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# Japanese Book News

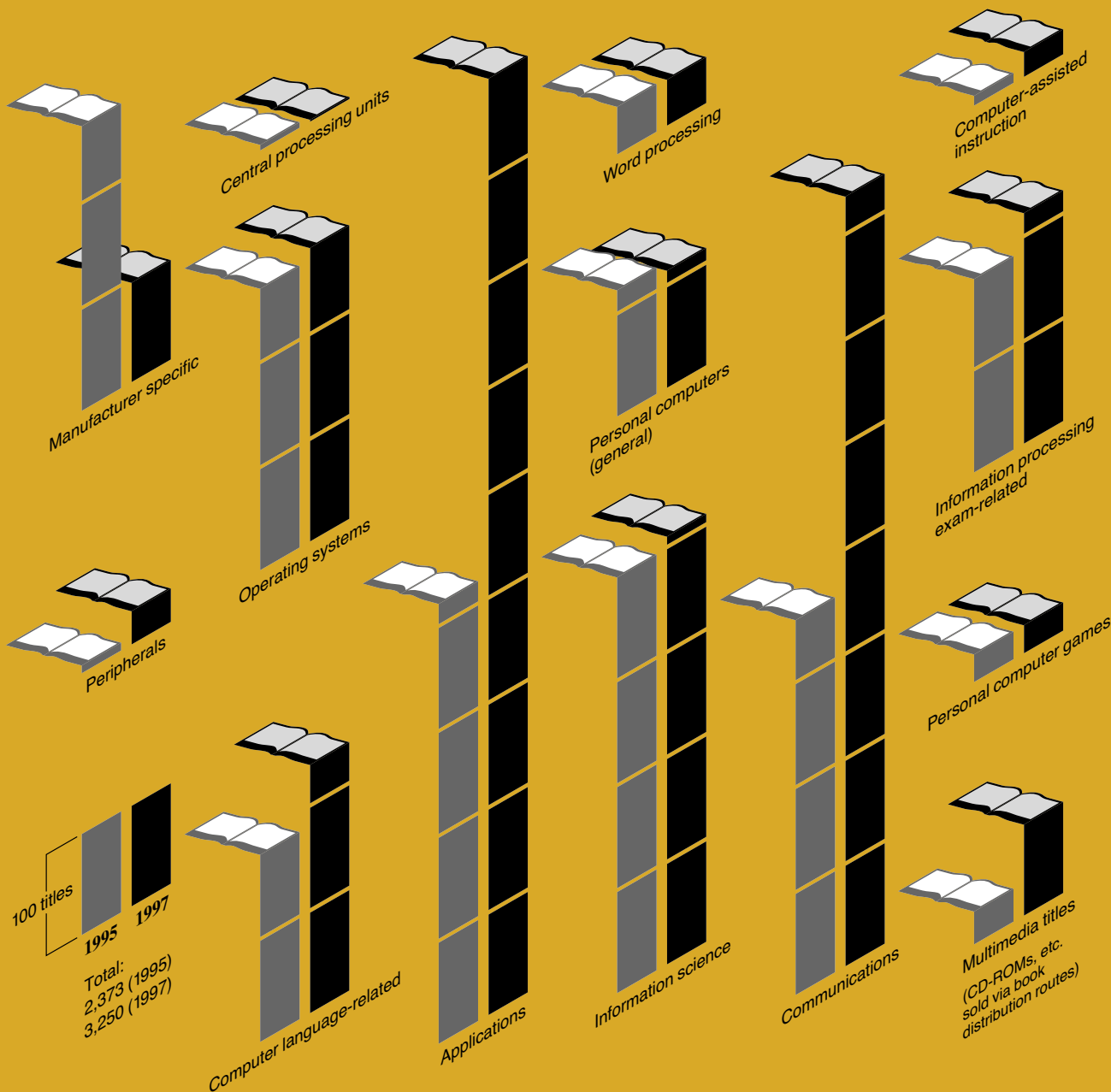
Restructuring Welfare Corporatism

Samurai Chronicles and Japan's Biographical Tradition

Books on Japan in the Philippines

From the Publishing Scene

## New Publications in Computer-related Genres



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## From the Editor

Hit by the post-bubble business slump and the fierce competition ensuing from government deregulation measures, Japanese corporations have been forced to adopt restructuring policies of unprecedented severity. Individuals affected by such changes have had difficulty adjusting their thinking fast enough, and social insurance and public assistance programs have been unprepared to cope with the resulting situation. We asked professor Ōsawa Machiko of Japan Women's University and professor Jeff Kingston of Temple University (Japan) to comment on how the government, corporations, and individuals need to respond to this unprecedented situation.

Although little has been written about biography in Japan, a number of fine works have been produced in this genre, among which the success stories of a number of samurai heroes have enjoyed mass popularity since the Edo period (1603–1867). Professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo Saeki Shōichi gives us a glimpse of this biographical tradition.

This issue's "Japanese Books Abroad" section introduces the situation in the Philippines. We asked professor Lydia N. Yu-Jose of Ateneo de Manila, a long-time researcher on the subject of Japan-Philippine relations, to describe the translation and publishing of books about and from Japan.

This issue launches a new page, "From the Publishing Scene," featuring two short articles on topics related to publishing. Koyama Tetsurō of Kyodo News's cultural news section will author a series for this page on literature, responding to strong interest among *JBN*'s readers. This time, we asked professor Nishigaki Tōru of the University of Tokyo to write about how the Chinese characters that make up an important part of Japanese orthography have fared in the age of computers.

For "In Their Own Words," young fiction writer Fujiwara Tomomi considers the translation of fiction into other languages.

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# Restructuring Welfare Corporatism: The Search for a New Paradigm

Ōsawa Machiko and Jeff Kingston

Mired in recession for most of this decade, Japan now faces the consequences of prolonged economic malaise. The twin pressures of recession and deregulation are generating a powerful economic rip tide with considerable consequences for the employment system. The system seems to be unraveling as companies discover that measures which saw them through past slumps are exhausted. They can no longer afford the rigidities and high costs of long-term employment and seniority-based wage scales. The social contract between employers and employees based on security and loyalty is a likely casualty, as firms slowly abandon the incrementalist approach to restructuring that they relied on thus far.

Unemployment is officially estimated at 3.9 percent, remarkably high by Japanese standards. Such figures probably undercount the real ranks of the jobless by 3 to 4 percent, depending on how the statistics are calculated. Forecasts cited in the media suggest that the picture is getting gloomier; the official unemployment rate may reach 5 percent in 1999. Alarmists warn that failure to follow through on deregulation and restructuring could lead, in three to five years, to levels of unemployment associated with Eurosclerosis.

The media and public opinion leaders in business and government have shifted from berating restructuring as an inappropriate Western business practice to describing it as an imperative for survival. Clearly the rules of the game are rapidly changing, but at what cost?

## Twilight of Welfare Corporatism

The tradition of welfare benefits provided by corporations in Japan has significantly minimized the social dislocations that accompanied recession in other advanced industrialized economies. Unlike firms in the United States and Europe, firms have not laid off large numbers of workers. Critics charge that companies are in denial, merely postponing the inevitable, but what European leader would not love to have Japan's problems?

Japan, Inc., however, is not immune to market forces and is beginning to run out of palatable options. As the barriers to international trade come down and deregulation stimulates competition, pressure on companies to restructure can no longer be addressed with a combination of safety valves and shock absorbers. Firms have imaginatively tinkered with existing structures in a bid to buy time, looking to a hoped-for rebound to make it possible to preserve the existing paradigm. Reducing overtime and bonuses, pay cuts, transfers, recruiting freezes, outsourcing, forced early retirement, and heavier reliance on part-time and temporary employees have bought precious time and helped rein in rising labor costs, but without the strong impetus of high growth, the traditional employment paradigm may soon be obsolete. The systems that worked so well in the post-World War II era are increasingly inadequate to the challenges that now face the

Japanese economy. The economic logic that animated the system no longer holds, and practices suited to a manufacturing economy are giving way to new arrangements better suited to the rapidly expanding service sector. Japan, Inc., moreover, is running out of money and time.

The aging of the work force has saddled Japanese corporations with a rising proportion of well paid, less productive senior employees. The percentage of employees older than 45 has jumped from 34.8 percent in 1976 to 48 percent in 1997, swelling wage outlays at a time when cost cutting has become the new management mantra. This is why the fastest growth in unemployment is among men aged 45–54, employees who are being forced into early retirement before they can collect on seniority. Once they are laid off it is difficult to place them in a position of similar pay and status, and many lack the specialized skills that would make them attractive job candidates. It is telling that the unemployment rate of workers between the ages of 55 and 64 has risen sharply from 5 percent in 1997 to 6.2 percent in 1998, especially since the government will subsidize up to 25 percent of the salaries of workers in this age group. The government spent 500 million yen on such subsidies in 1997, postponing job cuts for some 80,000 older workers. Rising unemployment among senior workers is attributed to bankruptcies and the spreading practice in firms of bullying older employees into early retirement by threatening to reduce pension and severance payments, by assignment of menial tasks, denial of perquisites, and other forms of harassment.

The crisis is looming and hard decisions can no longer be avoided. Some estimates suggest that there are as many as 6.4 million surplus workers bloating company payrolls, about 10 percent of the total work force.

## Restructuring

If Japanese firms embrace American-style restructuring, there are grounds for considerable concern. Welfare corporatism in Japan has meant that the government has relied on companies to provide job security and thus has not needed to develop an adequate safety net. Workers in Japan who lose their jobs can receive about half their pay for between 90 and 300 days depending on length of tenure. This bare-boned unemployment compensation scheme might suffice if there were solid programs for retraining or job placement, but this is not yet the case.

Is Japan in denial? Is it making a mistake by restructuring in a gradual manner? Advocates of shock therapy point to the success of U.S. companies in turning around their performance by shedding workers and streamlining operations. It is often argued that Japan needs to stop dragging its feet and take the bitter medicine of job cuts or risk being left behind. Proponents suggest that three or four years down the road, leaner, more flexible companies can revive their fortunes and take advantage of the oppor-

tunities created by deregulation to generate jobs. This is assuming, of course, that the government really concedes the commanding heights and implements meaningful and sweeping deregulation. Given deep-seated suspicion of market forces among bureaucrats loath to concede power and turf, it is not certain that Japanese firms will enjoy the same favorable operating environment that facilitated the reversal of fortunes accomplished by U.S. firms. In addition, some recent studies in the United States cast doubt on the value of firing workers to improve company performance if such actions are not part of a broader strategy and are not well planned and managed.

The cautious approach of Japanese managers may have its dividends, as poorly executed downsizing can have a devastating impact on firms. The implicit social contract that is the basis of welfare corporatism has constrained hasty initiatives, giving Japan time to learn from the mistakes and successes of its global competitors and partners. The types of outplacement and retraining programs available to redundant workers in Europe and the United States are limited in Japan, obstacles to mid-career job-switching remain considerable, and companies have yet to make the transition from lifetime *employment* to a focus on lifetime *employability*. Since job security was the core feature and virtue of the Japanese employment system and management focused on maintaining jobs, it is not surprising that systems for coping with unemployment are not yet adequate. The government's reliance on welfare corporatism has left it ill prepared to cope with an impending social crisis.

Rather than shock therapy, it is more likely that stronger doses of downsizing medicine will be administered in a measured manner. This muddle-through scenario may deny corporate Japan the full upside of restructuring, but it also means concomitantly that the dislocation will be muted. The government is also likely to slowly and sparingly implement deregulation, perhaps limiting the benefits, but also the fallout. Certainly the Japanese public has been prepared over the past few years, gradually but inexorably, to endure the unendurable and surrender the secure cocoon of welfare corporatism. The process of shifting to an as-yet unidentified paradigm with a new set of rules will involve elements of continuity and transformation; existing employment practices will gradually erode rather than be suddenly terminated. Attitudes and expectations are changing and will undermine the current system and help shape what comes forth in its place.

