JAPANESE BOOK NEWS

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FALL 2014

Japanese Book News is published quarterly by the Japan Foundation mainly to provide publishers, editors, translators, scholars, and librarians with up-to-date information about publishing trends in Japan and brief descriptions of the content of selected new books. The opinions and views expressed in the essays and new title summaries are not necessarily those of the Japan Foundation or the Advisory Board.

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JAPANFOUNDATION 国際交流基金

Two Other Centennials: Taishō Democracy and Maruyama Masao

Karube Tadashi

This year, 2014, marks the centennial of the outbreak of World War I. As we reflect upon the one hundred years since, we are reminded that it is also the centennial of publication of an essay that triggered the era of "Taishō Democracy" in Japan, when democratic thinking and institutions had a short-lived heyday, and of the birth of Maruyama Masao (1914–1996), a leader of the vigorous debate about democracy that flourished in the postwar period.

Few would doubt the tremendous impact of that war throughout the world on the history of the twentieth century. It was a total war in which the entire populace of nations became embroiled in the fighting. In terms of the international order, power and influence ceased to be limited to the European powers with the role of the United States becoming a force that could not be ignored. The trend towards democracy began to spread and nationalism flourished in the Eastern European and Asian regions. The latest trends in European and American culture were quick to spread throughout the entire world. As the force that brought these changes all at once to countries all over the world, World War I was surely the greatest event of the twentieth century.

For Japan, World War I did not deliver as much of a shock as it did to the nations of Europe—at least this is what the historians tell us. For instance, in *Fukugō sensō to sōryokusen no dansō: Nihon ni totte no Daiichiji Sekai Taisen* [Between Composite War and Total War: World War I and Japan] (Jinbun Shoin, 2011), Yamamuro Shin'ichi points out that, at the time, Japanese thought of the first world war as a "distant war." Based on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Japan was a member of the Allied Powers, but as compared with European countries whose territories were turned into battlefields, military action as far as Japan was concerned was limited to the capture of China's Shandong Peninsula, formerly controlled by Germany, and occupation of various German-controlled islands in the South Pacific. The war did briefly stimulate the domestic economy, producing a short-term boom that spawned the emergence of a nouveau riche profiting from the war; but once the war ended, the boom receded, ruining many of the war nouveau riche. Thus, Yamamuro argues, World War I left only the faintest of impressions on the Japanese historical memory.

If we think beyond just Japan's memories of the war, widening our perspective and turning our gaze toward the ideological changes brought about by world war and the political changes resulting from those changes, the effect of World War I on Japan was by no means small. One important text that demonstrates the traces of its influence was the essay published at the end of 1915 by political theorist Yoshino Sakuzō (1878–1933) entitled, "Kensei no hongi o toite sono yūshū no bi o nasu no michi o ronzu" ["On the Meaning of Constitutional Government and the Methods by Which It Can Be Perfected"] (hereafter "Meaning of Constitutional Government"). After its publication, this work became famous as having led the way in the tide of so-called "Taishō Democracy," the democratization movement of Japanese politics in the 1920s. If we ignore the one-year difference we can say that 2014 is the centennial of "Taishō Democracy."

At the beginning of this long essay Yoshino pointed out that all civilized nations were moving away from "autocratic rule by aristocrats" toward "the rule of law" (that is to say, democracy). He declared that this was the "world trend" of the times, and a change that could no longer be pushed back. Japan could not go on unconnected to such a "world trend." We would be missing his point to take Yoshino's argument to mean that he recommended that the Japanese people merely follow along on the latest worldwide trend. It was a time of the growth of long-distance transportation, the print media, and the telegraph, meaning that information had started to be exchanged very rapidly and in large quantities throughout the world. Yoshino's "Meaning of Constitutional Government" essay was published in *Chūō kōron*, which was then one of Japan's leading journals of opinion.

Of course, if we compare that era to the globalization of today, the volume of culture that crossed borders and circulated in the world was much smaller. Moreover, those within Japan who were in contact with such recent cultural trends of other parts of the world were limited to the literate members of society. However, from around the time of World War I, communication across national borders had progressed by leaps and bounds when compared to the nineteenth century. In using the expression "world trend," Yoshino aimed to show that democratic ideas would spread through these information networks and, inasmuch as Japan was incorporated into those networks, efforts toward democracy were a part of human affairs that could not be avoided. In recognizing the onset of this early era of globalization, Yoshino saw democratization as an important task of the new era.

Yoshino's idea of Japanese politics as moving towards democratization was meant to break away from the domination of government by bureaucrats who had

played a central role in the regime change of 1868 and push forward reform in Japan as long as it was consistent with the 1889 Constitution of the Japanese Empire. Specifically, Yoshino proposed that a universal suffrage system be introduced and, along with broadening the range of those who could participate in the political process to include ordinary citizens, he called for organization of cabinets by the political party that held the majority in the Diet, change in cabinets based on results of elections, and establishment of the custom of the Party-Cabinet system. Yoshino's proposal corresponded to the demands of ordinary citizens who were becoming politically aware at the time.

After that, the movement for universal suffrage among ordinary citizens gained momentum, and in 1925, universal suffrage was established and the Party-Cabinet system became a reality. Yoshino's ideas alone were not such as to have set in motion the tide of "Taishō Democracy," but "Meaning of Constitutional Government," as providing a clearly articulated program for political change, certainly had a major impact.

The fact of Japanese history is, however, that this period of democracy did not continue for long. As the 1930s began, Japan was actively initiating war on the continent and the democratization movement lost ground as the government came to be controlled by the military and the bureaucracy. However, after Japan was defeated in World War II, bold institutional reforms were carried out under the U.S.-led Allied Occupation (1945–1952) to bring about democratization in Japan. That the newly promulgated democratic constitution and the political system based upon it were maintained even after the end of the Occupation and became firmly established, was definitely a result of the "Taishō Democracy" experience of the 1920s. In that sense, in any reconsideration of Japanese democracy, it is worth being aware of the "centennial" of Taishō Democracy as its starting point.

The year 2014 is also the centennial of the birth of Maruyama Masao, a leading member of the group of intellectuals who led discussion of democratic thought in the postwar period. In Japan right after World War II, many intellectuals called for not just reform of the democratic system, but for change in the mindset of ordinary citizens. Their efforts in the discussion of ideas can be said to have made a major contribution to the establishment of democracy in postwar Japan. What this group of intellectuals asserted would later be called "postwar democracy," and the most prominent among them was Maruyama.

The important characteristic of Maruyama's ideas was the combination of active encouragement of popular participation in politics measured with stern skepticism of mass democracy. Political historian Mitani Taichirō discusses this aspect of Maruyama's thought in *Gakumon wa genjitsu ni ika ni kakawaru ka* [In What Way is Scholarship Connected to Reality?] (University of Tokyo Press, 2013). The "autonomy of the individual" could be threatened not just by the authority of the state but also by "the collective power of the masses themselves," which can suppress individuals as a minority. Hence, what is indispensable for democracy to be viable is not only political participation but the element of liberalism that assures the diversity of individuals. These were the ideas that Maruyama advocated for postwar Japan. Amid the tide of globalization generated by World War I, Yoshino Sakuzō sought the expansion of popular political participation, helping to articulate the ideals that inspired "Taishō Democracy." Born in that time of seminal ideas, Maruyama Masao after the end of World War II led the debate on "postwar democracy," scrutinizing the tension between democracy and liberalism. The year 2014 offers a signal opportunity for remembering these two figures as we consider the future of Japan's democracy.

