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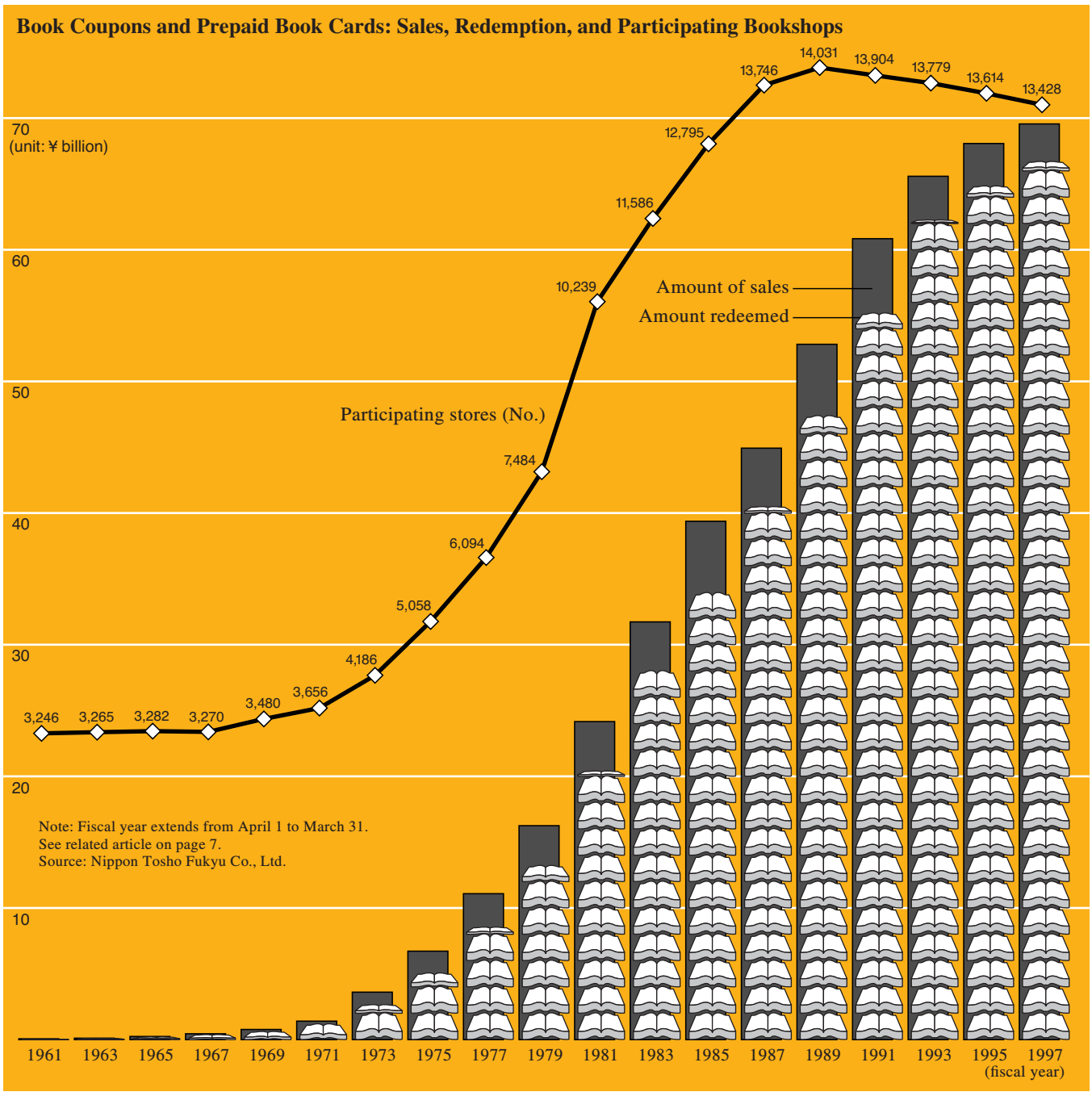

The Japan Foundation

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

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Contents

From the Editor

Probably most of our readers learned of the death of film director Kurosawa Akira (1910–98) from news and newspaper reports. The most famous of Japanese film directors whose career resulted in thirty masterful films, Kurosawa was highly regarded worldwide and is said to have influenced even such prominent directors as Steven Spielberg. His best-known films include *Rashōmon* (1950), the first Japanese film to win the Venice Film Festival grand prix, and *The Seven Samurai* (1954), which is known also from its remake version directed by John Sturges, *The Magnificent Seven* (1960). Film critic Satō Tadao reviews the major publications on Kurosawa's work and genius.

The articles by Takashima Toshio on "Chinese Characters and the Japanese Language" have proved very popular with our readers. In this last of three installments, we see how politics entered into the relationship between Japanese and Chinese characters. The international war that shook Japanese society to its very foundations and ultimately ended in defeat was bound to have a profound effect on the debate regarding the national language and the use of characters.

Our author for the Japanese Books Abroad column this time is Cathy Hirano, translator of *Natsu no niwa* by Yumoto Kazumi, published in English as *The Friends* and the winner of the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award in 1997. *Natsu no niwa* has already been published into five other languages and is expected to come out in another four languages in the near future. Hirano writes about the translation process and her thoughts regarding the translation of children's literature.

For the In Their Own Words feature, author Yan Sogiru, of ethnic Korean heritage and a permanent resident of Japan, contemplates literature that transcends national boundaries.

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Kurosawa Akira's Legacy: The Printed Record

Satō Tadao

On September 6, 1998, Kurosawa Akira passed away at eighty-six. Many books have been published about the great film director both in Japan and overseas, and for a while after his death, many bookstores in Tokyo set aside special display space for publications relating to his life and achievements.

Perhaps the most significant book to be mentioned is the six-volume *Zenshū: Kurosawa Akira* [Collected Works: Kurosawa Akira] (Iwanami Shoten, 1988). This set contains twenty-six scenarios of Kurosawa's works and two scenarios that were not made into films. Each is accompanied by a critical essay by this author, and these studies were later put together in a separate volume (Satō Tadao, *Kurosawa Akira kaidai* [Studies of Kurosawa Akira's Works], Iwanami Shoten, 1990).

Another central title is Kurosawa's own *Gama no abura: Jiden no yō na mono* (Iwanami Shoten, 1984) [trans. Audie E. Bock, *Something Like An Autobiography*; Random House, 1983]. This work doesn't say much about films, but as a record of the impressionable boyhood and youth of a Japanese born in 1910, it is extremely interesting. Kurosawa's fascination with samurai as seen in his films can be directly linked to the training he received in *kendō* during his elementary school years, and we can also see how the liberal education provided by his art teacher paved the way for his affinity for the modern and the Western. The accounts of his rebelliousness toward his military training officer during his middle school years and of the experiences during an interval in his youth when he joined the leftist movement and later abandoned it all provide valuable insights in attempting to understand Kurosawa Akira as a scriptwriter.

The path of Kurosawa's personality development, as in the case of many Japanese, mingled elements of traditional Japaneseness and Western modernity. In a rugged individualist like Kurosawa, moreover, these two aspects were constantly at odds with each other. Indeed, one might say—as I have argued elsewhere—that was precisely why he was able to make such extraordinary films, and the autobiography provides the basic material for exploring such analyses.

Perhaps the most comprehensive study of Kurosawa's work as a film director and scriptwriter is Donald Richie's *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* (University of California Press, 1965). It was among the earliest books written on Kurosawa, and is still one of the most insightful. Richie has lived in Japan for a long time, was a close friend of Kurosawa, and has a clear understanding of Japan. He demonstrates the uniqueness of Kurosawa's characters and cinematic techniques in contrast to the very average Japanese characters and hackneyed expressions of most Japanese cinema. That personal stamp of the director, Richie stresses, is the source of universality and appeal to people around the world and what makes it possible to analyze and critique Kurosawa's films according to the same criteria used for evaluating American and European films.

Donald Richie has contributed tremendously to introducing not only Kurosawa's films but Japanese cinema as a whole to the world. The above-mentioned book was expanded and published in Japanese in 1991 as *Kurosawa Akira no eiga* [The Films of Kurosawa Akira] (Kinema Jumpōsha). It contains detailed studies of all the films up to *Rhapsody in August,* made in 1991.

Among works by Japanese authors, my *Kurosawa Akira no sekai* [The World of Kurosawa Akira] (San'ichi Shobō, 1969) is the oldest, and it was published in revised and expanded form in 1986 by Asahi Shimbunsha. Rereading that work today, I notice many things that I would like to add, but still think it remains one of the central studies on Kurosawa's works. As a moviegoer who had been watching Kurosawa's films almost from their very first appearance, I was able to record in detail the meaning and impact of individual works against the backdrop of the times in which they were made. The book also includes accounts of their influence on me and a discussion of the extremely traditional Japanese dimensions of Kurosawa as a director, even though he was generally thought to be very Western in his thinking and methods.

In the history of Japanese films, there are two predominant currents, the male-centered, macho type represented by the works of Kurosawa Akira, and the female-centered types showing only weak male characters, represented by the films of Mizoguchi Kenji. These currents in fact draw on the two main schools of kabuki theater going back to the Edo period (1603–1867)—the *aragoto*, or rough, masculine, martial style, and the *wagoto*, or refined and elegant style—and represent cultural traditions that existed long before any of these individual artists emerged. I have explored this perspective in detail in the context of cultural history in my *Nihon eigashi* [The History of Japanese Film], 4 vols. (Iwanami Shoten, 1995; see *Japanese Book News,* No. 14, p. 16).

Interview Insight

Another source of lore about Kurosawa are the many interviews later published in book, magazine, or pamphlet form. Perhaps the most important among these is *Akuma no yō ni saishin ni! Tenshi no yō ni daitan ni!* [As Careful as the Devil! As Bold as an Angel!] (Tōhō Eizō Jigyōbu, 1975) and *Kurosawa Akira, Eiga no dainamizumu* [Kurosawa Akira and the Dynamism of Film] (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1998; a volume in their Bungei Bessatsu series). The first is a compilation of the extended talks Kurosawa often gave explaining his ideas about film, and the latter records conversations between Kurosawa and a number of distinguished artists, including film directors Kitano Takeshi, Ho Hsiao-Hsien, Wim Wenders, Francis Coppola, as well as composer Takemitsu Tōru. These conversations reveal many facets of Kurosawa's character in his own words.

Many interviews with members of Kurosawa's staff have also been published. Perhaps the most important include Tanno Tatsuya, ed., *Muraki Yoshirō no eiga bijutsu "kikigaki" Kurosawa eiga no dezain* [The Movie Art of Muraki Yoshirō: Notes on Designs for Kurosawa Movies] (Film Art Sha, 1998).

Muraki is a cinema art director who has worked on more than seventy films to date. Nineteen of them were works by Kurosawa. Before he became art director, Muraki served as art assistant on four Kurosawa film projects. Kurosawa Akira started out his career as a painter and he possessed a special talent—even obsession—for creating drama through images in which each frame of the film is treated literally like a picture. This meant that Kurosawa films had no use for the ready-made and customarily used sets, costumes, and small properties already available at film studios; his properties had to be separately and originally designed for each movie. Muraki accepted and met Kurosawa's demands for over forty years. Considering that one of the major qualities that attracts us to Kurosawa films is their artistry, we can see how Muraki was responsible for one of the most intriguing aspects of the creative process of filmmaking.

Take the film *Yōjimbō*, for example. It turns out that this was the first samurai movie to be made against a backdrop of folk dwellings in the style typical of the eastern region (the Kantō district) centering on Edo (what is now Tokyo). Up until then, almost all period films had been made in Kyoto; even for stories about Edo, directors made do with Kyoto-style buildings, providing various props meant to suggest eastern-district atmosphere, such as an ormamental *kumade* festoon hung in a drinking establishment. For this film, however, the buildings were designed with recognizable Kantō features, like helmet-shaped roof lines for the local folk houses and *namako*-style walls with their pronounced masonry lines. All the same, the storm doors on the houses were made in the Nagano district style because they were more impressive. The width of the streets in the old post towns was actually very narrow, but they had to be made double the width for the film in order to accommodate the sword-fights. The scenario called for one of the rival bosses in the film to be the head of a rice shop, but Muraki said it would make a much more interesting picture if he were a sake brewer and made the set a sake brewery. When Kurosawa saw his set, however, he simply declared that the sake kegs were too small. Ultimately, Muraki made sake kegs that were twice the size that would have been possible to build at the time given the hoops then available. And thus was created the scene with the swordfight in which sake spouts forth from giant-size kegs.

As this anecdote illustrates, great pains were taken in Kurosawa's films to achieve realism on the one hand—tearing down all the conventions of previous movie sets—while on the other, devising innovations to create memorable scenes and accommodate the acting, regardless of how improbable they might have been in reality. These interviews afford an intimate view of how Kurosawa would indicate to the art director the general direction in which he wanted sets changed and then, once he had seen it, develop the direction of the film on the basis of what had been done.

Another book compiling interviews with Kurosawa staff is Nishimura Yūichirō's *Kyoshō no mechie: Kurosawa Akira to sono sutaffu-tachi* [The Master's Metier: Kurosawa Akira and His Staff] (Film Art Sha, 1987). Included here, in addition to interviews with Muraki Yoshirō and Kurosawa himself, there are those with scriptwriter Ide Masato, assistant director Moritani Shirō, actor Miyaguchi Seiji, costume designer Wada Emi, cameraman Saitō Takao, lighting director Sano Takeharu, and composer Takemitsu Tōru.

Kurosawa Akira talked a great deal about the special techniques he used in his works. The famous swordfight on horseback in *Kakushi toride no san akunin* [The Hidden Fortress], looks at first impression as if it had been shot using a camera moving on a track, but was in fact achieved through repeated panning shots. He talks at great length about the reasons for using such techniques and their effects. These stories have been taken down in interviews not only in the above-mentioned books but many others. The work of organizing and compiling all those interviews and culling and summarizing their essence would not only contribute greatly to the study of Kurosawa Akira himself but result in a valuable textbook of filmmaking. It would be, of course, a somewhat idiosyncratic, certainly not an orthodox, text.

