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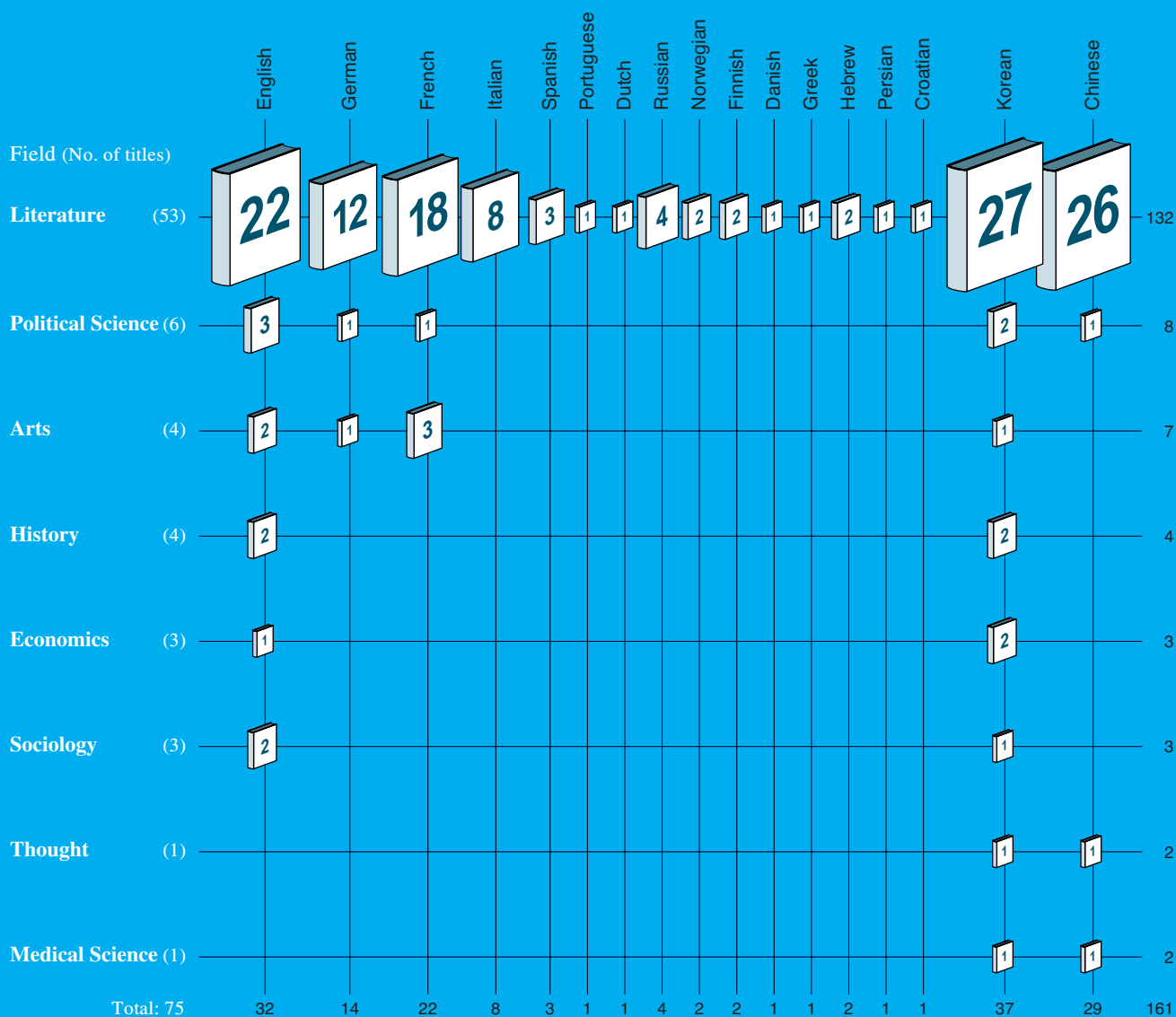
# Japanese Book News

Miyamoto Musashi for Japanese Today

Writing on *Izakaya*

Books That Open from the Back

## Works Published in Translation among Those Introduced in *Japanese Book News*



Note: Numbers in parentheses after each subject area indicate total number of titles translated. The numbers on the book shapes indicate the number of titles translated and published in each language. E.g., in the field of literature, of 53 titles, 22 were published in English. Figures at the far right indicate the total number of published translations for all languages. For example, for literature, a total of 53 titles were translated into 17 languages, resulting in 132 total published translations.



The Japan Foundation

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

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## From the Editor

Concern about the drift among young people away from reading and the printed word has been widespread for a long time. It may be that the shift from the print-oriented culture to the visually oriented culture is now in full swing. While most opinion leaders see books as the most effective means of transmitting culture, younger people today are more interested in the visual than the printed media. One hears recently how the fading allure of print culture is affecting local libraries as well: in order to appeal to young people, their "new book" displays are most often stocked with visually attractive books, and best-sellers, while the local library's mission of "responding to the intellectual needs of readers" is increasingly relegated to second place. Perhaps this trend reflects the way members of the generation now reaching maturity, who grew up playing daily with video games, seek visual rather than printed media to satisfy their curiosity and thirst for knowledge.

The recent spread of book publishing in electronic media may be the product of this phenomenon. E-books were published first in the United States from around 2000, but in Japan's own book market, major publishers and electronics manufacturers have collaborated in launching the new "electronic book" business. Services have also begun offering the texts of fiction and other genres previously published in pocket-sized paperback editions, for reading via cell phone. Behind these services is apparently the idea that books can be made easily available by these means for reading any time, anywhere, but there is some doubt as to whether such innovations will have any effect in countering the decreased interest among young people in reading. Publishers face the need to accurately assess reading trends among the young generations to come.

As of October 2003, the Japan Foundation, a special legal entity affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since its founding in 1972, was made an independent administrative institution. Japanese Book News would like to take the opportunity provided by this change to consult its readers and review the ways the publication responds to their needs and interests. Publication of the subsequent issue of JBN will be postponed pending the completion of this review. We look forward to your cooperation and continued interest.

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# Miyamoto Musashi for Japanese Today

Nawata Kazuo

Interest in seventeenth-century master swordsman Miyamoto Musashi is booming today and likely to continue for some time. Inoue Masahiko's *Bagabondo* [Vagabond] (Kōdansha, 17 vols. as of July 2003), the manga version of the now-classic story by Yoshikawa Eiji, has sold more than 2.7 million copies, and this year's Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) "Taiga Drama," *Musashi*, is also based on Yoshikawa's work. Bookstores stock a wide variety of titles related to the semi-legendary hero, old productions of films and television drama featuring his exploits are being made available in DVD format, and even an oral version on CD, read by well-known entertainer and writer Tokugawa Musei (1894–1971) has been reissued.

Of all the recent Musashi-related publications, the best may be *Miyamoto Musashi no shinjitsu* [The Truth about Miyamoto Musashi] (Chikuma Shobō, 2002) by Kojima Hidehiro, who himself is the holder of a seventh-rank license in the Nakanishi school of Ittōryū swordsmanship headed by the late master Takano Hiromasa. This work by an author well versed in both history and literature presents many acute insights on Musashi, such as those found in the writings of a particular Musashi authority, literary critic Kobayashi Hideo (1902–83). Kojima observes that "Miyamoto Musashi" as we know him could be said to have been born in the Shōwa era (1926–89). As a result of the serialization in a national newspaper of Yoshikawa Eiji's novel, beginning in August 1935 and ending in July 1939, he notes, Musashi was transformed from a hero of plays and romantic tales into a very real, historic figure, the most famous swordsman of all time.

Little is known about the real Musashi. Only a few events of the latter part of his life have been well established: that he was invited to reside as a guest at Kumamoto castle by lord of the domain Hosokawa Tadatōshi, and at Tadatōshi's request wrote out his treatise on swordsmanship, *Hyōhō sanjūgo-ka-jō* [Thirty-five Precepts of Tactics]; he wrote another book on swordsmanship, *Gorin no sho* [The Book of Five Rings] right before his death at the age of sixty-two in 1645. For the years before that, however, his biography is largely unconfirmed. It is said that he was born in 1584 (Tenshō 12), but there are two theories as to his birthplace, one claiming it for Hyōgo prefecture and the other for Okayama prefecture (the former is currently ascendant). Kojima's reflection that Miyamoto Musashi was "born" in the Shōwa era stems from the fact that the figure that most Japanese regard as familiar as their next-door neighbor was introduced through Yoshikawa Eiji's *Miyamoto Musashi* in the 1930s.

So what was the Musashi that Yoshikawa depicted? Put very simply, a man who dedicated his life to seeking spiritual peace and enlightenment. Until the writing of his work, Musashi had been simply one of the numerous

heroes of plays and *kōdan* (oral storytelling)—the fellow who endured trials and hardships and finally defeated Sasaki Kojirō in revenge for his father's death. It was Yoshikawa's novel that turned Musashi's sword from a killing tool into a symbol of philosophical search and that perfected his image as a humble seeker striving to improve himself. It introduced Musashi's long-time foe, Sasaki Kojirō, not simply as his arch-rival but as a young man who believes in techniques and strengths of swordsmanship that challenge Musashi's sword of the spirit.

The story opens with the scene in which the seventeen-year-old Takezō, as Musashi was then called, finds himself alive among corpses after the end of the Battle of Sekigahara, and continuing with his incarceration at Himeji castle and life-or-death swordfights at the Han'nya plain and Ichijōji temple. Musashi's personal saga unfolds among a colorful cast of characters including his lifelong mentor, the priest Takuan, the girl who loves him, Otsū, his companion from boyhood, Hon'iden Matahachi, and so on. All this is itself a history of agonized search culminating in his awakening to the principle of constructive fusion of two opposing forces (*niten ichiryū*) and his realization of the oneness of Zen and the sword. What is important to note here, however, is that at the time Yoshikawa wrote *Miyamoto Musashi*, war had broken out with China in the wake of the Marco Polo Bridge incident in 1937. It continued as the Japanese army conquered Nanjing and clashed with Soviet troops at Nomonhan. World War II in Europe broke out two months after the serialization of *Miyamoto Musashi* ended. The story was published in book form almost simultaneously (by Kōdansha in six volumes, 1936–39), and it became a wartime best-seller. In 1941 Japan opened hostilities with the United States and its allies. Japanese were conscripted in ever-greater numbers to serve in battlefields all over Asia and had no choice but to silently obey the authority of the military regime. Under these severe circumstances people found a kind of compass for their lives in Musashi's solitary trials in search of self-perfection through the way of the sword.

## Source of Strength

Ozaki Hotsuki, literary critic, wrote: "In the experience of those of us who matured during wartime—for whom life ended at 20—*Miyamoto Musashi* was the most accessible book that showed us what to do to live as best one could. For we young people of the time, living essentially meant imminent death, and Musashi's search gave us a compass upon which to fix our life's course." (*Yoshikawa Eiji: Hito to bungaku* [Yoshikawa Eiji: The Man and His Writings], Shin'yūdō, 1981).

Kata Kōjirō, another critic, describes how the story captured the interest of readers: "The way Musashi, amid the callousness and trickery that surrounded him, managed to protect himself and survive, gave ordinary individual

people hope that they could get through each terrible phase of the war's progress." "Musashi's spirit of 'living and wanting to live' or of resolve 'not to give up' was something that people who felt their lives in constant danger could readily relate to" (in his book about three famous heroes of three eras in modern Japanese history, *Kunisada Chūji, Sarutobi Sasuke, Kurama Tengu: Meiji, Taishō, Shōwa no eiyū*; San'ichi Shobō, 1964).

The way readers enthusiastically embraced this novel was to give rise after the end of World War II to the criticism that Musashi's devotion of his youth to training, self-denial, and forbearance had encouraged the ultra-conservative worldview and submissive mentality of everyone from the common people to the leadership in support of the war in the Pacific. Nevertheless, it was the masses that began to re-read Musashi as a source of strength in overcoming the turmoil of the defeat and opening up a path to the future. Among the letters author Yoshikawa Eiji received in 1949 may be found comments like the following: "At a time when there are few books that offer encouragement to us young people in these difficult times, *Miyamoto Musashi* shows us the path we ought to follow and helps spur us onward" and "If we can attain a spirit of the caliber of Musashi's we won't have any trouble getting over the defeat."

One can understand how *Miyamoto Musashi* provided a hero that sustained people throughout the war as well as when they faced seemingly insurmountable hurdles in the wake of the unprecedented defeat of their nation. *Miyamoto Musashi* became deeply etched in Japanese minds as inextricably connected to the memory of the Shōwa era, and that helps to explain why every subsequent work attempting to portray Musashi was inevitably a challenge, whether its author intended it as one or not, to Yoshikawa's classic. These include: Murakami Genzō's *Sasaki Kojirō* [Sasaki Kojirō] (Kōdansha, 1976; out of print), Yamamoto Shūgorō's *Yojō* [Implicit Feelings] (Shinchōsha, 1969), Koyama Katsukiyo's *Sore kara no Musashi* [Musashi After the Duel on Ganryū Island] (Shūeisha, 1967), Gomi Yasusuke's *Futari no Musashi* [The Two Musashi's] (Tokuma Shoten, 1978), and Shibata Renzaburō's *Miyamoto Musashi kettōsha* [Miyamoto Musashi the Duelist] (Shūeisha, 2000). The somewhat depressing questions these authors, most of whom were young men during the war, wanted to address through Musashi were: Was the fiction they were creating intended to overcome death or accept it calmly? What were the nagging feelings they could not rid themselves of that something was wrong with postwar society? Their feeling that something was wrong apparently arose from the way many people in postwar Japan managed to cast aside memories of wartime all too quickly in the headlong pursuit of wealth and material comforts.

