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*From now on, I tell those entranced
by the beauty of cherry blossoms
to live in the mountains
and abandon this world,
like me.*

今よりは花見ん人に伝へおかん
世を遁れつつ山に住まへと

Saigyō (1118-1190)

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Interview With Dr. Makruf Jamhari

(National Islam University, Indonesia)

"Sufism Has Created a Tolerant and Pluralistic Islamism in Indonesia"

The Japan Foundation interviewed Dr. Makruf Jamhari, the executive director of the Center for the Study of Islam and Society, National Islam University, Indonesia. He talked about the past, present and future of Islam in Southeast Asia. He also contributed a personal report on the tsunami disaster in Aceh province.

A Unique Form of Islam

JF: Most people are familiar with Middle Eastern Islamic culture, but are not as familiar with the history of Islam in Indonesia. Can you talk a little about Indonesia and the Islamic culture there?

Jamhari: Actually, there is a long history of Islamic culture in Indonesia. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Islam was

brought from the Middle East, and also by Indian traders. While these men carried out their trade, they taught Islam to our island. The second phase of the introduction of Islamic culture took place when many Sufis came to Indonesia in the middle of the fifteenth century and introduced Sufism. The Sufis brought a more pluralistic and inclusive Islamic teaching, and their teaching greatly influenced our notion of Islam. As a result, Indonesian Islam is quite tolerant and pluralistic. At the end of the fifteenth century, a large Islamic kingdom developed in Aceh. Islam spread to other islands in Indonesia through the influence of this kingdom.

JF: Sufism is different from traditional Islam. Isn't Sufism a kind of mysticism?

Jamhari: Yes. What we call normative piety is based on the formal teachings of Islam, but the Sufi Islamic teachings were more spiritualistic and mystical. Therefore, the Sufis were more inclusive. They were open to accepting local cultures and influences. They could also accommodate local traditions and religion, and that is why Islam was able to spread throughout Indonesia. Although normative Islam and formal Islamic law did not leave any room for merging with the local culture, our Islamic tradition has an inclusive and tolerant nature, owing to the Sufis. Even now, Sufism is still widely practiced in Indonesia. One of the largest Islamic organizations, NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) has combined Sufi teachings with formal Islamic law and teachings.

JF: In what ways is Islam in Indonesia different from that of the Middle East.

Jamhari: There are a few differences. The first, as I mentioned, is that Islam in Indonesia has accommodated local culture. Many Islamic practices, rituals, and forms of worship in Indone-



"Poverty is a breeding ground for radicalism." (At The International House of Japan, Tokyo).

Dr. Jamhari is executive director, Center for the Study of Islam and Society, National Islam University (PPIM-UIN, Jakarta). Having received a Ph.D. in anthropology from Australian National University, he is a renowned researcher on Islamic studies, focusing on the installation of democracy in Islamic society and on Islam's compatibility with civil society. In 2004, he was invited to Japan to take part in the Asia Leadership Fellow Program, organized by the International House of Japan and The Japan Foundation.

sia accommodate local culture and religion, making it a pluralistic religion here. The second difference is that Islam in Southeast Asia provides more freedom and opportunity to women. For example, in Indonesia, men and women pray together in the same mosque. Also, throughout Indonesian history, we have had a female president, female Islamic scholars, and female judges. They can achieve a higher level of education, even in religious knowledge. And the third difference is that Islam in Indonesia can accommodate what I will call “western ideas.” Right now, our Islam is practicing democracy. Some Islam scholars say that Islam and democracy, which comes from the West, are incompatible because they have different perspectives. But in Indonesia, that is not the case.

JF: Is Indonesian Islam unique in that sense, compared to Islam in other Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia or the Philippines?

