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国際交流基金

New Questions Concerning the Golden Age of Japanese Cinema

Nozaki Kan

Recipient of a Nobel Prize, French author J. M. G. Le Clézio famously reminisces in an essay regarding the cinema, “At that time, cinema meant Japanese cinema.” (Le Clézio, *Balladiner*, 2007) In his youth, what revealed the existence of art to Le Clézio was watching, without any prerequisite knowledge, director Mizoguchi Kenji’s *Ugetsu Monogatari* [Ugetsu]. From that moment, the young Le Clézio was taken by the allure of the cinema and, encouraged by his cinematic experiences, aspired to that path of creation.

If we take the name Mizoguchi Kenji and add to that the names Ozu Yasujiro and Kurosawa Akira, surely we can consent to the existence of a period in which, “cinema meant Japanese cinema.” However, in that same period, their works were as yet not heavily discussed or researched. Rather, it was after their deaths, with the inspiration created by an increase in appreciation for their works in Europe and America, that many books were written. As film studio systems faltered, movie theaters died out, and the number of movie-goers suddenly decreased, there was probably also an environment of heightening nostalgia regarding the erstwhile golden age of cinema. However, above and beyond that, in discussing the works of the great masters a new foundation was constructed for film research and film review in Japan.

Satō Tadao, who wrote one book each on Mizoguchi, Ozu, and Kurosawa, is quite possibly the only film researcher in the world to do so. Nevertheless, that is just one portion of his critical work on movies in general, from Asian to worldwide. Satō’s ideas, as a protector of postwar democratic principles, are deeply reflected in his 1969 publication *Kurosawa Akira no sekai* [The World of Kurosawa Akira]. Satō presents some doubts as to whether *The Seven Samurai* advocates Self Defense Forces, and his original viewpoints are prominent when expertly evaluating what are considered to be minor works of Kurosawa, such as *Waga seishun ni kuinashi* [No Regrets for Our Youth] and *Ikimono no kiroku* [I Live in Fear]. Even in *Ozu Yasujiro no geijutsu* (1971) [The Art of Ozu Yasujiro] and *Mizoguchi Kenji no sekai* (1982) [The World of Mizoguchi Kenji], Satō’s stance carries through as he clearly arranges and dissects the works’ contents from a social perspective.

Based on a robust ability to write, Hasumi Shigehiko aimed to establish a new review language from an almost irreconcilable position to Satō’s. Hasumi, as a researcher in literature who was well acquainted with modern French literary criticism, strictly cautioned against a break away from the “surface layer” of a text when engaging single-mindedly with a cinema screen in order to understand the

forms and actions repeated therein. For Hasumi, it is exactly those things that make up the thematic system of a “auteur.” Hasumi’s style of speaking about films as pure visual pleasure, completely free from ideological judgments and narrative elements, instantaneously gained enthusiastic followers and he was highly influential from the 80’s to the 90’s. Above all, based on dense analysis and many unexpected findings, Hasumi’s *Kantoku: Ozu Yasujiro* [Director: Ozu Yasujiro] established the Ozu image as a thoroughly modern creator through a purging of the stereotypes that celebrate Ozu as a “Japanese-style” director.

Without a doubt Hasumi breathed new life into film critic discourse in Japan from the 80’ on. He floridly discussed everything from Ozu to Godard and from silent films to the cutting edge of modern films, thus creating amongst Japanese youth a European-style “cinephilia” class. Hasumi’s critiques, in a post-modern period that is said to have erased the capital H from “History,” were indeed critiques that were filled with suitable intellectual joy. As a heavyweight in academics, to the point of working as president of Tokyo University, Hasumi lent authority to the film critique genre and, as a result, elevated its status. And university cinema research, which had not been active up to this point, soon got underway.

However, indicators of recent years of prosperity are essays and critiques that open new questions through delving into directors’ biographical backgrounds, and the historical contexts of works that did not previously give weight to Hasumi-esque critiques. First and foremost, there was a great impetus based on the unearthing of primary sources regarding directors. An important result of this was the compilation of Tanaka Masumi’s *Ozu Yasujiro zenhatsugen 1933-45* (1987) [The Complete Remarks of Ozu Yasujiro: 1933-45], *Ozu Yasujiro sengo goroku shūsei* (1989) [The Collected Sayings of Ozu Yasujiro], and *Ozu Yasujiro zennikki* (1993) [The Complete Diary of Ozu Yasujiro]. These compilations, which are indispensable for getting to know Ozu the man, comment on everything from personal relationships to his numerous fixations on the necessities of daily life and, of course, his method of work and attitude towards cinema.

Compared with Ozu, this type of excavation work on Mizoguchi has been lagging. Recently, the first collected essays and talks left by Mizoguchi have finally been published in *Mizoguchi Kenji chosakushū* [The Complete Writings of Mizoguchi Kenji] (comp. Sasō Tsutomu, 2013), and we can now pursue traces of Mizoguchi’s consistent contemplations from before the war up until his final years. As for Kurosawa Akira, with the completion

of *Taikei Kurosawa Akira* [The Kurosawa Akira Archives] (comp. Hamano Yasuki, four volumes, one supplement, 2009-10) we find many important resources, from his middle school writings, to scripts from his radio drama entitled *Yōki na kōjō* [A Cheerful Factory] that were written during the war, to his conversations with Ōshima Nagisa.

With this type of repletion on the document side, what kinds of new interpretations on existing works will occur and what type of new director's image will be drawn? The most prominent images are thought to be from the perspective of "war" memories. In *Ozu Yasujiro shūyū* (2003) [Ozu Yasujiro's Excursion], the driving force behind the compilation of documents on Ozu, Tanaka Masumi, elucidated truths that had not even been considered up to then using a single section from Ozu's diary written when Ozu had thrown himself onto the Chinese battlefield as an army corporal. The brief literary description of "special cartridge firing" at the battle of Shūsui River [Xīushūi River in Jiāngxī Province] meant that Ozu's military unit had participated in a poison gas attack. Two Chinese forces were destroyed without a fight at that time. Ozu's diary also indifferently describes a Japanese soldier cutting down an innocent old Chinese woman. The thoughts from such a war zone continued to under-gird the foundations of Ozu's work. Tanaka interprets the final scene, a bridal procession in a wheat field, in *Bakushū* [Early Summer] as Ozu's "war requiem." Soldiers from the Japanese army are compared to stalks of wheat. Tanaka feels that the bride moves along, as a symbol of regeneration and revival, right in the midst of the dead thus representing the idea of *samsara* [the repeating cycle of life and death in Buddhist thought].

Yomota Inuhiko, as representative researcher for the generation following Satō and Hasumi, energetically developed critical work without losing a step on his predecessors. In *Shichinin no samurai to gendai* (2010) [The Seven Samurai and the Present], which takes the universally popular work of Kurosawa as a nucleus, we see a wish for the continued fellowship and "mourning" of war victims. Also, in *Kurosawa Akira no jūjika* (2013) [Kurosawa Akira's Cross], author Sashida Fumio believes that we see, in a young doctor who is suffering after demobilization (played by Mifune Toshirō) in Kurosawa's *Shizukanaru kettō* [The Quiet Duel], the appearance of Kurosawa's "awareness of self-torment" when he questions why — despite his majestic physique — he wasn't taken be the army. In *Samurai: Hyōden Mifune Toshirō* [Samurai: The Biography of Toshirō Mifune], the first critical biography of the actor who continually embodied all that is good in Kurosawa films, author Matsuda Michiko carves out, in stark relief, the truth behind the dark shadow that covered Mifune's life after his six years of military life. She notes that Mifune yelled, "It serves you right!" when he found out that Japan had lost the war on August 15th, 1945.

