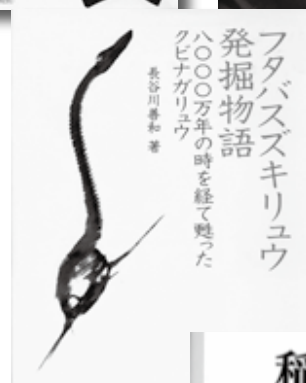


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国際交流基金

The *Kanikōsen* Boom and the New Poor

Yuri Sachiko

One of the hottest topics in the Japanese publishing world in the first half of this year was the surprising surge in popularity of Kobayashi Takiji's *Kanikōsen* [trans. *The Factory Ship*], a 79-year-old novel that has strongly resonated with young people. A classic piece of proletarian literature, *Kanikōsen* is a story about crab-canning ship workers who rise up against their horrendous working conditions and violently oppressive overseer.

Although the novel was seen as outdated during Japan's years as a booming economic powerhouse, it experienced a stunning revival last May, becoming a bestseller that continues to ride its wave of popularity. Previously, the most common edition, a pocket-sized copy published by Shinchōsha, was reprinted at a rate of about 5,000 copies per year, but that number soared to around 500,000 in just the first half of 2008. There is also brisk demand for readings of the book on CD, other works by Kobayashi and the writings of other proletarian authors, such as Hayama Yoshiki (noted for the novel *Umi ni ikuru hitobito* [Men Who Live on the Sea]).

Behind the meteoric reappearance of *Kanikōsen* is a widening gap between rich and poor that emerged as labor conditions in Japan deteriorated with the economic slowdown of the 1990s. The burgeoning disparities have particularly affected those in the 25-to-35 age bracket, whose entry into the workforce took place during what has been dubbed an "employment ice age." A large percentage of this cohort has lacked the opportunity to become permanent employees, and has instead become working poor—people who hold full-time jobs but do not earn enough to stay afloat—or have become stuck in unstable temporary jobs. As such, the people in these positions find that they can readily identify with the oppressed characters in *Kanikōsen*.

This connection was picked up by the magazine *Rosujene* [Lost Generation], which is specifically targeted at the employment opportunity-deprived generation. It declared in its inaugural issue, "We're still working on a crab-canning ship."

Let's take a closer look at *Kanikōsen*, a story that opens with the ominous line, "We're on our way to hell, mate!" The action takes place aboard a ship sailing out of Otaru, Hokkaido that catches and cans crabs. Like other cannery boats, it serves as a floating factory, so it is not subject to the strict regulations applied to passenger ships. The cannery ships are given only cosmetic repairs during their service, and thus have become "ancient ships that had been heaven knew where for twenty years and were now fit only for a watery grave."

The workers toil both day and night without receiving adequate food. No compensation is paid to the families of those who die from overexertion and malnutrition. A superintendent named Asakawa rules over the workers with an iron fist, using violence whenever he sees fit. No longer able to tolerate the cruel conditions, a number of workers band together and go on strike to bargain with Asakawa.

Their resistance seems doomed when the strike leaders are hauled off the ship by the crew of an Imperial Japanese Navy destroyer. However, the remaining workers carry out another resistance movement that ends in success. Asakawa, fired by the company without receiving a cent, bellows, "Damn them! They had me fooled all the time!" Kobayashi closes the novel by noting that the workers "made their way into various sectors of labor" to launch other labor movements.

Kobayashi penned this story at the age of 26. When he was a child, his family moved to Otaru from Akita Prefecture with assistance from an uncle who ran a successful bread factory in that town. Kobayashi attended Otaru Higher Commercial School with support from his uncle, and went on to work for a local bank.

A massive government crackdown on labor movements in 1928 inspired Kobayashi to write the story "*Senkyūhyaku-nijū-hachi-nen san-gatsu jūgo-nichi*" [trans. *March 15, 1928*], which depicted the brutal torture inflicted on dissidents by the Special Higher Police. After following up with *Kanikōsen* and other writings, he was fired from his bank job. He subsequently became a member of the Japanese Communist Party, which was an illegal organization at that time. In February 1933, he was arrested in Tokyo and tortured to death the same day. He was 29.

Japan's proletarian literature was originally a broad genre of socialist writings, but became closely associated with communism around the time Kobayashi composed his works. For this reason, it was treated as literature of the past until recently.

The revival of *Kanikōsen* was foreshadowed early last year by the stir created by a magazine article titled "*Kibō wa sensō*" [The Only Hope in This Society is War]. The



Kanikōsen
[trans. *The Factory Ship*]

author, a 31-year-old underemployed man who perceives his situation in life as growing bleaker with age, expresses his anger with Japan's status quo by welcoming war as a force that can reverse the disparities of society. Last year also saw the coining of *netto kafe nanmin* [Internet café refugees] as a term to describe young homeless people who spend the night in 24-hour Internet cafés.

There were also labor-related issues that captured the public's attention last year, such as illegal employment practices used by temporary staffing agencies and a trial concerning the treatment of *Nabakari kanrishoku*—supervisors who are not paid overtime wages on the grounds that they are members of the company's management, even though their meager compensation and authority suggest otherwise.

Prior to these developments, the problem of unstable working patterns tended to be blamed on a lack of personal responsibility among the younger generation. Now, however, young adults are re-interpreting their situation as a problem rooted in the structure of society, and are beginning to assert their rights to certain standards of living and labor.

A glimpse of this generation's reaction to *Kanikōsen* was provided by the submissions to an essay contest that commemorated the 75th anniversary of Kobayashi's death. Co-organized by Kobayashi's alma mater, now named the Otaru University of Commerce, and the Shirakaba Literary Museum's Takiji Library in Abiko, Chiba Prefecture, the competition called on young adults (up to age 25) to share their impressions of *Kanikōsen*.

The winner of the grand prize was a 25-year-old woman residing in Tokyo. She wrote about the plight of her female friends who were encouraged to take up a diverse working pattern that included temporary and part-time positions. Instead of finding a world of exciting employment, the women encountered miserable working conditions exacerbated by sexual harassment. The resulting stress drove some of them to take a leave of absence, or even to engage in self-mutilation (wrist-cutting). In some cases, the friends lost their homes as well. The essay writer also said that workers during the time of *Kanikōsen* were better off than her generation, because they were able to put up organized resistance. "Today," she lamented, "an unseen force is killing off the young workers, one by one."

The other winners in the contest also found that, despite certain contrasts, modern life shared various parallels with life as depicted in *Kanikōsen*. One of them made the observation that today's *Nabakari kanrishoku* mirrored the image of Asakawa, who was caught between the company and the workers.

The parallels are also seen by the writers Amamiya Karin and Takahashi Gen'ichirō, both of whom are involved in issues concerning young impoverished workers. Speaking at a public forum, the two agreed that such workers were caught in circumstances much like those portrayed in *Kanikōsen*, and that the novel has struck a chord with college students.

Such public comments about *Kanikōsen* were spread

via the Internet and other channels, sparking the surge in the book's popularity and, to a certain extent, an interest in reassessing Marxism. At the same time, *Kanikōsen* has also been rediscovered for its literary merits.

Using a ship as a microcosm for the institutions of society, Kobayashi created a powerful narrative of violent control and exploitation of workers and of their united resistance. His vivid descriptions of the characters, such as the origins and physical features of the strike leaders, makes the novel a full-fledged drama of the masses. Consequently, despite the complexities of modern life, it is easy for modern readers to discern a *Kanikōsen*-esque structure in today's society.

Kobayashi also used his astute insight into human affairs to probe the problems of movement leaders. For example, he chose to write about how some of the ship's fishermen used the odd-job boys for sexual relief. Such attention to the contradictions in human behavior gives the novel a dynamic quality.

Kanikōsen could not have touched the hearts of young adults 79 years after its writing if it were a tedious old tale. And, perhaps today's society is producing other novels with such a timeless feel. The resurgence of *Kanikōsen* is prompting literary critics and scholars to ponder these topics.

