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Nature and Ecology in Twentieth-century Japan
Literary Prizes: Upsurge and Change
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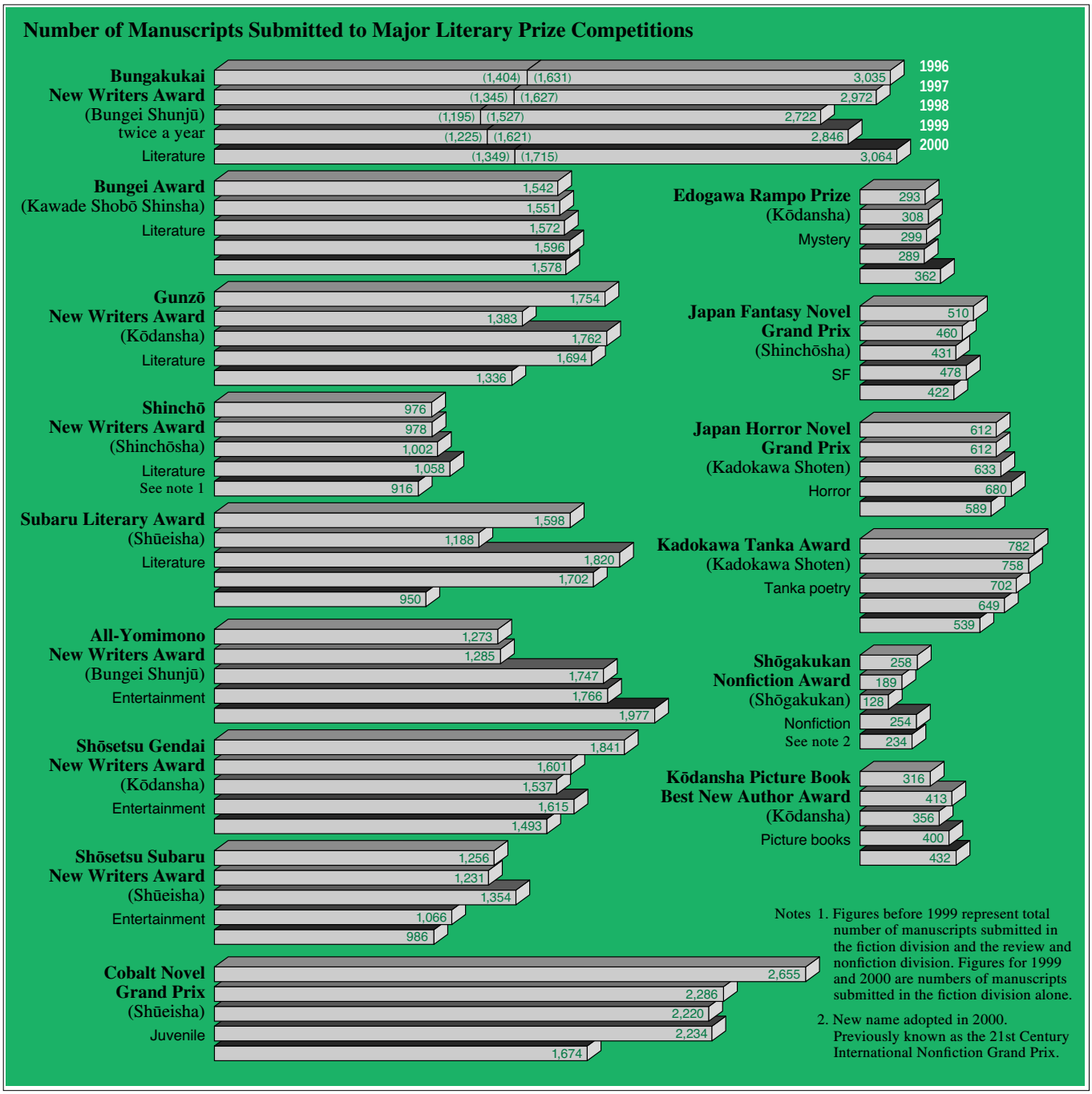

The Japan Foundation

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.

Publishers mentioned in the data given in the New Titles section are located in Tokyo unless otherwise noted. Further information about the titles may be obtained by contacting the publishers listed on page 3.

Publisher and Editor-in-Chief
Sakamoto Yōko, Managing Director
Media Department
The Japan Foundation
ARK Mori Bldg. 20th Fl.
1-12-32 Akasaka, Minato-ku
Tokyo 107-6020 Japan
Tel: 81-3-5562-3533; Fax: 81-3-5562-3501
E-mail: booknews@jpf.go.jp

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From the Editor

The third installment in our series looking back over the twentieth century, by *Japanese Book News* editorial board member Ikeuchi Osamu, calls attention to the changes in the Japanese view of the environment in the 1920s. That change may be observed in the career of Maeda Masana (1850–1921), who served in the government in the early years of Japan's industrialization and led in the formation of its guiding principles, but who also devoted many years of his life to nature conservation. Subsequently, various efforts were launched to preserve the environment and conserve its natural resources.

Numerous literary prizes are awarded in Japan, major and minor, ranging from those covered widely in the media to the very obscure. Some prizes bring the winner as much as ¥10 million while others bestow only a certificate or plaque. Some are sponsored by publishers, others by local governments or private corporations. Many writers make their debut in the literary world by winning one of these prizes, and the number of writers, as well as prizes, is increasing year by year. Some joke that there are more writers than readers. Koyama Tetsurō, who contributed an article on this topic to *Japanese Book News* No. 3 issue in 1993, surveys the major prizes, noting their characteristics and the hierarchical relations among them, as well as some of the writers whose careers they have launched.

In this issue's Japanese Books Abroad section, Bertrand Py of the Actes Sud publishing house outlines the current situation of the translation and publication of Japanese books in France and touches on the popularity there of novelist Ogawa Yōko.

In the From the Publishing Scene column, Koyama Tetsurō comments on some of the commemorative events during the thirtieth anniversary of novelist Mishima Yukio's death, and Ikari Haruo, who loves unusual books, brings to our attention a collection of the world's national anthems, sharing his enjoyment of their contents.

For In Their Own Words, novelist Tawada Yōko, who lives in Germany and writes novels in Japanese and German, reflects on translators and their work.

Japanese Book News address:
http://www.jpf.go.jp/e/media/publish/4_04right.html

Nature and Ecology in Twentieth-century Japan

Ikeuchi Osamu

Located in one corner of eastern Hokkaido's Akan National Park is Maeda Ippo En, an institute devoted to research and study of appropriate use of the park and preservation of the natural environment surrounding Lake Akan. The facility has long been involved in the nature conservation movement, holding nature-study seminars and training specialists through the affiliated Maeda Shōgakukai (Maeda Scholarship Society). Founded in 1906, the Ippo En has a history of nearly one hundred years and is Japan's first organization established for conservation of the natural environment. Its founding and growth offer clues for understanding the changes that have taken place in Japanese views of nature in the twentieth century.

The founder of the Ippo En was Maeda Masana, a high-ranking official of the Meiji government. Born to a poor samurai family in 1850, at the age of twenty he went to study in France. Seven years later he returned to Japan and entered the Agriculture and Commerce Ministry. As a zealous young bureaucrat, he was promoted rapidly through the ranks and in 1884 he supervised the drafting of the exhaustive *Kōgyō iken* [Opinion on Promotion of Industry], which set down the guiding principles for industrialization of the nation that were to be followed for decades thereafter. In a clash of views over the direction of national policy, however, Maeda resigned from the ministry at the age of forty one. After pursuing various private projects and serving a term as governor of Yamanashi prefecture, he later returned to government service and subsequently rose to the position of vice-minister of agriculture and commerce.

During the years after he resigned from the ministry and before once again assuming public office, Maeda explored the length and breadth of Japan, setting out on repeated walking tours lasting several months each. Encumbered only with an umbrella and backpack, he conducted field studies throughout the country. His expeditions were also exercises in organization of local industry. He became keenly interested in the economy of the "towns and villages" which the Meiji government had essentially abandoned in favor of investing capital in select elite businesses that had close connections with influential government officials. He called his field studies *tekisan shirabe* (lit., "suitable industry surveys"), intended to identify and encourage the industries best suited to local areas through accurate surveys. Such industries should be those, he believed, that would maintain harmony with the landscape and local ethos. The man who drew up the "Opinion on Promotion of Industry" changed into one of the nation's first advocates of ecological development.

Maeda's motto was "In all things, it is the first step (*ippo*) that counts." The Maeda Ippo En, lit., "Maeda First-step Park," was one of many projects he launched in various parts of the country in accordance with that conviction; others included a forestry business in the Kirishima area of Kagoshima prefecture, the planting of an olive farm in Kobe, and the opening up of extensive new land in Ehime prefecture to cultivation. The projects were strongly experimental in nature. Observing Maeda's plunge into one such ambitious project after another, a friend and influential politician, Shinagawa Yajirō (1843–1900), advised him to slow down, "The work you've cut out for yourself will take one hundred years. You don't need to be in such a hurry. Why not take it easy!"

In June 1906 Maeda purchased vast unsettled lands in the vicinity of Hokkaido's Lake Akan from the national government. At that point he apparently did not have a clear idea of what he would do with the land. Covered entirely with virgin conifer and broad-leaf forest, the mountains were inhabited by Ezo deer, *akagera* woodpeckers, and other distinctive wildlife. The climate was cold, 17 degrees centigrade at its warmest in August and as cold as minus 10 degrees centigrade in January. Snow accumulation could reach more than two meters by March.

In 1920 the Natural Monument Law (Tennen Kinenbutsu Hō) was enacted, extending legal protection to outstanding features of "heaven's legacy." Until then, no such regulations had existed, and under the promotion of industry slogan, factories and manufacturing plants sprang up hither and yon without restraint, rapidly denuding and defacing the landscape. The word "tennen" used in the title of the law suggests how nature at the time was viewed as bounty granted to humankind by "heaven." Insofar as they considered nature a rightful and natural legacy, people did not see it as requiring any special care or protection. Land development projects had been launched all over Japan without regard to local features of the environment. It was from around this time that Japanese finally became aware of the need to protect nature and think of city planning as a major issue of national concern. The Urban Planning Law (Toshi Keikaku Hō), too, was passed that year. Maeda Masana had started his career as an industry-promoting bureaucrat, but devoted the second half of his life to protection of the country's environment and conservation of nature. In the same way, Japan, while rapidly modernizing, was also beginning to adopt a new awareness of the environment.

The National Parks Law was promulgated in 1931. The Seto Inland Sea, the volcano and surrounding area of Unzen (Nagasaki pref.), and the Kirishima volcano group (Kagoshima pref.) were the first designated national parks. To these were later added Akan (eastern Hokkaido), Daisetsuzan (central Hokkaido), Nikko (Tochigi pref.), Chubu Sangaku (central Honshu), and Aso (Kumamoto pref.), followed by the Fuji-Hakone area (surrounding Mt. Fuji), Yoshino-Kumano (Kii peninusula), and Daisen (Tottori pref.). Today there are a total of twenty-eight national parks.

It is interesting to note that the Japan Tourist Federation was inaugurated about the same time as the promulgation of the National Parks Law. From that time, the custom of traveling to natural scenic spots for the purpose of sightseeing became an organized business.

After the end of World War II, yet another wave of industrial development swept the country. The mountains

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Literary Prizes: Upsurge and Change

Koyama Tetsurō

Literary prizes enjoy an irrepressible popularity in this country. Even when the economy remains sluggish and the publishing industry is shrinking, new prizes awarded for individual works or authors keep being inaugurated one after another. In the past ten years alone a significant number of new awards have appeared, spanning the genres and representing a variety of concepts.

Most notable are the prizes awarded in the name of a well-known novelist or a deceased writer. One of them is the Takeshi Kaiko Award, established in 1992 in honor of Kaikō Takeshi (1930-89), author of *Kagayakeru yami* (trans., *Into a Black Sun*). This prize is awarded to fiction or non-fiction writers who are just getting started. It is a competition open to anyone who submits an unpublished manuscript according to certain specifications. Those who have received the award are recognized as "new writers" (*shinjin*).

The Nakayama Gishū Prize for Literature was founded in 1993 to commemorate historical fiction writer Nakayama Gishū (1900–69). The Inoue Yasushi Literature Prize was awarded for the first time in 1994 in memory of novelist Inoue Yasushi (1907–91), who served as president of the Japan P.E.N. Club (1981–85). This prize is conferred on persons considered to have made significant contributions to cultural advancement in literature, fine arts, and/or history.

More recently, the Shiba Ryōtarō Prize, first awarded in 1998, was founded to honor Shiba Ryōtarō (1923–96), a prolific and immensely popular writer with a following among intellectuals and general readers alike. Among his best-known works are the novel *Ryōma ga yuku* (romancing the pre-Meiji Restoration activist Sakamoto Ryōma, 1836-67) and the "Kaidō o yuku" [Traveling the Old Highways] series of essays he wrote about the backgrounds and his impressions of a number of historical places he visited around the country. This prize also is awarded for works in literature, culture, journalism, or related fields.

To commemorate the contributions of Kuwabara Takeo (1909–88), scholar of French literature and one of Japan's leading twentieth-century intellectuals, the Kuwabara Takeo Prize was founded in 1998. The Ōyabu Haruhiko Prize, begun in 1999, goes to writers who are carrying on the literary tradition of Ōyabu Haruhiko (1935–96), who was known for his "hard-boiled" style of realistic fiction.

Although still an active writer, Komatsu Sakyō (1931–), author of the well-known science fiction work *Nihon chimbotsu* (trans., *Japan Sinks*), among others, has lent his name to an award recently established in 2000, the Komatsu Sakyō Prize. This is a competition open to anyone aspiring to be a new writer in the categories of science fiction, fantasy, and horror stories.

Many literary prizes are sponsored either by publishers or by foundations whose activities center on deceased authors. Some other prizes are given by local governments. For example, the Personal History Literary Prize was set up in 1991 by the Kitakyūshū municipal government as an open competition for the best unpublished nonfiction work dealing with personal experiences. The city of Uji, in Kyoto prefecture, being closely associated with the eleventh-century classic *Tale of Genji*, founded the Murasaki Shikibu Prize in 1991, and this prize has now become firmly established. The Miyazaki prefectural government, birthplace of tanka poet Wakayama Bokusui (1885–1928), inaugurated the Wakayama Bokusui Prize in 1997.