By adding the figure of Mizoguchi Kenji, who explained that, taking Göpels' words, movies should serve the nation and who longed to create "movies of the nation," (as it is put it in *Mizoguchi Kenji choshakushū*), we note that, among the above-noted wartime images, the fact that the war had cineastes — who created the golden age of Japanese cinema — deeply ensnared in its spell was once

again in everyone's consciousness. At the same time, the fact that the lands and people's — in areas the Japanese army had invaded — were almost completely unrepresented, exposed the truth that the idea of an "Asia" had only been very thinly expressed within Japanese cinema.

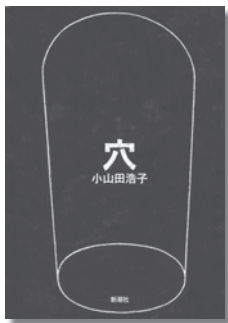
Here again Ozu's movies are tinged with symbolic meaning. In his ambitious review *Teikoku no zan'ei – heishi: Ozu Yasujiro no Shōwashi* (2013) [Remnants of an Empire – Soldiers: Ozu Yasujiro's Shōwa Period History], Yonaha Jun lists up all the "Chinese-like" elements that occur in Ozu's postwar works. For example, there are "Chinese restaurants" and "Mah-jong," but they frequently provide the opportunity for breaking the peace in the household of the main characters. Yonaha points out that, "when the composition of integrated Japanese families is being shaken, Ozu Yasujiro's symbolic logic usually adopts a Chinese-type motif." To put it differently, thoughts of "the shadows of colonization and memories of the Imperial period" are constantly oscillating back and forth and this secretly strains relationships in Ozu's writing projects.

Works that are well directed include minute details and what directors draw our attention to, with the presence of details like subtle creaking sounds, is the fact that they are not indifferent to the conditions of harsh questioning, in Asia and throughout the world, regarding a Japanese sense of self-examination concerning Japan's wars and aggression. If we borrow the subject of Yomota Inuhiko's critical collection, the question of "*Japanese movies within Asia*" becomes essential. Hereafter, this type of perspective on research can be expected to deepen critical essays. And, at the same time, we can fervently hope for objective remarks from critics, not just from Japan but from various Asian countries. An apt illustration of this phenomenon includes works that are written in Japanese by Lú Wénbīng, a Chinese researcher who received his degree in Japan, such as *Chūgoku jūokunin no nihon eiga netsuaishi* [The History of One Billion Chinese Lovers of Japanese Cinema] (2006) and *Shōgen: Nichū eigajin kōryū* [Testimonials: Japanese and Chinese Cinephile Interactions] (2011). Taking up disparities in historical awareness as well, Lú's work, which suggests the possibility of producing solidarity through movies, presents us with hope.

Nozaki Kan

Born in Niigata in 1959. Studied literature at the University of Tokyo and at Sorbonne Nouvelle Université, Paris III. Translator, Professor of French Literature at the University of Tokyo. Suntory Prize for Social Science and Humanities (2001) for Jan Runowāru [Jean Renoir], Yomiuri Prize for Literature (2011) for Ihō no kaori – Nerubaru "Tōhō kikō" ron [The Scent of Foreign Lands – Essays on Nerval's "Voyage en Orient"]. Writes occasional cinematic reviews in magazines and newspapers. Japanese Book News: Editorial Board Member

FICTION



Oyamada Hiroko

Born in 1983. Awarded the Shinchō New Face Award in 2010 for *Kōjō [Factory]*. Won the Oda Sakunosuke Award for the same work in 2013. Winner of the Akutagawa Prize for this work.

*The underworld
that exists along-
side everyday life*

Ana [Hole]

By Oyamada Hiroko

Shinchōsha, 2014. 194 x 134 mm. 160pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 978-4-10-333642-6.

The female protagonist, with her husband's job relocation, moved to a rural town. It just happened to be the town where her husband's parents' home was located and the couple ended up living in the house next door. As the quiet and empty days passed with nothing to do, the protagonist, who had quit her job, complained of her ennui as a "home maker" in that sleepy little rural town with no friends. One day, while she was out on an errand at the behest of her mother-in-law a strange black animal crossed in front of her. While following it she fell into a "hole" that had been dug in a thicket. However, there was no fantastical world opening up inside that hole, like in "Alice in Wonderland." Rather, the fantastical world was opening inside the rural town itself. Despite it raining all day long, her

father-in-law continued watering the garden and those who surrounded the protagonist, from her brother-in-law, who had shunned the public eye while living alone in a shed for twenty years, to her husband, who kept fiddling with his cellphone even while at the dining table, were all strange beings into whose depths she could not easily penetrate. The author, while maintaining a literary style that is indifferent to the last, all at once increases the verisimilitude of her descriptions at important points and gives a fresh perspective on the appearance of strange things that lurk in the shadows of the everyday. In searching for, and finding, Japan's indigenous depths, Oyamada broadens the preserve of the novel and we witness the appearance of a newcomer equipped with abilities that should amaze. (Nozaki)

Bannen yōshikishū [In Late Style]

By Ōe Kenzaburō

Kōdansha, 2013. 190 x 132 mm. 340pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 978-4-06-218631-5.

At the moment Chōkō, "author" of this "elderly man in his waning years" tragedy, is being severely criticized. He stands before a hail of biting arrows launched by the women most close to him, starting with his younger sister. "We have become 'privacy violation victims' because of you," she says. His daughter adds "It was you who wrote all of your 'The World Revolves Around Papa' tales." Then, even his intellectually challenged son Akari, with whom Chōkō was supposed to have created a tight "dynamic duo" bond, comes to be gripped by doubt. In this work characters from previous Ōe masterpieces, such as *Natsukashii toshi eno tegami* [trans. *Letters for Nostalgic Years*] and *Torikae ko* [trans. *The Changeling*], also appear and press Chōkō for answers. After 3/11, while being bludgeoned by the

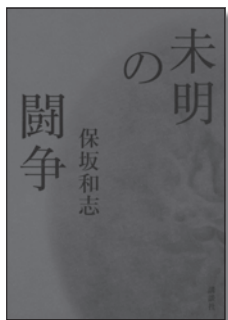
sense of grief associated with "the door to the future" being slammed shut, Chōkō moves back to his living space amongst the woods of his native Shikoku, together with Akari, and searches desperately for a path to recovery. Before long, his deeply troubled - and not lacking in humorous details - story, culminates in a piece of poetry. Up to now Chōkō has sought out "late style" while invoking the concepts of his deceased best friend Edward Said and that poem - while encouraging youth to embark upon an adventure - takes the form of something that opens the closed door to the future. This book will surely provide young readers with a precious gateway to enter the forest of Ōe Kenzaburō works. (Nozaki)



Ōe Kenzaburō

Born 1935. Tokyo University graduate in French Literature. Won the Akutagawa Prize in 1958 for *Shikoku* [trans. Prize Stock]. Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature on October 13th, 1994. In 2006 the Ōe Kenzaburō Prize was established. The winning novel is translated and published around the world in English, French, and German.

*An old writer and
the latter half of
his life with his
children*



Hosaka Kazushi

Born in 1956. Debuted with *Purēnsongu* [trans. Plainsong] in 1990. Won the Akutagawa Prize for *Kono hito no iki* [The Area of this Person] in 1995. Received the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize for *Kisetsu no kioku* [Memories of Seasons]. This book won the Noma Literary Award in 2013.

*Drifting through
dreams, reality,
and space-time*

Mimei no tōsō **[Struggles at Dawn]**

By Hosaka Kazushi

Kōdansha, 2013. 194 x 138 mm. 546pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-06-218492-2.