Mention should also be made of Kurosawa Akira as a painter. In the case of such films as *Kagemusha* [The Shadow Warrior] and *Ran*, there were often long waits between the time the scenario was completed and the filming began while the necessary funds were being raised. During those periods, Kurosawa turned out many paintings of his images of various scenes. Compiled in beautifully produced albums such as *Kagemusha* (Kōdansha, 1979), *Ran* (Shūeisha, 1984), and *Yume* [Dreams] (Iwanami Shoten, 1990), these paintings are not simply story boards for the movies, but give us fascinating insights into the nature of Kurosawa's imagination. His works are characterized by compositions of violent movement that spill over the edges of the canvas, intense colors, and vibrant three-dimensionality, qualities that are quite far afield from the mainstream Japanese painting and the painting of more academic traditions. They display qualities much closer to the heritage of ukiyoe prints and folk art such as seen in traditional kite painting. (*Satō Tadao is a film critic*.)

Chinese Characters and the Japanese Language 3

Takashima Toshio

"History" and "progress" are concepts that Japanese learned from the West. In the Western way of seeing things, human societies are all moving down the same path toward a single objective, and differences in location mean that some are in the lead while others lag behind. Of all the things Japan learned from the West, this idea is among the most basic: Humankind is progressing along a single path and that is the path of history. I think this notion was quite new to Japanese.

Having once been taught this way of viewing things, Japanese of the mid-nineteenth century compared themselves to Westerners and saw how far apart—how far "behind"—they stood. There was nothing to do but move ahead, to catch up and advance to superiority and glory. And Japanese thought that the way to accomplish this would be simple: just do things the way Westerners do. They began to study everything assiduously, from political and economic institutions to industry, transportation, education, and the arts.

The most important thing to be learned, because it related to everything else, was language. Language, being not only one among the subjects learned from the West, but also the means without which all those things could not be acquired, was also the target of discussion for reform. Even before the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the high-ranking shogunal official Maejima Hisoka (1835–1919) proposed that use of Chinese characters (*kanji*) be abolished, and particularly in the first two decades following the change of government, various theories advocating radical reform of the language were debated.

The advocates of language reform could be divided into two main schools. One consisted of those who asserted that Japan should make English the national language of Japan. The best thing to do, they were convinced, was to abandon completely the "inferior" Japanese language and adopt English as the vernacular, both written and spoken. From our contemporary perspective, such a step might seem rather rash, yet there were in fact numerous cases in which weaker peoples switched completely to the language of a dominant people—even today there are quite a few countries where communication in educated circles goes on in a foreign language (for example, English or French)—so it was not really such an outlandish idea. Nevertheless, it would probably have been impossible to achieve in Japan.

The other argument on modernization of the language centered on changing to a writing system based on phonetic characters, either alphabetic or syllabic. The biggest difference between Western languages and Japanese is that the former are all written using phonetic alphabets, whereas Japanese depends heavily on Chinese ideograms (in combination with phonetic syllabaries). Advocates argued that since the "advanced languages" use phonetic characters, Japan should also adopt a phonetic writing system, thereby moving its language into the modern age.

The government made conversion of the writing system to phonetic characters a policy objective. Opinion was divided, however, over what form this should take. There were two camps: those who argued for doing away with *kanji* (some 40,000 to 50,000 characters could be used) and relying solely on the *kana* or phonetic syllabaries (*hiragana* and *katakana*, 48 of each type), and those who were convinced that the ideograms and the *kana* should be completely done away with and replaced with roman orthography.

Implementation of this policy, however, made no progress whatsoever. As explained in the second part of this article (see *Japanese Book News*, No. 24), thousands of new *kanji* compounds had been coined in order to translate the many new foreign words introduced in the process of modernization, and many of them were homophones. Without those new words, the westernization that was taking place in the lives and activities of the people would not have progressed. The usage of those new words, moreover, depended on the characters. The word *jōki*, for instance can mean both "steam" and "excitement," and the meaning can only be determined by the *kanji* or the context. Given the large number of homophones, confusion would have been rampant. The usages of *kanji* had dramatically increased by comparison with pre-1868 times; government, industry, scholarship, and education would have come to a standstill without them (to be precise, without the Western words and concepts that had been translated using ideograms). Abolishing the use of *kanji* might have succeeded, albeit at great sacrifice, if it had been attempted before the end of the Edo period, before the influx of all the new vocabulary, but by the 1870s–1880s, it was too late. This was not entirely evident, however, to many people at the time.

The Language Reform Movement

In the early twentieth century, the government set up an official commission, the Kokugo Chōsa Iinkai or National Language Research Council. This council is a government organ whose ultimate objective is to make Japanese into something like a Western language, in short, to confine its orthography to phonetic characters. Save for a short interruption, the council has continued to exist for nearly one hundred years until the present day, and its purpose has not essentially changed. In 1934, its Japanese name was changed to the Kokugo Shingikai (National Language Council, NLC).

For about forty years from the time of its founding, the NLC drew up repeated proposals and presented them to the government, but none of them became the basis of government ordinances to implement the exclusive use of phonetic characters throughout the country (or even in part of it). Each time such proposals were made, strong protests would arise from various sectors. The council's recommendations were always divided into two parts. One

consisted of reforms of *kana* usage and rules for writing words based on the way they were actually spoken. The other consisted of proposals to determine the overall number of characters permitted for official use, with a view to curtailing the number of *kanji* as the first step in ultimately abolishing them altogether.

The advocates of switching to a *kana* orthography and those arguing for the romanization of Japanese script and the organizations that backed them continued to be active, and until the end of World War II, the language reform movement was led by the NLC, *kana*-advocacy groups, and proponents of romanization. From around 1920 onward, representatives of the leading national newspapers made up the largest proportion of NLC members. Newspapers had to be printed with great speed, and since fewer characters would mean greater speed in typesetting and printing, the newspapers were eager to see the number of characters decreased to the lowest possible number. The romanization movement was led by scholars in the natural sciences. Scientists wanted a Japanese orthography in which it would be possible to incorporate Western language terms used in their writings just as they were (in horizontally written, romanized characters). The *kana*-advocacy movement was made up of people outside of government who disliked *kanji* for one reason or other.

What all three groups active in the movement for language reform initially had in common was their conviction that language was simply a tool for expressing one's will. If language is merely a tool, it made sense to improve it and make it more convenient to use. As research continued, however, people gradualy came to realize that language may be used as a tool of expression, but is also inextricably linked to matters of spirit and tradition. Those who had studied linguistics in university were rarely part of the language reform movement; indeed, they were often its outspoken opponents.

The end of World War II with defeat for Japan presented the members of the NLC with a golden opportunity. Japan has lost the war, some opinion leaders argued, not just because of the deficiencies of its armed forces and economic resources, but because its culture was inferior to that of the West. That cultural inferiority ultimately ought to be blamed, they held, on the shortcomings of the language and the orthography. In November 1945, the influential *Yomiuri* daily newspaper published an editorial entitled "*Kanji* Should be Abolished," which argued that if *kanji* were done away with and roman script adopted, Japan would become an efficient country like the United States and would progress steadily toward cultural advancement and civilian government.

In 1946, the U.S. Education Mission to Japan presented a directive to the Japanese government to the effect that it should abolish *kanji* and adopt roman script. In the same year, the NLC, too, presented another of its proposals on language reform; and this time their proposal, consisting of two parts—adoption of phonetically consistent rules of the syllabary and restrictions on the use of *kanji* to 1,850 characters—was immediately made into a government ordinance.

One of the members of the NLC who played a leading role at this time was a man named Matsusaka Tadanori. Born in poor circumstances, Matsusaka had not been able to attend elementary school regularly and had had great difficulty in mastering *kanji.* Resentment of the barrier presented by *kanji* led him to champion the *kana* cause for many years. Ultimately the number of characters for daily use (*tōyō kanji*) was fixed at 1,850, and he was the one who adamantly opposed any attempt to increase it by even one character.

All government institutions and schools were required to conform with the stipulations of this ordinance and the newspapers as well immediately set out to implement it. The grand issue that had been debated and studied since the mid-nineteenth century was suddenly settled by imposing it upon the government apparatus, the schools, and the press.

Gradually, scholars and other intellectuals who had left Tokyo during the war began to return, but it was several years after this ordinance went into effect that they began to raise their voices in protest, calling on the Ministry of Education to rescind the language reforms. The MOE had no intention of turning back, but it became clear that complete conversion to a phonetic orthography would not happen as quickly as supporters of national language reform had initially envisioned.

The NLC continues to exist today, but it is now a very moderate body. No longer driven by the mandate to attain the ideal phonetic form of the language, it does not display much energy regarding fundamental review of postwar language reforms. In the last fifty years, the number of characters permitted for regular use has slightly increased, a step taken as a result of demands from the newspapers—which had been the strongest champions of limiting the number of *kanji*—saying it was difficult to write articles within the 1,850 *kanji* limit.

Blessing and Burden of Kanji

Western linguists say that language is basically a set of sounds. Writing is simply the shadow or image of those sounds. A writing system, they say, is not inherent or essential to language, and of course they are correct. Human beings have possessed language for tens of thousands of years, and the invention of writing systems in that long history is relatively recent. Not all languages spoken on earth, moreover, have writing systems. Languages without orthography are not necessarily impaired in any way. Indeed, writing is not indispensable to language.

But Japanese is the exception to this rule. Probably more than half of its vocabulary cannot be properly distinguished without recourse to a written form of the word. Japanese is in fact a very peculiar language, perhaps the only one of its kind in the world, in that it has so many words that can be empty or meaningless in spoken form alone. One wonders if a language like this can be called healthy. We must conclude, as I hinted in my first article, that Japanese is an odd, one might even say deformed, language. It is a language that matured with all of its deformities intact and functioning.

It was not always like that. It ended up that way after the Chinese language and writing system were introduced to Japan nearly 1,500 years ago, and the indigenous language ceased to develop. Particularly from the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868 onward, many home-made *kanji* compounds were created in the process of trans-

lating Western books and concepts, and these words became a dominant part of Japanese life and thinking.

Today, the words for very concrete things around us (mountains, stars, birds, etc), and frequently used verbs and adjectives are *wago*, the lexicon that goes back to indigenous Japanese. For these words, sound specifies meaning. The written word is only its shadow. More sophisticated concepts and terms for things that were brought into Japan after 1868, however, are almost exclusively expressed using the Chinese-character-based *kango.* These words are of course pronounced, but they are often indistinguishable without reference to the kanji used to write them. When people speak (particularly when the content is of an intellectual nature), they are constantly referring in their minds to the characters with which the words they speak are written.

The post-Meiji phonetic script movement had resolved to bring the language back to normalcy by imposition of government controls. The leaders of the movement believed that through such drastic measures, they could cause Japanese to be reborn as a "normal" language, like those of the West, in which sound lay at the core and orthography (in phonetic syllabary or roman letters) was (properly) its image.

Gradually people began to understand that it would be impossible to perform such an operation all at one stroke. The first phase toward this end was the postwar language reform. It is questionable whether Japanese drew any closer to the Western languages as a result; when the number of *kanji* permitted use was decreased, it definitely became a language with less precision and power.

Today the movement is in limbo. While the government hesitated, fearing that going any further might actually be rather risky, and wary of the strong opposing voices being raised, leadership of the phonetic script movement passed out of the Ministry of Education and the NLC.

As we have seen, Chinese characters have been a very troublesome burden for the Japanese language, and yet they are a burden that has become firmly grafted onto the body of the language. *Kanji* didn't really suit the constitution of the Japanese language to begin with, and they do not fit any better despite several reforms made over the past centuries. Still, to deprive Japanese of *kanji* would be to send it back into its infancy; if handled badly, it could be fatal. The burdens imposed by *kanji* did cause various problems, and yet without them the Japanese language cannot survive. They are both blessing and bane. From now on, too, Japanese can only survive, I believe, by coping with *kanji*'s mixed blessings. *(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.)*