A somewhat unusual award was started in 1991 by Tōkyū Bunkamura, a theater and cinema complex located in Shibuya, Tokyo. It is called the Bunkamura Deux Magots Literary Prize, so-named because of its association with the opening of a restaurant within Bunkamura called Les Deux Magots, after its well-known parent establishment in Paris. The prize is a Japanese version of the French Deux Magots Prize for literature, awarded for works authored by regular patrons of the Paris café. Just as idiosyncratic as the Bunkamura prize, which was founded by a private corporation with no particular literary connections, a Buddhist organization created the Rennyo Prize in 1994 using the name of Rennyo (1415–99), a Muromachi-period Buddhist priest. This prize is for nonfiction. There is even an Ocean Literary Prize begun in 1997, jointly sponsored by the Japan Maritime Public Relations Center and Nippon Foundation to commemorate the creation of a national holiday called "Ocean Day" (July 20).

The Japan Mystery Prize, the purpose of which is to recognize writers who have made important contributions in the development of the mystery genre, was started in 1997. Now we also have the Kadokawa Haruki Fiction Prize, inaugurated in 1999 with the aim of tapping new talent in the field of popular ("entertainment") fiction.

The list goes on. The Ihara Saikaku Prize was founded in 1996 by a literary society devoted to the study of Ihara Saikaku (1642–93), an early Edo-period writer of popular fiction. A new award for drama was introduced in 1998 called the Tsuruya Namboku Prize, deriving its name from the late Edo-period playwright Tsuruya Namboku (1796–1852). In poetry, the Ono Tōzaburō Prize was first awarded in 1999, to commemorate Ono Tōzaburō (1903–96), whose well-loved work reflects the culture of the poet's Osaka roots.

This overview of some of the new literary prizes making their debut within the last ten years is necessarily brief, but it should indicate their astonishing variety. All told, I would estimate that in Japan today there are now about 370 or 380 prizes, renowned or obscure, awarded in some area of the broad field of literature.

System in Transition

The emergence of so many new literary prizes might appear to signal a flourishing, creative world of writing, publishing, and productive critical activity. But quantity in this case does not necessarily mean consistent, demanding criteria for writing or in determining winners. The circumstances surrounding literary accomplishment and recognition have been changing, not the least in the system of awarding prizes.

A salient feature of the established system of literary awards in Japan is the pyramidal structure underlying the hierarchy of prizes. In pure literature, a writer starts out by competing for one of the publisher-sponsored prizes for unpublished manuscripts from aspirants for "new writer" status. Notable among these awards, for which anyone may submit a work as long as it is written in Japanese, are the Bungakukai New Writers Award (sponsored by Bungei Shunjū), the Shinchō New Writers Award (Shinchōsha), the Gunzō New Writers Award (Kōdansha), the Bungei Award (Kawade Shobō Shinsha), and the Subaru Literary Award (Shūeisha).

The next step for recipients of one of these awards is to achieve the Akutagawa Ryūnosuke Prize (better known as the Akutagawa Prize, sponsored by Bungei Shunjū), the Mishima Yukio Prize (Shinchōsha), or the Noma Literary Prize for New Writers (Kōdansha). In some cases, of course, a work deemed worthy of consideration at this level can be short-listed for one of these awards even if the author has not previously won a new writer's prize. Winners of the Akutagawa, Mishima, or Noma awards are recognized as having definite promise as "up-and-coming" writers.

The prize many writers aspire to as they move on to the next step is the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize (Chūō Kōron Shinsha). With this award comes recognition as an established "middle-echelon" writer. At the pinnacle of literature awards is the Noma Literary Prize, which is dubbed the "Grand Prix" in literature. A Noma Prize winner joins the ranks of the great figures in literature, with all the respect and status such a position confers.

In form, the pyramidal structure has remained basically the same over the years, and yet the activities that go on within it have been changing recently in ways that could, eventually, transform the structure itself. In the past, writers who submitted manuscripts in open competition for a new writers' prize sponsored by a literary journal tended to be regular readers of that particular magazine or they were genuine admirers of the writing talent of one of the selection committee members. Recently, however, that tradition is being pushed aside. There is now available a periodical devoted to information about submission deadlines and other details of all the literary prize competitions. Many contestants are using that information and competing for a given prize for reasons such as convenience of the deadline and/or because the length requirements match what they have produced. An increasing number of writers who try for a particular prize know almost nothing about the journal that sponsors it. Even more surprisingly, more people are writing fiction without having read very much of the work of other fiction writers.

Thus, people's attachment to a particular prize has declined overall, but the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes (both founded in 1935) are still eagerly sought by anyone who aspires to wide recognition as a professional novelist. The Akutagawa Prize is given for works of literature and the Naoki Prize for popular fiction, the so-called entertainment

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
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P. O. Box 5030, Tokyo International
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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
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2-7-1 Hirakawacho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0093
Tel: (03) 3221-4640 Fax: (03) 5210-8043

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Tokyo Hombu
3-10 Sambancho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8331
Tel: (03) 3239-6221 Fax: (03) 3239-7497

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

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2-10 Kanda Jimbocho
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Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0003
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Sōdosha
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Taishūkan Shoten
3-24 Kanda Nishikicho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-8466
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genre. Both awards are intended to recognize outstanding published works by "new writers" and "up-and-coming writers," but they are by far the best known of all the literary prizes. To win one of them is to land a passport to a successful career in writing.

The selection of winners of these two prizes takes place twice a year, when their screening committees meet simultaneously at the same site. The first meeting takes place in July, to select winners from among works published between January and June, and the second meeting takes place in January of the following year to choose from among works published between July and December. On the evening when the committees make their final decisions, TV reporters and others from the media gather at Shinkiraku, a Japanese-style restaurant in the Tsukiji area of Tokyo where the selection meetings are held, and the results are reported on TV and radio as soon as they are announced. An hour or two later, the winners are interviewed by the press live on national radio and TV. Of all the literary prizes given out in Japan, these are the only two whose winners generate enough excitement to be announced on TV and radio as soon as they are selected, as well as in the newspapers the next day.

Despite its cachet, however, the Akutagawa Prize in particular is being badly shaken by changes that are affecting the status and influence of all the literary prizes. Once, an Akutagawa-prize winning work was assured of selling at least 100 thousand copies, but today sales of only 20 or 30 thousand copies are not unusual. Declining sales may be related to a time when, year after year, the prize was awarded to works that general readers found extremely hard to understand. During that time, the audience for the "best" in literature dwindled.

Among publishers of literature, a major rival to Bungei Shunjū, sponsor of the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes, is Shinchōsha, which founded the Mishima Yukio Prize and the Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize in 1988. Both the latter prizes go to published works by so-called new writers, up-and-coming writers as well as literary critics: the Mishima Prize is awarded for literature and the Yamamoto Prize for popular fiction. Within the last decade something approaching a kind of rivalry has emerged between the Akutagawa Prize and the Mishima Prize. They seem to be competing for the most promising new writers, whose number is limited, trying to outdo each other in bringing forth one rising-star writer after another. At the same time, it appears as if, in their haste, they sometimes award prizes for works that are not really up to the high standards those prizes symbolize. It is indeed ironic if readers find such works so difficult that they drift away from what is supposed to be outstanding literature.

Murakami Ryū, winner of the Akutagawa Prize in 1976 for *Kagiri naku tōmei ni chikai burū* (trans., *Almost Transparent Blue*), enjoys enormous popularity among the young generation. He was appointed to the Akutagawa Prize selection committee in 2000 and participated in the meeting that summer to choose the winner of the 123rd Akutagawa Prize. Born in 1952, he is the youngest member of the committee. The Mishima Prize selection committee, too, has three new young members: novelist Shimada Masahiko, who is in his thirties, even younger than Murakami; literary critic Fukuda Kazuya; and Takagi Nobuko, another Akutagawa Prize winner, whose love stories have gained her a large and diverse following. These moves may well reflect a sense of crisis concerning the two awards, as well as a desire to appeal to young readers and aspiring writers.

Another notable development arose with the 1998 Tanizaki Prize. That year the prize, which is awarded for outstanding works by "middle-echelon writers," went to Tsushima Yūko for *Yamazaru-ki* [A Wild Monkey Chronicle]. Tsushima is not an Akutagawa prize winner, but in 1998 she also won the Noma Literary Prize for the same work. It was the first time that both the Tanizaki and Noma prizes were awarded for the same title. There had been a tacit rule until then that if a work was awarded the Tanizaki Prize it would not be nominated for the Noma prize. This time, however, the Noma prize selection committee boldly nominated Tsushima's work, disregarding the old rule, and gave her the prize.

This incident is another reflection of the extent to which the pyramidal structure of literary prizes has begun to waver. Many of the prizes in pure literature are currently facing new and changing circumstances that demand serious rethinking of the way awards are handled.

Popular Fiction and Young Talent

Readers respond eagerly to popular fiction that is awarded prizes in the entertainment literature category, but for that very reason the competition for such prizes has become intense. Some awards for entertainment literature carry with them prize money that can reach as high as 10 million yen with the condition that the winning manuscript can be adapted for a TV drama. Some prizes of this type are the Historical Novel Prize, the Edogawa Rampo Prize, and the Suntory Mystery Prize. Large sums of money, however, do not necessarily lead to the emergence of good writers nor do they guarantee good writing. Maintaining a literary prize that carries a large sum of money is, apparently, not easy. The Historical Novel Prize terminated this year (2000), after having conferred its 10th award.

Another literary prize that brings the winner 10 million yen was inaugurated this year, the Horror Suspense Prize, offered jointly by two publishers, Shinchōsha and Gentōsha, together with TV Asahi. In addition to this "grand prize," the same group also sponsors a "special prize," and it is reported that manuscripts selected for these awards will be published by Shinchōsha and Gentōsha in alternate years. That way, while the probability for each publisher of landing a very good work is cut in half, so are the costs for each and the risks involved. This "unprecedented attempt by two publishers to sponsor one writing prize" (in the words of one of the managers) is an unmistakable sign of the unpredictability that now surrounds publishing in Japan and the necessity for publishers, even then, to keep on searching for new talent.

As suggested in this overview, changes have been taking place in the way sponsors administer prizes and in the system of literary award-giving that could not have been imagined even ten years ago. At the same time, however, if we reflect on Japan's literary awards in a wider context, we can recognize some obvious merits. First of all, competitions for almost all the new writers' prizes for unpublished work are open to anyone, anywhere (even overseas), as long as the manuscript submitted is written in Japanese. Even a completely unknown first-time writer with no influence or connections can submit a work and it will be considered equally with all the others. If the writer has talent and some luck, he or she can win a prize. The writing careers of many of the most popular writers

among young readers today took off when they won literary prizes for new writers. Among them are Murakami Ryū and Murakami Haruki, both winners of the Gunzō New Writers Awardd; Yamada Eimi, who won the Bungei Award; and Yoshimoto Banana, recipient of the Kaien Literary Prize for New Writers (discontinued in 1996). The practice of keeping competition open has been maintained since the prizes began. And, despite a general decline in readership for some types of books in recent years, many readers still greet the emergence of young, new talent with eagerness and strong support.

In 1999 Hirano Keiichirō (see *Japanese Book News*, No. 30, p. 22) won the 120th Akutagawa Prize for *Nisshoku* [Solar Eclipse]. He was a university student, twenty-three years old, the same age that Ishihara Shintarō (now governor of Tokyo) and Nobel laureate Ōe Kenzaburō were when they won the same prize. As a vote of confidence in the promise of this talented young newcomer, it was announced the same day the award ceremony was held that a large reprinting—100 thousand more copies—of Hirano's book would be issued. Pressured by the harsh circumstances of the publishing world, literary prizes have changed and adapted, but they still have the power to bring new works and new authors to an enthusiastic reading public. (*Koyama Tetsurō is editor, Cultural News Section, Kyodo News.*)

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and forests were mercilessly plundered as the economy was rebuilt and industries reconstructed. By the 1950s, the devastation could no longer be ignored. A Natural Parks Law, with stricter provisions than the National Parks Law, was enacted in 1957. In 1971, the Environment Agency was set up and made responsible for environmental conservation and pollution control, and a Nature Conservation Charter was drawn up in 1974. Recognizing how profoundly harmony between nature and human affairs had decayed, the charter called for preservation of the natural environment and spelled out fundamental principles for protection of nature. In its preamble, the Charter states, "Human beings, together with sunlight, water, earth, animals, and plants, and others, are part of Nature. Human beings have built and developed their civilizations by enjoying Nature's benefits and enduring its burdens." Another passage further on in the Charter says, "We must now awaken to the dignity of Nature and cease the arrogance of believing that we can conquer Nature or subject it to the will of humanity. We should respect Nature, striving to partake of its bounties with moderation, without damaging the balance of Nature. All citizens should concert their efforts in protecting and preserving the natural environment."

The Maeda Ippo En, since 1983 an incorporated foundation with an endowment and operational funds donated by the Maeda family, has been passed down through three generations. The third and current president is Maeda Mitsuko, who now resides on the institute's grounds.

The vast forest land of Akan is one of the most systematically and successfully managed areas of Japan. Conservation is of two types: one type is preservation for eternity, consisting of projects intended to return the forest to its original state. In other areas, research is being conducted on wildlife habitats and afforestation, as well as basic surveys of the natural environment of the Akan district. Other original scientific research programs are also underway. The Institute holds nature study and observation seminars, supports natural environmental preservation activities, and carries out other programs including prizes for nature conservation.

The Akan mountains are covered with mixed, subarctic evergreen and deciduous forests. In rehabilitating forestland, forest management relies mainly on natural propagation, and the target proportions are the 70 percent coniferous and 30 percent broad-leaf growth that characterizes established areas of the Akan forest. The entire forest is divided into ten sections and one section is thinned and cleared each year. Cutting of trees is prohibited in National Park special protection zones, marimo protection zones, and important conservation areas in river drainage areas as well as in type one special areas. In the second type of forests, up to 50 percent of the growth may be selectively cut.

Here and there in these vast forests, the Maeda Ippo En has established trial forests where various experiments are being conducted. The Akan area exhibits a distinctive and diverse pattern of growth, with Ezo spruce and *todomatsu* dominant in lower altitudes, birch forests above them, low-growth *miyama hannoki* (*sorbus commixta*) and rowans yet further up, and other conifers above. This diversity makes the area ideal for forestry experiments.

The typical landscape of the Japanese archipelago is captured in the old, popular children's song about a train that runs, "now in the mountains, now along the shore" (*ima wa yamanaka, ima wa hama*). The chain of islands lie in an arc stretching north and south, and the four seasons are distinct throughout the archipelago. The undulations of the land are sometimes precipitous, sometimes gentle, and endowed with endless diversity. Situated at the northern end of the monsoon zone, Japan has high rainfall and humidity. Its flora is a complex mixture including sub-tropical and arctic- as well as temperate-zone plants that flourish and decay in nature's unending cycle. Preservation and utilization of the natural bounty of the islands should accord with such particular local features of the environment.

