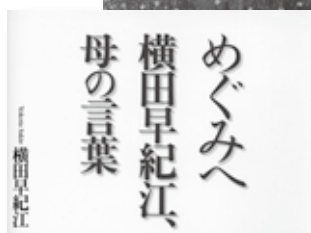
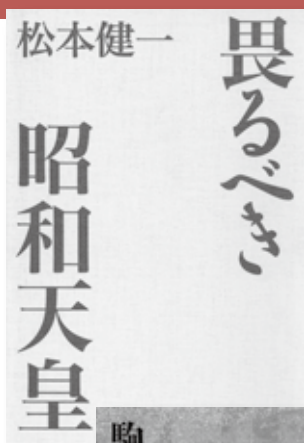


JAPANESE BOOK NEWS

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FALL 2008



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Japan's Unique Experience with Nursing Care Insurance

Ueno Chizuko

In 1970, Japan became an “aging society,” defined as one whose elderly represent 7 percent or more of the population. It became an “aged society” in 1994, when 14 percent of the population had entered its senior years. In 2000, this ratio had climbed to 17 percent. In 2007, the first wave of baby boomers reached mandatory retirement and stood at the brink of old age. Many new magazines have been published to instruct people on the ins and outs of their post-retirement years, their so-called “second life.” These include *Teinen jidai* [Retirement Years], *Yūyū* [Ease] and *Iki-iki* [Spry].

I am one of these baby boomers. In 2007, I wrote a book entitled *Ohitorisama no rōgo* [Single in Old Age] (Hōken, 2007), which sold 750,000 copies in the 10 months following its publication and became a best seller. In this book, I challenged the conventional wisdom that “old age surrounded by children and grandchildren” was the happiest outcome in life, arguing instead that it was totally acceptable to be single and that being old and single offered opportunities for happiness and enjoyment. The book described the attitudes and know-how required to bring this about, discussing living arrangements, time, finances, social interaction and, ultimately, nursing care and preparing oneself for death.



Ohitorisama no rōgo
[Single in Old Age]

Behind this best-seller status and what might be called a “single life” boom that was sparked by my book lies a change in the circumstances of the elderly in Japan. As people age, the ratio of single men and women increases due to the death of a spouse or to divorce or other kinds of separation. Of all women over the age of 80, 83 percent have no spouses. In 2006, the percentage of older people living with their children had declined to 45 percent, while the number of households made up of elderly couples rose to 36 percent, and the number of households made up of elderly persons living alone reached 16 percent. So, most elderly people were not sharing living quarters with their children. Hence, while it has been traditionally taken for granted in Japan that the elderly would spend their final years with family, the reality is rapidly changing.

Books dealing with the aged society range from those that take a macro perspective to those that take a micro perspective.

At the macro level, these books explore policy issues relating to pensions and social welfare systems for the

aged. Particularly in writings on social welfare following the so-called “crisis of the welfare state,” economists, public finance scholars, public administration specialists, sociologists, and experts on social and public policy have primarily been concerned with designing sustainable systems. Since the publication of Danish researcher Gosta Esping-Andersen’s work in which he compared different types of welfare states, the focus of the discussion has shifted toward trying to define a specific Japanese-style welfare regime.

At the micro level, we find “how-to” books and lifestyle books predominate, covering topics such as pension investments and management, finding a suitable nursing home (including people recounting their experiences in looking for one) and health-related information. Other books feature senior citizens who are cast as role models for their positive and joyful lives. There are countless other books written as documentaries or reportage or that describe real-life experiences.

In between the macro and micro levels, there are investigations, non-fiction accounts and other reporting on the conditions and attitudes of those involved with the elderly: personal service providers and nursing care workers, medical care and nursing specialists, and care recipients and their families and others who use care services. Since 2000 a great deal of information and research has accumulated in this field.

Finally, we have seen the emergence of fiction and non-fiction writing, which make up what might be called elderly literature or elderly care literature. This genre includes works such as *Kaigo nyūmon* [Introduction to Nursing Care], the Akutagawa Prize-winning novel by Mobu Norio, which is based on the author’s experience in his early 30s of caring for an 80-year-old grandmother, while living with no serious commitments to a career; *Sōkamo shirenai* [Maybe So], Kō Haruto’s story of an elderly husband caring for a wife suffering from dementia; and novels and poems written late in life by Ōba Minako and Tsurumi Kazuko, both of whom suffered from partial paralysis as the result of strokes. Nor should we forget Prof. Tada Tomio’s criticisms of the restrictions placed by governments and other institutions on rehabilitation. Tada is a world-famous immunologist who also suffered a stroke.

With respect to Japan’s aged society, one point bears special mention when comparing Japan to other countries. This is the impact of its Nursing Care Insurance Law, which was enacted by the Diet in 1997 and came into force in April 2000. Among industrialized nations with rapidly aging societies, Japan was only the second country after Germany to pass a nursing care insurance law. However, Japan’s insurance is uniquely Japanese not only because its coverage and standards are quite different from Germany’s but also because it adopts Britain’s “care management”

approach. Japan began investigating the possibility of implementing a nursing care insurance program in the early 1990s. The premises guiding those deliberations were that, elderly care had become increasingly long term and was requiring ever greater amounts of time, energy and resources, more than families could afford to provide. Japan's system came into being following a debate over whether a taxation method or an insurance method should be used. Like universal health insurance, enrollment in Japan's nursing care insurance program is compulsory for everyone 40 and over. An insured person 65 years or older may receive nursing care if he or she is certified as requiring such care. The costs of care are covered by premiums (50 percent) and taxes (50 percent). This system has given rise to an enormous service market: In fiscal 2000, the program's first year, 1.5 million people received care at a total cost of ¥3.6 trillion; in fiscal 2004, 3.2 million care recipients were provided with services at a cost of ¥6.3 trillion.

We often hear that nursing care insurance has changed the nature of care for the elderly in Japan from "treatments" implemented by the government to "contracts" reached by care recipients with care providers, or to put it another way, from a "benefit" to a "right." Those who need nursing care have become users of the system. I like to call nursing care insurance a "family revolution." This is because the Nursing Care Insurance Law took the initial step toward "making nursing care the responsibility of society" based on a national consensus that families should not be solely responsible for providing this care. It is well-known that even in Western societies, where it is taken for granted that different generations live separately, families provide informal care to elderly members who require it. The countries of East Asia, which have been experiencing falling birthrates and rapid aging as they go through a process of "compressed modernization," are taking note of Japan's experience with nursing care insurance and are closely following trends as they unfold in Japan. Among these, South Korea, in 2008, began implementing a distinctly new kind of nursing care insurance system.

In a global context, Japanese society's experiences in the eight years since the Nursing Care Insurance Law came into effect have been unique. And out of these experiences have come many important works by researchers in a number of areas. The Iwanami Shoten series called *Kea: Sono shisō to jissen* [Care: Philosophy and Practice], which I was involved in editing (and which is now being published), is one example. The book has five editors: Ueno Chizuko (gender studies); Soeda Yoshiya (welfare sociology); Jinno Naohiko (economics); Ōsawa Mari (social policy); and Ōkuma Yukiko (a journalist who covers welfare-related issues). The series comprises six volumes: 1) The Concept of Care, 2) Providing Care, 3) Receiving Care, 4) Care By and For the Family, 5) The Care-Support System, and, 6) The Practice for Providing Care. These volumes contain the work of more than 70 writers, including researchers, entrepreneurs, government administrators and care recipients. While assuming a wide range of readers including not only specialists and researchers but also on-site caregivers and care recipients and their families, our aim was to create a publication that would respond to practical needs while

meeting high academic standards.