Best-sellers in Literature, 1998

1. *Taiga no itteki* [Little Drops in the Great River], by Itsuki Hiroyuki (Gentōsha, ¥1,429). Written in the style of a confessional essay, the author reflects on the nature of humanity, concluding that life is an endless cycle of suffering and despair. The sense of unease felt by many Japanese, who feel they no longer have something to guide them in life, is probably the factor behind the brisk sales of this book. The publisher has received many letters by readers saying the story gave them the courage to live. (See *Japanese Book News*, No. 24, p. 18.)
2. *Rūpu* [Loop], by Suzuki Kōji (Kadokawa Shoten, ¥1,600). A horror story centered around a father and son involved in development of an artificial form of life. This is the last of a trilogy, the other two being *Ringu* [Ring] and *Rasen* [Spiral], which have been made into movies. This series has sold a total of over 5.8 million copies.
3. *Poppoya* [The Railway Worker], by Asada Jirō (Shūeisha, ¥1,500). A collection of eight short stories including the title story of a railway stationmaster who is posted on a soon-to-be deserted line in a remote part of Hokkaido, where he encounters the ghost of his daughter who died at an early age. Awarded the 117th Naoki Prize. (See *Japanese Book News*, No. 19, p. 20).
4. *Kindaichi shōnen no jikenbo: Ikazuchi satsujin jiken* [Cases from the Files of Boy-detective Kindaichi: The Ikazuchi Festival Murder Case], by Amagi Seimaru (Kōdansha, ¥760). Senior high-school boy-detective Kindaichi unravels the riddle of a curious case that occurred in a village that reveres thunder as a god. In the course of investigation he discovers the sad secrets hidden in the case. This is the sixth volume in the *Kindaichi Shōnen no Jikenbo* series, which has a large and faithful following among young people.
5. *Joi* (*Nothing Lasts Forever*), 2 vols., by Sidney Sheldon, translated by Tenma Ryūkō (Academy Shuppan, ¥1,150, ¥1,250). As three women doctors struggle in the closed, male-dominated world of the hospital they work in, they get involved in various incidents and meet an unexpected fate.
6. *Otoko to iu mono* [The Male of the Species], by Watanabe Jun'ichi (Chūō Kōron Sha, ¥1,400). Candid essays, by the author of the best-seller *Shitsurakuen* [Lost Paradise], about men as "male animals," in both physical and spiritual respects.
7. *Redi Jōkā* [Lady Joker], 2 vols., by Takamura Kaoru (Mainichi Shimbunsha, ¥1,700 each). A mystery based on the blackmailing of a large corporation that actually occurred, causing public alarm throughout Japan. (See *Japanese Book News*, No. 22, p. 19.)
8. *Chokorēto-go yaku "Midaregami"* (I, II) [The Translation of *Midaregami* into "Chocolate Language"] by Tawara Machi (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, ¥1,000 each). *Midaregami* [Tangled Hair] is a classical collection of intense love poems by noted Meiji-era woman poet Yosano Akiko (1878–1942). Tawara Machi (see *Japanese Book News*, No. 20, p. 22), who has revived the tanka form of poetry today, breathes new life into love verses written 100 years ago through her unique translations.
9. *Riyū* [Reason], by Miyabe Miyuki (Asahi Shimbunsha, ¥1,800). This is a mystery about the case of a family of four murdered in a high-rise condominium. Its minute and realistic description of families involved in the case considers the erosion of ties within the contemporary family. (See this issue of *Japanese Book News*, p. 19.)
10. *Shōsetsu "Seisho" Kyūyaku-hen* (*The Book of GOD*), by Walter Wangerin, translated by Nakamura Akiko (Tokuma Shoten, ¥1,900). The Bible is made into a novel faithful to its content. The dramatic story unfolds vividly as if in a movie. This book, which renders the Bible easy to understand through novelization, has sold far better than expected in Japan.

(Based on book distributor Tōhan Corporation lists)

Translating Children's Literature: *The Friends*

Cathy Hirano

Children's literature is deceptively easy to read, but in order for it to communicate to children or teenagers in another culture, careful deliberation and sometimes agonizing decisions are required during the translation process. Children read primarily for the fun of it. The translation must therefore be as easy to read and entertaining as the original; there can be no resort to footnotes explaining cultural context. Considering the amount of time it takes to produce such a translation, the monetary incentive is negligible. What motivates me instead is a love of reading that started in my own childhood and the satisfaction I gain from sharing with others the insights a good book can offer on Japan and life in general.

When I review a book for possible translation, I have two criteria. The book must be so good that it bears repeated reading (I will read it as many as ten times during the translation process), and it must strike a chord within me that makes me want to share it with others. I look for the universal, for thoughts or feelings that will transcend the Japanese cultural context and touch the heart of someone from a completely different culture, and for the specific, for insights or aspects of life that might give someone from another country a different perspective on Japan and its people. As soon as I began reading *Natsu no niwa* (*The Friends*) I knew that it fulfilled these criteria perfectly.

The Friends is about three sixth-grade boys and the relationship that develops between them and a solitary old man. Initially, the boys stalk the man, hoping to witness his death and thereby satisfy their curiosity about what happens when a person dies. Instead they become friends, and through their relationship, learn about life and living. Written from the perspective of one of the boys, the narrative style is upbeat and humorous, and the author's treatment of the theme is unsentimental yet often profound and deeply moving. One of the boys' mothers is divorced, another is sinking into alcoholism while the father, absorbed in his work, remains indifferent, and the third pressures her son to study harder and enter an elite school, ignoring his aspiration to become an ordinary fishmonger like his father. These and other aspects of life, such as school, peer relationships, and the emotional scars left on the elderly by the war, are woven naturally into the fabric of the boys' lives, providing a more modern perspective on Japan, one that North Americans seldom have the opportunity to see.

The book presented some interesting challenges when it came to translation. The cultural assumptions of young adult readers in the United States or Canada make certain aspects of the boys' daily lives incomprehensible. The Japanese school year, for example, begins in spring not fall, holidays are much shorter with homework assignments, and many children attend private tutorial schools after regular school in order to prepare for junior high entrance exams. The lack of any explanation of these facts would make much of the book very confusing to American teenagers, the target audience. To bridge that cultural gap and ensure that the translation still flowed as smoothly and effortlessly as the original, the American editor and I, in consultation with the Japanese author, actually added several sentences to the narrative, something I would hesitate to do if I were translating for an adult audience.

Some of the differences in cultural perceptions came as a surprise to me, a sign perhaps that I have lived in Japan too long. One of the boys' mothers, for example, locks her son out on the veranda when he fails a test and only lets him in when a neighbor complains about him crying so noisily. The American editor commented that in the United States this would be considered child abuse and wondered if we should change it. We left it as is, however, precisely because of the difference it reveals. In America, children can be sent to their rooms or some other place to reflect upon their misdemeanors, but in an apartment in Japan, there is no space to do so.

Similarly, the editor took exception to the use of "Fatso" as one of the boys' nicknames. It seemed rather cruel, not a nickname that friends would normally use. This reminded me that in North America we avoid mentioning certain physical traits, such as weight or age. In Japan, on the other hand, it is fairly common among close friends to joke about such things. It acknowledges the person's insecurity and at the same time, reassures them that they are accepted, warts and all. Although we tried softening the nickname to "Pudge," it still seemed rather unlikely in English and consequently, a brief insert was added to explain the feeling behind it.

Conversation style and content were equally challenging. The give and take among the boys in Japanese is very natural and gives the book a rhythmical, humorous tone, yet often a direct translation of the actual words came across as stilted and artificial in English. Judging the flow and style to be more important than the words in these cases, I projected myself or English-speaking children into the same situation to come up with more natural English responses.

Occasionally a single word can take longer to translate than an entire paragraph due to lack of an English equivalent. One example in *The Friends* was the word *ofukuro.* Although it means mother, it is a form only used by men, not women or children. When Yamashita, the boy who aspires to be a simple fish-store owner begins to use it, the other two are impressed and slightly envious, recognizing that he has already taken the first step into manhood. The significance of the word, however, would be totally lost on an English reader because it requires prior knowledge of the differences in spoken Japanese used by men, women, and children. After an extensive discussion with the author concerning her reasons for using this word, I thought long and hard about what would be a sign of maturity for a twelve-year-old North American boy, something that would impress his peers. I finally decided to use Yamashita's newly gained confidence about what he wanted to be when he grew up.

These are just a few of the obstacles we faced in the translation. I say "we" because it was collaboration with

Continued on page 20

Hoshino Michio: Stirring Images of Life and Death

Koyama Tetsurō

Hoshino Michio was a photographer who had lived in Alaska since his youth, recording the natural landscape and the world of the native peoples of the region. His life ended suddenly after an attack by a grizzly bear while photographing in Kamchatka in 1996. Since an exhibition of his photographs began touring Japan in the autumn of 1998, Hoshino has suddenly become much the center of attention. The opening of the exhibit in a Tokyo department store was thronged with 123,000 people passing through in the short 12 days of its showing.

Hoshino's books are much in demand. Publishers have issued reprint editions not only of his photograph collections including *Arasuka: Kaze no yō na monogatari* [Alaska: A Tale Like the Wind] (Shōgakukan, 1991), winner of the Kimura Ihei Prize, *Gurizuri* [Grizzly] (Heibonsha, 1985), *Mūsu* [Moose] (Heibonsha, 1988), and *Ākutikku odessei* [Arctic Odyssey](Shinchōsha, 1994), but of his collections of essays including *Inyunikku* [Life] (Shinchōsha, 1993; see *Japanese Book News*, No. 9, p. 13) and *Nōzan raitsu* [Northern Lights] (Shinchōsha, 1997; see *Japanese Book News*, No. 22, p. 18), and many bookstores even set aside special space to feature his books. A volume of interviews with Hoshino and writings by his friends attempting a fuller portrait of the photographer has been published entitled *Hyōgensha* [Artist] (Switch Publishing, 1998). Publication has also begun of a four-volume compendium of his photographs, *Hoshino Michio no shigoto* [The Work of Hoshino Michio] (Asahi Shimbunsha, 1998).

Hoshino's work as a nature photographer appeared in *National Geographic* magazine during his lifetime and he was internationally known in his profession, so it is curious that such a boom should occur more than two years after his death. There is more to it than the beauty of the Alaskan landscape he so eloquently captured on film. To those who view his photographs and read his writings Hoshino transmits deeply moving images of human life and death. Human beings can only survive by killing and eating other animals, and through his works, one feels his quiet, gentle acceptance of the fact that this is part of the symbiotic relationship of humans with other living creatures.

Yukawa Yutaka, an old friend of Hoshino's and the editor of his books, interprets the Hoshino boom as reflecting the sense of deadlock and frustration in our contemporary lives. Ours is a civilization revolving around the accumulation of wealth, and Hoshino introduces us to the way of life of native peoples in Alaska who do not bother to accumulate wealth. There may be a sense of healing in knowing that there is this totally different way of life being lived on earth. Yukawa reminds us that Hoshino was not an outside observer. He identified naturally with the spirit of the native peoples and he entered into that spirit without hesitation. That is the secret of the beauty of his writing, and it is quite a different approach from the Western way of seeing things.

If Hoshino's writings are ever translated, no doubt the ripples of that strong impact will spread even further. (*Koyama Tetsurō is editor, Cultural News Section, Kyodo News.*)

Book Coupons to Combat the Publishing Slump

Kiyota Yoshiaki

In 1997, sales figures in book publishing in Japan fell below those for 1996 and have not recovered. Estimates for 1998 are that the figures will again fall below those of the previous year, signaling a serious publishing recession. These trends are behind implementation since spring 1998 of a number of aggressive strategies aimed at getting people to read more books, spearheaded by the Liaison Council on Promotion of Reading and Books [Dokusho Suishin/Tosho Fukyū Renrakukai] formed by publishers associations in the industry. Among the strategies launched to combat flagging book sales are storytelling time for children held in bookstores and "Let's Go to the Bookstores" campaigns advertised in popular magazines. Perhaps the most important strategy now being developed, however, is promotion of book-coupon (including prepaid "book card") sales. Approximately 70 billion yen worth of book coupons were issued in 1998. This amount itself is not that large, but the greater the number of people using book coupons, the more assured are book sales.

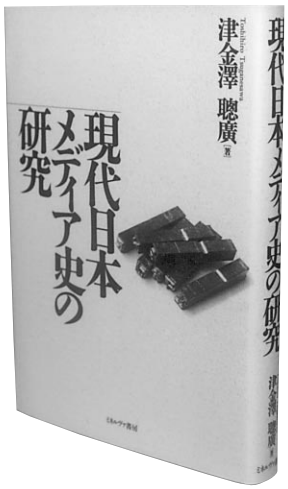
Book coupons have become increasingly popular as gifts for children and young people—for birthdays, to celebrate entry into first grade or a new school, as congratulations on passing university entrance examinations, etc.—and as presents distributed by businesses on their company anniversary day or for other general business purposes. People who want to send a gesture of gratitude for even a small favor find that book coupons are convenient as gifts and invariably appreciated. The more people use book coupons, the more business the bookstores will enjoy, so this trend can go a long way to tiding over the recession in publishing.

Prepaid book coupons can be used at about 14,000 bookstores in Japan ("book cards" at about 7,000), and users of such cards are bound to increase from now on. Telephone cards were once widely used as promotional or congratulatory gifts, but with the rapid spread of portable and mobile telephones, the prepaid telephone card business is dropping off. Declining sales of telephone cards offers a prime opportunity to expand book-coupon and prepaid card sales. Book coupons make gifts that can be attractively packaged and appropriately adjusted in value depending on the purpose, and their sales is likely to expand from now on. Of the 70 billion yen in book coupons sold, 65 billion yen-worth were redeemed. Booksellers are urging a concerted industrywide campaign to double the amount of book coupons printed and sold. (*Kiyota Yoshiaki is managing director, Shuppan News Sha.*)

New Titles

MEDIA AND JOURNALISM

***Gendai Nihon media-shi no kenkyū* [A Study of the History of Contemporary Japanese Media]. Tsuganesawa Toshihiro.** Minerva Shobō, 1998. 216×152 mm. 328 pp. ¥4,000. ISBN 4-623-02894-1.
The history of the mass media, since its beginnings with the appearance of newspapers and radio, has witnessed diverse developments that today exert enormous influence on people's lives. Tsuganesawa, who specializes in research on the relationship between the media and society from the Meiji era (1868–1912) onward, examines, among other topics, the *koshinbun*, which represent the forerunners of the major national newspapers of today.



Cover design: Inoue Fumio

Koshinbun, which centered around entertainment and popular journalism, played a role during the tumultuous times before clear lines came to be drawn between authority and anti-authoritarian forces and between mass and mini media. Former *gesakusha* (authors of traditional popular fiction published during the Edo period, 1603–1867) utilized *koshinbun* as a base and a medium of expression for the contradictions they felt in the process of modernization in post-Meiji Restoration (1868) Japan. In contrast to the usual retrospective approach to history, by studying history through the media, we are witness to the unfolding of events during the tumultuous years of the Meiji era.

