the page, the binding processes that secure the paper in manageable form, and the distribution system and bookstores that distribute the resulting product.

The content of publishing is by nature myriad, covering every field of information known to humanity. The publication of only a few titles in vast numbers would be unimaginable. There were times when best-sellers were

published one after another, and it is possible that we may see million sellers from now on as well. However, in the face not only of the diversification of values but the information deluge, the forms of publishing of the past may no longer be viable.

Since the twilight of academic publishing has come earlier than for other genres, it may be that introduction of some form of electronic technology will be necessary in order to keep going under current circumstances. If at all possible, network publishing is the preferable form, as it is widespread in the United States and Europe. Japanese publishers' capacity to handle CD-ROM publishing has improved immensely, but they have yet to commit themselves fully to network publishing.

Plans for digital libraries designed for computer networks are being realized in the industrialized nations, and relevant projects are underway at the National Diet Library and other institutions. Publishers need to establish their network publishing capabilities particularly in order to respond to these library plans, which are by their nature closely connected to publishing. Not only in the area of publishing, a number of problems have to be cleared up before publishers can conduct business smoothly via the Internet. Copyrights and personal privacy must be protected, means and methods of payment and settling accounts must be worked out, and ways for verifying the authenticity of data transmitted are needed.

These are all major issues that can only be addressed cooperatively on an international level, but they are ones Japan's editors and publishers need to give serious consideration, especially those who believe that academic publishing is the hallmark of a nation's culture. (*Aiba Atsushi is professor of informatics at Shizuoka University.*)

Best-sellers in Literature, 1997

1. *Shitsurakuen* [Lost Paradise], 2 vols., by Watanabe Jun'ichi (Kōdansha, ¥1,400 each). Popular among middle-aged and older readers, this story probes the depths of erotic love between man and woman. The novel has attracted much attention since it was serialized in the national daily *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, and its film version was released in May.
2. *Shōnen H* [Boy H], 2 vols., by Senoo Kappa (Kōdansha, ¥1,456 each). A story about a boy during the war, portraying love, laughter, and courage. It is the first autobiographical novel published by the author, a stage artist and essayist.
3. *Poppoya* [The Railway Worker], by Asada Jirō (Shūeisha, ¥1,500). A collection of eight short stories including the title story of a railway stationmaster who is posted on a soon-to-be deserted line in a remote part of Hokkaido and encounters the ghost of his daughter, who died at an early age. Awarded the 117th Naoki Prize (see *Japanese Book News*, No. 19, p. 20).
4. *Kindaichi shōnen no jikenbo (4) Onibitō satsujin jiken* [Cases From the Files of Boy Detective Kindaichi, 4], by Amagi Seimaru (Kōdansha, ¥770). The hero is the grandson of the famed detective Kindaichi Kōsuke. A disenchanted, apathetic high school student turns into a brilliant detective once he gets interested in a murder case. The riddle of the mystery unfolds in an entertaining story. This novel is based on the boy's comic series.
5. *Ningen da mono* [I'm Only Human], by Aida Mitsuo (Bunka Shuppankyoku, ¥1,506). The author is a calligrapher and poet who becomes the disciple of a Buddhist priest. He passed away in 1991. The book is a collection of short poems presenting the author's view of life rendered in his own distinctive calligraphy.
6. *Fukigen na kajitsu* [Sullen Fruit], by Hayashi Mariko (Bungei Shunjū, ¥1,359). A realistic portrayal of a weary married woman engaged in an extramarital affair. The author received the Naoki Prize in 1986 for her *Saishūbin de maniaeba* [If I Can Catch the Last Train] and *Kyōto made* [As Far as Kyoto].
7. *Kindaichi shōnen no jikenbo: Shanhai gyojin densetsu satsujin jiken* [Cases from the Files of Boy Detective Kindaichi: The Shanghai Mermaid Legend Murder], by Amagi Seimaru (Kōdansha, ¥780). Set in Shanghai, China, the story centers around a murder that occurs in a performing arts troupe that specializes in mermaid shows. Kindaichi, who is a friend of the daughter of the troupe leader who was killed, goes to Shanghai to investigate.
8. *Kōri no shukujo (The Best Laid Plans)*, 2 vols., by Sidney Sheldon, translated by Kinoshita Nozomi (Tokuma Shoten, ¥1,200 each). Published simultaneously in Japan and the United States. A woman abandoned by her fiancé just before the wedding is determined to have revenge. The man goes on to success and even becomes president of the United States. She takes a job in the mass media, then creates a scandal purposefully to discredit him.
9. *Inbō no hi (The Doomsday Conspiracy)*, 2 vols., by Sidney Sheldon, translated by Tenma Ryōkō (Academy Shuppan, ¥1,000, ¥1,400). The original novel became a New York Times No. 1 best-seller. The protagonist becomes involved in a momentous conspiracy related to a UFO that crashed in New Mexico.
10. *Chokorēto kakumei* [Chocolate Revolution], by Tawara Machi (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, ¥1,000). The third anthology by the author, published 10 years since her *Sarada kinenbi* [Salad Anniversary] became a best-seller. The poems follow the theme of love with frequent references to extramarital love. The book has had strong appeal among the author's contemporaries for her sensitive and perceptive grasp of complex inner feelings.

(Based on book distributor Tōhan Corporation lists)

Japanese Period Fiction in the World

Saeki Shōichi

Although an immense amount of research has been done in the field of Japanese literature, a surprising number of important questions have yet to be discussed or even identified as issues of scholarly inquiry. One question one might ask is how it happens that genres such as haiku poetry and *jidai shōsetsu* (period fiction), while at times disparaged as second-rate or low-brow forms of literature, have proved to be remarkably resilient and vigorous survivors of the changing times.

Short, thirty-one syllable (5-7-5-7-7) tanka poetry, which can be traced back to the seventh or eighth century, have been composed virtually without interruption until the present day. Leading daily newspapers today invariably carry a tanka column to which readers can contribute their own verse, and tanka coteries around the country regularly publish “little magazines” featuring the work of their members. The same is true for the perhaps even more popular seventeen-syllable haiku.

These short verse forms have been subjected from time to time to severe criticism. Following the end of World War II in 1945, some critics went so far as to dismiss haiku as a “minor art,” unworthy to be considered part of modern literature. Japan would never produce really first-rate modern literature, the critics claimed, until it ceased clinging to such empty traditions. That these assertions ultimately proved irrelevant and pointless is demonstrated not only by the unflagging popularity of haiku, but also by the fact that haiku is more widely known and appreciated throughout the world today than any other genre in Japanese literature.

Jidai shōsetsu are somewhat different in character from the Western genre of “historical novel.” Generally set in medieval times or the Edo (1603–1867) period, the historical background is seldom described in authentic or scrupulous detail. Most works in this genre display a fictional, imaginative approach that makes them perhaps better described as “historical romances.” Readers seem quite content with the recurrence time and again of leading characters such as the great medieval generals Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Oda Nobunaga, and Tokugawa Ieyasu, who provide the stock plots, elaborated in endless variety by each author. One example is the *Chūshingura* story—familiar in the West as the story of the “forty-seven samurai” and best known perhaps in its Kabuki version—which has appeared in countless versions, new and old. Celebrated samurai swordsmen, such as Miyamoto Musashi, Tsukahara Bokuden, and Yagyū Jūbei, are also favorite heroes.

There may be a resemblance here to the heroes of American Westerns, but whereas the latter have seen a sharp drop in popularity since the 1960s, their Japanese equivalents carry on regardless, nor does the genre seem to have been affected to any extent by the rapid spread of television and other audiovisual media. The national public broadcasting network, NHK, continues year after

year to produce adaptations of period novels for its year-long “Taiga Drama” series in weekly installments.

In spite of its amazing survival and undiminished popularity as a genre, little Japanese period fiction has so far been translated and introduced overseas. The English translation of Yoshikawa Eiji’s *Miyamoto Musashi* did sell reasonably well in the United States, but other popular titles have been virtually ignored.

Some may say that these stories have not been translated because they are “too Japanese.” It is perfectly possible, however, that *jidai shōsetsu*, like haiku, which have given Japanese readers such sustained and widespread pleasure, could prove to have much broader, more universal appeal. They certainly offer the necessary ingredients—dazzling feats of heroic figures, bizarre twists and turns of the plots, romance and intrigue—and are told in a familiar, vernacular style readily accessible to modern readers of popular fiction.

Writing in plain vernacular language has tended to be considered crude and uncultivated, not suited to “real” literature, for many centuries. Throughout most of its history, Japan lay in the periphery of Chinese civilizational sphere; so the higher realms of its culture in particular tended to be strongly oriented to the “central,” external model. The nobles of the Heian period even wrote their personal diaries using only Chinese characters, while from the Nara period (710–94) on into the Edo period one aim of the serious Japanese intellectual was to turn out *kanshi* (“Chinese verse”) that he would not be ashamed for a Chinese to see. After the modernization drive that began in the mid-nineteenth century, the ideal of the Japanese elite shifted from Chinese to Western civilization. The compelling authority of an external cultural “center” is still a very powerful force among Japanese intellectuals today.