Here is an excerpt from the series' statement of intent:

"Eight years have passed since the nursing care insurance system was introduced in Japan, and the task before us now is how to bring about 'good care.' This series is an attempt to explore Japan's new quality of experiences with nursing care from the standpoint of care recipients, caregivers, facility operators, nursing care systems and policy makers.

"We ask the following kinds of questions: what conditions must be in place to enable us to provide good quality care? What kinds of services are required and how should they be managed? What kinds of sustainable systems and policies must be established to make those services a reality? And what problems stand in the way of such systems and policies and how do we deal with them?"

"For both caregivers and care recipients, nursing care insurance has been an entirely new and historical experience, from which has emerged a host of system-related and operational problems. These include: the rapidly increasing number of care recipients and the accompanying sharp increases in insurance premiums and social security expenses; confusion at service-provider sites caused by repeated revisions of the law and a decline in the level of benefits as a result of growing budget deficits; doubts about the effectiveness of the support being provided; and the problem of those who are not covered by the system. In these problems, one can get a glimpse of the serious issues facing Japanese society today."

Driven by efforts to control total social security expenditures and to decentralize power under a national government policy of structurally reforming social security, the Nursing Care Insurance Law was revised for the worse during triennial revisions in 2003 and in 2006. Today, the country faces the collapse of local welfare systems and a severe shortage of competent caregivers because of low wages. This has led to serious discussions about whether to rely on foreign workers to remedy this shortfall.

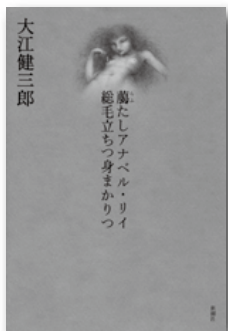
Japan cannot go back to the days when it had no nursing care insurance. In this age of globalization, societies around the world have experienced in equal measure the pain of reform guided by neo-liberalistic policies. Within the context of this reform, an historical experiment is underway in Japanese society, in which the nation is seeking to build a sustainable system and asking what must be done to build a society that allows the elderly to live out their lives with a sense of security. Japan's experience will be of major significance to other rapidly aging societies, particularly in East Asia.



Ueno Chizuko

Born in 1948, Dr. Ueno is Professor of Sociology in the Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo. A specialist in gender studies, sexuality studies, and family sociology, she has recently been conducting joint studies with on-site leaders in researching/studying the new work styles of women in charge of the local welfare operations. Her extensive writings in her field include such books as *Kafuchōsei to shihonsei* [Patriarchy and Capitalism], *Kindai kazoku no seiritsu to shūen* [Rise and Fall of the Modern Family], and *Nashonarizumu to jendā* [Nationalism and Gender] (English published).

FICTION



Ôe Kenzaburō

Born in 1935. Graduated from the Department of French Literature, Faculty of Letters of the University of Tokyo. Received the Akutagawa Prize in 1958 for *Shiiku* [trans. *The Catch*] while still a university student. Ôe has been a pioneer of modern literature and has won many awards, including the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Prize for Man'en gannen no futtobōru [trans. *The Silent Cry*], the Noma Literary Prize for Kōzui wa waga tamashī ni oyobi [*The Waters Are Come in Unto My Soul*], and the Yomiuri Prize for Literature for Reintsurī o kiku onnatachi [trans. *Women Who Listen to the Rain Tree*]. Received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1994.

Gōruden suranbā [Golden Slumbers]

By Isaka Kōtarō

Shinchōsha, 2007. 194×142 mm. 503 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-10-459603-4.

Gōruden suranbā is the latest full-length novel from one of the most popular young mystery writers in Japan today. Isaka's strong following is attested to by his winning of the 2008 Hon'ya [Book-seller] Prize, a unique award given to the book that bookstore employees throughout Japan would most like to sell.

The story takes place in a fictionalized yet highly convincing version of modern Japan. The prime minister is elected by popular vote, and machines called "security pods" are installed nearly everywhere to monitor citizens' private activities and communications. One day, the prime minister is killed by an assassin's bomb while parading through his hometown of Sendai. An ordinary young man is framed as the assassin by a shadowy organiza-

Rõtashi Anaberu Rii sōkedachitsu mimakaritsu [Chilling and Killing My Beautiful Annabel Lee] By Ôe Kenzaburō

Shinchōsha, 2007. 192×132 mm. 218 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-10-303619-7.

The latest full-length novel by Ôe Kenzaburō, this tale is told by a narrator who seems to be an alter ego for the author recalling his work as a script writer for the production of a film 30 years earlier. As the story evolves, a dark secret emerges from the past of the leading actress, Sakura. It comes to light that she underwent a horrific experience in her childhood when she appeared in a movie that was based on Edgar Allan Poe's poem "Annabel Lee" and was filmed in Matsuyama by an American information officer. Trouble also befalls the current production, which is abandoned over a scandal in which a French member of the crew is suspected of filming child pornography.

Three decades later, Sakura has recovered from her trauma and reappears as a storyteller who recounts the tale of a peas-

ant uprising that took place long ago in the narrator's hometown.

As in his earlier works, Ôe spins an intricate web of allusions to the works of Poe, T. S. Eliot, Heinrich von Kleist, Vladimir Nabokov and others. He also crafts his own style of the narrative structure found in the "I-novel" genre, creating complex inter-relationships between real and fictional characters. At the same time, however, this novel represents a bold step toward new frontiers, revealing that Ôe has acquired in his later years an audacious freedom of expression that is a "sudden lateness, as distinct from maturity," to borrow a phrase from the introduction to *On Late Style* by his friend Edward Said. (NM)

tion, and the story of his life on the run begins. Can he get away with the help of his friends?

With nostalgic nods to the Beatles' music and allusions to the Kennedy assassination, this elaborate story goes beyond being just a good page-turner to serve up a sharp rebuke to today's surveillance society. (NM)



Isaka Kōtarō

Born in 1971. Graduated from the School of Law, Tohoku University. Debuted as a writer with *Ôdyubon no inori* [Audubon's Prayer], which received the Shinchō Mystery Club Award. Nominated for the Naoki Prize in 2003 for *Jūryoku piero* [Gravity Clown]. Appealing to a wide range of readers with his stylish humor and precise story structures, five of his works have been turned into movies, including *Shinigami no seido* [Accuracy of Death] (see JBN No.47, page 6).



Ogawa Ito

Born in 1973. Debuted as a novelist under the name of Shunran in 1999 with *Missō to karē* [*Private Funeral*], which was published in the literary magazine *Ritoru moa* [*Little More*]. Served as a lyricist for "Fairlife," a music creator team. Restarted her career as a writer in 2007 under the name of Ogawa Ito. She also has written a picture book called *Chōcho* [*Butterfly*] (pictures by Koinuma Yuki).

Shokudō katatsumuri **[A Restaurant Called "Snail"]**

By Ogawa Ito

Poplar, 2008. 195×135 mm. 234 pp. ¥1,300. ISBN 978-4-591-10063-9.

This is the debut novel of Ogawa Ito, whose artistic work has included writing lyrics for the music group Fairlife under the name of Shunran. It has earned the rare distinction of becoming a bestseller through word-of-mouth among bestsellers and readers rather than by winning an award.