Will the *Kanikōsen* revival end as a short-lived boom? Given the financial turmoil that has gripped the world in recent months, it is still too early to tell whether the tide of social, political, and cultural forces will keep this phenomenon alive.

Note: Quotations from *Kanikōsen* were taken from the English edition published by the University of Tokyo Press.



"THE FACTORY SHIP" and "THE ABSENTEE LANDLORD"
by Kobayashi Takiji, University of Tokyo Press



Yuri Sachiko

Born in 1947. Graduated from Osaka University. Arts journalist who has covered the arts and cultural scene for the Asahi Shimbun for nearly 30 years. Author of a book on the writer Kōda Aya.

FICTION



Hirano Keiichirō

Born in 1975. Graduated from the Faculty of Law at Kyoto University. Won the Akutagawa Prize in 1999 for *Nisshoku* [The Eclipse], a work he contributed to the literary magazine *Shinchō* while a student. After crafting *Ichigetsu monogatari* [Tale of the First Moon], *Sōsō* [Farewell to the Departed] and other full-length novels set in the distant past, he switched to writing novels in modern-day settings. Other works include *Takasegawa* [Takase River] and *Shitatarichiru tokei-tachi no hamon* [The Ripples of Dripping Clocks] (See JBN No. 43).

Kekkai **[Dam Break]** By Hirano Keiichirō

Vol. I: Shinchōsha, 2008. 192 x 136 mm. ¥1,800. 382 pp. ISBN 978-4-10-426007-2.

Vol. II: Shinchōsha, 2008. 192 x 136 mm. ¥1,800. 402 pp. ISBN 987-4-10-426008-9.

Hirano Keiichirō, one of the premier young writers of modern Japanese literature, made a sensational debut ten years ago with *Nisshoku* [The Eclipse], a novel set in medieval France. In the ensuing years, he followed up with the epic-length *Sōsō* [Farewell to the Departed]—which fictionally depicts such historic personages as Eugène Delacroix and Frédéric Chopin in 19th century France—and with other thoroughly intellectual novels completely dissociated from the reality of today's Japan.

In *Kekkai*, however, Hirano switches gears to take a good look at the festering underbelly of modern Japanese society. Set in the fall of 2002, the tale gives an account of the gruesome discoveries of a severed human head, hands, feet, and

other body parts, first in Kyoto and then other locations across Japan. Next to the head is found a defiant note from the killer, who signs the message “Akuma” [the Devil]. The story underscores the violence rampant in modern society, as well as the dark side of humans that has been unleashed by the Internet. Accordingly, the title serves as a warning that modern society is in danger of committing a fatal error that will cause the dam to burst.

On the whole, the narrative evokes the prophetic vision used by Fyodor Dostoevsky to probe human crime and punishment. However, there is no God in *Kekkai*; instead, it is a story of crime in a godless age. (NM)

Kamome no hi **[The Day of the Seagull]** By Kurokawa Sō

Shinchōsha, 2008. 194 x 140 mm. 219 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-10-444403-8.

A portrait of human relationships in modern city life, this novel takes its title from “Chaika” [Seagull], the call sign of Valentina Tereshkova, the cosmonaut who became the first woman in space when she flew aboard the *Vostok 6* in June 1963 at the age of 26. In her communication with ground control, Tereshkova repeatedly exclaimed, “This is Seagull. Everything is fine!” As such, the title evokes an image of the link between space and the earth.

Tereshkova’s message echoed the line “Ya Chaika” (“I am a seagull”) that is repeated by the young girl Nina in Anton Chekhov’s play *Chaika* [trans. *The Seagull*]. Nina’s utterance is a soft cry that emerges as she frantically tries to restore the bonds between herself and those

around her.

Set on May 12, 2006, this novel likewise highlights the ties between various people, presenting snapshots of their lives as they wander in and out of an FM radio station on the 35th floor of a high-rise in Tokyo’s Roppongi district. The cast includes a mysterious girl named Eri, and a pudgy young man, Hide, who constantly frets about her. Their relationship with each other and with the radio station is kept secret until near the end of the story. Through this and other storylines, the author depicts the interconnections between people in modern urban life. (MK)



Kurokawa Sō

Born in 1961. Graduated from the Faculty of Letters, Doshisha University. In 2001, his novel *Modoroki* [Modoroki] was nominated for the Akutagawa Prize and the Mishima Yukio Prize. Also received an Akutagawa Prize nomination for *Ikarosu no mori* [Icarus' Forest] in 2002, and a Mishima Yukio Prize nomination for *Akarui yoru* [Bright Night] in 2005. Other works include the novels *Jakuchū no me* [Jakuchū's Eyes] and *IWO JIMA* [Iwo Jima], and the critical essays *Kokkyō* [Borders] and *Riaritī kābu* [Reality Curve] (See JBN No.10).



Kawakami Hiromi

Born in 1958. Graduated from Ochanomizu University's Faculty of Science. Previously taught biology at junior and senior high schools. Won the Akutagawa Prize in 1996 for *Hebi o fumu* [*Tread on a Snake*] (See JBN No.18). Her best-selling *Sensei no kaban* [*Teacher's Briefcase*] (See JBN No.37) garnered the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize in 2001, and her *Manazuru* [*Manazuru*] (See JBN No.52) received the Minister of Education's Arts Encouragement Prize in 2007. Member of the Akutagawa Prize selection committee since summer 2007.

Kazahana [Whirling Snowflakes]

By Kawakami Hiromi

Shūeisha, 2008. 190 x 138 mm. 285 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-08-771207-0.

Kawakami Hiromi, one of the most popular female writers in Japan, strikes out in a new direction with this tale of a 33-year-old woman named Noyuri. One day, Noyuri is tipped off by an anonymous phone call that Takuya, her husband of seven years, is having an affair. She meets with Takuya's lover, Satomi, to discuss the situation, but her vacillating personality prevents her from taking action. Noyuri then turns to a trusted uncle for advice, asking him whether she should get a divorce. But leaving Takuya, whom she still loves, is too painful, so she remains married to him, if only on paper.

Kawakami entices the reader to question what is really going in Noyuri's mind, and in the mind of the self-centered

Takuya, who initially seeks a divorce but ultimately reverses course. Their relationship continues in a delicate balance, without ever reaching a dramatic resolution. This limbo is deftly symbolized by the titular image of *kazahana*—the whirling snowflakes that Noyuri sees outside during a winter visit to a spa. The novel is pervaded with a sense of being stuck between joy and sadness, like wind-driven snowflakes that neither settle on the ground nor sail upward in the sky. Kawakami once again demonstrates her prowess with language in her exquisite portrayal of the ambivalent relationship between Noyuri and Takuya, the rhythm of their conversations, and their emotions.

(NM)

Tokyo-jima [Tokyo Island]

By Kirino Natsuo

Shinchōsha, 2008. 194 x 132 mm. 281 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-10-466702-4.

Set on a deserted island located somewhere between Taiwan and the Philippines, Kirino Natsuo's latest novel, winner of the 44th Tanizaki Prize, describes the conflict for survival between people who are marooned there for different reasons. More than thirty Japanese and Chinese men end up on the island along with just one woman, a Japanese, who assumes a queen-like role. Conflict emerges as the inhabitants become dominated by the primitive passions of human existence—lust, hunger, and the desire for power. This situation is clearly based on a shocking real-life incident that took place during World War II on the Island of Anatahan in the Northern Marianas, but in literary terms the novel is in the same vein as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Lord of the Flies*.

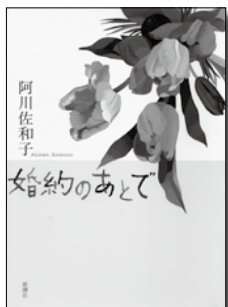
Kirino's narratives bring the characters' personalities into sharp relief, and in this work she reveals how raw human nature is exposed when modern people are subjected to the primitive conditions of a deserted island. In addition, the novel dishes up harsh criticism of civilization by depicting the island as the reverse image of today's Tokyo.