In the final scene of *Miyamoto Musashi* describing the duel on Ganryū island, Yoshikawa wrote, "Kojirō had put his confidence in the sword of strength and skill. Musashi trusted in the sword of the spirit. That was the only difference between them" (English translation, Kodansha International, 1993, p. 970). In their pursuit of prosperity after the end of the war, it was this "spirit" that the Japanese cast aside, concentrating their complete

faith and all their energy in the material, the economic; in short, in strength and skill. Throughout the extended period of rapid economic growth and right up to the height of the bubble economy the stories of great figures of Japanese history—such as Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the 250-year-long shogunate; Sakamoto Ryōma, the hero who contributed greatly to ushering in the Meiji Restoration of 1868; and Oda Nobunaga, first unifier of Japan's medieval warring clans—were glorified as the very gods of management strategy, with few paying heed to a solitary seeker of truth like Musashi. The milieu in which, as John Dower wrote in *Embracing Defeat* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999) "the only real avenue of postwar nationalism left to the Japanese leadership was economic" (p. 564), led to this arbitrary reading of history and of historical fiction.

### The Defiant Hero

What the masses found in the heroes other than Musashi was something the solitary seeker rarely possesses: a capacity for leadership of organizations. Why were the leaders of organizations so lionized from the rapid economic growth era through the bubble economy? One might say that it is because Japanese believed in this period that the regulated society was most effective organization that would allow them to exercise their abilities to the fullest and feel secure as they went about their lives. Secure in a level of material affluence that assured they would always have enough to eat, the masses read literature as information, and the much-lauded diversification of values added momentum to this trend. Few notions have affected Japanese as profoundly since the end of the war as the "diversification of values." Hearing such a phrase made people feel uneasy. It troubled them that there might be values about which they as yet knew little, and undermined their self-confidence, causing them to abandon long-accepted social norms.

In his classic essay on Miyamoto Musashi, "*Miyamoto Musashi*" to *Nihonjin* ["Miyamoto Musashi" and the Japanese] (Kōdansha, 1964) critic and French-literature scholar Kuwabara Takeo (1904–88) described the virtues that Japanese clearly most admire:

1. Self-discipline-related: pursuit of the "way" and the *mu* (the void, nothingness/emptiness or complete openness of mind), following the laws of nature, respect for martial culture, the arts, the power of the will, self-reliance, consideration of others, give and take, the value of life, integrity.
2. Blood/kin love-related: Love of kin, social obligation (*on/giri*), harmony among people, gratefulness to heaven (*ten'on*), family honor, shame.
3. Pathos-related: view of world as transient, pathos of things, gentleness, sentimentality.

In the course of the pervasive changes that took place after the war, however, many Japanese discarded these virtues. When people discard socially accepted norms, they are likely to become preoccupied with information and immediate gain. But is this really what happened?

Today, the era of rapid economic growth is history and the bursting of the bubble is rapidly receding into the past. If the pre-World War II period was one when Japanese were poor but had heart and spirit, and the

postwar period was one when they had money but were weak of heart and spirit, our current era is indeed barren—it is a time of neither monetary wealth nor spiritual well-being. In this seemingly hopeless situation Miyamoto Musashi has been resurrected as a hero who defiantly confronts hardship. Today, readers of *Miyamoto Musashi* are not only those who knew the work in some form or other in the past. A work that includes a detailed study of the novel's readership, *Miyamoto Musashi no yomarekata* [How Miyamoto Musashi Is Read] (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003) by Sakurai Yoshiki, indicates that younger readers exposed to the story of Musashi the seeker for the first time have mixed feelings about him. This seems clear even from the comment made in an interview by Inoue Masahiko, author of *Vagabond*, in an essay: "Many of the readers of my work are young

people, and they often express their feeling of envy at Musashi, who can move forward toward a goal he truly wants to pursue."

At a time when it is said that values are in transition, perhaps people are thirsting for something that is solid and immovable like Miyamoto Musashi's firmly grounded sense of himself. We can observe two things in this almost excessive Musashi boom of recent years. One is that Japanese are looking to Yoshikawa's novel once again as a guide for their lives. The other is the renewed appreciation of Musashi as a figure who pitted himself firmly against the conditions he faced. Perhaps this attraction signals a new rite of passage for Japanese as a people. It is the needs of the times that has prompted the revival of Miyamoto Musashi. (*Nawata Kazuo is a literary critic.*)

Further information about the books in the Children's Books section on page 6 and the New Titles section starting on page 8 may be obtained by contacting the following publishers. The language of the websites noted below is Japanese.

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# Writing on *Izakaya*: The Changing Tradition of Japan's Drinking Culture

Arashiyama Kōzaburō

Some time ago, I put out a book entitled *Tōkyō ryokōki* [Travels in Tokyo] (Magazine House, 1991). Among the strange and mysterious structures that had sprouted up all over the city during the “bubble” of the 1980s and then became ghost buildings in an urban wasteland when it burst, I set out on foot in search of the nostalgic, gallantly surviving scenes of yesteryear and wrote about them in this book. In that search I drew primarily on memories of neighborhoods and establishments to which I had been taken during my days as an editor or by bosses or friends who love exploring the city and who love drinking. I also went to places suggested in the essays of various respected writers.

Walking along the streets, I often ducked into *izakaya*, where just sitting down to have a drink plunges you into the atmosphere of a locale. In these traditional-style bars, you get a real and palpable feel for the pace, the ambience, and the sentiments of the city. While Tokyo can be a monster megalopolis, it has a warmly human side once one gets to know it more intimately. This is true even in the seamier entertainment districts like Roppongi and Kabukichō, where nowadays one can be hard put to find many Japanese.

Tokyo's human side is simple and sensible. The feeling isn't gushing or emotional, rather, a take-it-or-leave-it though genuine hospitality. The charm of this feeling is that it differs subtly from district to district. Although I was raised in Tokyo, I found many places in the city that were totally unfamiliar to me. Going through Tokyo on foot turned out to be a more refreshing experience than going to any country in the world.

I heard from quite a few readers who told me that they had been reading my Tokyo travel journal from the time the series began in a certain magazine. Never having had such a response to a column before, I realized the potential it held for publication as a book and poured even more energy into my research. And *Tōkyō ryokōki* did in fact sell quite well.

Now, more than ten years later, there is a boom in books on *izakaya* and their authors are quite literally putting themselves on the line in the research and writing of these works. Let us look at how the different drinking districts, establishments, people and so forth have been described in more recent years.

In these recessionary days for the publishing industry, the titles doing well in bookstores are mainly cookbooks and restaurant guides relating to the favorite pursuits of Japanese: eating and drinking. These books are gradually getting more specialized, with numerous titles on Japanese-style food (*washoku*), cafés popular with young people, all-you-can-eat restaurants, restaurants that allow dogs, and so on; signs are that the market is already reaching saturation point. Among them, books on *izakaya* form distinct sub-genre.

Books on *izakaya* can be broadly organized into three

categories characterized by lyrical nostalgia, curiosity for the old, and response to popular trends. The following introduces a leading title in each of these categories.

## Lyrical Nostalgia

Typical of this type is *Shin seisen Tōkyō no izakaya* [The New Tokyo *Izakaya* Special Selection], by Ōta Kazuhiko (Sōshisha, 2001). Ōta, born in 1954, whose main profession is graphic designer, has made a name for himself with his pioneering books on *izakaya*. He has written not only about Tokyo but has put out a number of travel-ogues introducing *izakaya* in other parts of the country. Ōta writes: “After university, I got a job as a graphic designer at the Shiseidō cosmetics company in the 7-chome area of Ginza, and, taken along by one of the older employees of the company, the first *izakaya* I ever entered in Ginza was this Taruhei. . . . I remember the great talks we used to have about our work and about design in general, and how we used to talk out all our gripes.” Reading this section, one realizes that Ōta belongs to the last generation of people who know what it was to be a salaried worker of the Shōwa era (1926–89). It was a time when the *izakaya* served as places where bonds between older and younger employees were forged, where people expressed their passions and enthusiasms for their work and gave vent to the inconsolable frustrations of corporate-centered life.

When person-to-person, rather than organizational communication was necessary to get feelings across, bosses would take their subordinates and higher-echelon executives would host their staff at favorite *izakaya* where they would tip back saké cups together. Young employees hot under the collar over some event at the office would cool their heads and accede where they were wrong. The *izakaya* were the after-work classrooms of personnel training.

The managers and executives of the Heisei era beginning in 1989, however, hit by the collapse of the lifetime employment system and successive cutbacks to their salaries, cannot afford to take their subordinates out to drink, and even if they did, the cool younger generation, who draw a clear line between their public and private lives, would be unlikely to go, preferring to depart promptly as soon as work hours are over. Workplaces have become strictly businesslike organizations that treat employees more like cogs in a machine than human beings.

I would guess that the main readers of Ōta's book are the last generation of graduates of the *izakaya* classrooms, by now established in management positions, who know the nostalgia of the bygone days of the salaryman. The dream they had worked toward, of one day ducking under the shop's *noren* curtain, subordinates in tow, did not come true. One aspect of their visits to the old *izakaya* is the solace they seek in this disappointment. Their

pockets better lined today than in their younger days, they can also afford to head out to the new upscale *izakaya* that Ōta recommends.

With eager curiosity Ōta reports on the changing state of the modern *izakaya* and their daily efforts to improve the taste of drinks and sidedishes. Though he has a good appreciation for the trends of the times, you can tell the red glow of the Shōwa-era *aka-chōchin* lanterns (symbols of old-style *izakaya*) still pulls at his heartstrings. His writing switching back and forth between past and present, he carries the baton of the observers of *izakaya* who share the pathos of the middle-aged salaryman.

### Curiosity for the Old

This type is exemplified by *Shitamachi sakaba junrei* [Pilgrimage to the Bars of Old Tokyo], by Ōkawa Wataru, Hiraoka Kaito, and Miyamae Sakae (Chikuma Shobō, 2001). The writers are all in their early forties. They have a special liking for long-established *izakaya* of the old *shitamachi* areas of Sumida, Arakawa, Kōtō, and Adachi wards. The customers who frequent these *izakaya* are mainly blue-collar workers and aging local residents.

The authors go to establishments dating from before they were born to savor the *shitamachi* ethos of the local community. The difference between them and an author of Ōta's generation is that, rather than immersing themselves in the atmosphere of the bar, they consistently maintain the attitude of the polite spectator. In one passage, they report:

The feeling you get when you enter a *shitamachi* bar that had been in business since before the war is unforgettable . . . As you settle into the atmosphere shaped by the appealing character of the master, his wife, and their regular customers, you're soon intoxicated. You realize that a person does not get high on alcohol alone.

For these authors, the shops, their owners, and their clientele are like curiosities, objects of artistic appreciation. The way they write is an expression of their reverence for these people and represents the values and attitudes of those middle age and younger who are fond of the old-style *izakaya*.

### Popular Trends

Among works of this type is *Tōkyō tachinomi kurōringu* [Stand-up Pub-crawling in Tokyo] (Kōtsū Shinbunsha, 2002). On a recent visit to a bookstore to take a close look at the *izakaya* book section, I found that the most numerous titles in this genre belong to the popular trends variety.

Women's magazines like *Hanako* have long been putting out occasional special issues featuring *izakaya* in response to the growing tendency for groups of women or couples and groups of close friends to go out drinking to have a good time. There are a great many guidebooks designed to sustain this form of recreation.

Though it is not appropriate for groups to descend on old *izakaya* that cater to local residents and lone drinkers, I have ventured to introduce this book because it allows us a look at the very contemporary character of the *tachinomiya* (stand-up bar). In the past, the stand-up bar was a small counter built at one side of a liquor store near a

railway station, where one would stand to eat snacks and beer or sake purchased directly at the store. The stand-up bar could also be found in business districts as spots for brief relaxation, where office workers would stop to grab a drink and as quickly leave, others arriving to take their place.

The straightforward way the stand-up bars are run and the uncomplicated relations among customers make them places where young people feel comfortable. Nowadays there are even stand-up bars offering side dishes of various ethnic cuisines. Whereas stand-up bars were once little more than simple perches by the wayside, today they are much diversified and likely to become part of the mainstream of Japan's bar-going culture.

### Izakaya Fiction

Finally, though different from the above-noted guidebooks, I should like to mention two novels set in *izakaya*. Authors around the world have a talent for telling the love stories between men and women that develop over drinks. The bars described in novels are condensations of the ethos of an era, and, while differing from one author to another, one can tell that they distill the intimacy of the Japanese *izakaya* even more richly than any bar in real life.

The bar in *Izakaya Chōji* [Chōji of the *Izakaya*], by Yamaguchi Hitomi (Shinchōsha, 1982) is modeled on an *izakaya* familiar to the author. Protagonist Chōji, derided by his boss for having a one-track mind, abandons the salaryman's life to open a shop serving roast giblets. The other main character is Sayo, who had married without love mainly to escape poverty, but she and Chōji had been childhood sweethearts and romance continues to smoulder between them. Centering on their eventual sad separation, this typical *izakaya* novel warmly depicts the conversations and affections of the people who frequent Chōji's bar. The novel gives vivid glimpses of the daily lives of the Shōwa-era salaried workers and the trends of popular culture, like the karaoke boom.

