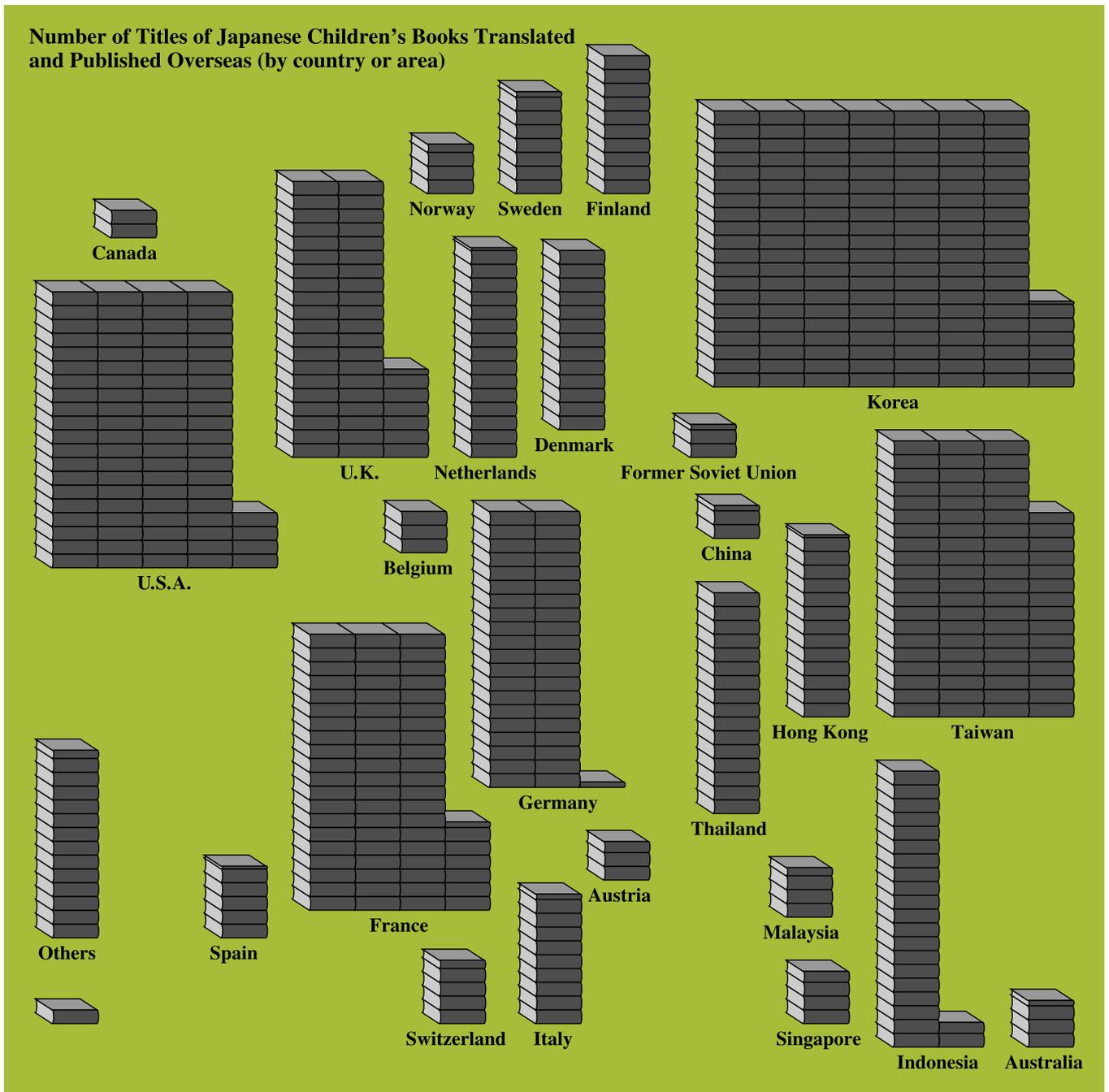


# 本

# Japanese Book News

NUMBER 24  
WINTER 1998

The Social Context of Organ Transplants  
Chinese Characters and the Japanese Language 2  
Japanese Children's Books Overseas



The Japan Foundation

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

Romanization follows the Hepburn style with minor modifications; macrons indicate long vowels. Japanese names follow the practice of surname first. Reproduction in whole or in part of *Japanese Book News* articles is prohibited without permission of the author. After permission has been received, articles may be reproduced providing the credit line reads, "reprinted from *Japanese Book News*, No. xx, published by the Japan Foundation." Three copies should be sent to the editor-in-chief.

Publishers mentioned in the data given in the New Titles section are located in Tokyo unless otherwise noted. Further information about the titles may be obtained by contacting the publishers listed on page 21.

#### Advisory Board

Ikeuchi Osamu, Specialist in German Literature

Kashima Shingo, Senior Editor, Tōyō Keizai Shimpōsha

Kawamoto Saburō, Literary and Film Critic  
Kida Jun'ichirō, Media Critic

Osawa Machiko, Professor of Economics,  
Japan Women's University

Ueda Yasuo, Professor of Journalism, Sophia University

#### Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

Sakamoto Yōko, Managing Director

Media Department

The Japan Foundation

ARK Mori Bldg. 20th Fl.

1-12-32 Akasaka, Minato-ku

Tokyo 107-6020 Japan

Tel: 81-3-5562-3533; Fax: 81-3-5562-3501

E-mail: booknews@jpf.go.jp

Bibliographic and Production Services  
Shuppan News Co.

Editorial and Translation Services

Center for Intercultural Communication

#### Design

Michiyoshi Design Laboratory, Inc.

Printed in Japan

©The Japan Foundation 1998

ISSN 0918-9580

## Contents

The Social Context of Organ Transplants <i>Amemiya Hiroshi</i> .....	1
Titles Introduced in Japanese Book News Published in Other Languages 1991-98 .....	3
Chinese Characters and the Japanese Language 2 <i>Takashima Toshio</i> .....	4
Japanese Books Abroad Japanese Children's Books Overseas <i>Fukumoto Yumiko</i> .....	6
From the Publishing Scene Tsushima Yūko, Nakagami Kenji and the Tanizaki Prize <i>Koyama Tetsurō</i> .....	7
National Diet Library Turns Fifty <i>Kibe Hiroshi</i> .....	7
New Titles .....	8
Events and Trends .....	20
In Their Own Words <i>Ogino Anna</i> .....	22

## From the Editor

In most countries of the world with advanced medical technology, organ transplants are now being routinely performed. In Japan a study commission was established by the government in 1990 to examine the pros and cons of organ transplants from the brain-dead, and, before the issue had been sufficiently aired through public debate, a law was passed about one year ago making such transplants legal. The law came into effect, but far from encouraging the new procedure, to date not one transplant operation using an organ from a brain-dead donor has taken place. What makes Japan so different from other countries when it comes to organ transplants? We asked physician Amemiya Hiroshi to consider the social and cultural issues encountered in modern medical care today based on his long experience.

This issue contains the second installment of Takashima Toshio's essay on Chinese characters in the Japanese language. He describes a momentous watershed in the history of Japanese society, when the role of Chinese characters in the language changed radically.

Japanese Books Abroad introduces a valuable new reference tool on translations of Japanese children's books into other languages. From the Publishing Scene touches on a new work by Tsushima Yūko and on the National Diet Library, celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year and moving in new directions toward the twenty-first century.

With this issue, *Japanese Book News* completes its sixth year of publication. Inasmuch as the "New Titles" presented in each issue are chosen for their potential interest to readers overseas, it may be valuable to see which of the more than 800 titles introduced so far have actually been published in other languages. The list on page 3 may be useful in this regard.

*Japanese Book News* address:

[http://www.jpf.go.jp/e/media/publish/4\\_04right.html](http://www.jpf.go.jp/e/media/publish/4_04right.html)

# The Social Context of Organ Transplants

Amemiya Hiroshi

Modern medical science has produced technologies that humankind once never thought possible. People outside the medical profession either accept such technologies without resistance as linked to human welfare (conventional techniques), or view them with suspicion (techniques developed on the basis of totally new principles). In the latter case, advanced technology may be accepted in the field of natural science but encounter strong objection in philosophy, religion, and folk culture.

In the natural sciences there may be a coincidence of views regarding a certain phenomenon or finding across national borders, and that agreement can sometimes help to confirm its veracity or validity. In the humanities, however, phenomena may be interpreted according to different sets of values deriving from the history, thought, religion, and philosophy of a particular nation or ethnic group.

Even when a certain medical technology is accepted worldwide in scientific terms, some peoples may feel apprehensive or hesitant about practicing it themselves. This is often the case with regard to techniques that relate to birth and death—the two experiences of human life still most surrounded by mystery—reproduction technology and organ transplants. Reproduction technology manipulates life itself. Organ transplants call on the organ donor to change his or her view of life and death. In these senses, new technology cannot be handled simply as scientific innovation; it inevitably arouses controversy in the realms of ethics and philosophy. The medical profession has never before faced such a difficult challenge.

Perhaps I should explain why the issue of organ transplants has been so hotly debated as a medical treatment related to life and death. Organ transplantation involves replacing a malfunctioning organ in a patient threatened by death with a healthy organ from another human body. In other words, the procedure is impossible without a donor. The donor may be living person or a dead person.

## Living Donor Transplants

In the case of transplanting organs from a living donor, Japanese surgeons forced to deal with questions they never faced in the practice of conventional medicine. One of the questions concerns the ethic of the medical profession. As medicine is taught in Japan, a doctor may perform surgery on a patient to cure some injury or illness, but it has been unthinkable that a healthy person should ever be touched by the surgeon's knife. Since 500 kidney transplants from healthy persons and 150 cases of kidney transplants from dead persons are performed annually in Japan, the doctors who perform such transplants may appear unruffled as they face a procedure that would seem to counter the ethic of the surgical profession. In fact, however, such physicians consider themselves committed to the same ethics as other surgeons, so they arm themselves with a theory to justify taking up their scalpels to remove a kidney from a healthy person. In self defense, they adopt

the argument that as long as the living donor is a blood relative of the patient, the procedure may be permissible because the tissue of the healthy organ will be more easily accepted by the patient's body than that of a non-relative.

Another issue that is raised concerns the personal honor and the prestige of doctors as members of Japanese society. In Japan, doctors have traditionally held the paternalistic authority to decide what is best for the patient. Transplanting a kidney from one spouse to the other has been considered out of the question in Japan because marriage status can so easily be abused. There have been cases when a donor who needs money and a patient who wants a normal kidney have come to a hospital saying they are married. Even if the couple is authentic and money is not involved, they may later divorce for one reason or other, and of course a transplanted kidney cannot be returned. Because of such complications, some argue that the obvious duty of the transplant surgeon is to persuade a patient not to pursue such a transplant. The surgeon's dilemma is, depending on how you look at it, a question of personal honor—what defense to give if criticized for performing a transplant that is suspected to be motivated by the pursuit of gain. But a doctor who takes it into his hands to decide a matter which can be considered up to the donor and recipient alone to decide may be guilty of paternalistic interference. Details of the arguments advanced by doctors themselves concerning this problem have been compiled in *Zōki ishoku eno apurōchi II: Zōki teikyō no genba to nōshi hantei, fūfu (hi-ketsuensha) kan no zōki ishoku* [Approach to Organ Transplants II: Organ Offer, Brain Death Certification, and Organ Transplant between a Married Couple (Non-blood Relatives)], edited by the Special Research Committee on Social Problems, Japan Society for Organ Transplant (Nihon Ishoku Gakkai Shakai Mondai Kentō Tokubetsu Iinkai), and published by Medica Shuppan, 1990.

As it turns out, with regard to transplants between spouses, transplant surgeons have reconciled their own professional ethic with the general consensus of society, although the reconciliation came about through the advice of ethics committees set up within hospitals.

## Dead Donor Organ Transplants

The iron rule of transplants from a living donor is that the provision of the organ not impair the health of the donor. There are obvious limits to which organs can be provided by living donors: the heart cannot be donated, and only a small portion of the liver can be removed. Organ transplants must therefore rely largely upon the availability of organs from deceased donors.

After an organ is removed from the donor, it has to resume normal function after being placed in the recipient's body. Whether the organ can function depends upon the conditions of the donor's death. In addition to the conventional three signs indicating death (absence of heart action

and respiration, and dilation of the pupils of the eyes; commonly known as “heart death”), brain death came to receive increasing attention as an indication of death.

In Japan, under the Dead Body Preservation Law, any act resulting in damage to a dead body is a criminal offense. Until 1958, when the Corneal and Kidney Transplantation Law came into effect, the removal of a kidney from a dead body not for the purpose of judicial or pathological autopsy but for transplantation was punishable under the law. The enactment of the 1958 law was relatively easy, and that was because the dead donors at that time were those judged to be “heart dead,” and because the necessity of kidney transplants was widely understood.

The transplant of a heart or liver is only possible while the organ is still functioning in the body of the donor. The donor should be brain dead—the entire brain having ceased to function irreversibly—and the other organs must have been kept functioning with artificial respiration equipment. It thus became necessary to establish a law concerning transplant of organs from donors in a state of brain death.

In deliberations on the draft of the organ transplant law that took effect in October 1997, it was immediately understood that transplantation itself was a necessary medical treatment. The debate became heated, however, when it came to defining brain death, as distinct from heart death. The “dead or living” debate can be traced to a report issued in 1985 by a Ministry of Health and Welfare task force of medical specialists, which set forth criteria for ascertaining brain death. However, the report declared that, while the criteria were an accurate measure of brain death, it was not the duty of the task force but of the public to decide whether brain death should be considered a valid indication of death. For people who had long believed that certification of death was up to the professional decision of a doctor, it was hard to understand why the question was now being left up to the public. From our vantage point today, I am inclined to think that the task force’s decision was right. It led, however, to a debate in which confusion only led to more confusion.