Jamhari: No. I think that Islam in Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, South Thailand, or the Southern Philippine Islands and Mindanao has the same characteristics. Therefore, I’d like to say that Islam in Southeast Asia has a distinctive character. In terms of the Islamic population, in Indonesia alone, almost 200 million people—which is 90 percent of the total population—are Islamic. This is larger than the total population of the Middle East. However, people have tended to focus on the politics of the Middle East when studying Islam, rather than looking at Islam in Southeast Asia. Yet, if people look at those numbers, they will agree that Islam in Southeast Asia holds the seeds of possibility for the future of Islam as a whole. Also, as the history of religion has shown, religions usually develop in countries other than their birthplace. For example, Christianity originated in the Middle East but developed in the West. Likewise, Buddhism was born in India and developed in East Asia and Southeast Asia. I believe that Islam will eventually make great progress in other areas, one of them being Southeast Asia.

Radicalism and Poverty

JF: You mentioned that Islam in Indonesia is very tolerant and pluralistic. Yet there have been tragic incidents, like the terrorist bombing of a nightclub in Bali in 2002.

Jamhari: That’s the sad thing. In the 1980s, all the media, especially the Western media and Western scholars, saw Islam in Southeast Asia as the future of global Islamism. Unfortunately, since 9/11, terrorist acts including the bombings in Bali and Jakarta hijacked the media. The Western and Indonesian media are all suddenly talking about radicalism. However, the number of radicals in Indonesia is small and insignificant in terms of mainstream Islam. And I think these numbers will diminish as long as democracy stays in place. Also, radical Islamic groups in Indonesia are underground groups; some of them have links with Afghanistan or extremists in the Middle East. But on its own, Indonesian Islam has a long history of tolerance, as I

mentioned before. Our Islam has coexisted with other religions since the fifteenth century.

JF: People in the lower economic classes are often drawn to radicalism. Is that the case in Indonesia as well?

Jamhari: Yes. In 1999, Indonesia had a severe economic and political crisis, which hit the entire nation. People turned to religion for relief and salvation from the messiah, or from a savior. And when we changed our political system to a democracy, democracy did not work well. That gave Islamic radicals a chance to look for another political system to address this crisis. Right now, however, democracy is consolidated and economic recovery is on track, so the popularity of radicalism has diminished. In fact, in the 2004 election, Islamic political parties supported by radical groups got only eleven percent of the vote.

JF: In 2004, Mr. Yudhoyono was elected president of Indonesia. Can you talk about his policies?

Jamhari: Yudhoyono has three big tasks ahead of him. One is a political issue. He should support democracy by maintaining laws to uphold it, and he should educate people in the principles of democracy. The second is an economic issue. Yudhoyono has to deal with widespread corruption. If he can tackle corruption, that will be very good for our country, because corruption is also a reason radicalism has emerged. Also, he should alleviate poverty. Currently, around 40 to 50 percent of the population, and many members of radical groups, live in poverty. Poverty is a breeding ground for radicalism. The third task is the issue of security, which is a huge problem. Ethnic conflicts in Maluku, Sulawesi, Aceh and others must be resolved within five years.

JF: What do you see as a solution to the ethnic conflicts from which the various independent movements have sprung, and do you think these solutions will happen soon?

Jamhari: Of course, it will take time, but a concerted effort can solve this problem. The biggest causes of ethnic conflict are political and economic issues. For example, the gap between the rich and the poor in affected areas like Aceh is quite wide. In Aceh, most of the local people belong to the lower class. The upper-class people are outsiders from Java or other countries. They prosper from oil and natural gas. So, if the government can bridge this economic gap, there will be improvement in Aceh. Also, in Papua New Guinea, there is a rising desire for independence among the population which has sprung from the same issue. Large foreign companies have gained access to Papua New Guinea. The money is just taken away from the local people



Mesjid Agung Al-Azhar: One of the biggest mosques in Jakarta, housing educational facilities from kindergarten through university.

and goes to Jakarta and other cities abroad, like Washington, D.C. People’s resentment and disappointment in the government has led them to seek independence. Also, the dominant role of the army in Papua New Guinea has worsened the political situation there. Many people do not like the army involvement. If we can improve the situations in these places, the radical movement will diminish.

Japan’s Role and the Future of Islam in Indonesia

JF: Japan is one of Asia’s most economically developed countries. Does Indonesia hope for more Japanese support?

