

Contents

Interview With Mr. Frederik Schodt	1
The Japan Foundation's Activities	4
Book Review: <i>Wakan: Symposium of the Working Group on Pre- Modern Literature of Japan</i>	6
Contribution	7
Cultural Highlights	8

*Changing into summer clothes,
resting in the garden for its cool air...
a letter from a friend in the North
arrived,
saying that the flowers
have started to bloom.*

か へい さい ち
衣更えて端居し居れば
蝦夷の人の手紙届きぬ花咲くとあり

Masaoka Shiki
(1867-1902)

The Japan Foundation Newsletter is distributed free of charge to individuals and organizations interested in Japanese Studies and international cultural exchange. Requests for subscriptions or copies of articles that have appeared in the Newsletter should be addressed to:

Editor
The Japan Foundation Newsletter
Information and Resource Center
The Japan Foundation
ARK Mori Bldg.21F
1-12-32 Akasaka, Minato-ku
Tokyo 107-6021, Japan
Tel: +81 (03) 5562-3538
Fax: +81 (03) 5562-3534
E-mail: jfnl@jpf.go.jp
http://www.jpf.go.jp/

If you are already a subscriber, we would appreciate being informed of any changes in your address.

©2004 The Japan Foundation. Reproduction of Newsletter articles in whole or in part is prohibited without permission of the author. After permission has been received, articles may be reproduced providing the credit line reads, "reprinted from The Japan Foundation Newsletter, Vol. xx, No. xx," and The Japan Foundation is notified.
Printed in Japan.
ISSN 0385-2318

Interview With Mr. Frederik Schodt

(Writer and Manga Scholar)

"Manga: A Medium to Tell Stories"

Manga and anime, which used to be considered part of an underground sub-culture, have now become the most popular Japanese cultural import, rivaling Zen, haiku, and Noh. The Japan Foundation interviewed Frederik Schodt, a writer and translator who has been actively translating and introducing manga to the West for over thirty years. He spoke with us about manga's growing global popularity and impact.



The Pioneering Vision of Osamu Tezuka

JF: When did you first encounter Japanese manga?

Schodt: In 1970, I was living in a university dormitory in Tokyo. Many of my roommates were reading these big fat manga magazines instead of studying. When I saw the magazines, I thought they were pretty interesting, and I wondered, "what are these all about?" So I started reading, and I became hooked. The plot and the pictures were very open and very free. In fact, everything was open for manga artists at that time. It was perhaps even freer than now, because now the styles have somewhat solidified. At that time, manga artists were still doing a lot of experimentation. Many of them were influenced by film and wanted to be movie directors. Many wanted to tell stories like novels. Some foreigners might have felt that manga were stupid, but I never thought so. For me, manga were wonderful entertainment, as well as a way to learn Japanese, and to learn about Japan.

JF: What manga impressed you the most at that time?

Schodt: The very first manga I ever read was *Tensai Bakabon* (Genius Idiot), which is a slapstick comedy by Fujio Akatsuka. I also read Reiji Matsumoto's *Otoko Oidon* (I'm a Man) and Noboru Kawasaki's *Koya no Shonen, Isamu* (Isamu, the Samurai Boy in the West). It was a lot of fun to read manga, and as I learned more Japanese and got better at reading them, I read more and more. I just loved them. Later, I started reading much more sophisticated material, such as *Hinotori* (Phoenix) by Osamu Tezuka. I found it truly amazing.

JF: You have translated Tezuka Osamu's *Hinotori* (Phoenix), and *Tetsuwan Atomu* (Astro Boy). And you also had a personal relationship with Tezuka. What aspects of his works attracted you?

Schodt: Tezuka was a real pioneer. He was trying to use the comic book medium to tell stories.

Frederik Schodt is an acclaimed writer and translator. He has introduced and translated manga and Japanese culture to English readers for more than thirty years. In 2000, he received the Tezuka Osamu Culture Award's Special Prize for his long-term dedication to introducing manga overseas. Among his non-fiction works are Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics, Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga, and Native American in the Land of the Shogun. He has also translated Osamu Tezuka's masterpieces Phoenix and Astro Boy.

"Manga are wonderful entertainment and a way to learn about Japan. They are now truly a global phenomenon."