One of the first views expressed in response to the health ministry’s report was that as long as brain death can be accurately judged, it is permissible to determine the death of a person on that basis, on the condition that the cessation of cerebral circulation can be proven (this was not included in the health ministry’s criteria for judging brain death). (Tachibana Takashi, *Nōshi* [Brain Death], Chūō Kōron Sha, 1986)

Another leading opinion was provided by anatomist Yoshimura Fujio in his *Hito no shi ga kawaru: Ichi kaibō gakusha no nōshi ishoku kō* [Changes in the Meaning of Human Death: An Anatomist’s View of Brain Death and Organ Transplants] (Seisaku Dōjinsha, 1994). Yoshimura argues that while brain death is considered an indication of the death of a person in some other countries, in the Japanese cultural milieu a brain-dead person must be considered still alive.

There were also some who argued that because the state of brain death in a body in which the heart is functioning should be considered still living, it might be too early to judge whether the condition is irreversible. Heart death can be confirmed by any layman, but brain death cannot

be so easily detected, so many went as far as to worry about what would happen if a doctor eager to perform a transplant were to shorten a person’s life by prematurely pronouncing brain death. Those who expressed such misgivings included medical practitioners themselves.

Organizations such as the Science Council of Japan and the Japan Medical Association also presented opinions. Most viewed brain death as final. (Japan Science Support Foundation Editorial Committee for *Nōshi o Meguru Shomondai*, ed., *Nōshi o meguru shomondai: Nihon Gakujutsu Kaigi dai-100 kai sōkai ni okeru kiroku nado* [Brain Death Issues: Records of the 100th General Meeting of the Science Council of Japan], Japan Science Support Foundation, 1986.) Even among medical associations, there was one that argued that a brain-dead person cannot be pronounced dead. The Japan Federation of Bar Associations, too, often presented opinions on the legalization of heart transplants from the standpoint that brain death does not constitute a person’s death.

Prior to the deliberations in the Diet that led to the Organ Transplant Law in 1997, a national-government-level discussion was held that resulted in the publication of *Nōshi oyobi zōki ishoku ni kansuru jūyō jikō ni tsuite* [Important Matters Concerning Brain Death and Organ Transplants] (Rinji Nōshi Oyobi Zōki Ishoku Chōsakai, 1992), a reply submitted in 1992 by the advisory body to the Prime Minister. The report concluded that brain death was final. The same report included a minority view that according to social norms it was proper to affirm a person’s death only after that person’s heart had stopped.

Diet deliberations on the organ transplant bill in 1997 focused not on transplantation itself but on the question of whether brain death should be considered a person’s death. It was ultimately decided that brain death is judged death only when the organ donor clearly expressed in advance that, should he or she become brain dead in future, his or her organ(s) could be donated for transplant. Moreover, the law requires the prior permission in writing of the brain-dead donor concerning his or her brain death and willingness to be an organ donor. That was the practical compromise reached to deal with the legalities of the issue of whether brain death is death. Upon careful consideration, however, the decision has made death very ambiguous. It has accepted two types of death, heart death and brain death, and it is now up to the individual to determine which criteria will be used to determine his or her own death. This has rendered death no longer an absolute but a selective state, and I wonder if that is really good.

### What Society Has To Teach

Until recently doctors’ opinions had been accepted unconditionally because medicine is supposed to be for the purpose of saving human life. It was unthinkable that anyone outside the medical profession should offer advice about medical treatment. Now, however, considering that it is necessary to cut into a healthy body in order to perform a transplant from a living donor, that death marks the end of a person as a social entity, and that a donor and recipient may be totally unrelated individuals, people have begun to realize that medicine involves many matters that cannot be permitted without the consent of society.

*Continued on page 5*

## Titles Introduced in Japanese Book News Published in Other Languages 1991-98

- Aimai na Nihon no watashi.* Ōe Kenzaburō: *Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself.* In English (Pennsylvania State University, 1995; Kodansha International, 1998), French (Gallimard, 1996), Italian (Marsilio Editori, 1998), and Spanish (Iria Flavia, 1995). JBN 11.
- Akira.* Ōtomo Katsuhiro: *Akira.* In English (Kodansha International, Japan, 1990; Mandarin, U.K., 1994), and French (Glenat, 1994). JBN 5.
- Andāguraundo.* Murakami Haruki: [The Underground]. In Chinese (Shibao Chuban, 1998). JBN 20.
- Chinmoku no fairu.* Kyodo News, ed.: [The Silent Files]. In Korean (Premium Books, 1997). JBN 17.
- Fiji no kobito.* Murakami Ryū: [The Dwarf of Fiji]. In Chinese (Sun Cue) and Korean (Ye-Eum Publishing Co., 1998). JBN 4.
- Fukai kawa.* Endō Shūsaku: *Deep River.* In English (Peter Owen, 1994; New Directions, 1995), French (Denoël, 1997), German (Verlag Volk und Welt, 1994)
- Furu hausu.* Yū Miri: [Full House]. In French (P. Picquier, 1997) and in Korean (Koreaone). JBN 18.
- Gaikokujin rōdōsha teijū e no michi.* Komai Hiroshi: *Migrant Workers in Japan.* In English (Kegan Paul International, 1995). JBN 5.
- Gofungo no sekai.* Murakami Ryū: [The World Five Minutes from Now]. In Chinese (Sun Cue) and Korean (Woong Jin). JBN 9.
- Hankoten no seiji keizaigaku.* Murakami Yasusuke: *An Anticlassical Politico-Economic Analysis.* In English (Stanford University Press, 1997). JBN 3.
- Hyakunen no tabibito-tachi.* Lee Hoesung: [Travelers of a Hundred Years]. In Korean (Daekyo, 1995). JBN 10.
- Itō Hirobumi to An Jūkon.* Saki Ryūzō: [Itō Hirobumi and An Chung-gun]. In Korean (Koreaone, 1993). JBN 4.
- Jūkō.* Miura Ayako: [Muzzle of the Gun]. In Korean (Publishing House Church of Korea, 1998). JBN 10.
- Kaifuku suru kazoku.* Ōe Kenzaburō: *A Healing Family.* In Chinese (Only Cultural Enterprise, 1996), Dutch (Bruen J. Bijleveld, 1998), English (Kodansha International, 1997), Finnish (Tammi Publishers, 1998), French (Gallimard, 1998), Korean (Koreaone, 1995), Spanish (Martinez Roca, 1998). JBN 12.
- Kangarū nōto.* Abe Kōbō: *Kangaroo Notebook.* In English (Vintage Books, 1991; Knopf, 1996), French (Gallimard, 1996), and German (Eichborn Verlag, 1996). JBN 1.
- Kanja yo, gan to tatakau na.* Kondō Makoto: [Patients! Don't Fight Your Cancer.] In Korean (Kumsung, 1996). JBN 16.
- Kanryō bōkoku ron.* Yayama Tarō. [The Bureaucracy on Trial.] In Korean (Beebong). JBN 7.
- Kaze no tani no Naushika.* Miyazaki Hayao: *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind.* In English (Tokuma, 1993). JBN 11.
- Koerarenakatta kaikyō.* Kanō Mikiyo: [The Uncrossable Straits]. In Korean (Christian World Co., 1996). JBN 8.
- Kokkyō no minami, taiyō no nishi.* Murakami Haruki: *South of the Border, West of the Sun.* In Chinese (Boyi Chuban) and English (Knopf, 1998). JBN 2.
- Kōraku.* Sae Shūichi: [Withering Leaves]. In Chinese (Cheng Wen Book Co. Ltd, 1998). JBN 14.
- Nejimakidori kuronikuru.* Murakami Haruki: *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle.* In Chinese (Yilin Press, Taiwan, 1998), English (Knopf, 1997), German (Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 1992), and Korean (Munhag Sasang, 1994). JBN 8.
- Nihon eigashi, dai-2 kan.* Satō Tadao: *Le cinéma japonais, 2.* In French (Centre Georges Pompidou, 1997). JBN 14.
- Nihon no guntai.* Maeda Tetsuo: *The Hidden Army: The Untold Story of Japan's Military Forces.* In English (Edition Q, 1995). JBN 8.
- Nihon kaizō keikaku.* Ozawa Ichirō: *Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation.* In English (Kodansha International, 1994). JBN 6.
- Ōinaru hi ni.* Ōe Kenzaburō: [On Great Days]. In Korean (Koreaone). JBN 12.
- Onnazakari.* Maruya Saiichi: *A Mature Woman.* In English (Kodansha International, 1998) and German (Insel Verlag, 1997). JBN 3.
- Oyakusho no okite.* Miyamoto Masao: *Straitjacket Society: An Insider's View of Bureaucratic Japan.* In English (Kodansha International, 1994) and in French (P. Picquier, 1996). JBN 6.
- Oyayubi P no shugyō jidai.* Matsuura Rieko: [The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P]. In Italian (Marsilio Editions, 1998). JBN 7.
- Seihin no shisō.* Nakano Kōji: [Philosophies of Deliberate Simplicity]. In Chinese (Zhang Laoshi Wenhua Shiye Gūfen Youxian Gongsi, 1995) and Korean (Chayoo Munhag Sa, 1995). JBN 3.
- Sen-kyū-hyaku-yonjū-nen taisei.* Noguchi Yukio. [The 1940 System: Farewell to the "Wartime Economy"]. In Korean (Beebong, 1996). JBN 12.
- Sōkyū no subaru.* Asada Jirō: [Stars in the Firmament]. In Chinese (Shih-Shue Shea, 1997) and Korean (Korean Economic Daily Publishers, 1997). JBN 17.
- "Sukuinushi" ga nagurareru made.* Ōe Kenzaburō: [Until the "Savior" Is Struck Down]. In Korean (Koreaone, 1995). JBN 7.
- Taikutsu na meikyū: Kita Chōsen to wa nan datta no ka?* Sekikawa Natsuo: [Uninspiring Enigma: What Was North Korea?]. In Korean (Yanhap, 1993). JBN 3.
- Tōdori no kubi.* Yamada Tomohiko: *La tete du directeur general.* In French (P. Picquier, 1995). JBN 2.
- Tokage.* Yoshimoto Banana: *Lizard.* In Chinese (Boyi Chuban, 1996), English (Faber and Faber Ltd., Grove Press, Washington Square Press, 1996), Greek (Kastanotis Editions, 1996), Italian (G. Feltrinelli Editori, 1996). JBN 4.
- Tokyo: Sekai no toshi no monogatari 12.* Jinnai Hide-nobu: *Tokyo: A Spatial Anthropology.* In English (University of California Press, 1995). JBN 3.

(Note: Other-language titles in italics are published titles; English titles in brackets [ ] are JBN translations.)

# Chinese Characters and the Japanese Language 2

Takashima Toshio

Having adopted the use of Chinese characters, as described in the first article in this series, the Japanese language came to be composed of two major vocabularies. One is *wago* or *yamato-kotoba*, both of which refer to the indigenous words of Japan used before Chinese and its orthography were introduced. The indigenous name for ancient Japan was “Yamato”; expressed in Chinese style it was called “Wa.” The indigenous word for words or language is *kotoba*, while the Chinese-style term is *go*: *yamato-kotoba* and *wago*, therefore, are two different ways of saying the same thing. As discussed in the previous issue, the development of the Yamato vernacular came virtually to a halt with the introduction of Chinese orthography, so very few words of indigenous origin have been coined since. Modern language has been enriched by continuous borrowing from other languages, but the indigenous language was suspended in its infancy.

The other major vocabulary in Japanese is *kango*. “Kan” means China or Chinese, and “go,” as noted above, means “words” or “language.” These words are of Chinese origin and are customarily written in *kanji*, Japan’s ideograms. Their pronunciation is not a close approximation of the original Chinese sound, but in Japanized, simplified sounds. Over the more than one thousand years since Chinese and Chinese characters were introduced to Japan, in addition, a wide variety of words have evolved that lie somewhere in between *wago* and *kango*.

One type of these in-between words are so-called “Japan-made” or newly coined *kango*. These words are always written with Chinese characters and read with Chinese readings, so they have all the appearance of ordinary *kango*, but in fact were invented in Japan. For many of these words there is no direct connection between the *kanji* used to write them and the meaning of the word. Examples are *yakunin* 役人 (official; public servant) and *karō* 家老 (high-ranking official in local administration of the domains under Japan’s premodern feudal system). Other examples are *bantō* 番頭 (a clerk or manager of a shop) and *detchi* 丁稚 (shop apprentice). While the characters and the meaning are not closely related, you can tell the sounds have been chosen carefully in order to form an easy-to-understand combination. Few of these words have homonyms of different meaning.

There are also many words that combine the features of *wago* and *kango*. Among the oldest is *shiragiku* 白菊, “white chrysanthemum.” *Shira* (*shiro*) is the *wago* meaning “white,” and *kiku* is a *kango* meaning chrysanthemum (in Japanese, the *k-* becomes the voiced *g-* in combination with a preceding word). We may call these the hybrid *wago-kango* vocabulary.

The Japanese language today is, strictly speaking, composed of four vocabularies: *wago*, *kango*, the coined or hybrid vocabulary, and words of Western origin, *sei-yōgo*. Most Japanese today are hardly conscious of these distinctions, except perhaps for words of Western derivation.

They make no association between *kango* and Chinese, which stands to reason, as that vocabulary has been part of strictly Japanese usage for more than a thousand years.