Yamaguchi Hitomi, after doing a stint working for the Suntory beverage firm, took up writing. He has produced many masterpieces about drinking and the salaried worker's way of life. Even now his essays offering guideposts for living draw many readers.

The other novel, by one of today's foremost woman novelists, Kawakami Hiromi, brings to life in briskly-told style the love between a man and woman who meet at an *izakaya*. *Sensei no kaban* [Teacher's Briefcase] (Heibonsha, 2001; JBN No. 37, p. 18) begins with the story of a former teacher and student, a man and woman quite different in age, who happen to become regulars at the same *izakaya*.

The Shōwa-era Chōji and Sayo, serious but separated by the *izakaya* counter, are ultimately unable to consummate their love. In Kawakami's novel, Sensei and Tsukiko sit next to one another at the counter, each ordering favorite snacks. Their relationship begins indifferently enough but gradually grows deeper. Reading these two novels together brings vividly to mind the sense of community, the culinary culture, the peculiar charms, and other fine traditions of the Japanese *izakaya*. (*Arashiyama Kōzaburō is a writer and essayist.*)

## Non-fiction

**Dango-mushi [The Pill Bug].** Text and photographs by Imamori Mitsu-hiko. Arisukan, 2002. 257×197 mm. 32 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 4-7520-0208-6. This is a picture book about the *dango-mushi* (pill bug or wood louse), a common isopod crustacean that curls itself into a ball when something disturbs it.

In order to observe these creatures thoroughly, the author, a nature photographer, kept some in a glass tank filled with soil, stones, moss and leaves. This arrangement revealed aspects of the *dango-mushi* and its behavior that he had not observed

previously, such as the graceful motion of its seven pairs of legs, nimble as a piano player's fingers. Seen in a close-up photo, it presents a charming face with wide-spaced eyes and a pursed mouth. The bug sheds its exoskeleton like someone taking off a white sweater, and when threatened it snaps into a ball, neatly tucking all of its legs and antennae inside its outer armor. The author also records the birth of tiny young from beneath the gray body of an adult pill bug.

With clear close-up shots and easy-to-read commentary, the book



brings this familiar and widely loved creature even closer to home. (Lower elementary to junior high school)

**Koma [Spinning Tops].** Text by Andō Masaki. Edited by Zen-Nippon Koma Mawashi no Kai (Japan Spin-a-Top Association). Bunkeidō, 2002. 257×238 mm. 32 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-89423-314-2.

Spinning tops have been enjoyed throughout history in virtually all parts of the world. They were popular in ancient Egypt, were depicted on ancient Grecian urns, and appear in the famous sixteenth-century painting "Young Folk at Play" by Pieter Brueghel the Elder.

This book is a photographic presentation of around fifty kinds of spinning tops from various countries, mostly Japan, a world leader in spinning top technology and diversity. In

a delightful variety of colors and shapes, the selection includes German tops in the form of dolls and insects; a Chinese top that makes a noise when spun on a string; a top that one spins on a pointed stick like



a spinning plate; and a top that tilts gradually until it finally flips over completely, still spinning.

The book provides detailed instructions with accompanying photographs on various top-spinning techniques, from the basics of cord-winding and throwing to high-level tricks for advanced spinners. It also delves into the history of spinning tops, and gives instructions for making tops out of wood, paper, bottle tops, and other household materials.

Written by the president of the Japan Spin-a-Top Association, the book brims with the author's genuine love for this age-old toy. (Upper elementary school)

**Ninja zukan [Ninja Picture Book].** Text by Kuroi Hiroaki. Illustrations by Hasegawa Yoshifumi. Bronze Shinsha, 2000. 210×150 mm. 158 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 4-89309-198-0.



The word ninja and the ninja image are familiar the world over. But how much do people really know about Japan's legendary masters of stealth? Is it accurate to describe ninja as "spies"? And when and how did they first appear?

This book, whose author trained under a ninja master descended from the famed Kōga Ninja line, introduces various facets of ninja history, arts, and training. To keep a low profile, ninja wore inconspicuous peasant wear. They dressed not in black, as is often thought, but dark blue, a color that provided ideal camouflage in the dark and was produced with a dye that was repellent to insects and snakes.

Many of the ninja's special skills remain useful today, such as techniques for honing one's physical abilities and senses (the book discusses, for instance, foods that help to sharpen a "sixth sense"), avoiding arousing suspicion, reading changes in the weather, navigating without a compass, and finding water. The book also looks at the realities of ninja disguise, secret language, running techniques and so on, and the rigorous training and discipline behind them.

Abundantly illustrated with a comical touch, this is a treasure trove of fun for children of mid-level elementary-school age and older. (Grade three and above)

Further information about the books listed in this section may be obtained by contacting the publishers listed on page 3.

## Suzuki Masajo and the Power of a Poetic Form

Koyama Tetsurō

Suzuki Masajo, a haiku poet known for her many amours, died on March 14, 2003. She was ninety-six. One of the best-loved contemporary haiku poets, Masajo was a symbol of today's ongoing haiku boom. Her first collection of verses was published when she was forty-eight, and as the years passed, her readership continued to expand. At the age of ninety-two she was awarded the Iida Dakotsu Prize, the most prestigious prize in haiku circles. She was the oldest ever to receive the prize. Some large bookstores in Tokyo honored her memory with special displays featuring face-up stacks of her poetry anthologies and essay collections.

Masajo was born into a family that kept a seaside resort hotel with a long history in Chiba prefecture. Her first marriage failed, and at the age of twenty-nine she married the husband of her deceased elder sister. The following year, she became involved in a love affair with an officer of the former imperial navy seven years her junior. At age fifty she left her husband and, to support herself, opened a small Japanese-style pub in Ginza, central Tokyo. The relationship between Masajo and the former naval officer is said to have continued for nearly forty years until his death.

Haiku is a very short form of verse written in units of 5, 7, and 5 syllables, but a master of this terse form can use it to convey a rich poetic world. One of Masajo's best-known poems is: *Usumono ya / hito kanashimasu / koi o shite* (Clad in light dress / cause others to grieve / by falling in love). There can be no single "correct" interpretation of a haiku poem, precisely because the words are too few to be definitive. The poem cited above could be interpreted as saying, "When I wear a thin summer kimono, I feel especially conscious of my sensuality and think about how despondent I make my husband by

having an unseemly love affair." A strong sense of self-affirmation also runs through this poem.

Masajo's work belongs to the haiku genre of *kyōgai-ku*, or "circumstances verse," in which the poet paints her/his own life within the fixed form. She became the model for the heroine of novels by two highly accomplished writers, Niwa Fumio (*Ten'i muhō* [Natural and Endearing], Kōdansha, 1959) and Setouchi Jakuchō (*Iyoyo hanayagu* [Even More Graceful], Shinchōsha, 2001). Reading these books with their accounts of her complex and eventful life gives one a good sense of many of her poems.

Between one and ten million people are estimated engaged in composing haiku in Japan. Ten million is obviously an overestimation, but even if there are only one million or so, that means that one out of every 100 people is a poet. Why are so many involved with haiku?

It is partly because of the strength of its fixed form in a turbulent, changing era. The April issue of the monthly magazine *Haiku* featured articles under the title "Limitless Power of a Fixed Form." The issue points out the convenience of haiku, stating, "Anyone can make a poem: all you have to do is put content into an existing vessel—the fixed haiku form."

Communication today is made more difficult by sharp generational and gender gaps, and also by increasingly diverse values. Individuals live in greater isolation and struggle to find something they share with others. When people are walled-off, many find a way to link their lives to the common culture by projecting themselves through the fixed five-seven-five pattern of syllables. Haiku is an established channel that joins people together. Suzuki Masajo personified mastery of this "circumstances verse." (*Koyama Tetsurō is senior writer, Kyodo News.*)

## Reflections on the Tenth Anniversary of *Japanese Book News*

Kiyota Yoshiaki

It is just ten years since the inaugural issue came out of *Japanese Book News* (JBN), Japan's first English-language periodical covering the latest trends in publishing in this country. The publishing world has changed radically over the decade. In 1993, the year JBN was launched, 48,000 new titles with combined print runs of 1.4 billion copies poured into an eager market. The publishing industry as a whole tallied sales of 2.5 trillion yen, an increase of 4.5 percent over the previous year. While Japan's macro-economy drooped into stagnation after the end of the bubble in 1991, the publishing industry remained vigorous.

With that situation in the backdrop, JBN was launched, partly in the hope of informing people all over the world of the lively publishing circumstances and culture of Japan. Major features in the inaugural issue were an article by Japan Foundation president Asao Shin'ichirō "The Information Imbalance"; "Books for the World" by media critic Kida Jun'ichirō; Sophia University professor Ueda Yasuo's article "Recent Trends in Publishing"; and

"Publishing in Translation" by University of Library and Information Science professor Fujino Yukio. It included reports on publishing from France and Thailand and short descriptions of twenty-four new titles. The issue had basically the same overall layout as the present issue. Members of the editorial board changed over the years, but Ueda Yasuo, one of the first contributors, has been on the board since the 12th issue (Winter 1995).

After peaking in 1996, annual sales in the publishing industry have declined over the preceding year for six consecutive years, and by 2002 sales had fallen to almost the same level as in 1993. Yet, the number of new titles is still on the rise, reaching 74,000 titles in 2002. It seems oddly inconsistent to see the number of new titles still rising in the face of sluggish sales, a phenomenon arising from publishers' scramble to push up sales by putting out more new titles. Unfortunately, the strategy has not increased sales—it has only created financial hard times for the publishers.

*Continued on p. 21*

## New Titles

### MEDIA/JOURNALISM

**“King” no jidai: Kokumin taishū zasshi no kōkyōsei** [The King Era: The Public Dimension of a National Popular Magazine]. Satō Takumi. Iwanami Shoten, 2002. 193 × 133 mm. 462 pp. ¥3,800. ISBN 4-00-022517-0.

The monthly magazine *King* was inaugurated by the founder and president of Kōdansha, Noma Seiji (1878–1938) in 1925. As the events leading Japan into World War II, beginning with the conquest and pacification of Manchuria in 1931 and the outbreak of war with China, *King* secured an enthusiastic following among readers and became Japan’s first periodical to sell over a million copies. Presiding over the golden age of magazines, Noma was known as the “magazine king.”

This book is a study of this legendary national and popular magazine that ceased publication in 1957. Its articles were written in familiar storytelling style that made the magazine more like a broadcast or film media, through which stories are heard aurally, than a print media that is read visually. The author probes the reasons *King* won the strong following of more than a million readers. As he demonstrates, the reasons can be found in the context of media history. Portraying news-

papers, magazines, books, and other media in the environment of the time, he describes the role of *King* and what came to be known as “Kōdansha culture.” The 462-page work is a study of the media of Japan’s imperial era.

**Taishū shinbun ga tsukuru Meiji no “Nihon”** [The Meiji Japan Created by Mass-circulation Newspapers]. Yamada Shunji. Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 2002. 182 × 127 mm. 270 pp. ¥1,020. ISBN 4-14-001952-2.

Mass-circulation newspapers played an important role in the era of Japan’s drive starting in 1868 to develop itself into a modern nation-state by introducing Western civilization and institutions. At first under the guidance of the government for the purpose of educating and cultivating the populace, newspapers later became a profitable business independent of the government. There were two kinds of papers, the “big” newspapers, which debated on

speaking to the reader fostered a close reader-writer community. Looking at the specific ways society changed in the early days of Japan’s modernization through the popular acceptance of the new newspaper media, we can see the pervasive influence of the mass-circulation newspapers on the formation of the nation-state in the Meiji era.

**Terebi no ōgon jidai** [The Golden Age of Television]. Kobayashi Nobuhiko. Bungei Shunjū, 2002. 193 × 134 mm. 398 pp. ¥1,857. ISBN 4-16-359020-X.

The year 2003 marked the fiftieth year since the first television broadcast was made in Japan. Scriptwriter Kobayashi, an expert on humor and American comedy, is known for his contributions to numerous variety programs. This book is a TV history depicting the excitement of production in the early 1960s to early 1970s through the author’s close association with Ihara Takatada, known for outstanding TV program direction.

Kobayashi was an objective observer with a marvelous memory who was part of the television world in its heyday. He writes about his experiences—the true faces of personalities as they were behind the scenes, the discord between television broadcasters and talent agencies, and the various experiments that were done in those days by trial and error. Unfortunately he is so disappointed with the poor quality of variety shows of more recent years that he declares at the end of this book that the only way to escape the control of the monster of television is to turn off the switch.



Cover design: Kurata Akinori



Cover design: Katsuragawa Jun

issues of the nation and the government, and the “small” newspapers, geared to the masses.

Of the small, popular newspapers, this book focuses particularly on the *Yomiuri shinbun*, founded in 1874, and society-page news it published in its early years. The author illuminates the consciousness and attitudes on the part of the newspaper publishers and readers, showing what the papers did to educate the people, among whom literacy was still relatively low, and how the use of a colloquial style written as if directly



Cover design: Ōkubo Akiko

Further information about the books listed in this section may be obtained by contacting the publishers listed on page 3.