A friend, who was supposed to have died one week prior, is walking among Ikebukuro pedestrian traffic. These unusual conditions, in which a subject and predicate that do not agree and a sentence that is grammatically exceptional are displayed from the start, show clearly that this is not the type of “novel” that has what would be considered a standard plot and causality. What we have here, between dreams and reality, are thoughts that roam about, continuously adrift as if threading the subjective and objective gap. Far from the “I” of the narrator giving unity to a story, to fly capriciously through space-time from the cradle into the near future, then to wander amidst the thoughts of someone else, continuously opens haphazard associations. Sentences that captures that state, forever flexible,

while versatily spreading and extending, beckons readers into a deep sense of intoxication before they know it. The “I” has lived life while passing through that very same life, then, while particularly freshly portraying the memories of all the cats and dogs that have died in one’s life up to now, a strange mental state in which “one’s previous existence” habitually dips into the present absentmindedly emerges. Hosaka Kazushi is an author who - while elaborating deep contemplations on the possibilities of modern literature, beginning with Kafka - has constructed an entire original world of prose. However, it is this long novel that shall be remembered as one of the great destinations in his career. (Nozaki)

Sayōnara, Orenji **[Goodbye, My Orange]**

By Iwaki Kei

Chikuma Shobō, 2013. 190 x 132 mm. 176pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 978-4-480-80448-8.

Salima is an African refugee to Australia raising two children alone after her husband left. In her English class are Itō Sayuri, a Japanese woman who brings her infant daughter along, and Paola, an Italian married to an Australian man. On this foreign Australian soil these women fight to live while grappling with English.

One day Sayuri’s infant daughter dies and Salima’s husband, appearing after a two year hiatus, takes her children. Paola suffers from depression and temporarily returns to Italy.

In this work the narrative portion is written from Salima’s point of view, with Sayuri interjecting by way of letters to Dr. Jones. Paola appears as a secondary character in both the narrative and the letters.

In this book the difficulties of living life are depicted through simply existing

in a foreign country. Historically women have often been placed in socially disadvantaged positions, but once they leave their homeland they suffer a double disadvantage. Not unlike a man, Salima had to perform hard labor in a meat processing plant just to survive and Sayuri, given that her husband neglected his family, had to become self-reliant. As for Paola, once her child left home, she was bound to lose sight of life’s goal. Mix in racial problems and these women could do nothing but accept every extraordinary day as ordinary and continue living. Situations where one is removed from one’s normal culture, language, and environment, have the greatest effect as far as exposing one’s inner thoughts. Newcomer Iwaki’s powerful work illuminates these issues in a manner rarely seen in recent years. (Chō)



Iwaki Kei

Born in 1971. After graduating from a Japanese University, Iwaki moved to Australia on her own. She has been there for 20 years. Won the Dazai Osamu Prize in 2013 and the Ōe Kenzaburō Prize in 2014 for this work.

*Agonizing and
courageous stories
of people living in
a foreign land*



Himeno Kaoruko

Born in 1958. Debuted with Hito yonde Mitsuko [A Girl Named Mitsuko] in 1990. Previously named a candidate for the Naoki Prize four times. This work received the 150th Naoki Prize. She has also written Haruka Eiti [Haruka Eighty]. (See JBN48).

Seeking human connections through interactions with dogs

Shōwa no inu **[Showa Dog]**

By Himeno Kaoruko

Geniōsha, 2013. 190 x 134 mm. 307pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-344-02446-5.

All human beings seek relationships with others and can live only within such relationships. Among all possible human relationships, the most basic is between a parent and child. Why? Because the child entrusts its life to the parent and the parent plays a very important role in fostering the child's body and mind. If that parent and child have nothing between them but a deformed relationship, what will become of that child? It is just such thoughts and questions that lie at the bottom of this work.

Iku, the protagonist, was born in 1958. For as long as she can remember she felt almost no love from her parents. Her father, after returning from internment in Siberia, suffered under the memories of war and took it out on his family without explanation. Her mother grieved over their unhappy situation and became emotionally unstable. In the

end, Iku wasn't loved by anyone and it felt as though she did not belong in her own house.

However, despite such sorrow, she never held a grudge. She accepted everything dispassionately and her character remained completely undistorted... because of dogs. When her young heart had been hurt she was always cheered by a dog. Her own dog, her neighbor's, or one she had met beside the road. When Iku saw those dog's faces, her heart melted. Beautiful childhood memories included being with those dogs instead of her parents, and those became her spiritual nourishment.

A life that only has relationships with dogs is fundamentally sad, but, within such relationships, Iku may have learned the importance of forgiveness in relationships with people. (Chō)

ESSAY

Bi **[Beauty]**

By Ōtake Shinrō

Shinchōsha, 2013. 194 x 138 mm. 279pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-10-431003-6.

Ōtake Shinrō (1955 -) is a highly regarded Modern Artist who has produced large works of art, both domestically and internationally. With a focus on paintings, Ōtake is developing myriad creations including installation art, music, photography, film, etc. He has been based in Ehime Prefecture, Uwajima City since 1988, but his sphere of activity is spreading out to the world.

What is "Bi"? The period during which Ōtake composed this essay - with just such a question in mind - overlapped with his creation of a bath-house in Kagawa Prefecture, Naoshima, and his attendance of Gwangju Korea's Biennale, Germany's documenta, and Italy's La Biennale di Venezia.

During all this travel, moments when "mysterious feelings" welled up were the

instances when Ōtake was cognizant of "Bi". For instance, when he laid eyes upon a completely ordinary garbage can, the wall of a restroom, a steel tower, a rusted shipyard, etc., he was shaken by curiosity for ideas that he couldn't possibly come up with on his own. He thought, "If I placed these things in an unusual place, how would they look?" This is how the impulse to produce was awakened.

The items above are all things that do not fall into the Art category. Ōtake feels that a group of art works that is systematically displayed at an art museum, without serving any real purpose, recalls the very malaise of something that is fading off the face of the earth. This diary of Ōtake's thoughts is also a unique essay on art. (Yonahara)



Ōtake Shinrō

Born in 1955. Modern artist. Graduated from Musashino Art University in 1980. Held a Grand Retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo in 2006 entitled "Shinro Ohtake Zen-Kei Retrospective, 1955-2006." He has produced both domestic and foreign large-scale works that were highly acclaimed.

An essay on the thoughts and creation of beauty



Hoshino Hiromi

Born in 1966. Photographer and Nonfiction Author. Received the Ōya Sōichi Nonfiction Award in 2001 for Korogaru Hong Kong ni koke wa haenai [A Rolling Hong Kong Gathers No Moss]. Won the Ikeru Hon Award in 2011 for Konnyakuya hyōryūki [Adrift: Wanders in Search of the Konnyakuya] (See JBN72).

An essay that spells out daily life in Tokyo's shitamachi

Togoshi Ginza de tsukamaete [Catcher in the Togoshi Ginza]

By Hoshino Hiromi

Asahi Shimbun Publications, 2013. 186 x 130 mm. 273pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-02-251046-4.

It is difficult to explain the expression “Tokyo *shitamachi*” (Tokyo’s district of storekeepers and workers) to those who have not lived in Tokyo. The area known as “*shitamachi*” was restricted to Tokyo’s bay-side lands until the 19th century. However, since there are now “*shitamachi*” sprinkled throughout Tokyo, it has become difficult to point out on a map exactly where an all-encompassing “*shitamachi*” is located.

