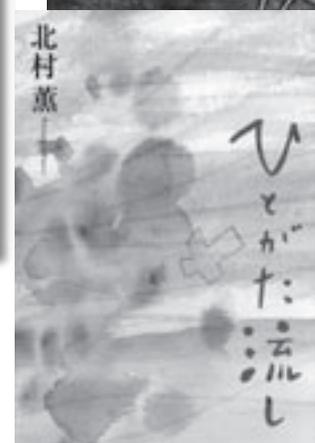
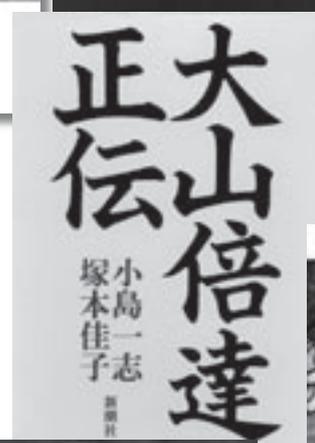


JAPANESE BOOK NEWS

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SPRING 2007



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Literature in Japan Today:

Publishing Trends for 2006

Matsuda Tetsuo

Any pictorial representation of the Japanese literary world will have two prizes at its center: the Akutagawa and the Naoki. The Akutagawa Prize is given to story-length works of serious literary fiction, and the Naoki Prize goes to lighter works aimed more at entertainment. Candidates for these prizes, awarded twice annually, are selected from among writers who have already made their debuts in newspapers or magazines, including those who have won contests for new authors. Compared to the many other literary contests currently run in Japan, though, the Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes have far more tradition and authority—and they are also far more effective as springboards to massively increase sales of the winning works. Writings that have garnered one of these prizes are guaranteed to sell far more copies than most other works, and their authors generally enjoy fame and stronger reputations as writers.

This does not mean that winning one of the two big prizes is a requirement for a professional writer, though. Two of the biggest figures in postwar Japanese literature, Dazai Osamu and Mishima Yukio, won neither the Akutagawa nor the Naoki; contemporary writers like the globally famous Murakami Haruki and Yoshimoto Banana received nominations, but did not win the prizes. And there are numerous authors who won one of these awards only to fade from the scene soon afterward.

The two awards are not, therefore, a guaranteed gate to success for new writers. Nevertheless, when it comes to pure literature or entertainment-oriented fiction, the area covered by these two prizes could be described as the “main stage” of literary publishing in Japan. Surrounding this stage are several other sub-stages, each of which enjoys a devoted population of readers. These are genres including mystery novels, historical fiction, and economy-related fiction.

Many new writers make their appearance on these various stages with works in the literary journals put out by major publishing houses. By giving writers a platform to get their creations before readers, these companies—major names like Bungei Shunjū, Shinchōsha, Kōdansha, Kadokawa Shoten, and Shūeisha—are playing a central role in the world of literary publishing. The writers who win Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes are at the pinnacle of a structure supported by these large publishers and the magazines and books they put out. This is a mountain that new writers are constantly trying to summit.

After the end of World War II there was a period of great vigor in the literary publishing field, as readers scrambled to satisfy their pent-up desire for the kind of literature that had been in short supply during wartime. As Japan’s economy boomed and people became more af-

fluent, though, a number of other media rose to fill their entertainment needs—movies, television, and games, to name a few. When compared with publishing sectors like comics, which have seen rapid growth from the 1970s on, literary publication appears to have seen relatively slow growth for some decades.

At the same time, though, the number of new writers vying for the major literary prizes has gone up steadily. This has been due largely to an increase in the number of middle-aged and older people eager to try their hand at writing novels. Beginning in the 1990s, with the rapid spread of word processors and then personal computers, the population of would-be writers burgeoned still more. In more recent times the explosion of the Internet and mobile telephones has given younger people a range of tools for their own writing, including e-mail sent from computers and mobile phones and weblogs. All of these factors have combined to keep the number of writers rising steadily.

As this number has risen, more than a few of these writers have decided that they want to write novels and publish their works. An increasingly active self-publishing industry is moving to tap this demand. The number of literary works published each year, including novels, poetry collections, and other forms, is on a steady rise, with both self-publishing and traditional publishing contributing to the climb.

Beginning around 2003, a series of events reinvigorated the literary publishing scene. One of these was the awarding of the Akutagawa Prize to the youngest recipients ever. The second 2003 prize went to two writers: the 19-year-old Wataya Risa, for “*Keritai senaka*” [A Back You Want to Kick], and 20-year-old Kanehara Hitomi, for “*Hebi ni piasu*” [trans. *Snakes and Earrings*]. When these young women won their awards it sparked a wave of fresh interest in literature among people—especially younger people—who had not been such avid readers before. The book version of Wataya’s story went on to sell an amazing 1.27 million copies.

Another event breathing fresh life into the literary industry was the appearance of Katayama Kyōichi’s *Sekai no chūshin de, ai o sakebu* [trans. *Socrates in Love*]. Originally published in April 2001, the book began seeing its sales grow steadily around December of the following year. According to some, this delayed climb in popularity was sparked by a Chiba bookstore clerk who, captivated by the work, set up a hand-made, in-store display to get more customers interested in it. As people began taking notice of the book in other bookstores around Japan sales rose swiftly, breaking the million-copy mark in the autumn of 2003. The work eventually sold considerably

more than 3 million hardcover and paperback copies on the strength of the cinematic and televised versions it inspired—and it remains a solid seller to this day.

What did publishers learn from these two developments? First of all, younger readers are showing a growing interest in literary works. Second, bookstore employees are able to play a direct role in the creation of bestsellers. And third, transferring a book to the small or big screen is a way to further accelerate its sales. In short, publishers have learned of the sizeable population of people who are willing to read literary works from hard sales numbers that prove what levels can be reached if the conditions are right. Taking this lesson to heart, they have produced a continuing string of hits in the same way, helping further boost interest in novels.

These industry moves have brought with them several new trends. First, Japan has seen the emergence of a number of new literary awards for new writers. The publishers sponsoring these awards are seeking to discover new talent in the field and to produce works that will sell well. Toward these ends they have refined their approach in several ways. Some of these contests are designed around certain themes, such as “novels of youth” or “novels written on mobile phones.” Others are limited to writers under a certain age. And the cash prizes offered to winners have been steadily increasing in value. Poplar, a major publisher of children’s books, shocked the industry when it announced an unprecedented award of ¥20 million for its new writers’ contest. Even outlays like this can be considered wise investments if they lead to the discovery of the next million-seller, of course.

The second new trend has been the invigoration of a certain genre of works: entertaining books aimed at younger readers. Novels written expressly for the younger generation—an entirely separate set of works from those that constitute the “main stage” of literature—have always been solid sellers, although their style and their intended audience may have changed over the years. These works have included novels for boys, novels for girls, children’s literature, and “junior novels,” to name a few. The authors of these books often go on to successful careers as writers of novels for adults, too. Examples include numerous Naoki Prize winners, such as Kirino Natsuo, Yamamoto Fumio, Yuikawa Kei, Ekuni Kaori, Murayama Yuka, and Mori Eto. Many recent novels aimed at readers under the age of 20 are steeped in influences from comics, anime, and video games, and are geared more toward entertainment value than profound literary merit. The writers of these “light novels” are gradually attracting older readers in addition to their solid fan bases among younger book-lovers.

The third trend has been the emergence of hit novels whose content originally appeared on websites accessed by mobile phone. These *keitai shōsetsu*, or “cellphone novels,” became wildly popular when read on mobile terminals and maintained that popularity when transferred to the paper medium. The writer Yoshi’s *Deep Love* was the first of these to be widely read. It was received coolly by people connected to the traditional publishing industry, but vast numbers of young girls who had never read novels before pushed it to the top of the bestseller lists, making it a significant work from the perspective of expanding the

book-reading population. The appearance of this new form of novel has led many young women to frankly relate their own experiences in similar works, and famed authors of traditional books are also trying their hand at this new type of writing. This is a lively corner of the publishing universe with a growing readership.