## THOUGHT

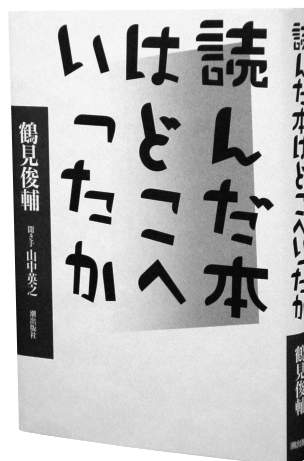
**Ju no shisō: Kami to hito to no aida** [The Philosophy of Spells: Between the Gods and Humans]. Shirakawa Shizuka and Umehara Takeshi. Heibonsha, 2002. 201 × 150 mm. 294 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-582-83121-4. This book is a dialogue between Shirakawa, a 93-year-old authority on Chinese literature, and the 78-year-old philosopher Umehara, known for his distinctive discourse on Japan studies, the questions mainly asked by the latter and answered by the former. Their discussion revolves around the origins of *kanji* ideographs, the personality and thought of Confucius, founder of Confucianism, and the *Shijing* (Book of Odes), the oldest poetry anthology in China, among other topics.

Shirakawa began his study of *kanji* in earnest after reading the *Man'yōshū*, Japan's oldest collection of poems composed in the fifth-eighth centuries, which in turn prompted him to study the *Shijing*. Written characters, he says, served as a means of communication between heaven and human beings by way of divination, and the concept of *ju* (spell) was closely connected with their emergence.

Confucius, he says, was the child of unknown fatherhood born to a shrine maiden; during his life he pursued noble ideals but met a series of failures, and it was the miseries he suffered that led to the system of doctrines we know as Confucianism. Shirakawa also points out that despite the many centuries between the compilation of the *Shijing* and that of the *Man'yōshū*, early phase poems in the latter have spell-like

elements that are shared by poems written in a certain phase of the former. The *Shijing* incorporates many poems on political and social themes, he notes, but almost none of Japan's ancient songs provided any foundations for the formation of ideological principles.

**Yonda hon wa doko e itta ka** [Where Have All the Books I've Read Gone?]. Tsurumi Shunsuke. Ushio Shuppansha, 2002. 194 × 131 mm. 222 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-267-01651-8. Scholar of philosophy and critic Tsurumi, who has read more than ten thousand books during his eighty years so far, probes how they continue to influence his thinking, not just as part of his past, but as a matter of the present. Originally published serially in a Kyoto newspaper over a period of a year and a half, this book is chiefly based on interviews of the author by a newspaper reporter.



Cover design: Hirano Kōga

“What happened to the books I have read?” They were in his heart as a child and, although remembered through the “filter of advanced age,” they are still there. In his boyhood, behind his mother's back, he absorbed himself in popular fiction like Osaragi Jirō's *Kurama tengu* [Tengu of Mt. Kurama] and Kuroiwa Ruikō's *Gankutsuō*, an adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo*. He also loved oral literature in the form of *rakugo* and *kōdan*, and playing cards inscribed with witty phrases derived from popular daily lives. He reflects on various other facets of his long and extremely diverse experiences of reading—as with the books about

pragmatism that he read at Harvard University—showing how reading contributed to his thinking up to today. The book includes a thorough index of authors, works, and terms.

## HISTORY

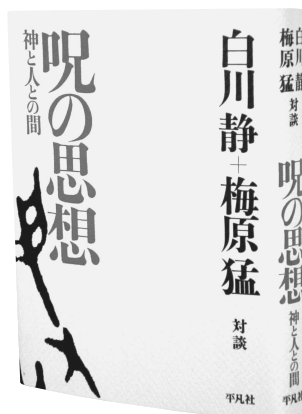
**Rekishi o fukaku suikomi, mirai o omou: Senkyūhyaku-nen e no tabi Amerika no seiki, Ajia no jison** [Reflecting Deeply on History with Thoughts of the Future: Journey Back to 1900, the American Century and Asian Self-respect]. Terashima Jitsurō. Shinchōsha, 2002. 197 × 134 mm. 286 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-10-402204-7.



Cover design: Shinchōsha

The twentieth century was dominated by the United States. It was also the century of Japan, an emerging nation. Author Terashima calls for a view of Japan's twentieth century “without arrogance or masochism,” and argues that in order to build Japan for the twenty-first-century its people must cultivate the ability to think things through.

Terashima, chairman of the Japan Research Institute (Nihon Sōgō Kenkyūsho), traces the lives of the Japanese and foreign individuals who were deeply involved in Japan's modernization, and depicts how they contributed to the emergence of Japan over the subsequent century. Among the Japanese introduced are Nitobe Inazō, Takamine Jōkichi, Noguchi Hideyo, Suzuki Daisetz, and Tsuda Umeko, and those of other nationalities include William Clark, Franklin Roosevelt, Douglas



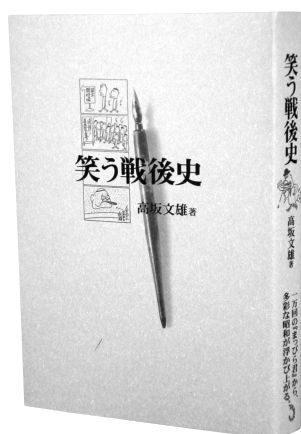
Cover design: Rosō Design Jimusho

MacArthur, Gandhi, Sun Yat-sen, and Zhou Enlai.

In order to reflect critically on its own modern history and put to future use the principle of non-nuclear pacifism that grows out of the lessons of history, says the author, Japan should have the courage to actively move history forward.

**Warau sengoshi [A Humorous History of the Postwar Period]. Kōsaka Fumio.** Transview. 2002. 188 × 130 mm. 372 pp. ¥2,400. ISBN 4-901510-10-X.

Manga artist Katō Yoshirō (b. 1925) is author of the four-panel gag strip “Mappira-kun” serialized in the *Mainichi shinbun* national newspaper from January 1954 to June 2001. Continuing for forty-seven years, it had appeared 13,615 times, making it the longest-running comic strip in a national newspaper. The main character, originally a salaried worker in his mid-twenties named after a phrase meaning “No way!,” eventually disappeared, replaced by a regular list of denizens of the city—the local fortune-teller, an aging retiree, a high-pressure salesman, and even a burglar—emerge to take turns in the role of protagonist each day. Introducing references to current events and the changing political, economic, and social milieu, the cartoons portrayed the times with nonsense and delightfully unpredictable humor.



Cover design: Kitamura Takeshi

Drawing on these four-panel comics, this book features original essays tracing the social history of the postwar era. The artist projects himself, untroubled by a particular ideology or obsession, through the mirror of his day. The author studies

the brilliant way Katō’s cartoons captured the essence of the times and essence of laughter, and won a wide readership for half the century.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

**Bireitō made [All the Way to the “Beautiful Isle”]. Yonahara Kei.** Bungei Shunjū, 2002. 193 × 134 mm. 255 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-16-359180-X.



Cover design: Minami Shinbō

“From the time I was small,” writes the author, “my parents talked about the history and the stories of Okinawa.” Born in Tokyo in 1958, Yonahara lost her mother at age twelve and her father at age seventeen. Her mother left her an old family album and letters, and her father left her a large collection of books related to Okinawa.

After Yonahara established herself as a successful nonfiction writer, she began to trace the history of her parents’ families. Her great grandfather on her mother’s side had been a doctor who was even mentioned in the diary of the great Meiji-era writer Mori Ōgai. This doctor opened a practice on Taiwan, then also called Bireitō (the “beautiful isle” [Formosa]). His wife—the author’s great grandmother—had been a stage actress; his younger brother was a painter. Her ancestors on her father’s side were descended from high-ranking warrior retainers of the Ryukyu court.

The journey the author began “in search of her mother and grandfather in their younger days” eventually turned into a journey exploring a history of the modern era stretching

from mainland Japan to Okinawa, and then to Taiwan. By tracing her family roots, the author has produced a book of vivid impressions set down in a memorable style, resulting in a distinctive history of an Okinawan family quite different from the usual writing on Okinawa.

**Towa no ai o tsuranuite [Faithful to Eternal Love]. Azuma Emiko.** Daiwa Shobō, 2002. 194 × 133 mm. 222 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-479-01158-7.

This book consists of autobiographical essays depicting the author’s devotion to social psychologist Minami Hiroshi (1914–2001). When the two met in 1949 Minami was a bright and articulate social psychologist recently returned from study in the United States. He was employed as a lecturer at a training school affiliated with the Haiyūza Theater Company. Azuma, a student actress ten years his junior, was attracted to him, and their mutual feelings eventually turned to love. Both, however, were firmly committed to the principle that a woman should work and be independent. They chose to live near each other, coming and going as they pleased but maintaining their mutual freedom.

Twenty-five years later, Minami’s sixtieth birthday party was unexpectedly transformed, through the clever scheme of some friends, into a “wedding and silver anniversary ceremony,” but the couple’s separate-residence relationship continued. In 1984, as Minami’s health began to decline, they finally registered their marriage and began to share a dwelling, while continuing to insist theirs was “a free marriage.”

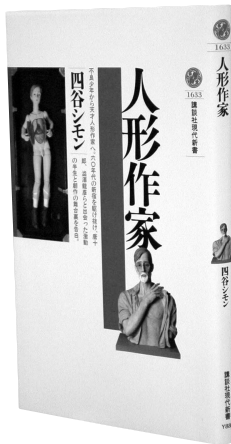
The author received the Minister of Education Award for the Arts in



Cover design: Kawashima Susumu (Studio Give)

1998 and continues to be active as an actress. “We experienced a far longer and more binding relationship than the average married couple,” she says. Approaching the first anniversary of her lifelong partner’s death, the author details memories from their half century together, from their first meeting to final parting, in this “homage of love from me to him.”

**Ningyō sakka [Doll Artist]. Yotsuya Shimon.** Kōdansha, 2002. 173 × 106 mm. 200 pp. ¥880. ISBN 4-06-149633-6.



Cover design: Sugiura Kōhei and Satō Atsushi

The author played a role in elevating Japanese doll making from a hobby-like handcraft to art. This book was produced by organizing his accounts, first taking down stories told to a friend about his childhood, his activities in the underground theater in the latter half of the 1960s into the 1970s as well as the process by which he began to make dolls in earnest.

Often left alone as a child, the author became interested in dolls while in elementary school. He frequented the exhibitions of dolls held at department stores and as a junior high school student worked as a helper to a doll artist. He later became a rockabilly singer and actor, rising as a star in the underground theater, but remained devoted to doll making. This book is the moving, realistic portrayal of an artist who created a distinctive style of dolls under the influence of the works of German-born surrealist dollmaker Hans Bellmer and through his interaction with the idiosyncratic artists of his time.

## TRAVELOGUE

**Boku to arukō zenkoku gojū iseki: Kōkogaku no tabi [Walk with Me to Fifty Sites Around the Country: An Archaeological Journey]. Mori Kōichi.** Shōgakukan, 2002. 193 × 133 mm. 223 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-09-626206-4.

This book is a compilation of a popular column, entitled “Excavating Japan,” written by a leading authority on East Asian tombs and published in the Japan Railways Zipangu Club information magazine *Jipangu kurabu* over a period of five years. The author’s fascination with archaeology began when he happened to pick up a fragment of a Sueki-ware pottery from ancient times at the age of eleven. Since the war ended in 1945, when Mori was seventeen, he has been exploring archaeological sites the length and breadth of Japan. For this book he introduces fifty of Japan’s important sites.

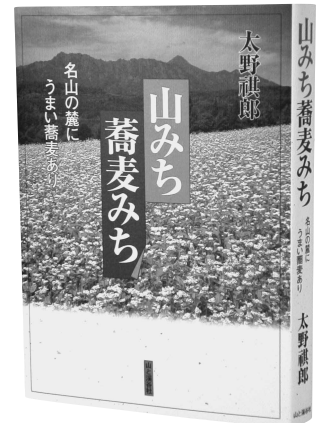
The sites are treated in the order taken up in the series, starting with the Daisen tumulus (tomb of the sixteenth Emperor Nintoku) in Osaka prefecture, the Takamatsu tumulus in Nara, the Sakamaki tumuli in Saitama prefecture, and so on, and Mori includes at least one site for each of the country’s forty-seven prefectures. Four pages are equally allotted for each site. Providing plentiful photographs (some in color) and local maps, information about transportation and related facilities, and points for special observation, the book is a travel guide with the kind of advice that only an author who has actually “walked” those paths could offer. Written in a plain and easy-to-understand fashion, it also



Cover design: Yamamoto Noboru

serves as a beginners’ introduction to the fascination and pleasures of viewing archaeological sites.

**Yama michi, soba michi: Meizan no fumoto ni umai soba ari [Mountain Paths, Soba Paths: Good Soba Found at the Foot of Famous Mountains]. Tano Yoshirō.** Yama to Kei-koku Sha, 2002. 210 × 148 mm. 302 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-635-28060-8. Throughout his working life the author pursued his enjoyment of mountain climbing and eating soba (buckwheat noodles), and after he retired, he began to write about these two hobbies in essays and travelogues, reflecting “Inside me there is well-established triangle linking mountain climbing, enjoyment of drinking, and soba.” This book focuses particularly on the mountain climbing-soba link of the triangle.