Period fiction, by contrast, with its roots going back to the *kōshaku* and *rakugo* forms of vernacular storytelling that were popular among the common people of the Edo period, offers the best of Japan’s indigenous, popular culture. (*Saeki Shōichi is critic and scholar of American literature.*)

Shiba Ryōtarō

The Last Shogun: The Life of Tokugawa Yoshinobu

Translated by Juliet Winters Carpenter

Published by Kodansha America in collaboration with the Japan Foundation

forthcoming May 1998

Japanese Literature in India

Andō Kazuo

Connaught Place is the business hub of downtown New Delhi, the capital of India. Business, government, and commercial centers are situated around the circular plaza like segments in a spider's web. This is an area with numerous restaurants and movie theaters and is a gathering place for young people. In the "B-Block" of the inner circle of this area I discovered The Bookworm, where English translations of Japanese literature are piled high on the floor: Kawabata Yasunari's *Yukiguni* (*Snow Country*), Mishima Yukio's *Kinkakuji* (*The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*), Ōe Kenzaburō's *Kojinteki na taiken* (*A Personal Matter*), and Endō Shūsaku's *Fukai kawa* (*Deep River*). I learned from Ms. Arora, the woman working there, that the shop was opened in 1977 by her son and store manager, Anil. It is a family-run business. The store is named after voracious reader Anil, who was nicknamed "the bookworm" by his friends. Ms. Arora smiled when I inquired about how Japanese books fared and told me that "They sell very well." When I asked her where the translated versions come from, she gave me the name of the distributor, Indian Book House (IBH).

IBH is located on Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, a road lined with the head offices of India's leading newspapers. According to sales manager Chiman Shah there are three major distributors in New Delhi; IBH, Rupa & Co., and India Book Distributor (IBD). The majority of translated versions of Japanese literature are procured from England and the United States and books are selected by referring to British periodicals such as *The Bookseller* and *Penguin Post*, the American catalog *Vintage Books* and book reviews. In Delhi, three bookstores sell translations of Japan-related books: The Bookworm, Fact & Fiction in Vasant Vihar, and The Book Shop in Khan Market.

Glancing through the copy of *Vintage Books* that lay on Mr. Shah's desk, I was surprised to find that the only Japanese authors listed were Mishima, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, and Murasaki Shikibu. Subsequently I visited both Fact & Fiction and The Book Shop, but the only works of Japanese literature I found were by Mishima, Kawabata, Tanizaki, Endō, and Yoshimoto Banana.

Kuroyanagi Tetsuko's *Madogiwa no Tottochan* (*Tottochan: The Girl by the Window*), which won wide acclaim from educators in many countries, was nowhere to be seen, nor were titles by Ōe, although it is possible that they had been sold out.

Without conducting a comprehensive study of book distributors, it is difficult to get an accurate picture of what types of books might sell well in the Indian market. Moreover, it is hard even to find works by Japanese authors in these stores because they are not clustered together in such categories as Japanese literature.

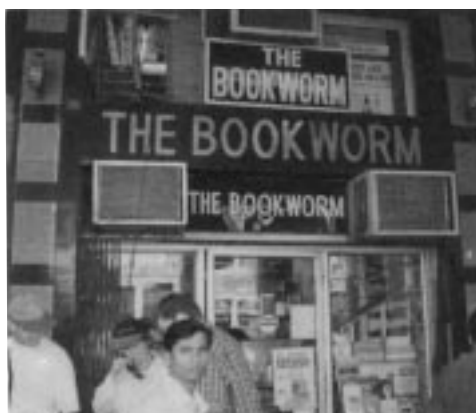
If public interest in Japanese literature in India is to be aroused and Japan-related books from other genres as well as literature introduced, efforts will have to be made not only to promote translation projects, but also to study effective promotional methods and make ample information available through distributors like IBH.

Translation in a Multilingual Nation

Modern Japanese literary works that have been translated into one or more of the official Indian languages and published by regional publishers include Dazai Osamu's *Shayō* (*The Setting Sun*), translated into Bengali and Gujarati, Kawabata's *Yukiguni* (*Snow Country*), translated into Bengali, Natsume Sōseki's *Kokoro*, translated into Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam, and works by Miyazawa Kenji translated into Hindi. The publication in Hindi of *Urashimatarō* and other Japanese folktales by Dreamland Publication Co. in September 1997 drew attention, and Baulmon Prakashan Co. in Calcutta plans to translate and publish Sōseki's *Botchan* in Bengali. These publishers certainly deserve recognition for their efforts to introduce Japanese literature to India. At the national level, however, two agencies play an important role in introducing translations into local dialects in India: Sahitya Academy and the National Book Trust (NBT).

Sahitya Academy translates literary works from local areas of India into the official languages used in other areas as part of its efforts to promote inter-regional exchange. It also conducts programs such as presentation of awards for the promotion of literary arts. Translation and publication of works from other countries is another aspect of the academy's work. Among its past publications are Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*) in Tamil, Punjabi, Urdu, and Assamese, and

Continued on p. 21



One of many small bookstores in New Delhi, The Bookworm is one place where books about Japan can be found. (Right) Ōe Kenzaburō's *A Personal Matter* was among the piles of books stacked high on the floor inside the shop. (Photographs by Andō Kazuo)

New Titles

BOOKS

***Machi no furuhon'ya nyūmon* [Introduction to Local *Furuhon'ya*]. Shida Saburō. KG Jōhō Shuppan, 1997. ¥1,200. 268 pp. ISBN 4-906619-02-9.**

This volume describes for complete amateurs how to open a *furuhon'ya* (a bookstore dealing in old or second-hand books), based on the author's experience in the business for many years. After first discussing the various categories of books sold (out-of-print books, titles no longer available in the bookstores, old books, etc.), he describes the features that distinguish a dealer in old or back editions from a new bookseller.



Cover design: Yumiyoshi Ame

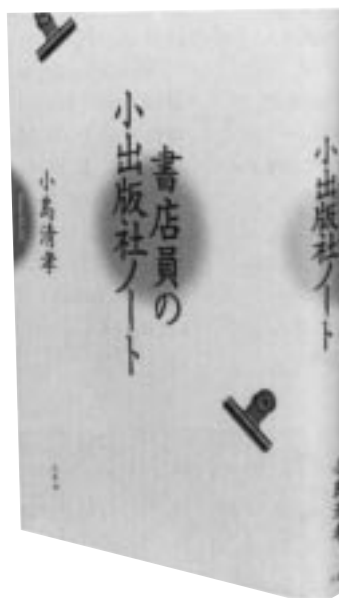
He then discusses the legal issues, theoretical issues, and matters of capital and working funds, and provides careful explanations of matters relating to management of a *furuhon'ya* (what it means to be a secondhand bookseller, how to set prices, where to get merchandise). The final part of the book covers specific problems those who sell books to the *furuhon'ya* face, what kinds of books to sell to what types of dealers, and other pointers for selling books. This

book offers excellent glimpses of the inside of the secondhand bookseller's world.

***Shoten'in no shōshuppansha nōto* [A Bookstore Employee's Notes on Small Publishers]. Kojima Kiyotaka. Mokuseisha, 1997. ¥2,100. 302 pp. ISBN 4-89618-019-4.**

The author has worked in a bookstore since his graduation from Kokugakuin University in 1973. The book records his contacts with a number of small publishers he worked closely with over the years. It introduces ten small presses such as Komichi Shobō and Kage Shobō, and explains the circumstances that led to their founding and the bankruptcies and other crises they endured along the way.

What all ten publishers share is their deep-rooted dedication to bringing out books useful to society. In documentary style the book recounts the ambitious, and sometimes quite rash, projects they are inclined to launch despite lack of adequate funding. At the same time, books reflecting urgent social concerns have ceased to sell well, and Kojima describes how small presses struggle to turn out new, profit-making titles in order to keep their businesses viable.



Cover design: Iwaya Junsuke



Cover design: Watanabe Michiko

***Zasshi to dokusha no kindai* [Magazines and Readers in the Modern Age]. Nagamine Shigetoshi. Nihon Editor School Shuppanbu, 1997. 216 × 151 mm. 282 pp. ¥3,200. ISBN 4-88888-261-4.**

This book looks at the history of demand for the printed media (magazines in particular) in modern Japan from the viewpoint of the reader. According to the author, what separated modern Japanese publishing culture from the culture before it was the advent of the new media of newspapers and magazines made possible by the spread of moveable-type printing.

Newspapers and magazines are similar in that they are periodical publications, but reading patterns for the two genres are quite different. Newspapers are subscribed to by households, but readers of magazines, who subscribe or purchase on an individual basis, tend to form strong ties with the publications of their choice. Utilizing a sociological perspective and statistical methods, the author seeks to clarify how reader-magazine bonds were formed and how they changed over time.

Baba Tsunego no memboku: Kiki no jidai no riberarizumu [The Cause of Baba Tsunego: Liberalism in an Era of Crisis]. Mikuriya Takashi. Chūō Kōron Sha, 1997. 196×135 mm. 234 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-12-002699-X.

Baba Tsunego (1875–1956) was a journalist who remained a steadfast advocate of the restoration of party-led parliamentarism throughout the prewar and wartime days when the military rose to establish its grip over the Japanese government. In the immediate post-defeat era, as president of the Yomiuri Shimbun company, he stubbornly held his ground against the demands of the labor union in a large-scale newspaper strike.

Through this examination of the lifework of Baba, an old-style liberal, the author probes the *raison d'être* of freedom of speech in the face of Japan's contemporary political deadlock.



Cover design: Yokoo Tomoko

Mikuriya, who is a specialist in modern Japanese political history, positions Baba in the context of the tradition of liberal political ideas extending from the emergence of the Meiji state in the mid-nineteenth century. He believes that Baba, who stood for the realization of party politics aimed at open government and clear identification of the issues, can be an inspiration in breaking through the stalemate that grips Japanese politics today.