## Watershed of Language

Given the coexistence of different vocabularies as outlined above, one might imagine that confusion reigned throughout the several-hundred years of the history of the Japanese language. In fact, the situation did not cause undue complications until the end of the Edo period (1603–1867), or more precisely, until about 1870. Up to that time, the spoken language of the intelligentsia (the majority of which consisted of samurai, the warrior class) was sprinkled with a certain number of *kango* and all official documents and records were written exclusively in *kanji* characters. For the language of everyday life as far as ordinary people were concerned, *wago*, enriched by some hybrid vocabulary, were quite sufficient.

The complications and confusion began following the Meiji Restoration, which toppled the feudal regime that had unified and governed the country since 1603 and established a new, modern-style government. Two antithetical movements occurred simultaneously regarding the language. One was the massive use of *kanji*, now without regard to sound, but utilizing only their meaning. This led to the emergence of countless words that could not be understood from sound alone. Indeed they often make no sense unless you look at the characters.

The other movement was one seeking to adopt a phonetic orthography, which was based on the assumption that since words were essentially sounds, all the orthography had to do was to express the sounds.

In this issue, let us take a look at the former movement, the unprecedented proliferation of *kanji* words. Following the formation of the Meiji government, Japan embarked on a remarkable endeavor to adopt everything possible from Western civilization. It borrowed not only governmental and economic institutions but industries in every field, architectural techniques and styles, means of transportation and communication, schools and other educational institutions, fields of scholarly and artistic endeavor, not to mention clothing, food, and articles of household use. In every field, with every borrowing, came new words and new terminology. These had to be expressed in Japanese, so *kanji* characters were mobilized and tens of thousands of *kango* were coined.

The newly introduced *kanji* words can be divided into two types. One makes use of words found in the ancient Chinese classics. Naturally, there was a large gap between ancient China and the modern West, but Japanese searched for terms that more-or-less resembled the meaning required, in a process one might call recycling obsolete words. The word *hōken* (the translation of “feudalism”) is one such term. The overall number of these overhauled words, however, is not large.

The vast majority of words to translate phenomena and terms from the West were newly coined. Most of them were made by combining two *kanji* in a compound, and when that was not sufficient sometimes three *kanji*. For things related to electricity, for example, the character *den* 電, meaning electricity, was used to create many words: *densen* 電線 (electric line), *dentō* 電灯 (electric lamp), *denpō* 電報 (telegram), and *denwa* 電話 (telephone).

“Japan-made” *kango* differ greatly in character before and after the beginning of the Meiji era. Until the end of the Edo period they were predominantly terms, as mentioned earlier, in which the characters (usually two) of which they were composed were not closely related to the meaning. The sounds, on the other hand, were distinctive.

### Real as Written

The new *kango* created from Meiji onward, however, were based strictly on the meaning of the individual characters. For example, in *densen* (electric line), the first character means “electrical power” and the second means “line.” On the other hand, the coiners of these words were little concerned about what the resulting pronunciation would be; it did not bother them if a new word turned out to be a homonym of other, totally unrelated words. Since the Japanese sound system, as discussed in the previous installment of this article, is very simple and the number of distinct sounds used in Japanese is rather limited, if people had worried too much about phonetic dissonance or similarity, they would never have been able to create the tens of thousands of new words that were needed to modernize the country.

This situation, indeed, seems to have further encouraged the general Japanese disinterest in or indifference to the sounds of words and their tendency to stress instead how they are written.

The above sound *densen*, written 電線, means “electric line,” but written 伝染, it is the translation of “contagion.” *Dentō*, written 電灯 means “electric lamp” but written 伝統, it is the translation of “tradition.” Because the characters are different, Japanese don’t find the identical pronunciation confusing; indeed, probably few native speakers of

the language pay much attention to the fact that the two words are pronounced the same.

The change at the end of the Edo period was historic. Until then, language to most people had been mainly the human communication they spoke and heard. To them, verbal speech was the *real* form of language. But from the beginning of the Meiji era onward, such a momentous transformation took place that for Japanese today, language seems real only in its written form. The sounds of words have become mere echoes or shadows of real words cast by pronunciation of written language. It doesn’t bother people when the shadows of one word and another overlap or mingle. When the verbal shadows overlap too much, they can easily undo the confusion by examining the word’s “real form,” that is, how it looks in writing.

Needless to say, language is inherently verbal. However, since Japanese today is used as if it were inherently *written*, you often cannot be sure of the meaning of something you hear until you can link it to a specific written context. In that sense, it is a topsy-turvy language.

The reason that the reality of language is now associated with its written form, one might observe, is because of the proliferation of *kango*. In the years following the Meiji Restoration, Japan westernized every aspect of its society, and, since the primary terminologies needed in that process were the newly coined *kango*, this was probably inevitable.

Perhaps most important, however, is that Japanese themselves are not much bothered by such confusion. They may realize this only when someone points out to them that the language seems real only in its written form and that the spoken form is simply a sometimes-fuzzy shadow of that form. Indeed precisely because they were not conscious of this, another, completely opposite movement sprang up around the time of the Meiji Restoration: a movement to switch Japanese to use of a phonetic orthography, as shall be discussed in the concluding installment of this article. (*This article is based on an original essay by the author abridged by the Japan Foundation with the author’s permission. Takashima Toshio is former professor of Chinese literature at Okayama University.*)

---

### Continued from page 2

Organ transplants are only some of the many new medical technologies developed by doctors. If doctors one-sidedly thrust such new technology upon the public, they did so from the assumption that people were as devoted as they to the “noble cause” of saving patients’ lives. Doctors did not believe they were forcing such technology on people, for they intended to do the best they could for their patients.

Organ transplants became possible only when the public considered them necessary. This applies to every other aspect of medicine. Medical professionals should cease any sort of paternalism, pretending that only they know best. They should candidly present the technologies they have developed to the public and be humble about the judgment of whether such technologies are truly necessary. (*Amemiya Hiroshi is General Director of the National Children’s Medical Research Center.*)

---

### Selected Readings

*Dō suru ishoku iryō* [What Should Be Done About Transplant as Medical Treatment?]. Asahi Shimbun Shuzaihan. Asahi Shimbunsha, 1985.

*Ketsudan seitai kan ishoku no kiseki* [Liver Transplants from Living Donors]. Nakamura Teruhisa, ed. Jiji Tsūshinsha, 1990.

*Nōshi zōki ishoku to jinken* [Brain Death, Organ Transplants, and Human Rights]. Katō Ichirō, Takeuchi Kazuo, Ōta Kazuo, and Niimi Ikufumi. Yūhikaku, 1986.

*Shiryō ni miru nōshi zōki ishoku mondai* [Documents on Brain Death and Organ Transplant Issues], Nakayama Ken’ichi, ed. Nihon Hyōronsha, 1992.

*Tandō heisashō no kodomo to kanzō ishoku* [Children with Biliary Atresia and Liver Transplants]. Tandō Heisashō no Kodomo o Mamoru Kai [Society for Saving Children with Biliary Atresia], ed. San’ichi Shobō, 1990.

*Zōki ishoku: Sono ai, hō, rinri* [Organ Transplants: Love, Law, and Ethics]. Honma Saburō, Sawada Nobushige, Saitō Seiji, Fujita Shin’ichi, Iwasaki Yōji. Taga Shuppan, 1989.

## Japanese Children's Books Overseas

Fukumoto Yumiko

Last year I took an American friend visiting Japan who works in a children's bookstore in Minnesota to a children's bookstore in Tokyo. She was obviously impressed with what she saw and purchased several volumes that caught her fancy. Later, she recorded my explanations of the stories in the margins of each book. Weren't there any English translations of Japanese children's books that they could have available in their store, she wondered? On another occasion, I was asked by a Japanese company employee on assignment in South America for a sampling of Japanese books published in Spanish. He wanted the children at his daughter's school to know more about Japan. At times like these, I always acutely felt the need for a list of Japanese children's books published in other languages.

Now such a list exists in *Overseas Editions of Japanese Children's Books 1998*, published by the Japanese Board on Books for Young People. JBBY is one of more than fifty chapters of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) which is devoted to fostering international understanding and cooperation through children's books. IBBY is headquartered in Switzerland. JBBY, founded in 1974, engages in a number of programs in Japan and abroad in line with this purpose. It organizes lectures, books exhibits, and exhibits of original works by book illustrators held both in Japan and abroad, and all of its activities are supported through the volunteer efforts of its members, who are writers, artists, translators, editors, bookstores, researchers, librarians, students, and many others concerned with children's books.

*Overseas Editions* presents data collected over more than ten years at JBBY from thirty-four Japanese children's book publishers. Of all titles published by these companies, 1,715 have been published abroad, many of them in several languages. *Hiroshima no pika (The Flash Over Hiroshima)* by Maruki Toshi, for example, which portrays the tragedy of the atomic bomb and the terror of war, has been translated and published in twelve different languages.

Picture books illustrated by Hans Christian Andersen Award-winning illustrators such as Anno Mitsumasa and Akaba Suekichi are very popular overseas and have been published in more than a dozen countries in Europe, North America, and Asia. Poet Mado Michio is another Japanese winner of the IBBY award, which is presented every two years to one writer and one artist who have made outstanding contributions to the children's book genre.

Statistics show that translations of the 1,715 original Japanese titles have been published in over forty-three countries and regions, for a total of 3,073 titles, a more than two-fold increase compared to figures from ten years ago. Fifty-five percent of these, however, are picture books, and 42 percent are non-fiction. Only 3 percent are literature, and many of their originals are old. Among the few works of the 1990s is *Natsu no niwa (The Friends)* written by Yumoto Kazumi, the translation of which was

published in the United States in 1996. One American reader commented, "I thought that all Japanese children did everyday was study. But when I read this book I realized for the first time that they have fun and get into mischief, too." In order to foster mutual understanding between countries, we need to introduce more literary works that depict the lives of children in Japan today. A scarcity of good translators capable of rendering Japanese skillfully into other languages, however, makes this task extremely difficult.

Although language presents a major barrier for Japanese throughout Asia, it is reportedly easier for Koreans to learn Japanese and vice versa. Perhaps for this reason, the Korean language accounts for the highest number of translations, or 24 percent. Books on natural science are particularly popular and many picture books on arithmetic or book series on astronomy, animals, and plants illustrated with photographs are being published in Korea. After Korean, the largest number of overseas editions are in English, Chinese, French, German, and Indonesian, in that order.

Children's books provide an excellent opportunity not only for children but also for adults to deepen their understanding of other cultures. I learned, for example, that a picture book was used to explain the lifestyle and food of Japanese children in a social sciences class in an American high school. Because of their narrower range of vocabulary, indeed, children's books are useful as language teaching materials. Translated into other languages, they impart the joy of reading and also play a major role in cultural exchange. The new booklist will be a valuable resource for such purposes. (*Fukumoto Yumiko is a member of JBBY and a freelance researcher on children's books who reviews, translates, edits, and selects children's books. She was a member of the editorial committee for Overseas Editions of Japanese Children's Books.*)



### *Overseas Editions of Japanese Children's Books 1998*

256 pages, 297 × 210 mm.  
¥2,000.

Paper, ISBN 4-931212-03-4

Lists titles of 3,073 children's books from 34 publishers translated and published overseas in both English and Japanese. Divided into three parts, picture books, literature, and non-fiction books, the catalogue gives English translations for all the titles. English annotations are provided for about 150 of the titles. Inquires about and orders for the book should be sent to: Japanese Board on Books for Young People (JBBY), 25-30-203 Fukuro-machi, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162-0828. Tel: 81-3-5228-0051; fax 81-3-5228-0053; e-mail: <JDK03301@nifty.ne.jp>.

**Tsushima Yūko, Nakagami Kenji and the Tanizaki Prize**

Koyama Tetsurō

*Hi no yama: Yamazaru ki* [Fire Mountain: Wild Monkey Chronicle] by Tsushima Yūko was the recipient of this year's 34th Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize, the award ceremony for which was held on October 13. The prize is awarded to outstanding works of pure literature by mid-career writers. While the Akutagawa Prize is most coveted by new writers, the Tanizaki Prize is sought after by established authors, and leading works by internationally known writers, such as *Tomodachi* (*Friends*) by Abe Kōbō and *Man'en gannen no futtobōru* (*The Silent Cry*) by Ōe Kenzaburō have received this honor.

Nakagami Kenji (1946–92) publicly spoke of his desire to win the Tanizaki Prize, and although he was nominated as a candidate five times, he never succeeded in doing so. At the time he was among the most popular writers of the younger generation in Japan, and some claim that his yearning for the award shortened his life. Nakagami and Tsushima worked closely together in their youth on a coterie magazine called *Bungei Shuto* [Literary Metropolis], and both began writing novels at the age of nineteen. Although close, like brother and sister, they were also rivals.

Tsushima's father was Dazai Osamu (1909–48), a famous author who died fifty years ago and is still popular. However, perhaps because he chose to commit suicide with a woman other than her mother, Tsushima never wrote about her father. A few years ago, she and Nakagami met at a symposium in Germany. Chatting between sessions, Nakagami pressed Tsushima with questions like, "Why did Dazai kill himself like that? Don't you

ever think about that when it is so important?" Tsushima, who had been only one year old at the time of her father's death, is said to have retorted, "I am always thinking about it. Thinking and thinking. How can you ask such a question when your own brother committed suicide?"

The award-winning *Hi no yama: Yamazaru ki* is the first of Tsushima's novels in which her father appears. Written on a grand scale, the story spans almost one hundred years, tracing the history of her mother's family up until the twenty-first century, and ranging through three different countries—Japan, the United States and France. Dazai appears as the marriage partner of a character who represents Tsushima's mother.