Ogawa's tale centers around a young woman named Rinko, a restaurant worker who loses everything after an unexpected heartbreak. She becomes mute from the shock and returns to her hometown where she starts up a small restaurant. She accepts only one party of customers each day, and takes great care to prepare meals for them using seasonal ingredients. Each dish in the story is so well-depicted that readers can almost taste it.

Life goes well for Rinko as word spreads that wishes come true for anyone who dines at the restaurant. Towards the end of the tale, however, the reverie of those peaceful days is abruptly shattered by a shocking turn of events that puts Rinko through a nightmarish experience. Nevertheless, the novel closes with a cathartic, profoundly moving ending.

This book also compels us to once again confront the fact that lives are taken in order to prepare the meals we eat every day.

(MT)

Wan-chan **[Wang-chan]**

By Yang Yi

Bungei Shunjū, 2008. 192×136 mm. 146 pp. ¥1,143. ISBN 978-4-16-326880-4.

Born and raised in China, Yang Yi has lived in Japan since her twenties and has written this debut work in Japanese, which she learned after coming Japan. *Wan-chan* [Wang-chan] was well received by Japanese critics, winning the Bungakukai New Writers Award and earning a nomination for the Akutagawa Prize.

The protagonist of the tale is a Chinese woman who ran a large clothing business in China, but had less success with her marriage, which ended in divorce. To escape from her ne'er-do-well ex-husband, she marries a Japanese man whom she does not love, and moves to Japan with him. After arriving, she takes care of her mother-in-law in rural Shikoku. Dissatisfied with life in the countryside, she launches a marriage agency that matches

up Japanese men with Chinese women. Yang describes this strong Chinese woman with clarity and crispness, and weaves an engrossing depiction of everyday life as she sheds light on the problems faced by modern Japan.

Because Yang's mother tongue is Chinese, her Japanese has a distinctive style. At the same time, *Wan-chan* has the light, earthy feel of a good old-fashioned pop novel, but this is in fact a refreshing change of pace for today's Japanese readers. We look forward to more books in Japanese by this new talent. (NM)



Yang Yi

Born in Harbin, China in 1964. Came to Japan in 1987 to study Japanese language. After graduating from Ochanomizu University, worked at a newspaper for Chinese living in Japan, then worked as a Chinese-language teacher. Debuted as a writer with *Wan-chan* [Wang-chan]. Received the Akutagawa Prize for *Toki ga nijimu asa* [*A Morning When Time Blurs*] in 2008 (see page 14).



Kawakami Mieko

Born in 1976. Calls herself a "writing singer." After graduating from high school, majored in philosophy at the Nihon University Correspondence Division, and debuted as a singer in 2002. Her first medium-length novel, *Watakushiritsu in ha, matawa sekai* [*The World According to Tooth*], was nominated for the Akutagawa Prize in 2007. In the same year, she received the Incentive Prize of the Tsubouchi Shōyō Award.

Chichi to ran **[Breasts and Egg]** **By Kawakami Mieko**

Bungei Shunjū, 2008. 192×136 mm. 138 pp. ¥1,143. ISBN 978-4-16-327010-4.

Winner of the 138th Akutagawa Prize, this work is characterized by a unique writing style that is rhythmic and comfortable, the result of a merger between Kawakami's Osaka dialect and a distinct style developed as a singer. Her writing style is the opposite of the approach of stringing together short sentences, a technique that became the standard for elegance in modern Japanese literature. Her style is reminiscent of the prose of the earlier Meiji era (1868–1912), which featured seemingly never-ending sentences broken up by an occasional comma. Her long sentences allow her to paint a complete picture of the drama that unfolds as well as the characters' emotions, sensations, associations and recollections. As such, her verbose style creates a unique mood

and vivid imagery with each turn of the page.

The main characters include a middle-aged mother who is intent on getting breast implants, and her daughter, who is obsessed with her first menstrual period. The cast of quirky but lovable characters interact to produce a humorous, offbeat tale. Written in a folksy Osaka dialect, the story smoothly proceeds to philosophical observations on women's bodies. This freedom of ideas is part of the appeal of this new writer. (MT)

LITERARY ESSAY

Genji monogatari to higashi-ajia sekai **[The Tale of Genji and the World of East Asia]**

By Kawazoe Fusae

Japan Broadcast Publishing, 2007. 180×130 mm. 294 pp. ¥1,160. ISBN 978-4-14-091098-6.

In this book, Kawazoe Fusae takes a look at the "East Asian sphere of commerce" that formed the cultural context of *The Tale of Genji*, which was written a millennium ago.

The Tale of Genji emerged out of the *kuniburi bunka*, the native Japanese culture that developed in the wake of the Tang China-influenced culture of earlier times. The conventional interpretation is that *kuniburi bunka* evolved when Japan became secluded from the outside world as a result of Sugawara no Michizane's recommendation to abolish diplomatic missions to Tang China, which had long served as a political and cultural model for Japan. Kawazoe, however, states that the cutting of diplomatic ties did not end the flow of foreign goods, people and informa-

tion into Japan. On the contrary, she argues that *kuniburi bunka* was a highly sophisticated culture that used goods imported from China. As evidence, she points to the vast number of imported goods among the finery that surrounded Hikaru Genji and his women, including lapis lazuli vases, winter clothing made from the hides of black panthers, celadons and agarwood as well as various items from India, Korea and the South China Sea Islands.

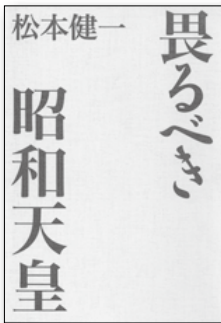
Kawazoe contends that *kuniburi bunka* did not reject Chinese culture but was in fact supported by Japan's commercial trade connections to other parts of East Asia. She says that the *The Tale of Genji* emerged from such an international milieu and hence embodies cosmopolitan sensibilities, rather than the feel of an isolationist culture. (MK)



Kawazoe Fusae

Born in 1953. Graduated from the Faculty of Letters of the University of Tokyo. Acquired her doctorate in Humanities and Sociology at the same university's graduate school. Currently serves as a professor at Tokyo Gakugei University and a co-professor at Hitotsubashi University. Specializes in Heian literature with a focus on *The Tale of Genji*. Has written many books related to *The Tale of Genji*.

CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY



Matsumoto Ken'ichi

Born in 1946. Professor at Reitaku University. Writes in various genres, including criticism, critical biography and novels. Received the Asia Pacific Prize in 1995 for *Kindai Ajia seishinshi no kokoromi* [Attempt at Modern Asian Intellectual History], the Yoshida Shigeru Prize in 1998 for *Nippon no kindai 1 kaikoku ishin* [Modern Japan I: The Imperial Restoration That Opened Japan], and the Shiba Ryōtarō Prize and the Mainichi Publishing Culture Award in 2005 for *Hyōden Kita Ikki* [Critical Biography: Kita Ikki].

Osorubeki shōwa tennō [The Formidable Emperor Hirohito]

By Matsumoto Ken'ichi

Mainichi Shimbunsha, 2007. 192×138 mm. 315 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-62-031845-5.

During World War II, amidst the turmoil of Japan's war with the U.S., the U.K. and their allies, Emperor Hirohito made several key decisions that shaped the fate of Japan and the Imperial Family. Though he rarely voiced his opinions aloud, his inner thoughts, sentiments, and political philosophy are brought into sharp relief by the diaries and letters of the people around him. Based on a thorough study of historic documents from the Shōwa era (1926–89), this epoch-making book brings to light important aspects missing from conventional studies on Hirohito.