### Emerging Paradigm

The emerging employment paradigm will not be unfamiliar to workers who have been toiling on the labor-market periphery nor to those who have bucked the existing system; part-time and temporary workers (mostly women), employees of small companies, dispatched workers, mid-career job changers and contract employees or consultants who have acquired professional skills in areas of high demand have not enjoyed the security and benefits associated with prevailing practices. The core labor force of larger companies has held a monopoly on the perquisites of job security and seniority wages, and has been spared the vagaries of market forces. The shocks are

absorbed by peripheral workers who earn far less and are the first to be fired. The costly and rigid employment system favoring core workers has been sustained throughout the prolonged recession due to an increased reliance on the flexibility and lower costs of peripheral workers. As companies rely more heavily on such workers, this adjustment process and new employment practices are becoming a barometer of change in employment. The prevailing system is surviving due to their contributions, but in the process is being transformed by practices initially viewed as stopgap measures aimed at preserving the status quo.

Practices on the labor market periphery involving flexibility in working arrangements and hours, risk taking, individual initiative in skills acquisition, job hopping, and less security are likely to feature in the emerging new paradigm, perhaps coexisting with some lingering elements of the old paradigm. A much smaller core work force, flattened hierarchies, merit-based promotion and pay, a more horizontal organization of corporate entities, scaled-back in-house training and greater reliance on recruiting workers who have requisite skills are some of the features that will become increasingly important in the new paradigm. The IT (information technology) revolution in offices unleashed by advances in telecommunications and computers will also shape the new paradigm, placing even greater emphasis on "knowledge workers" and creating correspondingly less tolerance for the rigidities of hierarchy, status, and seniority. This revolution will also downgrade the value of perspiration and dedication, and require far more inspiration and individual initiative.

### Managing the Transition

The transition from the old paradigm to a new set of rules, expectations, attitudes, and aspirations will generate costs and unintended consequences. Just as the practices of what we now consider the traditional system were honed from experience over time, the new paradigm will not suddenly be created. Meanwhile, the absence of a social infrastructure suited to an increasingly flexible employment system could make the transition difficult.

Society has to come to grips with the dislocation caused by restructuring and rising unemployment in the short term, but also needs to put in place an infrastructure to facilitate transition to the new paradigm that will enable society to make the most of the potential opportunities and benefits. There are signs that the government and corporations are developing mechanisms to help redundant workers adjust to new realities. Job placement,

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counseling, and retraining programs will help some workers return to the work force as productive employees. Others will need better welfare assistance from the government in surviving longer term joblessness or premature retirement.

For the future, ongoing deregulation of the economy and restructuring of corporations carry enormous implications for policy makers in the private and public sectors. The gradual demise of the lifetime employment concept and seniority-based wages and promotions is having a significant impact on recruiting, training, retention, promotion, compensation, and retirement practices. The Japanese style of management requires extensive renovation to adjust to the new terrain. As workers see the fate endured by some of their less-fortunate seniors, commitment, loyalty, and sacrifice for the benefit of the firm are likely to suffer. With a flattening of management hierarchies and consequent logjam for promotions, how will managers motivate their workers? How will they balance the logic of promotion and pay increases by merit with the emphasis on group performance and harmony?

As differences between employees in terms of working arrangements and compensation become more pronounced, how will firms maintain morale and collective effort? With in-house training becoming more risky (employees may leave before the training investment can be

recouped) and lagging rapid technological innovations, how will companies recruit and retain workers with the skills they need? If mid-career recruiting is going to become a more salient feature of the flexible employment system, issues such as pension portability also need to be addressed.

Clearly, corporations have a great need for innovation in managing the transition, but the public sector and educational institutions also need to renovate the social infrastructure which supports enterprise. The government will need to deregulate labor markets in tandem with other deregulation initiatives and allow private-sector firms a freer hand in disseminating information, recruiting employees, engaging in outplacement and other services that will ease the transition.

Japan will need to generate job growth, and in order to do so, the business operating environment for entrepreneurs and start-up ventures has to be liberalized and improved by government initiative. In the spectrum of choices ranging from free-market solutions to development-state type regulation and intervention, where will Japan make its bet on the future? Society has to weigh the benefits of protecting jobs for the moment versus generating jobs for the future. Half-hearted deregulation, restrained competition and minimalist restructuring will

*Continued on page 5*

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# Samurai Chronicles and Japan's Biographical Tradition

Saeki Shōichi

Asked to name their country's first writer of modern-style biography, most Japanese would probably be at a loss for an answer. Even a specialist in Japanese literature or a seasoned literary critic might be caught off guard. Possibly their dilemma stems from the fact that, while biography has been quite an active and distinguished genre in Japan's literary tradition, little effort has been made to formally position it as an accepted literary genre and accord it any sort of critical recognition.

Before examining how this situation came about, let me first answer the question posed above. The first biography in the modern sense of the word is *Shinchōki* [The Life of Oda Nobunaga] by Ōta Gyūichi (1527–?). Ōta was a samurai in the service of the sixteenth-century hegemon whose words and deeds he recorded, in almost hyperbolic detail.

Oda Nobunaga (1534–82), who rose to power during the chaotic Sengoku or “Warring States” period, very nearly brought the country's numerous warlord clans under unified control before he was assassinated by one of his own generals. Nobunaga was certainly one of Japan's most dramatic and eccentric warrior heroes. He was known for his unpredictability and impulsiveness. Ōta Gyūichi remained the faithful chronicler of both the light and shadow of his master, giving us a vivid portrayal of Nobunaga's complex character. No doubt Ōta was able to do this by virtue of living at close quarters with the subject of his writing and by being a direct observer of his personality and activities. In this respect, he enjoyed the same good fortune as did James Boswell, founder of the English biography with his *Life of Samuel Johnson*. The recent publication of a new critical biography, *Nobunaga* (Shin-chōsha, 1996), by the literary critic Akiyama Shun, has drawn considerable attention. Its attempt to reposition its subject in a new and more open biographical perspective, drawing frequently on references to Plutarch's *Lives*, makes fresh and stimulating reading.

Ōta Gyūichi's sixteenth-century samurai biography had considerable influence on subsequent biographical writing in Japan. Of course, the development of such biographies was not so much the result of his work alone as it was the upshot of the historical circumstances in which the samurai became the ruling elite in the Tokugawa regime that took power, bringing the Warring States period to a close at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Paradoxically, the military rule established by the warrior class headed by the Tokugawa regime worked the miracle of maintaining unbroken peace over roughly two and a half centuries. During that prolonged era of peace, when power centered on the city of Edo, the samurai biographies secured an extraordinary following among the common people, and they were told and retold, thoroughly permeating society through the oral media of *kōshaku*, or popular storytelling (later developed into *kōdan*). One important dimension of Japan's literary history is the often-

overlooked fact that this situation has not appreciably changed even today, the popular appetite for “samurai” heroes having survived several periods of radical social change.

During the Edo period (1603–1867), the lords of each individual domain assiduously compiled and passed down chronicles of the brave exploits of their ancestors through the storytellers/reciters known as the *otogishū*. Outstanding studies have been done by historian Kuwada Tadachika (1902–87) on the circumstances that made the *otogishū* an established institution of Edo-period society. (See his detailed study, *Daimyō to otogishū* [The Daimyo and the *Otogishū*], 1937.) At the very pinnacle of this unique institution was *Hankanpu*, a history of the daimyō houses by pragmatist politician and historian Arai Hakuseki (1657–1725), which portrayed the rich diversity of samurai heroes and specified even the details of their battles, and brought the characters to life in a concise, evocative style. It is of profound interest that one of the first to recognize Hakuseki's achievements as a biographer was the novelist Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965), whose writing style, as demonstrated in such works as *Sasameyuki* (*The Makioka Sisters*), and *Kagi* (*The Key*) would have seemed to be a world apart from the samurai biography. Perhaps, while he was fascinated by the brilliance of Hakuseki's works, he quickly recognized that it was alien to his own style.

Another point of interest is that the samurai biography, inaugurated by Ōta, developed by the *otogishū*, and refined by Arai Hakuseki, was simultaneously accompanied by a broad popularization movement. While starting out with the *otogishū*, whose purpose had doubtless been both to instruct and to entertain members of the samurai class, it was not long before storytellers and raconteurs (*kōshaku-shi/kōdan-shi*) appeared who enjoyed immense popularity among the common people for their storytelling talents. The most popular in their repertoire was invariably the rags-to-riches success story of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598), known as the “Taikō” (Imperial Regent). The *Taikōki* (1625), a samurai biography by Oze Hoan (1564–1640) that became virtually folk legend, was later told and rewritten in so many versions that it is impossible to keep track of them. The popularity of Hideyoshi's story has not faded; only a few years ago he was featured in a year-long television dramatization of the “Taiga” drama series, which won high viewer ratings partly because of the lead actor's unorthodox characterization of his role.

Another genre, also a leading source for the stories dramatized for the “Taiga” dramas, is the period novel. These works, recounting the lives of historical figures such as swordsmen Miyamoto Musashi and Yagyū Jūbei, as well as Sanada Yukimura and Ōishi Kuranosuke (hero of the “forty-seven samurai” story), are both hybrids of the samurai biography and their outgrowth. (See my article in

the previous issue of *Japanese Book News*, No. 21, p. 6.)

Perhaps even more distinctively “Japanese” and more lively as a genre—certainly one that goes further back in history—is that of the autobiography. The early development of the autobiography in Japan stands in clear contrast to the situation in the West, where biography came much earlier than autobiography. Possibly the overwhelming sway of Christianity in the matter of such records of personal recollection—confession being an inextricable part of Catholic church ritual—had something to do with this phenomenon. As long as the confessional life story was defined as an act that fell within the sanctum of church authority, it could hardly develop as a secular autobiography of an individual’s private life.

In Japan, no such religious taboos inhibited the genre, and a number of candid diaries, written by women of literary talent, beginning in the Heian period (794–1185), were widely read among the nobility. The autobiographical works of this early period originated with collections of *waka* poetry (consisting of five lines of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables), which were accompanied by explanatory text. The text gradually became more elaborate and substantial, until it became an independent literary work in itself. The noblewomen’s autobiographies dealt almost completely with their private lives, and mention of public functions or observations about society were rare. In general, their content revolved around delicate observations of nature and emotional and psychological reflections on matters of love, often frustrated and disappointed. The tendency of the women’s court diaries to focus on their personal emotions is actually a feature of Japanese literary history that continues to a certain extent to the present day. The *shi-shōsetsu*, the so-called I-novel written in the first person and first appearing in the early twentieth century, quickly became an established genre that held considerable sway in modern Japanese literature. This development, often attributed to the European “influence,” goes back to precedents in the Heian period.

One can readily imagine that the preoccupation with the private, personal aspects of life of Heian writers worked against the emergence and development of the biographical genre. While Heian times produced the *Genji monogatari*, the world’s earliest full-length work of fiction, it left nothing in terms of biography, save a few brief

sketches of the lives of Fujiwara notables or of anecdotes of the times. It was not until the turbulent times of the Warring States period and the emergence of the samurai heroes with their forceful personalities that the modern biography came into being.

During the Tokugawa period, in addition to the samurai biographies and the excellent samurai autobiographies by such prominent men as Arai Hakuseki and Matsudaira Sadanobu, there were a large number of autobiographies of various styles and content turned out by city-dwellers of different parts of the country, scholars, wandering monks, kabuki actors, and the like. Fortunately, they were of such vigor as to stimulate the biographical genre, leading to the writing of numerous *kijinden*, or stories of unusual contemporary personalities—eccentrics—that became extremely fashionable.

The pioneer in this genre was Ban Kōkei (1733–1806), author of *Kinsei kijinden* [Lives of Contemporary Eccentrics] (1790). This volume not only includes Confucian scholars, painters, and other outstanding figures; also included are portraits of a poor old street seller of tea leaves and nameless geishas. In its breadth of human interest and in its democratic selection of biographical subjects unprejudiced by social class or status, it would certainly come as a refreshing surprise even to foreign readers. Unfortunately, these stories are not only unknown abroad, they are not much appreciated even by scholars of literature or historians in Japan, who apparently still think of the Tokugawa period primarily in terms of the closed oppressiveness of the “feudal” framework.