A fourth trend has been a steady string of bestsellers whose popularity was built in part through the efforts of bookstore employees. Inspired by the performance of Katayama’s *Sekai no chūshin de, ai o sakebu*, bookstores around Japan began putting more energy into sales of literary novels. The Hon’ya [Bookseller] Prize, established in 2004, is symbolic of this new focus. This award is selected by bookstore employees around the country, who vote on the best book published in the previous year. The first Hon’ya Prize went to Ogawa Yōko’s *Hakase no aishita sūshiki* [trans. *The Gift of Numbers*], with the 2005 prize going to Onda Riku’s *Yoru no pikunikku* [Nighttime Picnic] and the 2006 award to Lily Franky’s *Tōkyō Tawā, okan to boku to, tokidoki, oton* [Tokyo Tower: Me and Mom, and Sometimes Dad]. All three of these books saw a fresh spurt in sales after receiving the Hon’ya Prize, and yet again after being made into films. Ogawa’s and Lily’s works in particular both cleared the 2 million mark, becoming runaway bestsellers.

In these ways, publishers and booksellers are working hard to uncover talented writers and bring quality literary works to readers. Their efforts also extend to nurturing broader reading populations so as to increase sales from the demand side as well. The publishing industry as a whole has long been in the doldrums in Japan, but literary genres have provided vigorous growth amid this situation. It needs to be noted, though, that this industry focus on books that sell well has resulted in even less attention being focused on the less flashy works that make up the bulk of publishers’ output each year. Countless books appear only to fade away quietly due to slow sales of their first printings.

Seen in this light, the Japanese publishing world is now experiencing a gold rush of sorts. Will this industry expansion lead to the appearance of new authors and works whose popularity can last long enough to open up a new age of success? Will we see the publication of works that will end up timeless treasures of Japan’s literary tradition, rather than tools to be used in the pursuit of short-term profits? These are the questions we must ask as we survey the state of Japanese literature today.



Matsuda Tetsuo

Born in 1947. Editor, essayist, and commentator. Executive director of Chikuma Shobō Publishing. In 1970 he went to work full-time for Chikuma Shobō, where he edited for major writers like Nosaka Akiyuki, helped produce numerous bestsellers like the Chikuma *bungaku no mori* [Chikuma’s Forest of Literature] series and *Rōjinryoku* [Old-Age Strengths], and launched the Chikuma bunko collection of titles. Among his own works is *Insatsu ni*

koi shite [In Love with Printing], which won a silver Gesner Award, presented to books about books. Member of the Japanese Book News Advisory Board.

FICTION



Oda Makoto

Born in 1932. Organized a citizen protest movement against the Vietnam War in 1965. Since then has promoted citizen activism through his writings.

Tina Pepler

British broadcast scriptwriter. Also adapted Oda's 1982 Hiroshima as The Bomb, a radio drama aired in 1995.

Donald Keene

Born in 1922. Noted American scholar of Japanese literature. Professor emeritus at Columbia University.

Gyokusai [The Breaking Jewel]

By Oda Makoto, Tina Pepler, and Donald Keene

Iwanami Shoten, 2006. 195x135 mm. 279 pp. ¥2,700. ISBN 978-4-00-022549-6 (4-00-022549-9).

The word *gyokusai*, meaning “shattered jewel,” comes originally from the Chinese classic *Beiqishu*, the history of the Northern Qi dynasty. It refers to a glorious death that keeps the honor and loyalty of the dying person intact. In Japan during World War II, the term came to mean the suicidal attacks against enemy forces and suicides carried out to avoid being taken prisoner.

Oda Makoto's 1998 *Gyokusai* lies at the heart of this present work. Moved by this book, Japan scholar Donald Keene translated it into English as *The Breaking Jewel* (2003). Tina Pepler then reworked this English version into a script for a BBC radio drama broadcast in 2005. This 2006 book contains Oda's original novel as well as a Japanese translation of Pepler's adaptation, a dialogue between Oda

and Keene, and other writings from all three contributors.

This combination of material—the novel, critical writings on it, and the discussion—is surprisingly effective. Oda's work does not explain away the practice of *gyokusai* as something commanded by a military system gone insane, but constructs a literary presentation of the psychology that leads a person to give up his own life. The contributions by Keene and Pepler examine the *gyokusai* concept from other angles, making this book a more complete exploration of its significance. Particularly interesting is the writers' refusal to view *gyokusai* as a purely historical issue: they apply its lessons to suicide bombings carried out by Islamic extremists and other facets of contemporary international society.

Hitogata nagashi [Floating Dolls]

By Kitamura Kaoru

Asahi Shimbunsha, 2006. 195x135 mm. 315 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-02-250199-8 (4-02-250199-5).

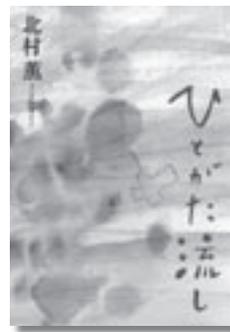
This book's author is a well-known mystery writer. This is no mystery story, though, but a tale of heartwarming friendship among three women in their forties.

Kitamura's works, including his mystery novels, have always been characterized by warmhearted narrative. He has even managed to write some of his mysteries without murders or crime in them. In this work he presents subtle depictions of everyday life and lively bits of conversation that are simply a pleasure to read.

But just because the sentences are smooth and sweet does not mean the story is the same. The main character, a newscaster, learns that she has an incurable disease just before she begins a long-sought-after position as head anchor of a news program. Two of her friends

and members of her family, however, step in to support her as she faces this difficult future. They even encourage and nudge her forward in romance, an area in which she is particularly shy.

But the illness does not wait. Confronted by this cruel fate, the protagonist is able to maximize the limited time she has to live and is moved by the depth of her irreplaceable friendships. The book's deeply emotional final scene will likely move many readers to tears.



Kitamura Kaoru

Born in 1949. Published *Sora tobu uma* [Horse in the Sky], his debut novel, while working as a high school Japanese teacher at his alma mater. Won the 1991 Mystery Writers of Japan Award for Yoru no semi [The Evening Cicada]. Has worked as a writer full-time since 1993, producing detective fiction as well as critical essays on the genre.



Mori Eto

For biographical information, please refer to the interview “In Their Own Words” on page 16.

Kaze ni maiagaru binīru shīto **[A Plastic Sheet Flying in the Wind]**

By Mori Eto

Bungei Shunjū, 2006. 195x135 mm. 313 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-16-324920-9 (4-16-324920-6).

This collection of short stories includes the tale of a Japanese woman involved with refugee programs at the United Nations. After the death of her ex-husband, with whom she had spent seven years, she is unable to come to terms with his end. Other stories follow a volunteer who cares for abandoned pets, a restoration artist mesmerized by images of Buddha, and an editor of a mail-order catalog in charge of handling customer complaints.

The author began her career writing novels for young adults and has since won a total of eight prizes in children’s literature. Over the last several years, however, she has produced a number of works that transcend the juvenile genre and are attracting greater attention from adult readers. Her popularity soared after her most recent work—this volume of short sto-

ries—was awarded the 135th Naoki Prize in July 2006.

The characters that appear in this collection share a common trait—they are all obsessed with something. The consistently warm attitude the author takes toward these characters, however, suggests her roots in juvenile literature.

The author conducted extensive research to describe each of her characters’ professions in depth, lending a vivid realism to her tales. Through solid composition and fine detail, she has created such a rich, full world in each of the stories that the reader comes away with a sense of satisfaction similar to that gained from a novel.

