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Okinawa and the East Asian Community – Marginal Island Solidarity –

– Kurayoshi Takara

If the fragrance
of the ume blossom is carried
to the falling snow,
who can tell which branch
is the blossoming ume tree to cut?

梅の香のふりおける雪にまがひせば
たれかことごとわきて折らまし

– Kino Tsurayuki
(870?-945?)

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"The East Asian Political Situation Has Always Defined Okinawa's Existence"

Having long been an observer of Okinawan history, I have always been keenly aware of how strongly the politics and social transformations of East Asia, particularly Northeast Asia, have affected Okinawa.

In that regard, Okinawa has had four historical turning points. The first was from the end of the fourteenth century to the beginning of the fifteenth century, caused by the establishment of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), which had hegemony in China. In Japan, the Muromachi Shogunate was established, and in Okinawa, which had the same cultural base as Japan, local clans competed against each other to establish single rule. However, it was not Japan but China that established close contact with Okinawa, which was undergoing civil war. The Ryukyu Kingdom that ruled Okinawa made the decision to become a tributary state of China and steered its wheels toward China. Thus, with support from China, the era of the Ryukyu Kingdom (the first independent nation in Okinawa), began. After establishing its China relationship as the main axis of its diplomatic policy, the Ryukyu Kingdom started to build its status as a marine nation whose domain of diplomatic and trading activities stretched to East and Southeast Asia.



The second turning point in Okinawan history was from the end of the sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century, in which two large East Asian countries, China and Japan, began to exert a strong influence on the island. The relative national power of China and Japan manifested as different influences on the Ryukyu Kingdom itself. While the Ming Dynasty was declining in China, in Japan, a strong feudal nation—which later became the Tokugawa Shogunate—was emerging through civil war. In the spring of 1609, Tokugawa Ieyasu allowed 3,000 soldiers of the Satsuma Clan to invade the Ryukyu Kingdom. They were victorious and took occupation of the land, which fell under the strong control of the Japanese feudal nation, despite its status as a tributary state of China. The rulers of the Ryukyu Kingdom faced a difficult time in which they had to maneuver carefully between these two large countries.

However, their careful navigation eventually failed. The third turning point for Okinawa came in the spring of 1879 (Meiji 12), when the Meiji government, which was abolishing feudal clans

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and establishing prefectures, established Okinawa prefecture by force, denying the historical fact that the Ryukyu Kingdom had been an independent country and a tributary state of China (Qing Dynasty). Islands that had belonged to the Ryukyu Kingdom were completely put under Japanese control, thus setting what is now the southern border of modern Japan. For its part, China was facing the decline of its empire as well as waves of Western imperialism. It could not find any effective way of ridding Okinawa of the Japanese initiative. The Japanization of Okinawa thus began. Its land became a poor, marginalized southern prefecture of Japan.

The fourth turning point was the rapid, dramatic transformation of Okinawa into a military base. This occurred through several drastic experiences: the ground battle between the Japanese and American forces competing for Okinawa, which was ostensibly Japan’s “outer trench,” Japan’s defeat and occupation by America, the birth of East Asian socialism, the escalation of the Cold War, and the rapid fortification of Okinawa by America in exchange for the Japanese postwar economic development and membership in the Western bloc. Through this fourth turning point, the islands of Okinawa—formerly a marginal area of Japan—transformed dramatically into the cornerstone of American military strategy towards socialist countries like China and North Korea.

When we examine these four turning points, two important aspects emerge. The first is that shifts in the East Asian political situation, especially those in Northeast Asia, have defined Okinawa’s very existence. Throughout periods in Okinawan history—the period in which Okinawa developed its unique character as an independent marine nation, the period in which Okinawa fell into the position of subsidiary nation of China

and Japan, the period in which Okinawa was singly governed by Japan, and the period in which Okinawa was endowed with the position of symbolizing the relationship between Japan and America—the power to define Okinawa’s position has always rested with the intentions of superpowers such as China, Japan, and America, which were concerned with East Asia. Okinawa has always been used, and in turn defined, by these major powers.

Another important historical factor is that the latter three turning points were a result of political instability and reorganization in East Asia. The background of East Asia has always influenced Okinawa. The relaxation and reorganization of the East Asian order, such as the tributary system, caused the Satsuma Clan invasion. The crisis in China caused by the European invasion and colonization prompted the absorption of Okinawa by Japan, and East-West tension created a potentially explosive situation that ultimately erupted, eventually transforming the island of Okinawa into a military base.