The Maeda Ippo En is an important, active center of the ecology movement, although its existence is by no means well known even among Japanese. With a history going back to the beginning of the twentieth century, it is certainly one of the world's pioneers in the protection of nature.

Founder Maeda Masana was a close friend of classical literati-style painter Tomioka Tessai (1837–1924). He occasionally visited Tessai's home in Kyoto, where the two loved to exchange stories. Their friendship is enshrined in a monument to Maeda's memory in Kyoto. Tomioka drew a full-length portrait of Maeda, wearing cap and backpack, umbrella in hand, the outfit he sported during his travels throughout the country. Tessai's epigram for this monument is "Shishi dokkō" (The Lion Goes Forth Alone).

The monument stands to the left of the gate of Kyoto's landmark temple Chion'in. Tomioka Tessai, eighty-nine years old at the time, created a portrait on a piece of paper beforehand and directed that the paper portrait be pasted on the stone as it was carved, so as to transmit to the sculpture the spirit of their friendship. (*Ikeuchi Osamu is a specialist in German literature.*)

French Publishing and Japan

Bertrand Py

During the *perestroika* era, at an international conference held to study the economic and cultural evolution of the former Soviet bloc, novelist Nina Berberova took the audience by surprise. The Russian-born American, who has spent her life writing, reading, and teaching, stated her belief that questions of economy predominate over those of culture, since the economy shapes exchanges between cultures and not vice versa.

The products of culture are rooted in the economy. They stimulate cultural exchanges, and so such a statement is debatable. But in view of the growth of the global economy and today's international literary marketplace, her claim takes on new relevance and is worth considering. Exchange among nations has its high and low points and its fleeting fashions (as with the case of Latin-American, New Russian, Spanish, and Cuban writing), all of which are not direct results of the global economy but have nevertheless followed in its wake.

In the last few decades, these sporadic impulses and the growth of markets worldwide have gradually enabled Asia, and Japan in particular, to create fruitful dialogues with both the United States and Europe in trade and literature. It is hard to say which came first, business or the book. You cannot tell whether readers first experienced Japanese technology and then were drawn to relish the masterpieces of Japanese literature (Mishima Yukio, Tanizaki Jun'ichrō, and Kawabata Yasunari, the "Japanese holy trinity," as we often say in France) or vice versa. Whatever the case may be, imports of both Japanese technology and literature have come a long way since the days when all we knew of Japan came from the Presses Orientalistes de France and Gallimard's *Connaisance de l'Orient.* Even then, the glimpses they gave were of a Japan before the modern era.

French Catalogues Go International

Editors have experienced globalization in the last twenty-five years in the marked proliferation of foreign titles in their publisher's catalogues. Many presses—Actes Sud, Alinéa, Rivages, Philippe Picquier, Le Serpent à Plumes, Gaïa, and others—have emerged or evolved by tapping the world's rich store of literary resources, and the competition stimulated by this trend has roused established publishers to refurbish their international collections. Publishers have undergone different and complementary developments which have greatly benefited the diffusion of Japanese literature. When Éditions Piquier first started up in 1986, it focused specifically on Japanese literature. Fifteen years later, it now offers a treasure trove of Japanese culture, featuring over 200 works by classical and modern authors. This collection (among others) crystallizes Philippe Picquiers' personal desire to help readers discover the modern age of Japanese literature and society. More established publishers, such as Gallimard, Albin Michel, and Le Seuil, and the new generation, such as Actes Sud, have been dealing with Japanese works for a long time, but their approaches are less specialized.

Actes Sud's own approach for the last twenty years has been to tie a handful of authors of one country into a carefully selected list of authors from around the world. Such a policy has enhanced the press's reputation over the two decades and, with sixty translations a year, confirmed it as a pioneer in the exploration of world literature. This success owes much to the links it has forged, from its base in Provence, with the worldwide translation community.

The Translator Knows Best

Translators play a fundamental (and often hidden) role in the selection of works and in key editorial decisions, even before they start translating. Actes Sud covers twenty or so different languages, and responsibility for its collections has often been conferred upon translators, who have suggested an author they would like to translate.

Today, due to the Internet and other worldwide networks, editors experience no problem in finding good books (suggestions come in from all directions). The difficulty lies in discovering a wise advisor who can identify the right names so that the editor can develop sustained profiles of the authors.

Actes Sud, for example, commenced publication of Japanese literature fairly recently (in 1995), under the initiative of the editor of its current collection, Rose-Marie Makino-Fayolle. Her choices, the quality of translation of the works, and also her author profiling have projected Ogawa Yōko to the fore in France.

From the outset, Actes Sud made a splash with the slender volumes that are still the jewels of its crown. Ogawa Yōko's short novels fit this idiom perfectly. Her first works to appear in French—*La Piscine* (*Daibingu pūru*), *Les Abeilles* (*Domitori*), and *La Grossesse* (*Ninshin karendā*)—won her a faithful readership, always looking for more. In 1998, Actes Sud's twentieth-anniversary program provided a breakthrough for Ogawa. By adding her *Le Réfectoire un soir et une piscine sous la pluie* (*Yūgure no kyūshokushitsu to ame no pūru*) to its prestige list of ten star authors, the publisher succeeded in doubling sales of her work. This success continued for her next novel, *L'Annulaire* (*Kusuri yubi no hyōhon*). The recent publication of *Hôtel Iris* (September 2000), coinciding with the author's visit to France, promises to spread her reputation even further.

Examining a press portfolio of criticisms of Ogawa's work, I was interested to note how her work addresses aspects of French images of Japan. It compels French readers to question both the nature of contemporary Japan and the age in which we live and the universal issues it faces.

In France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Francophone Canada, readers were first drawn to Ogawa Yōko because she is a woman. The prominence of her work (alongside that of Yoshimoto Banana) against the backdrop of the perhaps-justifiable, perhaps-superficial images of the male-dominated culture has been interpreted by critics as a sign of changes for women in Japan (*La Tribune de Genève*, June 1997). For them, the metaphysical malaise of Ogawa's characters represents a distinctly female inquiry into the possibilities beyond traditional wifely roles. They particularly like to note (as if De Sade were not a product of France) the cruelty and perversity of Ogawa's characters (*Libération,* March 1997; *L'Evénement du Jeudi*, March 1997; *L'Echo,* November 1998). These characters are people caught up in a literature of extremes

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Mishima Yukio: Thirty Years After

Koyama Tetsurō

November 25, 2000 marks exactly thirty years since novelist Mishima Yukio died. On that day, in the company of four members of the Tate no kai (Shield Society), a private defense force he founded in 1968 by recruiting nationalist-minded students to counter the leftist movement at the time, he forced his way into the Eastern Regional Headquarters of the Self-Defense Forces (formerly the Imperial Army headquarters) in Tokyo and, after a brief pronouncement delivered to SDF soldiers gathered outside, committed ritual suicide by disembowelment (*seppuku*). Mishima Yukio was forty-five years old.

Tied in with the anniversary, the major literary magazines put out issues featuring Mishima. In its October issue, *Subaru* carried a dialogue ("Imakoso kataru Mishima Yukio" [What Mishima Yukio Means to Us Now]) between novelist and Buddhist nun Setouchi Jakuchō and singer/actor Miwa Akihiro, and also a round-table discussion on Mishima and writer Abe Kōbō, who was a major rival and firm admirer of Mishima.

Bungakukai's November issue features an essay by Ishihara Shintarō (novelist and now governor of Tokyo) entitled "Tensai gosui" [The Decay of Genius], deliberately using the word "gosui," which appears in the title of Mishima's last work *Tennin gosui* (trans., *The Decay of the Angel*). In the essay, Ishihara discusses Mishima's natural gifts and the tragedy brought about by his excessive self-consciousness. Other feature essays include "Kaisō kaiten tobira no Mishima Yukio" [Revolving Door: A Recollection of Mishima Yukio] by Dōmoto Masaki, who was a producer in the film *Yūkoku* [Patriotism] starring Mishima himself, and "*Eirei no koe* ron" [On "The Voices of the Heroic Dead"] by Hirano Keiichirō, himself a young Akutagawa-prize-winning novelist.

Whenever the tenth, twentieth, or other significant anniversary of the death of a well-known writer comes around, any publication that had close ties with the novelist carries feature articles on that person. So it was natural that Shinchōsha, publisher of Mishima's collected works and sponsor of the Mishima Prize, should prepare a special issue of its literary magazine *Shinchō* on the writer. What was unusual was that so many other journals published feature articles on him as well.

Of all the magazines highlighting Mishima, the October issue of *Subaru* is especially interesting. Miwa Akihiro enjoys some renown as a cross-dresser and one of Mishima's past loves. In the dialogue between Miwa and Setouchi, Miwa recounted an episode: At one time he said to Mishima, "That you love me, an effeminate male, means that you love the feminine. You must be bisexual." Mishima was happy to hear he was considered bisexual. Miwa also talks about his interpretation of the riddle of Mishima's shocking suicide. Brought up with stern and meticulous care from infancy, Mishima followed the course in life that his parents laid out for him, going to the elite Peers' School, then to the University of Tokyo, and entering the Ministry of Finance after college. It was a passive life, always following someone else's plan, and it led to the development of a psychological complex about never having lived a life of his own choosing. At the end, says Miwa, "At least Mishima chose the way he would die. He died an active death."

One of discussants in the round-table discussion "Mishima Yukio and Abe Kōbō," which appeared in the same issue of *Subaru*, was novelist Nakamura Akihiko, author of the newly-published *Resshi to yobareru otoko* [A Man We Can Call a Patriot] (Bungei Shunjū, 2000), written about leading Shield Society member Morita Masakatsu, the man who ritually decapitated Mishima and then killed himself. During the discussion Nakamura remarked on Mishima's passivity, saying "I feel that in fact Mishima was led to suicide by Morita and some of the other university students in the Society." With this and other comments, this issue of *Subaru* offers certain new insights, offering a glimpse of Mishima as vacillating between the passive and the active until the very end.

The subtitle of the *Bungakukai* special issue on Mishima was "Forty-five Years of His Life and Thirty Years of His Absence." Indeed, whenever a major incident occurs in literary circles, there is always someone who wonders aloud, "What would Mishima say about this if he were alive?" Mishima's absence is felt strongly in the literary world. The strength of that feeling itself suggests the stagnation in Japanese literature today. (*Koyama Tetsurō is editor, Cultural News Section, Kyodo News.*)

The Words of National Anthems

Ikari Haruo

In 1999, Japan passed a law according legal recognition to the song that has long been used as its national anthem, "Kimigayo." The passage of the law was accompanied by considerable controversy and public debate. Perhaps reflecting awakened curiosity about the nature of such songs among the Japanese public, an unusual book was published in 2000: *Shashinshū kokka* [Photo Collection: National Anthems] (Jōhō Sentā Shuppankyoku), introducing the national anthems of 167 countries along with color photographs. This is the kind of odd and unconventional book I am most eager to tell others about.

At international sports competitions, the winners stand on the dais after receiving their medals, the national flag of the gold medalist is raised, and the national anthem is played. Almost every anthem has words, but that's about all we know. This book attempts to give an overall picture of the national anthems of the world, providing their texts in Japanese. The lyrics of anthems are fascinating reflections of the history and ethos of each country. The national anthem of Australia goes like this:

> Australians all let us rejoice,
> For we are young and free,
> We've golden soil and wealth for toil,
> Our home is girt by sea;
> Our land abounds in nature's gifts
> Of beauty rich and rare;
> In hist'ry's page, let ev'ry stage
> Advance Australia fair,
> In joyful strains then let us sing
> Advance Australia fair.

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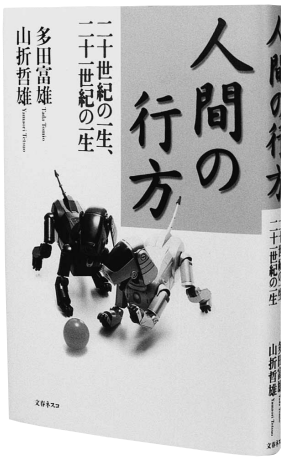
New Titles

THOUGHT

***Ningen no yukue: Nijusseiki no isshō, nijū-isseiki no isshō* [Whither Humanity: The Life of the Twentieth Century and the Life of the Twenty-first Century]. Tada Tomio and Yamaori Tetsuo.** Bunshun Nesco, 2000. 193×130 mm. 238 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-89036-103-0.



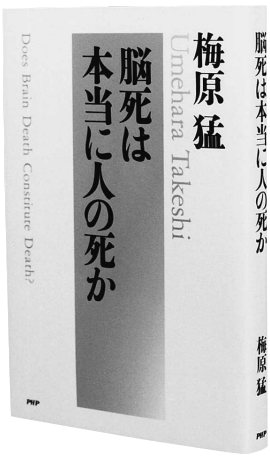
Cover design: Sakata Masanori

This book is a dialogue between immunologist Tada Tomio and scholar of religion Yamaori Tetsuo, both known for their strong personalities and solid thinking, who share a sense of crises about the condition of humanity today. The book consists of six chapters: "The human lifespan," "How will we determine the time of birth and death?" "Vitality enhanced by illness," "Is beauty a fantasy of the brain?" "Man, woman, and Y chromosomes," and a conclusion. Some of the thought-provoking themes it takes up are: Can we overcome our own DNA through our own effort? Can a fertilized human embryo be considered a human being? The human clone. The etiquette of death. How do foreign substances in the body identify with the self? Are the Y chromosomes that determine the male the source of all evil? The lives of all living matter and the lives of human beings.

Yamaori has extensive knowledge of and experience with religious culture in the world while Tada is both an outstanding scientist and deeply versed in the traditional performing art of noh. The dialogue between the two thus ranges over topics from the functioning of the brain to the total distance Shakyamuni, founder of Buddhism, walked in his lifetime.

The authors wonder whether the closing of the twentieth century, the century of science, and the opening of a new century will make it possible to recover humanity and the wholesomeness of human beings. This book offers food for thought about where humanity is heading, as symbolized by the title of its final chapter, "Whither the Human Genome?"