Another interesting aspect of this work is that it encapsulates the mysterious allure of islands—surrounded by water, they emanate a sense of both forsaken isolation and utopian delight. (NM)



Kirino Natsuo

Born in 1951. Made full-fledged debut as a novelist with *Kao ni furikakaru ame* [*Rain Falling on My Face*], which won the Edogawa Ranpo Prize in 1993. Has earned many other awards, including the Mystery Writers of Japan Award in 1998 for *OUT* [trans. Out] (See JBN No.21), the Naoki Prize in 1999 for *Yawarakana hoho* [*Soft Cheeks*] (See JBN No.28), and the Izumi Kyōka Literary Award in 2003 for *Gurotesuku* [trans. Grotesque]. A social novelist as much as a mystery writer.



Agawa Sawako

Born in 1953. After graduating from Keio University and working as a TV newscaster, lived in the United States. Following her return to Japan, has been active as an essayist, novelist, interviewer, and TV hostess. In 1999, won the Kōdansha Essay Award for *Ā ieba kō kū* [If You Say That, I'll Eat This Way], co-written with Dan Fumi, and the Tsubota Jōji Prize for Literature for *Umeko* [Umeko]. Has penned other books, including *Sūpu* opera [Soup Opera].

Kon'yaku no atode **[After Getting Engaged]** By Agawa Sawako

Shinchōsha, 2008. 194 x 142 mm. 325 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-10-465503-8.

Already highly acclaimed for her skills as a TV hostess and essayist, Agawa Sawako demonstrates with this book that she also has a flair for writing novels.

Brilliantly crafted into omnibus form, this novel repeatedly shifts the narrative's perspective, elevating minor characters to the role of the protagonist. Through this technique, Agawa puts the spotlight on each protagonist's romantic pursuits as she sketches the love lives of the characters, resulting in a riveting, profound examination of how romance shapes the way that people think and interact.

In addition to vividly portraying the joy and excitement of love, Agawa also brings into sharp focus the negative side as well—jealousy and betrayal. Although this gives the novel a slightly bitter un-

dertone, it does not leave the reader with an unpleasant aftertaste. Instead, it serves as a reminder that such harsh emotions and experiences are an integral part of human life, just like the bitterness and astringency found in the complex flavor of a truly satisfying bottle of wine. As such, this superlative tale of romance is bound to make any reader feel that love is wonderful thing. (MT)

ESSAY

Sōka mō kimi wa inainoka **[Oh, You're Not Here Anymore]**

By Shiroyama Saburō

Shinchōsha, 2008. 174 x 120 mm. 156 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 978-4-10-310817-7.

In March 2007, writer Shiroyama Saburō passed away, leaving behind this tender memoir of life with his wife Yōko, who had died seven years earlier. Following her death, Shiroyama seemed to have lost his will to live. Despite his apparent despair, however, he evidently wanted to at least leave behind an account of his time with Yōko, from their first encounter to her death.

The two met by chance in the early spring of 1951. Shiroyama recounts, "I felt as if a fairy had fallen from the sky," an unexpectedly romantic description from a writer whose previous works always portrayed a resolute, masculine lifestyle. Yet it seems that Yōko was a woman whose smile could have such an uplifting effect on those who saw it.

Fondly recalling this and other pleasant memories of life with Yōko was probably how Shiroyama spent his days following her death.

The book includes "Tsuma" (Wife), a poem by Shiroyama that contains this description of Yōko breathing like clockwork as she slept:

"*Oi**," I started to say.

But I stopped.

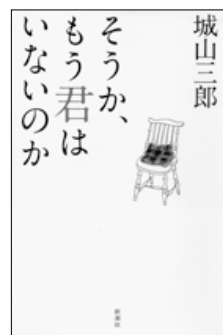
Of five billion people

You're the only one I can say "*Oi*" to.

And I couldn't stand it if the regular breathing of your slumber ended.

(MK)

**Oi* is an expression used by men to get the attention of a loved one, friend, or subordinate.



Shiroyama Saburō

Born in 1927. After graduating from Hitotsubashi University, taught Economics at Aichi Gakugei University. A pioneer of the Japanese business novel, he won the Bungakukai New Writers Award for *Yushutsu* [Exports] in 1957, and the Naoki Prize for *Sōkaiya Kinjō* [Kinjo the Corporate Racketeer] in 1959. His diverse writings have drawn a broad audience, and include *Rakujitsu moyu* [The Setting Sun Blazes], which won the Yoshikawa Eiji Literary Award and the Mainichi Publishing Culture Award. Died in March 2007.



Sano Yōko

Born in 1938. Picture book author and essayist. Graduated from Musashino Art University Junior College of Art and Design. Studied lithography at the Berlin University of the Arts. After returning to Japan, made debut as picture book creator. Among her leading works are *Hyakuman-kai ikita neko* [Trans. *The Cat That Lived a Million Times*] and *Watashi no bōshi* [My Hat] (winner of the *Kōdansha Publishing Culture Award*). Received the Ministry of Education's Medal with a Purple Ribbon in 2003.

Shizuko-san [Shizuko]

By Sano Yōko

Shinchōsha, 2008. 192 x 138 mm. 238 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-10-306841-9.

Sano has long been revered for the picture books she has created, including *Hyakuman-kai ikita neko* [Trans. *The Cat That Lived a Million Times*], which has delighted children and adults around the world for more than 30 years. Featuring eye-catching illustrations, her picture books explore topics fundamental to human existence—namely, the meaning of life, love and sadness.

In recent years, Sano has also composed various essays in which she ponders the important things in life through depictions of everyday happenings written in plain language. This book is one such essay.

Sano recounts how she, already past the age of 60 herself, had to begin looking after her senile mother. She candidly reports the day-to-day occurrences of

that experience, as well as the thoughts that arose from them. Sano had not gotten along well with her mother ever since her childhood days. While tracing the memories of their love-hate relationship, Sano looks back on the type of person her mother was. She also reveals how dealing with her mother's senility finally gave her a sense of their having made peace. This honest essay is a stunning personal record of human existence. (MT)

Shutsu-furusato-ki [A Record of Leaving Home]

By Ikeuchi Osamu

Shinchōsha, 2008. 194 x 136 mm. 219 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-10-375505-0.

As a scholar of German literature, Ikeuchi Osamu has introduced German-language prose and poetry to the Japanese public for decades. In recent years, he has earned strong praise for his exquisite Japanese renderings of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*, *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, and the works of Franz Kafka.

Ikeuchi is also an astute reader of Japanese literature who critiques works from a fresh perspective. He has greatly contributed to the reappraisal of not only Japan's celebrated writers but also its obscure yet distinctive "minor poets."

In this book, Ikeuchi introduces the reader to the lives of such lesser-name authors and poets, including those who died young, who were little read during their lifetimes or whose works were held

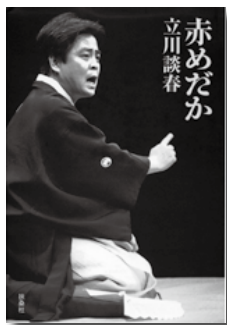
in low regard because of their personal reputations. By framing the writers in the context of their relationships with the places where they grew up, Ikeuchi is able to vibrantly portray what makes each of them tick.

Leaving home, wandering, running away, dropping out, disappearing. For writers and poets, their hometowns are not places to return to, but places to leave. By doing so, the unknown make names for themselves. This book is a collection of masterful portraits that highlight a distinctive element of Japanese literature—the relationship between writers and their hometowns. (MT)



Ikeuchi Osamu

Born in 1940. Scholar of German literature and creator of fresh Japanese translations of Kafka and Goethe. Writes on a vast array of subjects, including Germanic culture, nature, biographies, entertainment, and Kabuki. Books include *Umi-yama no aida* [Between the Mountains and the Sea] (winner of the *Kōdansha Essay Award*) and *Niretsu-me no jinsei, kakureta isai-tachi* [Back-seat Lives: Hidden Talents].