He was one of the first people who seriously tried to use *manga* in this way, just as film directors use film or novelists use novels. As a result, his stories are very thought-provoking. There's always something that children can enjoy, but actually adults can enjoy them too because they have many layers of meaning. There is a superficial layer which is just entertainment, but there is often a very philosophical layer, just like in a good movie or novel. Tezuka was also a real pioneer in the way he composed the pages in some of his comics like *Hinotori*. He used some very avant-garde layouts, some of which are quite beautiful.



An excerpt from Phoenix: A Tale of the Future by Osamu Tezuka. ©Tezuka Productions. Unedited English translation © 2004 Dadakai. All other material © 2004 VIZ, LLC.

Manga in America Today

JF: You've translated many other *manga* and written books about the Japanese *manga* world. Can you talk about that?

Schodt: Around 1977, some friends and I started a group called *Dadakai*. There were two Japanese and two Americans, and we started translating the *manga* of Tezuka and Reiji Matsumoto, but we were never able to get our work published. It was too early. Later, with one of these friends, I translated Riyoko Ikeda's *Berusaiyu no Bara* (The Rose of Versailles), and the second volume of Keiji Nakazawa's *Hadashi no Gen* (Barefoot Gen) series. But it was still too early. At that time, most people in America didn't know much about Japan, and they knew nothing about *manga*. So, when you said the word "*manga*," most people thought you were talking about Italian food or about manganese, which is a metal. So, when my first book, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*, came out in 1983, I actually had a little argument with my publisher. He thought it would be great to have the word *manga* in the title, but I thought it would be a mistake, because librarians would file it in card catalogs next to "manganese." But he said, "No, we have to try out this new word and maybe it'll catch on." As it turned out, when my first book came out, I think a lot of people were shocked to learn that comics were so popular in Japan.

JF: Because, in America, comics are only for kids?

Schodt: Not always. In America, newspaper comics are more popular than in Japan. Millions of people read newspaper comics. It was more that they didn't have an image of Japanese-style comics, so *manga* were just incredible to them. Also,

part of the problem was that in the 1950s and 1960s, most Westerners who wrote about Japan tended to focus on high-brow arts and crafts, Zen philosophy, the tea ceremony, that sort of thing. American and European scholars of Japan had ignored Japanese pop culture, so I think they were surprised to see how interesting it really was. Of course, I think *manga* are popular in Japan today partly because of a long tradition of appreciation of entertaining line art. It goes back to twelfth- and thirteenth-century *chojugiga* (animal caricature scrolls) and also back to woodblock prints. Actually, if you look at some of the woodblock prints of the Edo period, like *Kibyoshi* or *Tobae*, you will notice that they are very similar to today's *manga*.

JF: Thirty years have passed since you translated your first *manga*. How are *manga* accepted now by American teenagers?

Schodt: *Manga* are very popular among young Americans now. But there are still Americans who don't know what they are, or what *anime* is. But there are a huge number who *do*, and they are *big fans*. Nearly every large city now has a *manga* or *anime* convention. There are fan clubs in most of the big universities and among college and high school students. Now, it's considered very cool to know about *manga* or to draw them. There is a whole generation of kids who have grown up watching Japanese *anime* on television or reading *manga*. So pretty soon there will be a lot of young Americans capable of drawing *manga* just like they do in Japan. In fact, many professional comic artists in America today are already drawing a little bit more in the Japanese *manga* style. The eyes are a little bigger, the women look a little younger and more rounded, cuter. In America, there are more and more artists who call their work "*manga*" or "American *Manga*."

JF: Your book *Dreamland Japan: Writings of Modern Manga* has been translated not only into Japanese, but also into Korean and German. It seems that *manga* has truly become a global phenomenon.

Schodt: Yes. *Manga* are very popular in France, Italy, and throughout Europe. Also in Korea, Taiwan, and many Asian countries. In fact, *manga* are enormously popular around the world, partly due to the big influence of Japanese *anime*. In Japan, most people still read their favorite stories in *manga* format in magazines or books, and then later enjoy the same stories as animation on TV or video. Outside of Japan, however, the pattern is reversed: a whole new generation of kids mainly watch *manga*-based *anime*, and then, when they want to know more, they buy and read the original *manga* in book form. That's the general pattern now.

Henry Kiyama and Randal MacDonald:

Two Cultural Bridge-Builders

JF: In terms of classic *manga*, you also discovered and translated the 1920s *manga*, *Manga Yonin Shosei* (Four Immigrants

Manga) by Henry Kiyama, an immigrant to America.