Karube Tadashi

Professor, University of Tokyo Graduate School of Legal and Political Studies. Among his major works are: Maruyama Masao and the Fate of Liberalism in Twentieth-Century Japan *(International House of Japan, 2008; translation of* Maruyama Masao: Riberarisuto no shōzō*, which was the winner of the 2006 Suntory Prize for Social Science and Humanities),* Kagami no naka no hakumei *[Twilight in a Mirror] (Mainichi Book Review Award in 2010), and* Rekishi to iu hifu *[The Skin That Is History] (Iwanami Shoten in 2011). Karube is a member of the* Japanese Book News *Advisory Board.*

FICTION

Ikezawa Natsuki

Born in 1945. Novelist and poet. Awarded the Akutagawa Prize for Sutiru raifu *[trans.* Still Lives*] in 1988. Won the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize for* Mashiasu giri no shikkyaku *[trans.* The Navidad Incident: The Downfall of Matías Guili*] (See* JBN *5). He is a member of the selection committees for the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize.*

Breaking through the mechanisms of the surveillance society

Atomikku bokkusu
[Atomic Box]
By Ikezawa Natsuki

Mainichi Newspapers, 2014. 194 x 134 mm. 464 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-620-10801-8.

In Japan after the end of World War II, an atomic bomb was being covertly developed. A woman who believed her father had lived his whole life as a respectable fisherman finds out that he was involved in the project. When she tries to find out more, she is followed by the police. The bold venture of one woman challenges the state at its very core. Solidarity among individuals turns out to have an impact on society as a whole. Ikezawa Natsuki vividly develops the multiple layers of his story in a light, seemingly effortless writing style. He is an expert storyteller, sweeping up the reader with one new situation after another as his story rapidly progresses.

Hidden within the networks that link one small fisherman's boat to another lies the wisdom and the means of resisting massive power. At the same time, the story unflinchingly chronicles the mechanisms of surveillance and control that grip today's society. This novel explores the possibilities for eluding such mechanisms and finding a breakthrough. The work leaves an exhilarating aftertaste, but it will no doubt be remembered as the author's direct challenge to the recent establishment of the Secret Information Protection Act. (Nozaki)

Ikari
[Rage]
By Yoshida Shūichi

Vol. I: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2014. 200 x 140 mm. 284 pp.¥1,200. ISBN 978-4-12-004586-8.
Vol. II: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2014. 200 x 140 mm. 260 pp. ¥1,200. ISBN 978-4-12-004587-5.

Who was the criminal who scrawled the character for "rage" at the scene of the murder? The story unfolds in three settings: at a fishing port in Chiba, on an isolated Okinawan island, and in the center of Tokyo. In each, a man from outside the community appears and develops ties with the people living there. Among the three, however, one appears to be a murderer filled with "rage." Each of the outsiders bears the special mark of the young killer—the "three moles on the right cheek."

Yoshida Shūichi is one of Japan's leading storytellers today. He holds the readers' interest firmly to the very end of the story while depicting three very different characters with consummate skill. The criminal, who eludes the law by changing his features by plastic surgery, is clearly based on the actual 2007 case of a 28-year-old man who murdered an Englishwoman in Japan.

Perhaps someone you have met is a murderer? Even though seized by doubt, those who appear in this story continue to crave love and believe in others. The novel vividly describes the bleakness of a society in which the bonds of traditional community have been lost and the intensity with which those who flounder within such a society desire such ties. The thrilling story is sustained throughout its length by the author's unflinching grasp of reality. (Nozaki)

Yoshida Shūichi

Born in 1968. Novelist. Won the Akutagawa Prize for Pāku raifu *[Park Life] in 2002. In 2007 won both the Mainichi Publishing Culture Award and the Osaragi Jirō Prize for his book* Akunin *[trans.* Villain*] (See* JBN *54). In 2010,* Yokomichi Yonosuke *[The Story of Yonosuke] received the Shibata Renzaburō Award.*

What does it mean to trust others?

Nakamura Fuminori

Born in 1977. Novelist. Awarded the 34th Shinchō Literary Prize for New Writers for Jū *[The Gun] in 2002. Won the 133rd Akutagawa Prize for* Tsuchi no naka no kodomo *[Child in the Ground] (See* JBN *47) in 2005. Received the David Goodis Award in 2014.*

Who decides the criteria of justice?

Kyonen no fuyu, kimi to wakare
[Last Winter We Parted]
By Nakamura Fuminori

Gentōsha, 2013. 190 x 128 mm. 192 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 978-4-344-02457-1.

Photographer Kiharazaka Yūta was sentenced to death for the crime of burning two girls to death. The first-person protagonist of the story goes to interview the condemned criminal and his sister Akari. Kiharazaka insists, however, that he was ensnared in the case, and had not killed anyone. As the investigation proceeds it is revealed that the sister Akari is not who she seems, and that the editor who assigned the protagonist to do a story about the case is also deeply involved.

Nakamura Fuminori is known for his talent in portraying the senses. His earlier thriller *Suri* [trans. *The Thief*] surprised readers with his way of expressing the sense of touch in words. This work, by contrast, minutely depicts the way an excessive sensibility of the visual sense can destroy a person's humanity.

The mystery elements of the story are elaborate, with a plot so complex that grasping its threads is almost impossible without rereading. The dramatic developments, intricate character relationships, and the surprise ending are obvious contrivances. What makes the reader really shudder is the dark malaise that lurks beneath the surface of the macabre murder.

Indeed, by the end of the story, we feel not exhilaration at seeing the mystery revealed, but a sense of overwhelming melancholy. What distinguishes this work from an ordinary mystery are serious themes not usually found in an entertainment-type novel: How far can passion for art be allowed to go? What is the nature of human conscience? And who decides on the criteria of right and wrong? (Chō)

Ran
[Brilliance]
By Setouchi Jakuchō

Shinchōsha, 2013. 192 x 138 mm. 252 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-10-311224-2.

Doll maker Uehara Hitomi receives news of the death of Ōe Akane, whom she has known for 40 years. Hitomi is thinking it strange that neither the cause nor age at death is noted when a long letter arrives from Akane's grandson Fujioka Eisuke. Akane had had a habit of saying that she didn't want to live to be an eighty-year-old woman, and as Hitomi reads Fujioka's letter, her premonition that her old friend has committed suicide is proven correct.

Akane, who had died at 79, was four years younger than Hitomi. She had first visited Hitomi in her mid-thirties, and though they were meeting for the first time, suddenly confessed to Hitomi all of her secret loves. Soon after that, Akane has sent her a long letter recounting with complete candor the series of love affairs she had had, beginning with a blind sixteen-year-old boy.

Like Akane, who had divorced her husband leaving her daughter behind, Hitomi had abandoned her child and run away with her lover. The two have lived very different lives, and the story develops as they continue their pursuit of love in old age.