***"Ki" no hassō: Min'na "Shōnen Magajin" ga oshiete kureta* [It All Started from "Curious": *Shōnen Magazine* Taught Me Everything]. Uchida Masaru.** Sangokan, 1998. 193×131 mm. 318 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-88320-146-5.
The author of this autobiography, born in 1935, entered the employ of the Kōdansha publishing house in 1959, and as chief editor of the boys' manga weekly, *Shōnen Magazine*, helped launch such well-known story-manga series as Kajiwara Ikki's *Kyojin no hoshi* [Star of the Giants] and *Ashita no Jō* [Tomorrow's Joe], Mizuki Shigeru's *Gegege no Kitarō* [Kitarō the Spooky], and Akatsuka Fujio's *Tensai Bakabon* [Genius Bakabon]. He later became interested in the relationship between computers and books, and his four-decade career has paralleled the development of the visual media.

Manga is one of the most universal dimensions of Japanese culture, with appeal to people anywhere. Understanding the history of manga can be helpful in understanding Japan, especially post-World War II. This book is an intriguing first-person account of one involved on the inside of the history of manga, from the standpoint of an editor whose motive was ultimately the pursuit of profit.

Cover design: Suzuki Seiichi Design Office

***Shimbun ga omoshiroku nai riyū* [Why Newspapers Aren't Interesting]. Iwase Tatsuya.** Kōdansha, 1998. 194×131 mm. 326 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-06-208857-6.
Over the past several years, it has often been pointed out in Japan that

Cover design: Yamagishi Yoshiaki

the mass media, including newspapers, broadcasting, and publishing, have lost their self-regenerating capacity and are on the verge of destroying themselves. The present book is a critique of the Japanese newspaper industry by a journalist mainly concerned with bureaucratic corruption and the ethics of journalism.

News reporters have such a cozy relationship with the government agencies whose affairs they cover that they have essentially forfeited the function as watchdogs of authority that society expects them to fulfill. The very absence of any sense of crisis about this situation on the part of members of the press themselves, warns Iwase, threatens to undermine their very raison d'ētre.

The book consists of three parts dealing with corruption in the government press clubs, the excessive dominance of the *Asahi Shimbun*, and the necessity for a restoration of the true spirit of journalism.

The author's critique of the newspaper media follows in the established lineage of Japanese media studies. He approaches the realities through very specific and detailed compilations of data.

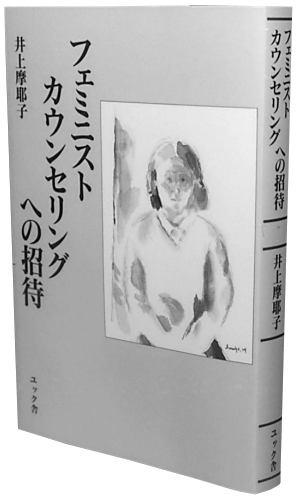
PSYCHOLOGY

***Feminisuto kaunseringu eno shōtai* [Invitation to Feminist Counseling]. Inoue Mayako.** Yukkusha, 1998. 188×128 mm. 262 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-8431-0067-6.
Author Inoue (b. 1939) once served as school counselor and college lecturer, and since 1990 she has called herself a feminist counselor. In this

book she looks back over her career in an attempt to identify guiding principles for her profession.

Inoue allows herself to be called a feminist in the sense that she seeks to reform various structural conditions that produce gender discrimination. In an environment in which women may be subject to discrimination, violence, and irrationality, she realized that women often identify problems and understand them better through association among themselves, and made up her mind to devote herself to clinical work.

Refusing to side with any myth or ideology designed to achieve only superfical reconciliation of gender discrimination, Inoue continues to call people's attention to the seriousness of the discrimination women face, which she encountered in the course of her own work. Her consistent stance is that because understandings of male-female relationships vary from person to person, ceaseless efforts must be made to seek convincing ways to understand such relations.



PHILOSOPHY

***Nihon bunka ni okeru aku to tsumi* [Sin and Evil in Japanese Culture]. Nakamura Yūjirō.** Shinchōsha, 1998. 196×136 mm. 362 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-10-424601-8.

Nakamura is a philosopher known for his insights on the structural distortions inherent in contemporary society and his empirical study of the diverse problems they produce. His consistent interest in the vulnerable aspect of humanity from the early stages of his activities has produced achievements in research on sentiment and shared sensibilities.

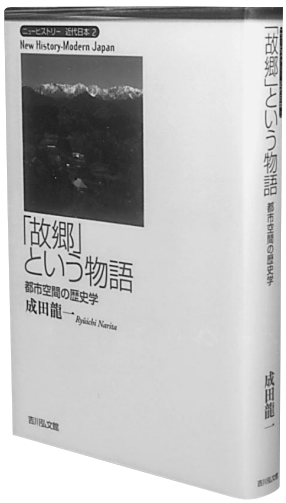
The present book takes up the so-called Aum Shinrikyō incident, including the cult's sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system in March 1995, as a specific example that illustrates the author's views on Japanese culture. He sees the incident as the result of a dilemma inherent in Japanese culture, at the deep layers of which an ethic has been passed down that permits killing others in the name of "fidelity" (*makoto*). As a way to intrinsically overcome that value, he articulates his theory of a "logic of topos," an idea originating in philosopher Nishida Kitarō's (1870–1945) idea of a "place" (*basho*) of "absolute nothingness" which reveals the "true self."

Cover design: Shinchōsha

HISTORY

***"Kokyō" to iu monogatari: Toshi kūkan no rekishi-gaku* [The Story of "Home": A History of Urban Space]. Narita Ryūichi.** Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998. 194×132 mm. 272 pp. ¥2,600. ISBN 4-642-03701-2.

Historian Narita deals with the question of why collective representations of "home" have continued to be created and to hold strong appeal to the depths of people's consciousness throughout the modern and contemporary history of Japan. The author aims his critical eye at the fact that modern/contemporary Japanese society has been shaped at the initiative of the state. He verifies with great care the process by which people's thinking and behavior have been



Cover design: Shimizu Yoshihiro

tamed by an ideological apparatus sustained by coercive institutions.

Young people who left their homes in the country and went to Tokyo eventually saw their dreams destroyed. Even mature adults continued to suffer. Resentment born of such frustrations produced all sorts of fictions, and the concept of "home" functioned as part of that fiction.

Among the topics discussed in the book is *dōkyōkai*, or associations of people from the same province. The author sees the associations not as a unique product of Japanese culture but as a distinct category extracted from the historical process.

One chapter is devoted to the relationship between well-known poet and novelist Ishikawa Takuboku (1886–1912) and his home in Iwate prefecture.

***Mishima kara Ōmu e: Mishima Yukio to kindai* [From Mishima to Aum: Mishima Yukio and Modern Times]. Iijima Yōichi.** Heibonsha, 1998. 194×130 mm. 354 pp. ¥2,300. ISBN 4-582-84178-3.

A professor of architecture, Iijima believes that symbolic meaning can be found in the ritual suicide of novelist Mishima Yukio immediately after making a speech from the balcony of the Tokyo headquarters of the Self-Defense Forces in 1970 and the scattering of lethal sarin on crowded Tokyo subways by followers of the Aum Shinrikyō cult in 1995. He argues that Mishima's suicide could be interpreted as the outburst of long-repressed feelings that had built up in the modernization of Japan and that the Aum Shinrikyō attempt to massacre innocent commuters expressed

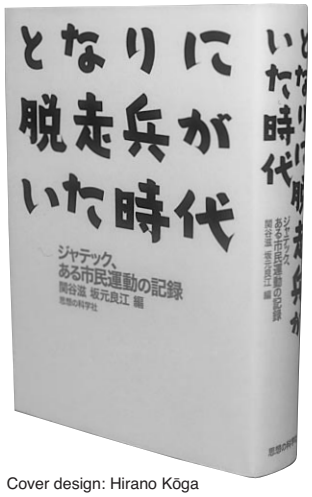
the breaking point of repressed emotions accumulated by changes in the post-modern process.

The author probes the frustrations thus expressed by analyzing the symbolism of space and the myth of time (transmigration). He shows how the balcony in European-style architecture, for example, had special symbolic meaning in Japan since it was introduced from Europe, and gives a number of historical examples. He also draws attention to metempsychosis, a central concept passed down in the tradition of the imperial family. According to that tradition, the shrine at Ise where the legendary first empress Amaterasu is enshrined must be moved and rebuilt every twenty years. At each renewal, the soul of Ise Shrine is believed to restart its life all over again. The same concept of revival of the soul is symbolized in the ceremony of imperial ascension. Tragically, Mishima's suicide must be understood in the context of that tradition.

Cover design: Nakagaki Nobuo & Yoshino Ai

***Tonari ni dassōhei ga ita jidai: Jatekku, aru shimin undō no kiroku* [The Days the Deserters Lived Among Us: A Record of JATEC, the Citizens' Coalition for Peace]. Sekiya Shigeru and Sakamoto Yoshie, eds.** Shisō no Kagakusha, 1998. 216×151 mm. 658 pp. ¥5,700. ISBN 4-7836-0092-9.

Collected in this volume are recollections of thirty-three Japanese who were engaged in underground activities giving shelter to American soldiers who deserted barracks or ships during the Vietnam war. In 1967, a Tokyo University student met four young American men at a coffee shop in Shinjuku. The Americans



Cover design: Hirano Kōga

asked him to find them a place to stay overnight. The student contacted Beheiren (Peace for Vietnam Committee) and later a group called the Japanese Technical Assistance Committee (JATEC) came into being.

JATEC organized a network that provided refuge to American deserters and help in smuggling them to Sweden, which openly accepted such soldiers. The first four Americans later became widely known as the "intrepid four." Not all deserters from the military did so for noble aims; some were just scared of battle. JATEC members faced all kinds of problems: how to lodge the deserters, money, transportation within Japan, counseling, but they did succeed in a number of cases. One of the soldiers they helped now lives in the United States. He practices medicine in a small town. He has a family but his past is not disclosed to anyone but his wife. The youngest members of JATEC have reached their fifties. Reminiscing about their underground activities, they believe their lives were greatly enriched by such experiences.

ECONOMY

***Karisuma: Nakauchi Isao to Daiei no "sengo"* [Charisma: Daiei and Nakauchi Isao's Postwar Career]. Sano Shin'ichi.** Nikkei BP Sha, 1998. 193×131 mm. 686 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 4-8222-4120-3.

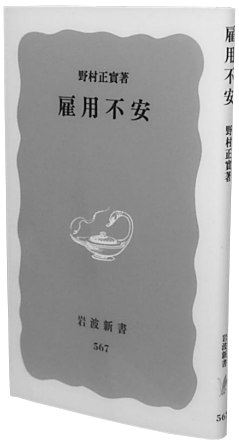
Postwar Japan was not without its share of capitalist robber barons, and Nakauchi Isao may be one of them. Now seventy-five, Nakauchi heads Daiei, Japan's largest supermarket chain now in serious trouble stemming from emormous bank loans. Author Sano is a baby boomer who grew up during Japan's rapid growth years. He was witness to the process by which the complacent old Japan was ruthlessly torn down and replaced by a more aggressive one. The "economic miracle" included the demise of his own parents' small retail business in downtown Tokyo. The process also devastated Japanese agriculture and its education system as the mass-consumption society was rapidly formed.

Nakauchi was definitely one of the main players in the economic drama. In 1945, he was repatriated from the Philippines, where he had been sent to fight against American forces. He survived a terrible battle in which 389 of 532 soldiers in his division were killed. He still carries hand-grenade shrapnel in his body. Starting out as a black-market trader, he later moved into legitimate business, challenging established distribution systems that had long been dominated by the big manufacturers. He won success by championing the cause of affordable prices for housewives, and Daiei today has annual revenues of more than 2 trillion yen.

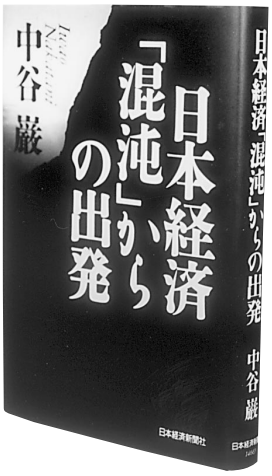
Sano recounts Nakauchi's personal and professional history, disclosing many of the secrets to his expansion strategy and business tactics. His extensive research includes interviews with 172 named sources (Nakauchi among them) and dozens of unnamed people. His account, carefully backed up in documentary research or interviews, portrays an entrepreneur with an enormous ego whose greed seems to have destroyed not only his own brothers but devoured himself as well.

Cover design: Hirano Kōga

***Koyō fuan* [Employment Instability]. Nomura Masami.** Iwanami Shoten, 1998. 172×105 mm. 214 pp. ¥640. ISBN 4-00-430567-5.
Unemployment has long been said to be lower in Japan than in Europe and the United States, but with the recent recession, the rate started rising in 1991, topped 3 percent in 1995, in the wake of bankruptcies of a number of large corporations, and rose over 4 percent in April 1998. While there is a rising sense of alarm in Japan over these unemployment figures, in the postwar period, the "postwar worst" unemployment rate is still lower than that in the United States in the best of times. What are the reasons for this discrepancy?



One reason may be differences in definition of terms. Figures will differ considerably depending on how one categorizes those who *want* employment but do not try very hard to get a job, thinking that there is probably no appropriate work available. More fundamental, argues author Nomura, are the structural attributes of the employment system in Japan, which are different from those of any other industrial nation. Essentially the difference boils down to employment of virtually all people who want work, even though their productivity and wages may be low (*zembu koyō*). In the past, this peripheral working population was absorbed by agriculture, small companies, and tiny-scale unincorporated enterprises. Today's gradual rise in the unemployment rate is understood by the author as a sign that the distinctive character and structure of the Japanese employment are eroding. He analyzes future unemployment problems in the context of the further disintegration of that system.