***Nōshi wa hontō ni hito no shi ka* [Does Brain Death Constitute Death?]. Umehara Takeshi.** PHP Kenkyūsho, 2000. 187×124 mm. 190 pp. ¥1,100. ISBN 4-569-61010-2.
This is a collection of essays and a dialogue by the philosopher Umehara Takeshi on the topic of brain death. In 1990 the author became a member of the Health and Welfare Ministry's Ad Hoc Committee on Brain Death and Organ Transplants. He says that the inclination to make it possible to recognize the brain death as the death of a person and to donate organs only by family consent was strongly felt within the Committee. Disturbed by the attempt to redefine death for the purpose of conducting organ transplants, the author joined the opposition members, who were very much in the minority on the Committee.

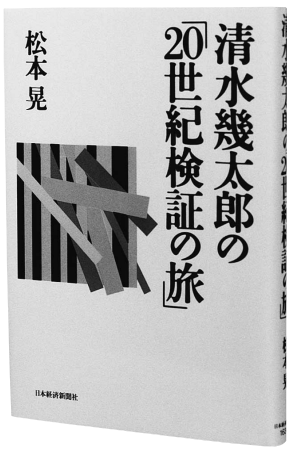


Cover design: Kawakami Shigeo

While explaining the Cartesian dualism and American pragmatism which form the basis for considering brain death the death of a person, he discusses views of death in Buddhism and ancient Shinto. He sees organ donation as akin to the practice of the bodhisattva in the Buddhist tradition. The bodhisattva, as taught in Mahayana Buddhism, seeks the salvation of all beings and practices compassion for all living creatures. Umehara argues that brain death is no more than a concept advanced for the medical purpose of organ transplantation, and it will not be neessary if the patient, acting as a bodhissatva, grants consent in a living will. What is important here is the donor's prior, clearly-expressed permission, and it is out of the question, he asserts, to remove the patient's organs only with family approval. He raises the question of whether it is really possible for family members to exercise the calm judgment needed at the crucial moment of death, particularly given the role doctors play vis-à-vis their patients in Japan.

This book makes a thoughtful contribution to current efforts to define the criteria for determining the death of a person and deal with the issue of organ transplants in general.

***Shimizu Ikutarō no nijusseiki kenshō no tabi* [Shimizu Ikutarō's Travels to Investigate the Twentieth Century]. Matsumoto Akira.** Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 2000. 193×131 mm. 238 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-532-16344-7.
Shimizu Ikutarō (1907–88) was well-known as an opinion leader and journalist in Japan both before and after World War II. As a sociologist he was also influential in the world of scholarship.



Author Matsumoto Akira studied under Shimizu at Gakushūin University and accompanied Shimizu as his assistant on overseas trips a total of six times during 1975–81. The book consists of memories of his mentor, centering around the journeys abroad to give a close-up view of the famous scholar's human side.

Although before the war Shimizu's early career had been devoted to the introduction of American thought to

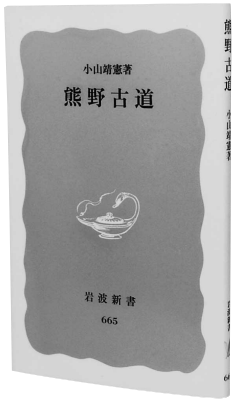
Japan, it was not until 1975 that he visited the United States for the first time. This was followed by trips to Latin America, Europe, South Korea, Israel, and other parts of the world. His journeys were apparently planned to confirm and corroborate the research he had undertaken.

Shimizu is well known for dramatic shifts in his ideological positions twice in his career, once right after the country's defeat and again amid the strong popular protest movement that rose up against ratification of the revised U.S.–Japan security treaty in 1960. His writings are now the subject of scholarly research, but little is known about Shimizu the individual, which makes the book all the more valuable. As the book vividly reveals, he was also an outstanding educator.

HISTORY/GEOGRAPHY

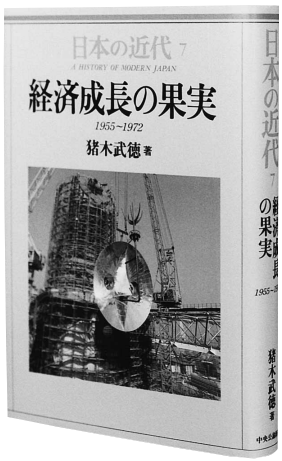
***Kumano kodō* [The Old Kumano Trails]. Koyama Yasunori.** Iwanami Shoten, 2000. 173×105 mm. 208 pp. ¥700. ISBN 4-00-430665-5.
The Kumano district of the Kii peninsula south of Kyoto and Osaka is characterized by steep mountains, ever-changing picturesque coastlines, a mild climate, and abundant rain. For Japanese Kumano evokes the scenic beauties of Nachi Falls, thought to be the most outstanding in Japan, the achievements of Minakata Kumagusu (1867–1941), an ecologist known for his field studies in this area, and the holy places located there that are traditionally visited by pilgrims from all over the country.

The Kumano Sanzan are three shrines that came into the spotlight in the late Heian period (794–1185) with visits from ex-emperors and empress dowagers. Thereafter people from all over Japan have been drawn, as if by some invisible force, to tackle their perilous pilgrim routes. The various paths they forged still cover a considerable distance and among the nation's best-preserved historic trails.



This book is by a historian who studied old accounts of pilgrimages to the shrines and has explored the trails for over twenty years. He analyzes the significance of the Kumano pilgrimages. The book is also a good guide for people interested in walking the old roads themselves.

***Nihon no kindai 7: Keizai seichō no kajitsu 1955–1972* [A History of Modern Japan: The Fruit of Economic Growth 1955–1972]. Inoki Takenori.** Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2000. 196×134 mm. 366 pp. ¥2,400. ISBN 4-12-490107-0.
This is the seventh title of a sixteen-volume series on modern Japanese history. The 1955–72 period covered spans the rapid-economic growth era. Tracing the history of the era, the book focuses on economic change, skillfully illustrating developments in politics and society.



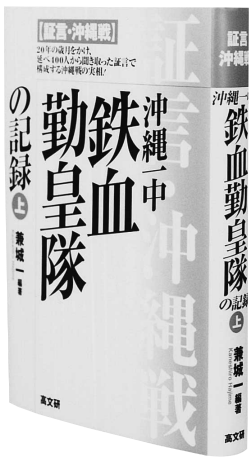
Cover design: Chūō Kōron Shinsha

Inoki advances some arguments that overturn widely accepted analyses of rapid economic growth. For example, he says that it was the venture spirit of small and medium-sized enterprises, the emphasis on ability rather than academic pedigree, and the technological legacy of the prewar and wartime eras that were the real driving forces behind rapid economic growth. The conventional view is that the Japanese economy grew rapidly because corporations imitated Western technologies and because the labor force was divided up by academic background.

Economic success during that period, however, brought substantial changes in what he calls the "forms and expressions" of Japanese society. Although the balance between public and private changed, people did not try hard enough to develop concepts that lie between the two extremes. The author argues that the unconstrained emphasis on private interests distracted the government from its focus on the public interest, leading to the downfall of the Tanaka Kakuei Cabinet in the fall of 1974.

The book includes many photographs and diagrams.

***Okinawa Itchū: Tekketsu kinnōtai no kiroku, jō* [Records of the Okinawa First Middle School Iron Blood Royalists, Vol. 1]. Kaneshiro Hajime.** Kōbunken, 2000. 195×132 mm. 386 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 4-87498-240-9.
Toward the end of the Pacific War, Okinawa became the scene of the bloodiest fighting in the war between Japanese and American troops, costing some 200,000 lives. In preparation for the battle, Okinawan civilians were mobilized to construct battle positions and airfields. Some were organized into fighting units called "iron blood royalist corps" (*tekketsu kinnōtai*). Among those sent into battle in these corps were students of the local teacher training school and middle schools (at the time secondary schools for male students) in the prefecture.



Cover design: Matsuda Reiichi

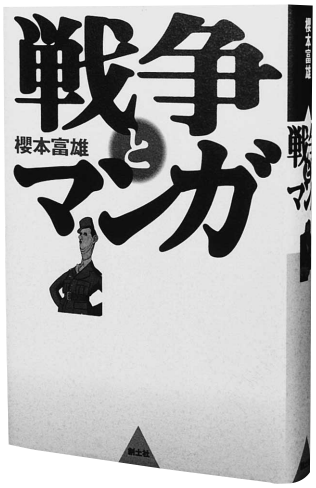
Some 340 students, including the author, from second through fifth grades (aged from 14 to 17) at the Okinawa Prefectural First Middle School were organized into these corps, and two-thirds were killed in action. The book tells how the middle school's teachers and students were cornered at the southern end of the main island and fought a hopeless battle, perishing together with regular Japanese troops.

Thirty-four years passed before the

author began searching for the survivors and relatives of those who had died during the battle. He visited Okinawa every year and gathered testimony from a total of nearly 400 people, compiling a list of names which, along with some other data, represents around 70 percent of the students and teachers who participated in the battle.

This account recounts the process leading to the tragic ending in diary style, interwoven with the recollections of the survivors.

***Sensō to manga* [War and Manga]. Sakuramoto Tomio.** Sōdosha, 2000. 194×131 mm. 414 pp. ¥4,800. ISBN 4-7893-0008-0.
Many of the intellectuals who actively supported the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, an instrument of national control, during World War II, continued to write and speak out on issues after the defeat as if they had had nothing to do with it.



Cover design: Ueda Hiroshi

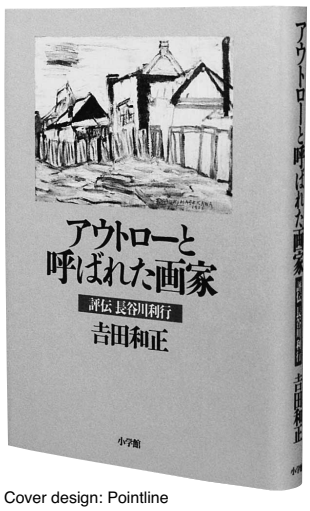
Born in 1933, the author, who has devoted his career to research on the war responsibility of the Japanese state and intellectuals, became interested in the role of Japanese manga artists during the war. Their artistic activities had been hidden and forgotten, suspended in obscurity. This book is the result of the author's extensive labors in collecting and classifying such works.

As was the case in every dimension of Japanese culture, manga, too, were used as instruments for promoting the war. The book shows how manga artists were mobilized for the war effort and what they thought and did about that past after the war. Among Sakuramoto's subjects are well-known manga artists, including Yokoyama Ryūichi and Kondō Hidezō.

The book is profusely illustrated with manga and contains a very thorough index of names.

BIOGRAPHY

***Autorō to yobareta gaka: Hyōden Hasegawa Toshiyuki* [The Artist Called Outlaw: The Life of Hasegawa Toshiyuki]. Yoshida Kazumasa.** Shōgakukan, 2000. 193×133 mm. 255 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-09-386102-1.
This biography of Hasegawa Toshiyuki (1891–1940), a painter known for his many stormy, yet unaffected and poetic works, traces his eccentric life and the times he lived in, as well as touching on his contemporaries. In the 1920s–30s, his highly idiosyncratic style was seen in the context of reaction to the academism of the Western-style school of Japanese painting established by Kuroda Seiki and others in the latter half of the Meiji era (1868–1912).



Cover design: Pointline

Hasegawa loved painting above all else in life. Although displaying extraordinary natural talent, he was not accepted in painting circles because of his unconventional behavior and was not successful by conventional standards. Living in a flophouse, he managed to support his drinking habits by virtually forcing people to buy hastily drawn pictures until he eventually succumbed to stomach cancer. Collapsing unrecognized on the street, he was sent to a hospital for the homeless and died there in obscurity.

The book traces the life of a lonely drifter artist, who would wander the metropolis yelling, "Is living as worthwhile as painting?"

***Dakara anata mo ikinuite* [Here's Why You Too Should Start Over]. Ōhira Mitsuyo.** Kōdansha. 2000. 194×130 mm. 259 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-06-210058-4.
This is an account of the eventful first half of the life of a woman lawyer whose work is now devoted to rehabilitation of delinquent young people. Born in 1965, Ōhira suffered from bullying at the age of fourteen and attempted to commit suicide. Although miraculously saved from death, she continued to endure the inquisitive gazes of others and further ill-treatment from her peers. Misunderstood even by the adults around her, she gave up herself to self-destructive, desperate behavior and became a delinquent. At sixteen, she married the boss of a gangster organization and had her back tattooed.

Cover design: Narita Ikuhiro

Ōhira later divorced, and at twenty-two she met a friend of her father's who challenged her to change the course of her life and start over. The serious interest this man, who later became her foster father, took in her made her decide to turn over a new leaf. She overcame the handicap of having only a junior high diploma through assiduous study and went on to obtain building construction and notary certifications. At 29, she passed the national law examination, the most difficult of all national qualifying examinations, on her first try.

Rather than serve as legal counsel for corporations or individuals, she has specialized in juvenile delinquency cases. Determined to help former delinquent youth find jobs and "start over, too," she busies herself even after the court cases are settled with the strenuous task of finding them work. Making no effort to remove the tattoo on her back, she

accepts her past and endeavors to impress her message on troubled youth: "Don't give up!"

***Ikyō: Watashi ga ikinuita Chūgoku* [In Foreign Parts: How I Survived in China]. Han Ruisui.** Shinchōsha, 2000. 196×136 mm. 335 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-10-435601-8.
This book looks back on the changes that took place in China over the fifty-odd years from World War II to today from the viewpoint of a single individual. What makes this book particularly remarkable is that the author is a Japanese woman who took Chinese citizenship and became a member of the Chinese Communist Party in the days of the Eighth Route Army, the main CCP armed unit (renamed the People's Liberation Army in 1947).

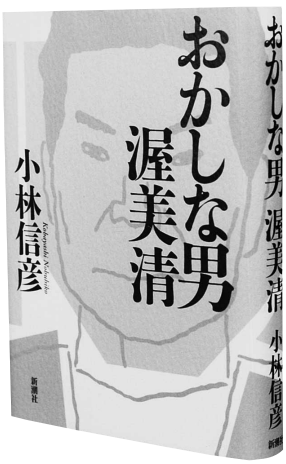
Cover design: Shinchōsha

During World War II, she married an "enemy alien," a Chinese student who was in Japan at that time, and went with him to the continent as a Chinese national while the war was still raging. Together with her husband Han Xiangchen, a CCP supporter, and while raising children, she joined the fighting against the Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist Party). After the CCP victory and establishment of the People's Republic of China, however, she saw her ideals betrayed one after another. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, her husband was arrested on suspicion of spying for Japan, and the author herself was kept under house arrest for more than half a year. After she and her husband were cleared of suspicions and her honor restored, she became a teacher of Japanese literature. Now seventy-seven years old, she still teaches in Beijing.

This book is the eventful account of a woman who was a close eyewitness to China's war and revolution both as a Japanese and CCP member.