Military Bases—A Heavy Burden for Okinawa

By looking back on Okinawan history, we can also see into the future. The Okinawan people hope to create a total, stable, and multilayered structure in East Asia, or an “East Asian Community.” With the support of this “East Asian Community,” Okinawa will have a kind of soft power with which it will be able to play a unique role as a representative of Japanese society, while also acting beyond the national framework of Japan.

Let us consider the possibility that the “East Asian Community,” could unite in an “Axis of Marginal Regions’ Solidarity” for stability and support. In other words, islands such as Taiwan, which faces mainland China, Cheju Island, which faces the Korean Peninsula, and Okinawa, which faces Japan, could establish a network and endow the “East Asian Community” with multilayered connections beyond the bonds of nations.

This year, Dr. John Chuan-Tiong Lim, a scholar of international politics and an assistant professor at Ryukyu University, wrote a report called *Marginal East Asia: The Establishment of a New Regional Concept*. In his paper, he defined Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Okinawa as “Marginal East Asia” facing “Central East Asia,” China and Japan. Dr. Lim discussed the possibilities of this new regional concept. We should look forward to more presentations and discussion of this topic, as well as further exploration of Dr. Lim’s work.

Regardless as to whether or not such a system is adopted in the future, the “East Asian Community” will not be able to create a more flexible and stable international order until it makes regional solidarity its foundation. Until then, Okinawa will not be freed of its old, entangled “historical problems,” nor will it be able to reveal its own unique reason for being.

However, we are not living in the future. We are still on the road of progress in which we are steadily taking steps toward achieving our dreams.

In reality, our situation is complicated and full of contradictions. For example, American military bases in Okinawa have been a heavy burden for the Okinawan people, and many residents of Okinawa have long called for their reduction and withdrawal. The American and Japanese governments bear the serious responsibility of how to maintain a balance between decreasing Okinawa's burden and maintaining the power of military deterrence. Accidents such as the crash of a marine helicopter into Okinawa International University (on August 13, 2004) show that a plan of action for the rapid withdrawal of the military bases is urgently needed.

Still, there are differences of opinion about this issue. One Taiwanese historian, an opinion leader in the Taiwan Independence movement whom I respect, expressed his honest feelings based on his deep understanding of the situation of Okinawa. He told me, "I understand the feelings of the Okinawan people very well. But for Taiwan, the American military bases in Okinawa play the role of a deterrent against a military threat from mainland China. To the Taiwanese, the American military bases in Okinawa are such a necessity that it is difficult for us to support their withdrawal or reduction."

I heard the same opinion from Korean historians in Cheju Island and Seoul. "Although we sympathize with the situation of the Okinawan people, we can't help but feel that the deterrent created by the American military bases in Okinawa is necessary to prevent a crisis on the Korean Peninsula," they said.

Needless to say, one of the main countries of concern to Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula is China. Although I have met and exchanged opinions with Chinese historians many times in China, mainly in Fujian Province, we have never discussed this issue. I know many Chinese historians, with whom I have close relationships. Some of them have even stayed in Okinawa for over a year. Nevertheless, we have carefully avoided talking about political issues, despite the fact that we have had heated conversations about concrete historical issues. The reason we avoid this topic is our understanding that China does not yet guarantee freedom of speech.

Cultural Exchange Activities With China:

Opening the Door to the "East Asian Community"

China holds one of the keys with which the doors to the dream of an "East Asian Community" will be opened. Although the mass media has focused on China's high economic growth (and the national upswing centered around the Beijing Olympics of 2008), the reality remains that political freedom and freedom of speech are not yet guaranteed. Information on the People's Liberation Army, which supplies China's strong military power, is not available to the public. Furthermore, concrete ideas about the security plans and aims of the PLA have not yet been revealed. Therefore, as many intellectuals point out, it is important to encourage China to share international responsibility by prompt-

ing it to be an important member of global society. Through this process, I expect that China will take a flexible attitude in its treatment of the problem of Taiwan, which is a country that will play an important role in the marginal region axis. We should avoid worsening the China-Taiwan relationship by putting pressure on China.