Tatekawa Danshun

Born in 1966. Rakugo performer. In 1984, became an apprentice to rakugo virtuoso Tatekawa Danshi at the age of 17. Promoted in 1997 to the rank of shin'uchi (master storyteller). Has received many accolades, including the Hayashiya Hikoroku Prize and the Hanagata Engeikai Prize. Created a sensation in 2006 with "Danshun Shichiya," a series of solo rakugo performances held for seven consecutive nights in Tokyo.

Akamedaka [Orange Killifish] By Tatekawa Danshun

Fusōsha, 2008. 190 x 136 mm. 283 pp. ¥1,333. ISBN 978-4-594-05615-5.

Rakugo, the traditional Japanese art of comedic storytelling that has entertained audiences since the Edo period (1603–1868), has recently experienced a surge in popularity among younger generations. The author of this nonfiction book, Tatekawa Danshun, is highly lauded as a bright young master of this art.

Danshun became an apprentice to the *rakugo* virtuoso Tatekawa Danshi at the age of 17. Told that his training would consist of "learning to endure contradictions," Danshun underwent a daunting but deeply enriching apprenticeship in which Danshi would scold him at times for impenetrable reasons, but would also unexpectedly show tenderness to him on other occasions. Although there are many accounts of life as an apprentice in the

performing arts, very few are written in such an entertaining style as this work, which adeptly captures in words the off-the-wall behavior unique to a consummate genius like Danshi. True to his profession as a storyteller, Danshun draws the reader into the narrative by creating a sense of being there. At the same time, he avoids fishing for laughs, yet manages to evoke chuckles from the reader with dispassionate depictions of his apprenticeship.

Filled with vivid descriptions of the eccentric world of *rakugo* performers, this book provides an excellent introduction to the way in which this delightful art is handed down to younger generations.

(MT)

HISTORY

Inasaku toraimin: "Nihonjin" seiritsu no nazo ni semaru [Rice-growing Migrants: Examining the Mystery of How "the Japanese People" Developed]

By Ikehashi Hiroshi

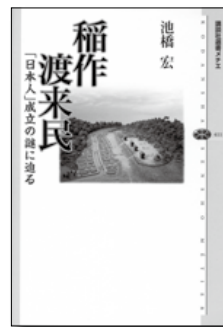
Kōdansha, 2008. 188 x 130 mm. 264 pp. ¥1,700. ISBN 978-4-06-258411-1.

The question of how rice cultivation originated impinges on numerous topics concerning prehistoric Japan, including the lineage and language of the Japanese. In an earlier work, *Inasaku no kigen* [The Origin of Rice Cultivation], the author rejected the established theories, arguing that domesticated rice evolved from the root crop culture of the lower Yangtze River basin. He stated that wet rice cultivation emerged when the region's early inhabitants began propagating perennial wild rice by selecting stalks growing among taro planted in ponds, and then dividing and replanting the roots.

Ikehashi has followed up that book with a new work that explores the origins of wet rice cultivation in Japan. Traditionally, research in this area has focused on how the Jōmon people absorbed the culture of rice

cultivation, without attempting to explain how a society of hunter-gatherers made the difficult leap to an agrarian lifestyle. However, Ikehashi holds that during China's Spring and Autumn period (770–476 B.C.) people possessing rice cultivation technology migrated to the Shandong Peninsula, and then to Japan via the southern Korean Peninsula. The places they settled had coves providing anchorage and had rivers flowing nearby, demonstrating that they specifically sought out locations suited for rice paddy construction, reasons Ikehashi.

Assembling evidence from the latest research in archaeology, ethnology, anthropology and linguistics, the author examines the mystery of the origin of rice farming in Japan with a multi-faceted approach, creating a gripping narrative that reads like a whodunit. (SH)



Ikehashi Hiroshi

Born in 1936. After graduating from Kyoto University, joined the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, where he worked on rice cultivar improvement. Specialist for the International Rice Research Institute. Taught at Chiba University and Kyoto University before becoming a professor at Nihon University's College of Bioresource Sciences. Also active in various roles overseas, including consulting for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.



Tsuji Nobuo

Born in 1932. Partially completed doctoral studies in Art History at the University of Tokyo. Previously served as a professor at the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Letters, Director of the Chiba City Museum of Art, and President of Tama Art University. Currently a professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo and Director of the Miho Museum. Also wrote Kisō no Edo sashie [The Fantastic World of Edo-period Book Illustrations] and Nihon bijutsu no rekishi [History of Japanese Art] (See JBN No.48).

Iwasa Matabē: Ukiyoe o tsukutta otoko no nazo **[Iwasa Matabe: The Riddle of the Man Who Conceived Ukiyo-e]**

By Tsuji Nobuo

Bungei Shunjū, 2008. 176 x 110 mm. ¥1,200. 254 pp. ISBN 978-4-16-660629-0.

Hishikawa Moronobu is said to be the originator of *ukiyo-e*, a broad genre of Japanese woodblock prints and paintings that flourished in the Edo period, but the author of this book contends that Iwasa Matabē should be given that honor.

Matabē was born to Araki Murashige, a noted feudal lord of the Warring States period (1482–1558), but soon afterwards his family's fortune declined and his mother was executed by the powerful warlord Oda Nobunaga. Residing in Kyoto, Fukui, and finally Edo (Tokyo), Matabē devoted his life to painting, developing a highly distinctive style unlike that of any of his peers. Some of his works were erotic or grotesque, reminiscent of today's manga.

Although Tsuji believed Matabē to be a brilliant artist, he initially thought

someone else created the so-called Funaki Screens, a revolutionary set of paintings that transformed the contemporary genre painting into *ukiyo-e*. However, Tsuji eventually became convinced that Matabē produced that opus during his Kyoto years and that he well deserved the title "Ukiyo-e Matabē." Hence, Tsuji argues that Matabē ushered in the early era of *ukiyo-e*, while Moronobu opened up the genre's latter era.

The book features color plates of the picture scroll "Yamanaka Tokiwa Monogatari Emaki" ([The Tale of Yamanaka Tokiwa]) and many other works by Matabē. Just thumbing through this visual smorgasbord is enough to mesmerize the reader with the genius of this artist. (MK)

Nihonjin no ai shita iro **[Colors Loved by the Japanese]**

By Yoshioka Sachio

Shinchōsha, 2008. 194 x 136 mm. 156 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 978-4-10-603597-5.

Japanese in the Edo period are said to have had some 2,700 names for different colors. This estimate isn't so far-fetched, considering that there were roughly 100 appellations for hues of red alone, which were based—as were the names of other colors—on things in the natural world, such as *taisha-iro* (deep brown) from the color of clay, *toki-iro* (Cupid pink) from the crested ibis, *hiwada-iro* (Van Dyke brown) from cypress bark, *suō-iro* (deep purplish red) from sappanwood, and *enji-iro* (purplish crimson) named for Mt. Yanzhi, a mountain in China surrounded by safflowers.

The author operates a dyeing studio where only dyes from plants and other natural sources are used. Influenced by his previous job editing art publications,

he seeks to faithfully recreate traditional dye colors by referring to old texts.

Modern Japanese writers often refer to the color gray as just *gurē*, a transliteration of the English word. However, the Japanese language has about 70 terms for various shades of gray, such as *sakuranezu* (pinkish gray), *ginnezu* (silvery gray), and *rikyūnezu* (greenish gray). There are also around 80 names for brown hues, such as *rokōcha* (yellow ochre) and *shirocha* (pinkish beige), and some of these hues have yet to be properly identified.

In addition to explaining the colors of the "Five Phases" of Taoism (blue, red, yellow, white and black), Yoshioka elucidates how one color not in the group—purple—came to be considered the supreme color in China and Japan. (MK)



Yoshioka Sachio

Born in 1946. Dyer. After graduating from Waseda University's School of Letters, Arts and Sciences I, founded the art book publishing firm Shikōsha. In 1988, became the fifth master of Sometsukasa Yoshioka, a dyeing studio in Kyoto in operation since the Edo period. Seeks to revive and preserve "Japanese colors" produced by traditional plant-based dyes. Has created artificial flowers, attire, and utensils for events at renowned temples. Other books include Nihon no iro o aruku [A Promenade through Japanese Colors].