Recent trends in the biography genre show that the fascination with eccentric personalities of the *kijinden* tradition, far from fading away, has even been revitalized. Numerous biographies have come out depicting the spectacular life of the once-exiled biologist/ecologist Minakata Kumagusu (1867–1941). Shirasaki Hideo (b. 1920) has written a vivid account (1971) of the life of Kitaōji Rosanjin (1883–1959), a versatile artist well known abroad for his achievements as a potter, calligrapher, and chef. Detailed biographical studies have also appeared for such internationally known figures as film directors Ozu Yasujiro, Mizoguchi Kenji, Kurosawa Akira, and Uchida Tomu. (*Saeki Shōichi is a critic and scholar of American literature.*)

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*Continued from page 3*

have a mitigating impact in the short-term, but such an approach risks mortgaging the future. Based on recent experience, it seems that a more flexible, market-oriented, hybrid paradigm incorporating the best practices of Japan and other industrialized nations offers a brighter future. Reenergizing Japan requires nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit, and that cannot be done in an economy burdened by red tape and rigid employment practices.

Educational institutions, too, can play a supportive role, by training students to be both informed citizens and skilled workers. This does not mean that universities need to become vocational institutions, but they should be better at preparing students for the IT revolution and corporate demand for skilled recruits. Computer literacy,

improved foreign-language skills and far more extensive development of internship and study-abroad programs are achievable goals that will enable universities to forge better partnerships with business and better meet student interests. More than ever, universities need to produce graduates who can take initiative, shoulder risks, and bring fresh perspectives and critical thinking skills to the workplace.

Even though Japan is ailing, if the transition is well managed and elicits appropriate responses from business, government, and educational institutions, the day of reckoning may prove to be a rejuvenating turning point. (*Ōsawa Machiko is professor of Economics at Japan Women’s University; Jeff Kingston is associate dean of Temple University, Japan.*)



## Books on Japan in the Philippines

Lydia N. Yu-Jose

The major bookstores in the Philippines offer an array of books on Japan in the fields of history, economy, industry, society, culture, politics, religion, psychology, and other fields. There are also pocket-book editions of Japanese fiction in English translation, colorful hobby books on origami, ikebana, bonsai, Japanese cooking, travel, and Japanese conversation, as well as English-Japanese and Japanese-English dictionaries. Most of these books are by neither Japanese nor Filipino authors and are published in third countries. They are expensive because they are imported.

In order to make books about Japan available inexpensively to Filipino readers, the publisher Solidaridad has put out a number of translations in Filipino of works by Japanese and non-Japanese authors, both fiction and non-fiction, including a few titles for children as well.

These translations into the Filipino language are also instrumental in communicating to readers the history, culture, and ideas of Japan. They make these books much more accessible to readers, albeit with the shortcoming that most of the works originally in Japanese have been translated from English versions. Aside from these, there are no books published in the Philippines that are about Japan alone. Almost all the books in Filipino that touch on Japan deal with the Japanese occupation of the Philippines or relations between the two countries.

This narrow range of subject matter may be attributed to lack of encouragement from publishers, which tend to be much more interested in Filipiniana. Consequently, it is only in the areas of Philippine-Japan relations and the Japanese occupation of the Philippines that Filipino scholars feel they can make a meaningful contribution and find better chances of being published.

Following the pioneering work in Philippine-Japan relations by Eufonio Alip with *Philippine-Japanese Relations* (Manila: Alip and Sons, Inc., 1959), recent publications in this field include Josefa Saniel, *Japan and the Philippines, 1868-1898* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1969); Aurelio B. Calderon, *The Turmoil of Change in Philippine-Japan Relations, 1565-1945* (Manila: De La Salle University, 1976); Takushi Ohno, *War Reparations and Peace Settlement: Philippines-Japan Relations, 1945-1956* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1986); and Lydia N. Yu-Jose, *Japan Views the Philippines, 1900-1944* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992).

All these titles were once available at major bookstores but have since gone out of print. It will be noted that the interval of their publication is six to ten years. By happy coincidence, 1998 is the centennial of the founding of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, and a commemorative volume on the one-hundred years of Philippine foreign relations is planned, a chapter of which will be devoted to a concise history of a century of Philippine-Japan relations. Unless the Foreign Service Institute,

which is to publish the volume, changes its policy, this book will not be for sale. Only limited copies will be printed, and they will be donated to libraries and other institutions.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of works were published privately by their authors. *The Second Invasion: Japan in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Karrel, Inc., 1989), by Renato Constantino, and *A Preliminary Study of Japanese-Filipino Joint Ventures* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978), by Mamoru Tsuda, reveal the authors' focus on Japan's postwar economic expansion. While privately published, these works were widely distributed and easily available at major bookstores for some time but are recently more difficult to locate.

*RP-Japan Relations and ADB: In Search of a New Horizon* (Manila: National Book Store, 1986) is a small book, not privately published, but a collection of economic news items from a local newspaper, *Business Day*, that focuses on economic relations. In the last couple of years, two anthologies on Philippine-Japan relations have appeared: *Towards a Shared Future Through Mutual Understanding* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1996) puts together the proceedings of an international conference on Philippine-Japan relations; *Image and Reality: Philippine-Japan Relations Towards the 21st Century* (Quezon City: Institute of International Legal Studies, University of the Philippines Law Center, 1997) is an anthology of articles and papers on such topics as ODA, Japanese investments, prewar Japanese in Davao, technology transfer, and Japanese drama and animation/cartoons. For some reason, however, these anthologies are not widely distributed; they can be obtained only from the publishers.

A number of individuals have put out personal accounts of Philippine-Japan relations under the auspices of the associations with which they are affiliated, which publish and distribute their works. Leocadio de Asis, a scholar in Japan during World War II who is now active in several Philippines-Japan organizations, is one of these. Two of his titles published in the Philippines are *Bridges of Friendship: The ASCOJA-JASCAA Story* (Manila: Philippine Federation of Japan Alumni, 1991), and *The Thread of Fate: A Personal Story in Philippine-Japanese Relations* (Manila: The Philippine Foundation of Japan Alumni, 1986).

Another Filipino who has recorded his personal account is Jose S. Laurel III, former ambassador of the Philippines to Japan and a son of the former president of the Philippines under the Japanese. *Seeds of Friendship* (Manila: The Philippines-Japan Friendship Foundation, Inc., 1997) is a collection of his selected speeches. The former ambassador follows the tradition inaugurated by his father of documenting his activities and publishing his ideas and autobiography. At present, the Laurel family is busy sorting out papers and publishing selected letters and memorabilia of the former president.

Still another individual who has contributed to the body of personal literature on Philippine-Japan relations is Ōsawa Kiyoshi. A Japanese who has lived in the

*Continued on page 21*



## Coming to Terms with the War

Koyama Tetsurō

*Haisengo ron* [The Post-surrender Period] (Kōdansha, 1997; see *Japanese Book News*, No. 21, p. 11), a work of literary critique by Katō Norihiro, has gone through eight printings since its publication in the summer of 1997, selling 28,000 copies. The success of this book, a reexamination of the fundamental elements of the postwar Japanese mind-set, came as a surprise even to the publisher, as books of this genre have not been big sellers in recent years. In June 1998 it also won the Itō Sei Literary Award in the division of criticism.

The book probes the completely opposite attitudes evinced by Japanese toward the war. On one side is the public apology expressed by Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro for the “acts of aggression” committed by Japan during World War II. On the other is the comment of another prominent politician to the effect that he considered the massacre carried out by Japanese troops in Nanjing a “fabrication.” So split is the Japanese social personality that it cannot even apologize properly.

Perhaps this split can be explained by the paradoxical genesis of Japan’s constitution, a charter renouncing the use of force for the resolution of international disputes, which the country was forced to adopt under occupation by U.S. forces. Reformist politicians have reasoned that it matters little that the constitution was essentially thrust upon Japan; they stress it committed the nation to peace. The conservatives, who do not face the fact that Japan invaded other countries rather than fighting for a just cause, demand that the postwar constitution be replaced with a

new one, drafted and adopted by Japanese themselves. The conservatives cannot come to terms with the twenty million people throughout Asia who died as a result of the war, and the reformists find it difficult to mourn the three million Japanese who also perished.

Under these conditions, one wonders if the countries where Japan inflicted heavy damage during the war will ever be able to take seriously any apology it might make. In *Haisengo ron*, Katō urges that the people of Japan, who were beaten in an “unjust” war, must become aware of the distortions in their national attitudes rather than ignoring them. He also argues that Japanese should be able to “sincerely mourn, without politicization, their fellow country-men, sent to the battlefields of an illicit war.” Admitting that they were forced to fight an unjust war can pave the way for mourning other Asians who died and to a sincere expression of remorse.

Novelist Ōoka Shōhei (1909–88), author of *Reite senki*, a semidocumentary account of the battle of Leyte memorializing his fellow soldiers killed there, reminded readers that the people of the Philippines suffered more than Japanese. Katō believes that only when Japanese can feel sincere grief for all those who gave up their lives because of the war, both Japanese and people of other countries, will they be able to play a more active role in their own history. *Haisengo ron* was lauded by people who say it identified for them the niggling something that had disturbed them about postwar Japan. (*Koyama Tetsurō is editor, Cultural News Section, Kyodo News.*)

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## Kanji Characters Going Global

Nishigaki Tōru

Japanese is written using phonetic symbols as well as ideograms, making it quite complex in terms of orthography. An extremely large number of kanji ideograms are in use today, and there are estimated to be between 50,000 and 60,000 in all. Once modern civilization began to develop in East Asia in the nineteenth century, Chinese characters (in Japan called kanji) came in for a lot of criticism. There were strong movements in both Japan and China for their abolition. It was believed that the use of a small number of phonetic symbols would help greatly to improve the reading and writing abilities of the general public. These voices rose even louder around the time computers began to be introduced. Inputting kanji using a computer was difficult until the 1970s.

Today the technology of inputting and processing kanji by computer has become well established, and their iconographical usefulness is well recognized. Our computer screens are covered with icons, pictorial symbols representing specific meaning. Kanji characters are far more elaborate pictorial symbols and can represent complicated and diverse concepts.

In writing Japanese, kanji characters are inserted among phonetic *kana* and function as the key words of the sentences. By glancing across a page, picking out only the kanji ideographs, you can get a rough idea of the content

of the text. It may take time to write kanji, but for those who can read characters quickly, their use is an efficient means of communication. After all, the volume of words we read is usually far greater than the amount that we write.

Fortunately, universal character codes are being created that enable kanji to be used by computers around the world. ISO/IEC 10646-1, which became the international standard in 1993, contains nearly 40,000 characters from different languages, based on 16-bit code, generally known as Unicode. More than 20,000 kanji characters are included, and while some say this is not enough, many believe that the number is adequate for ordinary international exchange. It is certainly a commendable first step.

Since ancient times, Chinese ideograms were common codes for communication among people from various parts of China who spoke dialects so disparate that they could not communicate verbally. Because of their iconographical functions, Chinese ideograms could serve as common codes throughout the world. It is quite exciting, in fact, to imagine sentences consisting of both Chinese ideograms and English words finding their way onto the world-straddling Internet. (*Nishigaki Tōru is professor at the University of Tokyo.*)

## New Titles

### THOUGHT

*Nihon tashinkyō no fūdo* [The Milieu of Japanese Polytheism]. Kubota Nobuhiro. PHP Kenkyūsho. 1997. 172 × 105 mm. 236 pp. ¥657. ISBN 4-569-55672-8.

What is “god” to you? What is your religion? Many Japanese are at a loss to answer when people of other countries ask such questions. The countryside is dotted with Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples, and other religious facilities and buildings. There is a wealth of religions, religious sects, and objects of worship, and most people tend to place their faith in more than one religious tradition. Compared with followers of a monotheistic faith, therefore, it is extremely difficult for many Japanese to objectively and articulately describe the religious life of their country.



Cover design: Ashizawa Taii

Written by a scholar of religion who has done fieldwork not only in the holy places of various religions throughout Japan but on the home ground of world religions including Christianity and Islam, the present book deals with the fundamental characteristics of Japan's polytheistic patterns of belief.

Japanese have always sought to harmonize themselves with nature and internalize it, so for them, says author Kubota, religion and life are seen in essentially animistic terms. He demonstrates this point through comparison with various forms of re-

ligious belief in other countries. The book is a compact guide to understanding the spirituality and behavioral principles of Japanese from the viewpoint of religion.