Meiji shimbun koto hajime [The Beginnings of Meiji Newspapers]. Okitsu Kaname. Taishūkan Shoten, 1997. 189×132 mm. 230 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-469-22130-9.

Heretofore, author Okitsu has pursued mainly through literary works his interest in the Bunmei Kaika era following the establishment of the Meiji regime in 1868. During that time, Japan negotiated a 180-degree turn from the Edo period (1603–1867) under the feudalistic Tokugawa regime to a constitutional monarchy and introduction of the enlightened ideas and modern institutions of the West. This work examines how people's attitudes changed in this transitional age through a scrutiny of newspaper articles published during that time.

Part one of the book looks at the course of events in the early part of the Meiji era (1868–1912) during which newspapers were newly founded and the completely new profession of newspaper reporting became established. Readers will be especially interested to learn that many of the founders of newspapers were survivors of the old Tokugawa regime that had been toppled from power by the supporters of the Meiji government.

Part two describes the social conditions during the Meiji era as reflected in newspaper articles, offering perspectives on both the continuities and the discontinuities between the Edo period and the Meiji era.



Cover design: Inoue Seiko

Hagayui kuni Nihon: Naze watakushitachi ga reishō sare Doitsu ga shinrai sareruno ka [Impatient with Japan: Why the World Sneers at Us and Trusts Germany]. Takako Klein. Shōdensha, 1997. 193×131 mm. 228 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-396-61066-1.

The author is a nonfiction writer who studied literature and modern Western political science and economic history at the University of Frankfurt and continues to reside in Germany. Taking what she considers Japan's "bungling" of the Peru hostage crisis as her point of departure, this book compares the diplomacy practiced by Japan with the other country defeated in World War II, Germany.



Cover design: Yamagishi Yoshiaki

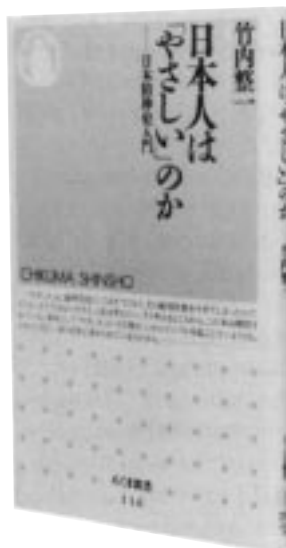
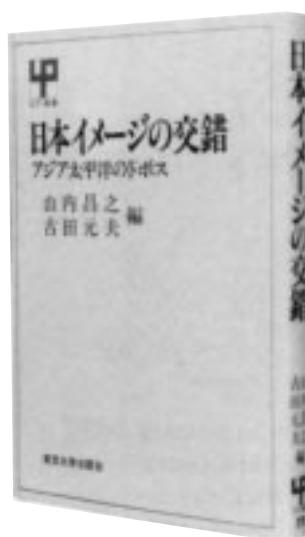
Through her experience living in Germany, the author became keenly aware of the discrepancies between international opinion and the foreign policy Japan has conducted since the end of the war, causing her to wonder why, unlike Germany, Japan seems unable to win the trust of international society. The answer, she believes, is that Japan has not adopted a "big-power consciousness" suitable to its standing in the world.

She concludes by declaring that the greater participation of women in society and the easing of government regulations are prerequisites for Japan to emerge as a genuine "big power."

Nihon imēji no kōsaku [On Japan: Images from Inside and Outside]. Yamauchi Masayuki and Furuta Motoo, eds. Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1997. 188 × 129 mm. 224 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-13-002075-7.

This volume is a compilation of the papers and proceedings of the discussions at the fourth University of Tokyo symposium on area and cultural studies, held on June 8, 1996. It attempts to capture images of Japan in the eyes of its neighbors, examining how the images emerged, and identify the conditions that shaped them.

The book is divided into two parts. Part one, “Images of Japan Today,” deals with how Japan is viewed in China, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, and the United States. Part two, “Asia-Pacific Historical Images,” draws on broad-ranging sources to discuss Japan’s worldview around the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868), early nineteenth-century U.S. views of Hawaii, China, and the Pacific region, as well as the networks of commerce in the Asia-Pacific region.



Cover design: Mamura Toshikazu

Nihonjin wa “yasashii” no ka [So Japanese Are “Yasashii”?].

Takeuchi Seiichi. Chikuma Shobō, 1997. 173 × 105 mm. 218 pp. ¥660. ISBN 4-480-05716-1.

Use of the word “yasashii”—the connotations of which, according to the author, are graceful, gentle, kind, and easy-going—has proliferated among Japanese since 1974, around the time rapid economic growth came to an end. In some ways the word seems rather hypocritical and weak-kneed, but in fact, “yasashii”—“yasashi” in old times—has been repeatedly used in explications of ethically and aesthetically desirable values from the *Man’yōshū* age (fifth to eighth centuries) to the present.

In this book, scholar of ethics Takeuchi Sei’ichi seeks to bring life back to the idea of *yasashi*, examining it in the contemporary context. He re-reads Japanese intellectual history since ancient times in this context, delving into the connection between the eschatology and nihilism of contemporary Japanese society on the one hand and the empathy and compassion of *yasashi* in the classical sense on the other.

Wasūkō [A Study of Japanese Numerical Symbols]. Gunji Masakatsu. Hakusuisha, 1997. 193 × 133 mm. 194 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-560-04633-6.

Written by an experienced specialist in Japanese folk performing arts and dance, this book discusses the role of numerical figures in Japanese culture from the perspective of folk studies.

Unlike the study of mathematics, Gunji observes, research on numerical symbols sheds light upon the cosmological implications numbers have had in each culture. From that point of view, he describes the way the numbers from *hitotsu* (“one”) through *tō* (“ten”) have been cited in traditional cultural contexts, such as kabuki and other performing arts, and in various classical works such as the *Kojiki*.



Cover design: Matsuyoshi Tarō

The author points out the differences between the traditional Japanese “art of counting” (*sanjutsu*) and modern arithmetic. Whereas in arithmetic, what matters most is being correct, in *sanjutsu*, the main standard of judgment is skill, as it is in the performing arts, he argues.

IDEAS

Haisengo ron [The Post-surrender Period], Katō Norihiro. Kōdansha, 1997. 195 × 132 mm. 326 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 4-06-208699-9.

A prominent literary critic, the author Katō (b. 1948) has sought to reexamine Japan's peculiar nationalism.

Since the end of World War II, he says, Japanese have suffered a severe distortion and dislocation of their character. The distortion stems from the lack of serious debate concerning two questions: how to mourn those killed in what ultimately proved an "unjust war" and what to do about the constitution forced on Japan during the Allied Occupation that renounces the use of force.



Cover design: Hirano Kōga

It is necessary, he argues, that Japanese first accept the fact that their country inflicted great damage on Korea, China and other neighbors prior to 1945, then search for a way of genuinely mourning the Japanese war dead, and scrutinize carefully the ambivalencies that haunt the collective conscience since the end of the war. He then proposes a popular referendum on the constitution to determine whether it should be revised or not.

This book, which directly addresses issues both supporters of the constitution and advocates of revision have avoided, stirred considerable debate in the press. It offers important insights for understanding contemporary Japan.

HISTORY

Rekishi jinkō-gaku no sekai [The World of Historical Demography]. Hayami Akira. Iwanami Shoten, 1997. 188 × 129 mm. 258 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-00-004235-1.

This introduction to historical demography by a Japanese pioneer in the field was originally prepared for a seminar aimed at nonspecialists. In Japan today, the rapid aging of the population and the decreasing annual birthrate are reported in the media daily. Demography as a field of research, however, is less known in Japan than in other countries.

Hayami criticizes the current media debate as short-sighted. It is urgent, he argues, for scholarly research to be conducted in long-term perspective and for the results of that research to be reflected in government policy in some cases in order to properly deal with unprecedented population-related conditions, including the on-going decrease in the working population.

The book provides an easy-to-understand overview of how the field of historical demography got started and how it has developed, and at the same time provides case studies of early-modern rural villages in Japan citing micro-level data.



Cover design: Manzen Hiroshi

Sengoku no mura o yuku. [Villages of the Warring States Period]. Fujiki Hisashi. Asahi Shimbunsha, 1997. 187 × 125 mm. 260 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 4-02-259679-1.

Rikkyō University professor Fujiki Hisashi, a specialist in medieval history, questions the long-established image among historians of Sengoku period (fifteenth-sixteenth century) Japan as characterized by powerful provincial lords (daimyo) versus powerless peasants.

In medieval Japanese society, demonstrates Fujiki, not only the daimyo but also villages had castles. Viewing the "village" as a mechanism farmers created for their own survival, Fujiki investigates the village as an institution of agrarian society.



He shows how hard the villagers worked to maintain peace within their own territories at a time when warlord leaders were waging constant battles against one another. Farmers were reluctant to respond to efforts by the authorities to draft them into their armies. The book describes views of provincial lords among the farming population and village decision-making mechanisms based on careful reading of old documents and many years of field research in villages dating back to the medieval period.

His in-depth study of history, written in easy-to-understand, dispassionate language, shows that the medieval farmers were much more capable and self-reliant than generally believed.