Jamhari: Yes, I think it is time for Japan to play a big role in Asia, especially in terms of human resource development. Some Southeast Asia countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Mindanao are reluctant to accept Western aid, because they are afraid that behind Western aid there is a Christian missionary movement. Of course, the Japanese government and NGOs have done a lot of work focusing on infrastructure aid, like building bridges and airports. But now it is a time to expand their activities to human resource development. Scholarly ex-

change programs, research, and scholarship are all very important. If Japan can provide scholarships at the Ph.D. level, this will have a very big influence on Asian countries. Also, I hope that Japan will help Asian countries develop their education systems. One of the reasons Japan has succeeded as an economic giant is its education system and high literacy rate. Japan can share its experiences with other Asian countries.

JF: What does the future of Islam in Indonesia look like?

Jamhari: My dream is that Islam in Asia will develop its own traditions. I hope that in the near future, people will come to Southeast Asia to study Islam. We would like to develop a prestigious university education system in Indonesia that will be the benchmark of the Islamic education system in Southeast Asia, so that we can take pride in our tolerant, pluralistic Islam. The first step is establishing a center for excellence in Islamic education in our country. If we can have that, we will be able to improve our libraries, our professors, and our building facilities, renewing and creating our own Islamic studies curriculum. Twenty or twenty-five years from now, the heart of Southeast Asia Islamism will then be centered in our country.

The Tsunami Disaster in Indonesia

Aceh, Swept Away

For Amir, a resident of Banda Aceh, Sun-day, December 26, 2004, was an unforgettable day. A tragic and devastating earthquake and massive tsunami swept away his lovely wife and his two sweet children. The tsunami swept through towns and villages in Aceh and Northern Sumatra. Within less than 45 minutes, the Aceh region was washed out and completely ruined. Thousands of people were killed; millions lost their homes. Almost three-fourths of Aceh province became a mass killing ground, and almost the entire infrastructure—office buildings, hospitals, schools, places of worship, and roads—was destroyed. The survivors lost fathers, mothers, children, brothers, wives, and husbands, experiencing severe shock and trauma. Many were almost insane with grief. It is reported that the earthquake and the tsunami were the world’s largest in 40 years. One can only imagine how painful it is for the Acehnese to face this tragic event in their history.

The tragedy shook not only Indonesia, Thailand, India, and Sri Lanka, but touched people everywhere. Volunteers came from all over the world, as did aid, food, clothing and financial and material support. The huge response from people who wanted to help Aceh was an indication of how moved the entire world was by this tragedy. A single homeless mother from Jakarta came to Aceh, bearing an old blanket and a package of instant noodles. As she brought them to a donation collection office for the victims, she said, “This

is all I have. But, please give it to Acehnese people. They need it more than I do.”

The Aceh tragedy is a human tragedy. Billions of dollars are needed to restore Aceh. In addition to the loss of life and property, and environmental damage, another casualty in Aceh is the loss of its culture and civilization, which is priceless and irreplaceable. The people of Aceh lost their culture; they lost community leaders who gave religious and spiritual counsel to others in times of need. The tsunami also washed away two important cultural centers: The Centre for the Study of History and Traditional Cultures (Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional), which preserved the valuable historical heritage of Aceh, and The Aceh Centre for Data and Information (Pusat Data dan Informasi Aceh), where people came to study and collect data on civilization and culture. The Acehnese people worked tirelessly for so long to establish these two centers. Now that they are gone, the people of Aceh face the reality that their traditional wisdom will not be passed on to the younger generations. What a devastating loss.

Now that a few months have passed, the Acehnese people have begun to start their lives over again. “I have lost even my tears,” said Amir. “Whenever I heard there was a new refugee camp, I went there, hoping to find my wife and children.” But Amir has realized that his hope is just that. For now, he says, “I have to dedicate the rest of my life to the memory of my wife and children. I have to help others.” Amir’s story is just one of thousands. He and the people of Aceh need our prayers and hope, but they also need real assistance to help rebuild their confidence and faith.

–Makruf Jamhari

The Japan Foundation's Activities

Korean Writer Kim Younsu

The Individual Amidst the Tides of History

As one of the events celebrating the 40-year anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and Korea, The Japan Foundation invited the young Korean writer Kim Younsu to come to Japan talk about himself and his work. Kim traveled to five Japanese cities from



Mr. Kim Younsu at The Japan Foundation Conference Hall (Feb 23, 2005 Photo: Atsuko Takagi).

the south to the north, giving lectures in Fukuoka, Osaka, Tokyo, Sendai and Sapporo.