Mori no hazure de **[On the Edge of the Forest]**

By Ono Masatsugu

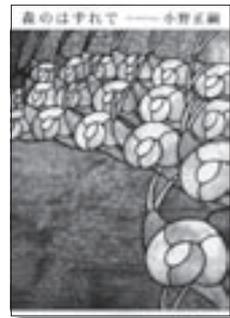
Bungei Shunjū, 2006. 195x135 mm. 216 pp. ¥1,714. ISBN 978-4-16-324990-2 (4-16-324990-7).

The latest work from one of Japan’s most avidly watched young writers contains four tales: “Katachichi” [The One-Breasted Woman], “Furui kawa no fukuro” [The Old Leather Bag], “Nemuru kobu” [The Sleeping Wen], and “Mori no okashiya” [The Forest Candy Shop]. The stories are probably set in the present or the near future, but their temporal and spatial setting are left quite vague. The main characters in these stories are a first-person protagonist and his young son. A second child was on the way, but the protagonist’s pregnant wife has evidently died, perhaps in some sort of accident.

The fairy-tale elements around which these tales are constructed—the forest goblin, the castle, the candy shop in the woods—help propel this book partly into the realm of fantasy. At the same time,

though, the book’s world features an atmosphere reminiscent of science-fiction disaster, with ongoing conflict, armed clashes, and massive flows of refugees adding up to a background of catastrophe for the stories. And the book bears the signs of a work of magical realism, with the wondrous forest producing this series of tales.

Underpinning this unique world is Ono’s bold, smooth writing, which makes skillful use of unconventional metaphor. A scholar of creole literatures, Ono has written a book that goes beyond the boundaries of Japanese literature to become one that deserves to be read in the context of modern world literature.



Ono Masatsugu

Born in 1970. Earned a doctorate in literature at the University of Paris VIII. Won the Asahi Prize for New Writers for his 2001 *Mizu ni umoreru haka* [Graves Swallowed by the Water] and the Mishima Yukio Prize for his 2002 *Nigiyaka na wan ni seowareta fune* [The Boat Carried by the Bustling Bay].



Kanehara Hitomi

Born in 1983. Gained fame when she became one of the youngest-ever winners of an Akutagawa Prize for her 2003 debut publication, a short story called “Hebi ni piasu” [trans. Snakes and Earrings].

Ōtofikushon **[Autofiction]**

By Kanehara Hitomi

Shūeisha, 2006. 195x130 mm. 262 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 978-4-08-775364-6 (4-08-775364-6).

This somewhat autobiographical novel is based on the real-life experiences of one of Japan’s top young female writers. The protagonist is Rin, a 22-year-old woman. The story begins on an airplane taking this woman and her husband, Shin, on their honeymoon vacation. She is at the height of newlywed happiness, but soon she begins to fear that she may lose her mate to another woman who is making advances to him.

Rin is a writer who has promised her editor a book titled *Autofiction*, in which she travels back through the narrative of her life—age 18, then 16, then 15, and so on. At each of these stages of her life she was enmeshed in passionate relationships of love and hatred with men. Her entanglements have left her thoroughly disillusioned time and again, with this disen-

chantment leading to the ruin of her relationships—more accurately, pushing her into shockingly reckless behavior in them. This background hints at a bleak future for the woman’s present marriage, despite her honeymoon joy.

The farther back we travel in Rin’s past, the more Kanehara’s book seems to tell a disappointingly familiar story. But there are still hopeful signs in this writing. Three years ago she won the Akutagawa Prize for her “Hebi ni piasu” [trans. *Snakes and Earrings*], a story that saw her searching for her own identity in an exploration of body modification. In this new book, too, she is steadily seeking answers to the question “Who am I?”—here an “I” who finds it difficult to create lasting ties with others.

Tsuā 1989 **[Tour 1989]**

By Nakajima Kyōko

Shūeisha, 2006. 195x140 mm. 218 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-08-774812-3 (4-08-774812-X).

This is an ambitious work from an up-and-coming female writer. Described simply, it is a mysterious story concerning memory.

In the late 1980s—around the end of the bubble era, when every region in Japan was experiencing ever-growing economic prosperity—an unprecedented world travel boom occurred. There was even talk of a company offering a bizarre-sounding “lost child tour,” in which one nondescript member of the group would disappear unexpectedly. This was apparently meant to provide the other group members with a strange and intoxicating experience.

Fifteen years later a rumor emerges and spreads via letters and weblogs that a man really did disappear on one of these tours. A young part-time worker decides

to investigate this mystery and meets with the man who invented the idea of the “lost child tour.” He then goes looking for the lost man in Hong Kong and even goes as far as Bangkok. While searching for traces of the man, he has a series of strange experiences. He finally encounters the lost man, but there is a twist . . .

In this book the author realistically portrays the ambiguity of memory and the strange way in which gossip and legend can rewrite people’s recollections.



Nakajima Kyōko

Born in 1964. After graduating from the College of Arts and Sciences at Tokyo Woman’s Christian University, worked at a Japanese language school and a publishing company before becoming a freelance writer. Her debut novel was the 2003 Futon.

ESSAY



Hanae

Born in the United States in 1991. Came to Japan at the age of six. At 10 started modeling for fashion magazines. In 2002, won the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology Prize in the Elementary and Middle School Essay Contest.

Hon o yomu watashi: My Book Report

By Hanae

Chikuma Shobō, 2006. 188x130 mm. 219 pp. ¥1,000. ISBN 978-4-480-81648-1 (4-480-81648-8).

The 15-year-old author of this book was born in the United States to an American father and Japanese mother. At the age of six her parents divorced and she moved with her mother to Japan. Three years ago her *Shōgakusei nikki* [The Diary of an Elementary School Student] was published to critical praise from Yoshimoto Banana and other top novelists.

The present work is a collection of essays written from a fresh point of view. Beginning with a recollection of a picture book she received as a young child, the author shares her thoughts on 15 books that she has read at different points in time during her 15 years.

Observations made with childlike sensitivity are depicted in wonderfully expressive language. The young author writes about herself without vanity and about the past without nostalgia. Her descriptions of a 15-year-old girl's world

come across so naturally that the work seems to possess the lasting pleasure and emotion of a novel.

One particularly charming essay recounts in fine detail the author's experience of moving to Japan when she was just six. At one point she describes the two countries as "America, where each person is special" and "Japan, where it's great to be all together," perceptively expressing different cultural outlooks from a child's point of view.

BIOGRAPHY

Fugū: Shin chō saigo no kōtei **[Puyi: The Last Qing Emperor]**

By Irie Yōko

Iwanami Shoten, 2006. 173x105 mm. 251 pp. ¥780. ISBN 978-4-00-431027-3 (4-00-431027-X).

Although a relatively slender volume, this book begins at the birth of China's last emperor, Puyi (1906–67), and brilliantly paints a human picture of his days.

In December 1908, the 2-year-old Puyi became the youngest emperor in Chinese history. Just three years later the Xinhai Revolution overthrew the Qing Dynasty. He was allowed to retain the title of emperor and live in the Forbidden City as before, though. In 1917 the warlord Zhang Xun placed Puyi back on the throne, but this was to last for just 12 days. Eventually Puyi had to leave his Forbidden City home behind.

Beginning in 1931 the Japanese military established an artificial state in northeast China, making Puyi emperor for a third time—this time of Manchukuo. Following Japan's defeat he was captured

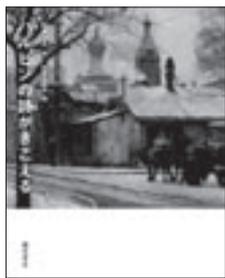
by the Soviets. In late July 1950 he was repatriated and sent to a reeducation camp, where he made the transformation "from emperor to citizen."