Female non-fiction writer and photographer, Hoshino Hiromi, passed her childhood years in a *shitamachi* called Togoshi Ginza, one of the inland areas mentioned above. Since turning 40 she has once again come here to live. However, she has begun her life inside this *shitamachi* while looking at it through the eyes of an outsider. Since many of the people who live

in this old *shitamachi* are elderly, it is difficult to once again form close relationships. But, within her daily life - while she continues to struggle with communications that are not always harmonious - the *shitamachi*’s aura slowly begins to envelope the author. Using that aura as a support, Hoshino notices that she is able to overcome both the death of her beloved cat and her worries regarding old age. This book explains, with great feeling, the relationship between the individuals who live in Tokyo’s “*shitamachi*” and the communities therein. (Karube)

PERFORMING ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT

Minzoku geinō tanbō gaido bukku [Folk Performing Arts Guidebook]

By Hoshino Hiroshi, et. al.

Kokushokankōkai, 2013. 184 x 134 mm. 375pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 978-4-336-05752-5.

Throughout Japan there are many folk performing arts, like dances, theatrical performances, etc. The majority of these occur at regional festivals. To say nothing of the fact that, as far as foreigners who have a penchant for Japanese culture are concerned, grasping the major points, not to mention the whole performing arts picture, is very difficult. The release of this book is good news for just such people.

Within folk performing arts, while there are local performances during festivals that are handed down through time in farm villages, towns, and fishing villages, there are also events that take place at temples and shrines. The purpose of these events varies greatly, from prayers for a good harvest and benediction performances to plague prevention prayers and vengeful spirit pacification.

This book introduces 168 hand-picked variations from among these various folk performing arts. Beginning with government designated “Important Intangible Cultural Properties,” such as Yamagata prefecture’s Kurokawa Noh, Fukuoka’s Kōwakamai, etc. you will find a comprehensive list of representative pieces from each region in Japan.

Each folk art is introduced with photos and explanations of its meaning and distinctive traits as well as an easy to follow commentary on how the art changed through history.

It is worth noting that, for those who wish to enjoy these events locally, all the necessary information, such as location, dates, transportation, etc., is presented. This book has surely been awaited by anyone interested in Japanese folk art. (Chō)



Hoshino Hiroshi
Program Director of the Japan
Arts Council

Visit folk performing arts locations all around Japan



Inada Kazuhiro

Born in 1960. Entertainment writer and rakugo commentator. Has experience with performance scripts (rakugo, historical narratives, "naniwa-bushi" recitation, manzai), lyrics for traditional Japanese music (nagauta, shinnai, biwa, etc.), scripts for plays, directing, etc.

A naniwa-bushi recitation primer filled with its very past and present

Rōkyokuron **[Naniwa-bushi Recitation Theory]**

By Inada Kazuhiro

Sairyūsha, 2013. 188 x 132 mm. 256pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 978-4-7791-1908-8.

"Naniwa-bushi recitation" is a form of narrative art. It involves telling various stories with *shamisen* accompaniment and a characteristic melody. Despite the fact that its roots date back to the end of the Edo Period (1603-1868) it is said that today's form of recitation was established in the middle of the Meiji Period (1868-1912), around the year 1900.

Most *rōkyoku* stories are warrior tales. They take as their primary themes concepts that Japanese are quite fond of, such as empathy and duty. The personality of the reciter, or "*rōkyokushi*," is truly brought to life and, from the Meiji Period on, *rōkyoku* became the most popular form of public entertainment and gained in popularity. There used to be many playhouses specializing in *rōkyoku* and, until the mid-60's, it was performed on radio

and television. However, recently *rōkyoku* has been in a crisis of decline.

This book should be called a *rōkyoku* primer. While searching for the background of the decline, it describes representative *rōkyoku* stories and the allure of this form of storytelling. Stories take as their subjects: Heroes from the Edo Period, villains, and Meiji Period warriors. In addition, they adapt literary works from the modern period and they have also adopted period specific topical issues. They are also heavily influenced by movies.

Now, there is a new wave in the world of *rōkyoku*. Female *rōkyokishi* are performing and, even today, new works are appearing. Experienced masters can satisfy anyone by using *shamisen* techniques that would put rock guitarists to shame. (Yonahara)

CULTURE

Minka nichiyō kōeki hiji taizen **[Secret Corpus of Everyday Items for the Home]**

By Sanshōkan Shujin

Gentōsha Renaissance, 2013. 220 x 155 mm. 320pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 978-4-7790-1013-2.

Contemporary man is "convenient." If he becomes sick he gets a check-up. Before a child is born he buys all kinds of child-rearing goods. He wears ready-made clothes and even the food on his table isn't made by him. Rather, he buys it at the deli.

Japanese of the premodern period did not enjoy such "convenience." They had to solve daily problems with their own two hands. Wisdom for everyday life is passed down from generation to generation, but a book that acts like a convenience guide for life can be another source of information. Since the Meiji Period (1868-1912) such books have been considered unscientific. Here we present what is probably the first attempt to translate such a book, compiled in 1851, into easily understandable modern Japanese.

Presented information can be broken

into two categories, knowledge and folk beliefs. Knowledge has to do with everyday life and items recorded in this book include a wide variety of daily wisdom, from how to repair rain-proof *shoji* (rice-paper doors), to how to cultivate vegetables, to methods for making *tsukemono* (pickled vegetables), to ways to perform home carpentry, to gardening, recipes and home medical treatments. Another section is on divination and types of incantations. Items believed to be of practical use like weather forecasting methods - not just divinations and charms for good or bad luck - are included in this section.

Unscientific by modern criteria, and with irrational bits here and there, this book is still an interesting piece of history that tells us a lot about the daily life of premodern Japanese commoners. (Chō)



Translation into modern Japanese by Naitō Hisao
Born in 1951. Graduated from the Graduate School of Nihon University.

An Encyclopedia of everyday-use items from the Edo period



Imahashi Riko

Born in 1964. Professor at Gakushūin Women's College. Won the Suntory Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities and the Education Minister's Art Encouragement Prize for New Artists for the published version of her 1995 doctoral dissertation *Edo no kachōga [Bird and Flower Paintings of the Edo Period]*.

*Facts that
"Kawaii" rabbits
are hiding*

***Usagi to katachi no Nihon bunka* [Rabbits and Their Shapes in Japanese Culture]**

By Imahashi Riko

University of Tokyo Press, 2013. 210 x 150 mm. 184pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 978-4-13-083061-4.

According to an ancient Chinese legend a rabbit grinds up an elixir of life at the center of the moon. In Japan, it is understood that the rabbit is "pounding *mochi* (sticky rice)." This "*mochi tsuki* (rice pounding)" is tied to the full moon, and has given rise to a variety of figurative devices. Now, in ancient Japanese folk belief, the rabbit - symbolizing "the god of the mountains" who controls crop fertility - is also girded with the strength of the god of the moon as his messenger. The rabbit, along with this history, has come to be loved and intimately known throughout Japan. And now, every single rabbit-designed item that Japan is awash with has everyone thinking that Japan is the most rabbit loving country in the world. While ungrudgingly presenting goods celebrating the image of the rabbit that she collected over

nearly twenty years, the author - an accomplished specialist in Edo Period (1603-1868) paintings and culture - carves out in bold relief a uniquely Japanese worldview through the rabbits that continually acquire new life irrespective of time period. Passages that freshly decipher the symbolic meaning of rabbits, as seen in late Edo period ink paintings collected in the Price Collection of America, allow readers to enjoy the author's skill as an art historian. On the other hand, the way in which she reports on the flavor of "face-down plump rabbit"-shaped Japanese sweets that she gobbles up, vividly conveys the fun of cultural studies sites. This is a fascinating volume that will get you thinking about the roots of Japanese tastes for all things *kawaii*. (Nozaki)

HISTORY

***Hikiagesha no sengo* [The Postwar Period for Repatriates]**

By Shimamura Takanori, ed.