### HISTORY

*Ajia kaijin no shisō to kōdō* [The Thought and Behavior of Asia's Maritime Peoples]. Shimizu Hajime. NTT Shuppan. 1997. 188 × 126 mm. 302 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-87188-528-3. Folklorist Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962) was known for his observation that “Japanese have always lived with their backs to the sea.” The tendency to view Japan as a closed, isolated agrarian society, as exemplified by this remark, has long dominated understandings of this country. One of a number of recent studies rebutting this traditional view, this book looks at “Japanese history from the perspective of the sea.”



Cover design: Katō Kōtarō Design Office

Economic development and interdependence has rapidly advanced in the East Asian maritime region in recent decades, but in fact extensive trade networks have existed there since ancient times, the countries along the seas are far enough apart to maintain their disparate local values as well as close enough to encourage interchange.

Shimizu examines the history of the “maritime people” (*kaijin*) who lived in northwestern Kyushu Island, a key point in the network linking Japan, Korea, China, and Southeast Asia. This perspective on the way of life by the *kaijin*, whose affinities

were closer to the maritime realm that extended between the boundary lines of states than to one particular state, is full of insights regarding the upsurge of regional exchange in this borderless age.

*Bakufu tenmongata goyō Inō soku-ryōtai makari tōru* [The Trail of Shogunal Official Inō Tadataka's Surveying Team]. Watanabe Ichirō. NTT Shuppan. 1997. 205 × 152 mm. 319 pp. ¥3,800. ISBN 4-87188-499-6. Inō Tadataka (1745–1818) was a geographer and surveyor for the Tokugawa government during the period of Japan's seclusion from the West (which lasted from the early seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century). He was the first to make accurate maps of Japan based on actual coastal surveys, walking about 44,000 kilometers in the process. His survey started when he was 55. His initial purpose was to measure a distance of one degree latitude.

Later he planned to survey Ezo (now Hokkaido), but found he could not survey various parts of the country without shogunal permission. He made a total of ten journeys for the purpose of geographical surveys, and the first half of them, for compiling data to make maps of the coast, were initially carried out by Inō on his own expense. Later, impressed by his dedication to the task, the shogunate authorized and granted subsidies for his work. The surveys from the fifth onward gradually developed into a national project, culminating in the surveying of the entire country. After devoting seventeen years to the project, Inō produced a total of 440 maps, large and small.



Cover design: Suzuki Yasuhiko

It is not known what the real motive of the shogunate was ordering Inō to survey the coastline of Japan. His maps were so accurate that when Philipp Siebold (1796–1866), pioneer Japanologist in Europe, tried to smuggle them out of the country, he was expelled from Japan in the attempt.

The present book faithfully traces the survey journeys he made, citing his meticulously kept diary and drawing upon related records left in the former post towns and villages through which his party passed.

***Doitsu bunka no ishoku kiban* [The Foundations of the Adoption of German Culture].** Morikawa Jun. Yūshōdō Shuppan. 1997. 216 × 151 mm. 348 pp. ¥4,800. ISBN 4-8419-0235-X.

Japan's Meiji regime (1868–1912), which embarked upon a national program of modernization in the mid-nineteenth century, at first looked to France and Britain as models, but later made Germany its mentor. This book is aimed to satisfy the curiosity of those who know about this shift but have never learned how and when it occurred.



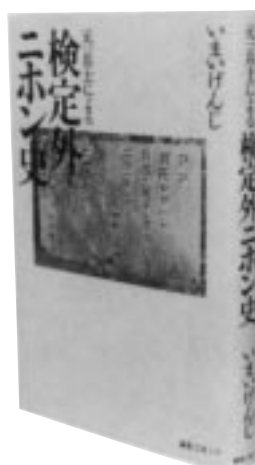
According to the author, Japan's inclination toward Germany began after the Political Crisis of 1881 through which Itō Hirobumi and others expelled advocates of people's rights movement from the government and began to work toward the establishment of a constitutional system. After the shift in government leadership, Germany was chosen as a guide for modernization, and the number of people sent to Germany to study increased rapidly. The scholarship and technology (*wissenschaft*) that had developed in the German

historical milieu soon became the core of establishment learning.

Based on careful documentary study, this book, by a cultural historian, looks back over the various stages starting at the end of the Edo period (1603–1867) that eventually led to the dominance of German *wissenschaft* in Japan. The book is unusual for its wealth of empirical analysis (especially in Chapter 2) of government leaders' personal connections with Germany, including accounts of Germans engineers and other specialists employed by the government (*oyatoi gaijin*) and Japanese who went to study in Germany.

***Moto ichi heishi ni yoru kenteigai Nihon-shi* [An Unauthorized Japanese History by a Former Soldier].** Imai Genji. Henshū Kōbō Noa. 1997. 188 × 127 mm. 274 pp. ¥1,600. Some people have called for revision of the school textbooks of Japanese history, claiming that the “comfort women” during the war were not forcibly installed to provide sexual services to Japanese soldiers but did so voluntarily as a means of earning money, and that the number of people killed during the “Nanjing massacre” was exaggerated. Imai, author of the present book, attacks this recent revisionism, calling it an attempt to distort historical facts. He says he wrote this book because he thought it his responsibility to convey the facts of the past to younger generations.

Born in 1912, Imai has written many books, consistently presenting the viewpoint of ordinary people. In this book, too, he portrays the history of Japan especially from the time of the wars with China (1894–95) and Russia (1904–05) onward, focusing



Cover design: Morimoto Yoshinari

on such topics as the state, the emperor system, and war and peace—topics that the Ministry of Education, which authorizes school textbooks, is generally reluctant to deal with.

According to the author, the path best suited to Japan is to move away from the nuclear umbrella of the United States and fulfillment of the ideal articulated in the Constitution's Article 9, which renounces war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. He is a consistent opponent of war and a pacifist.

His firsthand recollections vividly convey the realities of wartime Japan.

***Rekishi to shinjitsu: Ima Nihon no rekishi o kangaeru* [History and Truth: Reconsidering the History of Japan Today].** Nakamura Masanori et al. Chikuma Shobō. 1997. 193 × 134 mm. 250 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-480-85755-9.

Since the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and fall of socialist regimes throughout Eastern Europe, movements for national and state identity have been vigorous throughout the world. Japan is no exception. Augmented by wavering confidence in the country's status as an economic power following the bursting of the economic bubble, nationalistic tendencies seem to be growing.



Cover design: Image Plant

Often pointed to as indicative of these tendencies is the campaign for revision of the content of history textbooks launched by the Jiyū Shugi Shikan Kenkyūkai (Society for a Liberalist View of History), headed by a University of Tokyo professor. This group considers the modern and contemporary history being taught in the schools a “masochist view of history”



(i.e., excessively condemning Japan's actions in Asia during the war years), and calls for a reformulation of history.

The present book is a collection of essays written by ten historians and journalists opposing the above society's campaign. They discuss the pivotal issues in the debate including the "comfort women," the Nanjing massacre, the meaning of the fifteen-year war (including the Pacific War), and Japan's war responsibility.

The book expresses the strong desire of the authors to seek a better Japanese future through critical reexamination of the way the history of the country has been written since before the war.

***Shiba Ryōtarō no fūkei: (1) Jikū no tabibito Shiba Ryōtarō*** [The World of Shiba Ryōtarō: (1) Shiba as a Traveler in Time and Space]. NHK "Kaidō o Yuku" Project Team. Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai. 1997. 216 × 151 mm. 206 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-14-080336-3.



Cover design: Kanie Seiji

A leading postwar writer of historical fiction and critic of civilization, Shiba Ryōtarō (1923–96) exerted tremendous influence among both intellectuals and the general reading public. An extended "Shiba boom" has ensued in the press and in the publishing world since his death. *Shiba Ryōtarō no fūkei* is a TV program introducing the TV series "Kaidō o yuku" [Traveling the Old Highways] based on Shiba's well-known travel column of the same name.

Of all the works of Shiba's prolific career of writing, the "Kaidō o yuku" series, published in a weekly magazine for twenty-five years from 1971

to 1996—two-thirds of his entire writing career—can be considered one of his most important. He visited a total of seventy-two "old highways," portraying the people and the cultural and historical environment of towns along these highways.

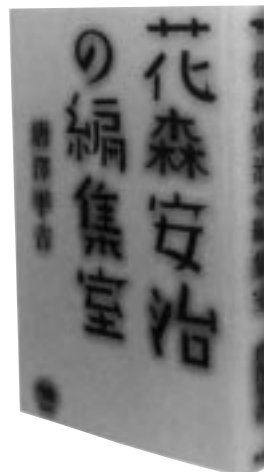
The theme that underlay Shiba's work was his endless pursuit of why Japan had come to be the way it was and of the true identity of Japanese. The television program shows how he approached those themes as he traveled around the country.

## BIOGRAPHY

***Hanamori Yasuji no henshūshitsu*** [Hanamori Yasuji's Editorial Office]. Karasawa Heikichi. Shōbunsha. 1997. 192 × 131 mm. 270 pp. ¥2,100. ISBN 4-7949-6322-X.

Of Japanese magazines, the household magazine *Kurashi no techō*, which was inaugurated in 1948 and is still being published, is distinguished for its policy of refusing advertisements in order to maintain freedom of expression, as well as for its consumer-orientation as shown by its performance of tests of consumer products and publication of the results.

Hanamori Yasuji served as editor-in-chief of this magazine for thirty years from its inauguration until immediately before he died at the age of sixty-six. Counted as one of the three greatest magazine journalists in Japan, he was a man of great charisma about whom many fascinating anecdotes are told. He was an "artisan" by nature, talented in all aspects of editorial work, including investigative



Cover design: Hirano Kōga

reporting, photographing, writing, and cover artwork. He had the sensitivity and insight to know what readers wanted and was responsible for increasing the magazine's circulation to more than 900,000.

The author of this biography was trained as an editor under the temperamental Hanamori in the last six years of his boss's life. The book realistically describes the extraordinary editorial skills of a man known for his tenacity and free spirit.

***Monogatrareru "jinsei": Jibunshi o kaku to iu koto*** ["Life Stories" Being Told: Writing the History of One's Own Life]. Kobayashi Tazuko. Gakuyō Shobō. 1997. 246 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 4-313-47011-5.

The term *jibunshi*, or "history of one's own life," coined by historian Irokawa Daikichi, has now become well established. As distinct from autobiographies of great figures or well-known personalities, *jibunshi* are accounts of and by ordinary people about their lives, usually published at their own expense.



Cover design: Hishinuma Eiji

This book is a sociological study of how ordinary people began writing personal histories, which has become something of a boom since the 1980s. In addition to analyses of these works and interviews with authors and publishers, it discusses classes taught at the community level on how to write such personal histories, the emergence of a *jibunshi* publishing industry, as well as literary prizes aimed at this particular genre.

A conspicuously large number of *jibunshi* authors are people in their mid-sixties and older, who have ample time and financial resources.



Their motives for writing are mainly retrospection and a desire to transmit what they have experienced to others. In a time when human relations are often cold and impersonal and the pace of social change is intense, Kobayashi believes this genre will continue to flourish.

**Ōsugi Sakae jiyū e no shissō [Ōsugi Sakae (1885–1923): Dash toward Freedom]. Kamata Satoshi.** Iwanami Shoten. 1997. 193 × 132 mm. 506 pp. ¥2,600. ISBN 4-00-022359-3. This is a biography of Ōsugi Sakae, leading anarchist of early twentieth-century Japan. During the “dark years,” when suppression of anti-establishment activism was severest, he put his life on the line for the sake of greater freedom and human rights. His passionate life is reproduced in this book by an author of many non-fiction works dealing with social issues.



Cover design: Hirano Kōga

At the time of the High Treason Incident of 1910, when a number of left-wing activists were arrested and executed in what has been considered a plot by the authorities to destroy the socialist movement, Ōsugi, aged 26, happened to be in jail and thus he escaped execution. The book deals mainly with the thirteen years from the incident to the year 1923 when he and his wife and socialist activist Itō Noe (1895–1923) were tortured to death by military police.

Each time Ōsugi was thrown into jail he is said to have mastered another foreign language, including Esperanto. Anecdotes of his dangerous career continue to circulate about him, including one of how he made a May Day speech in Paris. Through extensive study of documents and careful original investigation, the

book vividly portrays a character inseparable from the making of modern Japan, as well as the people closely related to him.