Cover design: Koizumi Hiroshi

“There is no preordained link between beautiful mountains and good soba,” says Tano, “but one could stretch the point a bit by observing that both mountain climbing and soba eating are civilized practices.” Soba, he writes, possesses a quality that reflects Japanese sensibilities just as do linked verse (*haikai no renga*) or the tea ceremony. Explaining how his fascination with these topics has enriched his life, the author climbs to his favorite thirty-nine mountains and introduces well-known soba restaurants in their foothills. For a mountain-and-soba travelogue you can savor while reading, he describes the appearance and interior of the shops, the kind of service they offer, the source and flavor of the soba-meal that is used, ingredients, prices, and so on. Maps of the paths up the

mountains and directions to mountain lodges (*yamagoya*) as well as maps and contact information for the soba shops are included at the end of each essay.

***Yūrashia no fūkei: Sekai no kioku o tadoru*** [The Landscape of Eurasia: Retracing Memories of the World]. Hino Keizō. Yūrashia Ryokōsha, 2002. 193 × 151 mm. 182 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 4-901919-01-6. Driven by an urge even he himself did not fully understand, journalist-turned-novelist Hino visited various places around the world, most on the Eurasian continent. They include Tromsø (Norway), Cappadocia (Turkey), Shiraz (Iran), the Yellow River (China), and Ayers Rock (Australia). “One sees the countless things that human beings have created as well as the remains of things they have created and destroyed,” says Hino.

Throughout the Eurasian journey he found spiritual richness in people who looked materially poor. “Always facing the possibility that they may perish . . . human beings have lived vigorously and flexibly,” he writes, concluding we must neither “cherish only short-term hopes nor lose hope in the long run.”



Cover design: Miura Naoko

The book, though less than 200 pages in length, has a feeling of weight, not only because of the inclusion of numerous color photographs taken by the author with a zoom 85 mm single-lens-reflex camera. Each of the forty-five essays making up the book is short—one topic about four pages long—but carries a special message. Hino died in October 2002 at the age of 73.

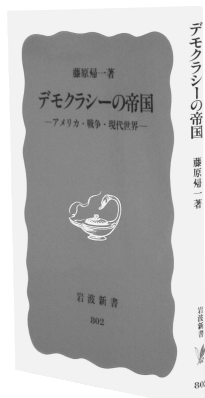
## POLITICS

***Demokurashī no teikoku: Amerika, sensō, gendai sekai*** [The Democracy Empire: The United States, War, and Today's World]. Fujiwara Kiichi. Iwanami Shoten, 2002. 173 × 105 mm. 214 pp. ¥740. ISBN 4-00-430802-X.

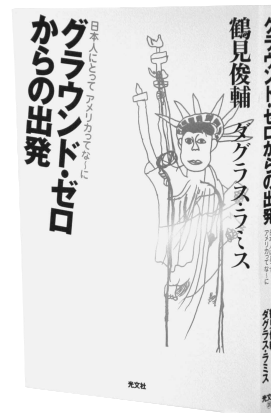
The world changed, it is often said, after September 11, 2001. As the sole superpower since the close of the Cold War, the United States made the world its empire. Focusing on the concept of “empire,” this work analyzes recent U.S. moves that could be seen as imperialistic and examines the nature of U.S.-dominated international politics.

The United States has tried to intervene in the affairs of other countries on the pretext of advancing universal ideals like democracy and human rights. At the same time, it behaves unilaterally by dropping out of the Kyoto Protocol, which was designed as an international movement to halt global warming, and refusing to participate in the International Criminal Court. If this non-cooperative stance continues, the author asserts, the international cooperation and diplomacy will be weakened, world bodies will be rendered meaningless, and the entire field of international relations will dissolve.

The author (b. 1956) points out that it is collaboration and coordination with other countries, rather than unilateral action and intervention, that reduces costs and makes possible a more organized, stable world order. In order to avoid the worst-case scenario, he argues, it is necessary to reorganize the United Nations to strengthen its original functions, and for the United States to return to its support for internationalism.



***Guraundo Zero kara no shuppatsu: Nihonjin ni totte Amerika-ite nāni*** [Starting from Ground Zero: What Is America to Japanese?]. Tsurumi Shunsuke and Douglas Lummis. Kōbunsha, 2002. 188 × 128 mm. 198 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 4-334-97365-5.



Cover design: Kawashima Susumu (Studio Give)

Both authors are experienced activists in the peace movement. Tsurumi Shunsuke (b. 1922) is a scholar of philosophy who studied pragmatism at Harvard University and returned to Japan in an exchange of prisoners of war in 1942, while Douglas Lummis (b. 1936) is a political scientist who was once stationed in Okinawa as a member of the U.S. marine corps.

This book is a collection of their essays and dialogues concerning the dramatic shifts in the political situation surrounding the United States and Japan in the wake of 9/11. Tsurumi expresses misgivings about the U.S. view of the war on terror as “a battle between good and evil.” Inasmuch as the fight against terrorism is not one between countries, he says, it is vital to construct a world order that transcends national boundaries. Lummis points out that the world changed the moment President George W. Bush decided to treat the 9/11 attacks as an act of war, rather than as a crime, essentially making it a war of vengeance. A war against terrorism can have no victory, he declares, and there is virtually no means of ending it.

While touching on subjects such as the universality of the Japanese constitution and the nature of a “military” force, this volume prompts the reader to think about how an individual should go about living at a time when the world is heading toward war.

**Kanryō wa shippai ni kizukanai [Bureaucrats Don't Notice Their Mistakes]. Hirano Takuya.** Chikuma Shobō, 2002. 173 × 106 mm. 222 pp. ¥700. ISBN 4-480-05979-2.

There are a number of factors behind Japan's prolonged economic downturn continuing since the beginning of the 1990s, the "lost decade": the failure to deal with the bad loans left over from overheated speculation under the "bubble" economy; the massive fiscal burdens resulting from the reckless expansion of public works projects in an effort to stimulate the economy; overly generous tax reductions; and a rise in the consumption tax in recessionary times, among other reasons.

These policies have been adopted under the leadership of a national bureaucracy with close links to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. The bureaucracy continues to control the management of the state, without ever having to take responsibility for the mistakes they have made. Behind these failures is Japan's long-entrenched bureaucratic system, under which career-track bureaucrats are automatically promoted without fair competition. The author declares that this system is the root of the evil that prevents Japan from changing.

To prevent the worst-case scenario in which "the Japanese miracle will end, and its economy will go sharply into decline and collapse under the weight of massive fiscal debts," he says, Japan must abolish the system of career bureaucracy, which has fallen into self-perpetuation and hoarding of vested interests. In line with the average for advanced nations, he says, Japan must reduce the excessive amount of public works projects to 2 percent of the GDP—one-third of the present rate—within

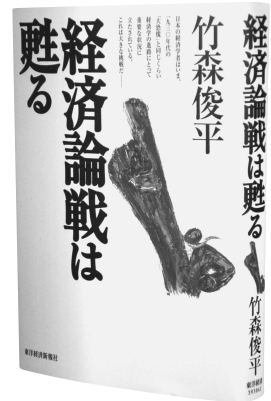
seven years. Hirano also offers other concrete proposals for the rebuilding of the economy, such as shifting from inefficient public demand to private demand.

## ECONOMY

**Genba ni deta keizai gakusha tachi [Economists on the Front Lines]. Fujimaki Hideki.** Chūō Daigaku Shuppanbu, 2002. 191 × 132 mm. 223 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 4-8057-2162-6. There has long been a tendency in Japan, writes the author, for any economist who sought to be active outside of academia to be criticized or disdained as a "government-hired scholar" or a "mass media academic." With the prolonged slow-down of the economy, however, more recently there has been a steady stream of economists becoming active in policy-making arenas in government and the central bank as well as in corporate management. The current minister for economic and fiscal policy and for financial services, Takenaka Heizō, is an economist. There are two major reasons behind the trend. One is the gridlock of the bureaucracy that sustained Japan's economic growth. The other is that the demand for economic specialists on the international scene is increasing due to economic globalization.

in government, the Bank of Japan, and leading corporations. The book studies the current state of Japan's economy by examining their personalities, background, achievements, and what they have tried, often without success, to accomplish.

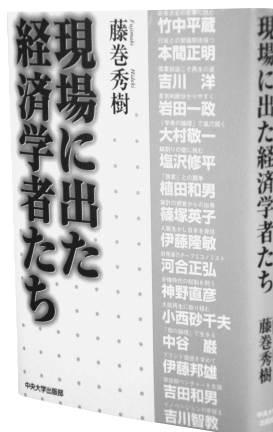
**Keizai ronsen wa yomigaeru [Economic Debate Resurrected]. Takemori Shunpei.** Tōyō Keizai Shinpōsha, 2002. 194 × 134 mm. 294 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 4-492-39386-2.



Cover design: Rokugatsusha

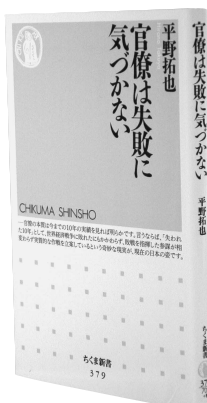
Should priority be given to overcoming deflation or to disposal of the bad loans coming out of the bubble economy era? While the state of the Japanese economy continues to deteriorate, the general debate among economists offers no answers. Specialist in international economics Takemori looks back over past experiences in the world economy, outlines the on-going debates on economic policy, and calls attention to the dangers of deflation left unintended.

The author introduces the 1930s debate between two prominent economists—Joseph Schumpeter, advocate of creative destruction, and Irving Fisher, proponent of reflation policy—over ways of overcoming the Great Depression. Now, in Japan at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the same debate is unfolding. Takemori warns that the current Japanese government policy, of dismantling failed companies, will not bring recovery to employment, but instead will encourage further shrinkage of the economy and end up in "destruction without creation." He notes that the countries that promptly adopted reflation policy survived the Great Depression, and underlines the importance of learning from history.



Cover design: Shimizu Design Office

The text, much amplified and revised, is based on a series published in the national daily *Nihon keizai shinbun* in 2001, introducing sixteen of Japan's leading economists, including Takenaka, who are in positions of responsibility



Cover design: Mamura Toshikazu

While the arguments tend to be quite specialized, this book incorporates some interesting anecdotes, such as one about Isaac Newton, who made a huge profit on the stock market and became an enthusiastic speculator, ultimately succumbed to greed and found himself a big loser. The book shows clearly the kind of economic policy Japan needs now.

**Yagate Indo no jidai ga hajimaru: "Saigo no chōtaikoku" no jitsuryoku** [The Era of India in the Offing: The Capacity of the "Last Superpower"]. Kojima Taku. Asahi Shinbunsha, 2002. 188 × 125 mm. 238 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 4-02-259812-3.



Cover design: Ashizawa Taii and Nozu Akiko

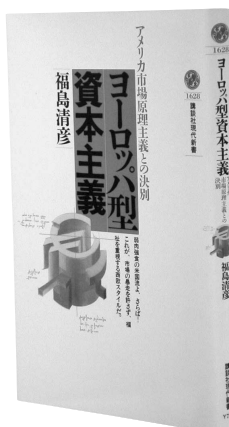
Second only to the United States in field of software, India is an export superpower where the sector accounts for 30 percent of its total exports. Basing his observations on a six-year survey begun in 1996 of the Indian information technology industry centering on Bangalore, the author (b. 1963) shows how elite education and emphasis on software technology education have turned India into an IT giant. The work reports various intriguing episodes, such as how Bangalore was able to become India's answer to Silicon Valley through the activities of Indian technicians who had worked in the original Silicon Valley.

Kojima calls attention to the election of Dr. Abdul Kalam, the scientist who led the way on India's nuclear and missile development, as president of India. Kalam's stated goals are to nurture the leading advanced technologies domestically and to make India an industrially advanced country by 2020. Supporting these aims are India's human resources, providing a wealth of expertise in advanced technologies,

and its rich natural resources that supply those technologies. This volume argues persuasively that India has the potential to undergo a dramatic transformation.

**Yōroppa-gata shihonshugi: Amerika shijō genrishugi to no ket-subetsu** [European-type Capitalism: Breaking Away from American Market Fundamentalism]. Fukushima Kiyohiko. Kōdansha, 2002. 173 × 105 mm. 246 pp. ¥700. ISBN 4-06-149628-X.

The Japanese economy has been slowing down for over a decade, and as yet there is no prospect of a breakthrough to better times. Author Fukushima, who lived in the United States for nine years and in Britain for three years as a leading member of the staff of a major Japanese think-tank, discusses what Japanese society should do to recover its vitality, comparing and analyzing capitalism in the United States and European countries.



Cover design: Sugiura Kōhei and Satō Atsushi

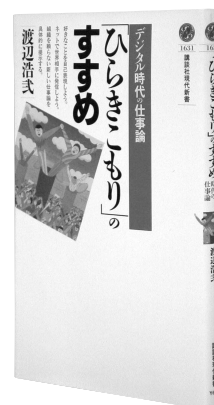
Fukushima criticizes American-style market-dominating capitalism because it widens the disparity between rich and poor not just in the United States but worldwide. He argues that Japan has much to learn from European capitalism, which regulates and/or utilizes the principle of the market instead of allowing the market principle to go unleashed. Based on the historical factors behind the formation of the European Union, he introduces European intellectuals' views of capitalism and analyzes the situation in Britain, Germany, France, and elsewhere.