Shin'yōsha, 2013. 188 x 134 mm. 416pp. ¥3,300. ISBN 978-4-7885-1333-4.

Modern Japan advanced into Taiwan, Korea, North-east China, Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, the South Sea Islands, etc. Many Japanese lived in these areas and formed societies. After Japan lost the war in 1945, it also lost its dominion over these lands and Japanese residents had to return home along with military troops and civilian personnel working for the military. There were about 6,600,000 people, half of whom were non-military civilians. These people are called "repatriates."

There were many repatriates who could not return to their hometowns. They spread out within Japan and created a new social space. Commercial spaces were created by repatriates and residential complexes were built for them. While their forms may have changed many continue

to exist as shopping centers and housing projects. According to repatriates, what distinguishes their "culture" is their "diet." Popular dishes of today, such as *ramen*, *gyoza* dumplings, etc., were brought back by repatriates.

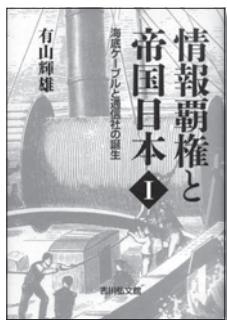
How did repatriates live in postwar Japan? Valuable testimonies have been discovered through investigations of diverse fieldwork. These testimonies make it clear that there are memories of various foreign experiences residing in Japanese society. (Yonahara)



Shimamura Takanori

Professor at Kansai Gakuin University, School of Sociology, Sociology Department. Specializing in Folklore Studies and Modern Folklore.

*The culture and
history of Japan's
repatriates*



Ariyama Teruo

Born in 1943. Professor at Tokyo Keizai University, School of Communication. Specializing in History of Modern Japanese Media. Published *Kindai Nihon no media to chiiki shakai* [Modern Japanese Media and Regional Communities], etc.

Challenges and failures of the Japanese Empire, based on its communications

Jōhō haken to teikoku Nihon I II **[Information Hegemony and Imperial Japan vols. 1 and 2]**

By Ariyama Teruo

Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2013. 190 x 136 mm. 483 pp. ¥4,700. ISBN 978-4-642-03823-2.

Along with colonial expansion by Western powers came a battle for information network hegemony. Since England's success in laying underwater telegraph lines in the mid-19th century, there was a cable route that connected Asia and the West by the end of the 19th century.

Along with transmission techniques, one pillar of information hegemony was the establishment of news agencies that specialized in the distribution of information. Before long the spearhead of expansion pointed towards the opening of Japan. At first, Japan failed to recognize the fact that it was the distribution of information itself that could influence power relations between nations and Japan was all too easily swallowed up by English information supremacy.

Then Japan aggressively pursued tech-

nological innovations and media organizations. In addition, after World War I, wireless communications were developed and communication autonomy became more complex. With an eye to the acquisition of concessions in East Asia – and despite challenging information supremacy centered in Western Europe – in the end, Japan's intelligence goals broke down due to the loss of the war in 1945.

After sifting through a mass of materials, the author has investigated, in great detail, modern Japan's self-recognition and foreign recognition. The structural non-symmetricalness of international information flows is a modern subject that is also under the microscope in this book. (Yonahara)

ARCHITECTURE

Isamu Noguchi to Moerenuma kōen **[Isamu Noguchi and Moerenuma Park]**

By Kawamura Jun'ichi, Saitō Kōji

Gakugei Shuppansha, 2013. 186 x 130 mm. 272pp. ¥2,400. ISBN 978-4-7615-2558-3.

Moerenuma Park is a large park in suburban Sapporo with an area of about 100 hectares. Originally a marsh that was filled in with garbage sent out from the city, world renowned American artist Isamu Noguchi proactively participated in a transformation that brought this park project to life for Sapporo residents.

However, at the stage where simple blue-prints had been made and the overall plan was being considered, Noguchi suddenly passed away. This book is nothing short of a record of the hard-fought battle surrounding the process of making said plan into a reality – as Japanese participants remained fully cognizant of Noguchi's aims – up until the park's completion in 2005. Within Sapporo City Hall there were administrative officials who had expressed a deep understanding of Nogu-

chi's project and, despite a succession of Mayors and the worsening of city finances, were able to give the construction plan continuances. As far as the details for the overall design were concerned, it fell to local architects and not those from Tokyo. Television and other media also supported the project. We can be certain that all of these various favorable conditions contributed to the realization of this miraculous project. But, above all, this book tells us how important participants' love for an artist's work – and their enthusiasm for putting a plan into practice – can be for the continuation of this type of regional cultural project. (Karube)



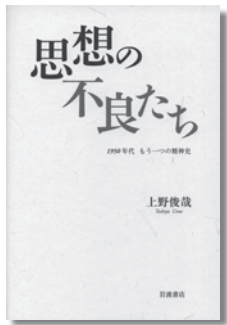
Kawamura Jun'ichi

Born in 1948. Architect. Winner of the Good Design Award for his design supervision work at Moerenuma Park, etc.

Saitō Kōji

Born in 1947. Landscape designer. Winner of the Good Design Award for his design supervision work at Moerenuma Park, etc.

Moere Numa Park is epoch-making public art



Ueno Toshiya

Born in 1962. Professor at Wakō University, Faculty of Expression Studies, Department of Transcultural Studies. Specializes in the history of social thought and cultural studies. Representative works include *Diaspora no shikō* [*Diaspora Thought*], etc.

*A rereading of
1950's intellectuals'
thought*

***Shisō no furyōtachi* [Those with Delinquent Thoughts]**

By Ueno Toshiya

Iwanami Shoten, 2013. 190 x 134 mm. 328pp. ¥2,800. ISBN 978-4-00-025891-3.

In recent years there has been increasing interest surrounding the 1950's in historical research on modern Japan. Once the political and social reforms of the occupation period were complete, Japan took its first steps as an independent country. However, it was an era of chaos, and Japan had still not arrived at a period of rapid economic growth and One Party Dominant Rule based around the Liberal Democratic Party. In this book Ueno delves into the ideas of prominent intellectuals – such as Tsurumi Shunsuke, Hanada Kiyoteru, Kida Minoru, and Abe Kōbō – to look at the wealth of possibilities contained within this era.

The philosopher Tsurumi Shunsuke, based on his unique understanding of pragmatism, rejected an extreme dichotomy of values and, within ambiguity and

diversity, sought out the possibilities of coexistence between heterogeneous individuals. It is safe to say that such flexible thought patterns were shared, in their own unique way, by each of the other three intellectuals. Ueno focuses on this and finds - within the thought of the 1950's - attractive shared elements with post-modern French thought.

Ueno does not speak much about how the thought of these intellectuals was inherited after they had passed through their golden age of activity. However, we get a sense of Ueno's strong conviction that in the 21st century - where there seems to be a strengthening of social control and conformism - there is meaning to rereading these intellectuals' thought. (Karube)

MANGA

***Watashi no Uchū* - vol. 1 [My Uchū]**

By Noda Ayako

Shōgakukan, 2013. 182 x 128 mm. 216 pp. ¥590. ISBN 978-4-09-188630-9.

The stage for this manga is a completely normal high school located in a town somewhere in modern Japan. Here, the story is moved along by a girl who is attracted to the mysterious aura of a youngster named Hoshino Uchū – around whom the story revolves –, by his younger twin brother, and the boys and girls in Uchū's class. Looking just at this setup, one could say that this is nothing more than a simple schoolboy tale.