***Shōwa, tōi hi chikai hito* [Shōwa: Distant Days and Familiar People]. Sawachi Hisae.** Bungei Shunjū, 1997. 193 × 133 mm. 294 pp. ¥1,429. ISBN 4-16-352840-7.

Half a century has passed since World War II, and memories of the Shōwa era (1926–89) are growing more distant, but there are some people who lived through—some who died during—the tragedy of war that author Sawachi, born in 1930, does not want us to forget. She has devoted herself continuously to writing about such people, tracing their footsteps with scrupulous care through massive amounts of documents and interviews with people who knew them.

The book recounts the stories of nine people, most of them unknown names: an antiwar *senryū* poet who died soon after release from prison into which he had been thrown by military police; a soldier who was among those who committed “total sacrifice” on Attu Island; a man who survived eight years in a gulag in Siberia, and his wife; a young communist who died of tuberculosis, and so on. The book is Sawachi’s requiem for those who, though their ways of life varied widely, were alike in that they were victims of the war.

Many nonfiction writers are so eager for facts that they do not accord proper consideration to the relatives and acquaintances of the individuals they write about. Sawachi is different; she is as respectful of facts as she is considerate of other people. This style of writing, along with the seriousness of the topics, has appealed to many readers.



Cover design: Sakata Masanori

SOCIETY

***Ikusa to ai to: Josei kyōshi no senchū sengo nikki* [Love and War: A Wartime and Postwar Diary of a Woman Teacher]. Kobayashi Hana.** Tōkyō Shimbun Shuppankyoku, 1997. 188 × 128 mm. 259 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-8083-0608-5.

This book is the diary of a Japanese woman teacher (b. 1919) in her early twenties through late thirties, a period that coincided with the opening of the Pacific War to Japan’s surrender and postwar recovery. Author Kobayashi received the highest level of education a woman could receive in those days, and became a teacher at a girls’ secondary school in Nagoya. She taught through the war years and later married a school teacher through an arranged meeting, but continued to teach while raising her children and keeping house.



Cover design: Bamboo Design

An invaluable record, the book vividly depicts people’s lives and the effect of the war on them. Particularly intriguing is the author’s candid account of what a school teacher actually thought about her work during the war. Amid the tide of wartime sentiment that swept the nation, Kobayashi was a serious and naive woman who ardently supported the military regime, encouraging her students to devote their lives to their country. Looking back, the author sees painfully that she was an accom-

plish to the war of invasion. Remorse over those memories prevented her from publishing the diary, but she finally decided to do so in the hope that it would help people better understand the nature of war.

***Jikokuhyō Shōwa-shi (Zōhoban)* [A Shōwa History of Train Schedules (Enlarged Edition)]. Miyawaki Shunzō.** Kadokawa Shoten, 1997. 194 × 131 mm. 300 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-04-883481-9.

There are many railway enthusiasts in Japan, most of them male. For them, the nationwide train schedules published every month are not just for practical use for traveling but also an object of perusal as a hobby.

Reading train schedules is a subculture in this country, where many railway mysteries—such as Matsumoto Seichō’s *Ten to sen* (1957–58; tr. *Points and Lines*, Kodansha International, 1970)—and railway-related essays are widely read. The author of the present book is an authority in this field.

Born in 1926, Miyawaki, former editor-in-chief of the highly reputed opinion monthly *Chūō kōron*, has devoted himself to writing railway travelogues over twenty years, producing more than forty books.

This book deals with the period straddling the war from 1933 through 1948, describing the author’s experiences relating to railways. His amazing memory for detail, reliably



Cover design: Ashizawa Taii

augmented by train schedules published during the period, makes the book a historical chronicle from a unique perspective.

Meiji haikara bunmeishi [A History of Fashionable Meiji Civilization].

Yokota Jun'ya. Kōdansha, 1997. 188 × 128 mm. 368 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-06-208600-X.

Modern science and technology flooded into Japan from the West in the early part of the Meiji era (1868–1912). By the end of the era it had been digested and original Japanese technological achievements had begun to emerge.



Cover design: Chiyoda Akira

The book shows how the products of Western science and technology made their way into ordinary Japanese households in the late Meiji era. Written in the style of a novel, the main characters of which are a University of Tokyo faculty of medicine professor and his family, it not only depicts the country's greedy and rapid absorption of science and technology but also sheds light, through careful documentary research, on how that influx changed social customs and morals. A total of thirty-two topics are covered, including electricity, gas, telephone, newspaper, schools, sports, Western cooking, and an Antarctic expedition.

Japanese are often criticized as imitators lacking in originality. The late Meiji era was a time that displayed Japanese adaptability to the full.

Written from the cultural-history point of view, the book offers valuable insights into how the foundations of modern Japan were laid.

Monogatari no umi, yureru shima [Island in the Seas of Stories]. Yonahara Kei. Shōgakukan, 1997.

188 × 130 mm. 230 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 4-09-387205-8.

This is a collection of short reports by a freelance writer in her late thirties based on research done on various aspects of contemporary life in Japan: the filming of pornographic videos, housewives involved in "date-club" prostitution, the reporter's own experience posing as a nude model for well-known photographer Araki Nobuyoshi, disunity within the supporters of those suing pharmaceutical companies for distributing HIV-contaminated blood products, investigation of cases of rape that allegedly occurred at the time of the Great Hanshin Earthquake, and young female followers of the Aum Shinrikyō cult.

The times produce "stories" that briefly circulate with urgency, and eventually disappear, leaving many believing them. Throughout the book the author is consistent in her determination to be an "island" not submerged in the sea of "stories." The reader is struck by the author's unfaltering attachment to her life stressing her freedom as an individual.

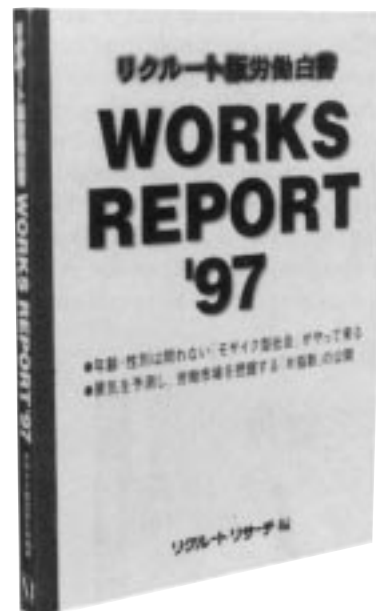


Cover design: Sakagawa Office

Yonahara was born in Tokyo in 1958 of parents who had moved there from Okinawa. At the age of 30 she began contributing to magazines as a freelancer. She is co-author of *Zai-Nichi gaikokujin* [Foreigners Resident in Japan]. (See article pages 1–3 this issue of *Japanese Book News*.)

Rikurūto-ban rōdō hakusho [Recruit Report on Labor]. Recruit Research, ed. Recruit Research, 1997. 210 × 148 mm. 207 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 4-88991-452-8.

The Recruit group of companies, some of which specialize in hiring skilled workers and dispatching them to companies needing manpower or womanpower, others acting as employment agencies, and still others engaged in research, is a leading corporate grouping in this segment of the service sector in Japan today. The present volume is a report on labor market conditions in Japan compiled on the basis of Recruit group information resources.



There has been a strong tendency in Japan to think that economic fluctuations are the result of the movement of goods. Corporate plant-and-equipment investment and the business prospects of raw-materials-consuming industries have thus been regarded as important indicators for economic analysis. The editors of this book, however, believe that, with the rapid growth of information and services, "workers" have replaced

“goods” as the key elements for appraising the economy.

Employment practices have long centered around male, full-time salaried workers (*seishain*). The Recruit editors see this practice changing and believe that Japan is going to be a “mosaic” society where corporations will place greater emphasis on individuals’ values, abilities, and skills than on age and gender. From this point of view, this book compiles survey data on and analyses of real-time employment conditions, changes in occupation, and other work-related matters, throwing into sharp relief the changes taking place in contemporary Japanese workers’ attitudes.

***Yoru to onna to Mō Takutō* [Night, Women, and Mao Zedong]. Yoshimoto Takaaki and Henmi Yō.**

Bungei Shunjū, 1997. 191 × 132 mm. 262 pp. ¥1,333. ISBN 4-16-353010-X.

The book takes the form of a dialogue between Yoshimoto and Henmi. An influential ideologue of the New Left movement, Yoshimoto (b. 1924) is an arm-chair intellectual who seeks to understand the world to the best of his ability without going anywhere. Henmi (b. 1944), a former Kyodo News Service correspondent in Beijing and Hanoi and the 105th Akutagawa Prize winner for his story “Jidō kishō sōchi” [Automatic Awakening Devices] (1991), travels exten-

sively, believing only what he actually sees and feels for himself. They talk about the Aum Shinrikyō sarin attack on the Tokyo subway system, the Great Awaji-Hanshin Earthquake, ideas, war, sex, and much more.

The dialogue evokes the image of the younger Henmi brandishing a sharp saber while the elder Yoshimoto nonchalantly defends himself, as if having taken up a handy pot lid as a shield, with both enjoying the exchange immensely. Their sparkling dialogue offers insights into some of the concerns of intellectuals in Japan today. It consists of four parts: “Night,” “Women,” “Mao Zedong,” and “Body and Language,” the main topics they discussed on four separate occasions between June 1995 and January 1997.

NATURAL SCIENCE

***Nihon no birin* [Distinguished Forests of Japan]. Ihara Shun’ichi.**

Iwanami Shoten. 1997. 173 × 105 mm. 232 pp. ¥630. ISBN 4-00-430516-0.