In 2014, almost sixty years after the release of her debut novel, the 92-year-old Setouchi Jakuchō is Japan's oldest novelist. She continues to actively write and publish her work, and her portrayal of romantic feelings that can only be understood by a person of her age is impressive. Perhaps, the appearance of a genre of "elder love" story, like that for teenagers and young adults, is not far off. (Chō)

Setouchi Jakuchō

Born in 1922. Novelist and Buddhist nun of the Tendai sect. Won the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize in 1992 for Hana ni toe *[Ask the Flower]. Translated all ten volumes of* Genji monogatari *[The Tale of Genji] into modern Japanese in 1998. Wrote* Hika *[Hidden Flowers] (See* JBN *54) in 2007.*

A novel of elderly love

Itō Seikō

Born in 1961. He is engaged in a variety of fields as a novelist, actor, comedian, and lyricist. In 2013, he was awarded the 35th Noma Literary Prize for New Writers for Sōzō rajio *[Imagination Radio] (See* JBN *78). He was a candidate for the 150th Akutagawa Prize for* Hana ni hasami uchi *[Pincer Attack on the Nose].*

An ambitious, and ingenious short story anthology

Sonzai shinai shōsetsu [Fabricated Stories]

By Itō Seikō

Kōdansha, 2013. 188 x 134 mm. 274 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-06-218683-4.

Six authors' short stories set in Philadelphia, a remote village in Peru, Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo, Hong Kong, and a beach in Croatia are compiled in this anthology translated by Itō Seikō. Each story vividly depicts the fabric of human relationships and the ambience of the locale and each is accompanied by a lively commentary by Itō Seikō.

In reality, however, the work is a deliberate fabrication. All the stories were originally written by Itō Seikō and, as suggested by the title itself, no original works exist for these "translations." The author gives free rein to the art of "story" (*katari* 語り) as "fabrication" (*katari* 騙り). Itō Seikō is the author of *Sōzō rajio* (Imagination Radio) who portrayed the tragedy of the March 11, 2011 disaster through a bold setting in which those who perished tell their own story. In the present work, he makes an ambitious and playful attempt to reveal the fabrication of the genre of fiction itself, and his experiment beautifully succeeds.

Through the author's powers of imagination alone, characters that do not exist begin merrily to talk about themselves, filling the world with the polyphonic reverberations of their stories. This is the dynamic feeling that animates this ingenious collection of short stories. (Nozaki)

Watashi no naka no kanojo [The Girl Within]

By Kakuta Mitsuyo

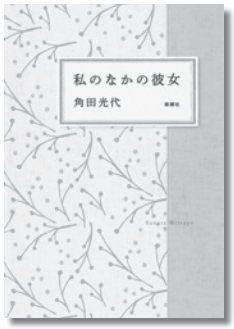
Shinchōsha, 2013. 194 x 136 mm. 294 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-10-434605-9.

Waka Honda enters an elite private university in Tokyo, where she becomes close to a student named Uchimura Sentarō who happens to be in her language class. Eventually they move in together. A manga character that Sentarō draws as his hobby gains a following, and suddenly he finds himself an "artist" whose work is being serialized in a comic magazine.

Waka, who had been thinking that she would marry Sentarō and become a housewife, finds herself cast in the shadows by Sentarō's success. Then Waka finds a novel written by her grandmother and, without realizing it, begins to write one too. Although her grandmother remained nameless, Waka's novel is recognized and she wins a prize for new writers.

Waka gradually becomes preoccupied with her writing and ceases to do the housework. Her role in the household changes, and Sentarō ends up doing the chores. It is not until Waka suffers a miscarriage that their relationship definitively breaks apart.

This novel stands out for its vivid portrayal of strained relations between the self and other. When personal independence is made the prerequisite for self-actualization, love and marriage become obstacles. Japanese women are still expected to play a considerable role in the home, so daily life always harbors the possibility of a life crisis. Behavior that seems natural to one person may hurt another and damage what bonds have been formed. This reality is depicted in the relationship between lovers, in the ties among family members, and through the occupation of a writer. (Chō)



Kakuta Mitsuyo

Born in 1967. Awarded the Naoki Prize for Taigan no kanojo *[trans.* Woman on the Other Shore*] in 2005. Won the 2nd Chūō Kōron Literary Prize for* Yōkame no semi *[trans.* The Eighth Day*] (See* JBN *55) in 2007. This work won the Kawai Hayao Story Prize in 2014.*

The most ordinary of actions and words can be hurtful

Fukushima Ryōta

Born in 1981. Literary critic and scholar in Chinese literature. Graduated from the Graduate School of Letters at Kyoto University. Currently a lecturer at Kyoto University. His works include Shinwa ga kangaeru nettowāku shakai no bunkaron *[A Cultural Theory of Networked Society as Seen in Myths].*

A bold reconstruction of Japanese cultural history

Fukkō bunkaron [Cultural Reconstruction Theory]

By Fukushima Ryōta

Seidosha, 2013. 192 x 136 mm. 420 pp. ¥2,200. ISBN 978-4-7917-6733-5.

It is during periods of reconstruction immediately following catastrophes or wars that Japanese culture really begins to overflow with creativity. This is the gist of young critic Fukushima Ryōta's new angle on the essence of Japanese culture. From the Jinshin no Ran (672), a succession dispute that was a major civil war of Japan's ancient period, and the war between the powerful Genji and Heike clans of the transitional medieval period, to the 1945 defeat in World War II, great turmoil can be seen as followed by a new flowering of culture and reform of society. It is precisely this "rebuilding phase spirit," the author holds, that has been the driving force and sustenance of the country's history.

Building on an idea of this grand scale, Fukushima argues the length and breadth of Japanese history, citing poets of the *Man'yōshū* (Japan's oldest anthology), military tales of the Kamakura period (1185-1336) like the *Tale of the Heike* as well as novelists of our own time and the anime of Miyazaki Hayao for a bold and provocative view of the development of culture. His comparisons with Chinese history, which produced a very robust culture through the rise and fall of dynasties, are also insightful.

Although not stated directly, the motive for writing this book was quite likely the March 11, 2011 disaster. We are soon convinced that Japanese do have the ability to turn crisis into the opportunity for cultural rebirth. This is an excellent work endowed with an energy that can fill readers with a sense of hope. (Nozaki)

Nihonjin wa naze sonzai suru no ka [Rethinking *Nihonjinron*]

By Yonaha Jun

Shūeisha International, 2013. 186 x 132 mm. 192 pp. ¥1,000. ISBN 978-4-7976-7259-6.

Of the world's peoples, Japanese are particularly fond of asserting their cultural or ethnic uniqueness, as often pointed out. For example, the notion that, compared to Westerners, Japanese have a more collectivist psychological disposition has become part of the stereotypes embedded in Japanese cultural theory (*Nihonjinron*) and has been widely accepted in the field of Japanese studies overseas. Today, however, the results of scientific research indicate this theory does not stand. A self-portrait of Japanese, though unsupported by empirical data, began to circulate at one point and that image gradually came to take on authority for Japanese and non-Japanese, who have been relying on it in their discussion of Japan.

Yonaha Jun, a young scholar of modern Japanese history, takes up the discourse on not only the issue of collectivist tendencies but various other stereotypes of Japanese culture. He points out that these arguments were constructed at a certain period in intellectual history.

Particularly as far as readers outside Japan are concerned, this book will be extremely useful as an aid for grasping the latest views based on scholarly research and in demolishing false images of Japanese culture they may have held up to now. This book also helps to heighten our awareness that absorbing various outside images of one's own people is part of the condition of people of the modern age, not only for Japanese but of any people of the world. (Karube)

Yonaha Jun

Born in 1979. Scholar in modern and contemporary Japanese history. Obtained Ph.D from the University of Tokyo. Associate Professor at Aichi Prefectural University in the Department of Japanese History and Culture. His book, Chūgokuka suru Nihon *[The Sinicization of Japan], was translated into Chinese and Korean.*

Demolishing false images of Japanese culture

Meguro Hidenobu

Born in 1962. Owner of Yoroshiku Sushi restaurant (Inagi, Tokyo). Director of Trade Association of Tokyo Sushi Restaurants, as well as Youth Division Director for the same association.