But, this work is definitely not your normal manga because the characters mentioned above realize that they are, in fact, characters in a manga. They are aware of the regard of the reader and sometimes raise their voices in protest to these outsiders. In addition, they also know that the youngster called Uchū is the protagonist and they choose actions

that are appropriate to characters in a story. If we take the meta-fiction genre as an example, this is an experimental manga that should be termed a “meta-comic.” Only the first volume has been released, but there is an inexhaustible interest in how the story will unfold from here. (Karube)



Noda Ayako

Manga Author. 2011 winner of the IKKI New Face Award for Samejima san [*Mr. Samejima*].

*An ordinary high
school story, but
also an experimen-
tal manga work*

No. 7: Oda Sakunosuke and Osaka

Oda Sakunosuke was born in Osaka in 1913. In this work we see the tactics and style of the author, as well as being introduced to the popular foods, lands, and stores that commoners frequented in Oda's hometown of Osaka.

Oda Sakunosuke's representative work, *Meoto zenzai* [trans. *Hurray For Marriage, or Sweet Beans for Two!*] begins with "one sen tempura." Deep fried burdock root, lotus root, sardines, etc., are all sold at small stalls near the entrance to an alley and even though these foods are quite cheap — costing only one sen each — they are hot from the deep-fryer and thus quite delicious.

Oda's story begins with Ryūkichi and Chōko's budding romance and then moves through their deepening physical relationship, which includes all the typical quarrels between a man and a woman. During a period of indecision regarding whether to stay together or not, the couple comes to find some mutually common ground. The tale concludes when Ryūkichi and Chōko happily go to eat "*meoto zenzai*" (sweet red-bean soup) on the grounds of the Hōzen-ji temple. That means that the story begins with tempura and ends with sweet red bean soup.

Various foods actually appear throughout this story. As a matter of fact, Ryūkichi and Chōko's love affair began when they went out to get some "tasty food." In addition, Ryūkichi has the nickname "Doteyaki-san," because he loves two *sen doteyaki* (pork-rind miso stew) from night stalls. He also knows, incredibly well, all sorts of "tasty foods" such as, boiled tofu from Kōzu, loach soup and whale hide soup found beside the Sogō Department Store in Ebisubashi, broiled eel from Dōtonbori Aioibashi Higashizume, octopus from Nihonbashi, Kantō-style *oden* from the grounds of Hōzen-ji temple, tuna rolls from a sushi restaurant in Sennichi-mae, *kayaku-meshi* (rice cooked with meat or fish and vegetables), a soup made from the lees leftover during the sake-making process that he found at a restaurant just across from the sushi place, ...

All of these succulent dishes are described at the be-

ginning of the story. And foods and stores just continue to appear, one after another, as if they were on parade: *sanshō konbu* from the Oguraya in Ebisubashi, egg curry rice from Jiyū-ken in Rakutenchi-yoko, a rice cake shop in front of Chikurin-ji temple, *kayaku-meshi* and a scorpion fish in red miso soup from a stand at Futatsuido market, *sukiyaki* from Maruman in Ebisubashi, ... If I were to open a map of Osaka and write all the name of these stores down, a strange topographical map of Osaka foods would appear.

Of course, all of this is due to the plot of the story. With the main character being nicknamed "Doteyaki-san" it is not surprising that a story develops whereby, no matter where "Doteyaki" goes, similarly inexpensive and tasty foods appear like good friends. The place where the main couples' loving romance develops is Osaka's *shita-machi*/run-down district and when the story attempts to narrate the manners and customs of these areas, it is the *kui daore* (extravagance in food that leads one to ruin) landmark-like names of Osaka's well-known food stores that naturally appear.

Aside from the natural link between the main character and food, which accompanies the composition of this work, there is no doubt that Oda had something specific in mind. And why should he not hand the plot over to food?

Mainstream modern Japanese literature has been based around the "I-novel" (*shishōsetsu*) for a long time. Only novels that dwell on private situations and mental states are considered "pure literature" and it was Shiga Naoya, at the summit of the so-called "pure literature hierarchy," who sternly governed this new literary world. In *Kanōsei no bungaku* [Literature of the Possible], it is Oda who writes with unbridled sarcasm that,

Due to decades of concentrated effort on the evolution of the pious minded "I-novel," the Japanese literary world has greatly contributed to the regression of the novel itself and has also achieved wonderful success at moving away from modern literary thought.

While single-mindedly working on crafting narratives, authors of the "I-novel" woefully spell out everyday lives that are neither interesting nor funny. Oda sharply questions what kind of potential there is for literature that seeks shelter in such "arts and crafts-like psychological novels."

When Oda titled his novel after well-known food found on the grounds of Hōzen-ji temple in Osaka, and then went on to make a couple who eats out insatiably and has great passion for foods — one more than the other — as its main characters, readers knew that this was already meant to be an intense criticism of literature at the time.



Bustle of Dōtonbori Shopping Street in Osaka. (From the collection of the Osaka at Night website.)

If Oda's *Meoto zen'ai* is a topography of Osaka food, it is safe to say that his other work, *Ki no miyako* [trans. *City of Trees*], is "a topography of place names."

* People say Osaka is a city with no trees, but when I think back to my childhood I find I have a remarkable number of memories that involve trees.

Oda starts out his story like this and then goes on to list certain places one after another: Ikutama Shrine, Kitamukai Hachiman, Nakaderamachi, Genseiji-zaka, and Kuchinawa-zaka. These appear in the first paragraph. Oda continues on to mention Sennichi-mae, Kōzu, Ikutama, and Yūhigaoka. Then, after Senba and Shimano-uchi, Oda references streets like Kōzu Omotemonsuji, Ikutama Babasaki, and Nakadera-machi Gataro Alley. After telling us about a number of slopes, Oda goes on to speak about one specific slope, mentioning that, "at the top of the slope was an alley. Once you emerged from the alley, you could turn south and go toward Shitenō-ji temple, north to Ikutama Shrine."

Right where Gataro Alley turned north, stores were constructed, one after another, as if they were lined up in a catalog along this strangely named street.

* Next to the geta store was the drugstore, and next to the drugstore was the public bath. Next to the public bath was the barbershop. Next to the barber shop was the store selling Buddhist articles. Next to the store selling Buddhist articles was the man who makes tubs and pails. Next to the man who makes tubs and pails was the man who makes nameplates. Next to the man who makes nameplates...

Following this, the story continues on to the festival at Aizen-dō in Yūhigaoka and the summer festival in Ikutama Shrine. The chosen place names begin creating features of the city based on one obvious conviction — these are not just place names. The humanity nurtured by Osaka townsfolk culture coils thickly about these places. With that, this absurd fiction is allowed to become lively at last and the story starts to self-develop. This topography of Osaka's place names, which forms the premise of *Kanōsei no Bungaku*, is equal to a daily calendar for writing novels the way they should be written.

Ado balūn [Advertising Balloons], published a year before Oda's death, interweaves Osaka's topography of foods and places like two white and red threads and it was a novel that only a native of Osaka like Oda could have written. The story is about a boy, whose father is a *rakugo* comedian, who comes back to Osaka after having been shuttled off to a foster family soon after his birth.

When you pass through the rear gate of Kōzu Shrine, right there is a bridge called Umenoki-bashi.

A closed down old store on the other side of that bridge became, for the time being, the boy's house. He

* These passages are cited from Burton Watson, trans., *Stories of Osaka Life / Oda Sakunosuke* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).



wandered aimlessly about the neighborhood as if trying to form a connection with the place.

Out the house and through the torii at the front gate you were already on Kōzu Omotemonsuji slope.