Nakagami died of cancer while Tsushima was spending a year in Paris. In an essay written immediately after publication of *Hi no yama*, Tsushima declared that "of all the people in the world, I most wanted Nakagami to read this work."

The Tanizaki Prize, sought after but never attained by Nakagami, was awarded to Tsushima for a work written in answer to his questions. Although perhaps a little late in coming, both authors can rejoice at this recognition of one of Japan's most prominent and internationally renowned women authors. In December Tsushima's *Hi no yama* was also awarded the Noma Prize for Literature, the most prestigious and coveted prize in the Japanese literary world. Tsushima is the first author to receive both prizes for the same work. (*Koyama Tetsurō is editor, Cultural News Section, Kyodo News.*)

**National Diet Library Turns Fifty**

Kibe Hiroshi

Ceremonies were held June 8, 1998 to mark fifty years since the National Diet Library was opened. Seven hundred people attended the event, including representatives of the legislative, administrative and judiciary branches of the government, members of the Diet, as well as representatives of the library profession, publishing, culture, and the media. In his opening address, Ogata Shin'ichirō, Librarian of the National Diet Library, indicated the Library's resolve to expand and consolidate its functions and improve services to meet the needs of the coming century. Honorary guest then-Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō observed that "the Japanese people at every level of society have high expectations of the Library as a comprehensive provider of information readily available for public access in the information society."

The National Diet Library opened on June 5, 1948, three years after the end of World War II, with the dual functions of Diet library and national public library. Temporarily housed in the former Akasaka detached palace (now the Geihinkan government guest house), it began with a collection of over 300,000 volumes. In the fifty years since, it has continued to expand its collection of both Japanese and foreign-language materials, improve its services, and upgrade its library and reading facilities. It

has grown to become one of the most prominent libraries in the world with a collection of 6,900,000 volumes, 150,000 magazine titles, and 8,000 newspaper titles, providing the largest base of document and information services in Japan.

The National Diet Library currently has two major projects for the enhancement of its services. One is the establishment of the International Library of Children's Literature, destined to be the first national children's library in Japan. The facility will be housed in the building of the former Imperial Library in Ueno which is presently being completely renovated for this purpose, and partial opening is scheduled for the year 2000 followed by full opening in 2002. The other project is construction starting in the fall of 1998 of the Kansai branch library scheduled to open in 2002. The facility will be located in the Seika-Nishikizu district, the heart of the Kansai Science City that is being built in the Keihanna hills straddling the borders of three prefectures—Kyoto, Osaka and Nara. Both libraries will have fully digitalized systems, equipped with the latest communications technology, to facilitate convenient access to library facilities by distant users. (*Kibe Hiroshi is a member of the staff of the Administrative Department, National Diet Library.*)

## New Titles

### MEDIA

**Aisho kyō** [A Passion for Books]. **Kashima Shigeru**. Kadokawa Haruki Jimusho, 1998. 216 × 152 mm. 272 pp. ¥3,500. ISBN 4-89456-074-7. Scholar of nineteenth-century French literature Kashima (b. 1949) is also an avid collector of old books. This essay-style volume presents a selection of twenty-five Romantic illustrated books of the nineteenth century from his collection. His detailed descriptions cover not only the contents of the books, their bibliographic histories, the backgrounds of their illustrators and so on, but also anecdotes about how he came to acquire them.



Cover design: Suzuki Sei'ichi Design Shitsu

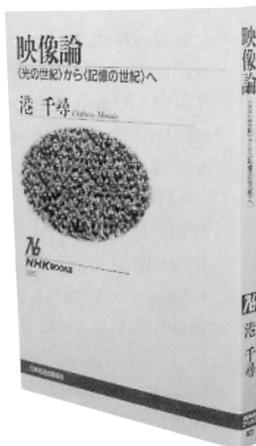
More than for their content, the author sees the books as objects of aesthetic value in themselves. This point leads to a discussion of his personal criteria of collection and how his hobby developed into a serious, professional career.

As a Japanese scholar of the West, the author elucidates the differences between Japanese and Western books. As an incurable victim of the collecting bug, he testifies to the historical value of collection.

**Eizō-ron: "Hikari no seiki" kara "kioku no seiki" e** [A Study of Images: From the Century of Light to the Century of Memory]. **Minato Chihiro**. Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1998. 182 × 128 mm. 278 pp. ¥1,070. ISBN 4-14-001827-5.

The fact that visual expression came to mean something completely new in the twentieth century has already been discussed by many, and this book further studies the significance of visual images in our time.

Deriving primarily from the author's own experience as a photographer (b. 1960), his inquiry therefore takes a slightly different tack from those who focus on other visual media such as painting and the cinema. This photography-based perspective adds new dimensions to the consideration of visual expression. Photography differs from painting, for instance, in that the whole subject is represented in a single instant. It is also unlike cinema in that it is a personal medium. The combination of the instant and the individuality of the photographer is the secret of photography's distinctive power. Photography, in short, aids the attempt to retrieve moments from the time that is singularly one's own. Although the presentation of its thesis is a little rough in places, the book offers readers many thought-provoking insights.



Cover design: Kurata Akinori

**Jānarisuto no sahō** [A Journalist Should Be an Historian]. **Tase Yasuhiro**. Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1998. 193 × 132 mm. 254 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-532-16255-6.

In this heavily autobiographical work, the author draws on his three-decade experience as a political af-



Cover design: Kawakami Shigeo

fairs columnist for the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* newspaper to probe the origins of errors in political affairs-related journalism.

Maintaining one's role as a journalist, he acknowledges, requires more than youthful idealism or commitment to justice. On the other hand, if journalists lose the ability to act according to their own best conscience, then sooner or later they lose themselves amid the swirl of opinions, information, and other pressures. This may result in being caught up in power struggles with fellow journalists, or straitjacketed by the institutional cliquism that is a feature of Japanese society. The author hopes an ethic of respect for minority views will emerge not only in the profession of journalism but throughout Japanese society as a whole.

**Terebi ga yume o miru hi** [When Television Becomes Truly Visionary]. **Usui Hiroyoshi**. Shūeisha, 1998. 188 × 121. 236 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 4-08-783120-5.



Cover design: Five One

Some disparage television as the “boob tube,” while others claim it is the predominant medium in the world. Author Usui is a prominent television producer who also teaches at Keiō University. After devoting the first two of the book’s ten chapters to the history of television, he discusses a variety of related topics, referring to specific programs and recounting numerous episodes about people involved in the process of producing television programs.

In the course of interviewing applicants for jobs in his production company, Usui came to feel that truly talented young people had lost interest in television and were pursuing careers in other fields. He accepted a university teaching position in hopes that he could persuade young people of superior ability to reconsider the potential and challenge of television.

Television has been around for only forty-five years so far, and Usui has great expectations for its future. He declares that it is a field on the verge of undergoing great changes. “Not everything may be rosy,” he says, “but it is certain to be exciting and absorbing. How those who join our profession will change and enlarge the world of television is something we can never predict.”

**Zasshi no shinikata [The Ways Magazines Die]. Hamazaki Hiroshi.** Shuppan News Sha, 1998. 193 × 132 mm. 290 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-7852-0079-0.

Magazines have been the absorbing interest for Hamazaki, magazine editor later turned university lecturer, throughout his life. He believes, as did genius editor/publisher of period-

icals of the Meiji and Taishō eras Miyatake Gaikotsu (1867–1955), that magazines are living entities. Magazines are born and die, sometimes accidentally, when their tenure of life is over. They have a life span, they evolve and flourish by adapting themselves to their environment, and they propagate in cognate groups, forming a larger “ecosystem” of the printed media.

Based on this theory, he classifies magazines into seven “ecosystems” and outlines the history of each. He takes up, for example, the most venerable of magazines, *Chūō Kōron*, founded in 1888, showing the three major evolutionary changes it has undergone. The book is full of episodes about publishers and editors who struggled to keep the spark of their magazines alive.

No matter how great the success of a magazine, however, in nine out of ten cases, the time came when it was forced to cease publication. The author confesses his love for the last issues of defunct magazines. Most collectors of valuable periodicals look for first issues, seldom taking interest in the last. Hamazaki himself oversaw the discontinuation of two well-known magazines during his career, and those painful experiences prompted him to look closely at such publications from the angle of their entire history.

## HISTORY

**Futatsu no kōhaku-ki: Indonesia-jin ga kataru Nihon senryō jidai [Two Red-and-White Flags: Indonesians on Indonesia Under Japanese Occupation]. Indonesia Kokuritsu Bunsho Kan.** (Japanese translation by Kurasawa Aiko and Kitano Masanori of the Indonesian National Archives, ed. *Di Bawah Pendudukan Japan*). Mokuseisha, 1996. 189 × 128 mm. 324 pp. ¥2,700. ISBN 4-89618-017-8.

This documentary record of Indonesia under Japanese occupation (1942–45) is based on interviews by the Indonesian National Archives with people from various backgrounds who directly experienced that chapter of Indonesia’s history.

Following a general overview of the occupation period, the book focuses on specific aspects of Indonesia around that time: the background to the rise of Japanese military administration; the lifestyle of the general populace of Jakarta; the mass mobilization of Indonesian youth; the activities of artists; education; the Sumatra volunteer army; and Indonesia’s declaration of independence.

Given the strict control maintained over various aspects of Indonesian life during the war, historical documents or artifacts that provide a clear picture of the lifestyle of ordinary Indonesians at that time are scant. Consequently, research on the period requires innovative methods by which to fill in the gaps. The emphasis on oral accounts in this book is one such methodological innovation. That the book is the product of real people who experienced the occupation firsthand lends it great weight and authority.



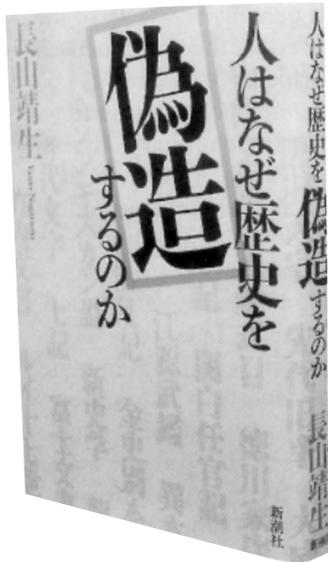
Cover design: Kikuchi Nobuyoshi

**Hito wa naze rekishi o gizō suru no ka [Why People Fabricate History]. Nagayama Yasuo.** Shinchōsha, 1998. 196 × 133 mm. 244 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-10-424101-6.

In Japan as elsewhere, there are people who not only advocate false accounts of history but fabricate documents, historical artifacts, and even fossils as evidence. Through a study of numerous cases of people taken in by such imagined or fanatical views of the past, this book offers a history of the mentality that condones the forging of history.

Around a century ago, for example, the story began to circulate





Cover design: Shinchōsha

that medieval warrior Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159–89) did not commit suicide as in accepted history but fled instead to the Chinese mainland, formed an army of Mongolian horsemen and became the figure known to history as Genghis Khan. This legend originated in the book *Yoshitsune saikō ki* [Record of Yoshitsune's Revival], published in 1885. Looking at the historical context of its publication, the background of its author and so on, Nagayama considers why such a book was written at that time. His analysis describes the psychology of people who, lamenting their ill fortune but unable to rise above their circumstances, seek refuge in constructed worlds—false histories or self-styled versions of their own origins—which accord with what they regard as their true selves.

It is an intriguing historical investigation based on a wealth of documentary study.

## BIOGRAPHY

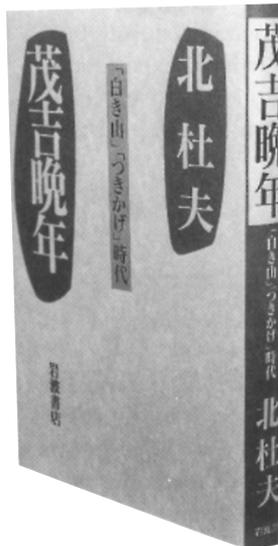
**Mokichi bannen** [The Final Years of Saitō Mokichi]. Kita Morio. Iwanami Shoten, 1998. 193 × 131 mm. 276 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 4-00-025281-X.

This is the last volume of a four-volume critical biography of tanka poet and psychiatrist Saitō Mokichi (1882–1953), written over a ten-year period by his son, novelist and neurologist Kita Morio. This volume covers the period from Saitō's move

from Tokyo to Yamagata prefecture in 1945 to escape the Allied air raids, until his death in 1953.

The author portrays Saitō in the historical context of turbulence in Japanese society during the final stages of World War II and the immediate postwar period. He supplements that account with a faithful telling of his own experience as a young man embarking on a dual career of medicine and literature in the footsteps of an illustrious father. These two approaches add great depth to the work as a critical biography.

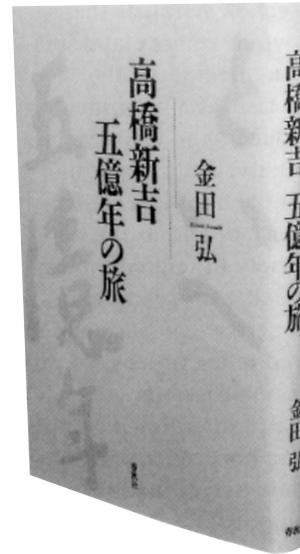
The strength of this book is the vivid portrait of Saitō that only someone who lived with him could draw. Even his decline into senility is recounted with fidelity, supported by numerous quotations from records written by other members of the family. Between the lines, the author reveals on the one hand his incomparable love as a son deeply influenced by his father, and on the other his objective perceptivity as a writer and a physician. The book also serves as a chronological anthology of Saitō's poetry.