Schodt: Yes. I came across this book in the Berkeley Library, when I was doing research for my first book on *manga* in 1981. It was very intriguing to me. When I started reading it, I soon realized it was a bilingual comic. It was over one hundred pages long, and an autobiographical story of Kiyama's immigrant life in San Francisco. However, the amazing thing was that



An excerpt from The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904-1924 by Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama. © Estate of Yoshitaka Kiyama and Frederik L. Schodt, published by Stone Bridge Press.

it was written in both English and Japanese. So, those who could read it were only those who knew both languages. Ordinary Japanese people could not read it, and ordinary Americans could not read it. You had to be someone like Kiyama, who knew English and Japanese. I just thought it was fascinating. Then, many, many years later, I was finally able to translate it. Depending on how you define a comic book, you could say that *Four Immigrants Manga* is one of the first graphic novels, and is one of the very first journalistic comic books ever created. The interesting thing is that it was created not by an American, but by a Japanese in the United States.

JF: You've recently written a historical book, *Native American in the Land of the Shogun*, which is about Ranald MacDonald, who came to Japan in 1848 by himself and taught English in Nagasaki. What drew you to that story?

Schodt: To me, Ranald MacDonald was a twenty-first century person in the nineteenth century, because he arrived in Japan by himself, without any association with a government or organization at all; he came only because of his own intellectual curiosity and because he could envision the day when Japan's isolation would end. MacDonald was the son of a Chinook Indian princess and a prominent Scottish official, and he was born in Astoria, in today's Oregon state, in 1824. As a young boy, he heard about some Japanese castaways in what is today the state of Washington, and this probably piqued his interest in Japan. When he was eighteen, he quit his job as a bank clerk in Canada and joined the crew of a whaling ship based in Long Island, New York. In 1848, after rounding the Horn and crossing the Pacific Ocean, he left the mother ship near Hokkaido in a small boat, and tried to infiltrate Japan. It was the age of *Moby Dick*; the fatality rate among whaling crews in the Pacific was very high, and most sailors believed

that if they landed in Japan, the Japanese would chop off their heads. But MacDonald decided to go anyway. Today, what he did would be comparable to someone trying to go to the moon on their own. If you knew someone at NASA, maybe you could get to the moon, but if you didn't, how would you get there? MacDonald was in the same situation. To me, the mere fact that he arrived in Japan in 1848 as an individual is amazing. For that alone, I consider him a true hero.

JF: You seem to have a talent for finding interesting stories. How did you discover MacDonald?

Schodt: I came across a reference to him around 1991, when I was writing an introductory book for Americans about U.S.-Japan relations, called *America and the Four Japans: Friend, Foe, Model, Mirror*. I only read a short paragraph or so on him, but I found his story truly incredible. Then I went to the San Francisco public library and actually found a copy of his posthumously published 1923 autobiography. In reading that, I became completely hooked on his story. He was such an amazing individual, and he seems to have made friends wherever he went. I think he was very open, friendly, garrulous, and didn't complain. Some of the other foreigners who arrived in Japan at that time were shipwrecked sailors or deserters from whaling ships. They were always very unhappy and complaining, and caused many problems for the Japanese. But MacDonald was not like that. He made the best of his situation and ended up teaching English to the government interpreters in Nagasaki, one of whom later acted as a chief interpreter during the negotiations with Commodore Perry. So in a way, he contributed to the peaceful opening of Japan to the West. It's a fascinating story. Nothing to do with *manga*, of course....

JF: Just as MacDonald and Kiyama bridged cultures, so have you in introducing Japanese pop culture abroad. What do you see in *manga*'s future?

Schodt: I think the *manga* industry has matured in Japan. It has become more conventional, and its styles are much more fixed and less experimental. Also, many artists don't create their own stories anymore, because they don't have enough time, and often the editors are creating a lot of the stories instead. So, for me, many of the stories are not as exciting as they used to be. That might also be because I am getting older. As I mentioned, there was a period in the late 60s, 70s and 80s, when *manga* artists were creating everything by themselves. They saw themselves as revolutionaries; they felt they were changing everything. It was a really exciting time. But now, we've entered the post-revolutionary phase of *manga*. And I think a lot fewer people read *manga* in Japan today. There is a new generation that prefers to watch *anime* or to spend their time on their cell phones. Still, while there might be stagnation in the Japanese *manga* industry, the good thing is that *manga* have spread outside of Japan, and will continue to spread. I think this is part of the natural flow of culture.