After reaching the top of the slope, on the south side there was a sweet red bean soup store called "Kanidon." You could see the north gate of Ikutama Shrine from the alley that descended the slope and in that vicinity there was a store selling metal lanterns, a store selling foxes carved from stone, a store selling coin purses made from bagworm cases, a caterer, an oil merchant, and a public bath.

If one descends the slope and turns north, then goes through the market and turns west, "there is a store selling blackened fur seal meat, a traditional charred medicine store selling charred monkey skulls and seahorses, a drugstore selling Thunberg's geranium and fishwort, and — thinking there are a lot of drugstores around here — there are also a lot of stores selling rulers and scales and two wells fronting the store selling *iwaokoshi*."

Just down the road, "the small house with low, sad-looking eaves" sold three-colored sweet rice jellies, and across from that house unsold white pounded fish cakes floated on water at the *kamaboko* store. A wild boar hung upside down at the store selling wild boar meat and, when passing the kelp merchant, the smell of stewing salted kelp assailed one's nose.

Now, are the tactics and styles of Oda Sakunosuke the writer clearly visible? Just in case they are not, let's take a look at the description of night stalls along the street that runs south to north from the corner of Asahi-za in Dōtonbori to Konpira-dōri in Sennichi-mae that was described in *Ado balūn*. "There is an *imagawayaki* vendor next to the toy vendor, next to the *imagawayaki* vendor is the vendor selling magic tricks, revolving lanterns have pictures of crickets, pine crickets, and giant katydids drawn on the interior and these red lanterns are hanging on the insect vendor's stall, next to the insect vendor the *mitarashi dango* vendor is selling glaze-drizzled Gion *dango*. Which vendor is next to the *mitarashi dango* vendor?"

There is a caramelized nut vendor, who also has *konpeitō* and hard candies in glass containers, next to that is the *tai-yaki* vendor selling hot-from-the-grill *taiyaki* — filled to the tail with sweet *azuki* beans and wrapped in a piece of newspaper — but they too hot to hold. And then, clay crafts, wooden crafts, *ezōshi*, pogs, glass winking discs, fireworks, globefish skin lanterns, megalopteras, fans, calendars, *ranchū* goldfish, geta thongs, wind-bells...”

In a word, this is the addition technique. Under the guise of being “pure,” the personal psychological novel

was trivialized and weakened using subtraction techniques. As if to ridicule this, Oda Sakunosuke kept impudently telling humanistic Osaka tales while employing ceaseless addition styles. The fact that possibilities for richness lie with addition rather than subtraction is a concept, not limited to literature, which even children can understand.

(Ikeuchi Osamu, essayist and scholar of German literature)

Events and Trends

Japanese Novels: Speed Translation

The novels of popular modern Japanese writers Higashino Keigo and Isaka Kōtarō are being “speed translated” in East Asian countries like Korea, China, and Taiwan. When newly published works come out in Japan, requests for their translation appear almost immediately. There are even cases where the translated versions of such books come out in less than six months.

The Korean translation of Higashino Keigo’s newly published *Shippū Rondo* [Stormy Rondo] (Jitsugyō no Nihon Sha) was published in Korea in January, 2014. This means that the translation was produced just a month and a half after it was published in Japan last November. In Korea there are many fans who eagerly await Higashino Keigo’s new works.

Higashino’s works are steadily popular in Korea and China and many of his major works, beginning with his *Galileo* series, have been translated.

Concerned with the cultivation of Asian readers, Isaka Kōtarō, known for works such as *Gōruden surambā* [trans. *Remote Control*], participated in exchange events with fans in Taiwan in August of last year. A total of twenty works by Isaka have been translated in China, Taiwan, and Korea.

There is particularly deep interest in the works of Murakami Haruki. Translations of his *Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to, Kare no Junrei no Toshi* [trans. *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki*

and *His Years of Pilgrimage*] (Bungei Shunjū) came out in three months for Korea and in six for China.

Authors who have won the Akutagawa Prize and Naoki Prize are highly regarded in China and Korea. For instance, translation requests for Oyama Hiroko’s *Ana* [Hole] (Shinchōsha), which won the Akutagawa Prize in January, came flying in immediately after the prize was received.

According to the *Shuppan nenkan* [Publishing Year-Book] (Shuppan Nyusu Sha), translated Japanese novels in Korea numbered seven hundred eighty-one in 2012. That is enough to have an entire Japanese literature section in Seoul’s huge bookstores.

On the other hand, Japanese literature translation in the West has been fighting an uphill battle, with only Murakami Haruki being widely known. In the West, where commercial success is a prerequisite, it is not easy to turn the translation of Japanese literature into a reality.

From last year The Japan Foundation, along with specialists including Numano Mitsuyoshi, a professor of the University of Tokyo, has put together a recommended list of Japanese literary works for translation called “Worth Sharing” and they are currently distributing it to foreign publishers.

Mishima Yukio: Nobel Prize Candidate

Based on new documents from the

Swedish Academy’s selection committee, revealed on January 3rd, it is now clear that novelist Mishima Yukio (1925-1970) was first nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature in 1963. It is also clear that Mishima, noted for his technical talent, was among the six candidates in the final selection.

The fact that Mishima was a Literature candidate was first formally recognized in records released by the Academy based on a request by Kyodo News. According to these documents in 1963 the total number of literature candidates was eighty. There were four Japanese candidates. Aside from Mishima, novelists included Tanizaki Junichirō and Kawabata Yasunari.

Anders Österling, head of the selection committee at that time, gave Mishima high praise by noting that, “Among the Japanese candidates he has the greatest chance of receiving the award.” Österling also stated that with *The Banquet* [trans. *Utage no ato*], “His technical talents can be recognized.” In addition, Mishima’s recommender was Dutch East Asian scholar and Professor at Yale University, Johannes Rahder (1898-1988).

The six candidates for the 1963 Nobel Prize in Literature, including Mishima, were whittled down to Greek poet Giorgos Seferis, Anglo-American poet W.H. Auden, and Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (winner in 1971). In the end, it was Giorgos Seferis who received the Nobel Prize.

Shōwa Tennō jitsuroku [Records of the Shōwa Emperor] Unedited

With its completion in March, we have an unobstructed view of the activities and daily words and deeds of the Emperor as recorded in *Shōwa Tennō jitsuroku*.

A “*jitsuroku*” is a written record based on various documents that are released after an Emperor’s death. In 1990, the year following the Emperor’s death, the task of editing began and it has continued through listening to close advisers, combing over the lord chamberlain’s diary, etc.

The record is structured chronologically, from the Emperor’s birth in 1901 to the end of his Imperial Mourning Ceremony in 1990. When the manuscript was almost written, and as it moved toward a completion date in mid-March, the examination work of leading members of the Imperial Household Agency and responsible staff continued. The completed *jitsuroku* will be presented to the Emperor as a “*sōteihon*,” or “humbly presented document,” sometime after April. From next year, a publisher will be chosen and it will be published sequentially over several years. The number of volumes, including the index, is expected to reach twenty.

When the *Taishō Tennō jitsuroku* was opened to the public it had many sections that were edited in black ink and there were critical voices saying that this was “a sacrilege to history.” This time there is a policy to open the entire document to the public. Kaizaoka Noriyuki, Grand Steward of the Imperial Household Agency, writes that, “with the passage of time, there are those who think that what could not be released thirty years ago, can now be released.”

A Collection of Manuscripts in Dazai Osamu’s Own Hand: DVD Edition

Dazai Osamu’s draughts and a collection of his manuscripts, held by The Museum of Modern Japanese Literature, have been published in a work entitled, *A Collection of Dazai Osamu jikihitsu genkōshū DVD ban* [Manuscripts in Dazai Osamu’s

Own Hand: DVD Edition].