In this book, Matsumoto Ken'ichi vividly identifies the controversies over the emperor system by comparing Mishima Yukio, the world-famous Japanese novelist, and Hirohito. Seeking “aesthetics in

politics,” Mishima exclaimed “Long live the Emperor!” while committing hara-kiri.

Matsumoto argues that Hirohito has been wrongly regarded as being obsessed by “a passion for war,” when in fact he consistently tried to be a constitutional monarch like the British sovereign, who “reigns but does not rule.”

Still, Hirohito made decisive judgments that went beyond the powers of a constitutional monarch on three occasions: First, when Zhang Zuolin was assassinated by a bomb in the Huanggutun Incident; second, during the February 26 Incident led by junior officers; and finally, when he issued an Imperial Rescript to end the Pacific War. The author considers these acts reasonable and politically justifiable.

(MT)

ESSAY

Oto o tazunete [Seeking Sounds]

By Sannomiya Mayuko

Bungei Shunjū, 2008. 192×138 mm. 208 pp. ¥1,900. ISBN 978-4-16-369870-0.

Written by an author who went blind at the age of four, this book is a collection of thirteen short reports about stirring soundscapes that have brought her comfort and encouragement ever since her childhood. Sannomiya visits a bell craftsman, piano tuner, *rakugo* (comedic storytelling) show, fireworks display, television sound effects technician and other sound makers.

In a chapter called “Meeting the Time Tone Lady,” she recalls how curious she had been since her elementary school days about the woman who announced the time over the phone: “At the tone, the time will be 2:30.” Beep, Beep, Beep, Boop... The woman was always there to give the time, rain or shine, whenever Sannomiya called. For her, the time announcements provided a sort of reassuring affirmation that the

earth was still spinning.

One day, Sannomiya realizes that the voices for the time tone and her cell phone's answering service are the same. She has the opportunity to meet the speaker, Nakamura Keiko, who tells her, “I speak as if I am talking to a person, even when recording messages on a machine, just like this: ‘Hey, it's almost 2:30 and 10 seconds.’” On hearing these words, the author realized that the comfort she had always felt from the time announcements had come from an expression of heartfelt sincerity that transcended the simple automated messages.

If you listen carefully, the “ears of your soul” will also open—an important message conveyed through these thirteen encounters.

(SH)



Sannomiya Mayuko

Born in 1966. Lost her eyesight at the age of four. Graduated from the Department of French Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Sophia University. Finished the preparation period of her doctorate course at Sophia University. Worked at a foreign news agency. Essayist. Received the Japan Essayist's Club Award with *Sotto mimi o sumaseba* [When You Quietly Listen with Intent] in 2001. Received the Saffron Prize in 2005, a prize presented to those contributing to the culture of people with visual impairments. In addition to writing, is frequently featured on TV and radio, and gives public lectures.



Yoshida Hidekazu

Born in 1913 in Tokyo. Graduated from the Tokyo Imperial University (today's University of Tokyo) with a degree in French literature. Music critic. Director General of Art Tower Mito. Established a leading presence among music critics with *Shudai to hensō* [Themes and Variations], which was released in 1953. In 1948, worked to establish the Music School for Children, the predecessor of Toho Gakuen School of Music, and founded the 20th Century Music Laboratory in 1957. Received the Osaragi Jirō Prize for Yoshida Hidekazu zenshū [Collected Works of Yoshida Hidekazu]. Received the Order of Culture in 2006.

Eien no kokyō: Yoru **[Eternal Home: Night]**

By Yoshida Hidekazu

Shūeisha, 2008. 188×136 mm. 157 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-08-774874-1.

In this book, the author—a pioneer in music criticism—goes beyond song commentary to explore poetry while musing on his past.

The book starts with an essay on Verlaine's poem *Claire de lune* [trans. *Moonlight*] in which the author recalls the days when the poet Nakahara Chūya taught him elementary French. As this point of departure suggests, the book focuses on talking about poetry, rather than songs. Nevertheless, the author regards songs as “a marriage between poetry and music,” and hence this book is not a purely theoretical discussion of poetics.

In a chapter entitled “The Merry Widow Waltz,” Yoshida retraces a bittersweet heartbreak of his youth. In the chapter “Winter Flower,” he shares his memory of

a chance meeting with the novelist Ōoka Shōhei at a performance of Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* in Munich. This recollection is combined with his memory of the political scientist Maruyama Masao, who happened to be there on that occasion, and who “kept talking about his opinions on Wagner.” He cynically concludes that “thanks to Maruyama, I missed hearing Mr. Ōoka's own opinions on Wagner.”

In the chapter “Two Loves,” he writes his impression of poems such as *Auf ein Altes Bild* [Trans. *To an Old Painting*] and *Nimmersatte Liebe* [Trans. *Insatiable Love*], both by Eduard Mörike, who is little known in Japan. He says that both Mörike's fondness for the sacred and his intense earthly love remained undiminished throughout his life. (MK)

CULTURE

Kemuru geiei **[Dim Shadows of Whales]**

By Komamura Kichie

Shōgakukan, 2008. 190×138 mm. 261 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-09-379781-8.

Japan is one of the few countries that still engage in whaling. During the Edo period, organized whaling evolved into a thriving industry across Japan, with whale oil providing fuel and whale meat serving as a precious source of protein.

Over time, however, the demand for whale declined as dietary habits changed. Today, it is difficult to assert that whales are vital to the Japanese diet. Only two forms of whaling are allowed: harvesting of large species for biological research and commercial targeting of small species. Stock remains unsold while prices fall. So how do people involved in whaling make a living?

The author visits Taiji, a town in Wakayama Prefecture known for its whaling industry. He boards the *Katsumaru*,

one of five Japanese ships permitted to engage in commercial whaling. By engaging the crew in conversation, he begins to understand how they feel about whaling and their worries about its future.

The ship sails from Taiji to the coast of Shiretoko in Hokkaido, chasing after pilot whales and Baird's beaked whales, which are not protected by the International Whaling Commission. His account of the experience includes recollections of how he felt uncomfortable when the captain sometimes blamed him—an outsider—after a poor day of hunting.

Readers may be dissatisfied since the pros and cons of whaling are not debated, but this book is nevertheless a valuable record of the voices of people left out of the discussion. (SH)



Komamura Kichie

Born in 1968. After working at several jobs, including journalism and construction, stayed in Mongolia for a year and a half from 1996. Started writing after returning home. Received the Outstanding Performance Award of the first *Kaikō Ken Nonfiction Prize* in 2003 for *Dakka e kaeru hi* [The Day They Return to Dhaka]. Received the Shōgakukan Nonfiction Award Grand Prize for *Kemuru geiei* [Dim Shadows of Whales].



Mori Tatsuya

Born in 1956. Movie director and writer. In 1998 released *A [A]*, a documentary close-up movie on the Aum Shinrikyō cult. *A2 [A2]*, its sequel, received the Jury's Special Award and the Audience Prize of the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival in 2001. His works include *Hōsō kinshi ka [A Song Banned from Broadcast]*, *Akuyaku resurā wa warau [The Black-hat Wrestler Laughs]*, and *Ōsama wa hadaka dato itta kodomo wa sonogo dōnattaka [What happened to the kid who said that the emperor was naked?]*.

Shikei **[The Death Penalty]**

By Mori Tatsuya

Asahi Shuppansha, 2008. 188×130 mm. 327 pp. ¥1,600. ISBN 978-4-25-500412-9.