Kim Younsu, who was born in 1970, belongs to what is called “the generation of new literature” which surfaced in the 1990s. In Korea, before 1980, the mainstream was “the literature of nationalism,” whose themes centered around national consciousness. However, through the collapse of the military government and the rise of the democracy movement in the 1980s, a new literature was born. This “new generation” depicts the inner world of the individual.

In his lecture, Kim discussed the initial influence of Haruki Murakami's works, which inspired him to begin writing novels. It was through Murakami's books that he learned that novels could be written for more than educational purposes, such as the attempts to enlighten people through “the literature of nationalism.” Rather, he discovered that they could be created to depict an individual's inner world. Then, in the twenty-first century, in light of the North Korean nuclear threat and the economic crisis of the 1990s, Kim's theme shifted. He began to depict individual life in East Asia as seen through the prism of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean history.

Kim also spoke of his father, who was born and grew up in Japan before the Pacific War. When Kim was a child, he could not understand why his father did not want to return to Korea and constantly missed life in Japan. It was not until Kim visited the place his father was born and grew up in that he began to understand his father's life and history. His father

had lived through the Pacific War, liberation from Japanese colonial rule, the Korean War, and a military government in Korea. These events shaped his outlook towards life. Ultimately, he had to accept Korean history as his fate.

By focusing on the individual's inner world amidst the enormous tides of history, Kim said the writer could rescue both the individual within that history and the writer himself, who ran the risk of losing his identity.

Russian and Japanese Film Directors Zvyagintsev and Koreeda Meet to Discuss Their Art

In January, the Japan Foundation invited the Russian film director Andrey Zvyagintsev to hold a conversation with the Japanese film director Hirokazu Koreeda. Zvyagintsev's first film, *The Return* won



A. Zvyagintsev (left) and H. Koreeda (right) at The Japan Foundation (Jan 14, 2005 Photo: Yasumasa Kawakami).

the 2003 Golden Lion, the Venice Film Festival's top prize. Koreeda directed the film *Daremo Shiranai* (Nobody Knows), for which the film's star, 13 year old Yuya Yagira, received the Best Actor Award at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival.

The Return is about a fishing trip between a father and his two teenaged sons. The father suddenly returns home after a twelve-year absence. Koreeda said he was impressed by the film's mysterious ending. Zvyagintsev replied that he wanted to depict a life full of mysteries. Zvyagintsev then asked Koreeda how he was able to direct the young actors in his film, *Daremo Shiranai*, which is about four children who carry on life after their mother abandons them. Koreeda said he placed the highest priority on communication with the child actors during the film's shooting. The two directors also spoke about their plans for their next films.

Their detailed conversation will be published in the April/May 2005 issue of *Wochi-Kochi*, in Japanese.

New Report Reveals 2.35 Million Students Studying Japanese Worldwide

A report on overseas Japanese-language education, *Present Condition of Overseas Japanese-Language Education—Survey Report of Japanese-Language Education Abroad 2003 (Summary)*, has just been published. This report is based on the results of a questionnaire distributed from June 2003 to March 2004 to overseas organizations involved in Japanese-language education. Results of this survey indicate that the Japanese-language is being studied by 2,356,745 students in 120 countries and 7 districts.

Other results of the survey indicate that there are 12,222 overseas Japanese-language institutions and 33,124 Japanese-language teachers worldwide. Compared to research conducted in 1979, the number of institutions has increased by 10.7 times, the number of teachers has increased by 8.1 times, and the number of students has increased by 18.5 times. Compared to even more recent research, conducted in 1998, the number of institutions has increased by 11.8%, the number of teachers has increased by 20.0%, and the number of students has increased by 12.1%.