Hiramatsu Tsuyoshi

Born in 1969. Nonfiction writer and architect. Graduated from the Department of Architecture in the Faculty of Science and Engineering at Waseda University. After earning a Master's degree from Waseda in 1994, worked for the Kimura Toshihiko Structural Design Office until 1998. Won the 32nd Ōya Sōichi Nonfiction Literature Prize in 2001 for his Hikari no kyōkai: Andō Tadao no genba [Church of the Light: Andō Tadao's Workplace].

***Isozaki Arata no "Tochō": Sengo Nihon saidai no konpe* [Isozaki Arata's "Metropolitan Government Building": The Biggest Competition in Postwar Japan]**

By Hiramatsu Tsuyoshi

Bungei Shunjū, 2008. 192 x 134 mm. ¥2,190. 476 pp. ISBN 978-4-16-370290-2.

In 1985, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government held a competition to solicit designs for a new building to house its offices, attracting submissions from the likes of Tange Kenzō, then regarded as the king of Japan's architectural world, and his former protégé Isozaki Arata. Their participation in the competition is recounted in this nonfiction work, mainly through the recollections of Isozaki and his apprentices.

Seeking to "win by blowing away the rivals," Tange worked on his design in a private room closed to all except those directly involved in the project. In contrast, Isozaki left the nuts and bolts of the design work to his underlings while he went on wanderings overseas. Isozaki was the only competitor to propose a low-

rise building, envisaging a design based on "open spaces" and "complexity" (a rhizome-like system). Hiramatsu uses his past experience as an architect to explain the relationships between the technical aspects and Isozaki's "philosophical" style, sometimes translating concepts in terms of well-known works of art, such as Kurosawa Akira's films and Murakami Haruki's novels.

Although the competition was won by Tange, Isozaki's playful proposal was used for a building that Tange created in his twilight years. Hiramatsu paints this as an ironic twist in which the master is the one who best appreciates the disciple. This is a fun book that makes entertainment out of architecture. (SH)

PHILOSOPHY

***Ika no tetsugaku* [The Philosophy of Squid]**

By Nakazawa Shin'ichi and Hatano Ichirō

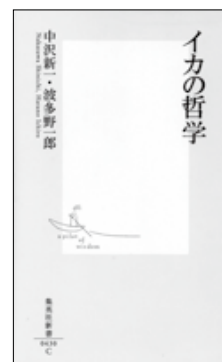
Shūeisha, 2008. 174 x 108 mm. 166 pp. ¥680. ISBN 978-4-08-720430-8.

The late philosopher Hatano Ichirō has been mostly forgotten in today's Japan, and this little known book, *Ika no tetsugaku* [The Philosophy of Squid], which he published at his own expense in 1965 is the only one he wrote. Seeking to create a vehicle for a re-examination of Hatano's ideology, anthropologist Nakazawa Shin'ichi re-compiled *Ika no tetsugaku* into a new book that includes, in a separate section, his own commentary.

During World War II, Hatano was assigned to a kamikaze unit, but the Soviet invasion of Manchuria saved him from having to fly his final mission. However, he was taken prisoner by the Soviets and interned for four years in Siberia, where he was forced to work in coal mines. After being repatriated, he moved to

the United States to study philosophy at Stanford University. While in California, he held a part-time job packing freshly caught squid in Monterey, an experience that viscerally impressed upon him the importance of being aware of the squids' existence. This spurred him to reason that the key to world peace was having people of different cultures and societies come into contact with each other.

Nakazawa's commentary provides an easy-to-follow account of Hatano's life and the unique philosophy of peace he conceived. Nakazawa eloquently stresses the significance of *Ika no tetsugaku* as an "ultra-pacifistic ideology" for the 21st century. (NM)

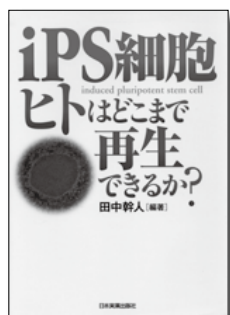


Nakazawa Shin'ichi

Born in 1950. Received a Master's degree from the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of the Humanities. An anthropologist who expresses and explores original concepts in diverse fields, including religion, philosophy, and art. Currently serves as Director and professor for Tama Art University's Institute for Art Anthropology.

Hatano Ichirō

Born in 1922. Philosopher. Interned in Siberia for four years following WWII. Earned a Master's degree in philosophy from Stanford University in 1954. Died in 1969.



Tanaka Mikihiro

Born in 1972. Instructor for the Master of Arts Program for Journalist Education in Science and Technology at the Graduate School of Political Science, Waseda University. Graduated from the Department of Science at International Christian University's College of Liberal Arts in 1997. Completed his doctorate at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 2002. Has been a science writer since college, and is currently involved in university research, application, and education concerning science and technology communication.

***Aipiesu saibō: Hito wa dokomade saisei dekiruka?* [iPS Cells: To What Extent Can Humans Be Regenerated?]**

Written and edited by Tanaka Mikihiro

Nihon Jitsugyō Shuppansha, 2008. 188 x 132 mm. 254 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-534-04384-9.

In November 2007, Prof. Yamanaka Shin'ya of Kyoto University successfully created human induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells. The news of this achievement, which represented a great stride forward in the development of regenerative medicine, drew a tremendous response from the international scientific community. Starting with the cloning of Dolly the sheep, this book traces the events that led up to that achievement and explains the technologies that made it possible. It is written in plain language and includes a variety of visual references and several interviews with Yamanaka and others involved in this field.

The advent of iPS cells has been widely hailed for having eliminated an ethical barrier to the advancement of regenerative medicine—the use of fertilized human

eggs. Tanaka describes the struggles that Yamanaka and his team faced before they successfully created cells with embryo stem cell-like differentiation capabilities. He also takes a look at inter-agency turf wars, the allocation of research funds, and the risk that the emergence of regenerative medicine will give rise to growing disparities in access to healthcare.

Yamanaka stresses that the members of Japan's scientific community need to work together to attain progress in regenerative medicine research. His entreaty stems from the frustration he felt at not being able to help just one rheumatoid arthritis patient during his days as an orthopedic surgeon—one example of how this book brings readers into touch with the true feelings that inspire scientists like Yamanaka. (SH)

***Futabasuzukiryū hakkutsu monogatari* [The Story of the Futabasaurus Excavation]**

By Hasegawa Yoshikazu

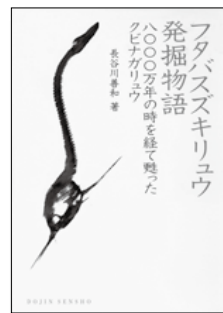
Kagaku Dōjin, 2008. 182 x 132 mm. 193 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-7598-1314-2.

In 1968, the National Museum of Nature and Science, Tokyo received a letter from a high school student in Fukushima Prefecture saying that he had collected several fossilized bones from a river. Hasegawa Yoshikazu and other scientists traveled to the site to conduct a full excavation, and eventually unearthed the remains of a plesiosaur. A "fossil boom" followed, and the dinosaur became popular with children after it was featured as "P-suke" in the animated film *Doraemon: Nobita no kyōryū* [trans. *Doraemon: Nobita's Dinosaur*]. The specimen was later classified as *Futabasaurus suzukii*, named for the Futaba strata that formed 80 million years ago and for the student who found the bones.

This book describes how Hasegawa and his colleagues excavated other fossilized bones, assembled them into skeletal form and in the spring of 2006 finally identified

the specimen as a new genus and species. At the time of the excavation, paleontologists were expected to pay for everything themselves, including the costs of travel, digging, fossil cleaning, and acquisition of scientific literature. The project's funds were eventually exhausted by a follow-up excavation and the effort to reconstruct the skeleton. Another major problem was a lack of the literature needed to make a scientific classification, as there had been few prior studies on the representative plesiosaur genus *Elasmosaurus*.