In late 2007, the United Nations passed a resolution calling for a global moratorium on the death penalty. The U.S. and Japan are the only developed countries that still permit capital punishment. According to one opinion poll, more than 80 percent of Japanese think use of the death penalty is unavoidable.

The author is renowned for directing a documentary film about the followers of Aum Shinrikyō, the cult that committed indiscriminate acts of terrorism and murder. As the author met with former Aum Shinrikyō leaders awaiting possible execution for their roles in those crimes, he began to wonder why Japan has not abolished the death penalty, and why so many other countries have done away with it.

He visited others closely involved with the death penalty, including activists who oppose it, a former executioner, a chaplain, and a murder victim's family. The author presents a world seldom seen by the general public—revealing the details of executions and the living conditions of condemned criminals—as well as data showing that the death penalty does not deter crime.

The author claims that the public has been prevented from seeing the truth of capital punishment and has stopped thinking about it. He insists that no one is dissociated from the death penalty.

The book's publication is timely as the lay judge system will be introduced in Japan in the next fiscal year. (SH)

Nihonjin no omoi **[Japanese People's Thoughts]**

By Hobo Nikkan Itoi Shinbun

Gentōsha, 2008. 206×152 mm. 413 pp. ¥1,500. ISBN 978-4-344-01473-2.

Itoi Shigesato popularized the job of copywriting in Japan in the 1980s. The multi-talented Itoi also produced Nintendo's "Mother" series of games, and has served as a television host. He started an online newspaper in 1998 called *Hobo Nikkan Itoi Shinbun* (Almost Daily Itoi Newspaper). Popularly known as "Hobonichi," the site attracts over 300,000 visitors every day.

Itoi started Hobonichi as "something fun that anybody can enjoy with a few clicks." This book is a one-year collection of surveys posted on Hobonichi's corner called "Japanese People's Thoughts," where visitors to the site vote on different questions. Several thousand ballots are tallied according to the gender, age and prefecture of the

voters, and some of the e-mail messages sent in by the voters are also presented.

This book reveals several unexpected findings that are quite different from the general perception of Japanese as industrious, shy, non-religious and unassertive. Asked if they were shy, 82.4 percent of the respondents said "yes," but only 32.7 percent said they were hard-working, defying the traditional image of the Japanese. Probably to appeal to foreign readers, there is a column called "Let's Explain It in English," a welcome addition. (SH)



Hobo Nikkan Itoi Shinbun

The website was opened in 1998 by Itoi Shigesato, a copywriter who is active in a wide range of activities, including lyric composing, writing, and game software production. The site's content is partially updated every day, and is written by a wide variety of people from various areas and industries, ranging from celebrities to ordinary people. Itoi also develops and sells unique products in cooperation with major manufacturers.



Yokota Sakie

Born in 1936. In 1977, her daughter Megumi (born in 1964) was abducted in Niigata by North Koreans. With her husband, Yokota Shigeru, she worked to establish the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea (AFVKN). Her husband served as the association's chair until stepping down in November 2007. He still plays an active role throughout Japan and in the world to draw support for the rescue of all those abducted by North Korea.

Megumi e: Yokota Sakie, haha no kotoba
[To Megumi: Words from Your Mother, Yokota Sakie]
 By Yokota Sakie

Sōshisha, 2007. 190×138 mm. 126 pp. ¥1,400. ISBN 978-4-7942-1655-7.

Thirty years have passed since Yokota Megumi, then a junior high school student, suddenly disappeared. It has been twelve years since it was learned that Megumi was abducted by North Korea.

This book is a collection of 37 statements her mother, Yokota Sakie, made as a member of one of several families of Japanese abductees. On May 2, 1999, Sakie introduced herself to more than 2,000 people gathered at a national rally, declaring: “I am the mother of Yokota Megumi, who was abducted by North Korea.” These were the desperate, pained words of a woman who has no choice but to define herself as the mother of an abducted child. Japanese citizens must fully respect the weight of her words when talking about the problem with North

Korea.

Her self-definition was further underscored by the following words she spoke when it became clear in February 1997 that North Korean agents had abducted Megumi and others: “They say that Megumi was kidnapped all alone from that beach in Niigata—where I later wept and searched for anything she might have left behind—and was taken to a world where she knew nothing and could not understand the language.”

Though Yokota’s words are brief, they say everything about the abduction issue.

(MK)

HISTORY

Jishin no nihonshi
[Japanese Seismic History]

By Sangawa Akira

Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2007. 168×110 mm. 268 pp. ¥800. ISBN 978-4-12-101922-6.

Earthquakes are so frequent in Japan that modern Japanese spend their lives under constant threat, something difficult to imagine for people in countries not subject to tremors. Japan was rocked by a number of big earthquakes in the 20th century, such as the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 and the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995.

In fact, Japanese have endured earthquakes since ancient times. This book reviews that history dating back to the Jōmon period (ca. 3000–300 B.C.), cataloging the earthquakes by chronology, scale and aftermath. The author has successfully created a comprehensive and surprisingly detailed compendium by sifting through documents going back more than 1,000 years, reviewing evidence

of past earthquakes through archeological excavation and studying data on the active faults that crisscross Japan today. He is a leading earthquake geologist and a pioneer in the new field of earthquake archeology. Observing Japanese history from the unique perspective of earthquakes, this book reminds us scientifically and matter-of-factly that the peace and prosperity of today’s Japan are superficial and fragile as long as the threat of earthquakes exists. (NM)



Sangawa Akira

Born in 1947. Specializes in earthquake archeology and earthquake geology. Finished his doctorate course at the Graduate School of Science, Tohoku University. Former chief researcher of the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology. Currently serves as a guest researcher at the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, as well as a guest professor for the Disaster Prevention Research Institute of Kyoto University. His other books include Jishin: “Namazu” no katsudōshi Nihon o shiru [Earthquakes: Activity History of “Catfish” (Discovering Japan series)].



Edo no kyōikuryoku
[The Power of Education in the Edo Period]
 By Takahashi Satoshi

Chikuma Shobō, 2007. 170×110 mm. 206 pp. ¥680. ISBN 978-4-48-006398-4.

The literacy rate in Japan during the Edo period (1603–1868) was said to be 50 percent, 70 percent for men and 30 percent for women, whose education focused on oral literature. This was much higher than that of another civilized country at the time, Great Britain, which stood at 30 percent.

What led to such a high literacy rate?

The reason was the *terakoya*, private schools in Edo Japan that taught children reading, writing and other skills. This book looks closely at the system, textbooks, tuition and other aspects of *terakoya*.

The author notes that Japan’s educational strength improved during the Edo period because of the stability of the Tokugawa Shogunate coupled with the nation’s policy of isolation. These conditions boosted economic activity and facilitated the “creation of culture.”

During the 19th century, *terakoya* spread throughout Japan. These privately operated schools did not need licensing by the authorities, who did not interfere with what went on there.

The word *terakoya* originated from the education given at temples during medieval times, when monks housed and educated children from ordinary families. These children were called *terako* (temple children). Enrolling at a *terakoya* was referred to as *tozan* (climbing a mountain, as mountains sometimes connote temples in Japanese), and leaving a *terakoya* was referred to as *gezan* (going down a mountain).