**Takahashi Shinkichi go-okunen no tabi** [Takahashi Shinkichi's Five-Hundred-Million Year Journey].

Kanada Hiroshi. Shunjūsha, 1998. 195 × 134 mm. 244 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 4-939-44139-7.

This semi-biographical book is poet Kanada Hiroshi's tribute to his friend Takahashi Shinkichi, prominent exponent of Dadaism in Japan. The author became acquainted with Takahashi when the latter was 49



Cover design: Honda Susumu

years old and about to marry Ichiyanagi Kikuko, who remained his wife until his death at the age of 86 in 1986. In 1923, Takahashi published his *Dadaisuto Takahashi Shinkichi no shi* [The Poetry of Dadaist Takahashi Shinkichi], arousing great controversy in poetry circles of the day. In 1928, while sitting in Zen meditation, he became mentally ill, but later regained control of his mind. From that time on he published a number of novels dealing with madness and mad characters. Although he rejected Dadaism in his later years, he was known for his eccentricism. Kanada recounts many intimate stories of his friendship with his mentor, such as the tale of the night Takahashi invited him to come and meet his wife-to-be and they all three ended up sleeping in the same futon. In those days, poets were as ingenuous as they were poor.

## POLITICS AND SOCIETY

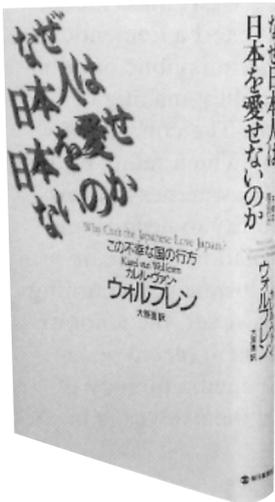
**Naze Nihonjin wa Nihon o aisenai no ka** [Why Can't the Japanese Love Japan?]. Karel van Wolferen. Ōhara Susumu trans. Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1998. 195 × 133 mm. 366 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-620-31211-8.

This is the latest of the author's books on Japanese society, following his best-selling *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (1989) and *Ningen o kōfuku ni shinai Nihon to iu shisutemu* [Japan, a System that Doesn't Make People Happy]. Van

Wolferen is a Dutch journalist who has made Japan the focal point of his research for many years. In his view, contemporary Japanese suffer the unhappy circumstance of being trapped and straitjacketed by their own society. This powerlessness, as he sees it, is manifested in their dependence on institutions and systems, as well as in their indifference to politics.

Van Wolferen's observations lead him to identify the root of the problem in the absence in Japan of true patriotism, as distinct from nationalism, and in the fact that Japanese people do not possess what he calls a "believable" history. In order to dispel its disjointed and unstable self-image, he insists, Japan must begin the task of recreating itself by its own efforts, such as by engaging in serious debate on revision of the constitution.

While it may seem somewhat odd for a non-Japanese author to urge so passionately that Japanese take more positive and autonomous political action, this book nonetheless makes a significant contribution toward clarifying some of what continue to be murky images of contemporary Japanese society.



Cover design: Kikuchi Nobuyoshi

**"Nihon" no owari: "Nihon-gata shakaishugi" to no ketsubetsu** [No More "Japan": Goodbye to "Japanese-style Socialism"]. Takeuchi Yasuo. Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1998. 193 × 131 mm. 294 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-532-14653-4. This book begins with the startling suggestion that postwar Japan has in fact developed under a socialist rather than capitalist system.



Cover design: Sakata Masanori

According to the economist author, socialism refers to a collectivist society in which the classic ideology of "each person contributing according to his ability and being provided for according to his need" is put into practice. The central thread running through the book is the author's opinion that postwar Japan perfected what he calls "Japanese-style socialism" by achieving growth and prosperity through a system closely resembling a normal market economy and then utilizing the fruits of that system to redistribute wealth.

With the aging of Japanese society, however, this system is proving no longer tenable. Rather, the author argues, Japan has no choice now but to return to the approach that is "natural" to human beings, that is, to "living by one's own efforts and in competition with others." It is time, in other words, to switch course toward true capitalism based on the individual.

In this work the author constructs a provocative critique of contemporary Japanese society by addressing such specific topics as the pension system, medical insurance, the family, education, and *kaisha shugi* or the tendency for company employees to center their whole lives around their place of employment.

**Oyakunin no mudazukai** [The Wastefulness of Bureaucrats]. Sumita Shōji. Yomiuri Shimbunsha, 1998. 195 × 133 mm. 262 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-643-98015-X.

The prolonged stagnation of the Japanese economy in recent years has made administrative reform a

pressing political task in Japan, and efforts are being made to reorganize the country's central government agencies. Written by a former administrative vice-minister of the Ministry of Transport currently serving as a top consultant for the now-private East Japan Railway Company, this book is both an indignant critique and a warning of the squandering of public money by Japan's central and regional public agencies.

Citing examples from the areas of marine transportation and harbor improvement with which he is most familiar, the author probes the causes of various forms of wastefulness, including careless project planning, poor cost-effectiveness and jurisdictional rivalry among the different government agencies. He notes that national and regional public bodies, and the Japanese National Railways Settlement Corporation, among others, are responsible for the total amount of the nation's debt which, when hidden loans are included, rivals Japan's annual GDP. In outlining a concrete prescription for reinvigorating Japan's public finance system for future generations, he points to the need for a strong sense of responsibility among financial controllers and for complete public disclosure of information relating to the management of public funds. Written in straightforward language, the book is nonetheless charged with patriotic sentiment.



Cover design: Sakata Kei

**Shōgai gen'eki shakai no jōken** [Preconditions for a No-retirement Society]. Seike Atsushi. Chūō Kōron Sha, 1998. 173 × 109 mm. 192 pp. ¥660. ISBN 4-12-101407-3.

Japanese society is aging more rapidly than any other in the industrialized world, and the assiduous efforts of politicians and bureaucrats have so far done little to assuage the anxieties average Japanese feel regarding life after retiring from their jobs.

A specialist in labor economics at Keiō University, Seike offers a prescription for the prevailing gloom in the form of innovations he believes will reactivate the aging society. The problem, he says, is lack or delay in efforts to create conditions appropriate for the elderly to work. He describes the exceptionally strong desire among seniors in Japan to continue working. Why not let them do so, remaining self-sufficient as long as possible? People should not be pushed into becoming passive members of society. The elderly should not be forced to work and should be free to enjoy the life of retirement if they so wish; but they should also be given the freedom to work and be independent.



The author draws attention to the widely practiced system of seniority-based wages. This system worked effectively during the period just after World War II because there was a larger proportion of young people. But as the birthrate decreases, the fundamental conditions upon which the system depended are eroding. Seike proposes reforms by which the seniority wage-scale system would be terminated as workers reach age 40. To prevent such reforms from undermining the worker's standard of living, he suggests changes in the fi-

ancial market that would encourage people to invest their savings wisely.

**Shufu no fukken** [Recovery of the Housewife/Mother]. Hayashi Michiyoshi. Kōdansha, 1998. 194 × 132 mm. 294 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-06-209194-1.

The second half of the twentieth century has been characterized by a diversification of values that has changed people's concepts of home and family so radically as to threaten the very survival of the traditional family unit. In this book, the sequel to the much-talked-about *Fusei no fukken* [Recovery of the Father] (Chūō Kōron Sha, 1996), the author, who teaches Jungian analytic psychology at a women's university, considers the nature of the traditional mother-homemaker.



Cover design: Suzuki Sei'ichi Design Shitsu

The author believes there should be a division of gender roles based on equality. An exemplary housewife, he says, is one who "is spiritually independent, raises her children with affection and maternal feeling, loves her family, protects their lives and health, and keeps the household together." He notes that traditionally husbands have tended not to duly recognize these values in a housewife. Recent feminist condemnation of the traditional housewife's role has caused many housewives to lose confidence in themselves. He criticizes the feminist assessment as a mistaken trend which, if it grows too widespread, could lead to the destruction of the family as a social institution. In order to reconstruct the family unit on the basis of cooperation between the paternal and ma-

ternal natures operating on equal terms, he advocates instead a renewed appreciation of the value of the traditional housewife. This, he argues, would pave the way to a future age in which due importance would be attached to spiritual and family values.

## ECONOMICS

**Keizai hōdō** [Media Coverage of Economics]. Takahashi Fumitoshi. Chūō Kōron Sha, 1998. 173 × 104 mm. 220 pp. ¥700. ISBN 4-12-101402-2.

A former editorial columnist for the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper, Takahashi (b. 1937) is a researcher who has been pursuing an on-going critical study of the nature of the mass media. In the present work, drawing on thirty years of experience as an economics journalist, he points up the shortcomings of the mass media through an analysis of economics-related debates that have unfolded through the media (primarily in leading newspapers) in recent years.

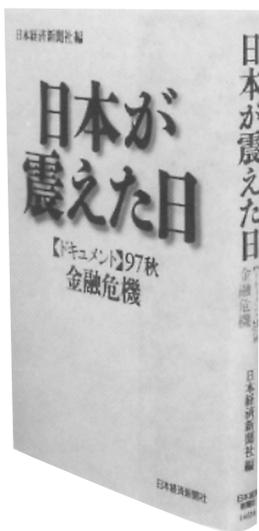
In the author's view, mass media news cannot but exert a tremendous influence not only on public opinion but also on the policy-making of career politicians. The concept of "media literacy," which refers to the average person's awareness of this influence and ability to decode and utilize the information the media provide, is gaining currency. According to Takahashi, however, the tenor of debate in the press in recent years suggests that the media literacy of media personnel themselves is in decline.



*Nihon ga furueta hi: Dokyumento 97 aki, kin'yū kiki* [The Day Japan Trembled: An Autumn 1997 Financial Crisis Documentary]. Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, ed. Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1998. 188 × 128 mm. 248 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-532-14656-9.

In November 1997, a string of major Japanese financial institutions went bankrupt and Yamaichi Securities Co. Ltd., one of the country's "Big Four" securities houses, closed voluntarily. An epochal event in the economic history of postwar Japan, this run of financial failures rocked not only Japan's financial community but the entire global financial system to which it is integrally linked.

That year is bound to be remembered as the year Japan began paying for the collapse of its "bubble economy" and the failure of the domestic financial system upon which the nation's postwar economic growth was founded. The collapse, furthermore, is still in progress, and doubts about the Japanese economy continue to hang like a pall over the world at large.



Cover design: Kawakami Shigeo

Jointly written by journalists from the country's leading economics newspaper, this book provides an account of what actually happened to the financial institutions involved in the November 1997 collapse (Yamaichi Securities, Sanyō Securities, Hokkaidō Takushoku Bank, and Nissan Life Insurance) and of the government's response. Presented in a handy, compact form, the book is a useful general guide to the financial crisis.

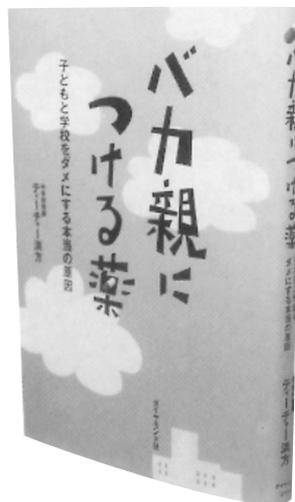
## EDUCATION

*Bakaoya ni tsukeru kusuri* [Medicine for Hopeless Parents]. Teacher Hamakata. Diamond Sha, 1998. 188 × 130 mm. 184 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 4-478-97031-9.

The tendency among Japanese since the high economic growth period to overemphasize formal academic qualifications is the result of a concerted social effort involving the family, schools, the business sector and the government. All Japanese who have deviated from the norm of formal qualifications have therefore had to bear economic and social penalties in one form or another.

Japanese society has yet to outgrow this tendency to put credentials above all else. Many Japanese parents, teachers and adults in general grew up in a society which had ceased to assess people according to actual ability or merit, evaluating them instead by means of such symbols as academic record and social or institutional position. This trend has left a deep scar on the collective unconscious of contemporary Japanese society.

The author of this book is one of the generation who was in school during the peak of Japan's high economic growth. Particularly after becoming a junior high school teacher, he could no longer ignore the effects of society's overemphasis on formal credentials. Partly in self-defense of the teaching profession, in this book he criticizes parents and explores their failure to properly discipline their children. The central point the book makes is that the education



Cover design: Fujisaki Noboru

system cannot hope to function at its best when the family and the home have so completely abdicated responsibility for educating and cultivating children.

## FOLKLORE

*Mukashi-banashi no mori* [Fairy Tale Forest]. Nomura Jun'ichi.

Taishūkan Shoten, 1998. 194 × 131 mm. 322 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 4-469-22138-4.

Written by a scholar of oral literature, this volume is a collection of critical essays on Japanese folk tales.

The story of Momotarō, the boy born from a peach who grows up to lead a band of animals in conquest of Ogre Island, is perhaps the most typical of Japanese fairy tales. The book opens with an inquiry into the stories which, though somewhat different in flavor than the standard version of the Momotarō tale, were its prototypes. The reader's curiosity is also aroused as the author unravels the mysteries of the origins and lineage of tales familiar to all and how the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales were incorporated into the Japanese tradition of children's stories.



Cover design: Yamazaki Noboru

One essay explores the actual circumstances under which traditional folk tales were told. Noting, for instance, that folk tales were recounted only at night time, around the *irori* (an open, sunken hearth) and so on, the author shows how it became established practice to tell certain tales only in specific places, in

circumstances, and following established narrative styles.