Nevertheless, the team's perseverance paid off with the identification of a new species. The life of Hasegawa, a man who has studied more than 15,000 fossils over the course of half a century, is in itself a portrait of the history of the Japanese fascination with dinosaurs. (SH)



Hasegawa Yoshikazu

Born in 1930. Holds a Ph.D. in Science. After working as researcher at the National Museum of Nature and Science, Tokyo and a professor at Yokohama National University's Faculty of Education and Human Sciences, took up current position as Director of the Gunma Museum of Natural History. His area of expertise is vertebrate paleontology. The more than 15,000 fossils he has excavated and gathered are known as the Hasegawa Collection, and have been displayed at museums.

“Seinen Manga” (manga for mature male readers)

Providing a historical overview of “Seinen manga” (*manga for mature male readers*) in Japan since 1990 is not an easy task. This is because, over this roughly twenty-year period, the changes in this genre have appeared to be gradual, especially when compared to boys and girls manga. That said, however, some degree of summarization is possible.

To begin with, in the early 1990s, seinen manga began attracting public attention because they incorporated themes that had been thought to be unconnected to manga narratives, such as politics and economics. Specific examples include such hit works as Hirokane Kenshi’s *Kachō Shima Kōsaku* [trans. *Division Chief Kosaku Shima*], which depicts a businessman working in a large corporation, and Kawaguchi Kaiji’s *Chinmoku no kantai* [The Silent Service], which portrays in spectacular fashion the adventures of a Japanese submarine, while pointing out issues relating to international politics. *Chinmoku no kantai* in particular is worth noting because it was brought up in questioning by a politician in the Diet. At the time, Ishihara Shintarō, a Japanese author, politician and the current governor of Tokyo, said he considered its stories to be “highly romantic and dangerous, and yet they raise issues that we can ill afford to ignore.” Ishihara’s take on the subject made “manga that are read by adult males” a hot topic of conversation.

Commercial publication of manga targeting mature male readers had been more or less established as a business in Japan by the 1970s. However, the public’s acceptance of “adults reading manga” did not really come until the early 1990s. For example, as far as I have been able to determine, the last magazine feature condemning this practice appeared in 1991 (“No Side,” *Bungei Shunjū*, August 1991). Historically, the background behind this change in attitudes was that the baby boomer generation had become the principal age cohort among manga readers. Manga artists, including Hirokane and Kawaguchi, also entered middle age at around the same time. And, there is the example of Prime Minister Asō Tarō, who—though he belongs to a slightly older generation—is known to be regular reader of manga. The prime minister’s favorite manga closely coincide with the works that had gained popularity during this period.

On the other hand, the second half of the 1990s is often considered to be a relatively weak period for manga. But one must be careful about jumping too hastily to this conclusion. Although many increasingly diverse new works were released, it began to take several years before these works could emerge from the crowd and become hits in the eyes of society. In other words, beginning in the 1990s, it became increasingly difficult to say just when a work attained hit status. For example, although Urasawa Naoki began serializing *Monstā* [trans. *Monster*] in 1994,

it is difficult to pigeonhole *Monster* as a “hit of the mid-1990s” because many readers did not become aware of its existence until much later (for example, the anime based on *Monster* was not broadcast until 2004). This kind of situation has continued to the present day. In terms of greater diversity of work, the late 1990s also saw publishers who were not traditionally involved in manga begin launching a number of new magazines for mature male readers. This brought a number of fine works by non-mainstream artists to the market that sought to appeal to hardcore fans. None of these projects, however, attained commercial viability and almost all suspended publication after a short period.

In the new millennium, the most notable topic has undoubtedly been the tie-up that has been established between manga and TV dramas. Beginning in the 2000s, there was a sharp increase in dramas based on popular manga, especially seinen manga. Another characteristic of the period has been the sharp increase in popularity of seinen manga which are read by both men and women. Moreover, the formerly clear distinction between “major” (main stream) and “minor” (alternative) styles has become increasingly blurred; manga that had been formerly considered “minor” style are now attaining hit status. In other words, the boundaries between genres have become increasingly fluid. In this environment, one thing, more than any other, distinguishes seinen manga from the other genres, and that is “information.” It is because seinen manga are able to link drama with information on all kinds of professions—including sommeliers and chefs appearing in the uniquely Japanese gourmet manga, as well as physicians, gangsters and con artists—that they are widely appreciated. Finally, I would like to note that the seinen manga also include the so-called “gourmet manga” subgenre, which deals with subject matter pertaining to the culinary arts. The gourmet manga are not only a classic example of seinen manga, but are also a truly unique Japanese creation.

(Itō Gō, manga critic and part-time lecturer,
Department of Arts Policy and Management,
Musashino Art University)

Recommended Works



Naniwa kin'yū-dō
[The Way of Naniwa Finance]
 by Aoki Yūji
 Vol. 1: Kōdansha, 1999.
 148 x 106mm. 471pp. ¥740.
 ISBN 978-4-06-260550-2 (4062605503).
 (19 volumes)

Set in Osaka, this 19-volume work depicts the world of a consumer finance company and the lives of those who become its customers. The unrefined quality of Aoki's drawings, combined with the earthy and bawdy realism of his stories, has attracted legions of readers. There is power in Aoki's explorations of the dark side of society, as he portrays the process that leads people down the path to debtorhood and depicts their subsequent fall from respectability. Even after Aoki's death, artists who have inherited Aoki's style continue to produce works that strike a similar chord. This manga was adapted to film in 2004 and 2005.

Gurīn hiru
[Green Hill]
 by Furuya Minoru

Vol. 1: Kōdansha, 2000.
 182x130mm. 229pp. ¥504.
 ISBN 978-4-06-336849-9 (4063368491).
 (3 volumes)



An example of comedic manga, Furuya's *Gurīn Hiru* [Green Hill] is about the members of a motorcycle group. The protagonist of this 3-volume work is a lazy college student who is a member of this group. Setting the story in what appears to be suburban Tokyo, Furuya engagingly depicts his young characters as they partially idle away their time and partially take steps to improve their lives. As with all fine comedy, the value of this work lies in its ability to extend its exploration into the realms of literature and philosophy.



Nijusseiki shōnen
[trans. 20th Century Boys]
 by Urasawa Naoki
 (serialized 1999–2006)

Vol. 1: Shōgakukan, 2000.
 180x128mm. 208pp. ¥504.
 ISBN 978-4-09-185531-2 (4091855318).
 (22 volumes)

©1999, 2006 Urasawa Naoki, Studio Nuts/Shōgakukan.

A childish fantasy concocted by the protagonists when they were children in the 1970s becomes the basis of a cult that commits serious acts of terrorism in the 1990s. The protagonists rise up to resist this evil. The background to this story is Japan's postwar ethos, which is depicted through the lens of a sub-culture-influenced imagination. *Nijusseiki Shōnen* [trans. 20th Century Boys] is at present one of the most popular manga in Japan, but the surprising fact is that it is a very "high-context" work. A series of three movies based on this work is scheduled for release starting in 2008.



Kodoku no gurume
[The Solitary Gourmet]
 by Kusumi Masayuki (story) and
 Taniguchi Jirō (artwork)

Fusōsha, 2008.
 204x150mm. 205pp. ¥1,142.
 ISBN 978-4-594-05644-5 (459405644X).

Everyday meals of a single middle-aged man are the subject of this manga. The protagonist operates a business which sells sundry merchandise. His meals, drawn in great detail, are those of the everyman, each one priced very affordably. The appeal of this work lies in the astonishing detail in which the artist depicts the trivial things of everyday life. The author gives his main character a speaking style that parodies toughness and cynicism. The enduring popularity of this story among different generations of readers is testimony to the depths of meaning reached in Japan's manga.