Japan, where the population is steadily declining, should overcome its obsession with growth, he says, and draw on European experiences

in constructing a social system and natural environment where people can feel safe in their consumer habits. He criticizes the Japanese government's policy of structural reform, which lacks any articulation of the national objectives to be achieved through reform.

## SOCIETY

**"Hirakikomori" no susume: Dejitaru jidai no shigoto ron** ["Open Reclusiveness": A Study of Work in the Digital Age]. Watanabe Kōji. Kōdansha, 2002. 173 × 106 mm. 198 pp. ¥680. ISBN 4-06-149631-X. An increasing number of young people and company employees in Japan are finding it difficult to get along with others and end up withdrawing from school or being unable to work in company offices. Watanabe (b. 1962), a video game author, views the tendency positively, regarding the desire to withdraw from society (known as *hikikomori*), as an expression of strong interest in the individual. He calls on these people to consider work as an extension of play, proposing that they make the new yardstick for deciding what work to pursue "whether it feels good or not."

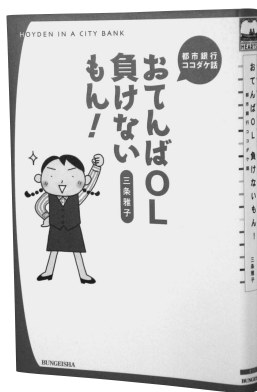


Cover design: Sugiura Kōhei and Satō Atsushi

According to the author, individuals can work at home by using computers and the Internet, regardless of their educational background and without being part of a big organization. He introduces instances in which products created as a hobby by enthusiasts and *otaku*-type amateurs have competed on the Internet on equal terms with products made on a professional, industrial base.

The author urges people with reclusive tendencies to investigate by trial and error what they really want to do and seek an “open reclusiveness” (*hirakikomori*), connecting themselves to the world via the Internet. This book offers a new perspective on the nature of work. It also contains interviews with four people successfully applying the author’s ideas.

**Otenba OL makenaimon!: Toshi ginkō koko dake banashi** [Rebellious Office Lady Won’t Give Up!: Inside Story of a City Bank]. Sanjō Masako. Bungeisha. 2002. 182 × 122 mm. 216 pp. ¥1,000. ISBN 4-8355-4165-0.



Cover design: Araki Satomi

In 1988, when Japan’s Equal Employment Opportunity Law was implemented, the author graduated from a four-year university and was hired at the head office of a major city bank as a “systems technician,” a position for which treatment was to have been equal for both men and women. What she was not prepared for were the strange and curious rituals performed by the women employees of such a company. With wit and satire, she compares it to the etiquette required of ladies in waiting in the women’s quarters (*Ōoku*) of Edo castle in the days of the shoguns. For example, at lunch time, all the women would line up, led by the head “office lady,” to announce that they would go to lunch. And then there were the various quaint customs to be observed in the ladies room and in the room where they changed into their office uniforms. Finding male-female equality a mere pretense and the office rife with outdated practices, she takes up the banner of protest.

She marks a company first by

refusing to retire upon marriage, and is demoted. After enduring obscurity and very hard work, she is singled out for a special project under the direct supervision of the bank president and finally gets her glory. A thoroughly enjoyable work of nonfiction written from the perspective of a newly hired “office lady” (female white-collar worker), it offers insights on what goes on behind the scenes in the big banking corporations.

**Owari no mitsugetsu: Ōba Minako no kaigo nikki** [Honeymoon at the End: A Diary of Caring for My Wife, Ōba Minako]. Ōba Toshio. Shinchōsha, 2002. 196 × 137 mm. 254 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-10-455601-7. Ōba Minako (b. 1930) became a well-known author whose works, based on her experience of the atomic bombing, conveyed the ethos of postwar Japan and were published overseas in several different languages. In 1996, she suffered a stroke and was forced into life in a wheelchair.

From that point on, her husband (b. 1929), the author of this book, began caring for her. For three years from the time she first became ill, he faithfully set down in this diary the details of caring for his wife. This is not only the story of a wife’s indescribable daily battle with illness and a husband’s devoted care for her. It is also an account of the plethora of tests and medicines required and of dealings with a Japanese medical establishment addicted to personal care by the manual, casting into sharp relief problems with the health care system that the Ōbas experienced firsthand.

The author is an acute observer, skillfully weaving descriptions of the



Cover design: Shinchōsha

changing seasons into his accounts of his wife’s condition and the environment of the rehabilitation clinic. He writes of his happiness in being able to confirm his bond with his wife through his daily care. One cannot help but admire, moreover, Ōba Minako’s devotion to writing that kept her producing works via dictation even while struggling with illness.

**Puchi-nashonarizumu shōkōgun: Wakamono-tachi no Nippon-shugi** [Petite-nationalism Syndrome: The Nippon-ism of the Young]. Kayama Rika. Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2002. 173 × 109 mm. 182 pp. ¥680. ISBN 4-12-150062-8.

A kind of “back to Japanese roots” boom is going on today mainly among young people. Bookstores feature numerous books on the topic of the Japanese language. At sports events, such as the 2002 FIFA World Football Cup co-hosted by Korea and Japan, young Japanese have no hesitation about waving the rising-sun flag and singing the “Kimi-gayo” national anthem, both of which are often negatively associated with the Japan of pre-1945 days by members of the older generations.



Cover design: Chūō Kōron Shinsha Design Shitsu

Calling the phenomenon “petite-nationalism,” the psychologist author analyzes the social factors behind it from the perspective of psychiatry. She points to the tendencies of young people to avoid stress, conflict, and anything they consider a bother, and to feel satisfied as long as they are happy in the here and now. She also indicates the social trend toward uncritical acceptance of the televised pronouncements of prominent persons. In actual life, says the author, what was long considered in Japan to be an egalitarian

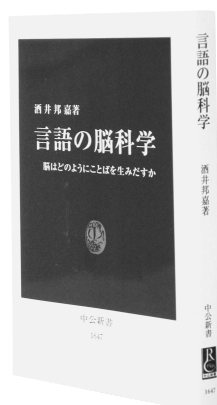
society is rapidly turning into a class society, with clear gaps developing in values and ideology among its members. Noting similar tendencies that led to the rise of ultra-rightists in Europe, she is concerned about the future of Japan, issuing a firm warning against the current of “petite nationalism.”

## LANGUAGE

**Gengo no nō-kagaku: Nō wa dono yō ni kotoba o umidasuka** [The Brain Science of Language: How the Brain Creates Language]. Sakai Kuniyoshi. Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2002. 173 × 109 mm. 340 pp. ¥900. ISBN 4-12-101647-5.

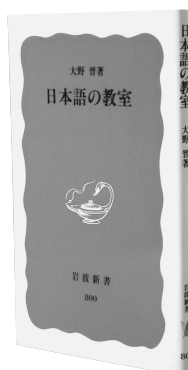
The difference between a dog that responds when called and a child that can make a sentence lies in the ability to understand grammatical relationships. Even a three-year-old who does not know anything about grammar intuitively knows when a sentence in his or her own language is grammatically wrong. Arguing that the principles governing the structure and use of language are the result of biological inevitability, Noam Chomsky advocated the theory of generative grammar, believing that human beings are inherently endowed with a kind of “universal grammar.”

The author tackles this difficult-to-demonstrate theory from the viewpoint of brain science. Language is the brain’s most sophisticated information-processing system. Using the currently most advanced brain measuring equipment, the MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), he strives to clarify the structure of brain peculiar to language-using human beings, that is, the nature of



the language-controlling organs of the brain—the brain-centers of grammar. How does “universal grammar” actually work in the brain? This is a case-study report written for the lay reader by an associate professor of medicine at the University of Tokyo graduate school who seeks to expound the basic principles of language information processing in the human brain through physiological methods, mainly linguistics and psychology.

**Nihongo no kyōshitsu** [Lessons on Japanese]. Ōno Susumu. Iwanami Shoten, 2002. 173 × 105 mm. 230 pp. ¥700. ISBN 4-00-430800-3. This book answers a variety of questions about the Japanese language sent in by readers of *Nihongo renshūchō* [A Handbook for Japanese Practice], a best-seller published by Iwanami Shoten in 1999.



The topics taken up range from why Japanese poetry does not have rhyme in verse endings to the author’s longstanding theory that Japanese, judging from various linguistic similarities, originated in the Tamil language of southern India. Ōno Susumu (b. 1919), expresses his strong misgivings about the postwar system of limiting the number of kanji characters in use and the effect it has had on people’s ability to read and understand Japanese. The generation that was educated according to the postwar Japanese language curriculum currently constitutes the core of society, he notes, and he is convinced that many of unthinkable accidents and scandals that have recently come to light “can be directly correlated to the general decline in people’s ability to read Japanese accurately and express themselves with skill and precision.” Worried that the ability to execute

tasks following a preformulated plan based on a firm and accurate grasp of the facts—“what can be called the capacity to understand and sustain civilization”—is gradually being lost, the author urges Japanese in general to use precise, clear Japanese, rather than following the tendency toward vague, merely emotive expression.

## LITERATURE

**Mishima Yukio: Shōwa no meikyū** [Mishima Yukio: In the Labyrinth of Shōwa]. Deguchi Yūkō. Shinchōsha, 2002. 196 × 133 mm. 230 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-10-410203-2.



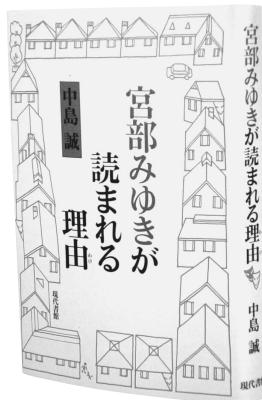
In the slightly more than three decades since Mishima Yukio committed suicide in November 1970, new materials on the controversial novelist have been made public, and numerous critiques have been published of his life and work. A scholar of French literature of Mishima’s own generation who has been an avid reader of Mishima works since he was young, the author analyses them in this book that traces the memorable wake the famous writer stirred up around himself in the 1950s and 1960s until his suicide.

Taking *Kamen no kokuhaku* (*Confessions of a Mask*), an early work depicting a young man with feelings of sexual desire for other men, as the starting point of Mishima’s oeuvre, the author covers *Shizumeru taki* [Death Beneath the Falls], *Kyōko no ie* [Kyōko’s House], *Eirei no koe* [The Voice of Hero Spirits], and gives a particularly detailed reading of the four books that make up the *Hōjō no umi* (*The Sea of Fertility*). He clearly sketches the life of a writer driven by sexual obsession

and self-destructive impulses. A penetrating and imaginative intellect and a relativist who fully embraced Japanese sensibilities, Mishima toward the end of his life adopted a fierce tone advocating absolute principles. Although deeply influenced by Western knowledge, he vehemently denounced things “foreign” as he committed suicide. Whatever the darkness Mishima suffered, the author offers prayers for his peaceful repose.

**Miyabe Miyuki ga yomareru wake [The Reasons for Miyabe Miyuki's Popularity]. Nakajima Makoto.** Gendai Shokan, 2002. 194 × 131 mm. 222 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-7684-6840-3.

Miyabe Miyuki is one of Japan's leading best-selling authors. Her numerous works have won prizes and several have been translated into other languages. What is it about Miyabe's writing that draws so many readers? Literary critic Nakajima explains the reasons for Miyabe's popularity in this analysis of seven of her novels and a number of short stories.



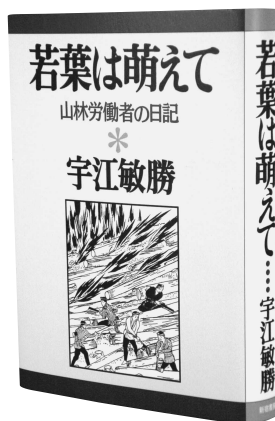
Cover design: Shirota Susumu

Though generally considered a mystery writer, Miyabe's fiction exhibits a number of overlapping characteristics, as typified by her novel *Kasha* (trans. *All She Was Worth*), which takes up the topic of credit card bankruptcy, and can be read as a work of business fiction or a novel of historical philosophy, and so on. The settings of her novels are not limited to contemporary times, and, indicative of her characteristic breadth, some are even set in the Edo period, three-hundred years ago. The relations among Miyabe's characters, who often suffer from loneli-

ness and anxiety, displaying a sensitivity to human feelings at the crossroads of hope and desire, are invariably real. Nevertheless, some kind of relief or sense of salvation is incorporated into every one of her novels and this, says the author, is the reason so many readers are drawn to Miyabe's works.

**Wakaba wa moete: Sanrin rōdōsha no nikki [The Glorious Green of Spring: The Diaries of a Forestry Worker]. Ue Toshikatsu.** Shinjuku Shobō. 194 × 131 mm. 302 pp.

¥2,200. ISBN 4-88008-237-6. Author Ue was born in 1937 on the Kii peninsula. The families on both his father's and mother's sides had been mountain dwellers for generations. He made charcoal for household fuel and eventually took up the work of forestry, logging and replanting forests. A man born and bred of the mountains, he writes, “Wild blood flowed in my veins and hardship and danger were an ordinary part of daily life.”