A number of books tell the story of Puyi. Steady progress in modern historical research and the discovery of new historical materials have allowed us to paint a more detailed picture of the events of his life. This work draws deeply on these fresh details and helps to create a fuller image of the man. Of particular interest is the investigation of Puyi's reeducation, which seeks to answer the question of whether completely breaking down and rebuilding a human being is truly possible. The author has uncovered heretofore hidden Japanese source materials that add yet more depth to her work.



Irie Yōko

Born in 1935. Author whose works include Nihon ga "kami no kuni" datta jidai [The Age When Japan Was the Land of Gods] and Kyōkasho ga abunai [Textbooks Are in Danger]. Has also translated books including Reginald F. Johnston's Twilight in the Forbidden City into Japanese.



Katō Toshiko

Born in 1915. After marrying at age 20, went to live in Manchuria, now northeastern China, with her husband. Returned to Japan after 11 years in Harbin. In 1957 opened Sungari, a Russian restaurant that just celebrated its fiftieth year of business.

Katō Tokiko

Born in 1943 in Harbin, the daughter of Toshiko. In addition to her singing career, is active in environmental issues, including serving as a United Nations Environment Program goodwill ambassador.

Harubin no uta ga kikoeru [Hearing the Songs of Harbin]

By Katō Toshiko; edited by Katō Tokiko

Fujiwara Shoten, 2006. 195x157 mm. 263 pp. ¥2,400. ISBN 978-4-89434-530-0 (4-89434-530-7).

This book contains the recollections of Katō Toshiko, whose daughter (the editor of the work) is a celebrated singer. It focuses on the years from 1935 through 1946, when the author lived in Harbin, Manchuria. Despite being more than 90 years old, Katō retains amazingly sharp memories of things that took place six or seven decades ago, making her book a valuable, detailed record of life in the “city of White Russians” in those days.

Katō’s husband, Kōshirō, had been educated at a Russian-language school in Harbin and worked for the South Manchurian Railway. The couple lived in Manchuria for 11 years, mainly in Harbin, raising their three children there. Kōshirō’s specialization in the Russian language led the family to develop close relationships with the Russians who had

fled across the border following the 1917 revolution in their country. At first Katō was surprised at the differences between Japanese and Russian ways of living and thinking, but as she mastered the language and came to know the warmth and charms of these strong people, she grew accustomed to life in Harbin.

In comparison with her husband, whose activities centered on his work and the community, Katō gave her attention mainly to the small matters of everyday life. Readers will be moved by her ability to maintain a positive outlook in the face of any predicament. She expresses this outlook in the closing words of her book: “All I need to do is keep on moving forward steadily through life, taking with me the memories of those Russians who taught me to live each day in a wonderful way.”

Konoe Hidemaro: Nihon no ōkesutora o tsukutta otoko [Konoe Hidemaro: The Man Who Made the Japanese Orchestra]

By Ōno Kaoru

Kōdansha, 2006. 195x135 mm. 413 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-06-212490-4 (4-06-212490-4).

This work details the life of Konoe Hidemaro, the conductor who created Japan’s first Western orchestra. To pursue his love of music, Konoe dropped out of Tokyo Imperial University and rushed to work with the songwriter Yamada Kōsaku, who hoped to organize an orchestra and put on world-class opera performances in Japan. Thanks to his family’s influence and wealth—his brother Fumimaro would become prime minister during the war years—as well as his own drive, Konoe succeeded in 1926 in assembling the forerunner to today’s NHK Symphony Orchestra. He left Japan and traveled to Germany in 1935; in just a year, he was conducting the Berlin Philharmonic.

By the time World War II began he had wielded the baton before more than

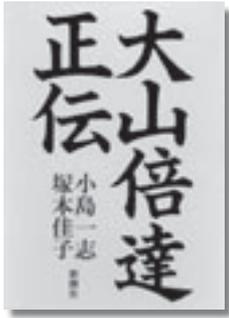
90 orchestras in the West, directing the first performance of Ravel’s arrangement of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* in Russia and serving under Arturo Toscanini at the NBC Symphony Orchestra. He was also the man who suggested to New York Philharmonic founder Leopold Stokowski that the German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler be brought out of Nazi Germany to escape to America—a plan that did not come to fruition.

Konoe had a highly evocative directing style rooted in his own unique musical interpretation. This sometimes earned him ridicule as a difficult-to-understand conductor, but a group of musicians showed him an almost fierce affection. He was a fascinating player in the early years of Japan’s orchestral music history.



Ōno Kaoru

Born in 1941. After working as a magazine reporter, became an author and nonfiction writer. His 1982 Kitabari: Taishō no Jon Manjirō tachi [Kitabari: The John Manjirōs of the Taishō Era] won the Ushio special prize for nonfiction. The main theme of his writings is early modern and modern Japanese history.



Kojima Kazushi

Born in 1959. Former editor of *Gekkan karatedō* [*Karate Monthly*] and *Gekkan budō karate* [*Monthly Budō Karate*]. Holds dan rankings in both *Kyokushin Kaikan karate* and *Kōdōkan judo*.

Tsukamoto Yoshiko

Former editor of *Shin Kyokushin karate* [*New Kyokushin Karate*]. Her books include *Josei ga kiken kara mi o mamoru 24 no hōhō* [*Twenty-four Methods for Women to Protect Themselves from Danger*].

Ōyama Masutatsu seiden [The True Story of Ōyama Masutatsu]

By Kojima Kazushi and Tsukamoto Yoshiko

Shinchōsha, 2006. 198x145 mm. 620 pp. ¥2,300. ISBN 978-4-10-301451-5 (4-10-301451-2).

This biographical exploration of Ōyama Masutatsu describes the legendary karate master as a product of the “dark period” of history following Japan’s defeat in World War II.

The founder of Kyokushin karate, Ōyama is the subject of a wide variety of “legends” regarding his life and deeds. Many of these were begun by Ōyama himself. Tales of his early life, such as “he was born in 1923 in Tokyo” or “in his youth he left Japan and went to live in Manchuria,” are among these self-created stories. The actual facts are different: He was born in 1921 in the town of Gimje in what is now South Korea’s North Jeolla province, his birth name was Choi Yeong-eui, and he never went to Manchuria. He ended up a dual citizen of South Korea and Japan.

In 1939 this young man met So Nei Chu—an encounter that would lead him to go to Japan and set out on his karate career. After the war ended So would become a key figure in an activist group of ethnic Koreans remaining in Japan after the end of the Japanese empire. Later Ōyama sought to erase all record of his fateful meeting with So to hide the fact that he was himself Korean.

Ōyama spent the final war years working in Chiba Prefecture as a drafted Korean laborer. After World War II ended he got involved in the conflicts sweeping through the Korean residents’ associations in Japan. It was his brawls with Korean communists during this time that truly gave birth to the superhuman karate master the world would know as Ōyama Masutatsu.

CULTURE

Modanizumu no Nippon [The Japan of Modernism]

By Hashizume Shin’ya

Kadokawa Gakugei Shuppan, 2006. 190x128 mm. 277 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-04-703395-5 (4-04-703395-2).

To produce this book the author took a diverse range of material, including catalogs, fliers, pamphlets, postcards, and other samples of what he calls “miscellaneous materials” and “paper things,” using them to paint a picture of everyday culture and urban lifestyles of the past, mainly the 1920s and 1930s. These “paper things” are seldom included in library collections; easily scattered and far from durable, they generally give only fragmentary glimpses of an era when they are used as historical source material. Hashizume, however, argues convincingly that these ephemera “are produced and distributed in massive amounts throughout the consumer society,” and that they can serve as eloquent testimony of “urban conditions in the age of modernism, various aspects of society and

culture, and even the lives of the people who lived in those times.”