“Dazai Osamu’s Library,” from the same Museum, was established in 1987 based around two hundred thirty-three Dazai Osamu documents presented his wife, Michiko. Among thirty-three important handwritten documents, there are completed full-length novels that are representative of Dazai’s literature, such as *Ningen shikkaku* [trans. *No Longer Human*] and *Shayō* [trans. *The Setting Sun*] and one can peruse seventy percent of extant Dazai handwritten documents in this “Library.”

The DVD edition has three discs containing 22 draughts/handwritten documents and 34 preliminary draughts/notes. Based on what is contained within these discs you can approach Dazai’s handwritten documents in your own home. In particular, there are rough drafts added to completed manuscripts, such as *No Longer Human*, *Setting Sun*, and *Goodbye*, so you are able to search out “the path” that led to these completed works. The three discs are sold by Yūshōdō Shoten for ¥90,000.

Murakami Haruki Changes a Town Name in a Novel

Town council members from Hokkaido’s Nakatonbetsuchō — around which author Murakami Haruki’s short-story revolves — protested. Mr. Murakami commented on the 7th of February that, “if I made the people who live there feel unpleasant, that is truly regrettable, and I am sorry for that.” He then displayed his intention to change Nakatonbetsuchō’s name when the short-story is turned into a book.

The novel being discussed was the short-story *Doraibu mai kā* [trans. *Drive My Car*], which was printed in the December 2012 issue of the monthly magazine *Bungeishunjū*. After seeing a female driver from Nakatonbetsuchō throw her lit cigarette butt out the window, the protagonist had the impression that, “Perhaps that is something that everyone from Nakatonbetsuchō normally does.” To which the six town council members objected, replying that, “There is nothing normal about it.”

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Nakamura Fuminori: Recipient of an American Literature Award

In 2014, at the age of thirty-six, author Nakamura Fuminori became the first Japanese author to win the American literature award known as the “David Goodis Award.” The award was established in 2008. A group of mystery authors and editors elect, once every two years, authors who contribute to Noir novels (hard-boiled type crime).

Nakamura’s works *Suri* [trans. *The Thief*] (2009) and *Aku to Kamen no Rūru* [trans. *Evil and the Mask*] (2010) were translated into English. *Aku to Kamen no Rūru* was also nominated for the Horror Writers of America’s Bram Stoker Award.

Also, Nakamura’s work was selected for last year’s “The Ten Best Mysteries of 2013” by the Wall Street Journal. Actually, two years in a row his brilliance has shown, as he was selected for the Wall Street Journal’s “Best of Fiction 2012” for *The Thief*.

Passing Down Citizen's Voices for Posterity

Driven by the strong conviction that what is not recorded will never be remembered, Mori Mayumi started keeping an online diary of what she saw and heard each day, following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

The acclaimed writer penned details of her immediate surroundings, such as disconnected telephone lines that prevented her from reaching friends in a village near Fukushima, and local elementary school children walking home while all wearing protective hoods. She later edited the blog diary for the publication of a paperback, *Shinsai Nichiroku* [Quake Daily Record].

"I believe it's very valuable for future generations to have written documents concerning what we witness rather than what we think," Mori asserts. "The trifling daily matters of today will be easily lost in the mists of time, unless recorded."

In this book, Mori also depicts how people in the afflicted area tried to rebuild their lives, and how she supported the sufferers at the grassroots level, by leading a campaign to use slates, which had survived the tsunami, on the roof of the newly renovated Tokyo Station. Mori has successfully managed to record the victim's real voices, because she has friends in the region. Here she had rented a second-house and farmland to grow vegetables with such friends.

In fact, her expertise is deep listening and fine writing. Over a quarter-century, Mori has sat and listened to the personal histories of ordinary citizens from in and around her hometown of Yanaka, Nezu and Sendagi in modern day Tokyo. These districts, or Yanesen for short, are known for preserving the townscape of the Edo-period.

In 1984, together with her friends, who are mainly housewives, and a sister, Mori launched a community magazine featuring the lives and obituaries of local residents in Yanesen. She did everything from reporting and writing to editing and hand-delivering copies to subscribers, all while raising three children.

"Real culture lies in the ordinary citizen's way of life, or their attitude towards life," Mori stresses. "Great paintings, novels and performing arts, created by a small cadre of elites, represent just the tip of the iceberg. I want to unearth a huge volume of precious cultural resources beneath that surface."

While Mori and her colleagues stopped publishing the print issue of their quarterly magazine, they still keep residents updated through a website.

Besides the magazine project, the tireless Mori has written nearly 60 books in the past 30 years. Given her admission that she likes to "read and write biographies," it is no surprise that most of her earlier works are critical biographies of prominent authors like Mori Ōgai, Higuchi Ichiyō, Natsume Sōseki, who once lived in the Yanesen area.

Ōgai no saka [Ōgai's Hilly Streets](see JBN No. 22), for example, is now considered a "must-read" for understanding the great Meiji-era writer, as Mori assiduously followed the footsteps of the people close to him, shedding new light on his world. The book won the Ministry

of Education's Newcomer Award for Fine Arts in 1997.

Her most recent book, *Seitō no bōken* [The Adventures of a Blue Stocking](see JBN No. 79), is another groundbreaking piece, which examines Japan's first literary journal run by young feminists. Unlike other studies, which tend to overly praise the courageous movement by Hiratsuka Raichō and her fellow feminists, Mori carefully evaluates the quality of each woman's writing, along with their attitudes toward publishing. Such thorough observation could only be carried out by someone like Mori, who took a similar path to the Blue Stocking in creating and running a magazine with an all-female team.

"Overall, our magazine is superior to theirs, but I am deeply inspired by Raichō's fearless way of pursuing her own path," says Mori, who could have met Raichō when she was a teenager but missed the chance.

Out of regret, Mori, who attended the same all-women's high school 70 years after Raichō, now tries to meet as many senior high school alumni as possible in order to hear their stories. "These women are elites, but the talents of many of them fail to see the light of day, as they are left out at work, or their research is unjustly underrated," Mori laments. "I hope that I can contribute to building a sound and vigorous stage on which Japanese women can live freely through my writings," she adds.

Mori is unyielding in her description of how she frantically works, while raising children and running a household all alone. Her non-fiction, *Yanesen no bōken* [Adventures in Yanesen], and her essay collection, *Hinraku gurashi* [Poor-Fun Living], have become a source of energy for young women in present-day Japan.

It has not all been smooth sailing though. An unexplained autoimmune disease struck Mori in 2007, sending her to the brink of vision loss. After battling the disease for two full years, she managed to recover, but still suffers from occasional headaches and dim sight.

"When I wrote *Ōgai no saka*, I read almost all the research papers and related documents possible, but now I cannot do that," Mori confesses. "I have to slow down, but I want to keep interviewing people," as recording oral history is her lifelong fascination.

Instead of becoming a novelist, Mori says she chose to be a nonfiction writer, because she wants her books to be used as historical materials in the future. That's why she intentionally leaves many direct quotes in her work, she adds.

"Just as wine matures in the cellar, the value of my books will be enhanced over time," Mori smiles.

(Kawakatsu Miki, freelance writer)



Mori Mayumi

Born in 1954. A nonfiction author, essayist, editor, and civil-rights activist. Graduated from Waseda University, where she majored in political science and economics. Founded and ran the local magazine for 26 years until 2009. Works include the award-winning *Ōgai no saka* and "*Sokkyō shijin*" *no Italia* ['An improvisatory poet in' Italy].