Also, needless to say, Japan should play an important role in prompting China to participate in and share the responsibility of a global society. Japan should use a highly effective method to take action, maintaining contact with the United Nations and related countries.

Okinawan scholars and researchers have undertaken various activities with China over the past twenty years, based on an understanding of Okinawa's 500-year-old history with China. The current fruits of these labors have exceeded expectations. In the field of history, the *Chu-Ryu Kankei Kenkyujo* (China-Okinawa Relationship Research Center), opened at Fujian Normal University in Fujian Province to study the history of exchange between China and Okinawa. Also, the Fujian Provincial Museum (Fuzhou) and the Quanzhou Museum of Overseas Communication History (Quanzhou), have permanent exhibition corners on the theme of Okinawa. The First Historical Archives of China (Beijing)—the biggest historical archive in China—has made an alliance with the Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education. They have not only exchanged historical materials but have also sponsored symposiums alternating between Okinawa and China. Furthermore, the foundation that maintains Shuri Castle Park in Naha has lent financial support to the Beijing publication of numerous historical documents on Okinawa housed in China's First Historical Archives. Last summer, the exhibition "The Treasures of Okinawa" from Beijing's Palace Museum was held in Okinawa, featuring masterpieces created by Okinawan craftsmen and gathered by the Ryukyu emperors to pay tribute to the Chinese emperors. Through this exhibition, the Okinawan treasures returned to their birthplace.

In closing, I would like to emphasize the fact that Okinawa has played the role of mediator between China and Taiwan, helping to create opportunities to deepen their relationship. In 1986, historians from Okinawa and Taiwan collaborated on holding "The First Okinawa-China Historical Relationship International Academic Conference" in Taipei. Every two years, the conference is held alternately in Naha and Taipei. Eventually, Okinawan scholars proposed that Taiwanese scholars invite scholars from mainland China to the conference as well. We also suggested holding the conference in Beijing and Fujian in addition to Naha and Taipei. The Taiwanese scholars agreed. Since then, scholars from each city have attended the conference and maintained periodic academic exchange.

Of course, this international academic exchange is a small step. But for me, as one of the promoters of this conference, it is an important project through which the dream to establish an "East Asian Community" and an "Axis of Marginal Regions' Solidarity" will become a future reality.

The Japan Foundation's Activities

“Have We Met?” Held at The Japan Foundation

Exhibit of Contemporary Art by Young Asian Artists

Have We Met?, an exhibition of contemporary art by young Asian artists, was held from December 11, 2004, to January 30, 2005, at The Japan Foundation Forum in Akasaka, Tokyo.

The exhibition showed the work of 14 Asian artists in their twenties and thirties from India, Indonesia, Thailand, and Japan. These artists came of age in the late 1980s, during a period of high economic growth in Asia. They share similar social backgrounds as well as common pop culture references. Young curators from the four countries selected artists whose work was not widely exhibited previously.

Their art ranged from video to installation, also including digital and hand-drawn animation.

All the featured artists explore the sense of “contemporary” in the local art scene, while keeping their eyes towards a global



The Dinosaur by Porntaweesak Rimsakul (Thailand)
(Photo: T.Chokchaipermpoonpol)



Black to Play and Draw by Anant Joshi (India)

perspective.

The Japan Foundation seeks to reflect the Asian transformation by organizing contemporary art exhibitions by young Asian artists. Previous shows such as “Under Construction” (2002) and “Out the Window” (2003) showcased the artistic sensibilities of the younger generations of artists, which are not confined to conventional discourses and disciplines in art history.

Turkish Writer Orhan Pamuk

On His First Japan Publication

The world-renowned Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk, whose works have been widely translated and published, gave a lecture on November 22, 2004 at the Japan Foundation Conference Hall. The lecture was in honor of the Japanese publication of Pamuk’s internationally best-selling novel, *My Name is Red* (*Watashi no Na wa Aka*, published by Fujiwara Shoten), supported by The Japan Foundation and Fujiwara Shoten. The novel has been translated into over thirty languages.



My Name is Red concerns a murder and takes place over nine snowy days in Istanbul in 1591. Through his depiction of this incident, Pamuk shows the cultural transformation from traditional Islamic art in miniature to more realistic art with a Renaissance-influenced perspective.