Sushi no gijutsu taizen
[A Compendium of Sushi Technique]

By Meguro Hidenobu

Seibundō Shinkōsha Publishing, 2013. 254 x 178 mm. 304 pp. ¥4,800. ISBN 978-4-416-61350-4.

Everything you need to know about sushi

Japanese cuisine has been registered as an UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, and its special features are said to be: use of diverse and fresh ingredients, respect for their inherent flavor, and the expression in food of the beauty of nature and the changing seasons. In all these respects, sushi is plainly exemplary.

This book provides detailed and thorough commentary by a veteran sushi chef. It covers every aspect of sushi preparation, from the basics to very advanced techniques. Everything is made easy to understand through illustrations and abundant photographs.

The greater part of a sushi chef's work is spent in preparation. The work begins by carefully filleting the fish, and the way knives are handled is completely different from one type of fish to another. Helpful commentary is provided along with numerous photos showing where to insert the knife, special tricks, etc., to illustrate the sequence of steps in sushi preparation.

Specific seasonings or garnishes accompany sushi, bringing out the flavor of each kind of fish. Master sushi chef Meguro also offers advice about how to select the best fish of the season. Sushi might seem to be a simple cuisine, but the painstaking efforts made to achieve a subtle harmony between the sushi rice and the fish are impressive. In addition to *nigirizushi*, the book also introduces *makizushi* rolled using a bamboo mat, *oshizushi* pressed using a small box mold, etc. Page after page offers step-by-step lessons from a professional laid out in graphic detail. Recommended for sushi lovers the world over. (Yonahara)

SOCIETY

Dokkoi Ōta no kōshōtachi
[The Indomitable Craftsmen of Ōta]

By Koseki Tomohiro

Gendaishokan, 2013. 190 x 130 mm. 240 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 978-4-7684-5715-3.

Koseki Tomohiro

Born in 1933. Worked for fifty years as a lathe operator. Published Ikina senban-kō *[The Dapper Lathe Operator] in 1975. Received the Nihon Nonfiction Award for* Ōmori kaiwai shokunin ōrai *[Craftsmen Come and Go in Ōmori Neighborhood] in 1981. Received the Ministry of Education Award in 2003.*

Taking up the challenges of ever-higher levels of precision

Ōta ward, located in southeast Tokyo, is an area of small workshops mostly engaged in machine-made metalwork. Although their numbers have decreased by half compared to the past, there are still approximately 4,000 factories, half of which have three employees or less. The products of these workshops vary widely. They make key parts for space satellites and high-tech medical instruments, and perform outstanding techniques in the semiconductor manufacturing process. There is an award system for craftsmen who work at such sites in Ōta ward, and this book reports on Q&A recorded with 17 craftsmen selected from those whose skills have been recognized in this way.

The author, Koseki Tomohiro, was born in 1933 and worked as a lathe operator for 50 years while also pursuing an active writing career. Knowing firsthand the tough conditions under which the factories operate, Koseki portrays the craftsmen with great empathy, bringing their work and careers vividly to life.

These craftsmen produce a huge variety of items, from parts used in reactor control equipment and on bullet trains, to traditional artistic objects in cut glass, to Caribbean steelpan percussion instruments. The lives of the craftsmen are all unique, but what binds them together is their alacrity for the challenges held out by the demands of ever-higher levels of precision. While honing their craft further, they groom their successors and help each other through close networks among the workshops. Herein lies the hidden power of Japanese society. (Yonahara)

Imai Akira

Born in 1953. His field is local government policy. Graduated from the University of Tokyo, Faculty of Letters with a major in sociology. Professor at Fukushima University, Faculty of Administration and Social Science. His major works include Jichitai no autosōshingu *[The Outsourcing of Local Government].*

A new style of local government administration

Jichitai saiken: Genpatsu hinan to "idō suru mura" [Rebuilding Local Government: The Nuclear Power Plant Accident Evacuation and "Mobile Villages"]

By Imai Akira

Chikumashobō, 2014. 175 x 106 mm. 240 pp. ¥880. ISBN 978-4-480-06769-2.

The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant have garnered worldwide attention, and a great deal has been reported since 2011 about how Japan's government and society are dealing with the reconstruction process. Not stopping at telling how the reconstruction policies are being carried out, Imai Akira moves on to discuss proposals for local government that will serve as reference in the future.

People who lived in villages and towns around the Fukushima nuclear power plant were forced to evacuate to other districts to escape the effects of radioactive substances. Their evacuation has turned out to be long term, thrusting local administrations into completely new situations. Evacuees have adopted the unusual residential status of continuing to live in the place to which they evacuated on the premise that they would eventually return to their original domicile.

Imai proposes a new form of local community not limited by location but conceived as the "mobile village" that takes circumstances such as those suffered in Fukushima into consideration. By suggesting plans for new local administrative systems adapted to the high mobility of our modern society, the book offers stimulating ideas not just for Japan but every country around the world. (Karube)

HISTORY

Nihon shashinshi [A History of Japanese Photography]

By Torihara Manabu

Vol. I: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2013. 172 x 110 mm. 248 pp.¥780. ISBN 978-4-12-102247-9.
Vol. II: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2013. 172 x 110 mm. 232 pp. ¥760. ISBN 978-4-12-102248-6.

Ishiuchi Miyako's winning of the Hasselblad International Award in Photography 2014 is among examples of the remarkable successes of Japanese photographers in recent years. This book presents the broad flow of the history of Japanese photography, from the time cameras were first imported to Japan in the mid-nineteenth century to today's golden age of digital photography.

Using many examples, this work follows the sequence of events showing how photography, with its perceptions introduced from the West, spread and evolved within the Japanese scene. The lineages of photographers form the core of the book, but changes in the social environment at their backdrop are also portrayed in detail.

This work chronicles how Japanese in the latter days of the Tokugawa shogunate (1850s–1860s) learned techniques brought in by photographers from Europe and the United States, and went on to open photo studios that prospered at the treaty ports. It goes on to cover how the wars with China and Russia expanded the newspaper and publishing media, prompting the growth of photojournalism, which went on to exert great influence on society.

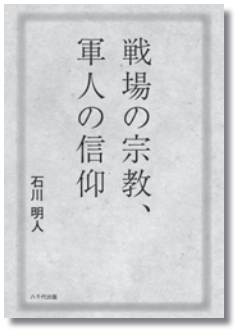
A great many of the accounts in the book come from after 1945, a time of dramatic changes. In addition, this work allows us to explore the roots of photographers active today by following the footsteps of those who, in close association with the magazine media that had developed during Japan's period of rapid economic growth from the mid-1960s, sought new forms of expression. (Yonahara)

Torihara Manabu

Born in 1965. Photography critic. Lecturer at Nippon Photography Institute and Tokyo Visual Arts. His other works include, Jidai o tsukutta shashin, jidai ga tsukutta shashin – Sengo shashin kuronikuru *[Photographs That Made an Era, Photographs That were Made by an Era: A Chronicle of Postwar Photography], etc.*

Tracing the footsteps of Japanese photography

RELIGION



Ishikawa Akito

Born in 1974. Scholar specializing in religion and war. Obtained Ph.D. from Hokkaido University. Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Momoyama Gakuin University.