Cover design: Tamura Yoshiya

Yet at the same time, Ue would sit at the dining table or a desk made from an orange crate in his mountain home, where he read and wrote by the light of an oil lamp or candle, studying literature. Although at first intending to write fiction, he then grew increasingly aware of the interesting world in which he lived, itself rich material of literature and folklore, and decided that it was important to record things just as they were around him. He has since continued to live and work in the mountains, writing vividly and exhaustively about life and labor in the forests.

This volume includes the author's diaries from the summer of 1963, when he was in his mid-twenties, as

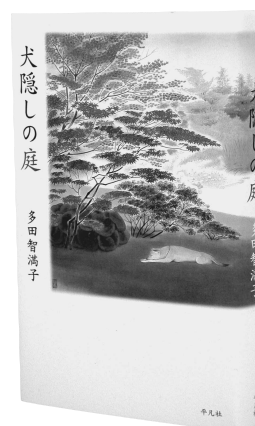
well as the winter of 1967 and the spring of 1978. Declaring that “I loved physical labor,” his accounts sing the praises of labor in the mountains. He has since retired and has been publishing his writings in successive volumes. This work is the sixth and final volume of his first set of writings that began in 1996.

## ESSAY

**Inu kakushi no niwa [The Garden That Hid the Dog]. Tada Chimako.** Heibonsha, 2002. 194 × 120 mm. 222 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-582-83125-7.

This volume is a compilation of reflective pieces written by a poet and essayist who passed away in January 2003 at the age of seventy-two. Conversant in the myths, faiths, and philosophies of old and new, East and West, Tada is known for the intellectual rigor of her poetry. She is also translator of Marguerite Yourcenar's *Memoires d'Hadrien* (Jp., *Hadorianusu no kaisō*).

The some-long, some-short essays, all previously published in various newspapers and magazines, are divided into four groups. “From an Eastern Suburb of Kobe” includes the title essay detailing the curious death of her pet dog of sixteen years and other pieces about nature and daily events in the world of her household garden. “Fragments of Time” are essays suspended between daily life and the other world and playing back and forth in time and space between reality and fantasy. The pieces in “From Destinations Abroad” recall travels to Mexico, Taiwan, Greece, and the Netherlands. “Counting” takes up miscella-

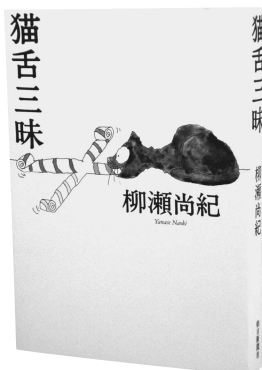


Cover design: Tsutsui Hideko

neous topics such as centipedes, peonies, and so on.

Redolent with the author's erudition, wit and humor, and elegance of sentiments, the collection evokes a poet's distinctive responses to time and space.

**Nekojita zanmai [Nothing but Cat-Babble].** Yanase Naoki. Asahi Shimbunsha, 2002. 182×129 mm. 235 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 4-02-257784-3. The author of this work is a scholar of English literature known for his translation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and for the first single-handed Japanese rendering of *Finnegan's Wake*, long said to be untranslatable into other languages. The volume consists of essays written for a column commissioned to deal with "phrases, proverbs, idioms, seasonal words, current jargon, etc." published in the national daily *Asahi Shinbun's* evening edition. The essays take up many topics, ranging from his love of his pet cat and local products of his home town in Hokkaido to acquaintances of the author, *shōgi*, majong, the horse races, current events and gossip, and seasonal topics.



Cover design: Sugiura Kōhei and Satō Atsushi

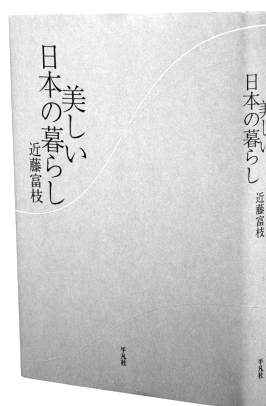
One essay, for example, is entitled "Finnegan's Betting Ticket." As it happened that Yanase completed his translation of *Finnegan's Wake* on July 14, he nicknamed a 7-14 ticket "Finnegan's Betting Ticket." Making free use of not only English and Japanese but also, *neko-go* ("cat-babble"; he calls himself half-cat/half-human), an encyclopedic knowledge of language, and a genius for capturing the funny side of things also found in *haikai* and *rakugo*, he delights in all manner of word plays, puns, and riddles. Each essay is accompanied by wryly comical illustrations by Furukawa Taku.

**Utsukushii Nihon no kurashi [The Beautiful Japanese Life].** Kondō Tomie. Heibonsha, 2002. 194×130 mm. 202 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 4-582-83124-9.

Born in 1922 in the Nihonbashi district of central Tokyo, the author is a woman writer well-versed in the *Tale of Genji*. Knowledgeable about traditional dress and Japanese-style attire, she is devoted to wearing kimono.

In this collection of essays, the author expresses in elegant language her affection for Japanese traditions like the kabuki theater and the wearing of kimono, evoking memories of the *shitamachi* (commercial and working-class quarter) of prewar Tokyo, with its lingering atmosphere of old Edo. She also writes of her fondness for bamboo, cherry blossoms, and wild flowers, as well as Kyoto when the new green of spring enlivens the landscape.

In one of these essays, she describes how the women of the Heian court (794–1185), the setting for what is said to be the world's oldest novel—*The Tale of Genji*—combined layers of different-colored sheer silk to create subtle hues impossible to achieve by dyeing. "The core of Japanese culture," she declares, "is this tireless pursuit of ultimate beauty." Yet insistence on delicate fragrances and fine aromas, and appreciation of the complex qualities of *iki* and other aesthetic sensibilities that have sustained Japanese traditions are gradually fading. While the passing of such traditions reflects the tumultuous changes taking place in Japanese society, this collection of essays pays homage to the Japanese spirit and traditions that have been an intimate part of the author's life.

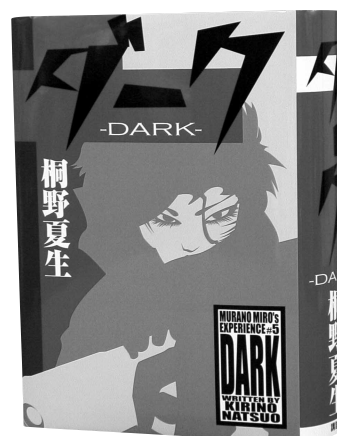


Cover design: Kumagai Tomoko

## FICTION

**Dāku [Dark].** Kirino Natsuo.

Kōdansha. 2002. 193×133 mm. 520 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 4-06-211580-8. The third in a series of hard-boiled detective novels by this woman mystery writer to feature the female detective Murano Miro, this 519-page novel describes events six years after those in *Kao ni furikakaru ame* [The Rain Falling on My Face] (Kōdansha, 1996) for which Kirino was awarded the Edogawa Ranpo Prize in 1993.



Cover design: Tsuhara Osamu

The story opens with the line, "I decided I would die when I turned forty." Miro is devastated to learn that Naruse, a man she loves who went to prison six years earlier and whose release she had eagerly anticipated, had committed suicide in prison four years earlier. Abandoning her past, ceasing to care even for her own life, and unable to forgive her foster father who hid the fact of Naruse's suicide from her, she "kills" him. Determined to do away with his friends and common-law wife as well, she sets out to bring about their ruin one by one. When she is compelled to flee as a result, she escapes to Korea on a forged passport. There, Miro meets a man who is deeply disturbed by the Kwangju Incident of 1980 and involved in the sale of counterfeit name-brand items. They are drawn to each another, and she embarks on a fugitive life with her new lover. Plunging into the web of human relations, Miro gropes her way toward love.

**Hansenbyō bungaku zenshū 1: Shōsetsu 1 [Complete Collection of Hansen's Disease Literature, Volume 1: Fiction, Part 1]. Ōoka Makoto et al., eds. Kōseisha, 2002. 216 × 151 mm. 478 pp. ¥4,800. ISBN 4-7744-0390-3.**

The writing of inmates of leprosariums in Japan is known as Hansen's disease literature. In accordance with a law enacted in 1908, Japanese suffering from leprosy were forced into isolated quarantine facilities, and suffered severe discrimination and human rights infringements. They were taken away from their families and deprived of any opportunity to participate in society. Even after Hansen's disease was proven medically curable, Japan's Leprosy Prevention Law remained in effect until 1996.

The first ten volumes of this collection of Hansen's Disease Literature consists of fiction, accounts/essays, poems, tanka, haiku/senryū, as well as writings by children. It is a collection of selections from approximately one thousand books, including privately published writings, produced between 1920 and 2000. Writing was actively encouraged in the leprosariums, and the fact that patients wrote assiduously, perhaps as a way of affirming life even while living in utmost despair, has created an enormous legacy.



Cover design: Anno Mitsumasa

This is a literature of suffering and despair that “sheds light on a dark chapter in history.” Among the seventeen novels by seven authors collected in Volume 1, the most substantial piece of writing is *Inochi no shoya* [The First Night of Life] (Asuka Shinsha, 1999; JBN, No. 34, p. 16) by Hōjō Tamio (1914–37), a writer discovered by the Nobel laureate writer Kawabata Yasunari.

**Honkaku shōsetu [A Genuine Novel]. 2 vols. Mizumura Minae. Shinchōsha, 2002. 196 × 136 mm. 470 pp.; 414 pp. ¥1,800; ¥1,700. ISBN 4-10-407702-X; 4-10-407703-8.** Azuma Tarō, the protagonist of this story, is a boy from a poor household, separated from his family since childhood. Beginning from elementary school, he is raised as one of the family of a university professor of medicine in the neighborhood. Set during the forty-year span from Japan's defeat in the war through the period of rapid growth and up to the bursting of the economic bubble, this book tells of the disappointments and pure love of two people of different social strata—Yōko, the physician's daughter, and Tarō, who becomes a wealthy man in the United States.

This is a full-scale romance with a touch of mystery. A rich variety of characters surround Tarō and Yōko, and Tokyo's Setagaya ward and the well-known summer resort of Karuizawa provide the picturesque backdrop for this story of the breakdown of Japan's prewar middle class.

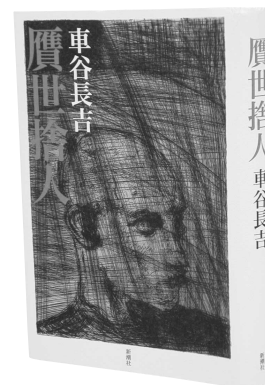


Cover design: Horiguchi Toyota

The novel is distinguished by a three-faceted structure that makes the reader feel closer to the characters. The story of Tarō's eventful life is told to a young editor by a maid who had worked in Yōko's home and had known the two since they were children; the young editor, in turn, retells it to the narrator, who had known Tarō when the protagonist was working at his father's company. With beautiful monochrome photographs of the four seasons in Karuizawa, this work experiments with touches that give the reader the illusion that it is a true story.

**Nise yosutebito [Pseudo-Recluse]. Kurumatani Chōkitsū. Shinchōsha, 2002. 196 × 132 mm. 244 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 4-10-388406-1.**

This is an autobiographical novel by an author who won in 1998 the prestigious Naoki Prize for promising writers of popular fiction. At age fifteen the protagonist faced his first setback in life, failing to pass the entrance exams to the best high school in his prefecture and ending up entering the worst one. At twenty-five he read the works of twelfth-century itinerant poet and Buddhist priest Saigyō and considered becoming a priest, but did not act on the idea, instead entering the employ of an advertising company. After he turned down a company transfer to work in New York, he found himself put off the promotional track, and eventually quit.



During the tumultuous period in Japan symbolized by the first oil crisis and the flamboyant suicide of writer Mishima Yukio, the protagonist becomes a kind of social dropout, working at various jobs including magazine editor, garbage collector, and helper at a *kappo*-style restaurant while aspiring to be a novelist. He is a slowpoke who cannot seem to do anything well, but seems incapable of withdrawing completely from society either. Only one thing sustains him: his passion for writing fiction. Often on the verge of losing even that passion and frequently suffering the admonitions of magazine editors, he doggedly goes on writing until finally his talent is recognized.

This is a vividly detailed story of the life of an aspiring young writer in the “I”-novel tradition. Often self-deprecating, the story fully reveals the author's private life and thinking, keeping the reader absorbed to the final page.

## Events and Trends

### Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes

The winners of the 129th Akutagawa and Naoki prizes, Japan's best-known literary prizes, were announced on July 17. The Akutagawa Prize, intended mainly for works of pure literature, went to Yoshimura Man'ichi, 42, for "Hariganemushi" [Horsehair Worms] (*Bungakukai*, May 2003 issue). The Naoki Prize, mainly for works of entertainment (popular) fiction, was awarded to Ishida Ira, 43, for *4TEEN Fōtin* [Fourteen] (Shinchōsha) and Murayama Yuka, 39, for *Hoshiboshi no fune* [Voyage Through Stars] (Bungei Shunjū).

Yoshimura, winner of the Akutagawa Prize, is a teacher at a special education school. In 2001 he won the Bungakukai New Writers Award for *Kuchukuchu bān* [Tickle Tickle Bang]. As the unmarried high school teacher protagonist of "Hariganemushi" begins associating with a woman working in the sex trade, the violence he has suppressed within himself begins to appear in his behavior. Parasites of such insects as praying mantises, horsehair worms are symbolic of impulses lurking in the depths of a person's heart. "For me, the violence that is everywhere in society today is an important theme," said Yoshimura at the awards press interview.