***Okashina otoko Atsumi Kiyoshi* [That Funny Fellow, Atsumi Kiyoshi]. Kobayashi Nobuhiko.** Shinchōsha, 2000. 196×136 mm. 374 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-10-331824-4.
The family melodrama film series (48 installments in all) *Otoko wa tsuraiyo* (It's Tough Being a Man), once one of the traditional features of the New Year's season in Japan, starred Atsumi Kiyoshi (1928–96) as Kuruma Torajirō (affectionately known as Tora-san), an easily infatuated itinerant peddler with many endearing foibles. The present book is a portrait of comedian Atsumi, whose performances of this lovable character made him a national icon. Author Kobayashi (b. 1932) is an authority on the Japanese world of comedy. He was on friendly terms with Atsumi since the actor's late twenties. The book is based only on what he actually saw and heard, he says, evidently proud that none of it relies on interviews.

Atsumi suffered from tuberculosis and had a lung removed at the age of twenty-six. Despite limited stamina, he was driven to achieve success and that propelled him down the path to stardom in the entertainment world.



Cover design: Shinchōsha

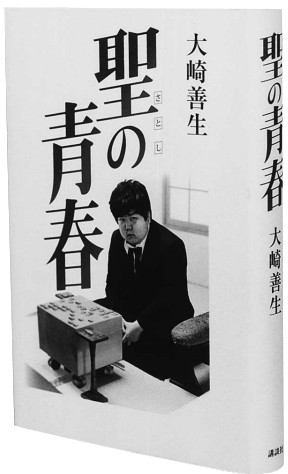
Many fans closely identify Atsumi with the fictitious character Tora-san and since his death his legend has grown even more. Aided by the diary he kept from that time, Kobayashi describes in depth the madness and isolation with which the star also struggled.

The book is not, however, intended as an icon-destroying biography. Introducing many anecdotes, it concretely describes Atsumi's temperament, his extraordinary efforts to learn from other actors by observation, and his gift for conversation and impersonation. It is also a valuable work for the study of Japanese films.

***Satoshi no seishun* [Satoshi's Young Life]. Ōsaki Yoshio.** Kōdansha, 2000. 194×131 mm. 334 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-06-210008-8.
Along with *go,* the Japanese game of *shōgi* is very popular. A large segment of the population plays the game, and the major professional and amateur matches attract keen attention among fans.

This book is a biography of Murayama Satoshi, an eighth-ranking *shogi* player who died at the young age of 29 just as he was expected to become one of the top players in the country. His first encounter with *shōgi* took place at the age of six, during his hospitalization with a severe case of renal nephrosis. Seeing friends suffering from the same condition die one after the other, he turned to *shōgi* as something to live for, cherishing the dream of someday winning the title of *meijin* ("master"; given to the best player in the country). Completely self-taught, he gradually improved his technique, and at age 13 he began to train under sixth-rank Mori Nobuo. The two lived together. Mori, known as an eccentric and inveterate traveler, developed a special affection for the sickly boy and protected him throughout his life. Murayama became a professional player at seventeen and played matches with strong rivals until cancer of the bladder finally took his life.

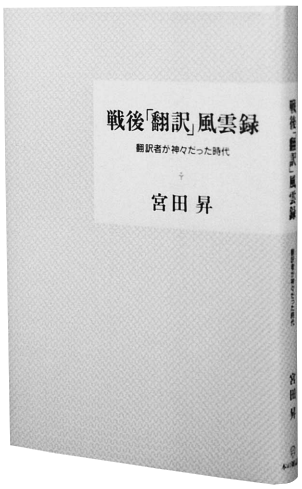
Even in adulthood, Murayama retained his childhood innocence and pure-heartedness. Written by a *shōgi* journalist who was closely associated with Mori and Murayama, this absorbing book vividly evokes the



Cover design: Yamagishi Yoshiaki

incomparable prodigy whose genius was both admired and feared, and who cut a bold swath in an intensely competitive world during his short life.

***Sengo "hon'yaku" fūunroku: Hon'yakusha ga kamigami datta jidai* [A Postwar Record of "Translation": The Era When Translators Were Gods]. Miyata Noboru.** Hon no Zasshi Sha, 2000, 194×131 mm. 236 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-938463-88-1.
Many translators who introduced works in foreign languages to Japanese readers as well as their editors in a period after the end of World War II were people of extraordinary talent and often eccentric character. Most of them have passed away. In this book, Miyata Noboru (b. 1928), their contemporary and a former editor and translation-rights agent with intimate knowledge of the world of publishing translations, introduces eleven of these translators.



Cover design: Tada Susumu

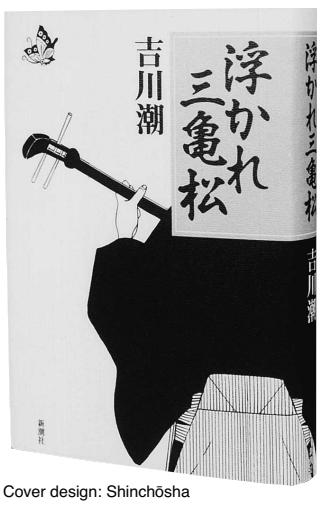
The names of the eleven are familiar to Japanese readers of mysteries, science fiction, and other popular entertainment fiction from abroad. One is Tamura Ryūichi (translator of Agatha Christie), who first decided when and where his wedding party would take place, sent invitation cards to his friends and acquaintances, collected cash gifts from them, spent the money drinking and eating, and then began searching for a woman who would marry him. Another is Hayakawa Kiyoshi, president of the Hayakawa Shobō publishing company who, although so miserly that he would not give a complimentary copy of a book to the person who edited it, kept on publishing the "Hayakawa Pocket Mystery" series even when the books were not showing a profit. The series triggered an influx of mysteries from other countries.

The author's calm and controlled writing style effectively evokes the unique passions of an era in the postwar entertainment publishing world when both translators and editors were memorable personalities.

***Ukare Mikimatsu* [Frolicking Mikimatsu]. Yoshikawa Ushio.** Shinchō-sha, 2000. 196×137 mm. 372 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-10-411802-8.
This is a biography of Yanagiya Mikimatsu (1902–68), a talented stage performer who became tremendously popular for his singing of amorous *dodoitsu*-style songs, holding sway in the entertainment world from the 1920s until the early post-World War II period. He is known for countless episodes relating to women, money, his art, extravagance, drugs, his *iki* chic, and so forth. Gathering together these episodes, theater critic Yoshikawa presents a detailed collage of the adventures of Mikimatsu's career.

Born the son of a craftsman in the old Fukagawa area of Tokyo, Mikimatsu was attracted to the theater from early childhood. At age eighteen he apprenticed to a *hōkan*, or professional jester serving drinking parties, and after many hardships he became popular in both Tokyo and Osaka, where his *dodoitsu* played to full houses.

Mikimatsu had a special talent for caricaturing the conversations between lovers. By subtle control of tone of voice, breath, and gesture he captured the depth of a couple's relationship, the personalities of the two, the atmosphere of the situation, and even the furnishings around them. During wartime, he refused to cooperate with the repeated bans on *oiroke-mono*, or "amorous pieces," but he would perform for the militartistic cause when he thought it necessary.

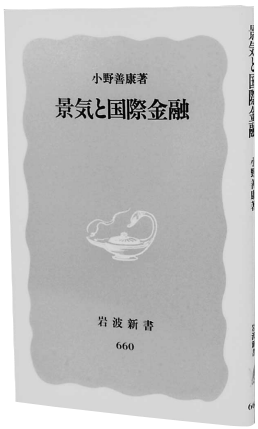


Cover design: Shinchōsha

Told against the backdrop of human drama in the world of entertainment, one episode after another in this book evokes at a brisk tempo the refined style and dash of his performances, his unyielding spirit and professional toughness.

POLITICS/ECONOMY

***Keiki to kokusai kin'yū* [Economic Performance and International Finance]. Ono Yoshiyasu.** Iwanami Shoten, 2000. 173×105 mm. 216 pp. ¥660. ISBN 4-00-430660-4.



Some say the strong yen slows down exports, triggering a recession; others claim that the yen weakens when the market drifts away from the Japanese economy. The author asserts that in the absence of accurate understanding of currency exchange rates and the international balance of payments, economic policy will continue to waver and the damage to business could be considerable. Commentaries on the subject, however, tend to be extremely complex and vary widely in perspective, advancing arguments that often contradict each other.

This book presents specific cases and explains them clearly, showing the features and contradictions manifest in previous analyses and arguments of those phenomena. This compact book addresses many questions of interest to a broad spectrum of readers. The author is director of the Osaka University Institute of Social and Economic Research.

Ono uses a two-nation model premised on the continuation of recession. While supporting the Mundell-model-like mechanism

whereby capital moves in the direction of high interest rates, he also presents the view, based on interest-parity theory, that the volume of currency in a low-interest-rate country must be increased. His original model helps to explain the coherence of these two theories.

The book attempts to clarify the complex structures of international finance and, discussing the effect of a country's economic performance upon other countries and issues of the key currency, provides useful perspectives on future prospects.

***Nihon no ushinawareta jūnen* [The Japanese Economy's Lost Decade]. Harada Yutaka.** Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1999. 193×130 mm. 248 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-532-14796-4.
As of the end of the 1980s, Japan's real gross domestic product (GDP) was growing at an annual rate of 4.8 percent. During the seven years since 1992, when the recession began, the annual GDP growth rate was less than one percent. Unemployment rose to 4.9 percent in 1999, and some analysts estimate the total amount of bad loans of Japanese financial institutions at 150 trillion yen.

This book focuses on Japanese financial policies and demonstrates why they failed. It then carefully analyzes the many wide-ranging structural problems behind the failures and discusses the weaknesses in economic philosophy that led Japan astray.

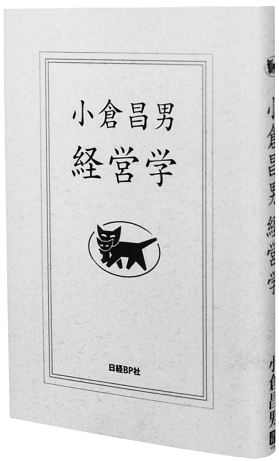
Looking at the problems peculiar to Japan relating to financial policy, the banks, the economic structure, and "land-values myth" (that land prices would continue to rise indefinitely), the author shows that the fundamental factor behind the long-term recession of the 1990s was the adoption of two contradictory policies:

Cover design: Kawakami Shigeo

control of the money supply and failure to promptly deal with the bad loans. He argues that, after all, the key to a hopeful future lies not in imitating the United States but in finding specifically Japanese solutions. He suggests that, instead of covering up failures and neglecting to fix them quickly, Japanese should return to the firm resolution that characterized their achievements in modernization following the Meiji Restoration (1868) and at the time of the post-World War II era of rapid economic growth.

***Ogura Masao keieigaku* [Ogura Masao Management]. Ogura Masao.** Nikkei BP Sha, 1999. 194×130 mm. 294 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-8222-4156-4.
This is a combination memoir and treatise on business management by Ogura Masao of the Yamato Transport Co, Ltd.

Founded by the author's father, Ogura Yasuomi, during the Taishō era (1912–26), Yamato Transport was Japan's largest overland transportation company until the outbreak of World War II. Later, the company fell on hard times when it was slow to enter the long-distance transport business that burgeoned during the early years of postwar industrial recovery. In 1976, Ogura Masao found a way out of the impasse by opening up the new market for small parcel home delivery, which proved successful.

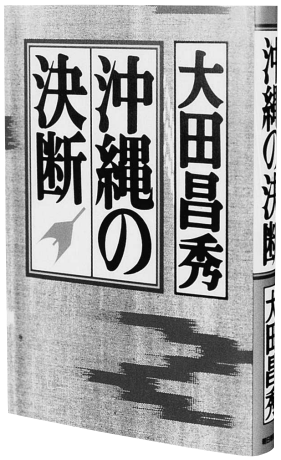


Cover design: Suzuki Seiichi Design Shitsu

The inspiration for Ogura's new business came partly from his observation of the successful Yoshinoya chain of restaurants, which specialized in a single dish: *gyūdon* (hot rice with seasoned beef). He had also seen delivery trucks of the United Parcel Services on a visit to New York City. Just as Yoshinoya served exclusively *gyūdon* on its menu, Ogura decided to concentrate on household parcels. The idea of looking at the business as a whole through the profit-loss performance of each delivery vehicle he learned from the UPS trucks.

The stories in the book of Ogura's "battles with the government" are also well worth reading. His conviction that the company's business benefits society has been the source of his confidence in battling the numerous government regulations that initially troubled the company's progress.

***Okinawa no ketsudan* [Okinawa's Decisions]. Ōta Masahide.** Asahi Shimbunsha, 2000. 193×130 mm. 348 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-02-257449-6.
This book, by a former governor of Okinawa prefecture who served two successive terms from 1990 through 1998, tells behind-the-scenes stories about his negotiations with Japan's central government over U.S. military bases on the islands.



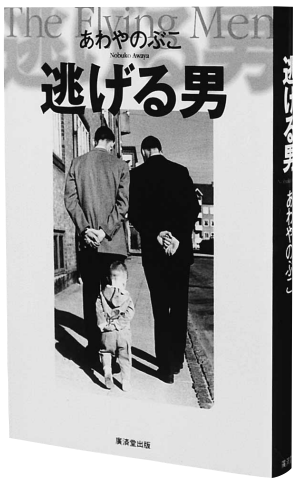
Cover design: Tamura Yoshiya

The Japanese government provides the U.S. forces with the necessary land for bases and services. Partly as the legacy of the nearly three decades after the end of the Pacific War during which Okinawa remained under U.S. military control, 75 percent of U.S. military bases and other facilities in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa. In 1995, sparked by an incident in which a local girl was raped by American servicemen, massive protest rallies were held, and a movement took shape calling for removal of U.S. bases. Okinawa governor Ōta, the author of this book, refused to sign documents that would force local landowners to allow their land to be used by U.S. forces, although he was required to do so on behalf of local landowners if they refused. By doing so, he expressed his protest against both the national government and the U.S. government.

Okinawa faces many other difficult problems, including unemployment and how to build a local economy not reliant on the U.S. bases. He warns against the tendency to blame all of Okinawa's problems on the economy. Moreover, the author observes that "the level of maturity of Japan's democracy can be measured by Okinawa"; how the military base issue is resolved will be a major test for Japanese democracy. Ōta's testimony in this autobiographical form is extremely important and useful in understanding this issue. The book also contains testimonies by thirty-three other individuals, including former Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi.