People at war and religious belief

Senjō no shūkyō, gunjin no shinkō [Battlefield Religion, Soldier's Faith]

By Ishikawa Akito

Yachiyo Publishing, 2013. 192 x 138 mm. 248 pp. ¥2,100. ISBN 978-4-8429-1614-9.

People pray for peace while waging war and wage war while praying for peace. Paradoxical as it may seem, for better or worse, this is simply human, says the author. Ishikawa keeps this image of humanity in mind in his consideration of peace, quietly reexamining the various forms of human vulnerability and probing deeply into the specific problems of war and religion.

This book's discussion revolves around Christianity, starting out with a discussion of the U.S. military chaplain system. For example, when the American bombers went out to drop the atomic bombs on Japan, the words of the chaplain's prayers for soldiers were aimed not just at protecting the soldiers, but also hoping for the success of the atomic bombing mission and the speedy conclusion to the war. From the point of view of the bomb's victims, of course, this is not acceptable, but the author looks closely at this situation from the diverse standpoints of soldiers at war.

Ishikawa also examines the inner struggles of members of the former Japanese military and present-day Self-Defense Forces who were/are Christians. Then, perusing the journal entries of Christian kamikaze pilots he describes people who accepted their own death, based on their faith in God. As far as the soldiers on the front were concerned, war was nothing more than a type of disaster.

Through the topics of religion and war, the author comes to grips with human beings' basic contradictions and internal struggles. (Yonahara)

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Nihon no saiji denshō [Japan's Seasonal Traditions]

By Ogawa Naoyuki

Arts and Crafts, 2013. 190 x 132 mm. 312 pp. ¥2,400. ISBN 978-4-901592-89-5.

Decorating the household shrines with a *shimenawa* festoon and gates with decorative pine ornaments (*kadomatsu*) for the New Year, arranging a display of dolls for Doll's Day, and the summer dancing events coinciding with the O-Bon Festival for remembering ancestors—these are some of the practices associated with Japanese annual events passed down from long ago. This book introduces these traditions, drawing on a wealth of sources.

Concerning "Tanabata," celebrating the legend that two stars (Orihime and Hikoboshi or Vega and Altair) separated by the Milky Way are allowed to meet once a year on seventh of July, the author gives examples of Tanabata poems in Japan's oldest book of poetry, *Man'yōshū*, and explains its relationship to ancient traditions.

This book also fully covers the differences in traditional events and ways they are transmitted in various parts of Japan. One example is the Nagoshi festival involving a ceremony for driving away evil known as "chinowa kuguri" (walking through a *kaya*-grass hoop). This ceremony was observed as early as the latter half of the fifteenth century—based on accounts in the *Kuji Kongen* [The Origin of Political Operations and Ceremonies of the Imperial Court], written in 1422—Ogawa introduces the ways the ceremony has been conducted in Fukushima, Ibaraki, Aichi, and other prefectures.

At a time when traditional events are rapidly being forgotten in urban areas, this book provides the perfect guide for learning about the content and origin of seasonal traditions. (Chō)

Ogawa Naoyuki

Born in 1953. Folklorist. Ph.D. in Folklore. Professor at Kokugakuin University, Faculty of Letters. Conducts fieldwork and research on folklore throughout Japan. His major works include Tsumita inasaku no minzokugakuteki kenkyū *[Folkloric Research on Tsumita Rice Cultivation].*

A reliable guidebook to Japanese traditions

Mase Motorō

Born in 1969. Manga artist. Graduate from Aichi University of the Arts. Studied art design in film and script writing in the U.K. Made debut after winning the 43rd Shōgakukan Comic Award for Newcomers for his work AERA. His major works include Kyōichi *[Kyoichi],* Ikigami *[trans.* The Ultimate Limit*], etc.*

Internet-based public consensus guides an attractive android

Demokuratia [Dēmocratía]

By Mase Motorō

Vol. I: Shōgakukan, 2013. 186 x 132 mm. 208 pp. ¥552. ISBN 978-4-09-185706-4.
Vol. II: Shōgakukan, 2013. 186 x 132 mm. 208 pp. ¥552. ISBN 978-4-09-185874-0.

There are already many works in the android sub-genre of SF manga and the debate continues to rage regarding the potential and problems associated with Internet communication. Where Mase's work succeeds is in producing an engaging story combining these two topics.

The protagonist of the story is a robot in the form of a beautiful woman. Each of the protagonist's actions is decided through discussion and voting by 3,000 members of an Internet social networking system. In other words, the will that drives the robot's movements derives from a "public consensus" formed via the Internet.

The decisions resulting from the voting occasionally go off in wild directions, sometimes causing tragic incidents. Reasonable, rational conclusions, too, are often reached through serious interchange among the participants. One of the interesting aspects of the story is how, based on the actual movements of the robot, the unpredictability of such "public consensus" is reflected in visible events. At the same time, readers get a deep sense of the way the story demonstrates the actual workings of a miniature version of a democratic system. (Karube)

Fuichin saiken (tsaichen)! [See you later Fuichin]

By Murakami Motoka

Vol. I: Shōgakukan, 2013. 186 x 132 mm. 192 pp. ¥552. ISBN 978-4-09-185429-2.
Vol. II: Shōgakukan, 2013. 186 x 132 mm. 208 pp. ¥552. ISBN 978-4-09-185896-2.

Japanese manga are now being read the world over. It is well known that their spread is being promoted under the government's "Cool Japan" PR drive. It is safe to say, however, that the manga now being disseminated throughout the world are limited to those produced since the 1990s. In fact, Japanese manga have a history of over one hundred years going back to the establishment of their current form at the beginning of the twentieth century. Little is known, not even in Japan, let alone overseas, about the artists or manga of the period that preceded the manga boom represented by the "Cool Japan" campaign.

This manga depicts the life of Ueda Toshiko (1917-2008), a female manga artist who was active during the earliest period of the genre. It tells us what manga Ueda was reading and what kind of education she received while becoming a manga artist around the 1930s to 1940s, a time when opportunities for women to work and be independent—not only as manga artists but in any occupation—were limited. The story gives a vivid sense of the development of her career. In addition, Ueda lived in China as a young girl and, after moving to Tokyo, took lessons from a Swiss artist. This is a valuable work that extends even to such circumstances of international exchange. (Karube)

Murakami Motoka

Born in 1951. Manga artist. His work Ryū – Ron *[Dragon] was serialized in Manga magazine "*Big Comic Original*" and ran for 15 years from 1991, becoming Murakami's representative work. His work* Jin *[Jin], serialized since 2000, won the Tezuka Osamu Manga Grand Prize in 2011.*

About a female manga artist active in the earliest period of the genre

No. 8: Tsuboi Sakae and Japanese Paper from Tosa

In an essay entitled "Tosa no washi mura" (The Paper-Making Villages of Tosa), author and poet of Kagawa Prefecture Tsuboi Sakae describes her childhood memories of Tosa Japanese paper and her observations of its history and methods of production, and the lives of those involved in its production.