The Japan Foundation's Activities

Arab Film Festival in Tokyo 2005

17 Classic and Contemporary Arabic Films Screened

The Arab Film Festival 2005 was held in Tokyo from April 15th to 24th at the Japan Foundation Forum in Akasaka, giving Japanese a chance to see some rarely shown films for the first time. This was the third festival featuring films from the region, following The Mediterranean Film Festival (2000) and The Middle Eastern Film Festival (1992), also organized by The Japan Foundation.

Seventeen Arabic films were shown in this two-part festival. Part I, "The Iraqi Film Retrospective 1948-2005," showed nine Iraqi films for the first time in Japan. They ranged from the 1948 classic *Alia and Issam* to contemporary films including the first feature film shot after the war, *Underexposure* (2005). Part II, "The New Arab Cinema 2003-2004," featured eight contemporary films including *The Kite*, which won the Silver Lion Prize at the Venice International Film Festival 2003, and *Route 181*, a four-hour documentary collaboration between an Israeli and a Palestinian director.

It was a rare chance to see some Iraqi films in Japan, such as the classic *Alia and Issam*, which was created at the dawn of the Iraqi film industry, and *The Night Guard* (1967) and *The Thirsty* (1972), which were made during the golden age of the Iraqi film industry. These films show the strong influence of international cinematography, such as Italian neo-realism, which was then popular. However, after Saddam Hussein came to power in 1979, many of those in the film industry were forced into exile. Films were often stored in poor conditions, while the more fortunate were taken out of the country and kept by the exiled filmmakers. The Japan Foundation recently digitalized two such films—*The Night Guard* and *The Thirsty*—and gave



A scene from *The Night Guard*



Route 181: Fragments of a Journey in Palestine-Israel

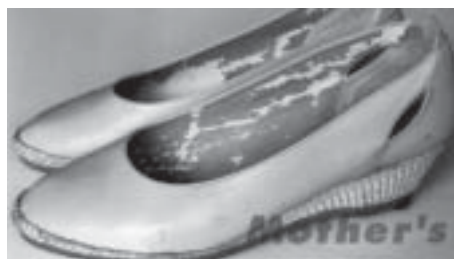
them to Iraq.

Beautiful works of Arabic calligraphy were also exhibited in the hall in conjunction with the festival. And documentary filmmaker Makoto Sato gave a lecture on his new film *Out of Place* (tentative title, to be released this fall), a documentary about the life and work of literary critic and political advocate Edward Said.

Miyako Ishiuchi's *Mother's* at Venice Biennale 2005

The Japan Foundation is pleased to organize the Japanese Pavilion at the 51st International Art Exhibition of Venice Biennale 2005, which is centered on the themes, "The Experience of Art" and "Always a Little Further." This year's participating artist from Japan is Miyako Ishiuchi, who has created a portrait of a woman who can be seen as a forerunner of today's independent women of Japan in her piece called *Mother's 2000-2005: Traces of the Future*. The exhibition will be held from June 12th to November 6th, 2005.

Ishiuchi's mother was born in a rural village in the Northern Kanto region in 1916. The artist uses documentary photographs of objects belonging to her mother to create her piece.



From *Mother's* series. © Miyako Ishiuchi

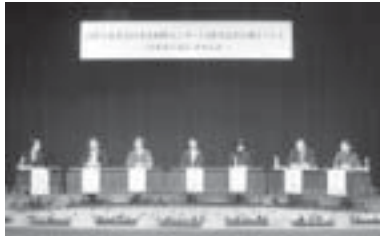
Her *Mother's* series begins with an old photograph of a woman standing next to a large truck (possibly an American model), with a dazzling smile. She is wearing a long skirt and blouse. The woman obtained her driver's license at age 18 and went to Manchuria to work. She got married, but her husband was quickly drafted and sent to the Front. During the Pacific War, she returned to her hometown in Japan and met a young student. When the war ended, the student graduated from college and the two began to live together in the village. Shortly after the woman became pregnant, her husband, who had been reported as killed in the war, returned to the village. The woman paid him severance money and obtained a mutually agreed upon divorce.