SOCIETY

***Nigeru otoko* ["The Flying Men"]. Awaya Nobuko.** Kōsaidō Shuppan, 2000. 193×130 mm. 242 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-331-50715-7.



Cover design: Hirasawa Michiko

"Flying men" is the author's term for men with mother complexes who avoid reality and the opposite sex, refusing to look at themselves honestly. In particular, men reared by overly protective and excessively meddling mothers often grow up without ever coming to grips with natural emotions such as sorrow, pain, and joy.

This book is based on interviews by the author with eight women who saw their relationships with men collapse as a result of the mother complexes of their partners. The escapist men introduced, including a medical doctor and the heir of an old and respectable family, are of relatively high social status. Among them is one who broke off an engagement with nothing more than a sudden telephone call to his fiancée; another who could not make up his mind whether he wanted to marry even after six years of association; another who could not face the sexual aspect of a relationship; and still another who does nothing but cruise the Internet. All eight men got to know the women in different ways and have different lifestyles. What they do have in common is the constant intervention of their mothers and their own failure to engage the affections of the women with whom they have established a relationship, some even refusing to truly confide in them. There is no commentary from the men's perspective in this book, but a random collection of voices by thirty-seven men talking about male-female relationships is included at the end.

***Tōdai de Ueno Chizuko ni kenka o manabu* [Learning How to Fight Under Ueno Chizuko at the University of Tokyo]. Haruka Yōko.** Chikuma Shobō. 2000. 188×129 mm. 250 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-480-81815-4.

The author is a TV and radio personality in her thirties. Searching for a sure-fire way to win arguments in the talk shows on which she often appears, ranging from serious debates to variety shows, she decided to study under well-known sociologist and feminist Ueno Chizuko, participating in her seminar for postgraduates at the University of Tokyo for three years. This book, resulting from a spring-break assignment to write an essay on what she had learned in the seminar, is Haruka's personal account of her experiences under Ueno's tutelage.

"There's no need to completely destroy your contender," Ueno advises, "Who wins and who loses is decided not by the principals in the debate but by the audience; once you learn how to manipulate your opponent, victory will naturally be yours." Rather than writing about how to debate—how to win arguments and influence people—the book focuses more on the "world of language" the author struggled to master, liberally elaborating on her discovery that sociology is a discipline aimed at constantly questioning established frameworks. It is also a feminist work, with an unusual twist.

Cover design: Suzuki Seiichi Design Shitsu

***Tōden OL satsujin jiken* [The Tokyo Electric Company Female Office Worker Murder Mystery]. Sano Shin'ichi.** Shinchōsha, 2000. 197×136 mm. 446 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-10-436901-2.

At midnight on March 8, 1997, a female member of the staff of Tokyo Electric Company was killed in a sleazy love-hotel district in Tokyo. Two months later, a Nepalese man who lived in a building adjacent to the murder site was arrested on suspicion of burglary and murder.

Cover design: Shinchōsha

The 39-year-old career woman who was murdered was unmarried and worked at one of the country's foremost corporations as the assistant chief in the Economic Research Section of the Planning Department, but she was also a prostitute who had pursued the profession for several years before she was killed. Her wages at the company were high. Why did she engage in prostitution? Is the arrested man really her killer?

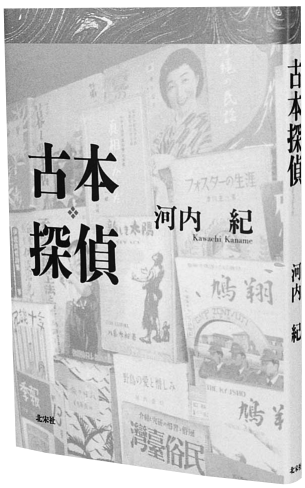
This nonfiction account traces the incident from its beginning through the court ruling that the arrested man was innocent. The author not only visited the murder site and neighbor-

hood, but also traced the woman's lineage back three generations and went as far as Nepal in the attempt to unravel the local rumors that circulated relating to the woman and the Nepalese man.

"The more I investigated the more mysterious I found both the incident and the inner life of the victim," the author says. Presenting various riddles, he offers keen insights on the unfathomable depths of human existence.

CULTURE

***Furuhon tantei* [Secondhand Book Detective]. Kawachi Kaname.** Hokusōsha, 2000. 188×127 mm. 224 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-89463-031-1.
The author of this book is fascinated by "the miscellaneous affairs of miscellaneous people" that can be explored in books. Pursuing this interest, he constantly makes the rounds of secondhand bookstores, which he has dubbed "private fee-charging archives." This book introduces some of the many unexpected discoveries he has made on these forays.



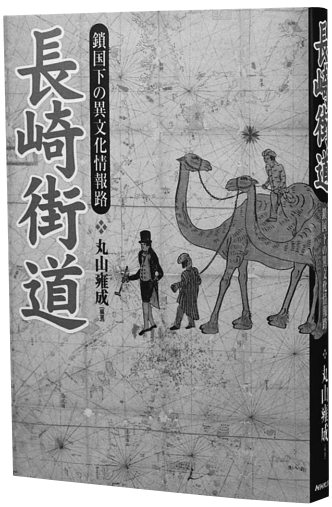
In the words of a secondhand bookstore owner of his acquaintance, "There's always something of interest about any book you pick up." It may be the content of the book itself, but it may also lie in guessing who read it and how. For example, you may find two different books on different shelves and muse that they could even have been in the same person's library. From the underlining of phrases and notes written in a book's margins, you can make certain conjectures about the circumstances of its former owner and what kind of person he or she was.

Kawachi's fascination extends to more than just books. The book also touches on advertisements, movie ticket stubs, and scrapbooks of comic strips clipped from newspapers, and other such remnants that vividly evoke the atmosphere of their times. Scholars and book-lovers will find this book irresistible, but it is also of interest to the general reader.

***Nagasaki Kaidō: Sakoku ka no ibunka jōhō ro* [The Nagasaki Highway: Road to Information on Other Cultures During the National Seclusion Era]. Maruyama Yasunari.** Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 2000. 188×130 mm. 228 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-14-080509-9.
Located in northwestern Kyushu, Nagasaki has prospered as a trading port since 1571 when it was opened to Portugal, and later became the nation's only port open to foreign commerce. Under the shogunal policy of national seclusion, trade was permitted only with the Netherlands and Qing China during the Edo period (1603–1867). The commissioner at Nagasaki, assigned by the shogunate to guard and control the coastlines, held one of the most important foreign-relations posts in the government.

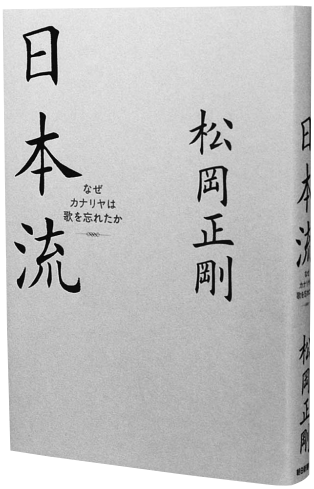
The Nagasaki Kaidō was that part of the main highway between Edo (now Tokyo) and Nagasaki which extended from the northern end of Kyushu to the commissioner's office. Articles of trade and information from overseas flowed along this thoroughfare, giving it a history distinct from that of the other main roads throughout the country.

This book, based on a symposium organized by a city along the Nagasaki Highway, also contains essays written by the participants in the symposium, including Amino Yoshihiko, specialist on Japanese medieval history, and Donald Keene, scholar and translator of Japanese literature. Another participant, Japanologist Josef Kreiner, discusses the cultural influence, especially in the realm of spiritual culture, of Japan on early modern Europe, arguing that Nagasaki was a "revolving door" through which information about the West came into Japan and information about Japan also traveled to Europe.



Cover design: Kumazawa Masato

***Nihonryū: Naze kanariya wa uta o wasuretaka* [Japan Style: Why Has the Canary Forgotten to Sing?]. Matsuoka Seigō.** Asahi Shimbunsha, 2000. 193×132 mm. 320 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-02-257468-2.
This book discusses seven aspects of Japanese culture that have been or are in the process of being lost. Beginning with the well-known children's song by poet Saijō Yaso, *Kanariya* [The Canary], the author studies Japanese culture through a total of 560 individuals and groups, including sculptor Isamu Noguchi, novelist Nagai Kafū, novelist Izumi Kyōka, poet Noguchi Ujō, and the rock group GLAY. The topics taken up reflect the omnivorous interests of Matsuoka, a journalist known for his advocacy of "editorial engineering."



Cover design: Suzuki Seiichi

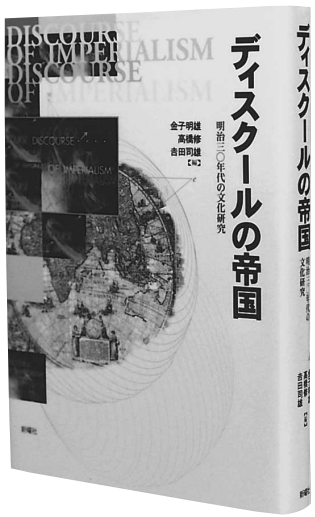
Matsuoka describes Japan as a country whose culture evolved from an intense pursuit of diversity. He dissects the structure of the culture and cultural sensibilities by focusing on pairs of words such as *aware* (pathos) and *appare* (glorious), *utsu* (void) and *utsutsu* (reality), and *miyabi* (elegance) and *hinabi* (simplicity). He writes articulately, with broad, free strokes, drawing on his

wide-ranging knowledge in many fields.

Identifying qualities that Japanese can take pride in, Matsuoka seeks a fresh and straightforward image of Japan. He tries to see Japan from various angles, avoiding snobbish traditionalism and irresponsible chauvinism.

THE JAPANESE

***Disukūru no teikoku: Meiji sanjūnendai no bunka kenkyū* [Discourse on Imperialism: Cultural Studies of the Fourth Decade of Meiji]. Kaneko Akio, et al., eds.** Shin'yōsha, 2000. 216×152 mm. 394 pp. ¥3,500. ISBN 4-7885-0716-1.
This book is the second collection of essays by a group of specialists in modern Japanese literature, the Meiji Sanjūnendai Kenkyūkai [Meiji Thirties Study Group]. The fourth decade (1897–1906) of the Meiji era (1868–1912), extending from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, is defined in this book as the period when Japan joined the ranks of the imperialist powers. Industrial capitalism held sway throughout the world, however, and the ambitions for military, economic, and cultural control in the world of most of the other powers had been more or less fulfilled.



Cover design: Namba Sonoko

The topics dealt with by a total of twelve authors vary widely, including art, mental illness, tanka poetry, fiction serialized in newspapers, department stores, gourmandism, boys' magazines, general-interest magazines (*sōgō zasshi*), and translations of adventure fiction. Rather than attempt to present a comprehensive, bird's-eye view of this one era, however, the essays form a multi-layered discourse, bringing into relief an accumulation of perceptions of Japanese by looking at writings and speeches of the formative period of the modern Japanese state. These studies not only reveal the coincidental links, but also connect the events of that era, while displaying their gaps and contradictions as well.

***Komori Yōichi Nihongo ni deau* [Komori Yōichi's Encounter with Japanese]. Komori Yōichi.** Taishūkan Shoten, 2000. 194×131 mm. 218 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-469-22151-1.
This book is a personal history of the language development of a Japanese from his boyhood in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s until he became a scholar of modern Japanese literature after returning to Japan. Born in 1953, the author went to Prague with his family when he was in the first grade of elementary school. He was sent to a Russian-language school affiliated with the Soviet embassy. Thrown into a new language environment, he had no choice but to do his best to master the Russian and Czech languages in order to survive in the children's world at the school.

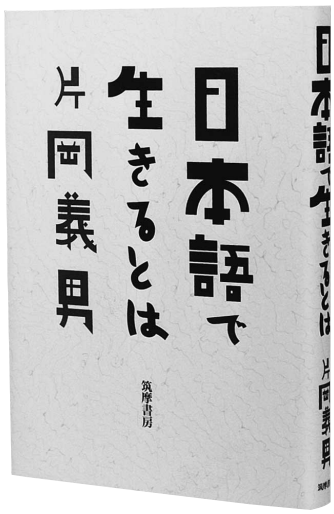
Cover design: Minami Shimbō

Komori studied Russian at school and spoke Czech in his neighborhood until the sixth grade and then his family returned to Japan. In his homeland, another struggle, this time with Japanese, awaited him. He immediately realized that written and spoken Japanese were totally different, although his school textbook back in Prague had said the two were identical. He found his Japanese language/literature classes boring and suffocatingly rigid. Entering senior high school at a time when the student movement was at its height, he made a surprising discovery: his spoken Japanese, which tended to be close to written Japanese, proved effective for speeches in student council meetings.

The process of his re-encounter with the Japanese language (after returning to Japan) is fascinating, and the story is absorbing. Toward the end, the book includes transcriptions of exchanges between Komori and his students at the elementary, junior high, and senior high school level that show something of his unconventional approach to teaching.

***Nihongo de ikiru towa* [What It Means to Live with Japanese]. Kataoka Yoshio.** Chikuma Shobō. 1999. 193×134 mm. 262 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-480-81616-X.
Japanese find it hard to master English. Any attempt to master it is fraught with difficulty. The author attributes the problem to the Japanese language. The language itself is not defective; rather it is the way it is used. He attempts to define how and for what purposes people have employed their language over the half century since the end of World War II and what sort of country they have built and what kind of people they have become as a result of its use.

The crux of a language, says the author, boils down to a way of life. He believes that English is a language that helps identify problems and challenges, functions in finding solutions to deal with them, encourages links among users, and helps its users take responsibility for their own actions and thoughts. The Japanese language, on the other hand, gives priority above all else to interests and hierar-

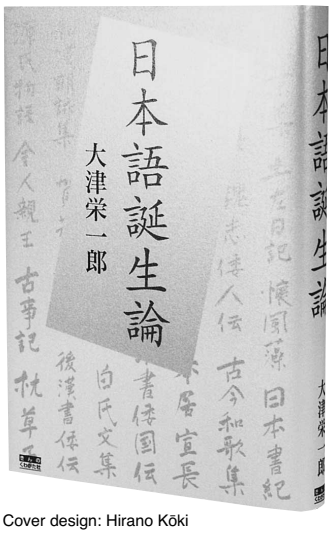


Cover design: Hirano Kōga

chical relationships, and serves as an aid to gaining advantage for the user in maintaining those relationships and continual adjustment of interests. This book is a critical evaluation of the mentality Japanese have developed over the last fifty years that stresses expediency and efficiency.