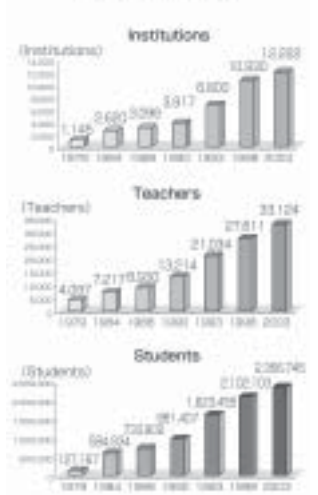
The areas with the greatest concentration of students of Japanese are East Asia, the Oceania region, and Southeast Asia. East Asia is home to 60% of the worldwide total of Japanese-language students, 40% of the total Japanese-language institutions, and 50% of all the Japanese-language teachers worldwide. The second largest area of Japanese-language concentration is the Oceania region, and the third is

Southeast Asia. 90% of the total worldwide Japanese-language students are located in Asia and the Oceania regions.

By country, Korea has 894,000 students of the Japanese language, which is the largest per-country number, and corresponds to 40% of the total worldwide number of Japanese-language students. The second largest concentration by country is China, with 388,000 Japanese-language students, and the third is Australia, with 382,000 Japanese-language students. Fourth is the United States, with 140,000, and fifth is *Taiwan*, with 129,000. Following those countries, Indonesia, Thailand, New Zealand, Canada and Brazil are in the top ten.

The report points out that the background to the increase in Japanese-language students is connected to each country's political, economic, and cultural relationship to Japan. In particular, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand have seen an increase in Japanese-language students due to economic ties with Japan. It is also reported that many young people, not limited to those living in the above countries, have started to learn Japanese due to interest in Japanese pop culture, such as *manga*, *anime*, and video games. However, the number of Japanese-language students has decreased in some countries due to Japan's longstanding economic recession, and an increase in the numbers of students studying other languages such as Chinese. Further details of the report can be viewed and downloaded from: <http://www.jpjf.go.jp/e/japan/oversea/survey.html>

Figure 1: Trends in Numbers of Institutions, Teachers and Students



Prime Minister Koizumi Selected “Nipponjin of the Year, 2004”

In your opinion, which Japanese made the deepest impression in 2004?

That was the question put in the Japan Foundation's survey sent to its overseas offices in 16 countries, asking people to choose “Nipponjin of the Year, 2004.” Prime Minister Jun'ichiro Koizumi was selected as the Japanese person who made the deepest impression last year outside of Japan. The questionnaire was given to approximately 100 locals randomly selected by each overseas office.

Other Japanese chosen were athletes like Ichiro, gold medalists at the Athens Olympics, the film directors Takeshi Kitano and Hayao Miyazaki, and the actor Ken Watanabe. A fair number of people selected members of the imperial family, like Princess Masako and Prin-

cess Sayako (Norinomiya).

By region, results varied. Takeshi Kitano was favored in Europe, Asia favored Prime Minister Koizumi, and Ichiro was the favorite in North America. Interestingly, even in areas where information about Japan is scarce, Prime Minister Koizumi is known for sending the Japanese Self Defense Forces to Iraq.

Top Three Votes for “Nipponjin of the Year, 2004”

- 1. Jun'ichiro Koizumi 286
- 2. Hayao Miyazaki 52
- 3. Takeshi Kitano 43

(selected from 1254 total answers from 16 countries)



Illustration: Minax

Books in Other Languages

Sado Island's Traditional Crafts



The Tub Boats of Sado Island: A Japanese Craftsman's Methods

by Douglas Brooks
Kodo Cultural Foundation, Kodo, Sado Island, 2003. ISBN 4-902377-00-4.
184 pages including 16 color pages.
84 photos and illustrations. Text in English and Japanese. Price: ¥2,625.

According to the biographical notes of this book, the author, Douglas Brooks, “specializes in the construction of wooden boats for museums and private clients.” So, not surprisingly, this book appears to target what one would imagine to be a rather small audience of experts or enthusiasts, those who can properly sharpen a drawknife, know what a “fid” is used for, and don’t call a mallet a hammer.