The mention of various animals—dogs, monkeys, birds, mice, snails—here and there throughout the book reminds us of the close rapport Japanese of former times maintained with the natural environment.

## SCIENCE

***Kaibutsu kagakusha no jidai* [The Days of the “Monster” Scientists]. Tanaka Satoshi.** Shōbunsha, 1998. 192 × 132 mm. 280 pp. ¥2,300. ISBN 4-7949-6346-7.

In the Meiji period (1868–1912), Japan broke with its feudal past and poured its energies into becoming a modern nation-state. This book offers a portrait of some of the Meiji-period scientists who pursued their work independently of the will and purposes of the state.

Following the Meiji Restoration (1868), Japanese devoted themselves to importing the achievements of contemporary Western science. To the more discerning scientists, however, the problem of how to interpret the differences between the scientific concepts newly imported from the West and those of the indigenous scientific tradition developed since the Edo period (1600–1868) was a matter of serious concern. Among those introduced here are Sada Kaiseki, who sought to revise the heliocentric theory of astronomy on the basis of Buddhist cosmology; Fukurai Tomokichi, whose research on clairvoyance led him into confrontation with



Cover design: Minami Shimbo

the academism of his day; Terada Torahiko (1878–1935), who attempted to fuse the spirit of *haikai* poetry with the perspective of physics; and Minakata Kumagusu (1867–1941), whose studies of slime mold prompted him to undertake a blending of the Buddhist and Western scientific cosmologies.

## ARCHITECTURE

***Nakano Honchō no ie* [The Nakano Honchō House]. Gotō Nobuko, et al.** Sumai no Toshokan Shuppankyoku, 1998. 178 × 117 mm. 135 pp. ¥2,300. ISBN 4-7952-2134-0.

The Nakano Honchō House was built in 1976 on a 20-meter-square plot in Tokyo’s Nakano Ward. Stark white and horseshoe-shaped, “the White U,” as it is known overseas, became a symbol of Japanese residential architecture of the 1970s.

The house was the product of the close understanding between musician Gotō Nobuko and her younger brother Itō Toyoo, who designed it. Gotō had the house built for the new family life she and her two infant daughters embarked upon after the death of her husband from cancer. The house, which strongly reflected her psychological and mental state at the time, was finally demolished in 1997, after the three of them had lived there for twenty years.

This book is comprised of interviews with the women, in which each explains why they are leaving the house, and an appendix in which Itō recounts the practical and historical



Cover design: Yamaguchi Nobuhiro

background to the house’s construction. Abundantly illustrated with photographs and other pictorial plates, the book is a valuable record both of the house itself and of each discussant’s frank questioning of the fundamental nature of the home in these times from the perspectives of both the dweller and the designer.

## FICTION

***Gurando misuteri* [Grand Mystery]. Okuizumi Hikaru.** Kadokawa Shoten, 1998. 194 × 131 mm. 588 pp. ¥2,400. ISBN 4-04-873089-4.

This mystery novel is set against the backdrop of the Japanese navy before and during World War II. In 1941, around the time of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, a Japanese soldier dies under mysterious circumstances aboard a plane. Requested by his widow to uncover the truth about her husband’s death, a friend of the dead soldier travels on foot throughout Japan looking for clues.



Cover design: Fujita Shinsaku

He eventually finds the key to the mystery in the 1934 incident in which the torpedo boat *Yūzuru* was sunk in an explosion incident at the Sasebo naval base in Nagasaki Prefecture. The story gradually reveals the interweaving designs and actions of two distinct types of people involved in the affair: military personnel (including soldiers and engineers) and civilians (including a writer and a university professor). In one sense the novel thus seeks to identify a pattern of imagination common to both

“scientific-type” and “intellectual-type” people.

Born in 1956, the author has won numerous literary awards. (See *Japanese Book News*, No. 23.) This work conveys a sense of the agitation of Japanese society in the post-modern era.

**Nakazō kyōran [Nakazō Frenzy]. Matsui Kesako.** Kōdansha, 1998. 194 × 131 mm. 336 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-06-209074-0.

This author (b. 1953) is a freelance writer specializing in the history of kabuki theater. This biographical novel depicts the turbulent life of Edo-period kabuki actor Nakamura Nakazō.



Cover design: Kikuchi Nobuyoshi

Generally speaking, Japanese who live in pursuit of personal freedom are regarded as different from the rest of Japanese society and cannot enjoy its usual institutional safeguards and benefits. As in the author's case, choosing to live as a freelance writer naturally means the harsher judgment of mainstream society. Entertainers, who similarly break with convention to earn a living by putting their bodies on display, have nonetheless played an important role in Japanese society, and it is from this sociological aspect that the author's interest in kabuki springs.

The author scrutinizes Nakamura Nakazō's life from various angles—how he made a living, his personal relationships, his struggle against political authority and so on—identifying qualities of Japanese society that are still pervasive in the “information age.”

**Nomonhan no natsu [Nomonhan Summer]. Handō Kazutoshi.** Bungei Shunjū, 1998. 193 × 132 mm. 358 pp. ¥1,619. ISBN 4-16-353980-8.

This is an historical account of the Nomonhan Incident, a border conflict in the summer of 1939 in which Soviet and Mongolian forces clashed with Japan's Guandong Army near Nomonhan in northwestern Manchuria, then the Japanese-controlled puppet state of Manchukuo, resulting in the complete rout of the Guandong Army.

The officers in command of the Japanese forces in the Nomonhan Incident were among the elite of the Japanese military: all had graduated with the highest distinction from the Army Academy and had been granted swords as symbols of their achievement by the emperor. The author presents a panoramic view of the historical context of the incident that took place on the eve of the outbreak of World War II, shifting scenes between the Japanese prime minister's official residence, the Army General Staff Office in Tokyo, the headquarters of the Guandong Army, Hitler's official residence, Stalin's Kremlin and so on, scrupulously recounting how the self-righteousness of the Guandong Army command caused this historic case of mistaken leadership, propelling the Japanese people into a horrible war. The author does not conceal his indignation at how Major Tsuji Masanobu, Lieutenant Colonel Hattori Takushirō, and other officers, who should have taken responsibility for the defeat at Nomonhan, far from learning any lesson from the incident, soon returned to the forefront of mili-



Cover design: Ogata Shūichi

tary leadership as fervent advocates of declaring war on the United States.

**Ryūhi gyoten ka [Dragon Heaven Songs]. Murata Kiyoko.** Bungei Shunjū, 1998. 193 × 133 mm. 268 pp. ¥1,524. ISBN 4-16-317680-2.

This novel is about the death and burial of a mid-seventeenth century “Dragon Kiln” potter named Karashima Jūbei, who dies at Sarayama in Kitakyūshū (a fictitious place probably modeled on the famous ceramics-producing region of Arita in what is now Saga Prefecture).



Cover design: Kikuchi Nobuyoshi

Jūbei is a Korean brought to Japan during the invasions of Korea by the Japanese warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–98). Organizing hundreds of other Korean potters who had also come to Japan with him, Jūbei spurs the success of the local domain's ceramics production. His achievement makes him a prominent local figure and he is permitted to wear a sword, a privilege normally restricted to members of the samurai class. Because of his social status, Jūbei's funeral service is expected to be held according to the local custom, as a gathering of other influential people of the region, and presided over by his son and successor Jūzō. However, Jūbei's wife, Hyakuba, who has long taken care of the potters' practical needs, remains adamant that the funeral will follow the Korean tradition. The novel depicts the maneuvering and struggle of wills over whether to bury Jūbei in the manner of his native land or in that of the land he had adopted. “The nature of funeral rites,” the author explains, “embodies the understanding

of life and death of the ethnic group, and as such there can be no compromise. While writing this novel, all I could think about was what it means to say that, where there was once a life, that life is now over.”

The author, a winner of the prestigious Akutagawa Prize, handles this potentially heavy subject with a wit and humor that make the novel absorbing reading.

**Sambon no ya [Three Arrows]. 2 vols. Sakaki Tōkō.** Hayakawa Shobō, 1998. 193 × 133 mm each. 374 pp.; 406 pp. ¥1,600 each. ISBN 4-15-208164-3, 4-15-208165-1. Written under a pseudonym by a career bureaucrat (presumably in the Ministry of Finance), this best-selling mystery novel simulates an economic and political crisis scenario in Japan’s near future.



Cover design: Hayakawa Design

A comment by the finance minister during a meeting of the Diet Committee on the Budget giving mistaken information tips a long-term credit bank into bankruptcy, triggering an unprecedented financial panic throughout Japan. Investigation reveals that the text of the reply the minister read out to the committee had been surreptitiously replaced. Who could be behind such a carefully orchestrated plot, and what was their aim? Ordered to carry out a top-secret inquiry into the case, a young assistant section chief of the Finance Ministry’s Banking Bureau follows the trail of evidence and pursues the motive leading to the perpetrator or perpetrators.

The “three arrows” of the title is an allusion to the advice of a warlord of Japan’s feudal past: one arrow, he

said, may break easily, but three bound together will not. The figure refers to the Japanese-style system of close ties between the political, bureaucratic and business spheres. Displaying an overwhelming knowledge of topics few but a serving member of the Japanese bureaucracy would have access to—from the antagonism between the Finance Ministry’s Budget Bureau and Banking Bureau to recent trends in political and economic theory, such as complexity-system and game theory—the author describes a version of the Japanese contemporary financial crisis on a scale unprecedented in Japanese fiction.

#### NON-FICTION

**Magajin seishun-fu [The Early Careers of Kawabata and Ōya]. Inose Naoki.** Shōgakukan, 1998. 194 × 133 mm. 396 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-09-394165-3.

This biographical novel revolves around the early careers of two prominent individuals of twentieth-century Japan: Nobel Prize-winning novelist Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972) and the so-called “mass media king,” journalist Ōya Sōichi (1900–70).

The pairing of these two men on the same expository stage comes at first as a surprise, given their differences in character and upbringing. The author, however, focuses on aspects they have in common, such as that they came from the same cultural milieu (they were classmates at a



Cover design: Watanabe Kazuo

middle school in the suburbs of Osaka) and regularly contributed to magazines from an early age. The book recounts their lives from middle school to when they first began to establish themselves as professional writers in Tokyo in the early years of the Shōwa period (1926–89). This was the exciting era of the rapid popularization of both literature and magazine journalism in Japan, and the book relates the rise of Kawabata and Ōya with the activities of contemporary intellectuals such as Kikuchi Kan (1888–1948), founder of the literary magazine *Bungei shunjū*.

While this is a serious, thoroughly documented work based on a wealth of historical records, it is written in a lively style that captivates the reader.

**Nanumu no ie no harumoni-tachi: Moto Nihongun ianfu no hibi no seikatsu [The Women of Nanum House: The Daily Lives of Former “Comfort Women”]. Hye Jin.** Jimbun Shoin, 1998. 214 × 152 mm. 192 pp. ¥2,400. ISBN 4-409-23028-X.



It is believed that, after silently enduring decades of repression, many of the Korean women who were coerced to serve as so-called “comfort women” for the wartime Japanese military are still suffering in illness and poverty.

This collection of essays depicts life at a home for former “comfort women.” Called Nanum, meaning “bestowal of compassion,” the home provides care and security to *halmoni* (old women) who were once “comfort women,” while also advocating the conclusive political and so-

cial reckoning of their plight. Eleven women currently live at the home with the support of many benefactors, including Buddhist organizations. The women and their supporters carry on various activities aimed at helping former comfort women lead normal lives and securing a formal apology from the Japanese government.

The author, a young Buddhist monk who lives with the women at Nanum, avoids sanctifying them as victims, but portrays them instead with affection as ordinary people. The book calls on us to understand the “comfort women” controversy with a proper understanding of the true stories of the women who survived history’s cruel realities.

***Nihon no izakaya o yuku (bōkyō-hen) [Izakaya Taverns of Japan (Nostalgia)]. Ōta Kazuhiko.*** Shinchōsha, 1998. 191 × 131 mm. 244 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-10-415803-8.

When not engaged in his usual occupation as a graphic designer, this author (b. 1946) roams about Japan searching out good, traditional-style *izakaya*, a kind of casual tavern now increasingly scarce. By “good” he means *izakaya* which fulfill three essential conditions: good sake, good people, and good food.

The book is the second in a series on *izakaya* for which the author has so far visited over twenty towns throughout the country. The present work alone records his drinking, eating, and conversational experiences from Sapporo in the north to Naha in the south, in establishments he selected based on his own instincts

and intuition. He retells his repartee with the people behind the *izakaya* counters with such verve that readers will feel they too are part of the scene, sharing the drink and good company.

This is a detailed guide to *izakaya* born of a unique passion that has taken the author to some 300 taverns at an average of 15 per town. At the same time, it provides an engaging glimpse into the rich diversity of local products and manners and customs in various parts of Japan. According to the author, the local economy, culture and lifestyle of a given locality can all be discerned by observing its *izakaya*.

***Onna no shōsetsu [Novels by Women]. Maruya Saiichi.*** Illustrated by Wada Makoto. Kōbunsha, 1998. 220 × 151 mm. 226 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 4-334-97164-4.

In this volume, novelist Maruya teams up with a well-known illustrator to produce a unique collection of critical essays on works by seventeen women writers of various periods and places. Maruya relates with good humor how a close friend quipped that the book deals with two of Maruya’s favorite subjects at once: women and novels.