At The Japan Foundation lecture, Pamuk discussed the fact that he had wanted to be a painter in his childhood but at the age of 23 decided to write novels instead. His writing was influenced by the works of Dostoevsky, Stendhal, Tolstoy and Sartre. Pamuk went to New York in 1985, where he had a kind of “cultural crisis” while looking at Islamic art miniatures

Mr. Orhan Pamuk at the Japan Foundation Conference Hall (Nov.22, 2004. Photo: Atsuko Takagi)

at the museum. That experience led him to write *My Name is Red*. The novel uses a polyphonic style with many narrators, which Pamuk said was influenced by Dostoevsky. He also pointed out a similarity to Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, who was influenced by Western culture in his youth but later returned to traditional Japanese culture. Pamuk emphasized that it was important to have a foundation in one's own native culture while remaining open to influences from other cultures.

Four Japanese Artists to Attend 11th Triennale-India

*Through February 10th
in New Delhi*

Four Japanese artists are participating in the 11th Triennale-India, which will run through February 10 in New Delhi. The Japan Foundation organized the artists' participation in this international art exhibition.

Yasuyuki Nakai, curator of the National Museum of Art, Osaka, has been chosen as commissioner of the Japanese section. Mr. Nakai has selected four artists—Gyoko Yoshida, Shigeru Hasegawa, Tokuzo Yabitsu, and Zon Ito—to represent the theme "Making Paintings in Japan." These artists have developed their own unique styles that go against the forms of Japanese painting that are currently in vogue, such as cartoons and anime-type illustrations.

Yoshida has chosen to carry on the tradition of Japanese-style painting. Through her study of traditional painters such as Ikeno Taiga and Kagaku Murakami, she has explored the concept of *ma* (empty space). Hasegawa, who uses oil painting techniques, focuses on artistic symbols from classical antiquity. He draws these images with vividly colored pigment thinned with oil, which leaves faint traces on the white canvas. This technique is an ironic nod toward the Japanese penchant for painting with thickly applied oils and muddy mixed colors. Yabitsu makes paintings on the carved surfaces of wood boards, using the words of Kumagusu Minakata, the folklorist who protested against the Meiji-government merger of Shinto shrines. Through these texts, the tradition of resistance becomes part of Yabitsu's artistic style. Ito uses ordinary materials like cloth and yarn to weave together images related to personal memories in his work.



Arizona no Sun by Zon Ito
(Courtesy Kodama Gallery, Osaka)

The Triennale-India, supported by the Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA), India's autonomous arts organization, has been held every three years since its inception in 1968. It is one of the major contemporary visual art exhibitions worldwide, with artists from over 100 countries participating.

Arabic Orchestra Tours Japan

Naseer Shamma and His Group

Visit Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The Al-Oyoin Group, an Arabic orchestra founded by the Iraqi *oud* player Naseer Shamma, toured Japan for the first time in November and December of 2004. Their profound musical style was met with critical acclaim at packed houses in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Tokyo. The tour was organized by The Japan Foundation.



Naseer Shamma in Tokyo
(photo: Atsuko Takagi)

Naseer Shamma was born in 1963 in southern Iraq. At the age of 14, he took up the *oud*, a traditional Middle Eastern instrument (precursor to the guitar or lute). After studying at the Baghdad Academy of Music, he performed his music around the world and received numerous prizes in Iraq and elsewhere. In 1989, he was imprisoned for 170 days under Saddam Hussein's regime. After his release from prison, he went to Jordan. He is currently the director of the *Bief Al-Oud Al-Arabi* (Arab *Oud* House), which he founded in Cairo in 1998. This foundation provides guidance to young musicians. He is also currently engaged in an effort to reconstruct an Abbasid-era orchestra.

While in Japan, the group performed *An Eastern Love Story*, *Happened at Al-Ameriya*, and *The Suffering of Hiroshima*. *An Eastern Love Story* was written for Shamma's *oud*-player friend who lost an arm in the Iran-Iraq War, and is performed with a unique one-handed technique. *Happened at Al-Ameriya* is a memorial composition for the women and children killed at Baghdad's Ameriya shelter when bombs hit the wrong target. *The Suffering of Hiroshima* was composed as an offering to the victims of Hiroshima.

While in Tokyo, Shamma led a symposium wherein he lectured on the history of Arabic music and how music differs in each area of the Middle East and North Africa. He also emphasized that music can only grow and develop in times of peace.