**Shinjuku Nakamuraya Sōma Kokkō [Sōma Kokkō (1875–1955): Owner of the Shinjuku Nakamuraya]. Usami Shō.** Shūeisha. 1997. 194 × 133 mm. 454 pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 4-08-774289-X. The Nakamuraya bakery has branch stores throughout Japan. Its headquarters building near Shinjuku Station in Tokyo, housing pastry and confectionary shops, cafés, and restaurants, is always packed with customers. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Shinjuku Nakamuraya was known as a salon of artists and intellectuals.

This book traces the glamorous and eventful life of Sōma Ryō (Kokkō), wife of the bakery's founder, Sōma Aizō. The book may be read as the story of a woman of ambition who, born the daughter of a ruined samurai family, achieved success in business, but also as an account of the foreign exiles (like Indian revolutionary Rash Behari Bose and Korean woman activist Pak Suncheon) and intellectuals (such as publisher Iwanami Shigeo and historian Tsuda Sōkichi) who enjoyed her patronage.



Cover design: Tada Susumu

While often lauded as a pioneering and successful career woman, Kokkō also came under attack for her many love affairs and her willing cooperation with the militarist authorities during World War II. Author Usami, taking into full account Kokkō's limited understanding of the world and the historical situation, realistically portrays her as a woman who embodied the liberal spirit of the “Taishō democracy” era.

## POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

**Atama no nai kujira: Seijigeki no shinjitsu [Whale Without a Head: The Truth Behind the Political Drama]. Tahara Sōichirō.** Asahi Shimbunsha. 1997. 193 × 131 mm. 198 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-02-257065-2. Japanese politics has been in turmoil, and changes of administration have been frequent since the Liberal Democratic Party lost its four-decade grip over power following the passage of a no-confidence motion against the Miyazawa Kiichi cabinet in June 1993.



Cover design: Kanda Norikazu

Tahara (b. 1934), journalist and author of this book, is reputed for exercising an influence on Japanese politics far beyond that of most journalists. Some say the turmoil began when prime minister Miyazawa promised, on Tahara's television program, that he would deliver on the issue of administrative reform. For the past four years since the fall of the Miyazawa cabinet resulting from failure to fulfill this promise, Tahara has been closely watching the political situation ever since.

Tahara is known for the penetrating questions with which he confronts politicians and other influential figures in his interviews. It took him two years to write this book, which seeks to clarify the facts surrounding the frequently changing political situation. Particularly adroit are his questions addressed to several informed sources and his organization of their testimonies in the attempt to reveal the truth about the thinking and actions of former prime minister

Hosokawa Morihiro, Ozawa Ichirō, and other main actors on the political stage.

The “whale without a head” refers to the overgrown and leaderless Japanese body politic that now swims along without any guiding principles. The book also offers a view of the future prospects of Japanese politics.

***Keizaigaku wa dare no tame ni aru no ka* [Economics for Whom?].**

**Uchihashi Katsuto, ed.** Iwanami Shoten. 1997. 182 × 128 mm. 274 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-00-000648-7.

There is a strong tendency in Japanese society to see market deregulation as a kind of cure-all without seriously considering its actual content and likely consequences. The actual deregulation programs, which have gradually begun to be implemented, however, fill Uchihashi, an economic critic and close observer of the Japanese economy for nearly forty years, with a strong sense of crisis. The present volume is a collection of his dialogues with nine leading economists.



Cover design: Iwanami Shoten

Uchihashi first tries to break down the preconceived image that anyone who questions deregulation must be a conservative clinging to vested interests. He stresses the necessity to closely examine the targets of deregulation to determine whether they will really work for the public benefit.

The book criticizes the widespread belief in the principle of market competition and emphasizes the importance of the public interest. From this basic position, it deals with such questions as “What is deregulation for?” and “For whom does economics

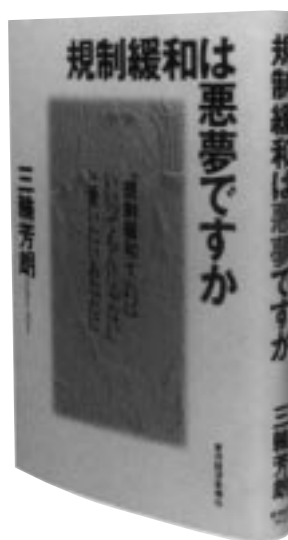
function?” in connection with specific topics such as globalism, motorization, agriculture, and the revision of the Large-scale Retail Store Law.”

***Kisei kanwa wa akumu desu ka* [Is Deregulation Really a Nightmare?].**

**Miwa Yoshirō.** Tōyō Keizai Shimpōsha. 1997. 193 × 131 mm. 300 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-492-39262-9.

This book aims to persuade those who vaguely doubt the validity of deregulation into accepting it. Skeptics’ doubts derive mainly from the traditional views of the Japanese economy and market, their still-unshaken trust in the government, and their image of big corporations as “bad” and small businesses as “weak,” convictions which the author believes impede the progress of deregulation and administrative reform.

Miwa points out that those opposed to deregulation often follow conventional views that are replete with misunderstandings and express opinions that inadvertently conform with those who support existing regulations in order to maintain their vested interests. He specifically discusses how the people, or the consumer, do not really enjoy the “right to know.”



Cover design: Kudō Hisashi

Together with Uchihashi’s book introduced above, which takes the opposing position, this book outlines the pros and cons of the debate over deregulation in Japan.

The author is professor of modern economics at the University of Tokyo. He is also a member of the deregulation subcommittee of the Administrative Reform Committee.

***Muen seisei: Nihon shihonshugi zankokushi* [Voice of a Lone Laborer: The Cruel History of Japanese Capitalism].** Hirai Shōji. Fujiwara Shoten. 1997. 188 × 128 mm. 380 pp. ¥3,000. ISBN 4-89434-065-8.

A labor activist (b. 1927) who has lived for nearly three decades in the Kamagasaki area in Osaka portrays the realities at the lower end of the working class in Japan’s capitalist society. The author adds to his personal experience as a day laborer in harbor and other construction works extensive reading of historical documents and other materials, bringing into clear relief the distortions in the Japanese economy, which would not prosper without a fluid supply of day laborers.



Hirai’s story before he settled down to live in a tiny three-mat room of a cheap lodging house in Kamagasaki—the break-up of his family when he was a little boy, his apprenticeship, his days in the navy as a young man when his main job was packing gunpowder into torpedoes and bombshells, black market trading after the war’s end, participation in the labor movement as a Japan Communist Party member, dismissal from the party—offers an intriguing behind-the-scenes record of Japanese history during and after the war.

Written in a plain, colloquial style, the book is compiled in such a way as to provide easy access to its numerous primary documents, such as pamphlets the author kept and photographs he took himself.

***Nō ga kowareru: Warera no kokoro mo mata* [Our Broken Farms, Our Broken Hearts]. Hashimoto Katsuhiko.** Kōdansha. 1997. 193 × 130 mm. 395 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-06-207112-6. In 1993, when alarm spread throughout Japan as a result of a severe shortfall in the rice harvest caused by unexpected cold weather, the crisis was dismissed by politicians and bureaucrats as “a once-in-100-years’ cold spell.” The government’s stand struck the author as showing its failure to face its responsibility for postwar agricultural policy.

Visiting farming villages throughout the country to find out what had led to the shortage, he became convinced that the seriousness of the situation was the result of structural problems in Japanese agriculture as a whole.



Cover design: Torao Takashi

The book surveys the history of postwar agricultural administration, which is considered to be the source of the present structural problems. Focusing on three themes—rice, cooperative work under organized management, and migrant farmers—it demonstrates how governmental patch-up measures undermined the strength of Japanese agriculture.

While presenting penetrating views of the current state of Japanese agriculture, the book does not confine its scope only to agricultural issues. As the subtitle suggests, the author’s other message is that, for Japanese, whose ethics and values were determined by the ethos of the rural community, the decay of rural communities caused by the collapse of agriculture has resulted in a serious spiritual loss as well.

## SOCIETY

***Ajia-kei Amerikajin* [Asian Americans]. Murakami Yumiko.** Chūō Kōron Sha. 1997. 173 × 109 mm. 268 pp. ¥740. ISBN 4-12-101368-9. Asian Americans have been called the “invisible minority” in America’s multiracial melting pot. Their presence, however, has rapidly grown in the last two decades, to a population now a little over ten million, and the increase seems unlikely to slacken.

The social status and living standards, not to mention ethnic background, of Asian Americans vary widely, however, ranging from elite third-generation Japanese lawyers to refugees from Southeast Asia. While some call for solidarity among all Asian Americans, complex stresses and strains are inevitable due to ethnic differences and generational gaps.



This book provides an overview of these complexities, introducing the lives and activities not only of prominent figures who draw attention in the media but also ordinary citizens. Like the author’s previous work, *Ierō feisu* —*Hariuddo eiga ni miru Ajia-jin no shōzō* [Yellow Faces: Asians Portrayed in Hollywood Films] (*Japanese Book News*, No. 5, p. 14), this book convincingly addresses the issues of encounter between East and West.

***Kōgai no tanjō to shi* [The Birth and Death of the Suburbs]. Oda Mitsuo.** Seikyūsha. 1997. 193 × 131 mm. 252 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-7872-3142-1. The author Oda, who witnessed firsthand the collapse of the rural village where he was born and raised, analyzes postwar Japanese society with “the suburbs” as his keyword. He of-



Cover design: Suzuki Takashi and Takigami Asako

fers a forecast of what Japan, where the elderly population is increasing and the birthrate is falling, will be like in the future.

It was in the 1970s that the spread of suburban areas became established in Japan following in the footsteps of the United States. Oda defines the suburbs as the residential areas developed on the wave of rapid economic growth in the interstices between the cities and rural communities, and as the “mirrors” of the values of the advanced-capitalistic-consumption society. Mainly through contemporary literary works and the development of “roadside businesses” such as fast-food restaurants, he discusses the changes that took place in suburban communities.

The fundamental factors responsible for the birth and expansion of the suburbs were the transformation of the industrial structure from agriculture to manufacturing, population shift into urban areas and overall population increase. Now that these trends have slackened, the myth about land (the price keeps rising) that sustained suburbanization has collapsed, once-flourishing roadside businesses are in decline, and the prospects for the suburbs are gloomy.

Quotations of passages from numerous works of recent fiction by such authors as Murakami Ryū and Yamada Eimi as well as the analysis of extensive statistical data are supplied to give depth to the author’s arguments.



***Muteki no handikyappu: Shōgaisha ga “puroresurā” ni natta hi*** [Invisible Disability: When Men with Physical Disability Became Professional Wrestlers]. Kitajima Yuki-nori. Bungei Shunjū. 1997. 194 × 133 mm. 318 pp. ¥1,524. ISBN 4-16-353630-2.

The record of a volunteer worker's seven years beginning in 1991 when he formed a special club and began helping people with physical disabilities train for professional wrestling and compete among themselves in publically held fights makes compelling non-fiction.

Kitajima began doing volunteer work among people with physical disabilities at the age of eighteen, but soon became concerned about the closed nature of the volunteer society around him and the tendency to portray the disabled as “pure, beautiful, and diligent.” If they could do something in the presence of others to express themselves, he thought it might help to promote better public understanding, but he was then disappointed to find that such performances seemed predestined to be evaluated only with good will and kindness.



Cover design: Sakata Masanori

Soon afterward, he hit upon the idea of starting a special pro wrestling club. “That disabled people should expose their bodies and risk their lives in a match might shock normal people out of their stereotyped images,” he thought.

The club encountered various setbacks and failures, but gradually attracted more fans, causing a sensation in the mass media and in the world of volunteers and supporters of the disabled.

## EDUCATION

***Daigaku “zōge no tō” no kyojō to jitsuzō*** [The Truth and Falacies of the University's Ivory Tower]. Fujii Kayo. Maruzen Co. 1997. 188 × 128 mm. 262 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-621-06066-X.

It was once believed that universities were institutions for the training of the elite and that those within the ivory tower were aloof from the world and deserving of high respect. Author Fujii, a scholar of comparative culture, has studied the historical background of this belief, drawing upon documents past and present and of both East and West to demonstrate that the sanctity of scholarship has been an illusion from a long, long time ago.