On the basis of his fieldwork, the author concludes that there were one or two *terakoya* in each village. Since there were 63,562 villages nationwide in 1834, a considerable number of *terakoya* existed then. (MK)

Takahashi Satoshi

Born in 1940. Finished his master’s course at the Tokyo University of Education. Currently, an emeritus professor at the National Museum of Japanese History. Doctorate in Literature. Specializes in modern education/social history and out-law research. Has written many books including *Kunisada Chūji o otoko ni shita jokyō: Kikuchi Toku no issō* [*The Brave Woman Who Raised Kunisada Chuji into a Man: The Life of Kikuchi Toku*] and *Bakuto no bakumatsu ishin* [*The Gambler’s Imperial Restoration*].

Fūin sareta Hiroshima Nagasaki
[Hiroshima & Nagasaki Under Wraps]
 By Takahashi Hiroko

Gaifūsha, 2008. 192×136 mm. 285 pp. ¥3,000. ISBN 978-4-7736-3208-8.

It is frequently noted in Japan that American science fiction works dealing with nuclear wars do not properly recognize the consequences of radiation poisoning. Japanese are also well aware that many Americans believe that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 saved the lives of one million American soldiers.

Why has the U.S. taken such a casual attitude toward the effects of nuclear weapons? Takahashi addresses that question with this book, which is based on declassified U.S. government documents. Her investigation reveals that the government’s official position on radiation poisoning woefully underestimated the damage that could be inflicted.

To the U.S. government, atomic bomb victims in Japan were the perfect research subjects to gauge the “effects of radiation

on the human body” and the “effectiveness of atomic weapons.” Such medical information was seen as top-secret data necessary for coping with a possible nuclear war in the future.

The government continued to downplay the influence of radiation when it enacted the Civil Defense Law. Although the U.S. government recognized the effects of radioactive fallout following the nuclear tests at Bikini Atoll in 1954, it nevertheless performed nuclear tests involving civilians while denying the harm posed. The latest research shows that 15,000 people have died of leukemia caused by the experiments.

The book supports its statements with photos and charts and represents a large step forward in research on the effects of radiation from nuclear weapons. (SH)



Takahashi Hiroko

Born in 1969. Worked as a special researcher at the Institute for Research in Contemporary Political and Economic Affairs, Waseda University. Has been an associate professor at the Hiroshima Peace Institute of the Hiroshima City University since 2002. Member of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum Document Research Investigation Committee, the sectional committee of the Peace Studies Association of Japan, the executive committee of Hiroshima Peace Film Festival, and the executive committee of the Hiroshima Alliance for Nuclear Weapons Abolition (HANWA). Also a co-chair of “Global Hibakusha.”

Shōnen (Boys') Manga

On January 1, 2005, Shūeisha, a leading Japanese publisher, took out a full-page New Year's advertisement in a leading newspaper. Many people were surprised by the ad's claims of the number of manga in book form that had been published. *Wan Pīsu* [trans. *One Piece*], by Oda Eiichirō, for example, had come out in 35 volumes and had sales of 110 million copies as of the date of the ad (the corresponding figures today are 50 volumes published and 150 million copies sold). Akimoto Osamu's *Kochira Katsushika-ku Kameari kōen mae hashutsujo* [This Is the Police Station in Front of Kameari Park in Katsushika Ward], another case cited, had come out in 142 volumes and had sales of 130 million copies (compared to 160 volumes published and 140 million copies sold today). The figures for Toriyama Akira's *Doragon bōru* [trans. *Dragon Ball*] were 42 volumes published and 120 million copies sold, while those for *SLAM DUNK* [trans. *Slam Dunk*] by Inoue Takehiko were 31 volumes published and 100 million copies sold.

In Japan, the four magazines in the *shōnen* (boys') weekly manga magazine category alone have a combined weekly circulation of more than seven million. This is apart from the many monthly magazines that are also published. Because of their short publication cycles, popular manga tend to be put out in many volumes, with the number of copies sold increasing proportionally. While these four manga are remarkable for having circulations of over 100 million copies, they are also notable for the rich variety of genres and content that they encompass, including romantic sea adventures, police comedies with elements of information comics, adventure and battle manga (in which the main character changes with the generations), as well as typical basketball stories.

Because the world of *shōnen* manga covers a vast array of thematic material, ranging from science fiction and fantasy to detective stories, cooking, music, gambling, and gangster stories, it makes it difficult to discern a particular trend. Furthermore, because the "sequel stories" of popular *shōnen* manga are often published in *seinen* (young men's) manga—because it is less risky to resume a well-known story than to start something new—the definition of *shōnen* manga is ambiguous. But if pressed, we would probably say that all *shōnen* manga feature boys (or young men) as protagonists, each of whom gains something through the process of growing as human beings, such as winning a battle or a sports competition through an all-out effort, finding a pretty girlfriend, gaining back a friendship that had been lost through betrayal, succeeding in the musical world, or doing a little detective work to track down a criminal.

Sports manga lend themselves to the portrayal of such adventures and are consistently among the most popular of all manga. Hence, they are always featured in *shōnen*

manga magazines. (In other words, these magazines could not survive without a successful, long running sports saga).

Since the 1950s, sports manga that feature baseball, boxing or martial arts have been especially popular. In baseball, these include such titles as *Dokaben: Sūpā Sutāzuhen* [Dokaben: Super Stars Edition], which began in 1973 and is the longest running serial manga in the world, and *MAJOR* [Major], the story of a boy who endeavors to become a Major League ballplayer. Among boxing manga, a well-known title is *Hajime no ippo* [*Hajime no Ippo: THE FIGHTING!*] which depicts the struggles of a timid boy who succeeds in becoming a professional champion. The most representative martial arts manga, meanwhile, is the *Gurappurā Baki* [trans. *Baki the Grappler*] series, in which highly individualistic male characters give their all in fighting one another.

Broadly speaking, *Kidō senshi Gandamu: The ORIGIN* [trans. *Gundam: The Origin*] is a "battle manga" that profiles a boy who, despite lacking a firm resolve to fight, ends up riding a huge robot and going into battle. It depicts the protagonist as he faces repeated conflicts with those around him and struggles with his inner self. This manga is unusual for a *shōnen* manga because it seeks to depict mainly the process of growth rather than growth that comes from success in battle. *Gundam* became a bestseller by successfully treating a theme that is more likely to be found in a *seinen* manga. *Gundam* is a good example of the broad scope of Japanese manga and of *shōnen* manga in particular.

In 2005, sales of manga books, of which approximately 10,000 are published annually, exceeded sales of manga magazines for the first time, and this trend has continued as manga readers drift away from magazines and lean increasingly toward reading manga in book form. In other words, the publishing model that had been followed for decades, in which manga were first featured in magazines before being published in book form, has become outdated. Manga publishers and editors are therefore working harder than ever to come up with new material, and manga artists have been responded successfully to this challenge. This is how new manga come into existence day by day.

(Saitō Nobuhiko, Editor, Manga Historian)

Recommended Works



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Kidō senshi Gandamu: THE ORIGIN

[trans. *Gundam: The Origin*]

by Yasuhiko Yoshikazu (manga artist)

Yatate Hajime and Tomino Yoshiyuki (original author)

Kadokawa Shoten, 2002. 178×128 mm. 216 pp. ¥560. ISBN 978-4-04-713453-9 (4047134538).

Kidō senshi Gandamu [trans. *Mobile Suit Gundam*] is an animated TV series that became an international hit after broadcasts began in 1979. The long-awaited manga was produced several years ago by Yasuhiko Yoshikazu, the film's animation director and character designer. His outstanding drawings create a sense of light and color despite being in black and white. *Kidō senshi Gandamu: The Origin* is being serialized in *Gandamu Ēsu* [Gundam Ace], a magazine that was created specifically for this purpose. The series is also being published in book form, with 17 volumes released to date.