Books in Other Languages

Freedom And Land



Community and State in the Japanese Farm Village: Farm Tenancy Conciliation (1924–1938)

By Dimitri Vanoverbeke
 Leuven University Press, Belgium, 2004
 ISBN: 90-5867-307-3
 Paper, 200 pp, illustrated
 \$79.50

Everyone knows how easily the earth can break you. The instruments of calamity are various, ranging from natural disasters and the freakish venom of climate change to, more insidiously, the slow leaching of the spirit; the will to oppose malignant forces. It is the latter case which was closer to the experience endured by under-privileged Japanese tenant farmers in the decades prior to Japan's defeat in WWII, and one that forms the focus of Dimitri Vanoverbeke's rigorous study of tenancy rights in those years.

Early in the book, the myth that social harmony prevailed during an earlier period, the Edo era, is exploded with some startling figures. We learn that, on average, 4.9 large-scale peasant uprisings occurred annually during the seventeenth century, rising to 14.8 such revolts during the first half of the nineteenth century.

One supposes that among Japan's landlord class there were few figures comparable to Tolstoy or Turgenev, a rare breed of landowner who, contrary to their own class in general, treated their serfs with dignity, and were prepared to acknowledge the possibility of change and reform as a natural social evolution.

It was typical perhaps of the window dressing of the Meiji period that, in the spirit of old wine in new bottles, the tenant farmer continued to remain at the mercy of the landlord. Ostensibly doing away with feudalism, the architects of the age promoted instead a more Confucian, paternalistic relationship between landowners and farmers, effectively making tenants more vulnerable to exploitation than ever. Although the Meiji leaders craved respect from Western nations, they, as Vanoverbeke points out, opposed concepts such as freedom and equality for all citizens "as contrary to Japanese tradition."

Even under the provisions of the Meiji Civil Code, real tenant gains were minimal, and the crucial question of discretion-

ary rent reductions was "left to the moral consideration of the landowner and the extra-legal supplication of the tenant farmer." This was all very well presupposing a landowning class of high moral rectitude. Unfortunately, the reality was very different, and tenants who challenged an exorbitant rent hike could find themselves swiftly evicted. A considerate landowner, on the other hand, meant certain advantages for tenants—but at a high price. The "landowner," as the author maintains, "guaranteed the survival of the tenant farmer as long as the tenant farmer gave the landowner absolute respect, obedience, and loyalty." Vanoverbeke supplies ample examples to show how, in a changing world, the system inevitably became unworkable.

A shift in the equation occurred when villagers who had left the land to work in the new factories returned with stories of how collective action such as strikes could bring owners to their knees, if only temporarily. The urban model had begun to impact on the rural one, and what was hitherto conducted almost at the level of a family dispute turned into a contemporary struggle between two distinct social classes. Socialist ideals, unionization, and nationally organized opposition during the pre-war years proved far more effective than rebellions born of frustration.

With books such as this, the devil is usually in the detail. Although Vanoverbeke is extremely exacting in paying attention to such detail, his clear, engaging prose steers us painlessly through the complexities, allowing us to emerge at the end with a real understanding.

On specifics, the author does a good job of explaining the intricate differences, for example, between contract tenancy, caretaker tenancy, and direct and separate tenancies, without laboring the point. The inadequacies of the 1924 Farm Tenancy Conciliation Law are modified by the thought that the adjustment in tenancy conditions did at least partially prepare farmers for a new social order, characterized by emerging individualism and economic opportunities. While being useful to academics and researchers, this title should also appeal to readers with a keen interest in Japanese history, workers' rights, and labor issues.

By association, the story of the tenant farmer is not just the account of economic and class struggle in rural Japan but the story of repressed people the world over. For those interested in these important issues, this book has much to commend it.

Community and State in the Japanese Farm Village: Farm Tenancy Conciliation is reviewed by Stephen Mansfield, a British photojournalist and author based in Japan, whose work has appeared in over 60 publications worldwide. A specialist in rural communities and development in Japan and Asia, he is the author of the anthropological work, Lao Hill Tribes: Traditions & Patterns of Existence, published by Oxford University Press.