***Nihongo tanjō ron* [A Study of the Birth of the Japanese Language]. Ōtsu Eiichirō.** Kin no Kuwagata Sha, 2000. 194×132 mm. 319 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 4-87770-046-3.
When and how did the Japanese language come into being? The author of this book, a specialist in English and American literatures, translator, and former university professor, sets forth a probing and freewheeling treatise on the origin of the Japanese language, derived from what he calls a "habit of conjecture and extrapolation" that he developed through many years of reading English literature.

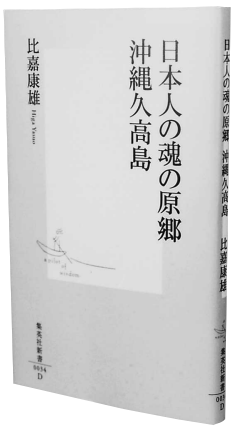
He suspects, for example, that the original form of Japanese during the Jōmon period (ca. 10,000 B.C.–ca. 300 B.C.) consisted of monosyllabic words, so that people talked to each other in fragments, "Na to?" ("You where?": Where are you going?) and "Wa mi" ("I water": I am going to get water.) Primitive Japanese, by his reasoning, consisted first of nouns and pronouns, after which verbs, adjectives, and a few postpositional words began to be used. Instead of the five vowels (a, i, u, e, o) of the Japanese language today, there were only four (a, i, u, o), and the development of the original Japanese into polysyllabic words (the Yamato language) was triggered by contact with ancient China. "This is not an academic study," declares the author, "but a book of imagination." His finely honed sense for language and provocative insights make stimulating reading.



Cover design: Hirano Kōki

***Nihonjin no tamashii no genkyō: Okinawa Kudakajima* [The Original Spiritual Home of Japanese: Kudakajima Island, Okinawa]. Higa Yasuo.** Shūeisha, 2000. 173×106 mm. 222 pp. ¥660. ISBN 4-08-720034-5.
A survey of the ritual events of the Ryūkyū archipelago, stretching between Kagoshima and Taiwan, shows that they are led by women and that the deities of local islanders are goddesses.

The tradition of rituals governed by the maternal principle has been carried down in particular on the island of Kudakajima, which was designated under the Ryūkyū Kingdom (1429–1879) in Shuri as the island where the founding deities of the islands had descended. There a grand festival called Izaihō takes place every twelfth year. Various rituals feature priestesses called *tamagaē*, including those involving dances by the seashore, where they swing bundles of straw in prayer for rich hauls of fish, and that in which they impersonate the deity of Nirāharā, the people's original spiritual home which is believed to be located far out in the ocean.



Cover design: Hara Ken'ya

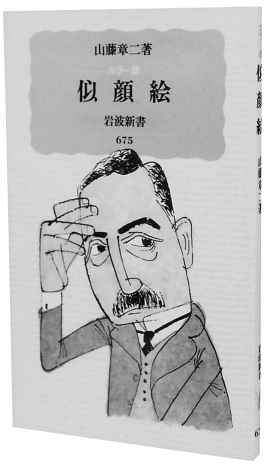
Having followed the festivals of the Ryūkyū island chain for nearly thirty years, the author recorded the multi-faceted scenes of rituals on the island of Kudakajima in text and photographs. One of the priestesses of the island, who told stories to the author for more than ten years, as well as the author himself, recently died. Although both have departed for Nirāharā, they have left this valuable book containing more than thirty photographs and rich with stories about how the ancients sought repose for the souls of the deceased.

ART

***Nigao-e* [Portrait Drawing]. Yamafuji Shōji.** Iwanami Shoten, 2000. 173×105 mm. 202 pp. ¥940. ISBN 4-00-430675-2.
For more than twenty years the *Shūkan Asahi* magazine has included the column "Black Angle," at the back of each issue, featuring original portraits of prominent or controversial figures of the day. These lampoons brim with wit and irreverence, and along with their accompanying commentary, have had enduring appeal among readers.

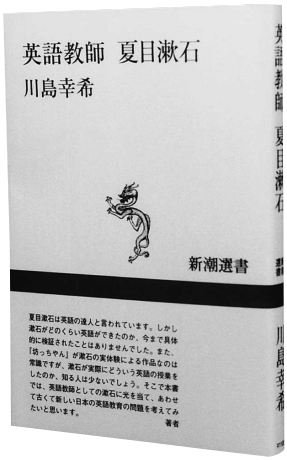
The present book by Yamafuji, author of the "Black Angle" column, discusses contemporary portrait art. He also supervises an adjacent feature in the magazine, "Nigao-e juku" (Portraiture School). Introducing not only his own works but outstanding selected works by amateur artists among the readership, Yamafuji argues that such portraits should not be exact likenesses but frankly critical expressions that say, "*this* is how he/she looks to me!" You shouldn't be the one to approach your subjects, says Yamafuji, but rather you should pluck them out (figuratively) and twist them around your finger.

In addition to demonstrating the standards achieved today in the art of portraiture (which in Japan can be traced back to *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints), the book's discussion of such tangential topics as comedy, television, and contemporary civilization makes for lively and insightful reading.



LITERATURE

***Eigo kyōshi Natsume Sōseki* [Natsume Sōseki As English Teacher]. Kawashima Kōki.** Shinchōsha, 2000. 191×130 mm. 254 pp. ¥1,100. ISBN 4-10-600586-7.
Numerous studies have been done of Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916) as a scholar of English literature as well as of his novels and other literary works, but rarely has he been studied as an English teacher. As a child Sōseki disliked English. How, then, did he master the language and how did he teach it to his high school students? In discussing Sōseki's entrance examination questions, method of teaching, and relationships with his students, this book describes ideas he had about English education that are still pertinent today.

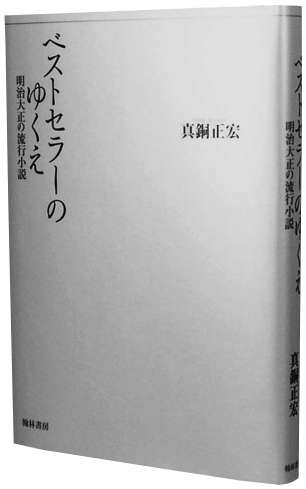


Cover design: Shinchōsha

The author examines Sōseki's knowledge of English through the compositions he wrote as a student and other documents, and concludes that the great novelist's mastery of the language was unsurpassed by few at the time and probably rivaled by few even today. Sōseki did not consider language a mere tool of communication. Viewing linguistic activity as a natural human urge, he accorded equal value to the various ways of using language—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and called for an emphasis on the sound of English at a time when the mainstream of English education focused on reading written documents in almost the same mechanical way as the Chinese classics were then read in Japan.

Familiarity with the figure of Sōseki as an English teacher is sure to prove indispensable to further research on his personality as well as his literary works.

***Besutoserā no yukue: Meiji Taishō no ryūkō shōsetsu* [Where Have All the Best-sellers Gone?: Popular Fiction of the Meiji and Taishō Eras]. Shindō Masahiro.** Kanrin Shobō, 2000. 216×151 mm. 256 pp. ¥4,200. ISBN 4-87737-094-3.
Numerous works of fiction that were exceedingly popular when first serialized in newspapers and quickly became best-sellers after being published in book form during the Meiji (1868–1912) and Taishō (1912–26) eras are little read today. Why? This book explains why the eight novels introduced in this book (all included in the *Nihon kinseidai higeki meisaku zenshū* [Collected Masterpieces of Tragedy in Early-modern and Modern Japan] published in 1933–34), sank into oblivion, giving a careful analysis of each of the novels. The analysis is based on the premise that the books' popularity and decline was not a reflection of their literary or artistic quality.

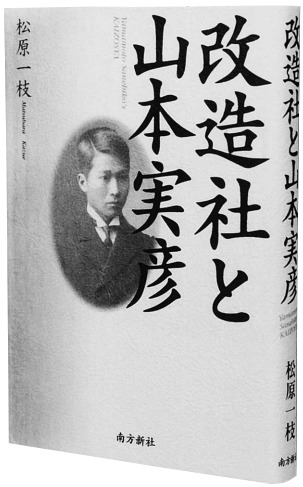


All eight works were originally published serially in daily newspapers and became best-sellers but are rarely read today. They include Ozaki Kōyō's *Konjiki yasha* (1897–1902; trans. *The Golden Demon*), Izumi Kyōka's *Onna keizu* [1907; A Genealogy of Women], and Watanabe Katei's *Uzumaki* [1913–14; Spiral].

Of various reasons for their popularity, says Shindō, author of the present book, the greatest factor was the combined energy of a novel and its dramatization. When a novel was published, it was almost simultaneously adapted as a play. When the new theatrical genres such as *shimpa* themselves went into decline, the popularity of best-selling books, too, slowed.

Shindō's broad perspective on society makes this book a fresh study in the field of literature.

***Kaizōsha to Yamamoto Sanehiko* [Yamamoto Sanehiko's Kaizōsha]. Matsubara Kazue.** Nampō Shinsha, 2000. 194×132 mm. 287 pp. ¥2,381. ISBN 4-931376-31-2.
Kaizōsha is the name of the publishing company that issued the opinion journal, *Kaizō*, a monthly for general readers that played a key role in the history of cultural and social movements in Japan before World War II. The magazine introduced articles on the labor movement and works of Marxism to Japanese readers, disseminating democratic and socialist ideas. It was through the magazine that such well-known works as Shiga Naoya's *An'ya kōro* (1921–37; trans., *A Dark Night's Passing*, 1976) and Hayashi Fumiko's *Hōrōki* (1928–48; partial trans., *Journal of a Vagabond*, 1951) appeared. Among contributors were world intellectual luminaries such as Romain Rolland, Lu Xun, and Leon Trotsky.



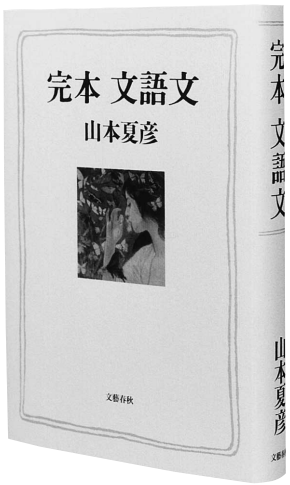
Cover design: Katahira Gōkichi

The man who founded and operated Kaizōsha was Yamamoto Sanehiko (1885–1952). Well versed on Chinese affairs and a journalist himself, he was a politician who served in the Diet. He engaged in activities in various fields of culture and society. He was a man of action, decisiveness, and insight, as demonstrated by the fact that the fee paid for manuscripts submitted to *Kaizō* was twice or more that offered by its rival, the conservative magazine *Chūō kōron*. He also managed a publishing coup when he invited Albert Einstein to visit Japan, and with a system for selling complete sets of literary works on a reservation basis at a price of 1 yen.

This biography offers a close look at Yamamoto as a businessman, a politician, and a human being.

***Kampon bungobun* [*Bungo*-style Writing, Unabridged Edition]. Yamamoto Natsuhiko.** Bungei Shunjū, 2000. 193 × 132 mm. 366 pp. ¥1,524. ISBN 4-16-356230-3.
This book is a collection of essays written by columnist Yamamoto Natsuhiko (1915–), about the classical style writing Japanese called *bungo-bun* and *kōgo-bun*, or writing based on the contemporary vernacular. *Bungo-bun* is an archaic form of language as it was spoken during the Heian period (794–1185), and is comparable to Latin in the West. Because no major changes were made in the written language after the Heian era, people had no choice but to improvise as they went along. This allowed the refinement of the language over subsequent centuries.

According to Yamamoto, it was within less than ten years starting around 1910 that *bungo*-style writing was replaced by the contemporary *kōgo* style. When Japanese cast aside the one-thousand-year-old *bungo* writing in their effort to "catch up" with Western civilization, he argues, they lost the common moral backbone carried by their language at the same time.



Cover design: Tada Susumu

Bungo has been virtually ignored ever since. Yamamoto has no illusions about attempting the revival of the old style of writing, but believes that the qualities it displayed needed to be recorded and studied before they were buried in oblivion. He has performed this task, hoping that it may offer a source of enrichment to contemporary writing. Citing some of the finest passages from outstanding classical works, he presents his argument in a work that is both a solid treatise on education and a study of civilization.

FICTION

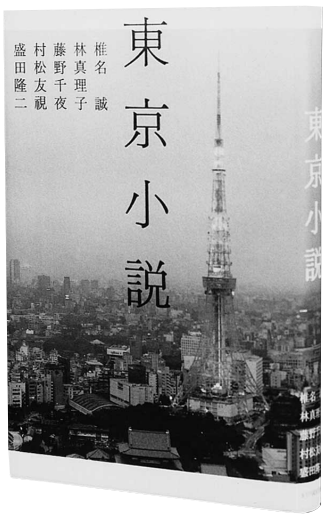
***Hana o hakobu imōto* [Little Sister Carrying Flowers]. Ikezawa Natsuki.** Bungei Shunjū, 2000. 193 × 131 mm. 422 pp. ¥1,762. ISBN 4-16-318770-7.
Kaworu flies to Bali to retrieve her older brother Tetsurō, a painter, who has been arrested for possession of drugs while in seeking the eternal beauty to be found in the transcience of life. She had been the model of the portrait that had started him on his painting career. The plot of this book, by novelist and poet Ikezawa Natsuki (see *Japanese Book News*, No. 26, p. 22), is a sort of contemporary version of a theme introduced by the founder of Japanese folklore studies Yanagita Kunio in his *Imōto no chikara* [The Power of the Younger Sister] that the spiritual force of a sister is capable of saving her brother.

Cover design: Ōkubo Akiko

By contrast to her brother, who loves Asia, Kaworu's work is based in Paris. She shudders at the vast gap between the island where her brother has been arrested and the West that is so familiar to her. However, once she decides that she should see what there is to be seen and take a stand there in Bali, the difficulties they face suddenly begin to fall away. It is Kaworu's realistic and persistent energy and her uncanny spiritual power that bring about the sudden turn of events. As these developments suggest, the book describes the confrontation and harmony of will and prayer, the West and Asia, and death and eros.

The book consists of chapters alternately narrated in the first person by the sister and the brother. One of the themes is "rescue," as the sister saves her brother not only from a false accusation and the death penalty but also from spiritual suffering. Many important and intriguing themes are woven together to form this well-integrated and absorbing story.