Cover design: Yakushiji Chikahiko

The university in Japan today is sometimes called the “paradise of fools.” It suffers from various problems caused by institutional fatigue, including the lowered standards of scholarly achievement among students as the result of the switch to mass education after the end of World War II. The tendency to load faculty members with teaching duties, limiting their time for original research, is another issue.

Japan, like many countries, faces the urgent need for reform in higher education. Curriculums are being renewed, and competitiveness and advancement by merit are being promoted through such measures as student assessments of their instructors and the behest to “publish or perish.” It was proposed in 1995 that university professors be appointed on

contracts for a limited number of years, but so far only a few universities have adopted such a practice.

Fujii asserts that what is really needed is a change in the thinking of university faculty themselves. They are unlikely to relinquish the comfortable positions in life-long employment they enjoy, says the author, until their institutions face real management crises—like those being confronted in the corporate world today—when the population aged eighteen or younger drops off sharply, a demographic reality expected to hit universities in the not-so-distant future.

***Donna ningen ga kono jidai o ikinuku ka*** [What Kind of People Will Survive This Age?]. Kumon Takeshi. Kawade Shobō Shinsha. 1997. 193 × 130 mm. 286 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-309-90176-X.

The individual-learning system known as the “Kumon method” is well-established in Japan and somewhat known overseas. Children studying by this method are given assignments according to their current level of learning in order to strengthen their sense of achievement and confidence and at the same time, cultivate in them self-reliance. The author, son of the late Kumon Tōru, who developed this method, the backbone of one of the most successful remedial study businesses in Japan, was the first student to study according to Kumon method. He succeeded his father as president of the Kumon Institute of Education, and devoted himself to expanding the business.



Cover design: Tanimura Akihiko



Today, there are 1,700,000 students in Japan and 780,000 overseas using the method to complement their regular school studies.

This book is a collection of dialogues conducted between Kumon Takeshi and eighteen Japanese intellectuals, including philosopher Ume-hara Takeshi, former minister of education Nagai Michio, and poet and writer Tsujii Takashi. Through their discussions, focusing on the topic of what today's children need to survive in today's times, Kumon not only drew out his conversants' insights on education, but on the future of civilization, focusing on the creativity, adaptability and other fundamental strengths of humanity.

Regrettably, Kumon Takeshi died in January 1997 at the age of 50, before he was able to put to use the wisdom acquired from these dialogues.

***Isai no gakusha sanmyaku: Daigaku bunka shigaku shiron*** [Outstanding Scholars: A History of University Culture]. Satō Yoshimaru. Fuyō Shobō Shuppan. 1997. 216 × 151 mm. 194 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 4-8295-0198-7. Author Satō Yoshimaru, lecturer at the Waseda University faculty of politics and economics is an advocate of the "history of university culture" (*daigaku bunka shigaku*), even though it is not an established scholarly field like history of higher education or history of universities. Satō seeks to further the study of university history from a broad perspective embracing disciplines such as the histories of education, scholarship, thought, politics, university management, campus life, university sports culture, and academic towns.



This book looks at the history of university culture by focusing on ten prominent scholars who taught at Waseda University, Dōshisha University, and other private institutions of higher learning soon after they were founded during the Meiji era (1868–1912), Japan's formative period as a modern state. It is an academic work probing how these scholars—each extraordinary and unique in his own way—contributed to the development of private university education, how they laid the foundations for scholarship, and how they educated people in their institutions and among the general public through writing and lecturing. Satō is currently involved with the writing of the history of Waseda University.

## ARTS

***Origami no uta*** [Origami Diplomacy]. Tajima Eiji. Shūeisha. 1997. 194 × 135 mm. 287 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-08-783111-6.

After Tajima, a photojournalist, met blind origami (paper folding) artist Kase Saburō in 1977, they organized a "society of origami diplomacy."



Cover design: Fujii Yasuo

Kase (b.1926)'s vision was impaired from childhood, and he became almost completely blind when he was twelve years old. He had discovered that the paper-folding art gave his life meaning, so while earning a living as a professional masseur and serving as officer and advisor for various public-benefit organizations, he devoted himself to origami. In

1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons, he was awarded the Health and Welfare Minister Award for his origami activities.

That year, he visited the United States as an origami ambassador and taught children there how to fold paper into various shapes. Since then, he has been going overseas almost every year, engaging throughout the world in non-governmental diplomacy through paper folding: at an institution for the blind in Cuba, at a refugee village school in Tibet, at a school for the blind in Baghdad, as well as in Romania, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere.

The present book is an account of his overseas journeys with author Tajima, and his encounters with people in various parts of the world. Katō's skill at folding simply square pieces of paper into the fanciful shapes of cranes, foxes, flowers, etc., and his gentle guidance have opened people's hearts wherever he goes. Using photos, Tajima vividly portrays a man who cultivated a spirit strong enough to overwhelm his physical disability through mastery of a creative craft.

***Sōtei, Kikuchi Nobuyoshi no hon*** [The Book of Book Design: Nobuyoshi Kikuchi 1988–1996]. Kikuchi Nobuyoshi. Kōdansha. 1997. 263 × 185 mm. 198 pp. ¥8,800. ISBN 4-06-208661-1.

Any Japanese connoisseur of good books has almost certainly at least one book designed by Kikuchi Nobuyoshi in his or her bookshelves.



Cover design: Kikuchi Nobuyoshi

Kikuchi at first worked for an advertisement firm, and in 1977 established himself as an independent book designer. In the twenty years of his career so far, he has designed approximately 6,000 books, ranging from a privately printed collection of poems printed in one exclusive copy to standard formats for pocket-size paperbacks. He is among the leading book designers in Japan in both quality and quantity.

The present volume, designed by Kikuchi himself, is a deluxe edition introducing his designs for about one thousand books done between 1988 and 1996 in color. Compiled so that the reader can easily trace the development of his design, the book shows his early use of lettering as the main elements of his designs, then extending from lettering to materials, to shapes, and then to colors. His designs are also grouped by author. Also included are essays by seven writers and critics, some of whose works Kikuchi designed.

Carefully reading each book in galley proof, Kikuchi does the design for each one so as to embody its content. This elegantly presented panorama of his work highlights both the talent and individuality of his work.

## LITERATURE

***Furakutaru inritsu ron* [A Study of Fractal Rhythms]. Umemoto Kenzō.** Nishida Shoten. 1997. 194 × 131 mm. 270 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-88866-268-1.



Cover design: Umemoto Kōbō

“Fractal” is a mathematical term, but Umemoto uses it as a metaphor for “poetic appeal,” or “like-patterns.” Expressing his disappointment that people no longer take pleasure in poetry by reading it aloud, Umemoto wrote this book of Japanese poetic rhythms in an attempt to draw attention to “the physical attractions of the Japanese language.”

In any language in the world, famous poets usually wrote rhymed verse. The quality important to poetry is expressed not simply through meaning but also by the sound and rhyme—the “physique”—of poetry. However, there are few “physically” beautiful poems in Japan, either among traditional tanka and haiku or among modern poetry and translations of poetry of other languages. Aspiring to fixed forms of rhymed verse, the author advocates his unique theory of rhythm and discusses the potential of new rhythms, offering advice about how to compose poem of this kind.

***Harumahera momori* [Halmahera Memories]. Ikebe Ryō.** Chūō Kōron Sha. 1997. 197 × 134 mm. 374 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-12-002719-8.



Cover design: Chūō Kōron Sha

Among the many books that deal with the authors' experiences during World War II, the present work is unique in that, while the story revolves around “I,” the author relativizes “I,” treating both “I” and “others” objectively. This, in addition to the light style of writing, makes the book rather humorous instead of masochistic (the tendency of many books in this genre).

Born in Tokyo in 1918, author Ikebe was a handsome and popular actor who appeared in many movies before and after 1945. His light and witty essays are also well received.

Halmahera is the name of an island in eastern Indonesia where Ikebe was stationed as an army officer when Japan surrendered in August 1945. He had been drafted for military service late in the war and as a university graduate, was made an officer. In the book he talks of his experiences on the Chinese front and on Halmahera, where he and his unit were sent in the winter of 1944.

One of the conventions of the imperial Japanese army was the deployment of non-career officers to battlefronts where they were used to “shield” the career officers against bullets. Ikebe, slighted both by his military-academy graduated colleagues and his own subordinates, was no exception. He recounts this and other hardships with a humorous touch, which nevertheless reveals the bureaucratic nature and cruelty of the Japanese army during the war.

***Hasen no marisu* [Shattered Lines of Malice]. Nozawa Hisashi.** Kōdansha. 1997. 193 × 132 mm. 320 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-06-208863-0.

While television exercises enormous power in society today, there is virtually no fiction in Japan that deals with the behind-the-scenes dramas of the world of broadcasting. The present book, a mystery story by a television scriptwriter, is thus of a rare breed that vividly depicts the magic spell of television. The work was



Cover design: Tatsumi Shirō

awarded the 43rd Edogawa Ranpo Prize, one of Japan's most prestigious prizes for mystery writing.

The protagonist is a veteran video editor. Her editing, which she bases on her judgment of what audiences want to see, is sometimes excessive, but the broadcasting company, for which viewer ratings are almighty, cannot complain. One day she receives a phone call from a stranger who calls himself a government official. He hands over to her a video cassette recording evidence of corruption in his government agency. Why is the whistle-blowing tape handed over to a mere editor like her? She is too ambitious to care. And then the inherent dangers of television unfold with vivid reality. The book is not only an excellent mystery story but also can be read as a critique of the mass media.

***Hitodenashi* [Cold-blooded Beast].** Nosaka Akiyuki. Chūō Kōron Sha. 1997. 197 × 134 mm. 282 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-12-002720-1.

The word *hitodenashi* ("cold-blooded beast") is one of the strongest of Japanese words for condemning someone, and the author Nosaka directs the word at himself in this autobiographical novel. He candidly describes the relationship between the family of his real parents and the family that adopted him following his mother's death when he was very young.



Cover design: Chūō Kōron Sha

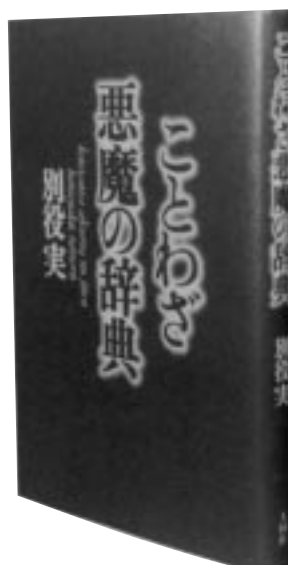
With the advent of the age of television, Nosaka began writing songs, dialogue for comedians, and songs for commercials, and was much sought-after by broadcasters. After he

won the Naoki Prize for his autobiographical story *Hotaru no haka* (1967; translated into English as *A Grave of Fireflies*, 1978), he devoted himself to writing fiction. *Hotaru no haka*, set in a ruined Kobe after the American air raids during World War II, poignantly depicts the anguish of a boy who loses his foster parents in the air raid and then watches his little sister die from starvation.

Actually, his foster mother did not die. In *Hitodenashi*, the author admits he deserted her and returned to his original family. Looking back upon his life revolving around this lie, the author expresses the deep regrets that bring him to call himself a "cold-blooded beast." Similar feelings of remorse are more or less shared by Japanese in general, who became too preoccupied with rebuilding the country and rapid economic growth to address many of the issues related to the war.

***Kotowaza akuma no jiten* [A Devil's Dictionary of Proverbs].** Betsuyaku Minoru. Ōkokusha. 1997. 194 × 133 mm. 222 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-900456-50-0.

This book is a satirization of current social conditions through witty reinterpretation of well-known proverbs. The author's barbs are flung in every direction, but his aim is always true. His target appears to be the Japanese proclivity to seek relief by aligning themselves with others. Betsuyaku, born in 1937, is a playwright, and his experimental "theater of the absurd" is popular among the young. He also is the author of many published



Cover design: Kikuchi Nobuyoshi

books, including children's books and collections of light essays.

Convention seems solid but easily collapses if struck at its sore spot. Betsuyaku, master writer of the absurd, is skilled at hitting the vulnerable spot. Taking advantage of the many homonyms in the Japanese language, he reinterprets well-known old sayings in the context of contemporary folkways, to very humorous effect. The new interpretations carry a sharp—and devilish—sting.