Ishida, the winner of the Naoki Prize, had worked as a copywriter among other jobs before he won the All-Yomimono New Mystery Writers Award in 1997 for *Ikebukuro uesuto gēto pāku* [Ikebukuro West Gate Park]. *4TEEN* is a collection of serial short stories, all set in Tsukishima, an old quarter of the bayside area of Tokyo where today high-rise condominiums have sprouted up within the historic townscape. It depicts one year in the lives of four fourteen-year-old junior high school students who live there and how they grow up, taking up such themes as their curiosity about sex, the encounter with death, teenage prostitution, anorexia, adultery, and ter-

minal cancer. Ishida says, "Despite the recent string of violent crimes committed by teenagers, I think we should believe in the young people around us."

The other Naoki Prize winner, Murayama was an office worker, a cram-school teacher, and a cable broadcasting announcer, among other jobs, before she established herself as a writer. In 1993 she won the Shōsetsu Subaru New Writers Award for *Tenshi no tamago* [Novice Angel]. Her other major works include *Tsubasa* [Wings] and *Ao no ferumāta* [Blue Fermata]. The Naoki Prize-winning work is a collection of serial short stories dealing with familial ties. It portrays a family plagued with difficulties such as what happens when brother and sister fall in love, discord between husband and wife, bullying, and the psychological scars of World War II. Murayama expressed her pleasure about the prize because "I have packed everything I wanted to say into this story."

### Woman's Portrait on Yen Note

The Japanese government and the Bank of Japan have announced their plan to change the designs of 1,000, 5,000, and 10,000 yen notes to be issued in fiscal 2004. The new 5,000 yen note will carry the portrait of Higuchi Ichiyō (1872–96), a woman writer of the Meiji era best known for her *Takekurabe* (*Growing Up*) and *Nigorie* (*Muddy Bay*). She will be the first woman to be featured on a yen note since the end of World War II.

Bacteriologist Noguchi Hideyo (1876–1928) will replace writer Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), known for the novels *Wagahai wa nekode aru* (*I Am a Cat*) and *Kokoro* (*Kokoro*), on the 1,000 yen note. The design of the highest-valued 10,000 yen note will be changed, but continue to bear the likeness of Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), prominent intellectual leader and educator of Japan's modernizing era.

### Okazaki Kyōko Manga

Three new titles by popular manga artist Okazaki Kyōko were published this spring. Their appearance drew

attention in the media as the first titles by her to appear in seven years. At the height of her career, Okazaki had been forced into a long convalescence in May 1996 after being hit by a drunk driver. The three titles are publications in book form of works previously serialized in magazines, but were eagerly greeted by Okazaki fans, and all three are selling very well and receiving extensive attention in reviews.

The three titles are: *Herutā-sukerutā* [Helter-skelter] (Shōden-sha), *Utakata no hibi* [Foam of the Days] (Takarajimasha), and *Koi towa dō iu mono kashira?* [What Is Love Like?] (Magazine House). Published serially in the women's manga magazine *Feel Young* from 1995 to the following year, *Herutāsukerutā* is the last serial work Okazaki produced before the tragic accident. Portraying the eventful life of heroine Ririko, a woman who is transformed into a stunning beauty after a series of cosmetic surgery operations and becomes a super idol, the story was ahead of its time, and many longed to see it published as a book. It has been praised as ranking with her previous work *Ribāzu eiji* [River's Edge], which created a sensation when it was published in 2000. *Utakata no hibi* is a manga version of French writer Boris Vian's (1920–59) story *L'Écume des jours*. It was originally published in serial form in the manga magazine *CUTiE*, 1994–95. *Koi to wa dō iu mono kashira?* consists of short manga stories that appeared in various magazines over a ten-year period.

Okazaki's manga go beyond the conventional category of girls' comics. As is evident in her major works *River's Edge* and *PINK*, she deals with such topics as the consumption impulse and breakdown of the family, and her stories take up the abnormal urges that lurk within a person who looks normal on the surface. Her rather provocative depiction of sex has drawn attention, but her abundant knowledge of literature, films, and music is everywhere throughout her works. Among her fans are many writers and literary critics, and since her work was suspended, the names of well-known commentators have been found among the contributors to the

numerous critical works coming out about her work.

Through the recent publication of the three books she has acquired an additional readership among young people. After the accident she could not move from her bed for some time, but she is now undergoing rehabilitation and has recovered to the point that, according to those in charge of publication of her books, she was able to proofread the galleys. The inscription at the end of *Helter-skelter* is "To be continued" rather than "The End," implying that she may make a comeback.

## Textbook Boom

Sections titled "textbooks" have recently been set up at bookstores these days, but the volumes on sale are not those used in the schools but rather targeted at people unsatisfied with regular school textbooks, which are compiled in line with the official education ministry guidelines.

One trend in the boom is production of textbooks by science-related researchers and teachers who feel a sense of crisis over the substantial reduction in the content of schooling at the junior high school level in the new education ministry guidelines. One example is the Atarashii Kagaku no Kyōkasho [New Science Textbooks] series (Bun'ichi Sōgō Shuppan), written jointly by some two hundred teachers and university professors in reaction to a 30 percent decrease in the number of the items taught in junior high school science classes. Another is the Manabintai Hito no Sūgaku [Mathematics for Those Who Want to Learn] series (NTT Shuppan), written by Keio University professor Tose Nobuyuki. Taking the school textbooks of the 1960s, which he considers the richest in content of past textbooks, as his

model, Tose's texts are written in an easy-to-understand style that speaks directly to the reader.

Another trend is production of textbooks that move away from conventional school textbooks and are intended to provide practical knowledge and information of use in the real world. The Yononaka Kyōkasho [Real-world Textbooks] series (Shinchōsha), sold under the catchphrase "textbooks that make us want to learn," is one example. Targeted at junior high school students and older people, volumes for Japanese-language, mathematics, and English have come out. In the Japanese-language volume, for instance, writer Shigematsu Kiyoshi (see "In Their Own Words," this issue of JBN), Naoki Prize winner and author of *Bitamin F* [Vitamin F] and *Naifu* [Knife], write on expression and thought in contemporary language, and writer Hashimoto Osamu, author of *Momojiri musume* [Momojiri Girls] and *Momojiri-go yaku Makura-no-sōshi* [The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon in Momojiri-Slang Translation] writes about classical Japanese. The series originates with Fujihara Kazuhiro, whose publication of *Jinsei no kyōkasho: Yononaka* [Textbook for Our Lives: The Real World] and *Jinsei no kyōkasho: Rūru* [Textbook for Our Lives: Rules] made news in 1998.

## New Translations of Salinger

A "new translation" boom is unfolding in the realm of literature. Just a few years ago, a new translation of Goethe's *Faust* by German-literature scholar Ikeuchi Osamu made a stir, winning the 54th Mainichi Shinbun Publishing Prize in 2000. A number of new translations of modern classics have recently come out, including V. E. Frankl's

*Night and Fog*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. The new renderings attempt to breathe fresh life into great works of world literature through translations done with a new sensibility fitting the new era.

Among the new translations that have attracted greatest attention is that of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. Entitled *Kyatchā in za rai*, it is the work of novelist Murakami Haruki, who has become a popular author not only in Japan but the United States, Taiwan, Korea, and more recently in Russia. He is also translator of a number of works by other American novelists, such as Truman Capote and Raymond Carver. His translation of *The Catcher in the Rye* has been selling well immediately since it went on sale. The old translation of the same novel, *Raimugi-batake de tsukamaete*, by Nozaki Takashi, which was reputed for its quality, also began selling well, suggesting that many are interested in comparing the two versions.

At the same time, various books related to Salinger have appeared, including the Japanese translation of *Dream Catcher: A Memoir*, written by Salinger's daughter Margaret, and several reader guides to *The Catcher in the Rye*. Also published was *Hon'yaku yawa 2: Sarinjā senki* [Chats about Translation 2: A Record of Struggling with Salinger], a dialogue between Shibata Motoyuki (British and American literature scholar known for translations of works by such writers as Paul Auster) and Murakami concerning the latter's *The Catcher in the Rye* translation. It is a sequel to *Hon'yaku yawa* [Chats about Translation], also a dialogue between the two published in 2000.

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### Continued from page 7

The publishing industry is at a crossroads. With sales having fallen to the level of ten years ago, all publishers are seriously considering their options. One idea is to sell e-books on the Internet. A total of 16,000 titles went on sale by this method in 2001 and 2002. The upward trend has continued into 2003, causing a kind of e-book boom. And even as the number of titles available on the Internet increases, the volume of e-books actually purchased is still small. If a portable, high quality device for reading e-books

becomes available, the niche for this new book format may start to grow. For publishers, that day cannot come too soon.

Be that as it may, when it comes to whether the sluggish business of printed publications will ever really recover, it is difficult not to be pessimistic. The role JBN can play in introducing information on Japan's publishing culture to the world continues to be important ten years after its inauguration. (*Kiyota Yoshiaki is president of Shuppan News, Inc.*)

## Books That Open from the Back

Shigematsu Kiyoshi

I'm the last person who should presume to talk about translation. My English, I'm ashamed to admit, is appalling. I got tolerable marks in English exams at school, but when it comes to actually using the language for communicating, I am hopeless.

Perversely, in my irresponsible university student days, I acquired several foreign-language paperbacks. Not to actually read, but simply to adorn my bookshelf. They were image accessories, part of the look. I was your typical upcountry hick, not quite able to hide his fascination-cum-complex not just about English but foreign languages in general.

Naturally, I never read a single line of those paperbacks—Hemingway, Steinbeck and the like, I think they were—but I did like to leaf through them. The attraction was mostly physical: whereas Japanese books generally open from the right-hand cover, the Western-language paperbacks opened from the left-hand cover and read from left to right moving down the pages in horizontal lines. Everything was exactly the opposite of what I was used to; even the way my fingers thumbed the pages was exotically reversed. I felt like I was reading backward, last page first, end to beginning. It was an indescribably novel feeling, and whenever I was at loose ends I would sit around just flipping through the pages of these strange, backwards-opening books.

I was about twenty at the time. In those days I was enthralled by the new ways in which my eyes and fingers had to move to manipulate such texts. Now a mellow forty, I'm tempted to wax philosophical about my early encounters with foreign books.

Take this idea of the direction in which the narrative moves, for instance. Suppose you have a novel that opens on a peaceful, everyday life. Some calamity tears that life apart, and the last scene ends with despair. If you read the story backward from the last page, like watching an entire video in rewind mode, it would have a happy ending. On the other hand, if you did the same with a story about, say, unrequited love that is eventually fulfilled, the protagonist would start out happy and wind up miserably alone.

Not exactly high-powered literary theory, I know. But when I'm thinking about the kinds of stories I like to write, the possibility of reading in reverse and rediscovering the everyday humdrum that comes before the

main action, finding a "happy ending," as it were, gives me inspiration and courage.

I always write stories that are concerned with what constitutes happiness for ordinary people in our time. What I mean by "happiness" is nothing particularly lofty or grand, but the humblest, garden-variety sort of happiness, the little, everyday moments that could hardly be called "bliss" but that nonetheless seem to make life worth living.

We tend to overlook those moments when they are actually happening; they get buried among the countless events we take for granted in daily life. It is only long after they occur that we finally look back and realize that we were indeed happy at those times. But of course the flow of time cannot be reversed.

I'm often described as a "novelist of everyday life." I seem to be known as a writer who never tires of portraying the little incidents that disturb the calm surface of ordinary life and the little solutions by which they are resolved (and, apparently without giving the reader much satisfaction).

That conclusion may be right, but whenever I hear myself described that way, I inwardly object. *My work, goes my silent protest, describes moments of happiness that I consider very important. Try reading one of my books in reverse from the last page and what you'll see, emerging in quietly bright tones, is a story with a happy ending.*

The first translation of any of my novels is almost finished and will soon be published in South Korea. Whereas my English is merely atrocious, of Korean I haven't even the faintest clue. If I'm not mistaken, however, books in the Korean language open from the left-hand cover. I'm looking forward to "reading" this new publication of mine in left-to-right mode—unlike any of previous translation—my fingers turning the pages in unfamiliar directions, my eyes gliding over my own story laid out in an alien script.

I will be much gratified if the scenes of simple, everyday life that I sketch in that work find common ground, in even a small way, with what people in other countries know in their own hearts as happiness.



Shigematsu Kiyoshi was born in Okayama prefecture in 1963. After graduating from Waseda University, he worked at a publishing company before he became a freelance writer. In 1991 he made his debut as a fiction writer with *Bifoa ran* [Before Run]. In 1999 he won the Tsubota Jōji Literary Prize for *Naifu* [Knife] and the Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize for *Eiji* [Eiji]. He was awarded the Naoki Prize in 2001 for *Bitamin F* [Vitamin F]. Other major works include *Ryūsei wagon* [Meteor Wagon] (Kōdansha, 2002), *Towairaito* [Twilight] (Bungei Shunjū, 2002), and *Shissō* [Sprint] (Kadokawa Shoten, 2003). Under nearly twenty pennames, including Tamura Akira, Shigematsu also novelizes TV dramas and movies as well as rewrites weekly magazine articles.