Forests, occupying some seventy percent of the land of Japan, are being devastated as their resource value has decreased and with fewer people to care for them.

Forests provide a place for popular recreation and relaxation, enrich the landscape and sustain farming, prevent erosion of the soil, serve as water-retention areas, yield food and other sustenance, and so forth. The present book is a report, by the tree-loving editor-in-chief of a forests magazine, of his visits to twenty-four of Japan’s most distinguished forests in these regards. It presents a clear picture of the state of Japan’s forests today, and discusses how they could be saved.

Opinion concerning forests has been divided into two groups, one calling for their conservation and the other stressing their importance as a resource. Some argue that all the trees of a forest can be cut down as long as they are replanted. Yet each time such an artificial forest grows to a certain point and it is harvested in

one sweep, even if after a few hundred years, the ecosystem centering around the trees is completely destroyed.

The flow of time for natural forests, on the other hand, is continuous, for the period of harvest is very long and not all its trees are cut. “Distinguished” forests, says the author, are those whose time is never interrupted, and those which continue indefinitely to both sustain a rich natural environment for living things and serve as a resource for human civilization.



POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

***Kabunushi sōkai* [General Shareholders’ Meetings]. Ushijima Shin.**

Gentōsha, 1997. 193 × 131 mm. 190 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-87728-167-3.

The fall of 1997 witnessed a series of revelations of payoffs to *sōkaiya* corporate extortionists by major corporations, resulting in the resignations of the firms’ top executives. *Sōkaiya* are individuals or organizations that hold a small number of shares but can obstruct or cause confusion in shareholders’ meetings or engage in outright blackmail.

Corporate funds and other valuable assets often end up in *sōkaiya* hands when companies are torn by internal struggles or involved in scandal. Even though it is known that such dealings are illegal, payoffs are made in order to assure that the annual shareholders’ meetings will go smoothly. As another means of forestalling *sōkaiya* obstruction of the proceedings, many companies make it a practice to obtain, in the name of the vice-chief of the company’s gen-



Cover design: Takahashi Masayuki



Cover design: Tada Kazuhiro

eral affairs department, the proxy voting rights of large shareholders.

This book is a novel about a general-affairs department vice-chief about to be forced to leave his job as a result of corporate restructuring. He takes advantage of the practice of cornering the voting-rights majority to take over his company and, aided by an attorney, reveals the misdeeds of the preceding company president. The author himself is an attorney who heads a Japanese and American staffed law firm. In addition to being an exciting, enjoyable story, the book provides a vivid portrayal of the Japanese corporate climate.

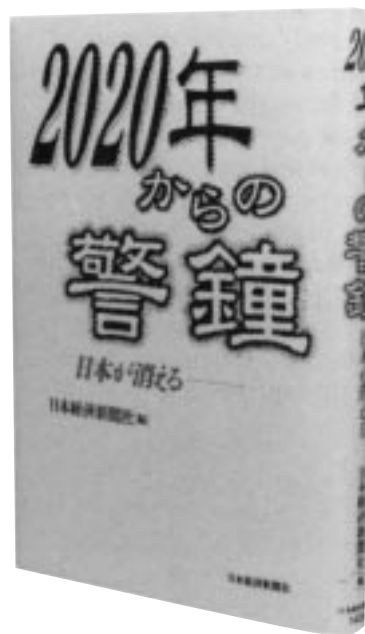
Nisen-nijū-nen kara no keishō [Warnings from the Year 2020]. 3 vols. Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, ed. Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1997–98. 194 × 130 mm. 252 pp.; 240 pp.; 224 pp. ¥1,500 each. ISBN 4-532-14591-0; 14616-X; 14643-7.

By 2020 Japan will be the nation with the highest average age in the world. One out of four Japanese will be 65 or older, and the steady decrease in the nation's population itself resulting from the decreasing birthrate will mean heavier tax burdens and the advent of minus growth in the economy. The world as a whole, meanwhile, will be suffering from the effects of burgeoning populations, exacerbated damage to the environment, food shortages, and diminishing energy resources.

Although Japan today needs to prepare for these difficult times through pervasive political, administrative, financial, fiscal, social security, and educational reforms, there is little sense among Japanese that they face a crisis that requires urgent action, and the pace of reform has been sluggish.

This book examines “what should be done now to make Japan a nation that will inspire hope and promise in the generations following our own in the first half of the twenty-first century.” It first analyzes what Japan and the world will be like in the year 2020, and from that vantage point looks back upon social and economic conditions as they are now at the end of the twentieth century.

The book is a compilation of a series of articles that appeared in the *Nihon keizai shimbun*, Japan's largest financial and business newspaper, written by a group of twenty-six reporters from various departments in the company on the basis of advice and views provided by the “Nikkei 2020 Committee,” a Nihon Keizai Shimbun-organized body made up of university professors, economists, and other specialists.



Tairon: Kaiken, goken [Dialogue: Rethinking the Constitution]. Nakasone Yasuhiro and Miyazawa Kiichi. Asahi Shimbunsha. 1997. 193 × 131 mm. 207 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-02-257182-9.

May 3, 1997 commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Constitution of Japan. Leading up to that day, a dialogue on the constitution between two former prime ministers, Nakasone Yasuhiro and Miyazawa Kiichi, appeared in five installments in the leading national daily newspaper *Asahi shimbun*. The articles stimulated subsequent debate on the subject in the media.

Nakasone and Miyazawa are both senior conservative Liberal Democratic Party leaders, but they represent the rhetorical as well as moral kingpins of two conflicting groups within the party regarding the constitution. Nakasone leads those favoring revision or amendment of the constitution and Miyazawa is spokesman for those opposed to any change.

The dialogue published in the newspaper, their first formal debate, has been revised and amplified with detailed footnotes and two appendices of public opinion survey findings for the present book.

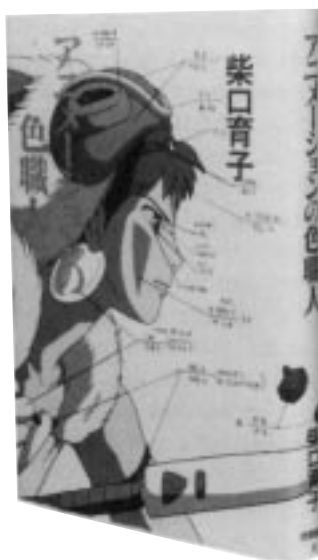
The 1997 survey shows that more people (46 percent) believe the constitution needs to be amended than those who see amendment unnecessary (39 percent), although supporters of the status quo were consistently greater in number than pro-amendment advocates in previous surveys. Concerning Article 9 of the constitution (renouncing war), most respondents (69 percent) are opposed to any revision.



ARTS

Animēshon no iro shokunin [Animation's Color Artist]. Shibaguchi Yasuko. Tokuma Shoten, 1997. 193 × 132 mm. 254 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-19-860726-5.

The color artist responsible for the long animated film *Mononoke hime*, released in the summer of 1997 by Studio Ghibli, is a woman, Yasuda Michiyo (58). The film has been a record hit, yielding the highest box-office profits of any Japanese film ever made. This book portrays Yasuda's personality and working style.



Cover design: Mano Kaoru

While the spotlight tends to linger on directors and scenario writers in the film business, Yasuda and her staff are unsung heroes. Reading how they work makes one realize that excellent films are always supported by a wealth of talent and friendship. Yasuda does the color layout of all the details that are drawn on the transparent sheets—eyes, hair, skin, clothing, accessories and so on, using more than five hundred colors. She supervises all coloring processes for 120,000 sheets.

Freelance writer Shibaguchi traces Yasuda's forty-year career working with color, describing her involvement in projects since the early days of animation history and bringing into vivid relief the texture of her life and work.

Shisen no monogatari, shashin no tetsugaku [Lines of Vision and a Philosophy of Photography]. Nishimura Kiyokazu. Kōdansha, 1997. 187 × 127 mm. 282 pp. ¥1,553. ISBN 4-06-258106-X.

The recent boom among young girls, mainly senior high-school girls, is "puri-kura," short for *purinto kurabu* ("print club"). Specially designed vending machines dispense sheets of instant photographs printed in selectable frames on adhesive paper. Exchanging *puri-kura* photos with friends or even strangers, collecting them, and sometimes pasting them around town has been a popular fad for some time.

Why are people so interested in taking pictures, being photographed, looking at photos, and showing them—sometimes giving them away—to others? The book seeks to answer this question. Author Nishimura has long been interested in the issue of images in the traditional arts and contemporary popular culture from the point of view of aesthetics.

As distinguished from many books on photography that introduce the history of photography and discuss individual works and photographers in that context, this book attempts to present a "philosophy of photography," analyzing the structure of "three lines of vision" (one that of the subject facing the camera, another that of the photographer focusing on the subject and the third those of the people who view the photos taken), using as examples portraits, pornography, and news photos. The author sees the "photo media" and act of taking pictures as a mode of self-understanding, vicarious experience, and world experience.



Cover design: Yamagishi Yoshiaki

LITERATURE

Auto [Out]. Kirino Natsuo. Kōdansha, 1997. 193 × 131 mm. 448 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-06-208552-6. Written by a fiction writer who specializes in mysteries, this crime novel about "ordinary" housewives compelled by circumstances into quite extraordinary behavior leaves the reader with an almost physical sense of unease.