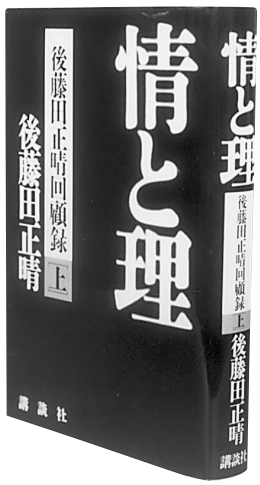
Cover design: Kawakami Shigeo

***Nihon keizai "konton" kara no shuppatsu* [The Japanese Economy: Rise out of "Chaos"]. Nakatani Iwao.** Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha. 1998. 193×132 mm. 270 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-532-14665-8.
What should be done to pull the Japanese economy out of the long-term recession ensuing from the bursting of the bubble economy? Respected economist and deregulation advocate Nakatani, professor at Hitotsubashi University, stresses the necessity of creating what he calls a vigorous "organized chaos."

If contemporary Japanese society, which penalizes any attempt to disturb the established order, moves on as it is without instituting necessary reforms, the Japanese economy with all its internal contradictions will ultimately be unable to elude a hard landing at the hands of a globalized market. In order to generate an energy-filled "chaos," argues Nakatani, it is vital, first, to dismantle the bureaucracy-led, developing-country-style system going back to the Meiji era (1868–1912), which was designed for catching up with the West through government-private sector collaboration, and promote decentralization instead. Second, the tax system should be reformed and educational decentralization and reforms fostered that will nurture people of unique and individualistic character. Third, individuals must be guaranteed free action to try new things and choose a way of life that suits them from among the great variety of alternatives. Citing specific examples, he demonstrates the usefulness of the market principle, which, he asserts, is the only way for Japan to start over in the battle against recession.

POLITICS

***Jō to ri: Gotōda Masaharu kaikoroku* [Principles and Sensibilities: The Memoirs of Gotōda Masaharu]. 2 vols. Gotōda Masaharu.** Kōdansha, 1998. 193×132 mm. each. 382 pp.; 366 pp. ¥1,700 each. ISBN 4-06-209113-5; 4-06-209114-3.
This is a biography of an influential politician, Gotōda Masaharu, born in 1914. After graduation from the University of Tokyo, he entered the Ministry of Home Affairs and rose through the ranks of the bureaucracy. He later served as head of the National Police Agency and was vice-chief cabinet secretary during the Tanaka Kakuei cabinet before turning to politics. Elected twice in national Diet elections, he was Minister of Home Affairs during the Ōhira Masayoshi cabinet, chief cabinet secretary of the Nakasone Yasuhiro cabinet, and Minister of Justice and Vice-Prime Minister during the Miyazawa Kiichi cabinet. In October 1996, right before the general elections, he retired at the age of 82.



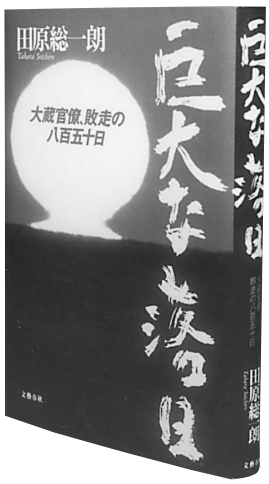
Cover design: Kamegai Shōji

The book begins with his boyhood and looks back on his thirty-five years of service in the bureaucracy and two decades as a politician. Gotōda remains an influential opinion leader in political circles. As one of the central players on the center stage of government during the tumultuous Shōwa era (1926–89), he candidly recounts his impressions of the important phases of Shōwa history, making the book a valuable historical source.

The text is based on an oral history project consisting of a total of twenty-seven interviews (held over a period

of two and a half years) by political scientists of the Kokuritsu Seisaku Kenkyū Daigakuin Daigaku (National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies) founded in 1997. The title of the book comes from a remark by Gotōda that he deliberately changed himself from bureaucrat guided by high principles to politician attuned to human sensibilities.

***Kyodai na rakujitsu* [Prodigious Sunset]. Tahara Sōichirō.** Bungei Shunjū, 1998. 194×133 mm. 260 pp. ¥1,286. ISBN 4-16-354260-4.
The setting sun here refers to the Ministry of Finance. In 1998, in order to reassert discipline in its ranks, the ministry punished more than one hundred officials for accepting excessive "entertainment" (*settai*) in various guises. This was the largest number disciplined in the postwar period. Many of those penalized were holders of high-ranking, elite posts. Several MOF officials were arrested for taking bribes. The present book, by a freelance journalist known for his many years of investigation of Japanese political and bureaucratic worlds, considers the implications of the ethical decline revealed in the country's most prestigious ministry.

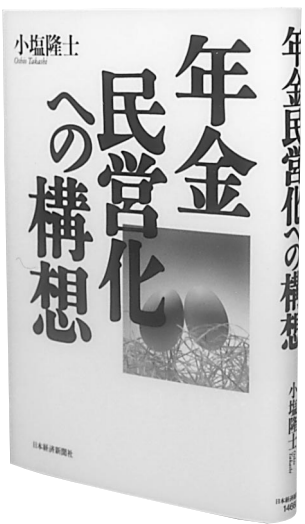


Cover design: Sakata Masanori

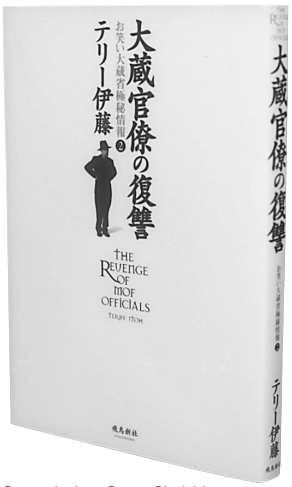
Entertainment of bureaucrats is actually a time-honored practice going back to ancient times, and such entertainment itself is nothing new. The result of the recent revelations of bureaucratic malfeasance, argues Tahara, is not so much new exposure of the corruption of bureaucrats as widespread realization among the populace that their central government, which led the country's modernization since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, has collapsed at its very foundations. It is crucial, he believes, that Japan seek political principles and a social philosophy distinct from that which was necessary for the nation's modernization.

***Nenkin min'eika eno kōsō* [Visions for Privatization of Pension Plans]. Oshio Takashi.** Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1998. 193×130 mm. 246 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-532-14660-7.
Japan is now the nation with the greatest longevity in the world. In addition to its aging population, the number of babies given birth to by the average woman thoughout a lifetime decreased to 1.42 by the year 1995. Pension plans in Japan are premised on "support by the younger generations of the older," so that pension payments to the aged are sustained by the pension payments of the working generation. With the aging of the population and the decreasing number of children, however, pension financing will obviously become untenable at some point. The working genration is increasingly worried that they may not be able to draw adequate pensions when they themselves grow old. Reforms of the current pension plans must be carried out. The question is, how?

Author of this book Oshio (b. 1960) advocates the privatization of pension plans in order to sustain their continuity and eliminate discrimination stemming from diverse occupations of future pensioners. Under the present system, the principle of welfare and the principle of insurance are not differentiated; they are mixed. To make their functions effectively separate, Oshio argues, the public pension plans will have to be limited to the guaranteeing of a minimum standard of living, and pension plans for coverage beyond that limit should be privately contracted on an individual basis. Oshio is an up-and-coming economist who once worked with the Economic Planning Agency and is now assistant professor at the Ritsumeikan University.



***Ōkura kanryō no fukushū* [The Revenge of MOF Officials]. Terry Itō.** Asuka Shinsha, 1998. 188×132 mm. 206 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 4-87031-337-5.
The author's earlier book entitled *Owarai Ōkurashō gokuhi jōhō* [Destroy after Reading: Secret Files of the Ministry of Finance] (Asuka Shinsha) based on discussions with anonymous officials of the Ministry of Finance elite, made sensation when it came out in 1996. It made startling revelations about what was really going on in the MOF and of true feelings of its officials, including the intense elite consciousness of those who serve there and the predominance of MOF among all the ministries.



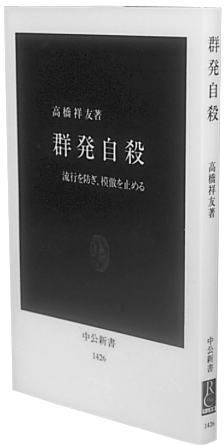
Cover design: Ogata Shūichi

During the two years after publication of *Owarai Ōkurashō* the reputation of the MOF was stained by bribery scandals and revelations of numerous cases of excessive "entertainment." Judicial authorities entered the MOF building to arrest officials for the first time. Many MOF officials were punished (by temporary suspension of their duties, wage cuts, warnings, and other penalties), and an official in the top MOF post, administrative vice minister, was forced to resign. Partly due to popular disenchantment caused by the

prolonged recession, the prestige of the MOF has been thoroughly tarnished. Against this tide of popular opinion, the comments of the four anonymous MOF officials with whom Itō talks in the present book, sound rather like excuses, obviously trying to hide their discouragement and anguish about the changes in their ministry. They frankly talk about rivalry between elite and non-elite MOF personnel and other human dimensions of their work, making the book a valuable source on the inner workings of the MOF. Itō is a well-known TV director responsible for many successful programs.

SOCIETY

***Gumpatsu jisatsu* [Cluster Suicide]. Takahashi Yoshitomo.** Chūō Kōron Sha, 1998. 173 × 109 mm. 212 pp. ¥700. ISBN 4-12-101426-X.
In Japan, 23,000 to 24,000 people kill themselves each year, making more than sixty people every day, which is double the number of deaths caused by traffic accidents. The tendency of suicide to be "infectious" or "catching," for one case to be followed quickly by one or several others, has been known since ancient times.



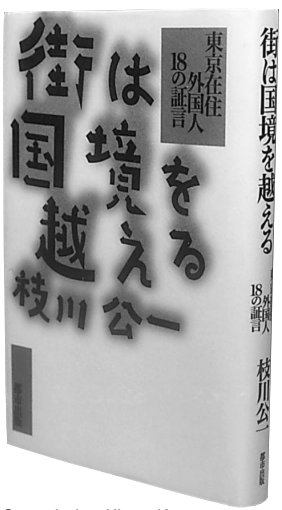
The term "cluster suicide" refers to such series of suicides as well as group suicide (a number of people killing themselves at the same place at the same time), suicide carried out at places known for such incidents, and so forth. In the backdrop of cluster suicide is a vulnerable group of people who are easily influenced by others, either separately or by a group. Psychiatrist Takahashi analyzes the social and individual conditions of such susceptible people, and argues that society should accord more attention to the cluster suicide phenomenon and improve measures for prevention and treatment.

Those who commit suicide may appear to die alone, but Takahashi suspects they seek companionship even at the last moment, leading them to choose the same means or places of people who have gone before them. His analysis imparts a glimpse at the tragedy of human beings who take their own lives.

***Machi wa kokkyō o koeru: Tokyo zaijū gaikokujin jūhachi no shōgen* [The City Beyond National Boundaries: Testimonies of Eighteen Foreign Residents of Tokyo]. Edagawa Kōichi.** Toshi Shuppan, 1998. 193 × 131 mm. 326 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-924831-61-1.
This collection of eighteen interviews of twenty foreign residents of Tokyo introduces stories from people who have come from all over the world to Tokyo and chosen to live there. Pancho, an American, and Beatrice, an Italian, have been living in a six-tatami-mat room for years. They make accessories. In winter they go south to Thailand. Beatrice says she sometimes misses Rome and Milan, but does not find the scenery of those cities beautiful. She is fascinated by Tokyo's townscape, which she says teaches the importance of small things.

The people introduced in the book live lives they believe to be in a Tokyo style. Tokyo is often their final destination after having wandered about Asia for many years. While Japanese often hanker after the attractively designed streets of European cities, these people speak of their friendships with neighbors and owners of their apartment houses. These friendships can be so strong as to prevent them from moving to bigger, more attractive accommodations. The author is quite taken aback to find that perhaps Japanese have made the mistake of casting aside urban lifestyles that are very precious and still do not realize what they have lost.

Edagawa once lived in New York and knows the difference between such cities and Tokyo, but intuitively he feels that all cities have something in common and that in the figurative sense all cities are connected in a way that transcends national boundaries. His interviews seem to confirm that his intuition can be objectively verified.



Cover design: Hirano Kōga

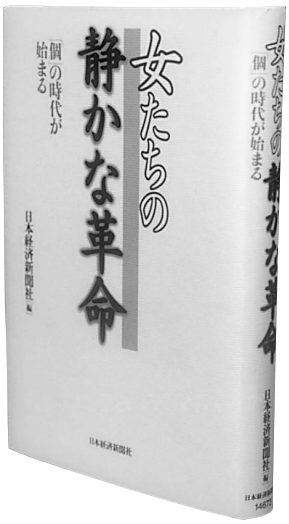
***Nihon shakai to wa nanika: Fukuzatsu kei no shiten kara* [What Is Japanese Society: Perspectives on a Complex System]. Hamaguchi Eshun, ed.** Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai. 1998. 182 × 129 mm. 318 pp. ¥1,160. ISBN 4-14-001833-X.
This collection of sixteen essays by specialists in the fields of humanities and social sciences seeks a new perspective on contemporary Japanese society. The motif running throughout the book is the endeavor to relativize traditional discourses on Japanese culture and society that are a product of the mind-set that resists and competes with the West.

Editor Hamaguchi characterizes Japanese society as an "interpersonal" (*kanjin*) society where order is maintained through emphasis on what he calls the human nexus. The

Cover design: Kurata Akinori

"complex system" is a framework for illuminating the flexible structural features inherent in such a society. Juxtaposing Western individualism against Japanese groupism, he rejects any attempt to judge which is superior. His approach, called "methodological relatum-ism," helps explain both the universal aspects of the Japanese social system and the peculiar aspects of Western social systems. The book gives us a glimpse at the struggle being waged in the social sciences in Japan against the long-held inferiority complex vis-à-vis the West.