Tsukiji uogashi sandaime
[Tsukiji Fish Market's Third Generation]

by Hashimoto Mitsuo (Vol. 1),
 Nabeshima Masaharu (story, Vols. 2-20),
 Kuwa Kazuto et al. (story, Vol. 21 and
 later), and Hashimoto Mitsuo (artwork)

Vol. 1: Shōgakukan, 2000. 178x128mm. 221pp.
 ¥504. ISBN 978-4-09-184356-2 (4091843565).
 (25 volumes to date, still in production)



This is a story of a former bank employee who takes over as the third-generation owner of a middleman business at Tokyo's Tsukiji Fish Market, the largest wholesale fish market in Japan. Each episode unfolds around specific seafoods and the warm human interactions that make the business work. The work's appeal derives from its ability to provide up-to-date information gleaned from research, its masterful scenarios, and the restrained and yet refined speaking style of its characters. It was adapted to film in 2007 and is still course of publication (25 volumes to date).



Ōkiku furikabutte
[Big Windup]
 by Higuchi Asa

Vol. 1: Kōdansha, 2004.
 182x13mm. 212pp. ¥514.
 ISBN 978-4-06-314342-3 (4063143422).
 (11 volumes to date, still in production)

This beautifully delicate work portrays boys who are members of a newly formed baseball team at a suburban Tokyo high school. The protagonist is a pitcher who has trouble relating to the others because of the trauma of having been ostracized in middle school. The story depicts the slow recovery of his self-esteem as he is accepted by his catcher and then by other teammates. Traditionally, manga about boys' sports have been created by men for mainly male readers, but *Ōkiku furikabutte* evolves from woman's perspective of young men, a fresh slant that gives it a modern aura.

A Rush of New Publications on Tezuka Osamu's Work

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the birth of Tezuka Osamu, who died in 1989 at the age of sixty. Publishers have been commemorating the event with a number of new publications in honor of the man widely considered the “god of manga.” These include reprinted editions of his early work and theme-based anthologies.

For example, Kōdansha has issued *Omoshiro bukku ban Raion Bukkusū* [Lion Books: Fun Reading in Book Form] in a two-volume set that faithfully reproduces Tezuka manga originally released as supplements to youth magazines in 1956–57. This collection includes *Sōseiji satsujin jiken* [The Case of the Twins' Murder], which was left out of *Tezuka Osamu manga zenshū* [Complete Manga Works of Tezuka Osamu]. Also, in February 2009, Shōgakukan will reprint *Shin takarajima* [New Treasure Island], of which only a few original copies currently exist. *Shin takarajima* was the first work published by Tezuka in book form, so this is shaping up to be an important publishing event.

Some publishers are releasing theme-based anthologies. Shōgakukan's *Hana to arakure* [Flowers and Wild Ones] is a compilation of story comics published by Tezuka in rental manga magazines in the late 1950s. *Tezuka Osamu wārudo* [Tezuka Osamu's World], published by Goma Books, includes only the final chapters of Tezuka's best-known works, which he redrew each time they were issued in book form. In this compilation, the original drawings are placed alongside

the redrawn work, enabling the reader to compare the two. Other interesting anthologies include *Tezuka Osamu kessakusen: Kazoku* [The Best of Tezuka Osamu's Family Manga], a Shōdensha Shinsho release focused on works dealing with the theme of family ties, and publisher Akita Bunko's *Tezuka Osamu iryō tanpenshū* [Anthology of Short Works on Medical Themes by Tezuka Osamu], a collection of works that express the reverence of Tezuka—a holder of a medical degree—for life and the mysteries of the human body.

Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's Lost Suicide Notes Found

Suicide notes by the writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, which were long thought to have been lost, were discovered by a family member in her home in Tokyo and donated to the Museum of Modern Japanese Literature in Komaba, Tokyo. Just before his death, Akutagawa wrote of “feeling only an obscure anxiety about the future.” He left six suicide notes in all, the contents of which are recorded in an anthology of his works. Apart from one addressed to a friend and fragments of a letter to his wife, which are in the possession of the Museum of Modern Japanese Literature, all the letters were believed to have been destroyed at some time in accordance with Akutagawa's will, which ordered that they be “immediately incinerated.”

The notes were discovered last spring by his granddaughter, Akutagawa Teruko, while she was cleaning the house. There were four letters: two to his wife, Fumiko, one to his children, and one to the writer Kikuchi Kan. To his wife, he wrote that “all your skillful attempts to keep me alive are totally futile.” The letter to his three children included the instructions, “If you are defeated in life's battles, you should commit suicide like your father. However, you should avoid causing the unhappiness to others that your father has caused.”

The note to his children reveals that Akutagawa was concerned about making the right choice of words up to the very end. Nakamura Minoru, director of the aforementioned museum, remarks, “From his handwriting, you get a sense of the power of Akutagawa's

determination as he faced his own death. The handwriting does not waver. It is astonishing to see the resolve he had about his own death.”

More Than 100,000 Meiji and Taishō Books Now Accessible Online

In August, the National Diet Library added approximately 4,600 titles to its “Modern Digital Library” service, which makes Meiji- and Taishō-era books available for reading over the Internet. These additions expand the collection to over 100,000 titles, comprising nearly 148,200 volumes.

Launched in 2002, the service places digital images of each text online after the copyright expires or after permission is obtained from the copyright holder. The service provides an easy way for users to browse old, sometimes badly damaged books without actually visiting the library.
<http://kindai.ndl.go.jp>

Miyazawa Kenji Award

The Miyazawa Kenji Award honors those who have made exceptional contributions in research and criticism relating to Miyazawa Kenji (1896–1933), one of Japan's most prominent poets and writers of children's stories. The 18th recipient of the award is the author and playwright Roger Pulvers, head of the Center for the Study of World Civilizations at the Tokyo Institute of Technology. A native of New York and an Australian citizen, Pulvers became captivated by Miyazawa's writings during his first visit to Japan in 1967. Over the ensuing forty years he has devoted himself to research on Miyazawa's oeuvre and to translating many of Miyazawa's poems and children's stories into English, including *Ame ni mo makezu* [trans. *Strong in the Rain*]. The award recognizes Pulvers' contributions to the translation of Miyazawa's works and honors the deep passion and knowledge that he brings to this task. Among Pulvers' recent works is a book in Japanese entitled *Eigo de yomitoku: Kenji no sekai* [Exploring Kenji's World in English] (Iwanami Shoten), in which Miyazawa's words are placed alongside English



Tezuka Osamu (Courtesy: Kyōdō News)

translations, enabling readers to compare the work in two languages. Pulvers also contributed the essay "The Two Clocks" to *JBN* No. 43.

Reprints of Books by the 2008 Nobel Laureates in Physics

Books by Kobayashi Makoto, Masukawa Toshihide, and Nambu Yōichirō, winners of the 2008 Nobel Prize in Physics for their contributions to theories of particle physics, are going into new printings.

Kobayashi's *Kieta hanbusshitsu* [Disappearing Anti-matter] was published for general readers in 1997 as part of Kōdansha's Bluebacks series. Although dealing with the abstruse subject of "CP violations," it sold 20,000 copies. Nevertheless, Kōdansha didn't follow up with additional printings, letting the book fall out of print. This all changed, however, with Kobayashi's Nobel Prize. Kōdansha now believes that it has an excellent opportunity to bring the book to the market again and has committed to printing 10,000 new copies. The Bluebacks series also includes Nambu's *Kuōku* [Quark], which was published in 1981. When the top quark was discovered in the mid-1990s, Nambu immediately began working on a revised edition, which came out in 1998. Over a 27-year period, *Kuōku* sold some 110,000 copies, qualifying it as a quiet bestseller among science books, and now Kōdansha plans to print 20,000 more copies. Finally, Iwanami Shoten has decided on a new printing of Masukawa's introduction to particle physics, *Gendai no busshitsukan to Aishutain no yume* [Einstein's Dream and the Modern View of Matter].

Dictionary on Okinawan Society

Yoshikawa Kōbunkan has recently published *Okinawa minzoku jiten* [Dictionary of Okinawan Folklore], which introduces readers to Okinawa's distinctive culture. Comprising 950 entries, the dictionary covers such themes as historical heritage, annual events, performing arts, food, and dialect in a first-ever attempt to explore Okinawan society as a whole using a dictionary format. The work spans from the

beginnings of recorded history to the U.S. occupation and the present day, incorporating everything from commentary on indigenous religious beliefs to discussions of Okinawa's unique experiences with the U.S. military bases, emigration, and World War II. Examples of present-day topics include the Ryukyu Festival and the Okinawa Actors' School.