Masako, a wife and mother, lives in the Tokyo suburbs and has a part-time job at a box-lunch factory, working the late-night shift. One day, one of the women Masako works with, in a fit of rage, kills her gambling, philandering, no-good husband. Succumbing to the woman's pleas, Masako agrees to help her dispose of the body. She enlists two other women from the same work group, and together they take care of the business.



Cover design: Tada Kazuhiro

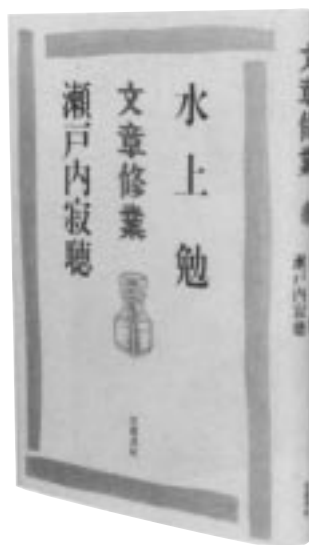
Born in 1951, the author is popular for her hard-boiled mystery stories centering around a female private detective. In a change from her usual style, this time she depicts the plight of a group of ordinary housewives who, from an unexpected turn in their otherwise humdrum lives, step "out" of normality into a realm where their commonplace grievances demand an uncommon response.

The novel depicts circumstances in the contemporary Japanese family with a compelling reality that makes absorbing reading throughout its more than 400 pages.

Bunshō shūgyō [Apprentices to Writing]. Mizukami Tsutomu and Setouchi Jakuchō. Iwanami Shoten, 1997. 193 × 132 mm. 210 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-00-002872-3.

This is a collection of talks between senior but active writers, Mizukami now aged 78 and Setouchi 75, looking back upon their nearly-forty-year association as well as upon how they learned to write.

At age 9, Mizukami was left in the care of a Zen Buddhist temple. Although he entered the priesthood, he eventually “fled” and returned to secular life when still in his teens, and later became a writer. Setouchi, on the other hand, had been a well-known writer for years when she took the tonsure at the age of 51. Both made their debut as writers in their mid-thirties, and their friendship goes back to that time.



Cover design: Tada Susumu

Their candid dialogue covers many topics: the coincidence that both their fathers were carpenters, how they started their careers as writers and later improved their writing skills, the passing of older writers they respect, love, religion, literature, long life, their current lifestyles, how they maintain a youthful outlook, and so on.

In the preface, Setouchi writes that her relationship with Mizukami is not romantic, “but, for whatever reason, he has many times told me things of much importance which I believe he wouldn’t tell anyone else.” The frank dialogue based on long-standing and trusting friendship is heart-warming to read.

Daidokoro [Kitchen]. Sakagami Hiroshi. Shinchōsha, 1997. 196 × 133 mm. 204 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-10-418601-5.

This collection contains eight short stories on the themes of old age and death, and a memoir of the author’s friendship with composer Takemitsu Tōru, who died in 1996. While keeping up a career as a company employee, the author has written a number of novels treating themes drawn from his own family life and personal circumstances. These works skillfully bring out the profound uncertainties inherent in the most ordinary of situations, and in their own quiet way have attracted a strong following.



Cover design: Shinchōsha

This book fully displays the author’s distinctive talent. The title story depicts the relationship between a senile, bedridden woman and her son, who is himself approaching retirement age. The son has taken to preparing dinner in his mother’s kitchen on his way home from work every day, and it is there that he begins to ponder various things, such as the relationship between his mother and deceased father, and about his own situation as he edges toward old age himself. These thoughts are subtly interwoven with the narrative of his mother’s condition, one scene, in which he bathes her, evoking the essence of the maternal bond with particular poignancy.

The other stories similarly depict people who have reached the age of

retirement from a company they devoted most of their lives to—for many the gateway to “old age,” or death—and the various ways in which they come to terms with the sudden change from active member of a corporate organization to isolated individual.

Eien no miyako [Eternal Capital]. 7 vols. Kaga Otohiko. Shinchōsha, 1997. 151 × 106 mm. each. 410 pp.; 392 pp.; 398 pp.; 398 pp.; 504 pp.; 500 pp.; 442 pp. ¥552; ¥514; ¥514; ¥514; ¥629; ¥629; ¥552. ISBN 4-10-106707-4; 106708-2; 106709-0; 106710-4; 106711-2; 106712-0; 106713-9.

The appearance of seven-volume, paperback revised edition of Kaga’s trilogy, *Kiro* [Crossroads], *Ogurai mori* [Gloomy Forest] and *Ento* [The Capital Aflame], which originally appeared in the journal *Shinchō* between 1986 and 1995, was greeted as a major event on the Japanese literary scene. It marks the completion of a realistic portrayal of Japan in the turbulent years around World War II.

The author, born in 1929, is a writer and psychologist, and the novel is semi-autobiographical. Its central character, Tokita Rihei, is a physician, ex-army surgeon, successful businessman, as well as inventor. Yet as the story unfolds, following the lives of Rihei and his family in the twelve years from 1935 to 1947, a portrait gradually emerges of the novel’s other “protagonist”: the city of Tokyo itself. The author describes the successive faces of the city—before the war; aflame during U.S. air raids; in ruins by the war’s end—in scrupulous detail.



Cover design: Tsukasa Shū

That this work appears in paperback reflects the realities of the publishing world today, where hardbacks are difficult to sell and bookstore space is limited.

***Mori no sekaiya* [Sequoia: Elders of the Forest].** Tada Chimako. Jinbun Shoin, 1997. 191 × 135 mm. 208 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-409-16078-8. The Chinese compound used by the author to write “sequoia,” the giant trees native to North America, is composed of the characters for “world” and “old person,” which might be read literally, “ancient one born when the world was born”—an apt ideographic image for trees that have survived as many as 3,000 years.

This book is a collection of essays about trees, written by a poet who is also a fine essayist. Drawing on her considerable breadth and depth of knowledge, she writes in a style that seems to call forth the spirits of the trees themselves. Treated sometimes with humor, sometimes with melancholy, her subjects are trees that have piqued her interest either in everyday life or on her travels abroad—the pine, the fig, the katsura, the carob—as well as other plants, such as papyrus and the water lily.

Her accounts evoke a flow of time separate and different from that of the human world, a time that makes one realize that the human lifespan is very short.



***Nandemo-nai hanashi* [Stories of Nothing in Particular].** Aoki Tama. Kōdansha, 1997. 193 × 131 mm. 212 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-06-208779-0.

Aoki is the granddaughter of Kōda Rohan (1867–1947), a leading figure in modern Japanese literature, and the daughter of writer Kōda Aya (1904–90). Aoki has a singular knack of arousing our nostalgia for the past. This volume is a collection of essays published over a one-year period in her Sunday newspaper column. As the title suggests, the essays are personal notes and observations on matters of far-from-critical import. They may be “trivial,” but nonetheless evoke compellingly nostalgic images of everyday Japanese life and of the changes that have taken place in people and their communities.

The essay entitled “Imo” [Potatoes] is a good example. A roasted sweet potato reminds the author of a story her grandfather told her about an elderly couple who once ran an old diner in Tokyo specializing in *tororo*-tuber soup (*tororo-jiru*), and the essay concludes in the mood of solitary reverie conventionally reserved in Japanese writing for autumn, the season of the roasted sweet potato. Though only three pages long, it is written with impressive skill.

Not all fifty of the essays are so tranquil in tone: in others, the author vents her anger at the indiscriminate construction of high-rise buildings in Japan, a consequence of the fashionable urban lifestyle, and laments the environmental damage she has witnessed during her travels.

The moods of Aoki’s text are further set off by illustrations by Mura-kami Yutaka, which accompany each essay.



Cover design: Ōizumi Taku

***Onchō no tani* [Valley of Grace].** Tatematsu Wahei. Shinchōsha, 1997. 196 × 136 mm. 490 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 4-10-333606-4.

The Ashio Copper Mine holds a unique place in Japan’s industrial history. Located in Tochigi Prefecture, in the northern part of the Kantō region, the mine became famous for the important role it played in early modern Japan’s industrialization. The pollution caused by the mine’s excavations, however, devastated surrounding fields and villages, arousing vehement protests by local farmers. When the government moved to forcibly quell the protests of the farmers and their supporters, the Ashio Copper Mine came to symbolize the notorious side of Japanese capitalism as well.



Cover design: Shinchōsha

This novel is set in and around the Ashio Copper Mine during the Meiji period (1868–1912). The main character, Sōjū, is a miner of great skill. Hearing that the Ashio mine has a rich lode, he and companions leave a depleted silver mine where they had been working in western Japan and head for Ashio. As they soon discover, however, the working conditions there are cruel: accidents are frequent, workers are treated like cattle, and little value is attached to a miner’s life. Through hard work and skill, Sōjū carves out a successful career, but that success cannot keep him from developing lung disease.

The author, currently one of Japan’s most popular writers, modeled his hero on his own great-grandfather.

***Shōjo to rōjo no Poruka* [Young Girl–Old Woman Polka]. Kojō Toshinobu.** Jiritsu Shobō, 1997. 193 × 131 mm. 142 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-88059-233-1.

Food is in plentiful supply in Japan today. With all kinds of foods and food ingredients imported from around the world, Japanese consumers can choose from a cornucopia of staples and gourmet delicacies. That there had never been such an abundance of food in this country makes it all the more perplexing that an increasing number of young Japanese are developing anorexia nervosa and other disorders marked by refusal or inability to eat.