***Onna tachi no shizukana kakumei: "Ko" no jidai ga hajimaru* [Women's Quiet Revolution: The Beginning of the Era of the Individual]. Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, ed.** Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha. 1998. 194×130 mm. 292 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-532-14673-9.
The book is a compilation of a series of articles on women's issues written by a group of journalists of the major financial and business trade daily *Nihon keizai shimbun.* The series ran for six months starting in January 1998.



In Japan, little importance has been given to the fundamental principle in a modern society that social organizations, such as the family, corporations, and the state, are entities created by individuals and can therefore be changed whenever necessary. The strains resulting from such inattention can be detected in symbolic form in the attitudes and behavior of women. The book points out that while, historically speaking, Western individualism has been led by men, the development of Japanese individualism is being initiated by women, and shows this by examining three realms of activity: work, domestic life, and recreation.

The book could have benefited from further study of the role of gender as a principle in the making of human societies, but nevertheless provides solid documentation of the types of disparities that exist between men and women in Japanese society today.

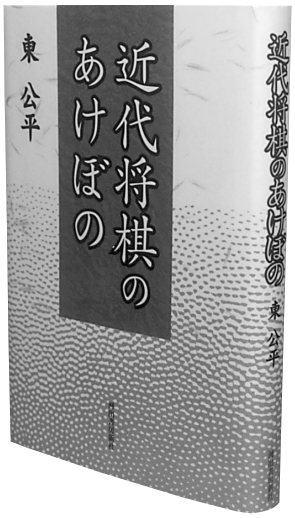
CULTURE

***Fasshon no nijusseiki: Toshi, shōhi, sei* [Fashion in the Twentieth Century: Cities, Consumption, Gender]. Kashiwagi Hiroshi.** Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai. 1998. 182×128 mm. 246 pp. ¥1,160. ISBN 4-14-001831-3.
The preface emphasizes that this book is not an introduction to the history of fashion but an attempt to examine the thought and sensibilities of the twentieth century through the ways people clothed themselves. Just as the French Revolution gave the French freedom to dress in whatever manner they pleased, the Meiji Restoration eliminated rigid hierarchical institutions and freed Japanese from feudal regulations regarding dress and hairstyles.

While the book studies and discusses Japan's fashion trends, Kashiwagi's main interest seems to be much broader. International style, he points out, was the modern design movement's attempt to identify approaches universally acceptable in Europe, North and South America, and Asia. The goal of modern design is to transcend differences of race, religion, language, and gender. It is exemplified today in the businessman's suit and tie and the T-shirt and blue jeans of young people. Mass-produced apparel of the Ralph Lauren and Brooks Brothers brands are everywhere and for everyone; the paradox is that universal designs set world standards and render all those who do not adopt them marginal. The postmodernism of the 1980s has by contrast made much of diversity. The author quotes frequently from Walter Benjamin who defined modern society as a phantasmagoria pregnant with the capitalist dream. Fashion, Kashiwagi says, reflects the shifting images within that dream.

Cover design: Kurata Akinori

***Kindai shōgi no akebono* [The Dawn of Modern *Shōgi*]. Higashi Kōhei.** Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1998. 194×132 mm. 262 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-309-26335-6.
This collection of essays, previously published in the magazines *Shōgi magazine* and *Shōgi sekai*, relates anecdotes in the history of Japanese chess (*shōgi*). The author is a professional player and commentator on *shōgi* matches, as well as reporter for the *Asahi shimbun* newspaper.



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During the Meiji era (1868–1912) there were no *shōgi* professionals, and players engaged in other occupations held matches on their holidays. In pre-*shōgi* magazine days, players and fans gathered information by word of mouth.

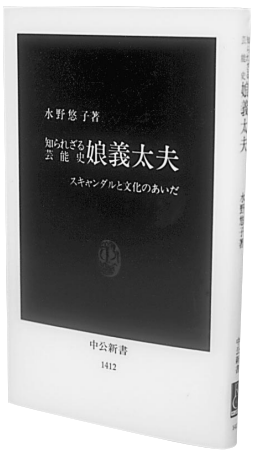
Japan's *shōgi* culture was patronized by the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1867), which encouraged the training of experts in the game and

assumed the role of sponsor, establishing various systems and practices. The succeeding Meiji regime tended to slight *shōgi* as mere entertainment, and in subsequent decades Japanese chess became an object of interest among anti-government newspapers and magazines, including Kuroiwa Ruikō's well-known newspaper *Yorozu chōhō*. There was a certain period, then, when *shōgi* played a part in the anti-establishment movement. The book contains a wealth of anecdotes on famous *shōgi* players and historic matches.

***Nipponjin wa naze?: Tojōkoku seinen to no Nippon mondō* [Why Do Japanese Do Things This Way?: Questions from Young People of Developing Countries]. Ōno Tsutomu.** 3A Corporation, 1998. 187 × 130 mm. 280 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 4-88319-115-X.
Involved in training programs related to overseas development aid projects, the author must "explain Japan" to engineering trainees from developing countries. Most trainees come to Japan with scarce preliminary preparations or knowledge of the country. Inundated with their questions, he is often surprised by things he takes for granted. An Indian studying Japanese in Tokyo once asked if people used the same characters for writing in Hiroshima. He had been told he would be sent to Hiroshima for training. The author understood why the young man was worried after learning that in India two hundred languages are used.

In this way, questions that made him aware of the trainees' lack of understanding of Japan at the same time revealed his own ignorance of other countries, especially the developing countries. A Saudi Arabian asked, for example, why Japanese men do not have beards or mustaches. A Korean expressed his shock at seeing Japanese eat rice holding their bowl in one hand and chopsticks in the other; this common practice is considered deplorably bad manners, seen only among beggars in Korea. The author selected ten such questions to present in this book, designed to help Japanese think about the non-Western parts of the world from an amusing and entertaining perspective.

***Shirarezaru geinō-shi: Musume gidayū* [The History of a Little-Known Performing Art: Women's *Gidayū*]. Mizuno Yūko.** Chūō Kōron Sha, 1998. 173 × 109 mm. 250 pp. ¥780. ISBN 4-12-101412-X.
Musume gidayū, professional performances by women chanting tales to the accompaniment of the shamisen, started in Edo (now Tokyo) two hundred years ago. During the Meiji era (1868–1912), it enjoyed enthusiastic popular support, mainly among the urban masses.



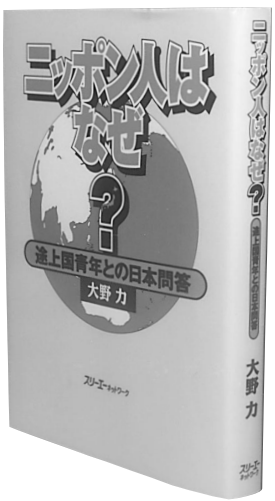
Although almost forgotten by society today, there are still performers who carry on *musume gidayū* traditions and perform in various parts of the country. Its long-preserved traditions have influenced other genres of the performing arts, such as popular singing (*kayō*). In that sense, it is wrong to regard *musume gidayū* as a vanished art form, says the author.

Even though in general the Meiji government did its best to mobilize popular and traditional culture in building a new nation, it sought to prohibit *musume gidayū* as "detrimental" to public morals, imposing various restraints upon it. Author Mizuno raises the question of what enabled the art to survive that policy and remain vigorous today. She sheds light upon the role of this performing art in the modern history of Japan.

FOLKLORE

***Fuku no kami to bimbōgami* [The Deities of Good Fortune and Poverty]. Komatsu Kazuhiko.** Chikuma Shobō, 1998. 182 × 128 mm. 200 pp. ¥1,100. ISBN 4-480-04221-0.
The "seven deities of good fortune" (*shichifukujin*) in Japanese folk belief are named Ebisu, Daikoku, Benzaiten, Bishamonten, Hotei, Fukurokuju, and Jurōjin. Deriving from gods and sages of ancient India and China, the seven were grouped together and revered as the deities of wealth and happiness beginning in medieval times. In the background of this development were the weakening of the medieval state and people's yearning for happiness in this world rather than in the next, amid the relative decline of established religion and the expansion of the money economy at that time.

People believed the seven deities would bring them abundant harvests, flourishing business, well-being for their families, connubial bliss, wealth for their posterity, and good health, in this life. More recently, traffic safety and success in school entrance examinations have been added to this list, keeping reliance on *shichifukujin* favor vigorous in Japanese culture today.



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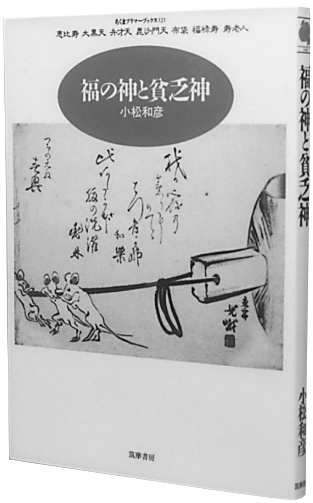
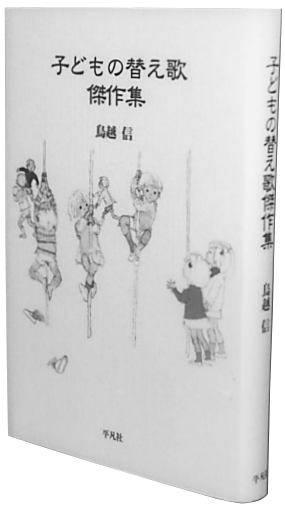


Cover design: Minami Shimbō

Drawing on innumerable references, author Komatsu, folklorist and professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Kyoto), traces Japanese perceptions of "happiness" (*fuku*) and "wealth" (*tomi*) over the centuries and demonstrates the mutually supplementary relationship of these ideas with demons and ogres (*oni*) and "bad luck" (*yaku*). This is a unique study of Japanese culture illuminating the contemporary Japanese view of happiness through historical analysis of folk society.

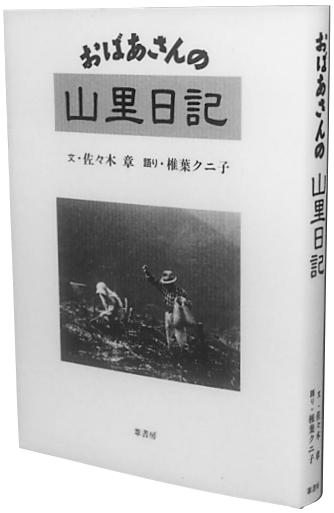
***Kodomo no kaeuta kessaku shū* [A Collection of Children's Parody Song Masterpieces]. Torigoe Shin.** Heibonsha, 1998. 193×131 mm. 254 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 4-582-82926-0.
Author Torigoe (b. 1929) is a university professor specializing in research on children's literature who also writes original books for children himself. Noting how much delight children take in *kae-uta* (parodies of well-known ditties and songs) throughout the ages, he collects in this book actual examples past and present and presents them with his own annotations. The collection is divided into six categories: songs taught in the schools, nursery rhymes, popular ballads (*kayōkyoku*), war songs, theme songs of TV animation programs and commercials, and bawdy songs.

According to the author, *kae-uta* are a kind of "contemporary folktale" representing signs of a chaotic or dynamic mood at a pre-cognitive stage. They also express the perspective from which the weak view their society, a force that can generate action, as well as an element that is at the core of contemporary folklore. Understanding the concept of *kae-uta* in this broad context, the book shows how they transmigrate the spirit of the original song into different realms of symbolic expression.



Cover design: Mine Yūko

***Obāsan no yamazato nikki* [An Old Woman's Diary of a Mountain Village]. Sasaki Akira and Shiiba Kuniko.** Ashi Shobō, 1998. 210×148 mm. 248 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-7512-0710-5.
This book is a record of the life of an elderly couple engaged in slash-and-burn agriculture in a village called Shiiba-son (Miyazaki prefecture) in the mountains of Kyushu. The diary, told mainly through the words of the wife, is recorded by an agriculture scholar with a special interest in the origins and development of farming.



Shiiba is known from a book by founder of Japanese folklore studies Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), entitled *Nochi no karikotoba no ki* [A Later Record of Hunting Life] (1909), recording the way of life of the wild-boar-hunting mountain people of this area. The old style of slash-and-burn farming, based on harmony with nature, is still practiced in the village, which seems a world apart in a country where every local area now seems more or less the same as the result of postwar rapid economic growth.

Author Sasaki spent twenty years interviewing the farmers and recording their accounts. He vividly depicts the rhythm of their lives and work, so different from that of people engaged in rice farming or commerce and industry anywhere else in Japan. The slash-and-burn method of farming, he explains, is a technique that maintains a minimal lifestyle basically relying on the workings of nature, a sharp contrast to the productivity- and efficiency-oriented way of life that produced modern civilization. In actuality, the book shows, slash-and-burn agriculture has much in common with the post-modern urban lifestyle.

NONFICTION

***Bashō futatsu no kao: Zokujin to haisei to* [The Two Faces of Bashō: Secular and Spiritual]. Tanaka Yoshinobu.** Kōdansha, 1998. 188×127 mm. 254 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-06-258134-5.
When famous Edo-period haiku poet Bashō moved from Nihonbashi to Fukagawa in 1680, a dramatic change took place in the tone of his works. Established theory attributes this shift—from the Danrin style of poetry, emphasizing humor and wit, to the Shōfū (i.e., his own style)—to a turning point in Bashō's thinking as a result of his exposure to Zen Buddhism and the influences of ancient Chinese philosohers Lao-zi (Lao-tzu) and Zhuang-zi (Chang-tzu).

Cover design: Yamagishi Yoshiaki

Author Tanaka opposes such philosophical explanations, offering a more mundane hypothesis. Bashō was quite an able, practical businessman, he shows, and had won a bid for an important dredging job for a portion of the channel carrying water into the city of Edo (present-day Tokyo). Meanwhile, he had achieved some fame as a haiku

poet/judge, and had quite a few followers among the prosperous merchants and high-ranking samurai.