Theater HerStory: Women in Modern Chinese Drama

Faye Chunfang Fei

Wherever there are people, there is theater of some kind, for theater is at once a showcase and a forum through which society displays its ideas, aesthetics, lifestyles and values, debating its conflicts, contradictions and struggles. On this occasion I would like to examine the changing roles of women in modern Chinese drama, from its early days as a Western import to the present time.

Western-style drama was introduced to China during the first decades of the twentieth century. At the time, the majority of plays favored by Chinese intellectuals and artists were those of critical social realism. Plays like Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* were warmly embraced by the New Culture Movement¹, and the May Fourth Movement². From the outset, women were called upon to be actively involved in the development of Chinese modern theater, known as *huaju* (spoken drama, as opposed to classical sung drama), as writers, performers, and members of the audience. *Huaju* was seen as the antithesis of traditional Chinese theater. This difference was most noticeable in modern drama's determination to portray the lives of Chinese people realistically. *Huaju* started to present women of all social classes and their issues, rallying sympathy and support for their struggle for equality and liberty. It was hoped that the "New Woman"—educated, independent, free to pursue happiness—would emerge. But war and harsh reality made this an unattainable dream.

If the pre-1949 *huaju* was preoccupied with challenging the existing order of feudal tradition and imperial power, the post-1949 *huaju* mainly served the ruling Communist government as a tool for political propaganda and socialist mobilization. Mao Zedong said, "Women can hold up half of the sky," and praised women for "loving army uniforms but not red lipstick." For women, these famous words became expectations and even reality. On stage, leading women characters were revolutionaries devoted to the Party and the socialist state rather than the family; they were asexual beings, divorced from traditional roles as mothers and wives.

The next critical stage of modern Chinese drama came in the 1980s, when the entire nation was reeling from the 10-year-long national nightmare of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Arts and literature experienced a period of tremendous revival, and China slowly lifted the bamboo curtain. Then, *huaju* witnessed the rapid rise of women directors and writers. Women characters came from all walks of life: doctors, teachers, factory workers, educated urban youth sent to the countryside, women

in the military, etc. The plays were innovative and experimental in style and self-critical in tone. They dealt with themes of disillusionment and subsequent reawakening, challenging extreme ideologies and blind faith in authority.

Now, with the arrival of a market economy and recent globalization, *huaju* has witnessed more significant changes. One thing that has emerged is the new "white collar" drama and its female characters. *Huaju* has always been an urban form, and in places like Shanghai and Beijing, these independently produced plays are increasingly an arena created by and for young urban professionals: "white collars" between the ages of 25 and 35. People go to see and be seen. Invariably these plays mirror the lifestyles of those who create and attend them. Some have even been called "petty bourgeoisie," "love bubbles," or "little women." Recent "white collar" plays such as *Taking the Fat out of Love*, *Singles Apartment*, *www.com*, and *White Collar Stories* feature young urban professionals and often have themes of alienation, disillusionment, loneliness, longing, and failed relationships. Typically, an independently produced "white collar" drama has a small budget, a small cast, and a smaller theater. Most participants are women—from producers to playwrights, directors and performers—and most have limited stage experience. Yet what they lack in theatrical expertise they make up in enthusiasm and resourcefulness.

As for the female characters, they are educated, financially independent, and free to date or mate. Ironically, they are also decidedly unhappy and confused, as the world experiences a sea change and they face difficult moral and ethical decisions. For these women, security is not assured, values are relative, and identity is in flux. While the range of women characters might be narrow in terms of age and socio-economic status, the situations are realistic and the range of emotions the women face is universal. In current Chinese *huaju* theater, these women and their audiences are all negotiating the difficult course of identity, security and democracy in the global age. Can it be said that the "New Woman" envisioned by the New Culture activists nearly a century ago has finally arrived?

¹ The movement aimed to introduce Western concepts to China, such as democracy and liberty. A new style of writing, and the latest science and technology were also introduced.

² On May 4, 1919, a student-led demonstration marked the beginning of the upsurge of nationalist feeling, with unity of purpose among patriotic Chinese of all classes. The movement grew out of dissatisfaction with the pro-Japan Treaty of Versailles and the effects of the New Cultural Movement

Faye Chunfang Fei, a professor of English and drama at East China Normal University, was a fellow in The Japan Foundation's Asia Leadership Fellow Program 2004. Her current research project, Theater HerStory, examines women characters on stage and artists who create theater in the East and the West.