This is a play about eating. The leading characters are an old woman dying from cancer and a girl suffering from anorexia. The old woman has withdrawn herself from treatment and resolved to die by simply not eating, while the girl's condition stems from her having been pushed around unmercifully by her classmates in school. Through the relationship between the two—the old woman who won't eat and the young woman who can't—the play explores the meaning of eating and living, its occasional flashbacks to the past and leaps into the future providing additional perspectives on the issue. Although the old woman dies, her death also represents a kind of assurance that the girl shall live. Paradoxically, that is, by expressing her urge to live precisely in her decision to starve herself to death, the old woman eventually cures the girl of her disorder.



Cover design: Kanda Norikazu

Born in 1959, the author heads a small theatrical company and is also active as a writer and producer.

***Tera-gurashi* [Temple Life]. Mori Mayumi.** Misuzu Shobō, 1997. 193 × 131 mm. 206 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-622-04618-0.

From a cramped rented house in a squalid, incessantly noisy corner of Tokyo's old downtown district, a mother and her three children move to a new home within the grounds of a nearby Buddhist temple. Though literally only a stone's throw from the same bustling streets where they lived before, it is an entirely different world. The passage of time itself seems less hurried, and whereas in their former house the family scarcely noticed the gradual turn of the seasons, now hardly a day passes without some fresh reminder of nature's cycle.



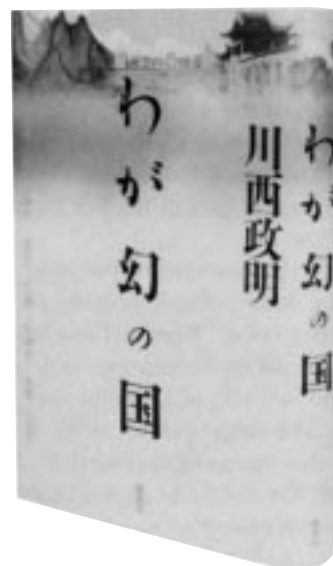
The author of this diary-like account edits a local magazine in central Tokyo. Her own reports and essays on various topics, including her research on prominent people associated with the local area, have gained her a solid reputation for scrupulous reporting and an easy, flowing style. (See *Japanese Book News*, No. 15, p. 16)

Even in the heavily built-up heart of Tokyo, temples stand on spacious lots. Many temples use this space to generate supplemental income, such as by operating kindergartens or—as in the case related in this book—building apartments for rent. The move reminds the author that a home can either confine its inhabitants or set them free. The book vividly conveys the distinctive mood of life in Tokyo's old residential areas.

***Waga maboroshi no kuni* [Our Land of Dreams]. Kawanishi Masaaki.** Kōdansha, 1997. 194 × 131 mm. 406 pp. ¥2,816. ISBN 4-06-208356-6. Since the days when Japan first sent official envoys to China well over a millennium ago, China remained for many Japanese the land of dreams, its advanced civilization and unfathomable scale the enduring object of fascination and aspiration. In modern times, however, Japanese perceptions of China have undergone a radical change.

This book examines how China has been perceived and represented in Japanese literature from the late nineteenth century to the present day. The work is divided into eight chapters, each focusing on one of eight Chinese cities: Shanghai, Shaoxing, Yangzhou, Nanjing, Dalian, Harbin, Dunhuang and Beijing. Each of these cities has its own special links with Japan, and their names alone each carry a distinct connotation for Japanese. Shanghai, for instance, is readily associated with Meiji Japan's push for cultural advancement, Nanjing with the Japan-China War, and Dalian and Harbin with Japan's invasion of China's northeastern territory.

The author is a literary critic who has maintained a long and almost obsessive interest in the true meaning of literature. In this work, an exhaustive inquiry that took ten years to complete, he explores the connections of Japanese writers with these cities and considers how their Chinese counterparts regarded Japan and Japanese literature.



Cover design: Sugiura Kōhei

Events and Trends

Review of Publishing in 1997

The shadow of Japan's economic recession was felt keenly in the publishing industry last year. Estimated book sales from January to November 1997 totaled ¥992,925 million, a drop of 1.9 percent compared to the corresponding period of the previous year, the first time a negative growth rate has been recorded since 1984 and only the second time since the end of World War II.

Amid this general slowdown, fiction sold rather well. Year-round sales were brisk for Watanabe Jun'ichi's *Shitsurakuen* [Lost Paradise] (2 vols., Kōdansha)—the movie and television versions of which attracted great attention—and *Shōnen H* [Boy H] (Kōdansha) by Seno'o Kappa.

Sales of award-winning works were also strong. Tsuji Hitonari's *Kaikyō no hikari* [Light on the Channel] (Shinchōsha) and Yū Miri's *Kazoku shinema* [Family Cinema] (Kōdansha), both winners of the 116th Akutagawa Prize, and Shinoda Setsuko's *Onnatachi no jihādo* [Women's Jihad] (Shūeisha) and Asada Jirō's *Poppoya* [The Railway Worker] (Shūeisha), winners of the 117th Naoki Prize, sold very well, assisted by considerable media coverage of their authors. The same trend was repeated in the mystery and horror genres with steady sales of Nozawa Hisashi's *Hasen no marisu* [Shattered Lines of Malice] (Kōdansha), winner of the 43rd Edogawa Ranpo Prize and Kishi Yūsuke's *Kuroi ie* [The Black House] (Kadokawa Shoten), winner of the 4th Japan Horror Prize.

A remarkable number of publications in the business field concerned Japan's "Big Bang" financial market reforms. Books on human psychology and philosophy of life sold successfully. The long-running best-sellers in this category included Stephen R. Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Japanese translation published by King Bear Shuppan), Robert M. Bramson's

Coping With Difficult People (Kawade Shobō Shinsha), Francesco Alberoni's *L'ottimismo* (Sōshisha), and Scott Peck's *People of the Lie* (Sōshisha).

The top seller for 1997 however, was *Bisutoro Sumappu kanzen reshipi* [Complete Recipes from Bistro SMAP], based on the television variety program featuring SMAP, a young entertainment group. The book's success is due to SMAP's remarkable popularity as well as the current boom in cookbooks. A sequel, *Bisutoro Sumappu KANTAN reshipi* [Simple Recipes from Bistro SMAP] is also selling well.

A major change occurred in pocket-sized books (*bunko*). Gentōsha and Kadokawa Haruki Corporation both launched new *bunko* series in April, as did major publisher Shōgakukan in December.

Severe constraints continue to impede magazine publishing. Estimated sales for 1997 were almost the same as the previous year with the number of issues sold about 1 percent lower than for the previous year, representing a decrease in sales continuing for the second year. The publication of many magazines was suspended while others revamped their formats to attempt a new start. The general-interest weekly magazine *Shūkan ASCII*, for example, was ushered in with great fanfare in May only to be withdrawn after four months; it reappeared in November as a computer magazine. The slump in the market for monthly general-interest magazines was also marked, and publication of both *Views* and *Boss* was suspended. Women's magazines were also hard pressed, as evidenced by the suspension of publication of the newly launched *Haru* and a revamping of *Ginza*.

Despite such sluggish market conditions, several new urban-style city information magazines were launched. In Tokyo alone, the original *Tokyo Walker* entered into a serious struggle to corner a readership market against the launching of *Can Do Pia* in October and the inauguration of *Tokyo issshūkan* in November.

A series of CD-ROM publications hit the market in 1997. These included not only reference materials such as the Japanese version of Microsoft's *CD-ROM Encarta Encyclo-*

pedia, *Maipedia '97* and the Japanese dictionary *Super Daijirin*, but also CD-ROM novels. Sales are promising for Shinchōsha's CD-ROM containing two novels in the erotica genre, *Yojōhan fusuma no shitabari* [Under the Paper Lining of the Fusuma in the Four-Mat Room] and *Akai kami no onna* [The Red-haired Woman], the authors of which remain unidentified although Nagai Kafū (1879–1959) claimed to have penned the former and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927) the latter under a pseudonym. In addition, the 1998 editions of the *Imidas* and *Chiezō* dictionaries of contemporary terms, for instance—were accompanied by a free CD-ROM copy.

Photo Publication Controversy

The year 1997 will be remembered for the controversy surrounding the publication of a photograph of the fourteen-year-old junior high-school student who murdered a twelve-year-old school boy in Kobe (see related article on pages 1–3 this issue). Initially, in accordance with juvenile law, the media refrained from publishing his name or photograph. When Shinchōsha's weekly photo magazine *Focus* (July 9), and soon after its weekly journal *Shūkan Shinchō* (July 10), printed the boy's photograph (in the latter case with the slight concession of masking the eyes), however, bookstores, kiosks, and convenience stores throughout the country had to decide whether to put the magazines on sale or honor the offender's juvenile status. In protest, well-known writer Haitani Kenjiro, author of *Usagi no me* [Rabbit's Eyes], withdrew almost all rights to publish his work from Shinchōsha.

Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes

For the first time since 1994 and the fifth time in the history of the prizes, no winners were selected for either of the 118th Akutagawa and Naoki prizes, the most prestigious literary awards in Japan.

SF Pioneer Passes Away

One of Japan's leading science-fiction writers, Hoshi Shin'ichi passed away in December 1997 at the age of

seventy-one. A founding member of Japan's first full-fledged SF coterie magazine, *Uchūjin*, his debut as an author came when *Sekisutora*, a story he published in the magazine, was re-published in the magazine *Hōseki*. He created a new style of writing known in Japan as the "short short" (story) and "Bokko-chan," a story about a "female" bartending robot (tr. *Bokko Chan*, a collection of the title story and several other short-shorts, 1978, Japan Times, Ltd.) is considered one of his representative works.