Tsuboi Sakae (1899–1967) is famous as the author of *Nijūshi no hitomi* (trans. *Twenty-Four Eyes*), and the movie adaption of the story was such a huge hit that she is invariably associated with the movie to the exclusion of anything else that she wrote. Her contribution to modern Japanese literature, however, is much greater than that one work. Her writing records the living images of ordinary, nameless people—what sociologists would broadly call "commoners" or "the masses"—which is to say most Japanese. Her novels and essays vividly record the life in country towns during the thirty years before, during, and after World War II and the lifestyle and everyday wisdom of their inhabitants. The so-called proletarian literature being written mainly by men at that time was very conventional, viewing society and the times in very doctrinaire fashion, and Tsuboi Sakae's writings are beautiful exceptions to that trend. *Twenty-Four Eyes* captured people's hearts because everyone could identify with the detailed descriptions of island life and see themselves in the personalities of the twelve children living as best they could despite their poor circumstances.

In April 1957 Tsuboi Sakae went to Kōchi in order to get a close look at the papermaking (*washi*) villages there. Having heard about Tosa's handmade paper through stories told by her mother, she felt a special connection with the place. Tosa, which is located on the southwest coast of the island of Shikoku, was 20 hours away from Tokyo by airplane and ferry. Her mother had recalled how in winter her hands and feet would crack painfully in large chilblains. The folk cure was a plaster made by crushing *shunran* orchid bulbs with grains of cooked rice. The plaster worked well but fell off easily, so people would pull a strip of paper from their shoji panels to hold the plaster in place. That one layer of paper—tough Tosa paper—held fast, no matter how hard it was pressed underfoot or soaked in water.

Nagashi-zuki (Scooping up the pulp stock) (Photo from Inomachi Paper Museum in Kōchi prefecture)

There was a time when Tosa paper was the standard for shoji panels used all over Japan. You could tell when shoji had been made with handmade Tosa paper by the crisp thwack they made when struck with a *hataki* duster in the morning. It was durable and strong; made into cheap tissue paper, it didn't disintegrate no matter how much you might crush or crumple it.

In 1957 Tosa's Japanese paper production system took a hard hit and stood on the brink of crisis. When Tsuboi heard what was happening, she knew she had to go to Shikoku, and thus quickly set out on the long journey.

Tosa's handmade paper was called "sennen washi" ("thousand-year" paper) because of its durability, and it is even recorded in the *Engi Shiki* (Procedures of the Engi Period)—a compilation of government regulations from the Heian Period (794-1185)—as having been a product sent to the capital as annual tax. The raw materials available in the mountains of Tosa were harvested, and then processed with quite advanced techniques. For a very long time paper was made from the bark of the paper mulberry (*kōzo*). *Kōzo* is a low-growing deciduous tree with large leaves resembling the regular mulberry; it blossoms with yellow-green flowers in spring. The fibers are long and have a tendency to entwine, which makes for very durable paper.

From the Meiji era (1868–1912) *mitsumata* (paper birch) was added. *Mitsumata* is a deciduous shrub native to China and could be grown in dry fields. Similar to paper mulberry, the paper birch has strong fibers, making it well suited to papermaking.

The province of Tosa has mountain after mountain rising up from the southern shore as you move north, and as in the Iya district there are areas labeled as "hikyō" ("unexplored region") scattered about.

The soil of the mountains is suitable for cultivating paper mulberry and paper birch. There are innumerable rivers in the mountains that provided the water needed to separate the bark from the wood and process it for use. Most of the mountains are limestone and the water from them is good for separating fibers. Indeed, for many of Tosa's villages during the Edo period (1603-1867) annual taxes were paid in paper rather than rice. People would grow paper mulberry, make paper, and sell it to merchants for cash.

With the establishment of banks in Japan in the modern period, it was the strong, "thousand-year" *washi* that was used for the country's paper currency. Trees for papermaking were grown not just in the mountains but throughout Tosa. At the beginning of the Edo period the consul of the Tosa domain, Nonaka Kenzan, encouraged new industries and showed his skill in civil engineering. The *Motoyama okite* (Motoyama Regulations) notes,

> Those knowledgeable of sericulture shall plant rows of mulberry bushes around their residences and raise silkworms. Those who do not know should

plant lacquer trees. Other trees useful for paying annual land taxes, such as tea, paper mulberry, etc., shall be grown. Not a single useless tree shall be grown!

Only useful trees are to be grown on every inch of land. Along with mulberry and tea, paper mulberry cultivation was encouraged. These regulations fostered a high-level of paper manufacturing technology and, from the Meiji era onward, the mountain regions of Tosa were blessed with stable demand for the paper used for Japanese currency.

During the inflationary times following World War II, the units of money changed suddenly. At a certain point one could live on a monthly wage of 10 yen, but today 10 yen wouldn't buy a piece of candy. Thousand yen and 10,000 yen notes came into daily use and the issuing of paper money skyrocketed. Large quantities of bills were printed on cheap paper, not on the good durable paper of Tosa, and these cheap bills were then exchanged over and over again. Also, rather than using paper, smaller units were issued in coins for semi-permanent circulation.

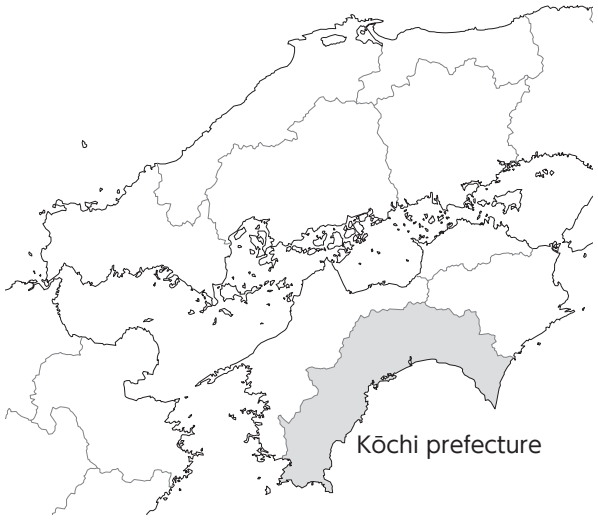
In 1948 the five-yen bill was switched to coin. In 1951 the 10 yen coin was issued, in 1955 the fifty yen coin, and finally the 100 yen coin in 1957, and these changes in the financial policy of the central government had a direct impact on the rural economy. It was at this time, when the government demand for paper suddenly ceased, that Tsuboi Sakae visited the papermaking villages of Kōchi. Herself the daughter of a poor island craftsman, she had gone out to work as soon as she finished primary school; she knew all too well that it was not possible for people of such remote mountain areas to change occupations easily. It was not as if they could just go out and work in the fields when demand for their paper vanished. No compensation was offered by the state, and the passage of a single law expanding the use of coinage wiped away the livelihood of those mountain dwellers.

Against the wave of the abolition of the one
hundred yen note,
A rallying cry rose up among Tosa's mountain
villages—
"No!" "No!"
Echoed in anguish through Shikoku's mountains.

An ordinary reporter might have quoted such lines, evoking the voices of anger or the hidden stories of the dying industry provided by locals, but Tsuboi was completely different.

Yesterday and again today, I went in to the mountain villages.

Her investigations led her to go back and write about the birth of paper from the very beginning. She described the work huts built along the beautiful clear streams and the paper birch groves flowering on the sheer slopes of the mountains; the boiling of the harvested paper mulberry and paper birch branches, the peeling off of the bark, and rinsing in the stream. The processes had become established long ago and whole families engaged in



the work. Depending on the process, even the hands of a three-year-old child contributed to the work:

[The children] do it naturally, as if they were changing the clothes on a doll, but with the dexterity of veterans.