This exhibition is an homage by Ishiuchi, an independent contemporary woman, to her mother, Miyako Ishiuchi, another independent woman who died at age 84 in 2000. (In another

act of tribute, Ishiuchi took her artistic name from her mother). The artist uses realistic photographs of objects that her mother owned, such as chemises, girdles, partially used tubes of lipstick, a comb with hair still in it, false teeth and wigs, as well as close-up shots of plants and skin, to depict the great changes that have occurred in the consciousness of contemporary Japanese women.

The Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa “Let’s Talk in Japanese” 15th Anniversary Event

On March 12th, 2005, The Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, held an event to commemorate its fifteenth anniversary. The event was called *Nihongo de Hanashimasen Ka?* (“Let’s Talk in Japanese”). The hall was full of Japanese language teachers, volunteer staff who teach Japanese, and students majoring in Japanese-language education.



Panel discussion “What it Means to Learn and Teach Japanese.” (March 12, 2005)

There were two parts to the anniversary event. Part I was a commemorative speech by H.E. Musa Muhammad Omar Sai’id, Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan, and a panel discussion called *Nihongo wo Manabukoto to Oshierukoto* (“What it Means to Learn and Teach Japanese”), by three Japanese-language teachers: Associate Professor Sau Kuen Fan, Professor Hideho Kindaichi, and Chief Lecturer Noriko Yokoyama. Three foreign specialists who studied Japanese and now use the language in their work were also on the panel. They were Ms. Kenna Son, Ms. Ginny Parker, and Mr. Romaniello Donato. Those on the teaching panel spoke of how teaching the Japanese language led them to better know themselves. Those on the student panel talked about their motivation for pursuing the study of Japanese.

In his commemorative speech, Mr. Sai’id spoke of his own experience of learning Japanese. He stated that, “The Japanese should realize the importance of making an effort to spread the Japanese language as a global language, because Japan is now a global economic giant.”

Part II introduced The Japan Foundation’s activities and Japanese-language education. It consisted of hands-on workshops such as, “How to Teach Japanese (Mini-Lecture),” “Understanding of Different Cultures,” “Dispatching Japanese-Language Specialists to Overseas Countries: An Introduction to the Project,” and “The Trial of ‘Minna no Kyozai’ (the website ‘Teaching Resources for Everyone’).” It also featured display booths ex-

hibiting Japanese-language learning materials in overseas countries, an introduction to the Sushi Test (an online Japanese-language test), and video display rooms.

Many visitors enjoyed the opportunity to look at and try out the various Japanese-language materials first-hand.

Korean and Japanese Hip-Hop and Contemporary Artists Perform Together in Seoul

Korea-Japan Road Club Festival

The Korea-Japan Road Club Festival was held on March 25th in the Hondae area of Seoul, South Korea. This event, co-organized by The Japan Foundation and the Korea Club Cultural Association, presented an all-night joint performance of Korean and Japanese hip-hop artists that went on from the evening of the 25th to the morning of the 26th. This event was part of a series of events held to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan. Also, it was the first time The Japan Foundation had sponsored hip-hop artists.



The main street crowded with young people (March 25, 2005. Hondae area, Seoul).

Photo by Haruo Matsuya

The Hondae area is considered one of the hippest places in Seoul. It is full of clubs, bars and cafes frequented by young people. A variety of events are held there once a month on Friday nights.

On 25th March, two huge fifty-meter tents were set up at the intersection of the main street to serve as the main performance space for this event. Twenty other spaces in the area, such as clubs, live music halls, and galleries, housed joint performances by Korean and Japanese hip-hop musicians, DJs, and contemporary artists. Thirteen groups and a total of over seventy hip-hop performers, musicians, and artists participated from Japan, among them DJ. Kentaro, LITTLE (Kick The Can Crew), Soul Flower Union, and Tsuyoshi Ozawa.

Although it was a politically sensitive time due to the Takeshima (Dokdo) Island issue, the main tents and performance spaces were packed with appreciative audiences who enjoyed the collaboration among hip-hop artists of both countries. People in the audience commented that listening to and enjoying music reached beyond political concerns, and felt that it was important to continue to hold events like this to promote mutual understanding between Korea and Japan.

Also, a real-time report of the event was dispatched live via the Internet by volunteer members of The Japan Foundation Supporters Club.

Books in Other Languages

Adopting Chinese Literature in Japan



Wakan: Symposium of the Working Group on Pre-Modern Literature of Japan, June 2003 Munich University

Edited by Jutta Hausser
OAG Publishers, Hamburg, Germany
2004, 145 pp.