Tanaka focuses his attention on Bashō's nephew, whose haiku pen name was Tōin and for whom Bashō had been guardian. Mainly from circumstantial evidence, Tanaka conjectures that the young nephew fell in love with Bashō's mistress and eloped with her, a serious crime that could have been punishable by death. The law of the domain from which Bashō and Tōin came stipulated that those living temporarily in Edo should return to their home domain every five years. Violators and their relatives could be punished severely. After consultation with his brother living in his home domain, Bashō falsely reported Tōin's death to the local government. This hypothesis, Tanaka believes, would perfectly explain two enigmas that have puzzled Bashō scholars for two centuries: Why Bashō so abruptly changed his literary style, and why not a single haiku was recorded in Tōin's name.

***Furuhon'ya Tsukinowa Shorin* [Tsukinowa Secondhand Bookstore]. Takahashi Tōru.** Shōbunsha, 1998. 192×133 mm. 200 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 4-7949-6359-9.
This is a diary-style record of the business of a forty-year-old secondhand bookseller.

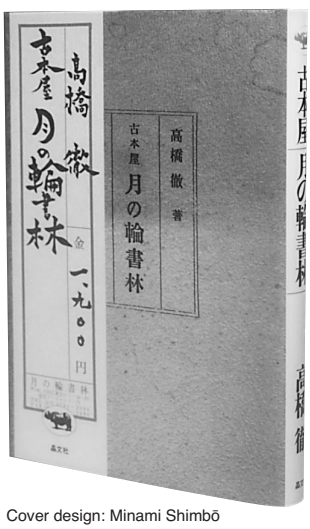
With the development of the mass media as it has occurred in Japan, more people write books and more titles are published, but the number of serious, devoted readers has gradually decreased by proportion. While many people have become less selective and discriminating as they try to keep up with the large volume of new titles coming out, those who value old books are in a good position to cultivate critical and selective reading among works already available.

The value of books must be judged according to an awareness of trends in the market as a whole, but the author, a somewhat abashed lover of old books, says he never ignores his own aesthetic taste. The books introduced in this volume are dealt with mainly as commodities in his business, but his attempt at self-restraint in writing about them betrays his unwritten insights in evaluating books. This is a book that also makes one think again about the significance of professionalism.

***Watashi to iu shōsetsuka no tsukurikata* [The Making of the Novelist That I Am]. Ōe Kenzaburō.** Shinchōsha, 1998. 197×125 mm. 204 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-10-303617-6.
Since early 1995 when he completed his trilogy, *Moeagaru midori no ki* [A Green Tree in Flames]—which he called his "last novel"—1994 Nobel Prize winner Ōe Kenzaburō has spent most of his time studying Spinoza. In the meantime, a ten-volume collection entitled *Ōe Kenzaburō shōsetsu* [Ōe Kenzaburō's Fiction] (Shinchōsha, 1996–97) has been published, which is intended as a final accounting of his forty-year career as a novelist. "For this collection," he wrote, "I have selected only those of my works that I find acceptable after having completed myself as a novelist. In order to prevent the indiscriminate compilation after my death of all sorts of my writings from personal letters to fragmentary pieces, I want to make this the definitive collection of my work."

The present volume is compiled from autobiographical essays Ōe wrote for each of the above-mentioned ten volumes. Beginning with a boyhood poem that was his earliest published work, the essays look back on the strong-willed, ceaseless process through which he sought to train himself as a novelist, candidly discussing his approach to creative writing and techniques of writing a novel such as dealing with problems of narrative and making use of the strengths of quotation. Concluding that "for me the only certainty is continuation of my customary life as a novelist," Ōe hints that he is beginning to think about another "last novel."

***Yamabito no dōbutsushi* [Animal Almanac of a Mountain Naturalist]. Ue Toshikatsu.** Shinjuku Shobō, 1998. 193×131 mm. 334 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-88008-234-1.
Author Ue (b. 1937) is an essayist also engaged in forestry in the mountains of the central Kii Peninsula bordering Nara and Wakayama prefectures. The book is a record of his relationship formed over many years with the local wildlife. He knows intimately the wild boar, rabbit, serow (*kamoshika*), racoon dog, weasel, bear, as well as eel, crab, and shrimp of the area. Tracing his memories of things he saw and heard and other interesting episodes, he depicts in a clear, simple style both the blessings brought and the troubles caused by these animals, from a standpoint quite different from either the passing traveler or the learned zoologist.



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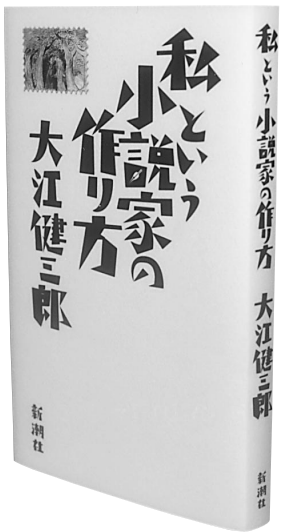


Cover design: Tsukasa Osamu

Cover design: Tamura Yoshiya

Recounting stories of his actual life, Ue's tale is not all sweetness and light. One story tells of a childhood friend who joined the Communist Party after World War II, and later became mentally disturbed and committed suicide. Another discusses how conditions for living in the mountains have steadily deteriorated. These interludes cast complex shadows over what is overall a humorously told account.

FICTION

***Hikari no ame* [Rain of Light]. Tatematsu Wahei.** Shinchōsha, 1998. 197×137 mm. 476 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 4-10-333607-2.
This is a novel based on the United Red Army incident of 1971–72 in which members of the ultra-leftist group tortured and killed several of their own comrades in the name of revolution. The story is set in the year 202X, more than half a century after the incident. An old man, who was involved in the incident and is now living alone, tells a preparatory school student living next door in the same apartment and his girlfriend the full story of the incident, describing how the way the Red Army members saw the world became narrower and narrower.

Many contemporaries of the Red Army members were deeply affected by this incident, feeling that it must have something to do with their lives as well. What should Japanese society in general learn from the incident? That question is behind the term "Zenkyōtō generation" (based on the name of one of the nationwide organizations that led the student movement in the 1968–69 period), and various studies have been done in an attempt to answer it. Told by a member of the Zenkyōtō generation, the story is a sympathetic portrayal of the sentiments of those times.

Cover design: Shinchōsha

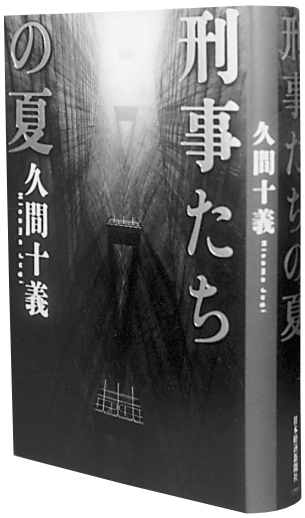
***Kabuki no hi* [Kabuki 's Day]. Kobayashi Kyōji.** Kōdansha, 1998. 194×137 mm. 322 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-06-209289-1.
A post-modern story inspired by kabuki, this novel centers around a fictional kabuki theater named Sekaiza (lit., "World Theater" or "Globe Theater"), whose distinguished troupe had prospered with nationwide tours but is brought to serious crisis by factional struggles within the group.

Cover design: Ashizawa Taii

When the theater building undergoes a complete remodeling in the 1970s, the labyrinth-like structure of its backstage invigorates the actors, and the Sekaiza outdistances all its rivals. But torn this way and that by the demands of audiences, the actors lose sight of themselves and begin to feel as if they have been "deserted by kabuki." Staking his efforts on reviving the troupe, protagonist Yonosuke tries to breathe the spirit of kabuki actors of the past into his contemporary fellow performers.

In this book, which was awarded the 11th Mishima Yukio Prize in 1998, kabuki is a metaphor for the world of entertainment as a whole, or more specifically, of the post-modern Japanese literary dilemma of which the author is part, set in a fictionalized Japan where kabuki is everywhere.

***Keiji tachi no natsu* [Summer of Detectives]. Hisama Jūgi.** Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1998. 193×133 mm. 422 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-532-17055-9.
This mystery story was serialized in Japan's largest economic daily from February 1997 to May 1998, a period that coincided with growing public distrust of government financial policies as the recession dragged on.
It involves a senior police officer, politicians, bureaucrats, and businessmen in a 600-billion yen illegal financing deal by a city bank.



Cover design: Mamura Toshikazu

The story opens with a Ministry of Finance consulting official suspected of a crime falls to his death from atop a hotel building. He leaves behind a memo detailing the scandal surrounding a resort development project. The order comes down from the upper echelons of the police department that the death of the high-ranking government official, suspected to be a murder, be handled as a suicide. And thus begins a long, hot summer for a middle-aged detective, who is facing divorce in his own household, and everyone else on the case.

Hisama is of the pure-literature school. In this mystery the characters are not related to actual people, but if they did not reflect something of real public figures as far as social standing or role, the novel would not have been be able to hold the interest of readers of the newspaper in which it appeared for a year and a half. During that period, judicial authorities actually did enter the Ministry of

Finace building and arrest officials. Under such social conditions, this novel, which depicts the cozy relations of government, politics, and business, is about as close to reality as it could get, a fact that itself reflects the sense of gridlock Japan is experiencing today.

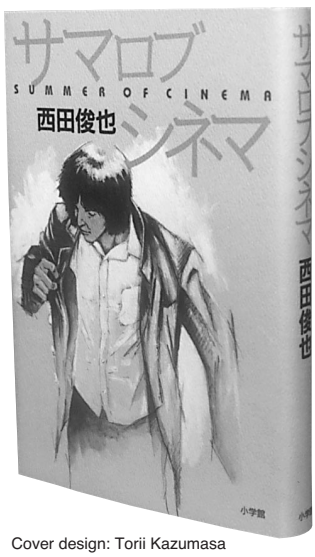
***Riyū* [Reason]. Miyabe Miyuki.** Asahi Shimbunsha, 1998. 193×133 mm. 574 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-02-257244-2.
A family of four living in a fashionable high-rise condominium is murdered. As the police investigate the case, they discover that members of the "family" were practically strangers to each other.

Cover design: Kanda Norikazu

The story consists of interviews done by a writer. In the common technique of the mystery novel, the most ordinary looking citizens are found to live unexpectedly bizarre lives. A middle-aged woman speaking through the author says, "Gazing up at the windows of those dizzingly high apartment houses, you imagine those living there as rich, refined, and highly cultivated people, living stylish lives no old-timer can imagine. There may be some who lead the kind of life seen in the movies and perhaps eventually that could become real. But for a while, we may have to go on *performing* such lives that are not really our own until we can completely shed old habits and truly enjoy the new lifestyle." During the period of the overheated "bubble" economy, people pursued acquisition of property with almost feverish intensity. Miyabe's theme is the absurd and fraudulent steps some people would go for the sake of money, and the devastating blow this dealt to Japanese society. Her work is based on extensive research and deals with subjects that emerge from the anomalies of the mass-consumer life in Japan's cities today.

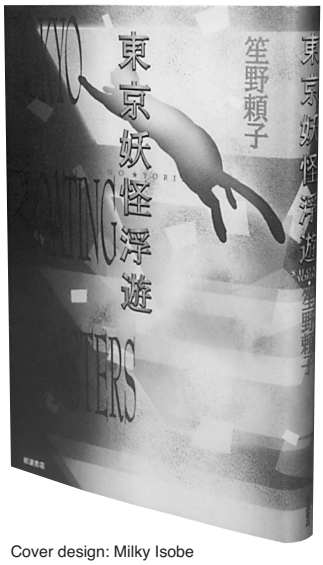
***Sama robu shinema* [Summer of Cinema]. Nishida Toshiya.** Shōgakukan, 1998. 194×133 mm. 222 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-09-386024-6.
Youth is the eternal theme of literature. A fifteen-year-old cinema buff and his high-school classmates decide to make an 8-mm. film for an annual school event. The story unfolds during the summer vacation with the students' experience of things they would not have encountered if they had not shot the film. Okaji is victim to the agonies of a broken heart. Nishijima, the director, secretly in love with a classmate, sees her emerging from a love hotel with a stranger. A janitor, a disenchanted former movie actor, offers unexpected help. The father of the heroine, opposed to her repeated late nights, bans her from appearing in the movie. A hoodlum tries to wreak havoc with the shooting. The relatively simple story is replete with the experiences of ordinary high school students: lovesickness, violence, friendship, rivalry, cowardice, meek obedience, revolt. It is a time of life that passes very quickly, the value of which we often become aware only after it has come and gone.

Japanese fiction writers once appeared to speak for a very different understanding of life from anything with which Western readers were familiar. The characters they described had sensibilities that seemed quintessentially Japanese. But it is doubtful that Nishida can be counted among such authors.



Cover design: Torii Kazumasa

***Tōkyō yōkai fuyū* [Floating Monsters of Tokyo]. Shōno Yoriko.** Iwanami Shoten, 1998. 193×133 mm. 214 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-00-024108-7.
This is a collection of short stories first serialized in the Iwanami Shoten magazines *Sekai* and *Hermes*.



Cover design: Milky Isobe

A middle-aged woman living in Tokyo narrates in disc-jockey fashion accounts of scenes of the city she experienced after arriving in Tokyo "twelve years ago." She first lived for six years in the western suburb of Hachiōji, then moved slightly further toward the city to Kodaira for a year, then further in to Nakano for three years, and as the story unfolds has been in Zōshigaya for two years. Her acquaintances are limited to a small number of people while she writes stories for magazine serialization. In her eyes, Tokyo is an evil city inhabited by "monsters." Intensely self-conscious, the woman begins to feel that everything in the city is somehow unreal, and becomes tired of deploring that as well. As she writes about the "monsters," she gradually realizes that she is one of them. She can no longer believe in anything. She does not even know for sure *where* she is talking about "monsters." Where is she being taken? The stories sustain a thrilling sense of suspense.