Yet at the same time, she clearly portrays how hard and harsh the work was. The rude huts built on the windswept riverbanks lacked even doors, and the people sat on small partitioned earthen floors in a tiny room, working in freezing water with the wet and soggy bark. Paper birch, when stripped of its bark, looks just like white bones. At that time, the Sōgetsu school of ikebana often used white branches as artistic *objets*; they were sold in Tokyo flower shops. In the mountains of Kōchi Tsuboi put her realization into simple words.

Oh, those *objets*. This is where they come from.

Tsuboi, an author who writes about real life, must have linked this ikebana art to a three-year old child changing the clothes on a doll. Her account followed the detailed processes of turning the raw materials into paper. The fiber was boiled in a cauldron, washed in water, bleached, and pounded to break up the fibers. Supplementary raw materials are added and the sheets made by scooping up the pulp on a screen. Then the sheets were dried and cut into smaller sheets. Only at the end, did the names of the paper makers appear attached to the sheets, when paper was sorted.

In a story where readers might imagine villagers looking grim and dejected, threatened with what could be an issue of life or death, Tsuboi writes cheerily, "How bright and friendly are these Tosa folks."

Her story tells how the people working on the riverbank were friendly and quick to strike up conversation. If asked for a photograph they would readily pose without shyness, even the elderly. A person who appeared to be in his forties might turn out to be fifty-six. A girl who might have been a man's daughter turns out to be his wife; she already has children and works alongside him. People who are almost sixty laugh merrily as they tell of how poor their lives are, as if it were nothing.

Apparently people related to the paper industry had

prepared many documents for Tsuboi that recorded the dire straits of their situation, but Tsuboi appears to have believed in the energy and wisdom of the mountain folk. At the end of the book Tsuboi excuses herself for not using the "many documents that I received," instead just writing what she wanted to write. Like her mother who had cured her chilblain-cracked hands and feet with a traditional home remedy, Tsuboi was also the child of stalwart ordinary folk.

(Ikeuchi Osamu, essayist and scholar of German literature)

Events and Trends

Granta and *Waseda bungaku*

Hayakawa Publishing put the Japanese edition of *Granta Japan with Waseda bungaku* [*Granta Japan with Waseda Literature*], co-edited by well-established Japanese and English magazines, on sale on March 1st. In the latter part of April the English version, *Granta 127*: *Japan*, was also published by Granta Publications in London with the same content. Twenty contributors from Japan and other countries, put together short stories and translated them into each others' languages.

Eleven contributors were from Japan, including previous winners of the Akutagawa Prize Oyamada Hiroko and Kawakami Hiromi, and nine from Anglophone countries, including Pico Iyer, who has contributed to over 150 magazines worldwide.

The overseas works deal with subjects associated with Japan.

Granta was founded in 1889 and *Waseda bungaku* in 1891. The plan to produce this issue was realized after holding many meetings, bringing together editors concerned with overseas literature from the two journals.

Newly Established Cultural Centers and Museums in Tokyo

Facilities that convey the appeal of cultural figures with local connections are appearing one after another in Tokyo's twenty-three wards. The aim is to promote local culture and, with one eye on the Tokyo Olympics upcoming in 2020, inject new energy into communities.

In Tokyo's Sumida Ward, a 3,300 square meter four-story building, located in a park a five-minute walk from Ryōgoku Station, is being built for the Sumida Hokusai Museum. Organizers are shooting for a 2016 opening. Sumida Ward is also said to be the birthplace of Hokusai, and there will be a museum shop, library, and display of Hokusai's *Fugaku Sanjūrokkei* (Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji).

A Memorial Literature Center dedicated to local author Yoshimura Akira is being constructed within a multi-use facility in Tokyo's Arakawa ward. It is scheduled to open in 2016 with a floor space of approximately 10,000 square meters. Yoshimura is known for works such as *Senkan Musashi* [trans. *Battleship Musashi: The Making and Sinking of the World's Biggest Battleship*] and *Sanriku kaigan ōtsunami* [Major Tsunamis on the Sanriku Coast], which describes the massive tsunamis that struck northeast Japan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The literature museum reconstructs Yoshimura's private study and displays originals of his personal writings and his most treasured books.

In Shinjuku Ward, a memorial hall to writer Natsume Sōseki called the Sōseki Sanbō is being built. The opening of the hall is scheduled for 2017 in commemoration of Sōseki's 150th birthday. The location of the hall in Waseda Minamimachi is the site of a house where Sōseki spent his later years. In addition to reconstructions of the study and living room where Sōseki wrote *Kokoro* [trans. *Kokoro*] and *Meian* [trans. *Light and Dark*] there will be a library and a café.

2014 Japan Booksellers' Award

The book that booksellers throughout Japan most want to sell, winner of the 2014 Honya Taishō (sponsored by the Honya Taishō executive committee), was announced on April 8th. The winner was Wada Ryō for *Murakami kaizoku no musume* [Daughter of a Murakami Pirate] (pub. Shinchōsha). Second place went to Kizara Izumi for *Yūbe no karē, ashita no pan* [Last Night's Curry, Bread for Tomorrow] (pub. Kawade Shobō Shinsha). And third place went to Tsujimura Mizuki for *Shima wa bokura to* [The Island Stays with Us] (pub. Kōdansha, see *JBN* 79).

Inui Akito Receives the Kawabata Award

The Kawabata Foundation announced the outstanding short story to receive the Kawabata Yasunari Literature Prize, in award ceremonies on April 9th. It was Inui Akito's *Suppon shinjū* [The Snapping Turtle Double Suicide] (Shinchō, January 2013).

The Complete Works of Yoshimoto Takaaki

The publication of *Yoshimoto Takaaki zenshū* [Complete Works of Yoshimoto Takaaki] (pub. Shōbunsha) began in March. Yoshimoto Takaaki, leading postwar intellectual and poet, passed away in March 2012. It will take seven years to publish all thirty-eight volumes, including a chronology and other separate volumes.

The mastermind of the plan for a publication truly deserving of the title

"complete works" was Mamiya Mikihiko (69), Yoshimoto's former editor at the publisher of Chikuma Shobō. Mamiya originally showed the planned table of contents for thirty-six chronological volumes to Yoshimoto in August of 2010, and when he submitted a schedule for the project to Chikuma Shobō in February of 2011, they replied, "It can't be done." Yoshimoto died the following year.

When even after Yoshimoto's death no plan was proposed to publish his complete works. In December 2012 his second daughter, well-known writer Yoshimoto Banana, brought the situation up on the internet, lamenting, "They say it is because there is no budget. Not even at a single publishing company."

The one who responded to her lament was president of the publisher Shōbunsha, Ōta Yasuhiro. He recalled being deeply touched once by encouragement received from Yoshimoto when they met at a party. Shōbunsha had suffered a management crisis, however, and was still in the process of recovering. But Shōbunsha decided to accept the challenge.

President Ōta stated, "If sales of the *Collected Works* was poor, it would put 20 or so employees out on the streets. So it was a very risky decision." After seeing the detailed table of contents drawn up by Miyama he said, "I was very worried. We performed the cost accounting over and over. The total expenses would be 200 million yen."

During the first year, the volumes will appear at a pace of about one per three months and in the second year once every two months. The first to come out will be volume 6, covering the years 1959 to 1961 and the second will be volume 7, with works from 1962 to 1964. Leading works from these years include his *Gisei no shūen* [An End to Fictions] and *Maruyama Masao ron* [On Maruyama Masao]. The collection is to include over 270 works not previously published in Yoshimoto's books.