This German-language volume includes seven contributions to the fourth working group's meeting on pre-modern literature of Japan, held in June of 2003 at Munich University. The group's main aim is to contribute to the understanding of modern Japan through research into pre-modern Japanese literature. David Pollack's 1986 publication, *The Fracture of Meaning* (Princeton University Press), served as a reference point for the group's examination of the ways in which the Chinese language operated in its transition to Japanese. The papers present diverse views illustrating and analyzing the processes that were part of the adaptation and recreation of Chinese literary themes and writing in the literature of pre-modern Japan.

Unrequited love and how it is often bound to waiting for the beloved is explored in Simone Mueller's *Influence of Chinese Poetry on Classical Japanese Love Lyrics*. Mueller demonstrates how the passively waiting woman was adopted from Chinese court poetry, and how it may have gained a dominant aesthetic stylization in Japanese poetry beyond literature to ultimately help define the Japanese feminine ideal. And in *The Palace of the Dragon and the Treasure Chest—Perception of Foreign and Local Elements in the World of Urashima Taro's Images and Stories*, Jutta Hausser attempts to trace the origins of the fairy tale of the fisherman who spares a turtle's life, is given in marriage to the Dragon King's daughter, and enjoys his stay until a sense of obligation toward his aging parents prompts him to leave. The princess gives him a treasure chest, which is only to be opened if he wishes to see her again. Back home, he realizes that not three but three hundred years have passed. In desperation, he opens the chest. A wisp of smoke emerges, he ages rapidly, and dies. Hausser traces the variations of this story in Chinese literature and follows in detail the rich variety of similar tales in Japan.

Stephan Köhn looks at the Shogunate era in his paper entitled *Shades of Morality—Ambivalent Chinese Images in the*

“Boulevard” Journals of the Edo Period. At that time, Confucian ideals were promulgated by the political class and gained prominence, with *ukiyo-e* prints used as educational tools that served to highlight good behavior and warn of the consequences of evil. Köhn describes how popular arts like kabuki theater and woodblock prints were cleverly used to infuse Confucian moral values into society. In *Disposition of the National Learning (Kokugaku) Movement towards Chinese—The Case of Ueda Akinari*, Judith Árokay looks into the National Learning (*Kokugaku*) Movement in the eighteenth century, whose particular concern was to return Japanese to its origins. She investigates the struggle within the *Kokugaku* Movement by following a controversy between Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) and Ueda Akinari (1734-1809) in the Movement's reconstruction efforts.

In *Ideas on the Evolution of Literary Ideals in the Tokugawa Period*, Nadja Brinker puts forward the idea of how a group of Japanese intellectuals took recourse in Chinese scholarly literary traditions. Brinker looks at how Chinese intellectuals fleeing to Japan during the collapse of the Ming dynasty provided significant contributions to the deliberations. The literati's ideals in the Tokugawa period are illustrated with a discussion of the author Terakado Seiken (1796-1868) and his work.

In *Japanese Medieval Legal Texts as Examples of Written Orality and Spoken Literacy*, Judith Fröhlich addresses the dilemma between the Japanese spoken and written languages, based on alien Chinese scripts. Finally, Matthew Königsberg discusses *The Story of the Sohga, Chinese Material in Japanese Translation* in a paper that analyses three versions of an often-told story of extreme filial piety, in which Sohga, a Chinese woman who is too poor to afford a proper burial for her father, eventually takes her own life. Königsberg investigates the possibilities of finding methods that allow identification of literary sources attributable to certain historical periods.

The topics in this book have been extensively researched and will certainly be very useful for linguists working in the field. General readers such as myself, whose access to Japanese literature is mostly in translation, will also find the papers to be interesting and stimulating. However, while the decision to use Pollack's book as a framework may have been practical, it may have also provided a one-sided assessment of the impact of pre-modern Japanese literature on modern Japan. In any case, language is not a quiet partner. Anyone who uses it recreates and changes it, be it in pre-modern Japan or Japan today.

Wakan: Symposium of the Working Group on Pre-Modern Literature of Japan is reviewed by Urs Sieber, who has been a resident of Asia for the past thirty years. A former manager at the Asian Development Bank in Manila, Sieber currently lives in Tokyo, where he studies Japanese art, literature, culture, and society.