Given the author’s deep knowledge of Heian court (ninth-twelfth century) literature, it is fitting that the book opens with a discussion of Murasaki Shikibu’s (c. 978–c. 1014) *Genji monogatari (Tale of Genji)*, regarded as the world’s first full-length novel. Maruya is also well versed in the Chinese and Western literary traditions and has translated several works

of English literature. Drawing on this extensive knowledge, he takes up works from a broad range of authors, including Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette’s (1873–1954) *La chatte*, Virginia Woolf’s (1882–1941) richly original *Orlando* and, from contemporary Japanese literature, Kōno Taeko’s (b. 1926) *Yōji-gari (Toddler-Hunting)*.

Renowned as a penetrating reader, Maruya offers here a deeply insightful, stylish, and intellectually rigorous critical study full of original observations and impressions. It is a work that offers in full the pleasures of reading fiction.

***“Shall We Dance?” Amerika o iku [“Shall We Dance?” Tours America]. Suō Masayuki.*** Ōta Shuppan, 1998. 187 × 127 mm. 414 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-87233-375-6.

Director Suō Masayuki’s 1996 film *Shall We Dance?* became a major hit in Japan, sweeping Japanese film awards and showing to some two million cinema-goers. This book chronicles the tour Suō made to twelve cities in North America to promote the film’s release there.



Cover design: Suzuki Sei'ichi Design Shitsu



Cover design: Ōta Kazuhiko



Cover design: Wada Makoto

The story begins when a buyer from the American distributing company Miramax Films comes to see Suō, who in fact had no distribution rights in *Shall We Dance?* because he had not funded its production. As the negotiations proceeded, it became clear that the film would have to be shortened in accordance with the distributor’s standing view that no subtitled foreign-language film over two hours long would be a hit in the United States. Although this negotiation process pointed up the differences in culture and sensibilities

between the two countries, the response of U.S. preview audiences, who laughed and reacted just as Japanese did, proved the film's universal appeal. The film enjoyed a level of success in the United States that rewrote the record book for Japanese films released there, showing to some 1.9 million Americans by January 1998 and winning the National Board of Film Review's Best Foreign Film award.

Written in a light, witty style, this account of the film's rise to success is also an excellent study in comparative culture.

***Shiki no kokoa, Sōseki no kasutera* [Shiki's Cocoa, Sōseki's Sponge Cake]. Tsubouchi Toshinori.**

Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1998. 194 × 134 mm. 214 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-14-005288-0.

Tsubouchi is a university professor and haiku poet known particularly for his playful haiku about *amanattō*, a Japanese confectionery made of sweetened adzuki beans. In this collection of essays centering around two Meiji-period (1868–1912) literary greats, poet Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) and novelist Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), among others, he mixes reverie about the times of these writers with elements from his own private life.

The founding editor of the leading haiku magazine *Hototogisu*, Shiki advocated a style of haiku stressing realism or immediacy. His views had an enormous impact on the subsequent development of haiku poetry. Shiki died from tuberculosis at age 35. In the final year of his life, he wrote *Gyōga manroku* [Bedside



Cover design: Kitahara Yutaka

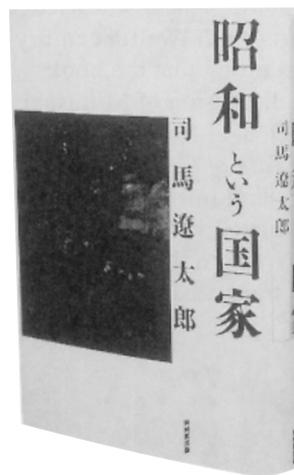
Scribblings], a journal in which he recorded his daily meals. Food was the greatest pleasure for the bedridden poet, who in the diary gives a detailed account of various favorite dishes, including cocoa made with milk, which he enjoyed for breakfast. In the author's view, Shiki's record of his meals was a record of his still being alive.

Sōseki and Shiki had been close friends since their student days, and it was at Shiki's suggestion that Sōseki took up writing fiction. With various sketches and anecdotes of this friendship, as well as examples of the author's own haiku, this volume makes engaging reading particularly for those interested in literature.

***Shōwa to iu kokka* [The Nation of Shōwa]. Shiba Ryōtarō.**

NHK Shuppan, 1998. 215 × 150 mm. 250 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-14-080361-4.

The Shōwa era, 1926–89, is known above all for war. Why did Japan start a reckless all-out war in this era? What happened to Japan that drove it to such madness? This book presents the text of a television series broadcast on NHK educational television from May 1986 to February 1987 by the late writer Shiba Ryōtarō (1923–1996).



Cover design: Suzuki Kazushi and Gotō Yōko

The leaders of Japan's modern state of Meiji (1868–1912) were realists. They knew that only by learning from the West could they achieve the power with which to compete with and avoid being colonized by the West. Shiba observes that, as the glorious Meiji era lapsed into Taishō (1912–26) and then into Shōwa, something went wrong. When Shōwa began in 1926, Japan had fallen

under a spell, as if cast by a wicked witch. One of the magic words that bewitched Japan was *tōsuiken*, or the imperial prerogative of supreme command. The military seized control of the government but they were out of touch with reality. They had neither clear goals nor solid strategies—indeed they had no strategy at all.

Shiba searches for clues to why humble, conscientious, and realistic leaders ended up being replaced by men of blind and fanatic ambition. Why did Japanese allow second and third-rate military officers with five stars on their shoulders to take command of Japan? The book may not provide the answers to all these questions, but it does reveal a man who never ceased to try to answer them.

***Taiga no itteki* [Little Drops in the Great River]. Itsuki Hiroyuki.**

Gentōsha, 1998. 194 × 133 mm. 267 pp. ¥1,429. ISBN 4-87728-224-6.

Itsuki Hiroyuki, winner of the 1966 Naoki Prize, is one of Japan's most respected novelists. This book is a compilation of essays under the theme expressed by the title: that all human beings are but "drops" in the "great river" of life. Itsuki was brought up in Korea, the son of a Japanese official employed in the colonial administration of the time. When he was twelve, Japan was defeated and all hell broke loose for the Japanese in Korea. He survived and came back to Japan when he was thirteen, but he felt no attachment to his home country and continued to feel alien there. He suffered a number of traumatic experiences, and says in this book that he seriously contemplated suicide twice in his life, once when he was fourteen.



Cover design: Mimura Jun

He managed to overcome his impulse to put an end to his life, though he continued to believe that life is but a succession of painful experiences and times of despair. You never know when misfortune may unexpectedly befall you.

The constitution assures citizens the right to live happy and healthy lives, but, he observes, such ideals are helpless before life's realities. He calls himself a cunning impostor who survived hardship, pushing aside many gentle-hearted people. For a long time his sense of guilt prevented him from speaking out, but in this book he does so, aware that the world is about to enter the twenty-first century.

***Tōi asa no hontachi* [Books of Far-away Mornings]. Suga Atsuko.** Chikuma Shobō, 1998. 194 × 134 mm. 216 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-480-81409-4.

The author, prize-winning writer and former professor at the international division of Sophia University, passed away before this anthology of essays was published (see *Japanese Book News*, No. 23, p. 7). The essays collected in this volume deal with books and important figures in her life, such as her father, who was an avid reader. She reminisces about her high-school years while Japan was embroiled in World War II. She writes of how she became so absorbed in books that she almost became unable to function in the real world.

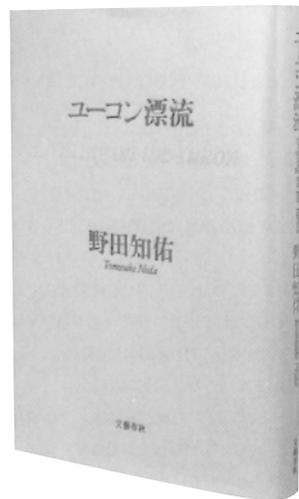
Among such books were Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did*, Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *North to the Orient*, and Saint Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*. She vividly remembers how



Cover design: Mamura Toshikazu

she ended up reading these books and how they changed her. She went to study in France and later married an Italian. She writes that she lived a life books led her through, and it was certainly a life worth living.

***Yūkon hyōryū* [Drifting on the Yukon]. Noda Tomosuke.** Bungei Shunjū, 1998. 194 × 132 mm. 318 pp. ¥1,429. ISBN 4-16-353130-0. Canoeist and writer Noda Tomosuke is a long-time critic of the Japanese Ministry of Construction for its damming of rivers and streams and widespread embankment projects lining waterway channels in concrete.



Cover design: Ishizaki Kentarō

In this book he describes his trip down the Yukon River by canoe from Whitehorse, Canada to Enamok, Alaska, alone except for his dog, which accompanied him on the latter half of his 3,700 kilometer trip. He describes the untouched wilderness he passed through and how it revived in him the long-lost feeling of living naturally. The occasional interactions with various people during his trip, who included Eskimos and "mountainmen," made him ponder many aspects of life, modern civilization, and values. He compares the ways of life of the free individuals subsisting in the wilderness with the average person in today's Japan.

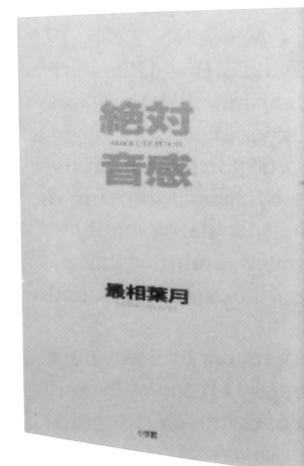
Noda's account mentions books he read and quotes poems by Robert Service. His style is straightforward and simple, but with an elegant charm of its own. It is a book you find hard to put down, and a certain pathos that runs through its pages lingers long after you have finished reading.

***Zettai onkan* [Absolute Pitch]. Saishō Hazuki.** Shōgakukan, 1998. 194 × 132 mm. 338 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-09-379217-8.

A person with absolute pitch can pinpoint the key of any sound. When children are trained on a musical instrument from a very early age, some acquire this ability. It enables them to freely write music on a score as they hear it, but does that mean that absolute pitch is an ability shared by most professional musicians? Not necessarily. Many great musicians, including Tchaikovsky, lacked that ability.

Reporting on music education in Japan, the *New York Times* May 15, 1996 issue described a young musician who had studied at the Yamaha Music School and was able to identify the notes of a bird's song or an ambulance's siren. Compared to American children, it reported, more Japanese children have perfect pitch or want to acquire it. Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese, it went on, begin their children's music education very early, and some of those children eventually enter prestigious music schools like Juilliard and perform with virtuosity in international contests. Are their societies truly musically great? Are they musically creative?

What does this ability mean to the field of music, for musical creativity, and especially to the Japanese who make so much of it? The present book by Saishō Hazuki is a tour-de-force work attempting to answer such questions. The author interviewed more than a hundred musicians and composers, and her conclusions draw on multifaceted perspectives, such as advanced research into the workings of the human brain.



Cover design: Craft Ebbing and Yoshida Atsuhiko

## Events and Trends

### Business Mystery Boom

Titles in the recent spate of mysteries on themes related to business and the economy are selling well and earning a reputation for their impressive detail based on thorough research and realism. Their authors include quite a number who are either businessmen themselves or who have worked in business at one time.

*Kuroi ie* [The Black House] (Kadokawa Shoten) is by Kishi Yūsuke, a former insurance company employee. Presented the Japan Horror Fiction Prize in 1997, it is set in the life insurance industry. It portrays the terror experienced by an insurance company investigator pursued by a psychopath who contrives murders for insurance money. This book has won a strong following not only because of its strong thriller impact but for the inside story it provides on the insurance industry. Kishi's story no doubt came to mind for many following the revelations this past summer of a succession of incidences of insurance fraud and murder allegedly committed by a husband and wife in Wakayama prefecture.

*Redi Jōkā* [Lady Joker], by Takamura Kaoru (Mainichi Shimbunsha) portrays a case of blackmail against a beer manufacturer. This novel, said to have been inspired by actual cases of blackmail against manufacturers of food products, stands out for its very detailed accounts of the inner workings of the beer industry, the newspaper business, and the police. (See *Japanese Book News*, No. 22, p. 19.)

Miyabe Miyuki's *Riyū* [Reason] (Asahi Shimbunsha) also draws on the author's experience working in a law firm to portray the situation in the real estate business following the collapse of the speculative bubble economy, through a murder that takes place in a Tokyo luxury condominium.

One of the winners of this year's Edogawa Rampo [Mystery] Prize, too, was a business thriller: Ikeido Jun's *Hatsuru soko naki* [Utterly Bottomless] (Kōdansha), a bank mystery.

Author Ikeido, who was previously in the employ of a major city bank, also writes non-fiction books on business. He has said that he took the idea for the prize-winning story from an actual case of corporate bankruptcy he observed while working for the bank.

The above, as well as *Sambon no ya* [Three Arrows], by an author currently a member of the bureaucracy elite, as introduced in the New Titles section on p. 16, are examples of the many business mysteries now selling briskly in Japanese bookstores. The feature shared by all the best-selling titles in this genre is the tremendous amount of information they contain, giving them the feel of non-fiction.

### Twentieth-Century Retrospectives

With the end of the century drawing near, a number of large-scale retrospective publishing projects, mainly planned by newspaper companies, are underway.

Asahi Shimbun Sha is publishing a series looking back over the century appearing in weekly installments. Begun in January 1999, *Asahi kuronikuru* "Shūkan nijusseiki" [Asahi Chronicle's "Twentieth-century Weekly"] is to be complete in 100 volumes. Kōdansha has a similar project entitled *Nichiroku nijusseiki* [Daily Record of the Twentieth Century] that has been very well received.

Yomiuri Shimbun is publishing *Nijusseiki donna jidai datta no ka* [What Was the Twentieth Century Like?], an eight-volume compilation of articles published in its pages. The content is divided thematically, under topics such as revolution, war, and lifestyles. The Mainichi Shimbun plans to market a series in softbound book (mook) format entitled *Nijusseiki no kioku* [Remembering the Twentieth Century].