Japanese Science Magazine Published in Italy

A major Italian publishing firm, Coliel della Sella RCS, which produces Italy's most prestigious daily newspaper, began publication of an Italian version of the Japanese science magazine *Nyūton* (*Newton*, Newton Press Magazine) in September 1997. The president made the decision to publish on the basis of *Newton*'s outstanding visual appeal. The first issue, containing articles on the universe and dinosaurs, made a successful start with sales of approximately 700,000 copies. Half of the articles are translated from the Japanese while the remainder are produced locally by the Italian firm.

Numerous Japanese versions of established international magazines, like *Newsweek* and *National Geographic*, are published, as well as tie-up publications like *Good House-*

keeping and *Donna Giappone* produced in collaboration with their respective parent magazines, but Western-language publication of a Japanese magazine has heretofore been virtually unheard of. Korean and Taiwanese versions of the magazine are already being published.

Wine Crazy

An unprecedented wine boom is sweeping Japan, sparked by reports in health magazines and on television programs that drinking red wine helps prevent hardening of the arteries.

The wine trend has spread to the publishing industry as well. Egawa Suguru, former ace pitcher of the Yomiuri Giants professional baseball team and now a sportscaster, is the author of *Yume wain* [Dream Wines] (Kōdansha), a strong seller since it was published in June 1997. In his book, Egawa, who holds the title of "honorary sommelier," describes his passion for wine. Tazaki Shin'ya, one of Japan's most distinguished sommeliers, has published many works in this field. Of these, *Tazaki Shin'ya ga erabu mainichi nomu wain* [Tazaki Shin'ya's Choice: Wines for Every Day] (Shinsei Shuppansha) is very popular.

Magazine features on the subject were also popular. Far from being restricted to culinary magazines, wine was a hot topic in both women's and men's magazines.

Tokyo International Book Fair

The 1998 Tokyo International Book Fair was held for four days from January 22 through 25 at the Tokyo Big Site in Ariake on the edge of Tokyo Bay. Under the theme "bridges for publishing exchange linking Japan and Asia and the world and Asia," the Book Fair has been held annually since 1992. The 1998 fair's display area was 50 percent larger than that of the previous fair. A total of 444 companies participated: 327 from within Japan, 46 from the Asia-Pacific region, and 71 from the United States, Europe, and other parts of the world.

The fair featured special programs on exchange in publishing culture between Japan and France and for introduction of French publishing culture, as part of a wider event for 1998-99 called "France Year in Japan." The French Pavilion was set up within the book fair site, and a symposium on literature and other meetings with invited speakers (mainly writers) from France and Japan were held.

Other publishing-related events included the 4th IPA International Copyright Symposium, the annual general meeting of the Asian Pacific Publishers Association (APPA), and an APPA Publishing Forum meeting. There were more than forty thousand visitors, an increase of over twenty percent from last year's fair.

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Shimazaki Tōson's *Hakai* (*The Broken Commandment*) in Hindi. NBT, on the other hand, was established to encourage publishing activities in India, introduce India-related books overseas, and promote children's literature, and it has also worked to support authors and publishers. More recently, local publishers translated and published Japanese picture books such as Tashima Seizō's *Fly, Grasshopper!* and Iwamura Kazuo's *14 Mice Move House* (1993). NBT is unique in that one of its stated objectives is to encourage reading in India. Cooperation with these two agencies would make it possible to introduce Japanese literature not just to the elite but to a much broader spectrum of society and over a much wider geographic area.

Toward Active Exchange

Although not numerous, some literary works from India or other countries in South Asia are being introduced to

Japan through programs implemented by the Daido Life Foundation and the Toyota Foundation. The few Japanese literary works available in Indian languages, however, are mostly translations from English versions, the majority originally published in the West. Meanwhile, there is scant support for the introduction of Indian literature to Japan, or for translation of Japanese works into Indian languages.

Interest in Japan is rising among Indian intellectuals, and there is a high demand for information not just in literature, but Japanese scholarship in other fields. Researchers or think tanks and other organizations likewise wish to have access in English to research papers by Japanese political scientists, economists, and specialists in international relations, in particular. Responding to this demand could contribute greatly to intellectual exchange between the two countries. (*Andō Kazuo is director of the Japan Foundation New Delhi Office.*)

The Self-conscious Author

Shiina Makoto

Of the roughly 100 books I have published, two have been translated. One is a two-volume story told in the first person entitled *Gaku monogatari* (Eng. *Gaku Stories*, translated by Frederik Schodt, Kodansha International, 1991). The Japanese edition has been reprinted several times and continues to be read widely. It is the story of the relationship between myself, as a young writer at the very beginning of my career, and my son Gaku, then in elementary school. The translation is available in both hardcover and paperback editions, one a bilingual publication designed to help Japanese study English.

Set against the backdrop of life in 1980s Japan, it depicts our household, matters related to my son's school, my own work, and the short trips that I occasionally took with Gaku. Since it is a story that describes an ordinary household and family relations in contemporary Japan, I have been more curious than usual to know how readers respond to the book when they read it in translation.

My other translated work is a light, first-person story of the somewhat crazy friendships of my youth back in the mid-1960s, *Aishū no machi ni kiri ga furu no da* [Mist Falls in the Sorrowful City] (Shinchōsha, 1991), which was rendered into Russian. Set in a shabby apartment house in Tokyo's Shitamachi area where four young men live in one small ten-foot square room, it recounts two and a half years of the hard-scrabble life of university students at that time, although I would hesitate to call it typical.

One aspect of the student life was poverty. Students just didn't have money in those days. There is one story of how we managed to cadge some canned mackerel and concocted a banquet by boiling it in a cockery pot with vegetable scraps we were able to assemble. Another side was our excess energy: on one corner near where we lived there was one of those mannequins of a policeman that were a common fixture along the roads at one time. We used to let off steam by kicking it around on our way home at night from the public bath. I cannot help feeling somewhat embarrassed as a Japanese when I think how Russians might react to such stories. The translator of this book is a professor East Asian history named Georgi Sviridov who no doubt knows Japanese and Japanese orthography, not to mention Japanese history, far better than I do. Unfortunately, he passed away in 1997.

There are a lot of stories of our trips to the public bath in that book. There was the day we ate lots of pork dumplings (*gyōza*) and schemed to spread the garlic stench all over the place, breathing out heavily on purpose in order to fill the bathroom with the smell. I can't help feeling rather concerned about what will Russian readers think of tales like that.

Reflecting a time when Japanese fathers rarely had enough time to be close to their children and children needed to be encouraged to assert their individuality and imagination, Gaku monogatari poignantly records the author's efforts to be a good and understanding father. In the excerpt below he describes his son's latest antics when river-adventurer friend Noda Tomosuke asks after Gaku:

"So how's your Gaku, anyway?"

"My Gaku? Well, when I told him I was coming with you to Lake Biwa and to the sea off Fukui, he made a face and said something about grown-ups having all the fun."

"Sort of makes sense."

"He keeps bugging me to take him to the sea. Whenever he's not off stream-fishing with his pals, he's dog-fishing off our second-story veranda."

"Dog-fishing?"

"We've got this mongrel pooch at our place called Dai, see, and Gaku tries to snare him with a fish lure he made out of wood."

Noda stroked his mustache, beamed as if immensely pleased, and said, "Sounds just like Gaku."

"The mutt's a bit of a numskull, too. It thinks the lure's a real fish and tries to eat it. Then Gaku starts cranking and reeling in his line, hauling the dog up and saying, 'Whoa! I've got a big one this time!'"

Noda laughed.

"They make quite a pair!" I said.

[*Gaku Stories* (Kodansha International, 1991), p. 163]

Shiina Makoto was born in 1944 in Tokyo. After working as editor for a business journal, he became editor-in-chief of a book review magazine called *Hon no zasshi* founded in collaboration with a friend and featuring articles and introductions about books written in a candid, incisive style. Since he began writing in 1979, his first-person stories, known for their descriptiveness and light-hearted tone, have secured a strong readership among the young. His main works include *Saraba Kokubunji shoten no obaba* [Farewell, Kokubunji Bookstore Granny] (Sangokan, 1993), *Aishū no machi ni kiri ga furu no da* [Mist Falls in the Sorrowful City], 2 vols. (Shinchōsha, 1991), *Shinbashi Karasumoriguchi seishunhen* [Our Youth in Shinbashi Karasumoriguchi] (Shinchōsha, 1987), and *Gaku monogatari*, 2 vols. (*Gaku Stories*). Endowed with an unquenchable curiosity for the unknown and a vigorous spirit of adventure, he not only writes essays and novels but has traveled to uninhabited islands and remote places in Mongolia and Patagonia where nature remains largely untouched by human hands, publishing numerous travelogues in his characteristic style. He has also been involved in filmmaking and is known for his infinite affection for children and nature.

In 1989 he won the 10th Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for New Writers for his novel *Inu no keifu* [Lineage of the Dogs], in 1990 the 11th Japan Science Fiction Prize for *Ado bādo* [Ad Bird], and in 1995 the Japan Film Critics' Prize, first prize for excellence in direction of his film *Shiroi uma* [The White Horse] set in Mongolia.