On Good Governance and Leadership in the Solomon Islands

Salana Kalu

The Solomon Islands are one of the most beautiful island nations in the Pacific. However, after they gained independence from Britain on July 7, 1978, the state continued to confront numerous social, economic and political difficulties. By 1998, these difficulties had developed into a civil conflict. I would like to offer some explanations of how and why the economy continues to decline, affecting the welfare and well-being of the citizens.

Pro-modernists have pointed out that developing countries like the Solomon Islands are destined to confront socio-economic and political difficulties as they continually transform themselves into becoming more like developed nation-states. Some scholars also argue that the underdevelopment of states like the Solomon Islands has been, and continues to be, impeded by forces (international and/or domestic) bent on the ongoing exploitation of natural resources. They argue that these primarily capitalist interests could only be held at bay if the global system underwent a fundamental change that would alter structural relations between the Third World and the industrialized world. Indeed, these arguments, although contradictory in many ways, are valid. However, I would like to stress that a nation-state like the Solomon Islands would be able to make a great leap forward in its effort to develop satisfactorily if its policy makers were willing enough to practice the orthodoxy of good governance.

It is evident that the inability of policy-makers to function along with a lack of a good governance agenda had resulted in the nation's declining economy, a drastic increase in the population growth rate, increased illiteracy, unemployment and poverty rates, inadequate health and education resources and facilities, and lower life expectancy. In 2002, it was reported that the GDP continued to decline that year, and that the cumulative decline in real GDP between 1999 and 2002 during the conflict period may be as high as 25-30%. Most industries have shut down or are running under partial operation, and logging remains the main means of generating revenue for the government.

Many Solomon Islands policy-makers frequently like to justify these significant failures as a plight imposed on them by external forces, such as the dictating policies of international financial institutions and leading industrial nation-states. Of course, to some extent, this is true. However, it must also be stressed that the time has come for leaders and policy-makers to consider their own performance and corrupt practices before blaming external forces.

For over two decades, leaders were not seriously criticized for their own weaknesses. And even if they were, the judiciary system would generally not penalize them for corruption. Today, the Solomon Islands are regarded by many as a 'failed state.' This statement was overwhelmingly accepted when the national government of the Solomon Islands could no longer cope with its own internal problems and decided to ask Australia for assistance. A Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was formed, led by the Australian government. Reluctantly, the government was forced to surrender a significant portion of its sovereignty to RAMSI. For instance, law and order was completely administered by this organization. RAMSI also stationed its financial controllers in key areas within the Ministry of Finance to ensure that government funds are rightly administered.

Some Solomon Islands leaders deliberately decided to turn a blind eye to the success of RAMSI in stabilizing law and order and the economy of the nation-state. Today, some of the same national leaders who had asked for and invited the intervention have begun to criticize the work of RAMSI in the Solomon Islands. This attitude displayed by leaders can be explained in many ways. From my point of view, this is a clear indication of the fear of being guilty of committing serious crimes. Some leaders who had been masterminding corrupt practices which contributed significantly to the emergence of the civil conflict realized that the work of RAMSI was infiltrating the national and provincial government administration and uncovering corrupt practices within the entire bureaucratic system. And if RAMSI continues with its work, a good number of Solomon Islands leaders will be charged as the main players of corruption within the entire governing system of the nation-state.

Recently, a few national leaders were imprisoned for playing an active role in the instigation of the 1998 civil conflict, or for personally utilizing government funds. An effective elimination of corruption among politicians and senior government officials would create a better outlook for governance of society. Also, assisting civil society and NGOs to educate villagers on corruption and dependency concepts would have a great impact on good governance in this nation. Clearly, solving a national problem is not an easy task. However, it is time for Solomon Islanders to become empowered to take charge of their own destiny.

Salana Kalu is a Solomon Islander who is currently writing his Master's thesis, "The Shortfall and Reformation of Political and Administrative Decentralization in the Solomon Islands," at the University of the South Pacific. He was also one of the participants of the 2005 Asia Pacific Youth Forum (APYF), organized by The Japan Foundation.

Cultural Highlights

(March–April, 2005)

PUBLICATIONS

Mr. H Poetry Prize Winner Announced

The Japan Poets' Association has announced the winner of the 55th Mr. H Poetry prize and the winner of the 23rd Contemporary Japanese Poetry prize. The winner of the Mr. H Poetry prize is Junko Yamamoto for *Amanogawa* (Milky Way). The winner of the Contemporary Japanese Poetry prize is Toshihiko Hirabayashi for *Funa Uta* (Sailor's Song).