The author investigates a number of areas—the growing use of electricity in that era, travel and tourism, fashion and design, manners and customs, and advertising—presenting clear interpretations of modern urban life as seen in Japan of the 1920s and 1930s. The world of “scrap-paper modernism” described in this book is one where these insignificant paper items vividly depict the spirit of an age when modernization and tradition fitfully existed side-by-side. This is a particularly valuable work for readers with an interest in Japan’s modern cultural history, and the many rare items collected by the author for inclusion—unfortunately reproduced in monochrome prints, rather than color—are fascinating.



Hashizume Shin’ya

Born in 1960. Professor at *Osaka City University’s Urban Research Plaza*, where he specializes in architectural history and urban cultural studies. His works include *Modan toshi no tanjō* [*The Birth of Modern Cities*] and *Nihon no yūenchi* [*Japan’s Amusement Parks*].



Kami Shōichirō

Born in 1933. Critic and researcher of children's culture. Has also authored a number of works on children's stories and songs. Has served as director of the Japanese Association of Writers for Children, the Japan Society for Children's Literature, and the Japan Society for Child Study.

Nihon no dōgaka tachi **[Japanese Illustrators of Children's Picture Books]** By Kami Shōichirō

Heibonsha, 2006. 160x112 mm. 270 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-582-76583-0 (4-582-76583-1).

Dōga are pictorial artworks for children, particularly illustrations that appear in children's books, magazines, and other publications. This work presents a concise history of children's illustration by introducing the work of *dōga* artists from the Meiji (1868–1912), Taishō (1912–26), and Shōwa (1926–89) eras.

From the early Meiji era up through the start of World War II numerous children's books and magazines were published, but many have since been scattered and lost. The author has studied an enormous volume of materials, touching upon illustrators and other individuals related to *dōga* production. Kami has managed to piece together a complete picture of the *dōga* history that is currently fading away.

This book is striking for its thoroughness. From Meiji-era artists Takeuchi

Keishū and Takehisa Yumeji to Chō Shinta and Anno Mitsumasa, two of the most influential picture-book authors in Japan today, Kami introduces the reader to a total of 45 *dōga* creators. The book contains reproductions of representative works as well as analysis of and commentary on each artist's style. Although the narrative focuses primarily on the artists, the chapters are divided thematically and presented chronologically, allowing the reader to gain an overall sense of the development of *dōga*.

Kami has produced a pioneering study on art in Japanese juvenile literature. As the first chronicle of the history of these works, this volume is indispensable for an understanding of the diversity of modern Japanese pictorial art.

Ocha wa sekai o kakemeguru **[Green Tea Goes Global]**

By Takau Masamitsu

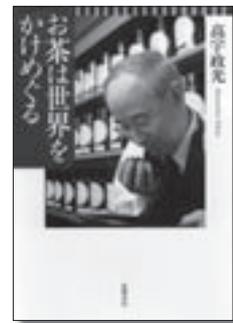
Chikuma Shobō, 2006. 195x140 mm. 238 pp. ¥1,800. ISBN 978-4-480-87769-7 (4-480-87769-X).

This is a comprehensive introduction to Japanese tea, commonly known as green tea. In addition to presenting a broad overview of the ways production and consumption of this tea have changed over the course of modern history, the book explains the types of Japanese tea, a variety of traditional processing methods, and ways of preparing and serving it. It also examines the history of Japanese tea's global popularization, beginning with exports to the West and now extending even to African nations. The numerous color photographs of tea types, stages in tea production, and packaging used in the United States make this a visually stimulating book as well.

Takau presents fascinating examples that illuminate the history of green tea and its cultural background. For instance,

the tea called *sencha*—ordinary tea in leaf form widely seen today as the most traditional type—was in fact created as recently as the eighteenth century. Until then Japan's tea drinkers had enjoyed a number of other forms of the drink. Japanese exports of tea to the West, meanwhile, began a surprisingly long time ago, in the mid-nineteenth century. At the time Western drinkers enjoyed it in the same way as black tea, adding milk and sugar to their cups of the drink.

Japanese cuisine continues to gain an international following today, and green tea is similarly becoming popular around the globe, making this a timely guidebook to the beverage. It is a cogent explanation of the true nature of green tea, filled with fascinating information that even the Japanese are unfamiliar with.



Takau Masamitsu

Born in 1949. Tea merchant. One of the first licensed Nihoncha [Japanese tea] instructors, he also holds an instructor's certificate from the Japan Tea Association, which focuses on black tea. Has been active in overseas tea education, including a 1999 seminar at an industry convention in Florida. His books include Boku wa Nihoncha no somurie [I Am a Japanese Tea Sommelier] and Ocha no yuraku: Nihoncha [The Joy of Tea: Japanese Tea].



Mōri Kazuko

A professor in the Graduate School of Political Science at Waseda University, where she teaches modern Chinese politics and foreign relations. Works include Chūgoku to Soren [China and the Soviet Union] and Gendai Chūgoku seiji [Contemporary Chinese Politics].

Nit-Chū kankei: Sengo kara shinjidai e **[Japan-China Relations: From the Postwar into a New Era]**

By Mōri Kazuko

Iwanami Shoten, 2006. 173x105 mm. 232 pp. ¥740. ISBN 978-4-00-431021-1 (4-00-431021-0).

Many Japanese were shocked when anti-Japanese demonstrations broke out in Chinese cities in the spring of 2005. The author of this work, an expert on contemporary China, was concerned by this sudden downturn in Sino-Japanese relations and frustrated by the media's overreaction and flawed analysis. She wrote this book to clarify the causes of discord, looking back on relations between the two countries from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the present day and examining changes in the bilateral ties.

Prior to the normalization of Japan-China relations in 1972, both nations were locked into the Cold War system, but economic exchange in the private sector stayed active. From the late 1970s, as China instituted market reforms and Japa-

nese firms expanded overseas operations, both nations discovered mutually beneficial aspects of their relationship.

Around 1995, however, this warm period ended as the relations underwent structural changes. With China's economy growing rapidly, the two countries began to view each other as competitors. The author argues that Japan must directly confront these changes and work to build a new relationship with China to meet the needs of the future.

The topic of Japan-China relations tends to become emotional, but the author conducts her analysis rationally and objectively. Although limited to relations between two nations, the book sets forth an excellent example of how to think about problems in diplomacy in general.

ECONOMICS

“Nō” o dō toraeru ka **[Coming to Grips with Agriculture]**

By Hara Yōnosuke

Shoseki Kōbō Hayama, 2006. 195x135 mm. 270 pp. ¥2,500. ISBN 978-4-88611-501-0 (4-88611-501-2).

This work considers ways to approach the agricultural industry against the backdrop of economic globalization. Today market principles are advancing with great vigor in all industrial fields—not just farming—and all areas of economic endeavor are seeing the application of market mechanisms. Hara argues, though, that agriculture is a productive activity that takes place on a certain piece of land, with nature as its foundation, and is built up over generations by people who function within social relationships as they work. For these reasons, agriculture is an exception—an industry where universal market principles do not apply as readily as in other fields.

Land, capital, and labor have long been defined as the three fundamental factors producing economic wealth. Of these

three, capital is the most mobile factor, capable of moving anywhere around the globe. Historically labor has been more difficult to shift from one location to another, particularly across national borders, but in today's global economy labor migration is an increasingly common phenomenon. Land is the one factor that cannot be taken elsewhere, and the natural conditions affecting that land can differ greatly from place to place—rainfall, temperature, and soil quality, for instance.

In this work Hara focuses on those conditions that are endemic to each area, examining agriculture—particularly farming in Japan—from a scientific perspective. At the same time, his exploration shows deep affection for his subject matter.