***Manshū hōkai: "Daitōa bungaku" to sakkatachi* [The Collapse of Manchukuo: "Greater East Asia Literature" and Its Authors].** Kawamura Minato. Bungei Shunjū. 1997. 193 × 131 mm. 374 pp. ¥2,381. ISBN 4-16-353200-5.

Under its policy of establishing a Greater East Asia Coprosperity Sphere, imperial Japan invaded China's three northeastern provinces and Inner Mongolia and established a puppet state (Manchukuo) there in 1934. Manchukuo collapsed in August 1945 as Japan surrendered in World War II.



Cover design: Tamura Yoshiya

Author Kawamura, born in 1951, is a literary critic. During a sojourn of several years as teacher of Japanese in South Korea, he came across Japanese works of literature written by unfamiliar authors in the store-room of the library at the university where he was teaching. Realizing he had come upon "Japanese literature" written in the former Japanese colonies, he devoted himself to research on these literary products of Japanese imperialism.



The present book is a critical study of literary works written in Japanese by numerous “Greater East Asian” writers, including local authors in China, Manchuria, Mongolia, Korea, and Taiwan—such as Yi Gwangsu, a Korean writer who was a fervent anti-Japanese activist when young but who later became loyal to the Japanese emperor—as well as Japanese writers active in the former colonies. It traces how these writers, now doomed to oblivion, were at the mercy of their times, and reveals the scars imperial Japan deeply etched in their hearts.

**Minna yume no naka [Everything Is in a Dream]. Kuze Teruhiko.** Bungei Shunjū, 1997. 193 × 133 mm. 190 pp. ¥1,238. ISBN 4-16-353500-4.

As suggested by the subtitle, which is “My Last Song,” echoing the main title of a previous book to which it is a sequel, the essays in this book express the author’s thoughts about various songs of the kind that Japanese would like to hear at the end of their lives. The title of this volume, “Minna yume no naka” [Everything Is in a Dream], recalls a popular song of the 1970s. The author (b. 1935) is a stage producer who also writes fiction.

The songs introduced in the book represent a wide spectrum, from those familiar to most Japanese to some that are nearly forgotten, and include folk songs, melodies from other countries, and militaristic songs that became popular during the war (*gunka*). Despite the variety, they all express the timeless feelings close to Japanese hearts: the pathos and transience of the mundane world and the

fragility of life. Listening to their verses being sung gives Japanese a feeling of inner peace. Even the so-called war songs evoke such feelings, far from simply championing brave exploits and the martial. The author’s restrained, simple writing style is well suited to the theme.

**Nōzan raitsu [Northern Lights]. Hoshino Michio.** Shinchōsha. 1997. 215 × 151 mm. 246 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-10-395603-8.

In the state of Alaska, the aurora is known as Northern Lights. After graduating from a Japanese university, author Hoshino (1952–96) went to the United States to study wildlife management at the University of Alaska.

He remained in Alaska, introducing the grand-scale seasonal migrations of the caribou and lives of the people and wild animals of the world’s northernmost regions to Japan through photographs and writing. His works were highly acclaimed, but in the summer of 1996, while gathering material for a book in Kamchatka, Russia, he was attacked and killed by a bear.



Cover design: Mimura Jun

This book is a collection of his essays and photographs published in a magazine column that went unfinished because of his abrupt death. Featuring stories of two women who were pilots during the frontier days of Alaska, the book tells the stories of various people who dedicated their lives to nature in Alaska, tracing the changes and history of Alaska in the twentieth century when opinion was divided over whether priority should be given to development of its oil re-

sources or preservation of its Arctic wildlife.

The book is written with powerful eloquence of a man of deep insight whose spirit, according to one of the two women, resonates with the pulsations of nature.

**Ōgai no saka [Ōgai’s Hilly Streets]. Mori Mayumi.** Shinchōsha. 1997. 196 × 135 mm. 374 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-10-410002-1.

Numerous studies have been done of Mori Ōgai (1862–1922), a pioneer figure in modern Japanese literature. He was a medical doctor, army bureaucrat, as well as novelist and critic. How his multifaceted career was related to literature has been the subject of great interest to scholars and critics.



Cover design: Shinchōsha

The present book is somewhat different from other studies of Ōgai in that it brings into relief the man in his everyday life. Mori Mayumi, author of this new “must-read book” for understanding the great Meiji writer, is an essayist known for her easily accessible style and the extensive field research upon which she bases her books. She is editor of a local magazine featuring the older sections of Tokyo.

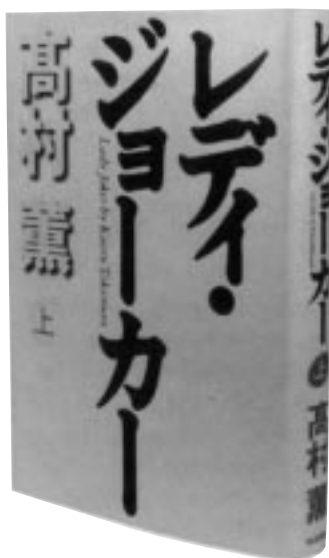
Mori visited each of the residences where Ōgai lived in Tokyo (he changed homes several times from the time his family moved to Tokyo when he was around ten). By assiduously following the footsteps of the people close to him, including family and friends, she sheds new light on the world of Ōgai and vividly portrays the streets of old Tokyo a century ago.



Cover design: Nakajima Kahoru



**Redi Jōkū [Lady Joker]. 2 vols.**  
**Takamura Kaoru.** Mainichi Shim-bunsha Shuppankyoku. 1997. 195 × 134 mm. each. 426 pp.; 444 pp. ¥1,700 each. ISBN 4-620-10579-1; 10580-5. A two-volume crime story that makes absorbing reading to the end of its 900 pages, this novel probes the subconscious of Japanese psychology. The author, who was awarded the Naoki Prize for her *Mākusū no yama* [Marks' Mountain], is reputed for her characterizations of the multilayered relationships between individuals and organizations. *Lady Joker* is her seventh long novel.



Cover design: Tada Kazuhiro

The story begins as a group of horse-racing fans of different ages and lifestyles plot to extort money from a large corporation. The group includes the owner of a small drug-store, a police officer, a banker, and a small-town factory worker; all that they apparently share is a seemingly hopeless future. The crime they plan to commit seems to soothe their sense of the emptiness of life as much as betting on the track. The target of their blackmail is a major beer brewing company.

The company president who is blackmailed, the group of extortionists, and the detectives on their trail form the structure of the story, which weaves into a vivid fabric the problems related to people from outcast communities (*buraku*) and the relationships between a large corporation on the one hand and right-wingers, gangsters, and politicians on the other, issues that reflect the dark side of Japan's corporate structure. These

relations often come to the surface in media-revealed scandals that have recently shaken the country. The story is a powerful one, often making the reader stop and think about the realities that lie behind the "prosperity" Japan built from the ruins of war over the past half a century.

**Tsuki no shizuku [Dew of the Moon].**  
**Asada Jirō.** Bungei Shunjū, 1997. 194 × 132 mm. 318 pp. ¥1,429. ISBN 4-16-317260-2.

This is the latest anthology of short stories by an author at the height of his productivity, and whose recent books have invariably become best-sellers. The seven stories, including the title work, touch on a common theme that might be described as the "dream of love." In most cases, that dream comes in the form of pure, unconditional love.

For example, the title story describes purehearted love that a middle-aged, unmarried poor dockworker experiences toward an ostentatious and affected woman. Another story, "Seiya no shōzō" [Portrait of Sacred Nights] portrays a man who continues to love and accept his wife even though she still harbors lingering feelings for her own first love through twenty years of marriage. "Gin iro no ame" [Silver Rain] and "Pieta" [The Pieta] are of a similar vein.

The stories seem to be trying to say that the ideal of a man's love for a woman is really that which is almost completely selfless. Love that seeks no return is one of the traditional themes of Japanese literature,



Cover design: Kimoto Momoko

and the author re-invokes this timeless sentiment within the context of contemporary culture. His message is apparently that this expression of love is somehow essentially "male."

**Wakaranaku natte kimashita [Doesn't Make Sense Anymore].**  
**Miyazawa Akio.** Shinchōsha. 1997. 190 × 133 mm. 270 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 4-10-397402-8.

This is a collection of witty essays by one of Japan's most prolific playwrights (b. 1956), published mainly in magazines over the last few years, that trip us up with topics we usually pay little attention to. Each section is very short, no longer than six pages, presenting a point unexpectedly but so convincingly that readers find themselves nodding and laughing.



Cover design: Shinchōsha

The title, "Wakaranaku natte kimashita," captures the essence of the essays. Once you start thinking seriously about something about which you give little heed in daily life, your puzzlement gradually deepens, until you ultimately give up, bewailing that "It doesn't make sense anymore." The topics taken up in the book touch on diverse aspects of society, probing the meaning of familiar sayings or such things as why people feel satisfied by seeing cockroaches caught in a trap or want to climb up onto roofs. As one reads, what seems at first obvious becomes puzzling. The essays are written in a light and humorous style, but there is something rather disturbing behind the chuckles that leaves the reader with a feeling of uneasiness.

## Events and Trends

### “Last Shogun” Boom

Among the television programs that enjoy the highest ratings in Japan is NHK's Sunday evening “Taiga” drama series. In the Taiga slot starting in January 1998 is “Tokugawa Yoshinobu,” depicting the first half of the life of the fifteenth and last of the Tokugawa shoguns who ruled Japan from 1603 to 1867. The program has been a great success, partly because of the popularity of the young actor in the leading role.

The “Tokugawa Yoshinobu phenomenon” has spilled over into publishing as well. Since February 1997, when the theme of 1998's Taiga drama was announced, reprint editions and new books dealing with the last shogun and related topics have been coming out in a steady stream that now accounts for over 80 titles.

The story on which the NHK series is based, the late Shiba Ryōtarō's *Saigo no shōgun* [The Last Shogun] (Bungei Shunjū, first hardback edition 1967; pocket edition 1974) is selling well. A new edition, brought out to coincide with the Taiga drama, sold 600,000 copies within six months of July 1997 when it went on sale. Other directly related titles, such as *Tokugawa Yoshinobu* (Nippon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai), NHK's book version of the Taiga drama story, *Tokugawa Yoshinobu* (PHP Kenkyū-sho), *Jūgodai shōgun: Yoshinobu* [Yoshinobu: The Fifteenth Shogun] (PHP Kenkyū-sho), as well as *Tokugawa Yoshinobu* (Chūō Kōron Sha), and *Tokugawa Yoshinobu no subete* [Everything about Tokugawa Yoshinobu] (Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha), have all proved quite popular.

As announced in the last issue of *Japanese Book News*, an English edition of Shiba's *Saigo no shōgun* was published in June this year (Kodansha America), as the first title in a new publication program for translation of Japanese fiction supported by the Japan Foundation. French and Mongol translations of the book are also available.

### Debate on Juvenile Crime Reporting

In July 1997, controversy flared when Shinchōsha's photo weekly *Focus*, published a picture of the boy indicted in Kobe for the murder of a 12-year-old schoolboy and other crimes. The boy was 14 years old at the time of the murder. Since the Juvenile Law in Japan prohibits giving the real names or publishing photographs of minors involved in crimes, most bookstores, station kiosks, convenience stores, and other shops that sold the magazine withheld sales.

Since the beginning of 1998 as well, there have been a number of events calling into question media handling of juvenile crime. The March issue of *Shinchō 45*, Shinchōsha's monthly that went on sale in February, published both the real name and photograph of the 19-year-old youth arrested on suspicion of murder of a kindergarten child in Osaka. The Kobe murder case once again came back into the spotlight when the opinion monthly *Bungei shunjū* published in its February issue seven documents compiled in police interrogations of the boy, despite an order issued by the courts calling for cancellation of the publication as being in violation of the Juvenile Law. Some libraries have withheld the March issue from circulation, but about 70 percent of libraries have not imposed such a constraint.

### The “Beat Takeshi” Effect

On September 6, 1997, at the awards ceremony of the internationally renowned Venice International Film Festival, Kitano (“Beat”) Takeshi flashed the victory sign as he received the grand prix for direction of his film *Hana-bi* [Fireworks].