Events and Trends

1998 Publishing in Retrospect

While the Japanese economy remains in recession, the stagnation of the publishing industry continues. Book sales for the 1998 calendar year fell by 5.9 percent compared with the previous year, a decline for the second year running. This is only the third time in fifty years (after 1984 and 1997) that book sales have declined from the previous year. Meanwhile the number of new titles is about the same as for the previous year, so the steady increase of recent years may now be leveling off.

Perhaps reflecting difficult economic conditions, the titles that sold the best in 1998 included a number of self-improvement books. In particular *Tanin o homeru hito, kenasu hito* [Those Who Praise Others, Those Who Disdain Others; translation of *L'ottisimo*, by Francesco Alberoni] (Sōshisha) in the first half of the year and *Chiisai koto ni kuyokuyo suru na!* [translation of *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*, by Richard Carlson] (Sunmark Shuppan) for the latter half sold continuously. Other books in this vein are also selling well. Among works of general reading, books by respected authors about their insights on life such as Itsuki Hiroyuki's *Taiga no itteki* [Little Drops in the Great River] (Gentōsha) and Watanabe Jun'ichi's *Otoko to iu mono* [The Nature of the Male] (Chūō Kōron Sha) have been doing well.

In the field of fiction, nothing appeared in 1998 to equal the market success of recent hits like *Shōnen H* [Boy H] or *Shitsurakuen* [Lost Paradise]. It is notable that the most successful titles included two-volume horror or mystery heavyweights like *Redī Jōkā* [Lady Joker] (Mainichi Shimbun Sha) by Takamura Kaoru and *Shiki* [Corpse of the Devil] (Shinchōsha) by Ono Fuyumi.

Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes

The winners of the prestigious literature prizes awarded for the 120th time were announced in January. The Akutagawa Prize went to Hirano Keiichirō for "Nisshoku" [Solar Eclipse], which appeared in the August issue of the journal *Shinchō*, and the Naoki Prize was presented for a mystery story by Miyabe Miyuki, *Riyū* [Reason] (Asahi Shimbunsha).

"Nisshoku" is set in fifteenth-century France and takes the form of notes by a Christian monk who makes friends with a heretical alchemist and encounters a witch hunt. A story woven from the fabric of obviously prodigious knowledge and written in an ornate style laced with classical vocabulary, the book was quick to draw attention. Hirano is a 23-year-old university student and this is his first published work; he is one of the youngest authors to win the prize. Others to win the Akutagawa Prize while still in university include Ishihara Shintarō, Ōe Kenzaburō, and Murakami Ryū.

The author of *Riyū* (see this issue of *Japanese Book News*, p. 19), Miyabe is a popular novelist known for her wide range of writing from mysteries and horror stories to period fiction about Edo townsfolk. A talked-about recent work was *Kurosufaia* [Crossfire] (Kōbunsha, 1998) in which the protagonist is a woman with supernatural powers. Miyabe has won many prizes, including the Yoshikawa Eiji Literary Prize for New Writers for her *Honjo Fukagawa fushigi sōshi* [A Mysterious Tale of the Honjo-Fukagawa Area] and the Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize for *Kasha* (tr. *All She Was Worth*, Kodansha International, 1996). She had previously been nominated for the Naoki Prize five times.

Kōjien Fifth Edition Published

A new edition of Japan's authoritative household dictionary, *Kōjien* (Iwanami Shoten), was published in November 1998, a revision of the 4th edition published in 1991. Ten thousand new entries have been added for a total of 230,000 in the new edition, which features a special binding and paper chosen to deal with the problems presented by the increased number of pages.

The new edition has drawn attention because it incorporates many new words current today like *keitai denwa* [mobile/portable telephone], *chapatsu* [dyed hair], *furī-māketto* [flea market], *kankyō horumon* [hormone-disrupting chemicals], and *intānetto* [Internet].

The fourth edition sold more than 1 million copies within six months of its publication and sales of the fifth edition are also brisk, stimulated by promotion on television and in other media. A CD-ROM edition went on sale simultaneously.

Empress Michiko Lecture

In September 1998, Japan's Empress Michiko presented the keynote speech by pre-recorded video at the Congress of the International Board on Books for Young People convened in New Delhi. Speaking for 53 minutes in English, the empress reminisced about the books and poetry she had read and loved as a child and what she had learned from books, recounting how her reading of the legends and tales of other lands "at times gave me roots, at times gave me wings."

Continued from page 6

the author and the editor that made the English version as good as it is. When *The Friends* won the Boston Globe/Horn Book award for best fiction, the author mentioned to me that she was originally inspired to write it after reading an American short story, *The Body* by Stephen King (in translation, of course). Now the circle is complete. Her book has been published in the United States to inspire American authors in its turn.

The response in North America far exceeded our expectations. People aged ten to eighty have told us how it reminds them of their own experiences, how it helped them to deal with the loss of a loved one, how it opened their eyes to the differences and similarities between America and Japan. It struck the same responsive chord in English, making readers laugh and weep, reaching across cultural differences to touch them in a personal way. And that, for me, is the ultimate reward a translator can receive. (*Cathy Hirano is a professional translator living in Shikoku.*)

The lecture, shown on NHK public television several times, stimulated much discussion of children's reading and books, and in November Suemori Books published it as a Japanese-English bilingual edition entitled *Hashi o kakeru: Kodomo jidai no dokusho no omoide/Building Bridges: Reminiscences of Childhood Readings*. Empress Michiko is also known for her English translations of the poetry of Mado Michio, who won the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 1994, published in the anthology *The Animals* (Suemori Books) in 1992.

As the result of her speech, Shinchōsha reprinted *Nihon shōkokumin bunko sekai meisakusen* [Library of Books for the Younger Generation: Masterpieces of World Literature] 2 vols. (1936), which she mentioned among the books she read. It is rare for a work out of print for more than fifty years to be reprinted. These volumes include Japanese translations of various works the empress referred to in her lecture, including poet Erich Kästner's "The First Despair," American poet Robert Frost's poem "The Pasture," and Karel Capek's "A Postman's Story."

Chūō Kōron to Yomiuri Empire

In a move to overcome its financial difficulties, Chūō Kōron Sha became part of the massive Yomiuri Shimbunsha publishing empire in February 1999. The leading journals and the monograph series of the venerable and highly respected publisher, such as the opinion journal *Chūō kōron*, the long-established women's magazine *Fujin kōron*, as well as pocket-size book (*bunko*) and paperback (*shinsho*) series will continue to be published. Other publishers of long-standing repute have not been so fortunate; in recent years Simul Publishers, Mita Shuppan, and Riburopōto have been forced to close.

Electronic Books

Work has begun to develop production and marketing technology for "electronic books" using satellite transmission. The content of such books would be sent via satellite to computer terminals located at bookstores or convenience stores and recorded there on mini-disk (MD) as needed by readers. The reader takes the MD home for reading on a personal reading device. Plans are to develop personal reading devices that overcome the screen-reading problems encountered with early electronic books produced on CD-ROM and in other forms.

For publishers, the merits of this new genre are savings of the costs for paper and printing as well as warehouse storage, and it is believed that prices will be about half that for conventional paper books. The new books are to be available in about two years.

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

Asahi Shimbunsha
Inquiries from overseas should be addressed to:
Mr. Hirano
Book Export Dept. 2
Japan Publications Trading Co.
P. O. Box 5030, Tokyo International
Tokyo 100-3191
Tel: (03) 3292-3753 Fax: (03) 3292-3764

Ashi Shobō
3-1-2 Akasaka
Chuo-ku, Fukuoka 810-0042
Tel: (092) 761-2895 Fax: (092) 761-2836

Asuka Shinsha
1Fl. Kanda Daisan Amerex Bldg.
3-10 Kanda Jimbo-cho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0051
Tel: (03) 3263-7773 Fax: (03) 3239-7759

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

Heibonsha
5-16-19 Himon'ya
Meguro-ku, Tokyo 152-0003
Tel: (03) 5721-1234 Fax: (03) 5721-1239

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

Kawade Shobō Shinsha
2-32-2 Sendagaya
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151-0051
Tel: (03) 3404-1201 Fax: (03) 3404-6386

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

Minerva Shobō
1 Hinooka Tsutsumidani-cho
Yamashina-ku, Kyoto 607-8494
Tel: (075) 581-5191 Fax: (075) 581-0589

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

Nikkei BP Sha
Shiozaki Bldg. 4Fl.
2-7-1 Hirakawa-cho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0093
Tel: (03) 3221-4640 Fax: (03) 5210-8043

Sangokan
Dai 2 Taro Bldg. 2Fl.
2-10 Yotsuya
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0004
Tel: (03) 3226-0035 Fax: (03) 3226-0170

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

Shinjuku Shobō
9 San'ei-cho
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0008
Tel: (03) 3226-5450 Fax: (03) 3226-5590

Shisō no Kagakusha
Ueno Bldg.
1-20-8 Hyakunincho
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-0073
Tel: (03) 5389-2101 Fax: (03) 5389-2102

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

3A Corporation
2-6-3 Sarugaku-cho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0064
Tel: (03) 3292-5751 Fax: (03) 3292-6195

Toshi Shuppan
3Fl. Daishinkyo Bldg.
1-5-8 Fujimi
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0071
Tel: (03) 3237-1790 Fax: (03) 3237-7347

Yoshikawa Kōbunkan
7-2-8 Hongo
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-0033
Tel: (03) 3813-9151 Fax: (03) 3812-3544

Yukkusha
2-12-1 Yushima
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-0034
Tel: (03) 3815-6549 Fax: (03) 3815-6546

Literature That Transcends Borders

Yan Sogiru

As a voracious reader of such classics as *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Les Misérables*, and *Moby Dick,* as well as postwar Russian, French, and American literature, since I was in junior high school, I have learned a great deal from and been deeply influenced by translated literature. And as I was born and educated in Japan, I of course read a good deal of Japanese literature as well. Postwar writing was an especially inseparable part of my reading, and postwar Japanese literature itself is profoundly influenced by translations into Japanese from other languages.

The prewar years were quite different. As part of its *datsu-A, nyū-Ō* policy, Japan declared that it had parted company with other Asian nations and was determined to be counted among the Western powers. In the course of colonizing Korea and Taiwan and invading the Chinese continent, the steadily building crescendo of nationalism strengthened xenophobia in Japan to the point where you could not openly listen to jazz or even classical Western music. If you wanted to read European or American literature, you had to do it behind closed doors.

When World War II ended, the reaction against such restrictions and xenophobia quickly spread among the general populace. Indeed, it is impossible to discuss postwar literature or thought without taking into account the impact of translations from Western languages. I would say nothing against this situation; indeed, many of the books I read are translations, and I readily admit their impact on my thinking and writing.

My relationship to language is an odd one. I am ethnic Korean by birth, but I never studied the Korean language, and have only a passing listening comprehension of Korean. The only language I can speak, read, and write is a "foreign" one, Japanese. Ironic or paradoxical as it may be, I learn about the literature, thought, and life in other countries largely through such books translated into Japanese.

I often hear people say that translations can be completely unlike the original, and no doubt that is true to some extent. But although the original and the translation may be very different, I believe, perhaps naively, that the translated version has captured something of the essence of the original, and I make use of this essence to give full play to my imagination in creating the world in my mind and my writing. I am convinced that truly great literature and profound ideas possess within them the power to transcend the boundaries of language. All the literature of Russia, France, the United States, Latin America, Africa, and other regions I have read has been in translation, and it is the influences drawn from the best writing and the most persuasive ideas that have been reborn and taken on new life in my own works. I believe that creation is the energy deriving from such confluences.

English and the Romance languages are clearly the international languages of the world, while Asia continues to be a region of local languages. Although Japan has established itself as the second most powerful economic power in the world, the peculiarities of its language have prevented it from becoming widely used abroad. Opportunities for Japanese literature to be translated into other languages are said to be limited. The inhibiting factor is not simply one of language; it is an outgrowth of history. Europe had a long history of outward-looking exploration of the world in search of colonial outposts. Japan's history is notable for its long period of inward-looking seclusion from the world, and I believe that the disparity in cultural influence in the world stemming from such different histories continues today.

Another concern as far as the translation of literature is concerned is what kind of works are being translated—whether they are those that really ought to be translated. Criteria for selection set by publishers and translators as well as some degree of personal taste certainly come into play in determining what gets translated. There are also gaps in perceptions of what makes good literature, how the times should be interpreted, and in cultural values. These differences do not affect just literature but also other aspects of culture—film, music, art, the performing arts. It is very difficult for these aspects of Japan to find broad acceptance in the world market. Until there is a certain common language (and I don't mean just words) that can bridge the gap between what is essentially Japanese and what is global, this situation will continue. It is my hope that my works can play a role in bridging the gap.

Yan Sogiru is a novelist and poet of Korean heritage born in Osaka in 1936. After graduating from high school, he went into business but fell heavily into debt by the age of 29, after which he moved from one place to another, changing jobs several times. He worked as a taxi driver for ten years. Among his works are a collection of poems entitled *Muma no kanata e* [Beyond the Nightmare] (Village Center Shuppankyoku, 1996), novels including *Takushii kyōsōkyoku* [Taxi Rhapsody] (Chikuma Shobō, 1987) and *Yoru no kawa o watare* [Cross the Night River] (Tokuma Shoten, 1995), as well as nonfiction works *Takushii doraibā nisshi* [A Taxi Driver's Diary] (Chikuma Shobō, 1984), and *Shura o ikiru* [Living Through Hell] (Kōdansha, 1995; translated into Korean and published by Myung-Kyung Publishing, 1996). In 1998 he was awarded the 10th Mishima Yukio Prize for his *Chi to hone* [Blood and Bones] (Gentōsha, 1998; see *Japanese Book News*, No. 23, p. 16).