Hara Yōnosuke

Born in 1944. Professor at the University of Tokyo. Specializes in the theories of economic development, Asian economy, and agricultural economy. Has written numerous books, including Kurifōdo Giatsu no keizaigaku [The Economics of Clifford Geertz].

No. 6: Japanese Cuisine

International interest in Japanese food is on the rise. Items like tofu are now available in most supermarkets around the world, and Japanese homemaking queen Kurihara Harumi's book, *Harumi's Japanese Home Cooking* (Conran Octopus), also became a bestseller abroad after being published in England in 2006. In this issue we introduce works of particular value to readers interested in the history of Japan's cuisine. While some of them are unfortunately out of print and hard to find, the many books described below are all well worth reading.

Understanding Japan's Culture of Food

Researchers of cultural anthropology, folkloristics, and related disciplines have been most actively engaged in work on Japanese food. A classic study can be found in Yanagita Kunio's *Meiji Taishōshi sesōhen* [History of Social Conditions in the Meiji and Taishō Eras] (Asahi Shimbunsha, 1931). Noteworthy works in the postwar period are Segawa Kiyoko's *Shoku seikatsu no rekishi* [A History of Eating Habits] (Kōdansha, 1957), based on a thorough folklore survey, and Volume 24 of Miyamoto Tsuneichi's collected works, *Shoku seikatsu zakkō* [Studies on Eating Habits] (Miraisha, 1977), a valuable source for knowledge on popular culinary culture.

Meanwhile, a number of historians have treated the topic of food and culture from the perspective of the history of folkways. In 1934 Yūzankaku published the comprehensive *Nihon shokumotsushi* [A History of Japanese Food] by Sakurai Shū and Adachi Isamu. Morisue Yoshiaki and Kikuchi Yūjirō wrote *Shokumotsushi* [A History of Food] (Daiichi Shuppan, 1953), a revised version of which was released in 1965. Two outstanding works, Higuchi Kiyoyuki's *Nihon shokumotsushi* [A History of Japanese Food] (Shibata Shoten, 1960) and Watanabe Minoru's *Nippon shoku seikatsushi* [A History of the Japanese Diet] (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1964), were published in the 1960s—a period during which high economic growth and the increasing accessibility of higher education gave scholars more opportunities to investigate cultural history.

Other major results of folkways-based historical studies include Volume 10 of Mitamura Engyo's complete works, *Edo no shoku seikatsu* [The Edo Diet] (Chūō Kōronsha, 1975), and Volume 5 of Ema Tsutomu's collected works, *Shokuji to jūkyō* [Food and Home] (Chūō Kōronsha, 1988). Both of these utilize an assortment of historical literature to convey a vivid and accurate picture of food cultures from Japan's past. The seminal *Sushi no hon* [The Sushi Book] (Shibata Shoten, 1966) and *Kome no bunkashi* [A Cultural History of Rice] (Shakai Shisōsha, 1970) by Shinoda Osamu, a scholar well-versed in the history of Chinese food, are essential reading for the study of Japan's rice culture.

Ever since the general public started to take an interest in food culture in the 1980s, the level of research on the subject in various disciplines has risen and numerous magazines and books on the topic have been published one after the other. Hirata Mario spearheaded an effort to launch a series titled *Inshoku shirin* [Food and Drink History] in 1979. Published by the Inshoku Shirin Kankōkai, the series spans eight volumes (the final volume was pub-

lished in 2000) and features excellent scholarly essays on the history of food and drink. In 1980 Asahi Shimbunsha began running a series titled *Sekai no tabemono* [Foods of the World] as part of its *Shūkan Asahi hyakka* [Weekly Asahi Encyclopedia] publication. In all this series ran for four years and totaled 140 issues, of which 40 included Japan-related topics. Heibonsha published a one-shot, color-illustrated magazine in 1976 titled *Bessatsu Taiyō: Ryōri* [Taiyō Supplementary Issue: Cuisine], which, along with a similar publication called *Tankō bessatsu: Nippon no ryōri* [Tankō Supplementary Issue: Japanese Cuisine] (Tankōsha, 1996), provided readers with a visual introduction to the history of Japanese cooking.

Also in the 1980s, seasoning and foodstuffs manufacturer Ajinomoto Co. held comprehensive, interdisciplinary symposiums on food culture three years in a row. These events were an attempt to place Japan's food culture within a comparative context, and their proceedings were collected and published in three books including *Ningen, tabemono, bunka* [Humans, Food, and Culture] (Heibonsha, 1980), edited by cultural anthropologist Ishige Naomichi. The event was then established as an annual forum held by the Ajinomoto Foundation for Dietary Culture. For 16 consecutive years Ishige edited the forum proceedings according to theme, beginning in 1983 with *Shoku no kotoba* [The Language of Food] (Domesu Shuppan, 1983). Starting with its seventeenth volume, a new editor has been assigned to the series each year. The Dietary Culture Series has now been active for nearly a quarter of a century and includes a total of 24 volumes. Published under Ishige's editorial supervision and based on research featured in the Dietary Culture Series, the seven-volume *Kōza shoku no bunka* [A Course on Dietary Culture] (Ajinomoto Foundation for Dietary Culture, 1998–99) is a landmark in international food culture research in Japan.

Editors Haga Noboru and Ishikawa Hiroko have collected relatively recent essays on food culture in the 12-volume series *Zenshū Nihon no shoku bunka* [Japan's Food Culture] (Yūzankaku, 1996–99). Arranged by theme, this work is useful for an overall understanding of Japan's food culture. Another valuable source of data is the 50-volume *Nihon no shoku seikatsu zenshū* [Japan's Dietary Culture] (Rural Culture Association, 1984–92, CD-ROM version 1997), which includes content from interviews and surveys from each prefecture and offers a broad view of food culture throughout Japan. In 1989 the Ajinomoto Foundation for Dietary Culture began publishing *Vesta*, a magazine on food culture studies currently on its sixty-fourth issue.

The study of food culture developed rapidly during the

1980s. Once viewed as a relatively minor area of study, the field has since grown and produced a rich body of research. In folkloristics, which deals with the food culture of the common people, Tsuboi Hirofumi forced a fundamental reconsideration of the widely accepted theory that Japan's food culture has always centered on rice in his books *Imo to Nihonjin* [Potatoes and the Japanese] (Miraisha, 1979) and *Ine o eranda Nihonjin* [The Japanese Who Chose Rice] (Miraisha, 1982). As a historian, I also took up this issue in my *Rekishi no naka no kome to niku* [Rice and Meat in Japanese History] (Heibonsha, 1993) and *Kome o eranda Nihon no rekishi* [The Selection of Rice in Japanese History] (Bungei Shunjū, 2006). ***Tochi to Mochi* [Japanese Horse Chestnuts and Rice Cakes]** (Iwanami Shoten, 2005), which Nomoto Kan'ichi wrote based on a long-term folkloric survey, and *Sake no Nihon bunka* [Sake and Japanese Culture] (Kadokawa Shoten, 1990) and ***"Matsuri" no shoku bunka* [The Food Culture of Traditional Festivals]** (Kadokawa Shoten, 2005) by Kanzaki Noritake are all valuable works that examine Japanese culture through the lens of traditional food culture.