Cultural Highlights

(November–December, 2004)

VISUAL ARTS

WHISKY Wins Grand Prix at 17th Tokyo International Film Festival

WHISKY (Uruguay), directed by Juan Pablo Rebella and Pablo Stoull, has won the Grand Prix at the 17th Tokyo International Film Festival. The other winners are:

Special Jury Prize: *Kekexili: Mountain Patrol*, directed by Lu Chuan. Award for Best Director: Im Chan-sang (*The President's Barber*). Award for Best Leading Actor: Olzas Nusuppaev (*Schizo*). Award for Best Leading Actress: Mirella Pascual (WHISKY). Award for Best Artistic Contribution: *Niwatori wa Hadashi da* (The Chicken is Barefoot), directed by Azuma Morisaki. Best Asian Film Award: *Possible Changes*, directed by So-Young Kim.

PUBLICATIONS

The 26th Suntory Prize for Social Science and Humanities

The Suntory Foundation has announced the winners of the 26th Suntory Prize for Social Science and Humanities. The following recipients were honored for their work:

Politics and Economics: Shin Kawashima (assistant professor, Hokkaido University Graduate School), *Chugoku Kindai Gaiko no Keisei* (The Formation of Modern Chinese Diplomacy), published by Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai; Ryosei

Kokubun (professor, Keio University), *Gendai Chugoku no Seiji to Kanryosei* (The Politics and Bureaucracy of Modern China), published by Keio Gijuku Daigaku Shuppankai.

Art and Literature: Takako Tanaka (assistant professor, Kyoto Seika University), *Ayakashi ko–Fushigi no Chusei e* (Thoughts on the Japanese Goblin: An Invitation to the Mysterious Medieval), published by Heibonsha; Kenya Hara (graphic designer, professor, Musashino Art University), *Dezain no Dezain* (The Design of Design), published by Iwanamishoten.

Society and Social Trends: Hisako Kuroiwa (writer), *Shokudoraku no Hito–Murai Gensai* (The Gourmet: Murai Gensai), published by Iwanamishoten; Yasushi Watanabe (assistant professor, Keio University), *Afuta Amerika–Bosotonian no Kiseki to “Buka no Seijigaku”* (After America: The Bostonian's Locus of Change and the “Political Science of Culture”), published by Keio Gijuku Daigaku Shuppankai.

Thought and History: Satoshi Hirano (assistant professor, Tokyo University Graduate School), *Shin Teikoku to Chibetto Mondai–Taminzoku Togo no Seiritsu to Gakai* (The Qing Dynasty and the Tibet Issue: The Formation and Collapse of Multiracial Integration), published by Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai.

Life in Japan

Sleeping Facing the North

If you go to any Japanese temple on February 15, you will see a beautiful painting hung in the main hall, and most likely encounter a Buddhist ceremony. The painting is a *Nehan-zu*, and the ceremony is *Nehan-e*, a memorial for Buddha. *Nehan* means Nirvana, and February 15 is the day when Buddha entered Nirvana. At the center of the *Nehan-zu*, Buddha is depicted with a serene expression on his face, surrounded by creatures from all walks of life, such as humans, animals, and insects, mourning his passing.

You have probably heard of the custom of sleeping with one's pillow to the north, or *kita makura*, but you might not have known that this custom actually has its origins in Buddha's last moment. In Japan, it has long been believed that sleeping with one's pillow to the north brings bad luck. This is because at a funeral, Japanese customarily place a dead person's head northward.

However, history has it that before his death, Buddha asked his disciples to make his bed between two sala trees, with his pillow facing north. And he lay down on his



Nehan-zu, reprinted from the website of the town of Kibi, Wakayama Prefecture

right side and placed his head northward. This scene appears in the *Maha Parinibbana Sutta*, the Buddhist sutra depicting Buddha's last moments. Then, Buddha spoke his last words: “Everything in this world is subject to vanish. Remember to practice the teachings wholeheartedly.” And he entered Nirvana.

Buddha laid his head northward so that he would be able to accept death peacefully, since in India this is considered the most comfortable way to sleep. The Japanese misunderstood this tender gesture and believed that sleeping with one's pillow facing north was a Buddhist ritual to enter Nirvana at death. That is how the misconception that sleeping to the north brings bad luck arose.