Kadokawa Shoten published *Our Times Nijusseiki* [The Twentieth Century: Our Times] as a joint project with the American media firm Turner Entertainment Group/CNN. Shōgakukan has *Nihon Nijusseiki kan* [Library of Japan's Twentieth Century], and Kōdansha's *Jinbutsu nijusseiki* [Prominent People of the Twentieth Century] includes biographical material on 2,000 leading figures.

### Dazai Osamu Prize Revived

In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Dazai Osamu (1909–48), well-known author of *Ningen shikkaku* (*No Longer Human*), *Shayō* (*The Setting Sun*), and *Hashire, Merosu* (*Run, Melos*), a literary prize established in his memory was revived after a twenty-year hiatus. Established in 1964 by the publisher Chikuma Shobō to encourage promising new writers, it was awarded fourteen times to such novelists as Yoshimura Akira, Kaga Otohiko, Kanai Mieko, Miyao Tomiko, and Miyamoto Teru. Since 1978, however, the award had been suspended.

### Writers Remembered

Hotta Yoshie, author of both fiction and critique, died at the age of 80 on September 5. In 1945 he won the Akutagawa Prize for *Hiroba no kodoku* [Alone in the Square], which portrayed the crisis of intellectuals set in a newspaper company immediately after the Korean War. His next major work was a critical biography of the Spanish painter Goya, completed in 1952, which won the Osaragi Jirō Prize. From 1956 to 1962 he resided in Spain and after returning to Japan published a number of works based on his experiences there. He also wrote many critical works on history and civilization.

Sata Ineko, a leading writer of the proletarian literature movement from before World War II, died October 12 at the age of 94. A convinced Marxist, Sata published novels based on her actual experiences such as *Kyarameru kōjō kara* [From the Caramel Factory] and was a pillar of the proletarian literature movement. After the war's end, she produced a number of autobiographical works. In 1972, she received the Noma Prize for *Juei* [The Forest Shadow].

Tamura Ryūichi, leading postwar writer of modern poetry, died August 26 of cancer of the esophagus. He was 75. Tamura helped modern-style poetry gain a foothold in postwar Japan through his involvement in the publishing of the poetry journal *Arechi* [Wasteland]. For four years starting in 1953, he was an editor at Hayakawa Publishing company,

working with the Hayakawa Mysteries series in its early days. Among his major works are *Yonsen no hi to yoru* [Four Thousand Days and Nights], *Kotoba no nai sekai* [World without Words], and *Dorei no yorokobi* [The Pleasure of the Slave].

### Author-Reader Internet Exchange

Internet use in Japan has burgeoned in the last few years and naturally it has begun to significantly affect the worlds of publishing and literature. It is now taken for granted that publishers have their own website and many writers are starting to set up private websites as well. Now, one finds authors like Tsutsui Yasutaka, who announced a writing moratorium in the printed media in protest of what he considered publishers' self-censorship, but went on providing access to his works by making them available on his website. Tsutsui has since ended his moratorium.

Taking advantage of the Internet's facility as a two-way communication media, some authors are increasingly using their websites not only to provide one-way information about their works and concerns but to respond to readers' questions and comments.

Murakami Haruki, author of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Norwegian Wood*, and other novels well known overseas, was swamped with electronic mail when he opened his first website at <http://opendoors.asahi-np.co.jp/span/asahido> (this site is currently being rebuilt). Almost all of Murakami's interchange with readers on this website has been compiled on *CD-ROM-ban Murakami Asahidō*, *Yume no sāfu shiti* [Murakami at Asahidō, CD edition: The Surf City Dream] (Asahi Shimbunsha).

One author who has gone so far as to participate in discussions of his own works on a reader website is currently popular novelist Murakami Ryū. Murakami posts messages to

the site <http://ryu-disease.com/jp/index.html>, independently established by Murakami fans, several times a month. Eleven pieces by fans posted on this website are included in the commentary of a paperback edition of *Murakami Ryū eiga shōsetsushū* [Collection of Murakami Ryū Films and Fiction] (Kōdansha).

(Note: All of the above-mentioned websites are available in Japanese only.)

### Noma Literature Translation Prize

The ninth Noma Prize for Literature Translation (sponsored by Kōdansha) was awarded this year for the second time (the first time was 1991) for translations into French of Maruya Saiichi's *Tatta hitori no hanran* [A Singular Rebellion] by Catherine Ancelot (Paris: Robert Laffont) and Kaikō Ken's *Natsu no yami* [Darkness in Summer] by Jacques Lalloz (Paris: Phillippe Picquier).

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

**Bungei Shunjū**  
3-23 Kioi-cho  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8008  
Tel: (03) 3265-1211 Fax: (03) 3239-5482

**Chikuma Shobō**  
Komuro Bldg.  
2-5-3 Kuramae  
Taito-ku, Tokyo 111-8755  
Tel: (03) 5687-2671 Fax: (048) 666-4648

**Chūō Kōron Sha**  
2-8-7 Kyobashi  
Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-8320  
Tel: (03) 3563-1431 Fax: (03) 3561-5922

**Diamond Sha**  
1-4-2 Kasumigaseki  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8060  
Tel: (03) 3504-6517 Fax: (03) 3504-6254

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

**Hayakawa Shobō**  
2-2 Kanda Ohmachi  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0046  
Tel: (03) 3252-3111 Fax: (03) 3254-1550

**Iwanami Shoten**  
2-5-5 Hitotsubashi  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-8002  
Tel: (03) 5210-4000 Fax: (03) 5210-4039

**Jimibun Shoin**  
9 Takeda Nishi-Uchihata-cho  
Fushimi-ku, Kyoto 612-8447  
Tel: (075) 603-1344 Fax: (075) 603-1814

**Kadokawa Haruki Jimusho**  
Futaba Dai-ichi Bldg.  
3-27 Kanda Jimbo-cho  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0051  
Tel: (03) 3263-5881 Fax: (03) 3263-6087

**Kadokawa Shoten**  
3Fl. 2-13-3 Fujimi  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8177  
Tel: (03) 3238-8521 Fax: (0492) 59-1199

**Kōbunsha**  
1-16-6 Otowa  
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112-8011  
Tel: (03) 5395-8170 Fax: (03) 5395-8179

**Kōdansha**  
2-12-21 Otowa  
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112-8001  
Tel: (03) 5395-3676 Fax: (03) 3943-2459

**Mainichi Shimbunsha Shuppan-kyoku**  
1-1-1 Hitotsubashi  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8051  
Tel: (03) 3212-3239 Fax: (03) 3212-0095

**Mokuseisha**  
2-20-17 Mukogaoka  
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-0023  
Tel: (03) 3824-1252 Fax: (03) 3824-1353

**Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai**  
41-1 Udagawacho  
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8081  
Tel: (03) 3464-7311 Fax: (03) 3780-3350

**Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha**  
Inquiries from overseas should be addressed to:  
Nihon IPS Sokatsu-ka  
3-11-6 Iidabashi  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0072  
Tel: (03) 3238-0700 Fax: (03) 3238-0707

**Ōta Shuppan**  
1Fl. Epcot Bldg.  
Araki-cho 22  
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-8571  
Tel: (03) 3359-6262 Fax: (03) 3359-0040

**Shinchōsha**  
71 Yaraicho  
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162-8711  
Tel: (03) 3266-5111 Fax: (03) 3266-5118

**Shōbunsha**  
2-1-12 Soto-Kanda  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0021  
Tel: (03) 3255-4501 Fax: (03) 3255-4506

**Shōgakukan**  
2-3-1 Hitotsubashi  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-8001  
Tel: (03) 5281-1630 Fax: (03) 5281-1640

**Shūeisha**  
2-5-10 Hitotsubashi  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0003  
Tel: (03) 3230-6393

**Shunjūsha**  
2-18-6 Soto Kanda  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0021  
Tel: (03) 3255-9611 Fax: (03) 3255-5418

**Shuppan News Sha**  
Tomowa Bldg. 3F  
2-40-7 Kanda Jimbo-cho  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0051  
Tel: (03) 3262-2077 Fax: (03) 3261-6817

**Sumai no Toshokan Shuppankyoku**  
Minds Tower 19F  
2-1-1 Yoyogi  
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151-0053  
Tel: (03) 5352-3456 Fax: (03) 5352-3459

**Taishūkan Shoten**  
3-24 Kanda Nishiki-cho  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-8466  
Tel: (03) 3294-2221 Fax: (03) 3295-4108

**Yomiuri Shimbunsha**  
1-2-1 Kiyosumi  
Koto-ku, Tokyo 135-8439  
Tel: (03) 5245-7021 Fax: (03) 5245-7029

## Fiction as Friction

Ogino Anna

The first of my works to be published was the doctoral thesis I completed in France, a study of satirical eulogy in the later works of François Rabelais (1483–1553). It appeared in French from France Tosho, a Japanese publishing company. Of the twenty-odd books I have put out in the ten years since, it sold the least and many copies still slumber in storage.

My life veered off the orthodox track at the age of fifteen when I first encountered Rabelais. I had always been a fiend for books, but the minimalist examples of fine Japanese prose presented in school textbooks never struck a responsive chord, and I read mainly translations of foreign works. One day I happened to be browsing through a faded collection of world literature in the dim light of the library when I flipped open a volume of Renaissance literature. The torrent of words that streamed from the pages bore me away, until I thought I would literally drown. But I was captivated.

Gargantua, the giant protagonist, did not cry at birth like an ordinary baby, but rather shouted imperiously, “Some drink, some drink, some drink” and slaked his thirst with wine. It took some 17,913 cows to regularly satisfy his appetite. His childhood was spent like that of any other child in the country—drinking, eating, sleeping, eating, sleeping, drinking, sleeping, drinking and eating.

Drinking, eating, and sleeping—the basics of daily life, and the ultimate in mediocrity. Yet the triple repetition and peculiar rhythm makes such prose anything but ordinary. Rabelais freely employs the most flowery style to describe even the lowest of content without falling into redundancy, and art and laughter coexist in a verbal cascade. For the first time I realized that a writer can be a laughing philosopher, and although I was not aware of it at the time, I had already unconsciously set my heart on becoming one myself.

I had at least the physical characteristics that might attract me to an author such as Rabelais whose pen flowed like an inexhaustible cornucopia. Although thin and high-strung as a young child, when I entered junior high school, I was beset by rapacious hunger, rapidly ballooning to sixty-eight kilograms, far out of proportion to my 160-centimeter height. I could consume ten pieces of cake in one day and half a liter of ice cream at one sitting. Gobbling extravagant amounts of meat and sweets, I gabbled with my friends, telling tall tales worthy of Rabelais. I really had a good appetite in all senses.

I had no trouble satisfying my gargantuan stomach, but with a waist size of over eighty centimeters, I did have difficulty finding clothes that fit. Finding styles to suit me fashion-wise was one thing, but what increasingly perplexed me was that on the intellectual level I could not seem to discover a literary style for myself that would fit into the contemporary literature of my own country.

The fact that it took me fifteen years to begin writing despite the burning desire to do so that ate away at me like gastric juices dissolving stomach lining was due to

my inability to find a place for myself in contemporary literary circles. It was, after all, literature before the modern age that attracted me most. It was only after graduate school and four years of study in France that I was finally convinced of the appeal and potential of literature as it has been before the advent of the novel, and was able to write my first lines.

My first work, a short piece in Renaissance novella style that made liberal use of the Kansai dialect, was nominated for the Akutagawa Prize, setting me on my path as a writer. With each subsequent work I gradually adjusted the direction of my literary style which was far removed from that of the modern novel. *Seoimizu* [Burden of Water], the fourth of my works to be nominated and the one awarded the Akutagawa Prize, is the most tame. My personal favorites are *Watashi no aidokusho* [My Favorite Poison; (a pun on “my favorite books”)], the series of parodies on such authors as Kawabata Yasunari and Mishima Yukio, the garrulous farce *Momo-monogatari* [Peachy Preachments], and *Hanshi hanshō* [Half Dead, Half Alive] in which the main character is a cross between the living and the dead. But it seems that the books that approach my own ideal most closely are the least understood by my readers, and, perhaps because of the abundance of plays on words, I have had, alas, no requests for translation.

To aspire to Rabelais in Japan is to invite continuous friction, both internally and externally. “Why don’t you write more serious works?” “Why do you sprinkle your books with such corny jokes?” Whenever I am asked such questions I retort that there is more to Japanese culture than Zen and Noh. The history of humor and unexpected twists represented by *rakugo* comic monologue is also one aspect of this country’s tradition. If I wish to carry on that tradition then I have no choice but to continue drinking, eating, sleeping—and writing.

Ogino Anna was born in Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture, in 1956. She acquired French citizenship from her American-French father but took Japanese citizenship at the age of ten. In 1983, she went to Paris on a French government scholarship where she studied Rabelais and Sakaguchi Ango. While working on book reviews after her return to Japan, she took up fiction writing and was nominated for the twice-yearly awarded Akutagawa Prize in 1989. Nominated three more times, she received the prize for *Seoimizu* [Burden of Water] in 1991 (Bungei Shunjū, 1991). Among her other important works are *Yūkitai* [Wandering Organism], Bungei Shunjū, 1990; *Rabelais shuppan* [Sailing Rabelais], Iwanami Shoten, 1994; *Meitantei Maririn* [Detective Marilyn], Asahi Shimbunsha, 1995; *Hanshi hanshō* [Half Dead, Half Alive], Kadokawa Shoten, 1996.