In the field of cooking history, the most printed works are my trilogy of *Edo no ryōrishi* [A History of Edo Cuisine] (Chūō Kōronsha, 1989), *Edo no shoku seikatsu* [The Edo Diet] (Iwanami Shoten, 2003), and the illustrated *Edo no ryōri to shoku seikatsu* [Edo Cuisine and Eating Habits] (Shōgakukan, 2004). Kumakura Isao's *Nihon ryōri bunkashi* [A History of Japanese Cooking Culture] (Jinbun Shoin, 2002), which focuses on *kaiseki ryōri* (tea ceremony cuisine), and my ***Washoku to Nihon bunka* [Japanese Cuisine and Japanese Culture]** (Shōgakukan,

2005), which covers the ancient times to the present, are both good for comprehensive historical overviews. Maenobō Yō's *Meiji Seiyō ryōri kigen* [The Origins of Western Cuisine in the Meiji Era] (Iwanami Shoten, 2000) is an extremely interesting account of Japan's encounter with Western cooking during the Meiji period (1868–1912). And from Kawakami Kōzō, a leading scholar in the field, the three-volume *Tsurezure Nihon shokumotsushi* [A Close Look at Japan's Food History] (Tokyo Bijutsu, 1992–95) and *Kanpon Nihon ryōri jibutsu kigen* [A Complete History of the Origins of Japanese Cuisine and Related Topics] (Iwanami Shoten, 2006) are essential sources of information.

Archaeological studies, such as *Shoku no kōkogaku* [The Archaeology of Food] (Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1996) by Sahara Makoto and *Shoku no taiken bunkashi* [A Cultural History of Japanese Food Experiences] (Chūō Kōronsha, 1995–98) by Mori Kōichi, have also made valuable contributions to the study of food in Japan. And one must not overlook agricultural scientist Aoba Takashi's *Yasai no Nihonshi* [A History of Vegetables in Japan] (Yasaka Shobō, 1991). Finally, the authority on Japanese food culture studies, Ishige Naomichi, has written numerous works. Some of these have already been discussed, but there are two that deserve special mention: ***Gyoshō to narezushi no kenkyū* [A Study on Fish Sauce and Fermented Fish]** (Iwanami Shoten, 1990), coauthored with Kenneth Ruddle, and *The History and Culture of Japanese Food* (Kegan Paul International, 2001).

(Harada Nobuo, Japanese cultural history researcher; professor, School of Asia 21, Kokushikan University)

***Tochi to Mochi* [Japanese Horse Chestnuts and Rice Cakes]**

By Nomoto Kan'ichi

Iwanami Shoten, 2005. 195x135 mm. 299 pp. ¥3,000. ISBN 978-4-00-024132-8 (4-00-024132-X).

This book, based on a detailed folkloric survey, captures an accurate picture of the ceremonial occasions where people ate rice cakes as well as the everyday dietary culture of common people who ate horse chestnuts to survive. The traditional Japanese food cultures that it depicts contain marvelous folk

wisdom but are also rapidly fading away. Particularly interesting are the foods other than rice that people have devoted time and effort to eating over the years, as well as the knowledge and skills that come with them and are now disappearing.



***"Matsuri" no shoku bunka* [The Food Culture of Traditional Festivals]**

By Kanzaki Noritake

Kadokawa Shoten, 2005. 190x130 mm. 245 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-04-703382-5 (4-04-703382-0).

This work examines the culture of the Japanese people through the lens of the dietary practices of their annual events, such as the midsummer Obon festival and New Year's celebrations. While observing the significance of different foods provided on ceremonial occasions, the author focuses on the origin

of Japanese lifestyles, revealing the structure of Japanese culture. Thus, he uses food as a means of analyzing culture.

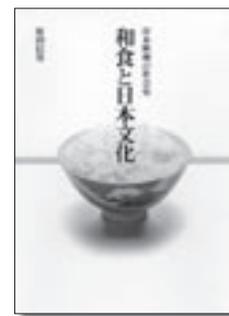
Washoku to Nihon bunka [Japanese Cuisine and Japanese Culture]

By Harada Nobuo

Shōgakukan, 2005. 215x155 mm. 254 pp. ¥2,000. ISBN 978-4-09-387609-4 (4-09-387609-6).

As the subtitle—"a social history of Japanese cuisine"—suggests, this book is a survey of Japan's food culture from ancient times to the present, with a focus on cuisine. One main argument of the work is that Japanese cuisine developed based on the food cultures of East and Southeast Asia; building on this, the

book seeks to uncover special developments within this cuisine over the course of Japanese history.



Gyoshō to narezushi no kenkyū [A Study on Fish Sauce and Fermented Fish]

By Ishige Naomichi and Kenneth Ruddle

Iwanami Shoten, 1990. 210x148 mm. 404 pp. ¥4,466. ISBN 978-4-00-002721-2 (4-00-002721-2).

Although it does not treat the subject of Japan's food culture directly, this work examines the "rice and fish" culture that predominates in East and Southeast Asia as a whole. The authors offer a number of fascinating insights by way of comparison with the "wheat and milk" food cultures of Europe, the Near East, and

Central Asia. This is required reading for study of the essential character of food culture in Japan.

Events and Trends

(January to March 2007)

Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes

On January 16 the 136th Akutagawa Prize—presented twice annually to works published in newspapers or magazines by relatively new authors—was awarded to "Hitori biyori" [A Fine Day to Be Alone] by the 23-year-old Aoyama Nanae.

The young author's story, which first appeared in the autumn issue of the literary journal *Bungei*, describes a 20-year-old protagonist living apart from her home for the first time. She stays for a time with a distant relative, a woman in her seventies, gradually learning how to live her own life as she gains new experience in love and work.

The winning story gained strong praise from jury members including Tokyo's governor, Ishihara Shintarō, and the writer Murakami Ryū.

Aoyama is a graduate of the University of Tsukuba, where she studied library and information science. She previously won the Bungei Prize in

2005 for her debut work *Mado no akari* [The Light of the Window]; by winning the prestigious Akutagawa Prize and its ¥1 million in prize money she has further cemented her fame as a fast-rising writer.

The Naoki Prize, which is usually announced at the same time as the Akutagawa, was not awarded this time around. According to selection committee member Atōda Takashi, this unusual decision was due to a split jury: "We had very strong opinions both in favor of and against the final two works in the running. Our choice to present no award this time wasn't because of a lack of quality candidates." It was the first time since January 2003 for no work to receive a Naoki Prize.

Osaragi Jirō Prize Announced

The thirty-third Osaragi Jirō Prize has been awarded to two works: Tsujihara Noboru's *Hana wa sakuragi* [For Flowers, the Cherry Tree] and Taso-



Aoyama Nanae displays her prizewinning work at a January 16 gathering in Tokyo. (Courtesy: Kyōdō News)

gawa Hiroshi's *Kurosawa Akira vs. Hariuddo* [Kurosawa Akira vs. Hollywood], which was introduced in *Japanese Book News* No. 50. This annual prize, sponsored by Asahi Shimbunsha, was presented for the first time in 1974; the company awards it to prose works of particular excellence. The winning authors will give public speeches at a special event to be held in March 2007.

Financial Support for Translations

Major publisher Kōdansha announced in November 2006 a program aimed at promoting the translation and publication of Japanese literature in English. The new program aims to foster appreciation of Japanese literature overseas.

Kōdansha has selected 10 works for translation from serious fiction, pop literature, young adult fiction, and other genres, including such books as Shimamoto Rio's *Ritoru bai ritoru* [Little by Little] and Isaka Kōtarō's *Maō* [The Devil]. Foreign publishers have until the end of July 2007 to select a work from this list.

Kōdansha will judge the received proposals on the basis of the applicants' publication plans and provide grants of up to \$10,000 to defray production costs—particularly translation costs, which present a hurdle to firms hoping to uncover new globally marketable writers.

At first Kōdansha will provide one or two grants a year for works translated into English; the publisher hopes to expand the program to other languages in the future.

Asian Literary Prize Announced

The Man Group, a London-based financial services firm, has partnered with the Hong Kong International Literary Festival to organize a new writing award. The first Man Asian Literary Prize will be awarded in autumn 2007 to a fiction novel by an Asian writer not yet published in English.