If one were to find oneself at a train station in Niigata Prefecture, of which Sado Island is a part, one would almost surely see colorful posters promoting tourism there—and many of the posters would depict the *taraibune*, or tub boats. These boats, shaped like half-barrels, are propelled by women in traditional working garments and rice straw hats who paddle tourists around the waters off Sado’s Ogi Peninsula. Indeed, looking at a picture of these rare Japanese fishing craft is as close as most people, myself included, have ever come to experiencing them. This book, then, offers a welcome window into their world.

Aside from tourism, however, the boats have another important use, and that is “*Isonegi*.” *Isonegi*, a word unique to Sado, comes from *iso*, meaning both “seaside” and “a measure of distance from shore reckoned by one’s ability to identify a person standing on the beach.” *Isonegi* means fishing or seaweed harvesting from small boats close to shore. Tub boats are among the most useful craft for *isonegi* fishing.

This bilingual book is composed of two parts. It includes an article by Toshio Sato, local historian, on *isonegi* fishing. Then, there is the body of the book by Douglas Brooks, who is fluent in Japanese. As one might expect from a master craftsman, Brooks organizes his material in a straightforward, logical manner. After a short introduction explaining his involve-

ment in a project to preserve the skills needed to build tub boats, Brooks goes on to document the procedures he and his Japanese apprentices used in building two such boats.

Beginning with the necessary Japanese vocabulary, such as the measurements *shaku* (303 mm or 11ft 15/16in), *sun* (1/10th of *shaku*), and *bu* (1/10th of *sun*), Brooks lists the tools and materials needed before describing the actual construction details. Throughout the detailed yet easy-to-follow instructional portion of the book, the author pays sincere homage to his mentor, Koichi Fujii, whose death in 1999 marked the passing of the last Sado-based *taraibune* shipwright and the birth of the ambitious project upon which Brooks and his dedicated sponsors and crew embarked.

In total, Brooks has built five *taraibune*: two with Fujii on Sado, one for the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Mass., and two with his student Higuchi Takashi in Niigata. Brooks’ dedication to the preservation of this traditional craft is well founded. These boats were originally created in 1802 when a large earthquake modified the topography of the Ogi Peninsula to encourage blooms of *yukinori*, an edible seaalgae. An anonymous resident invented the tub boat, a design probably inspired by *miso* tubs and sake barrels. Nowadays, there are only a dozen *taraibune* remaining in original condition on Ogi, with over 200 modified by fiberglass coating, including 35 used for tourism. (The rest are actively used for *isonegi* fishing). Luckily, these boats are also still in use in Ibaraki, Kagoshima and Hyogo prefectures. But, like so many traditional Japanese crafts, it is a slowly dying art.

As a reader with an enthusiasm for fishing boats, but without much boat-building background, save for a year as a woodworker in a small Canadian shipyard building a wooden sailing yacht, I was as entranced by Brooks’ sensitivity to the universality of craftsmanship and maritime heritage as by his building talents and eloquent writing style.

One hopes that this book finds an audience beyond those currently involved in *taraibune* construction. It should reach maritime professionals or hobbyists who actually plan to build tub boats, as well as general readers whose interests include traditional crafts of all kinds and traditional practices of Japan. It is also a wonderful resource for those who wish to simply learn more about Sado, a remote and romantic island located some 45 km from Honshu in the Sea of Japan.

The Tub Boats of Sado Island: A Japanese Craftsman’s Methods by Douglas Brooks is reviewed by Hillel Wright, a former commercial fisherman in Hawaii and British Columbia. Wright is author of the nautical novel *All Worldly Pursuits* and a collection of short fiction, *Rotary Sushi*. He currently lives in Kawasaki, Japan.

News *Nishikie* — Tabloid Tales in Living Color

Mark Schreiber

Printed newsheets appeared in Japan as early as 1615. During the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), however, the authorities imposed strict censorship, and news reporting, in the modern sense of the word, had to wait for the far-reaching political and social changes that came after the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

Yet, by the mid-1870s, the man on the street had his choice of an astonishingly wide variety of reading material. One was a short-lived news format known as *shinbun nishikie*, or “colored woodblock print newsheets.” First appearing in 1874, they closely resembled conventional *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints, but with a major difference: their contents reported actual newspaper stories, accompanied by dramatic artwork in vivid, and often gory, color.