***Tōkyō shōsetsu* [Tokyo Stories]. Shiina Makoto et al.** Kinokuniya Shoten, 2000. 193 × 131 mm. 216 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-314-00866-0.
French publisher Éditions Autrement has a series of stories connected with specific towns. Towns with story potential are selected and writers living there are asked to write stories set in the town. The present book, the latest in the series, consists of stories set in various neighborhoods of Tokyo, and was published simultaneously in Paris and Tokyo.



Cover design: Suzuki Seiichi

Chosen for the book are five contemporary Japanese writers, both young writers or writers of established standing. All are popular among Japanese readers but none has had works previously translated into French. One of the five, Shiina Makoto tells a story set in fashionable Ginza, describing the life of a young man who is burned out of his apartment house and takes up residence on the roof of a building in a tent. Hayashi Mariko depicts a love affair in the upper-income district of Aoyama. The three other writers, too, display their distinctive talent for short stories: Fujino Chiya's story is set in the dense residential area of Shimo-takaido, Muramatsu Tomomi's in the old *shitamachi* quarter of Fukagawa, and Morita Ryūji's in the popular entertainment district Shinjuku. These vignettes evoke the light, shadow, as well as depth of the nation's capital, revealing the realities of Tokyo as a consumer's metropolis.

Events and Trends

Tale of Genji Revivals

Japan's counterpart to the worldwide Shakespeare boom that took off in the mid-1990s with new productions like that of *Romeo and Juliet* starring Leonardo DiCaprio, is the recent revival of the early eleventh-century novel *The Tale of Genji* in the literary and performing arts. Adaptations for the traditional kabuki stage as well as for opera have been enthusiastically received, notably among women. Internet websites focusing on *Genji* and "culture school" (private adult education programs) classes in reading the novel are flourishing as well. The number of research studies on the subject has also increased. The author of *The Tale of Genji*, Murasaki Shikibu, was a woman of noble birth of the Heian period (794–1185), an age known for its elegant court culture. The novel depicts the lives of the Heian nobility, centering around the romances of Prince Hikaru of the Genji clan with various ladies of the court.

Genji was adapted for a play staged in May 2000 at the Kabukiza theater in Tokyo. Several long-established kabuki plays feature individual themes from the novel, but the new production dramatizes the entire first half of the story (up until the prince's exile to Suma). The play stars three popular young actors who have been dubbed the "princes of kabuki" (all roles in kabuki are played by male actors). Tickets were sold out only two days after going on sale, reportedly the most rapid sell-out in the history of the Kabukiza. The Kabukiza production was based on a translation into contemporary Japanese of *Genji* by novelist and Buddhist nun Setouchi Jakuchō. Her ten-volume edition has sold a total of 2.1 million copies and is said to have triggered the current *Tale of Genji* boom. Other modern translations of the classic, by such authors as poet Yosano Akiko and novelists Enchi Fumiko and Tanabe Seiko, are also selling continuously.

The latter half of the *Tale of Genji*, meanwhile, was performed on stage by the Takarazuka Kagekidan opera company, whose performers are all women, under the title "Asaki yume mishi" [Transient Dreams]. The Takarazuka performance, which drew considerable public attention as well, was based on Yamato Waki's *Asaki yume mishi*, a 13-volume manga version of *Genji* that has sold a total of 17 million copies since it came out in 1980. It has been selling steadily ever since.

The Tale of Genji boom seems to be making its way overseas as well. In June, a jointly produced Japan–U.S. opera "The Tale of Genji," composed by Miki Minoru, was performed at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, United States, for the first time. Accompanied by a musical score composed in the Japanese court music (*gagaku*) style and played by a Western orchestra, American performers clad in colorful traditional kimono sang and danced in front of a golden backdrop modeled after a Heian-period handscroll. The attempt at marriage of a Japanese classic with Western music is reported to have received favorable reviews in the local media.

In May 2000, cultural anthropologist Liza Dalby published *The Tale of Murasaki* (Doubleday), an ambitious work focusing on the life of Lady Murasaki, whose detailed portrayal vividly evokes a sensitive young woman, author of the world's oldest novel, and the many anxieties she suffered. This book has been translated into Japanese (*Murasaki Shikibu: Sono koi to shōgai*; 2 vols., Kōbunsha) as well as into numerous other languages.

Graphic Magazines Succumb

While one of the icons of graphic journalism, the American magazine

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Continued from p. 6

(*Le Vif/L'Express*, December 1995). And yet paradoxically, the critics add, her writing is distinctive for its art of suggestion.

At the heart of the critical acclaim Ogawa has won in France is the fascination one culture takes in musing upon its opposite. Recently I heard an experienced translator comment that for Westerners, what Japanese say is but the slightest part of what they really think, the tip of the iceberg. Ogawa Yōko's world has the power to fascinate French readers because it is constructed with dialogues that are mysteriously banal, through which she nevertheless affords a glimpse of sincerity in thought and feeling, as well as a precise, yet momentary, grasp of the most subtle of impressions (*Le Matricule des anges*, February 1999). Her way of observing human character as an entomologist might insects is also much admired (*Lire*, September 2000), although it is feared that she might slip from suggestion to description and end up venturing into the perilous domain of sadomastic melodrama (*Le Monde,* September 2000).

Ogawa's works are also appealing for their psychological qualities. They may speak to French readers in particular because they take us beyond contemporary Japan. News reports and documentaries broadcast in France paint a dark picture of modern Japan, but recent accounts about the worsening hell of urban life, professional pressures, and violence there may be a projection of our own fears. Fascination is tempered by the overriding presence of Japanese technology and industry, which does not inspire reader's yearnings. Ogawa Yōko's fiction portrays few tangible objects and little technological realism, touching rather on the universal fear that the future of humanity will be bewilderingly bleak.

Today Japan and France share know-how in numerous fields of endeavor. The fear that is associated with globalization—that building a world of uniform, interconnected cultures will efface all singularity and identity—is clear. As in the novel *L'Annulaire*, we might be forced to turn to a chemist's laboratory to preserve our most precious memories, to hold onto mere fragments of what is real and dear to us. Whether this vision is utter pessimism or deeply penetrating, it is a vivid portrait of our worst nightmares. We can picture, one day, one of our descendants turning to the taxidermist of *L'Annulaire,* clutching an item of no use. The living art he holds has become obsolete and is now fit only for embalming. This object is literature itself. Then, maybe, with a fervent hand, his heart heavy with melancholy, he will proffer a novel written by Ogawa Yōko. (*Bertrand Py is Editorial Director of Actes Sud.*)

Life, virtually ceased publication in May 2000, in Japan as well two long-standing magazines devoted mainly to graphic journalism have ceased to appear.

The *Asahi Graph* (published by Asahi Shimbunsha) was discontinued with the October 4 issue. Launched in 1923 as Japan's first photo-journalism weekly, it had maintained a high reputation for keeping abreast of current events as only a national daily like the *Asahi* can do. Circulation, however, had begun to decline in recent years.

Also ceasing publication, with the December 2000 issue, is the monthly *Taiyō* ("The Sun," published by Heibonsha). *Taiyō* featured topics relating to traditional culture since its founding in 1963, and was known for its high-quality visual format and substantial accompanying text that other graphic periodicals found hard to rival. Many readers reportedly collected back issues as permanent additions to their libraries. Sluggish circulation and a sharp decrease in advertising income apparently led to the suspension of publication. A number of editors and writers who are now well-known media figures, such as Arashiyama Kōzaburō, Unno Hiroshi, and Aramata Hiroshi, got their starts with the magazine. The Taiyō Prize, founded to commemorate the first anniversary of its inauguration, was one of the gateways to a successful career for young photographers. The 1964 winner of the 1st Taiyō Prize, Araki Nobuyoshi (Arākī), is now a well-known photographer. Other prominent photographers, including Hashiguchi Jōji, are also winners.

Listen to the Voices of the Sea Published

A collection of letters written by Japanese students—who either volunteered for or were drafted into military service during World War II—to their families was published in 1949 under the title *Kike wadatsumi no koe* [Listen to the Voices of the Sea] (edited by the Nihon Senbotsu Gakusei Kinenkai [Association for a Memorial to Japanese Students Fallen in Battle]). This collection drew widespread attention at that time in Japan. In June 2000, its first complete translation into English was published in the United States, entitled *Listen to the Voices from the Sea* (University of Scranton Press). The translator is Yamauchi Midori, professor at the private University of Scranton in Pennsylvania. A member of the generation that experienced the war, Yamauchi started the translation in hopes of rectifying American prejudices and images of Japanese as robots who blindly follow orders from above. Working with the assistance of an American colleague, she completed the translation in six years.

The publication of the English version was announced in the U.S. media and introduced on a CBS morning television show, with the reading of a letter by a University of Tokyo student who died in a kamikaze suicide attack.

There are abridged translations of the collection in English, French, and German, but this is the first complete translation.

Continued from p. 7

France's "Marseillaise" evokes the revolution and struggle for freedom:

> Arise, children of the motherland,
> Our day of glory has arrived!
> Over us, the bloodstained banner
> Of tyranny holds sway!
> Oh, do you hear there in our fields
> The roar of these ferocious soldiers?
> Who came right here in our midst
> To slaughter our sons and wives.
> To arms, oh citizens!
> Form up in serried ranks!
> March on, march on,
> May their impure blood
> Flow in our fields!
>
> (Source: http://www.info-france-usa.org)

Translated into Japanese in this book, I finally understood for the first time the words of the American national anthem, which goes as follows:

> Oh, say, can you see, by dawn's early light,
> What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
> Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
> O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
> And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
> Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
> O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
> O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

The national anthem of the Federal Republic of Germany seemed befitting of the character of the country, with stirring words well suited to belting out with a raised beer in one's hand:

> Unity and Right and Freedom
> For the German Fatherland!
> After these let us all strive
> Brotherly with heart and hand!
> Unity and Right and Freedom
> Are the pledge of happiness.
> Bloom in the splendor of this happiness,
> Bloom, German Fatherland!
>
> (Source: *German Songs: Popular, Political, Folk and Religious,* ed., Inke Pinkert Satzer. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.)

The national anthem of Switzerland goes as follows:

> When the morning skies grow red
> and over us their radiance shed
> Thou, O Lord, appeareth in their light
> when the alps glow bright with splendor,
> pray to God, to Him surrender
> for you feel and understand that He dwelleth in this land
>
> (Source: http://www.swiss-maeder.ch)

One also realizes in this book that some anthems have no words. Certainly it must be a difficult task to come up with suitable lyrics for an anthem. I wonder if a book like this has ever been published anywhere else in the world. (*Ikari Haruo is an essayist.*)

Literary Discovery Through Translation

Tawada Yōko

It was a few years before my writing began to appear in Japan that I had first read a translation of one of my works. I had gone to Germany in 1982, at the age of twenty-two, and there were no people around me who understood Japanese. The flood of German pouring into my head day after day seemed to be reorganizing my brain cells, for I suddenly found myself unable to write in Japanese any more. From early childhood, I had been writing poems and stories all the time. But during those first two years of my stay in Germany, even though I wanted to write, I could not, because the stories that had continuously spun themselves in my head had just stopped. In their place were only scattered, though vivid, fragments of stories. These fragments began to take the form of poetry, and together they formed a narrative of crash, break-up, and rebirth.

Around 1985 I wrote many poems on this theme, but I was so absorbed by the process that when asked what I was writing about I was at a loss to answer. Just after I finished one poem, Peter Pörtner, a Japan studies scholar of my acquaintance, translated it into German, and as I read the translation, I realized that I was seeing the poem clearly for the first time. I was struck how much a work seems to mature in the process of translation, moving away from its author and taking on a new life of its own. In those days, I felt that the process of creating a work was not complete until it had been translated into German.

In due course, a bilingual collection of my poetry was published by Claudia Gehrke in 1987. It became my first published book. Bilingual publications usually provide the original text and the translation on facing pages, but this volume was different: to read the Japanese original you open the pages from the back, and to read the German translation you open the pages from the front following the Western tradition. Bound within the same volume, the two texts follow their separate paths, so the binding itself is an artistically clever way of expressing the impossibility of translation.

A few years after that, I began writing fiction in German as well. Instead of writing it in Japanese and then rendering it in German, I wrote in German from the start. The style of my writing in German was unmistakably influenced by previous German translations of my works. My Japanese writing as well, no doubt, betrayed the strong impact of the style of the translated literature I had read so much of since childhood.

Translators are not merely intermediaries. They are discoverers and interpreters of a new literature. Susan Bernofsky, who translated one of my German works into English, has been combing German literary magazines of all kinds since she was a university student, hunting for works she wants to translate. She found my work in *manuskripte*, a journal published in Graz, Austria.

An anthology of my Japanese short stories, "Inu-muko iri" (The Bridegroom Was a Dog), "Kakato o nakushite" (Missing Heels), and "Gottoharuto tetsudō" (The Gotthard Railway), was translated into English by Margaret Mitsutani and was published by Kodansha International in 1998 under the title, *The Bridegroom Was a Dog*. Last year (1999), during a four-month stay in the United States as writer in residence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, about ten readings of my works were held with the cooperation of local poets in a number of states along the East Coast. I was pleased by these occasions because I could see the enthusiastic response of the audiences and I felt as if the translations had taken on an independent character of their own, engaging readers in direct dialogue. I also became aware that the difference between my writing style in Japanese and that in German emerges all the more distinctly when the works are translated into the common language of English.

How gratifying, too, to have the occasional letter from Poland asking for permission to translate one of my works for publication in a magazine. I am happy to see that there are also Czech and Bulgarian translations of my works. My Hungarian translator is Laszló Màrton, a rising young star of Hungarian literature.

I correspond regularly by email with my French translator, Bernard Banoun. Translators, who read your work critically and three-dimensionally, ask all kinds of probing questions from which one can learn a great deal. Indeed, translators are my most avid readers.

Tawada Yōko was born in Tokyo in 1960. After graduation from Waseda University in 1982, she went to Germany as a trainee employee for a German book-export company in Hamburg. She continued working in Germany, later obtaining a master's degree at the University of Hamburg and a doctoral degree in German literature at the University of Zurich. She has pursued her writing career since 1987, supporting herself with interpreting, private teaching, and clerical work. In 1990 she was awarded a literary prize by the city of Hamburg and in 1991 she won the 34th Gunzō literary prize for new writers for "Kakato o nakushite" (Missing Heels). In 1992, she was shortlisted for the Akutagawa Prize for her "Perusona" [Persona], and the following year she was awarded the 108th Akutagawa Prize for "Inu-muko iri" (The Bridegroom Was a Dog). She is also a recipient of the Chamisso Prize (1996). Other works include "Kitsune tsuki" [Fox Moon], "Hikon" [Flying Souls], "Hinagiku no ocha no baai" [When It's Baby Mum Tea].