BECK

[trans. *BECK: Mongolian Chop Squad*]

by Harold Sakuishi

Kōdansha, 2000. 180×130 mm. 210 pp. ¥505. ISBN 978-4-06-334278-9 (4063342786).

This is the story of Koyuki, a good-for-nothing boy who becomes a musician after meeting some companionable fellows. While the group is sometimes in danger of disbanding, they forge ahead: from amateur to professional and from Japan to the international stage. Drawn without lyrics or sound effects, the singing scenes are breathtakingly beautiful. This is a passionate, groovy music manga boasting the longest history in Japan. The series spans 34 volumes.



Hoero pen

[Be Growl, Pen]

by Shimamoto Kazuhiko

Shōgakukan Sunday GX Comics, 2005.
176×128 mm. 187 pp. ¥533.
ISBN 978-4-09-157311-7 (4091573118).



©Fujiko Studio

Manga michi

[The Way of Manga]

by Fujiko Fujio Ⓐ

Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 1996.
152×106 mm. 324 pp. ¥686.
ISBN 978-4-12-202637-7 (4122026377).

A drop of ink is a drop of blood! *Hoero pen* [Be Growl, Pen], a 13-volume series, portrays the life of Honō Moeru, a manga artist whose passion for his craft often leads him to work through the night. Though slightly comedic and incorporating many exaggerated expressions, this is a typical example of the genre of manga that depicts manga artists. *Manga michi* [The Way of Manga] and its 14-volume sequel *Ai shirisomeshi koro ni* [When You Know What Love Is], which runs in a *seinen* manga magazine, portray the lives of artists who devote their youth to manga. By reading these two manga together, readers will gain a better understanding of the manga industry and of what goes on behind the scenes in their production and thus be able to enjoy more fully.

Akutagawa and Naoki Prizes

On July 15, Yang Yi became the 139th winner of the Akutagawa Prize for her work *Toki ga Nijimu Asa* [A Morning When Time Blurs]. Yang had been nominated previously for another work, *Wan-chan* [Wang-chan] (see page 5). Her selection marks the first time in the seventy-three year history of the prize that it has gone to a foreign national who is a non-native speaker of Japanese.

The winning work is a coming-of-age novel which paints a fresh and vivid portrait of two idealistic Chinese youths who join the democratization movement in China and see their hopes dashed at Tiananmen Square protest of 1989. They later move to Japan, and struggle with questions of identity in a foreign land. "As a person who saw change in Chinese society from the outside, I wanted to write about how we Chinese viewed Tiananmen Square and how we grew as human beings in the aftermath of that incident," explains Yang.

The Naoki Prize went to Inoue Areno for her novel *Kirihana e* [To the Mine Face], a love story set on an island in Kyūshū that portrays the internal conflict of a married woman who is attracted to another man. The author succeeded in masterfully depicting the love between a man and a woman through her portrayal of the suppressed desires of her protagonist.



Yang Yi (right) and Inoue Areno (Courtesy: Kyōdō News)

The Second International MANGA Award

On August 26 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the recipients of its second International MANGA Award, which was established in 2007 to recognize manga creators who are contributing to the dissemination of manga culture overseas. This year's awards drew 368 entries from 46 countries and regions. The ministry presented the Gold Award for the best work to Lau Wan Kit of China (Hong Kong) for his *Feel 100%*. First published in 1992, *Feel 100%* is a love story focusing on today's young people. An enormously popular manga, it has been made into movies and a TV series. Silver Awards went to Yin Chuan of China for his *Eclipse*, Chezina Svetlana Igorevna of Russia for her *Portrait*, and Alice Picard of France for her *Okhēania I*. Twelve other entries were selected for final judging. In numerical order, artists submitting works for this year's award represented the following countries and regions: Indonesia 50, China 39 (including 5 from Hong Kong), Russia 27, U.S. 25, Brazil 22, France 16, Singapore and Great Britain 14 each, Thailand 12, Malaysia and Myanmar 11 each, Saudi Arabia 10, Canada and Spain 9 each, and others.

The Japan Foundation invited the Gold and Silver Award winners to Japan to attend an award ceremony on September 2. The award recipients then attended the International MANGA Summit in Kyoto and also met with Japanese manga creators.

Japan's First Comprehensive Dictionary on the Development of Zen Thought

Tokyo Shoseki has recently published *Zen no Shisō Jiten* [A Dictionary of Zen Thought], a comprehensive dictionary that deals with the complexity of Zen terms and Zen thought head on. According to the publisher, *Zen no Shisō Jiten* is one of the few dictionaries available that meets the needs of the general reader who is interested in Zen and/or Buddhism.

In addition to so-called Zen sayings,

Zen no Shisō Jiten includes key words and phrases that help clarify the meaning of Zen philosophy. In all, it provides commentary on approximately 2,000 topics, including important personages in Zen intellectual history and well-known Zen literary classics. The dictionary begins with an overview of the development of Zen thought, which gives the reader a sense of the history of Zen and of the different ways in which it has developed in each region. The dictionary comes with indexes arranged by subject matter, personal names, and book titles.

A Rush of New Manga-based Film Releases

Live action film adaptations of popular manga have been hitting the screens in rapid succession in the June-September period. June's two releases, *Daibu!!* [DIVE!!] (original novel: Mori Eto; manga: Ikeno Masahiro) and *Hana yori dango fainaru* [trans. *Boys Over Flowers Final*] (manga: Kamio Yōko), were followed in July by *Gegege no Kitarō* [trans. *GeGeGe no Kitarō*] (manga: Mizuki Shigeru). In August, *Detoroito metaru shithi* [Detroit Metal City] (manga: Wakasugi Kiminori) and *Nijusseiki shōnen* [20th Century Boys] (manga: Urasawa Naoki) arrived in theaters. Finally, on September 27, *Ikigami* [trans. *Ikigami*] (manga: Mase Motorō) is scheduled for release.

These films cover a wide range of genres, including coming-of-age stories, romantic comedies, ghost stories, and science fiction suspense. Japanese manga have also attracted the interest of Hollywood, where *Doragon bōru Z* [trans. *Dragon Ball Z*] is being filmed (production and distribution by 20th Century Fox). *Dragon Ball Z* will be released in Japan and the United States in the spring of 2009.

Noruei no Mori to be Adapted into a Film

Murakami Haruki's best-selling full-length novel *Noruei no Mori* [trans. *Norwegian Wood*], published by Kōdansha, will be adapted to the screen by the French-Vietnamese

director Tran Anh Hung. A co-production of Asmik Ace Entertainment and Fuji Television Network, the movie will feature Japanese actors. Filming is scheduled to begin in February 2009, with release planned for 2010.

Obituaries

Ōno Susumu, 88, scholar of the Japanese language, July 14, 2008. Ōno made it his life's work to search for the origins of the language.

He published *Nihongo no kigen* [trans. The Origin of the Japanese Language] in 1957. In this work, he investigated the historical changes in the language's lexicon, making a major contribution to research in this field.

In the 1960s, Ōno began to investigate Japanese culture through the lens of the country's language, publishing commentary from a wide range of perspectives. He also continued his exploration of the origins of Japanese, stirring considerable debate in 1979 with a new theory which argued that Japanese shared common origins with Tamil, a language spoken in southern India. His recent works included *Nihongo no genryū o motomete* [Seeking the Origins of the Japanese Language], which was published in 2007 (See JBN 56).