The stories and images of these newsheets ran the full gamut of the human condition, and must have delighted their purchasers, who probably carried them home to show and read out loud to assembled family members. Like this story, from *Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun* No. 877, Dec. 13, 1874:

A mochi (rice cake) merchant in the Nishi Rokkenbori district of Fukagawa in Tokyo was bedridden by prolonged illness. His 25-year-old wife was promiscuous and conducted a secret affair with the shop's apprentice. . . The wife and her lover brazenly conspired to put poison in his medicine bottle. When he drank the potion, blood poured from his nose, ears, mouth and eyes, resulting almost immediately in death. Claiming he had died from his illness, the wife arranged for his burial, making a show of grief, while secretly happy. Her feigned weeping, however, did not escape notice, and eventually she was summoned by the police. She underwent intense interrogation and finally admitted her crime. On the 9th of this month she will face charges in the Tokyo Court. (by Sansantei Arindo.)

While many of the illustrations appeared to revel in violence and brutality, the publications themselves were of the didactic *kanzen choaku* (to encourage good and punish wrongdoing) variety. The stories, often embellished with colorful expressions and moralistic pronouncements (“The ignoble criminal will surely be brought to justice in the end”) were written by so-called *gesaku* (lowbrow) writers like Sansantei Arindo (the pen name of Jono Dempei), and Tentendo Shujin (Tabatake Ransan).

The artists who created the news *nishikie* were as colorful as their products. The two most famous woodblock print masters were Ochiai Yoshiiku (1833–1904), who drew for the *Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun nishikie*, and Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839–1892) who did the drawings for the *Yubin Hochi Shinbun nishikie*. The two men, who were both apprenticed under the

famous woodblock master Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861), had acquired notoriety in 1867 when they collaborated on a portfolio of 28 “atrocious” pictures, titled the *Eimei Nijuhasshuku* (literally, “Twenty-eight Plebeian Verses about the Constellations of Glorious Figures”). This series accorded illustrious treatment to some of the most notorious rogues in Japan’s history. This project turned out to be a trial run for their tabloid-style news stories of crimes, suicides, and other violent and tragic scenes.



Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun No. 877, reporting the murder of a mochi merchant by his wife.

According to Dr. Reiko Tsuchiya, an associate professor of Sociology at Osaka City University and an authority on the genre, the *nishikie* newsprints in Tokyo and Osaka typically sold by the hundreds, with the more popular issues “surpassing one thousand.” Considering that the larger prints took about one week to write, sketch, carve and print, they lacked the immediacy of the daily newspapers from which they took their stories, but made up for this with lively imagery.

“I suppose in most cases, the costumes, hairstyles and so on depicted in these prints were based on the artists’ fancy, and it would be wrong to believe they resemble the actual appearance,” points out Tsuchiya. “However, their themes do reflect the interests and concerns of ordinary people in those times. Topics like murders, robberies, and love suicides, as well as the stories of ghostly apparitions and other topics appearing in news *nishikie* are not really so different from what we encounter in today’s mass media.

“I think their true appeal lies in these contrasts between customs and values of people back then with ourselves today,” Tsuchiya adds.

While hundreds of news stories were covered, the genre lasted only a few years, and all but vanished by the late 1870s. Today, large collections are kept in several university libraries and the Japan Newspaper Museum in Yokohama. In 2004, myself and another enthusiast began introducing the genre in English on a website called “News *Nishikie*” (<http://www.nishikie.com>). We hope this site will help to further understanding and appreciation of this fascinating genre.

Mark Schreiber has resided in Japan almost continuously since 1965. In addition to a weekly column in The Japan Times and contributions to numerous publications, he is the author of several works of nonfiction, including, most recently, The Dark Side: Infamous Japanese Crimes and Criminals (Kodansha International, 2001).