The contest organizers are accepting entries in English up through March 2007. These entries will be pared down to a long list of around 20 candidates in June, and the jury will announce its short list of five works at the beginning of October. The author of the winning work, to be announced in November, will receive \$10,000, and \$3,000 will go to the translator. The Hong Kong publisher Chameleon Press will edit and print the winning novel if its author has not already lined up a publisher.

According to Peter Gordon, director of the Hong Kong festival, "Asia is

becoming an important source for new writing . . . and this award will help facilitate publishing and translating of Asian literature into English." The Man Asian Literary Prize aims to illuminate the writing scene in Asia by sharing excellent examples from it with the English-reading world.

More information on this new prize and its organizers is available at <www.manasianliteraryprize.org>, and contest entries can be submitted directly via the same website.

Setouchi Jakuchō Earns Cultural Award

In October 2006 the Japanese government announced the recipients of the Order of Culture, awarded to people who have made great contributions to the sciences or arts. On Culture Day, November 3, author and Buddhist nun Setouchi Jakuchō was one of five Japanese receiving this award in a ceremony at the imperial palace.

Born Setouchi Harumi, the 84-year-old writer began her career in the 1950s. Her skillful depictions of Japanese women awakening to their place in the modern world earned her devoted readers among all generations. In 1973 she took Buddhist vows, but continued writing and giving frequent lectures thereafter.

Setouchi has received numerous prizes for her writing, including the 1963 Women's Literary Prize for *Natsu no owari* [trans. *The End of Summer*], the 1992 Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize for *Hana ni toe* [Ask the Flowers], and the 2001 Noma Prize for *Basho* [Place]. In 1998 she completed her modern Japanese translation of *Genji monogatari* [trans. *The Tale of Genji*], which went on to sell more than 2 million copies.

The Order of Culture is presented annually to people selected by the cabinet from among Persons of Cultural Merit, an honor that Setouchi had won in 1997.

Obituary

Haitani Kenjirō, 72, author, *November 23, 2006*.

The writer of such books as *Usagi no me* [trans. *A Rabbit's Eyes*] and *Taiyō no ko* [Child of the Sun], Hai-

tani Kenjirō was also an active commentator on educational issues in Japan. Born in the city of Kobe, he graduated from Osaka Gakugei Uni-



Haitani's first novel, the 1974 *Usagi no me*. (Courtesy: Rironsha)

versity (now Osaka Kyōiku University) before beginning a career as an elementary school teacher. While teaching he also edited the children's poetry journal *Kirin*.

In the early 1970s he left the classroom and traveled to places like Okinawa in Japan and Thailand and India overseas; it was in 1974 that he released his debut novel *Usagi no me*, which took as its setting a school in an industrial district.

Announcement

Did you enjoy a particular feature in this issue of *Japanese Book News*? Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve our publication? Let us know! Send your comments by email to <booknews@jpf.go.jp> or by fax to +81-3-3519-3519. Thank you for reading!

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A Versatile Author for All Ages

Mori Eto is a Naoki Prize–winning author herself, but when celebrated writers like Murakami Haruki and Kazuo Ishiguro come out with new offerings, she rushes out to buy them just like other fans of theirs. This is not because these literary giants inspire her, she says, but because “they always release something new,” and she finds their unpredictability simply intriguing.

Despite her eager consumption of their books, none of Mori’s work shows traces of influence from Murakami or Ishiguro. Actually, when she is working on her own stories, she shuts herself off from reading other people’s work. This approach seems to pay off: her startling versatility and ability to create a brand new storyline, writing style, and characters each time out allows her to evoke similar thrills for her readers to those she gets from her two favorite authors. Mori’s readers report being overwhelmed by the novel sensations sparked by one story after another, which all leave them fulfilled but longing for her next output.

“I get easily bored if I repeat myself,” Mori says. “Trying something new all the time is a real challenge, but I like to have that sense of self-renewal.”

Now 38, Mori has published nearly 30 books since her debut in 1991. Starting off as a children’s book author, she completed a rare sweep of the major awards for juvenile literature in her first 10 years, and moved gracefully to more adult fiction. A master storyteller, she entertains and inspires readers with a mixture of drama, humor, and carefully chosen words that defy easy explication. With her latest collection of six short stories, *Kaze ni maiagaru binru shito* [A Plastic Sheet Flying in the Wind], she won the Naoki Prize in 2006. (See page 5.)

Mori says stories come to her while she is taking a bath, or enjoying an afternoon nap. For this award-winning collection, though, she says she chose the theme first and then invented characters to suit it: people who pursue their own values no matter how extraordinary they seem.

In the title work, the protagonist divorces her American husband—a United Nations field officer who is also her ex-boss—because of the loneliness of being with him for only 10 days a year. Shortly after the divorce, though, she learns that he has died in Afghanistan while rescuing a refugee girl. This sparks her realization of what it was that drove him to return to the battlefield, and her own “addiction” to the cause of peace.

In the collection’s other stories, Mori writes about restoration artists in the early 1930s working on a Buddha image at a small temple; a woman who becomes a bar hostess so she can volunteer to take care of abandoned dogs; and a part-time worker taking night courses at a college, where he finds just what he wants in conversations with a female student who refuses to write his reports for him.

The stories are at times funny, and at times sad—but always in a wonderfully redemptive manner. Mori’s gift is just as much in the telling as in the tales themselves. Her compact prose evokes the deep emotions felt by her characters, who are also heartbreakingly aware of their situations.

Above all, it is the voice of Mori’s characters that shines through her many works. Whether she takes the point of view of a young woman dealing with the death of her father (*Itsuka parasoru no shita de* [One Day, Under the Parasol]), or a young boy who committed suicide being sent back to inhabit another boy’s body and redeem himself (*Karafuru* [Colorful]), Mori’s characters speak in unique voices, true to their own hearts.

Of course, this is easier said than done. Mori achieves it through her meticulous research and repeated polishing of her text. For instance, for the gripping *Dive!!*—which depicts schoolboys who are committed high-board divers—Mori traveled across Japan to watch diving meets before spinning a suspenseful story of young athletes’ struggles and secrets that captivates readers until the very last word. For one of several stories she is now working on, sports-shy Mori even ran a full marathon.

“Once I make up my mind, I go through with it,” Mori professes. She adds that her core motto in writing is to keep rewriting and revising until she is fully satisfied. This is a soul-wrenching and solitary pursuit. But Mori, who had written scripts for *Black Jack* and other films with a group of writers before her novelist debut, prefers this solitude to the team approach: “I found my love in creating stories from scratch, all by myself.”

Mori’s success is not limited to the Japanese market. Her books have been translated and published in South Korea, Thailand, and Taiwan. One of her earlier works, *Uchū no minashigo* [Orphans of the Cosmos], was certified as a recommended book at schools in Korea.

While Mori says her favorite format is the novel, she has also won numerous accolades for her essays, short-short stories, and other works. *Aiueo-chan* is a rollicking book on the Japanese kana syllabary, with clever word play and zany humor. The combination of Mori’s rhythmic text with the droll pictures of Arai Ryōji, an illustrator with an Astrid Lindgren Award to his name, makes this an unforgettable work.

Mori’s joy in subverting genres and clichés is evident on every inventive, original page of each work. As a truly gifted and spellbinding writer, Mori will continue to enthrall readers with the intimate magic of her tales.

(Kawakatsu Miki, freelance writer)



Courtesy: Bungei Shunjū

Mori Eto

Born in 1968. Majored in children’s literature at the Japan Juvenile Education College, and Japanese classics at Waseda University. Her 1991 debut novel *Rizumu* [Rhythm] won two juvenile literary awards. In many of her stories, Mori manages to capture the times perfectly and incorporate universal themes, creating novels that are widely loved by readers of all ages. Her 2003 *Eien no deguchi* [An Eternal Exit], in which she depicts the life and development of a teenager, is a representative example.