While Kitano, who has won a reputation as “Japan's Tarantino,” had already earned considerable international recognition for earlier films including *Sono otoko, kyōbō ni tsuki* [Violent Cop] and *Sonatine*, the Venice grand prix brought him back into the spotlight. He and his new film were featured not only in film magazines but in mass-market and women's magazines for general readership.

Shinchōsha put out an extra issue

of its monthly *Shinchō 45* entitled “Komanechi: Beat Takeshi zenkiroku” [The Complete Story of Beat Takeshi] under the editorial direction of Kitano himself. This feature issue drew a broad readership, particularly among women, and sold an estimated 410,000 copies.

Comedian, actor, as well as film director, Kitano is also a prolific author of such titles as *Dakara watashi wa kirawareru* [This Is Why I'm Disliked; Shinchōsha, 1991], *Takeshi-kun: “Hai!”* [“Takeshi!” “Present!”; Ōta Shuppan, 1991], and *Kyōso tanjō* [The Birth of the “Great Teacher”; Ōta Shuppan, 1990]. Apparently the “Venice” effect has been useful, as sales of his latest book, *Watashi wa sekai de kirawareru* [The World Hates Me; Shinchōsha, 1998], have been favorable.

### Mishima Yukio Biography Brouhaha

Twenty-eight years since November 25, 1970 when Mishima Yukio committed suicide by the samurai ritual method of *seppuku*, the novelist is again a hot topic. This spring, the publication of *Mishima Yukio: Tsurugi to kanbeni* [Mishima Yukio: Sword and Scarlet] (Bungei Shunjū), a book that discusses Mishima's much-rumored sexual preferences, stirred immediate controversy.

Author Fukushima Jirō, who says he had a brief sexual relationship with Mishima, records his encounter with the novelist in graphic and vivid detail. Excerpts of the novel were published in the April issue of the literary journal *Bungakukai* (Bungei Shunjū).

Mishima's heirs, however, have reacted strongly to the work, which quotes from letters received by the author from Mishima, filing a lawsuit claiming infringement of copyright and calling for cessation of publication and recall of distributed copies of the book. The plaintiff's claim was upheld in a court decision passed down on March 30.

### Passings: Ishinomori Shōtarō and Kageyama Tamio

Ishinomori Shōtarō, father of the TV series *Kamen Rider*, which sparked the “transformation hero” boom, died

January 28 at the age of 60 after a long battle against illness.

Ishinomori studied under Tezuka Osamu, of *Tetsuwan Atomu* (Astro Boy) fame, made his debut as a manga artist while still a high school student, and produced works in a broad range of genres, including both girls' and boys' manga and science-fiction manga. But he was perhaps best known for his hero story manga that were made into television series: *Cyborg 009*, *Kamen Rider*, and *Secret Corps: Five Rangers*.

In 1986, he changed his penname from Ishimori to Ishinomori and that same year published *Manga Nihon keizai nyūmon* [Introduction to the Japanese Economy in Manga] (Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha), sparking a boom of books on academic subjects and social issues produced in a manga format. He also produced the 48-volume *Manga Nihon no rekishi* [A History of Japan in Manga] (Chūō Kōron Sha, 1989–94).

Winner of the Naoki Prize for his *Tōi umi kara kita Coo* [Coo of the Distant Seas], writer Kageyama Tamio died as a result of a fire in his home in January 1998. Kageyama began his career as a broadcast script

writer, appeared frequently on television, and was known particularly for his profound knowledge of the occult. In the past several years he had made news by launching a protest movement against the gossip and sensationalist photo weekly *Friday* and by his remarks as a loyal follower of the religious group Kōfuku no Kagaku. He was only 50.

### Soccer World Cup Boom

On November 16, 1997, Japanese soccer fans painted the Johor Bahru stadium in Malaysia blue in a crucial game against Iran deciding whether the Japanese national team would qualify for the 1998 World Cup finals in France. Japanese fans, wearing the same uniforms as the team members or blue plastic bags, flocked to the Johor site en masse. When Japan won this game, placing it in the World Cup finals for the first time, the soccer boom in Japan reached new heights.

Soccer fans also like to savor the joys of victory in the printed word. Extra issues of mass-circulation magazines featuring soccer and the World Cup are all selling briskly, and the

magazine that has reaped the greatest harvests from the soccer boom is the general sports magazine *Number* (Bungei Shunjū).

A seemingly endless number of books related to soccer have been published. *Kessen zen'ya* [On the Eve of the Decisive Games] (Shinchōsha), a book depicting how the Japanese national team played in the qualifying games for the World Cup finals in Asia, by Kaneko Tatsuhiro, a sports writer who was once on the editorial staff of a soccer magazine, has been listed among best-sellers since its publication.

Gotō Takeo, author of several World Cup-related books, has just published *Ajia sakkā senki* [Records of Asian Soccer Games] (Bungei Shunjū) and *Wārudo kappu* [The World Cup] (Chūō Kōron Sha).

Japan national team coach Okada Takeshi suddenly became the man in the limelight, and star mid-fielder Nakata Hidetoshi often appears on cover pages and as a subject of feature articles in women's magazines which until now rarely dealt with sports players. Soccer is now the topic on everyone's lips.

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Philippines since the 1920s, Ōsawa has written several accounts of his life there before, during, and after World War II. Among the titles of his works are *The Way for the Philippines and Japan is One* (1994), *The Japanese Community in the Philippines Before, During, and After the War* (1994), *Go South, Japanese* (1994), and *A Japanese' Miraculous Life: 70 Years with Filipinos* (1996). All were published privately and are available at major bookstores.

Among the numerous books on the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, there are four that are frequently used reference works, but they are now available only in libraries: the two-volume *The Fateful Years: Japan's Adventure in the Philippines, 1941–1945* (Manila: R.P. Garcia, 1965) by Teodoro A. Agoncillo, the two volumes of *The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines* (Manila: Bookmark, 1967) by A.V.H. Hartendorp, *A Day to Remember* (Manila: Benipayo Press, 1961) by Eliseo Quirino, and *Wartime Philippines* (Manila: Philippine Education Foundation, Inc., 1950) by Manuel Buenafe. *Panahon ng Hapon, Sining sa Digmaan Digmaan sa Sining* [The Japanese Occupation: Art in War, War in Art] (Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas, 1992), an anthology of works on various aspects of cultural life—literature, music, theater, the visual arts, and film—in the Philippines under the Japanese occupation was published

in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the occupation. Contrary to the impression given by the Filipino title, the book is actually in English. This book is available only from the office of the publisher.

*Japanese Occupation of the Philippines, A Pictorial History* (Makati City: Ayala Foundation, 1997) by Ricardo Trota Jose and Lydia N. Yu-Jose is the first pictorial that focuses on life during the Japanese occupation to be published in the Philippines. The Ayala Foundation has its own bookstore and also places its publications in major bookstores in Manila.

One way of encouraging interest among Filipino students is to make available to them books on Japan, whether in English or Filipino, at reasonable prices. This can be done if local publishers put out works by scholars who write about Japan or if foreign publishers establish co-publish with local publishers. This would make it possible for students to buy books published locally instead of purchasing costly imported works.

Local publishers in the Philippines should also cooperate with distributors abroad for a wider market. Books in the Filipino language have an admittedly limited market, but published in English could be marketed abroad, thereby offsetting the reality that the market for books on Japan is ultimately quite small. (*Lydia N. Yu-Jose is professor at Ateneo de Manila, Philippines.*)



# Language Is Not the Greatest Barrier

Fujiwara Tomomi

My first work to become a book, *Untenshi* [Subway Driver], was originally published in a literary magazine and would ordinarily have been forgotten by the following year. It won a literary award, however, and was quickly published in book form, thereby exposing it fully to the critic's gaze.

A number of reviewers found the novel "reminiscent in many ways of the world of Abe Kōbō," though I have never read a single work by Abe. There were various other interesting appraisals, such as that it was "pure literature with an SF touch" and that it was an example of "the new proletarian literature." I suppose that conclusion was drawn because the protagonist is of the working class—a subway driver—but if the critics expected my writing to have any sort of political message, I would have to disappoint them.

The comment that intrigued me most was the one that called my story "the first *otaku* novel." The term *otaku* was originally coined to refer to people with a mania for animation or cartoons, and now it has come to refer widely to young people who tend to be introverted, stay-at-home types absorbed in a particular hobby or pastime. The protagonist of *Untenshi* is not an *anime* fan, but he is certainly an introverted fellow whose only hobby is his work. In that sense he is a character with certain *otaku*-like features.

Initially, *otaku* were considered to be a phenomenon unique to Japan. People assumed that the proclivity of people in their later teens and early twenties to be fanatical collectors of animated films or Barbie dolls could not possibly exist anywhere else in the world. The French edition of *Untenshi* (*Le conducteur de métro*; Paris: Stock, 1995) came three years later, in 1995. I was eager to learn how the French would respond to a story that had been called *otaku* fiction in Japan.

In 1997 I participated in the Paris Book Fair (Salon de Livre). Once there, I obtained a number of critiques of my works and, while it came as a relief that none of them called my novel "proletarian literature," I did not detect insights much different than those expressed by the Japanese critics. Someone remarked that she "really empathized" with the main character, but the young woman, looking very chic with a red scarf around her neck, did not look like any *otaku* I had ever seen.

So far, two of my books have been translated into French, and a third will be by the time this essay is published. I believe that my stories, which unfold in con-

temporary urban settings, can be read without seeming strange or exotic to readers whether they be in Asia or Europe. In today's world, the barriers of culture are gradually growing lower everywhere. Ours is a world where there are young French people so enthusiastic about Japanese animation that they dress themselves up in the costumes of their favorite char-

acters and where the CD of the British rock group Oasis can sell tens of thousands of copies within one week in faraway Japan.

Children all over the world grow up with the animation of Walt Disney, spend hours playing computer games, play soccer and basketball, and listen to the same music. The world is rapidly being homogenized and, particularly in the cities, it may be only a matter of time until differences in lifestyle disappear altogether.

Literature is by no means aloof from or immune to this lowering of cultural borders, and yet one senses that the Japanese literary establishment is not paying much attention to the changing of the times. Although Japan is one of the countries that imports the most in the field of literature from other countries, literary circles are disinclined to believe that contemporary Japanese literature is truly accepted overseas.

Actually, however, differences of culture are no longer the most serious ones. Today the barrier that literature confronts is not so much that of language as that of generation. Among Japanese themselves, the disparities between those in their seventies born before World War II and the computer-game generation now in their twenties are almost as great as between people of different nationalities. The barriers between Japanese and Europeans in their twenties, meanwhile, are far lower. A writer's concern, therefore, is to speak not so much to readers of a particular nationality as to those of a particular orientation, taste, or generation.

Literature is like constructing a kind of "castle" with building blocks of language aimed at an understanding of the world. While translation is the craft of re-constructing that same structure in the language of another country, the finished edifice is unlikely to be exactly the same. It is impossible to rebuild something without the slightest change. After all, words are not two-by-four-like internationally standardized materials.

When it comes to writing fiction and to translation, the judgment of whether the result is good or bad must ultimately be left to the reader. Nothing can be accomplished if no castle is built to begin with. I must admit that it gives me a thrill to think that someone on the other side of the world, in a city I have never seen, may be strolling in the corridors of the castles I have tried to create.



Fujiwara Tomomi was born in the city of Fukuoka in 1955. As a student at Meiji University he wrote scripts and produced plays for a student theatrical troupe. He worked as a freelance magazine reporter and copy writer for PR magazines and job recruiting publications for a time. Fujiwara began writing fiction in his early thirties. His first published work was "Ō o ute" [Shoot the King] (Kōdansha, *Gunzō*, Vol. 45, No. 11, Nov. 1990). In 1992 he was awarded the 107th Akutagawa Prize for *Untenshi* [Subway Driver] (Kōdansha, 1992). Among his other works is *Riariti* [Reality] (Shūeisha, 1994), *Guntai* [Cluster] (Kōdansha, 1994; *Ratage*, Paris: Stock, 1997), and *Koisuru hanzai* [Crime of Love] (Yomiuri Shim-bunsha, 1996; *L'amour du crime*; Paris: Stock, 1998).