Cultural Highlights

(January–February, 2005)

PUBLICATIONS

Winners of 132nd Akutagawa Prize and Naoki Prize Announced

The winner of the 132nd Akutagawa Prize for belles-lettres by new writers was Kazushige Abe for *Gurando Finare* (Grand Finale), which appeared in the September issue of *Gunzo*. The 132nd Naoki Prize for popular fiction by more established writers was awarded to Mitsuyo Tsunoda's *Taigan no Kanojo* (She On the Other Side), published by Bungeishunju Ltd., *Gurando Finare* is about a middle-aged man who divorces because of a "Lolita complex," and decides to start directing play, changing his life in the process. *Taigan no Kanojo* depicts the lives of two women in their thirties who have difficult relationships with their husbands and the pasts.

VISUAL ARTS

Han ochi Wins 28th Japan Academy Prize

The Nippon Academy-sho Association announced the winners of the 28th Japan Academy Prize.

Han ochi (Half-Confession), directed by Kiyoshi Sasabe, received the award for Film of the Year. This mystery depicts two days in the life of a retired detective, in which he kills his wife and confesses his crime to the police. Other winners are as follows:

Director of the Year: Yoichi Sai for *Chi to Hone* (Blood and Bones). Screenplay of the Year: Shinobu Yaguchi for *Swing Girls*. Outstanding Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role: Akira Terao in *Han ochi*. Outstanding Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role: Kyoka Suzuki in *Chi to Hone*.

OBITUARIES

Rin Ishigaki, 84, poet, December 26, 2004. One of the founders of Japanese post-war women's poetry. Ishigaki's poems attracted many readers for their powerful, direct style. Ishigaki depicted post-war Japanese society from a woman's point of view, focusing on ethical and humanistic issues. She received the Mr. H Poetry Prize for the poetry collection *Hyosatsu Nado* (Name Plate, Etc.) in 1969 and the Tamura Toshiko Prize for *Ishigaki Rin Shishu* (Collected Poems of Rin Ishigaki) in 1972.

Kihachi Okamoto, 81, film director, February 19. Popular among movie fans for his unique nihilistic humor and engaging action scenes. His films depicted war and youth, most notably *Dokuritsu Gurentai* (Desperado Outpost), *Nikudan* (Human Bullet), and *Nihon no Ichiban Nagai Hi* (Japan's Longest Day). He also created the samurai films *Zatoichi to Yojinbo* (Zatoichi Meets Yojinbo), *EAST MEETS WEST*, and *Sukedachiya Sukeroku* (Sukeroku the Assistant).

Life in Japan

Japan's Greatest Hanami Party

In Japan, the end of March/beginning of April marks the time of *hanami* (cherry-blossom viewing) parties. Even in small towns, people flock to famous *hanami* sites to eat, drink sake, and sing with friends and colleagues, enjoying the beauty of cherry blossoms in full bloom.

It is not clear exactly when the custom of holding these lively parties began, but it has been said that the first cherry-blossom viewing parties originated among the aristocrats in seventh-century Japan, during the Heian era. The first formally recorded *hanami* party was hosted by Emperor Saga in 812. The emperor reportedly treated his guests to a sumptuous spread of food and drinks as they made revelry under the gorgeous blossoms.

However, it was Toyotomi Hideyoshi who threw the most lavish *hanami* party in Japanese history. Hideyoshi was *Kanpaku* (Chancellor), who unified Japan at the end of the sixteenth century. Hideyoshi liked to host large social gatherings, such as a 1583 tea party in which anyone who loved the tea ceremony could participate, regardless of social class.

Five months before his death in 1598, he ordered six hundred cherry trees planted at *Daigo-ji* temple in Kyoto. It was there that he planned the most spectacular *hanami* party Japan had ever seen. Hideyoshi invited



Cherry Blossoms at Daigo-ji Temple
(Photo: ©Yomiuri Shimibun)

thirteen hundred lords and upper-class samurai to the celebration, serving them food, sake and western-style sweets. This party is called *Daigo no Hanami* (*Hanami* party at *Daigo-ji* temple) and is known as the most opulent cherry-blossom viewing celebration in all of Japanese history.

However, despite his popularity, Hideyoshi could never cement his legacy by becoming Shogun. The son of a poor farmer, he was not related by blood to the Genji clan, which founded the Kamakura Shogunate in the twelfth century. Perhaps that is why he threw such generous and lavish parties. If nothing else, he will always be remembered for the grand style with which he invited his charges to celebrate Japan's beloved blossom.