PRIZES

The Ministry of Education's Art Encouragement Prizes

The Agency for Cultural Affairs has announced the winners of the 2004 The Ministry of Education's Art Encouragement Prizes. The winners are the following:

Theater: Masakuni Asami (*Noh Shite Kata*: leading actor), Shinobu Otake (actress)

Film: Rie Miyazawa (actress), Azuma Morisaki (director)

Music: Masataro Imafuji (shamisen player), Ichiro Nodaira (composer, pianist)

Dance: Tetsuya Kumakawa (ballet dancer), Yukari Saito (ballet dancer)

Literature: Ei'ichi Kasuya (poet), Yuko Tsushima (writer)

Art: Yoshiyuki Nakano (Japanese painter), Ryuji Saito (photographer)

Broadcast: Yutaka Shigenobu (TV producer), Yasuo Tsuruhashi

(TV director)

Popular Entertainment: Utamaru Katsura (traditional Japanese comic storyteller), Harumi Miyako (singer)

Art Promotion: Tomio Yuki (folk researcher)

Criticism: Mikio Omuro (critic), Satoru Higuchi (literary critic).

Winners of The Japan Art Academy Awards

The Japan Art Academy has announced the winners of The Japan Art Academy Awards for the 2004 fiscal year. The winners are:

Art Division: Haruhiko Kawasaki (Japanese painting), Tadao Terasaka (Western painting), Seiji Nohjima (sculpture), Seiuro Kurono (calligraphy)

Literature Division: Toshio Mae (Tanka)

Music, Performing Arts Division: Mitsuko Uchida (Western classical music), Yoshiyuki Kanze (Japanese classical music), Hokusuke Nakamura (Kabuki).

OBITUARIES

Kenzo Tange, 91, architect, March 22. A pioneer in the field of post-war Japanese architecture, Tange designed many of Japan's most prominent buildings utilizing innovative concepts. His most famous designs are the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, Yoyogi National Stadium, the Saudi Arabian Royal Palace, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office.

Life in Japan

Rice-Planting Rituals and the Birth of Noh

In Japan, June is *taue* (rice-planting) season. As anyone who has ever lived in Japan knows, it is also the rainy season. If you go to the countryside, you can see farmers planting young rice plants in water-soaked fields.

In modern times, the rice-planting process is mostly mechanized, but in medieval times, it was celebrated by ritual and festivity. When young rice was planted, farmers performed a dance dedicated to the rice-field God in the hopes of being granted a bountiful harvest. Villagers sang songs, banged drums, and played the *sasara*, a small wooden musical instrument resembling a castanet, to celebrate the work of planting and to encourage the rice to grow well. A memorable depiction of this ritual is found in the last scene of Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*, where villagers and farmers join in a lively announcement of the beginning of *taue*. *Taue* was not only physical labor, but also a significant and joyous event in village life, cementing community bonds, celebrating new life, and honoring nature. These local performances were called *Dengaku*, a word made of the kanji for "rice field" (*den*) and "music" (*gaku*).

Thus, *Dengaku* was born in the ninth century. Eventually these village celebrations were adopted by professional actors, and they later developed into independent productions called *Dengaku*

(*Noh* meant "performance"). These productions enjoyed great popularity in cultural centers such as Kyoto and Kamakura, gaining an enthusiastic audience ranging from aristocrats to samurai to lower-class people. In the fourteenth century, famous *Dengaku* actors like Ichu, Inuo and Kiami emerged. Their charismatic performances influenced Kan'ami and Zeami, the father-and-son duo that comprised the *Yamato Sarugaku* theater. At that time, *Yamato Sarugaku*, plays that made fun of human behavior (like monkeys imitating humans; hence the name), were just countryside performances held near Nara. By the end of the fourteenth century, Kan'ami and Zeami blended the sophisticated style of *Dengaku Noh* into *Sarugaku Noh*, which eventually became *Noh*. The duo is considered the founders of *Noh*.

Taue reminds us that, like *Noh* theater, most popular arts have their roots in ordinary and everyday pleasures.



The Taue Festival in Seiyō, Ehime Prefecture. ©Seiyō City