The Literature of Mother-Daughter Relationships

A number of novels by women writers on the relationship of mothers and daughters have recently been published. The stories portray the conflict of daughters, whether they are loved or rejected, who cannot escape the control of a mother of overwhelming influence. Single daughters who become caregivers for their aging mothers; the differences in points of view regarding household and work arising from differences in generation—for many women writers mother-daughter relationships are becoming an urgent issue to be discussed in literature.

In February 2014 Shinoda Setsuko published a collection of short stories entitled *Chōjotachi* [Eldest Daughters]. The first story, "Iemori musume," depicts the wife of an academic who raised two daughters and, widowed and suffering from dementia at over seventy, seeks the aid of her eldest daughter. The 43-year-old daughter had been divorced in her twenties and is now lives with her mother. Unable to pursue a love life because of care of her mother, she is also forced to quit her job. Shinoda, who takes care of her ailing mother in real life, says that, "when taking care of a parent with dementia, there are certain things that the social system cannot help with."

Psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki's study of mother-daughter relationships, *Haha wa musume no jinsei o shihai suru* [A Mother Controls Her Daughter's Life], says, "the degree of attachment is greater in mother-daughter relationships when compared to father-son or other familial relationships, and mothers have a tendency to bind their daughters with excessive expectations and meddling." Literary critic Kitagami Jirō states that, "over the last ten years, within novels that depict the daily lives of women there has been a decrease in those discussing love between men and women, and more discussion of the three themes of *mothers*, *work*, and *friendship among women*."

Novels describing mother-daughter relationships published since 2010 include, Kakuta Mitsuyo's *Watashi no naka no kanojo* [The Girl Within, see p. 5], Minato Kanae's *Bosei* [Maternal], and Murakami Yuka's *Hōtōki* [An Account of Dissipation].

Last year's release by Kubo Misumi, entitled *Anibāsarī* [Anniversary], describes how two characters suffer due to differences of opinion regarding work and household. The main character feels that her life is constantly controlled by her mother, a specialist on food. Kubo says that, "I thought I would depict the differences in thinking between women of different generations through food. I wanted to address the issue of what needed to be done in order to see each others' virtues and rise above such differences." The novel does not give answers, but it does give hints regarding how to think about complex, modern problems between mothers and daughters.

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Editing, Translation, Design, and Production
Showa Information Process Co., Ltd.

Printed in Japan on recycled paper

ISSN 0918-9580

Interview in Paris with Kanehara Hitomi

Kanehara Hitomi, who made a sensational literary debut in 2003 with her Akutagawa Prize-winning novella *Hebi ni Piasu* [trans. *Snakes and Earrings*], now lives in Paris with her husband and children. She left Japan, as she became uncertain whether it was safe to raise her two little daughters in the country where a massive earthquake and tsunami wrecked nuclear power plants in 2011.

The author first escaped to Okayama, which is 730 km west of the afflicted area, to give birth to her second child. She then moved to Paris, where she had no relatives, no friends, and had visited only once on a book promotion tour.

"The quake-related incidents completely changed my life and way of thinking," says Kanehara in a café near her Paris apartment.

On the surface, Kanehara's decision to run from the nuclear meltdown to a country with an even higher reliance on nuclear power might seem like jumping from the frying pan into the fire, but she had other intellectual considerations.

"I chose to live here because I strongly felt, when being interviewed by journalists or speaking with other French writers, that they had no doubts about themselves as artists, were eager to challenge cultural taboos, and, above all, greeted me with open arms."

In fact, in Japan, where society is still male-dominated, Kanehara had long struggled to understand the reason for her own existence. She dropped out of school and engaged in self-harming, cutting her wrists several times before finding the writing of novels as the perfect cathartic means for comprehending her true self.

"In real life, I cannot rationalize what is going on around me, so I try to analyze my state of mind by penning stories," she confesses. "My stories are thus heavily linked to my own experiences or feelings, especially the negative ones," all of which fuels the spark of imagination, she adds.

Her latest novel, *Mazāzu* (Mothers; see JBN No. 71), like many of her previous stories, is filled with true-to-life portraits of young women like herself, people who suffer for love or the lack of it. But, the theme in *Mazāzu*, which is the family, contrasts starkly that of her other works. For the first time, Kanehara reveals the anxiety and inner struggles of young mothers in Japan who are often obliged to raise children without the understanding and support of their husbands.

By employing first-person narrative and presenting the viewpoints of three disparate protagonists, all of whom send their children to the same daycare center, the author sheds light on the sense of isolation and crushing frustration women feel, torn between love and hatred for their children.

"When I had my first daughter, I was panicky and shocked to learn that she also existed as a creature that can violently intervene in my life and alter my lifestyle completely," says Kanehara. "By writing this novel, I managed to accept a whole new world."

The book was also her first experience in serializing a long novel in a monthly magazine. Rotating one chapter per month for each of the three main narrators, she grappled with the difficulties of identifying the features of their distinctive characters.

"At first I found it difficult to write a story about a stay-at-home mother, Ryoko, and easy to develop a story about a novelist, Yuka, but once Ryoko started abusing her son from stress, my emotional attachment shifted from Yuka to Ryoko. Such an empathic swing is something I had never experienced before," says Kanehara, who always draws too much of herself into her characters and wears herself out. "I was crying out loud at a Tokyo café when I was writing about the death of the daughter of a fashion model called Satsuki, and felt deeply depressed and refused to talk to anyone for a few days."

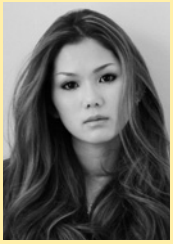
Readers of her earlier works, which contain freewheeling sex, drugs, and depression, might find Kanehara's latest novel a departure from her bohemian style. It is true that the object of her interest has shifted following her marriage, childbirth, and motherhood, but she is still not hesitant about graphic depiction of sex, and creating blunt dialogues. "I can't create characters who are totally alien to me. That's my weakness, but also my strength," says Kanehara, who wears countless piercings in her left ear. Earrings, alcohol, and cigarettes are standard features in almost all of her novels.

Asked how she would react if her daughters grow up and read her novels, the 32-year-old writer grins and says that she doubts they will ever read her books. "When I was young, my house was full of books with my father's name on the cover, but I didn't care to read them, so my girls will probably follow suit." Kanehara's father is a well-known translator. He has always encouraged her to write shocking stories that walk a fine line between social acceptance and rejection, and which might make it difficult for her parents to "stay in their hometown," she adds.

Kanehara admits that *Mazāzu*, which she wrote before moving to Paris, could never have been created if she were in Paris. "Being in a nation of individualism, where mothers don't experience any of the unnecessary social pressures they would in Japan, the moral crisis that I have expressed in my story just doesn't occur here," says Kanehara. "My next challenge would be how to write about each individual's inner struggle under circumstances where nothing is considered taboo."

She says she is now working on a story based on what she felt during and after the cataclysmic earthquake. This is going to be her first novel written since coming to Paris, and her first expression of how the quake affected her.

(Kawakatsu Miki, freelance writer)



Kanehara Hitomi

Born in 1983. Awarded the Akutagawa Prize in 2004 for *Hebi ni piasu*, which is translated into more than 100 languages and has been made into a film. Other works include *Amībikku* [Amebic], *Ōtofikushon* [trans. *Autofiction*] (see *JBN* No. 51), *Haidora* [Hydra], *Mariāju, mariāju* [Marriage, Marriage] and *Torippu torappu* [Trip Trap].

(Photo by Hiruma Yasuhiro)