Akatsuka Fujio, known for his gag-filled manga, which ignited a boom in comedic manga during Japan's period of high economic growth, passed away from pneumonia on August 2. He was 72 years old.



Akatsuka Fujio (Courtesy:Kyōdō News)

He debuted in 1956 with a work entitled *Arashi o koete* [Beyond the Storm]. In the 1960s, he produced a number of major hits, including *Tensai Bakabon* [trans. *The Genius Bakabon*], *Osomatsu-kun* [Osomatsu-kun], and the manga for girls, *Himitsu no Akko-chan* [Secret Akko-chan The Magic Mirror]. Akatsuka's inventive sense of language generated dialogue that included such sentences as *Shee!* and *Kore de ii noda!* [That's all right], which caught on among the public as trendy expressions. Many of Akatsuka's manga were made into television anime, which also became sensationally popular. In 1997, he received the Japan Cartoonists Association Minister of Education Prize.

Announcements

Translation & Publication Grants

The Japan Foundation supports the translation and publication of books related to Japan in various languages with the aim of promoting Japanese studies and understanding of Japan around the world. Fifty-five grants were made through this program last year. Here we present a small sampling of titles that have been published under this grant program.

• Original Works

- *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, Mark W. MacWilliams, M. E. Sharpe, Inc., USA (English)
- *Kaitai shinsho and Geka Soden*, Gabor Lukacs, HES & DE GRAAF Publishers BV, Netherlands (English)
- *Traces et Fragments dans l'Esthétique Japonaise*, Murielle Hladik, Editions MARDAGA, Belgium (French)
- *On Ukiyo-e Modality and its Impact on Western Art*, Pen Li, Hebei Education Press, China (Chinese)

• Translations

- *Amurita* [Amurita], Yoshimoto Banana, Nha Nam Publishing and Communications Joint Stock Company, Viet-Nam (Vietnamese)
- *Privata Lieta* [A Personal Matter], Ōe Kenzaburo, Atena Publishers Ltd., Latvia (Latvian)
- *Pribeh Prince Gendziho 4* [The Tale

of Genji (Vol. 4)], Murasaki Shikibu, Paseka Publishers, Czech (Czech)

Publishers interested in publishing a translation of a Japanese work or an original work on a Japan-related topic are invited to contact the Japan Foundation after confirming all terms and conditions. Additional information and application forms are available on the Japan Foundation website <www.jpjf.go.jp>. Submissions for the fiscal 2009–10 program will be accepted until November 20, 2008.

Practical Guide to Publishing in Japan 2008

The Japan Foundation and the Publishers Association for Cultural Exchange (PACE)



jointly publish the Practical Guide to Publishing in Japan. This booklet contains helpful information in English concerning the Japanese publishing industry and the purchase and sale of book copyrights. The 2008 edition may be viewed online at the PACE website: <www.pace.or.jp>.

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The Grand Parade invites readers into the mystery wonderland of Onda Riku

Published in October 2007, *Inochi no parēdo* [The Grand Parade] (Jitsugyō no Nihon Sha, 2007) is a compilation of 15 short stories written by Onda Riku between April 2004 and October 2007. Fourteen of them were originally written for *Gekkan J-novel*, a monthly magazine that introduces the latest novels of leading Japanese writers.

“Being a slow writer, it was tough to meet the deadline for each story every three months,” Onda recalled. *Inochi no parēdo*, in which Onda gave full rein to her imagination, invites readers to enter and explore her unique mystery wonderland. Because these short stories were intended to be published in book form, Onda incorporated a distinctive setting and style for each one, thereby introducing readers to her multi-faceted writing. “I didn’t want any of the stories to suggest a particular country. The episodes are fictitious but could have taken place anywhere. The only thing they have in common is that they are all very easy to visualize, as if you were watching a stage play or a movie,” says Onda.

Onda gets her ideas from many different sources. “I think of the story lines as I write. At times, I may be inspired by science fiction, which I’ve always liked. I may also recall scenes from the works of other novelists such as Shirley Jackson, Robert Sheckley, Jack Finney, Charles Beaumont and John Collier. Or I might reflect on the works of Edogawa Ranpo, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō or Kobayashi Nobuhiko, or even manga or other subcultures that have become a big part of my life,” she explained.

In this book, Onda’s creativity was spurred by other things as well. “The opening scene of the film version of *West Side Story*, which seems to go on forever with seemingly no movement, inspired me to write *Endo mōku made goishsho ni* [It’s Hard Being a Musical Star]. It’s a fastpaced tragicomedy in which a guy meets a girl and her pet lion. The German artist Michael Sowa’s painting of a huge snail in a city prompted me to write *Katatsumuri chūihō* [Beware of the Snails], where horrific giant snails crawl through the streets in the dead of night.”

The book’s design is eye-catching, with a black cover featuring an unusual photo that Onda found while traveling in the Czech Republic. It incorporates classic typography and a unique page-numbering style. The table of contents and titles are written horizontally from left to right instead of vertically from top to bottom as is the usual case with Japanese text. Furthermore, there are superb English translations of each title. Such attention to detail has given a universal yet somehow retro-classic, mysterious atmosphere to the book, just as Onda intended.

Since her debut novel in 1992, Onda has written 40 books spanning a variety of genres including mystery, science fiction and horror. Her translations are popular in South Korea and other Asian countries, but none of her

books has been translated into English so far. “I would love to have some representative works of mine translated into English and read by many more people around the world,” she said.

In addition to *Inochi no parēdo*, Onda mentioned four other books that she would like to see translated. *Kureopatora no yume* [The Dream of Cleopatra] is the story of a man who tries to take his twin sister back from the man with whom she is having an illicit love affair while exploring the true meaning of an object named “Cleopatra.” In *Tasogare no yuri no hone* [The Bone of a Lily at Dusk], a woman must live in a mansion rumored to be haunted by witches because her grandmother’s will forbade selling the house unless the woman lived there for more than six months. *Kuro to chairō no gensō* [Black and Tan Fantasy] is a heartbreaking tale of four young men and women who graduated from the same school and set out on a journey to an ancient mystical forest. *Chokorētō kosumosu* [Chocolate Cosmos] is a fascinating story about two young rival actresses battling fiercely to enter a taboo world of darkness as they act on stage.

Despite her successful career, Onda confessed that she has never been good at writing short stories. “That’s because each short story requires the same amount of effort and concentration as a single, long novel. You have to describe a situation in just a few pages, which requires skill. On the other hand, you have a lot more leeway with long stories. You can give lengthy explanations, which is so much easier.”

But, she said, “Following the same pattern and style in writing limits a person’s capability and restricts the writer to working within a very narrow range, so eventually all of that person’s stories sound the same.”

Onda’s various writing styles and tales reflect her effort to move away from such limitations. Despite her success, Onda is humble. When asked about her plans, she simply said that she wanted to expand the scope of her work and write more in different genres.

(Yoshino Michiru, The Japan Times writer)



Onda Riku

Born in 1964, Onda debuted as a writer in 1992 with *Rokubanme no Sayoko* [The Sixth Sayoko]. Her writing spans various genres and has recently expanded to include playwriting. *Yoru no pikunikku* [Nighttime Picnic] (See JBN No.43) won the Yoshikawa Eiji Literary Award and the Hon’ya [Bookseller] Prize in 2005. In 2006, she won the Mystery Writers of Japan Award with *Yūjinia* [Eugenia].