Order of Culture Awards for 2008

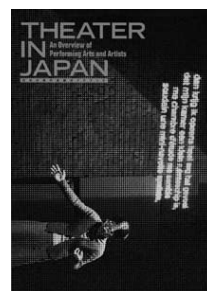
The Japanese Government has awarded its Order of Culture to Donald Keene, Professor Emeritus of Japanese Literature at Columbia University. Keene was deeply moved when he read Arthur Waley's English translation of *Genji monogatari* [trans. *The Tale of Genji*] at the age of 18, marking the start of a lifelong fascination with Japanese literature. His research has ranged from the classics to modern literature, encompassing everything from the ancient chronicle *Kojiki* and the works of the Edo-period dramatist Chikamatsu Monzaemon to the writings of Mishima Yukio and Abe Kōbō. He has played an enormous role in introducing and commenting on Japanese culture in America and Europe, and has mentored numerous Western scholars of Japan. In recognition of this contribution, the Japan Foundation presented Keene with its the Japan Foundation Award in 1983. Eight others were honored with the Order of Culture in 2008, including the writer Tanabe Seiko (contributor of the lead essay for *JBN* No. 56) and the conductor Ozawa Seiji.

Compilation of Performing Arts Network Japan Interviews

Since going online in 2004, the Japan Foundation's "Performing Arts Network Japan" website has posted a new interview with a Japanese artist each month. Now, the first thirty interviews have been compiled into a book entitled *Pafōmingu ātsu ni miru Nihon-jin no bunkaryoku* [trans. *Energizing Japanese Culture: The Performing Arts in Japan*] (Suiryōsha). The artists interviewed range from performers of such traditional arts as Noh and Kabuki to performers of contemporary theater

and dance, and include the likes of Kabuki dance artist Fujima Kanjūrō and world-renowned stage director Ninagawa Yukio. The interviews provide a bird's-eye view of the performing arts in Japan today, while giving readers a taste of Japanese culture's richly diverse power of expression.

Free English Guidebook on Modern Japanese Theater



The Japan Foundation distributes information on modern performing artists in Japan through its website and publications. As a part of this endeavor, it has published an

English-language guidebook entitled *Theater in Japan: An Overview of Performing Arts and Artists*. Part one of the book examines the latest trends in modern Japanese stage arts, and part two introduces readers to puppet theater, performing arts companies, and artists, with a focus on playwrights who produce work for the small theaters that now symbolize the modern Japanese performing arts scene. To obtain a copy of the guidebook, send an e-mail to: info@performingarts.jp.

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Living with Japan for 45 Years

For most of my adult life, ever since I took a course on Japan taught by Professor James Morley when I was a first year graduate student at Columbia University, I have been involved with Japan. Thanks to Morley's encouragement, I decided to enter the Ph.D. program and the rest, as they say, is history. And it is that history that is the subject of my book *Seiji to sanma—Nihon to kurashite 45-nen* [Politics and Sanma—45 years of Living with Japan] (Nikkei Business Publications, 2008).

The title, needless to say, is unusual and deserves a little explanation. The book is part autobiography, part political analysis, and part an essay on Japanese society and culture. I struggled to come up with a title that signaled to the reader that this was not another political science tract but an account of my experiences in Japan and my views of Japan and the Japanese. My wife, Midori, suggested that I ask our friend Tetsuo Takahira for his advice. Many years ago they worked together at an advertising agency in Tokyo, she as an art director and he as a copywriter. He left that company shortly thereafter and struck out on his own, becoming famous as a comedy writer for the entertainer Tamori and others, and as a publisher and producer of plays.

Takahira read the manuscript and came up with the brilliant idea of putting *sanma* in the title. *Sanma* captures the idea that this book is not only about politics and about my interactions with Japan's political elite. It is even more the story of my encounters with ordinary Japanese and what I learned from them.

Sanma does not translate easily into English. The dictionary says it is "Pacific saury," but I have never met anyone who had ever heard of saury much less eaten one. *Sanma*, which is a kind of mackerel, is written with the characters for autumn, sword, and fish. Seen swimming in the autumn light, its silver back looks like a sword cutting through the water.

Popular and inexpensive, *sanma* evokes for Japanese the image of ordinary everyday life. It also had a special meaning for me, as I recount in the book. Having grown up in New York City mostly on meat, potatoes, and canned vegetables, my introduction to *sanma* and other foods I had never tasted before changed my eating habits for ever. Food is an integral part of a nation's culture and while I was writing this book I surprised myself by how much food appears in my memories of life in Japan.

When I set about to write this book, to summarize in a way my life with Japan for nearly half a century and to aim the book at Japanese readers, I decided without thinking too much about it to write the book in Japanese. Just as with *sanma*, there are many other things that simply lose their meaning when translated into English. Furthermore, there is a rhythm to the Japanese language and ways of expressing ideas that cannot be replicated in English and that gets completely lost when English is then translated into Japanese. So thanks to the computer I was able to write the book in Japanese. I doubt if I ever would have finished it if I had to remember how to write the strokes of characters that I can read but rarely if ever write by hand anymore.

The book recounts how I got involved with Japan at Columbia, my experiences living for the first time in Tokyo in 1964, the year of the Tokyo Olympics when I was a student at the Inter-University Center for Japanese Studies, my year-long immersion into Japanese election campaigning when I lived in Oita and did the research for *Election Campaigning Japanese Style* and its Japanese version, *Daigishi no Tanjō*, and my work

with Columbia University Professor Herbert Passin in running a US-Japan parliamentary exchange program for a decade. It goes on to talk about what happened in Japan from the 1980s through the collapse of the bubble economy and its aftermath. If there is one theme that runs through the discussion of the past two decades, it is how much Japanese society has changed and how inadequate the political response to those changes has been.

It has been profoundly gratifying to see the book receive extensive and enthusiastic reviews, but many of the reviews also have surprised me. While I expected reviewers to focus on what I have to say about the political system, what seems to have fascinated any number of people is my account of life living in a four and a half mat room and experiencing Tokyo in the 1960s and my experiences a couple of years later in Oita. Those stories seem to make Japanese who are old enough to remember those days nostalgic for that optimistic and exciting time, and it seems to fascinate younger Japanese who have not experienced the Japan that I write about. Several reviewers commented that these chapters of the book evoke the same sense of affection for a past now gone as the movie *Always Sanchōme no Yūhi* [trans. *Always: Sunset on Third Street*].

What is perhaps most surprising, and more than a little disturbing, is how pleased, perhaps grateful is the better word, so many readers seem to be about my discussion of what makes Japan "beautiful." I recount how put off I was by the title of former Prime Minister Shinzō Abe's book *Utsukushii kuni e* [trans. *Toward a Beautiful Country*]. This quite clearly reads as a denial that Japan is a beautiful country now. I remark about what is beautiful about Japanese values—politeness, cleanliness, humility, concern for the group and not just the individual, the effort to avoid overt confrontation, and so on. That so many people were so touched by this discussion seems to point to a profound loss of confidence, which is perhaps the most serious consequence of the troubles Japan has faced since the early 1990s.

My book ends on an optimistic note. Japan is going through a major transformation. The process is not clear cut and it is often not pretty, but if Japanese can muster the confidence to believe that the values that hold their society together are strong and resilient, then they will have the confidence to embrace change. And when they do that, the future will be far brighter than the current conventional wisdom might lead people to believe.



Gerald Curtis

Born in New York in 1940. Political scientist and professor at Columbia University. Intimately observed politician Satō Bunsei's campaign for the 1967 Japanese House of Representatives elections, and wrote his dissertation and a book, *Election Campaigning Japanese Style*, based on that experience. Has written many other books on Japanese politics, including *Seiji to sanma—Nihon to kurashite 45-nen* [Politics and Sanma—45 years of Living with Japan] and *The Logic of Japanese Politics*. Received the Japan Foundation Award in 2002 and the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star in 2004.