

ask a Yamanashi person to name three historical persons from our area, he will probably be stuck trying to name Nos. 2 and 3. On the other hand, any adult Japanese would be familiar with quotations from Shingen or would be able to explain the significance of the characters on his famous banner.

People are different

Takeda Shingen has provided Japanese historical novelists with mounds of material for their sword-play scenarios, but here in our area his shadow actually lingers. Yamanashi people have been described as being different. The easiest way to explain what is meant is to recall all of those characteristics which differentiate the Japanese from other nations. It is said that those same characteristics differentiate the people of Kai (the old name for our area), from the rest of Japan. In other words, Yamanashi people are more Japanese than anyone else. The reasons for the development of such characteristics has been attributed to the way in which Yamanashi was treated by the Tokugawa shogunate after the fall of the Takeda clan and the end of the Sengoku period. There was a fear of resurgence of military power and outsiders were placed at the helm of local government. Local people developed a special talent for dealing with such "foreigners."

At any rate, this is a good time to turn our attention to this fascinating period. History buffs will find Shingen's tracks all over the land. Unfortunately, books in English are not available. The field seems to be wide open for someone with interest, energy and a good pen. A little research will take you to ingenious irrigation projects, river dikes, old military roads, a system of signal towers, an old gold mine, Shingen's grave and numerous items of memorabilia including, of course, old documents and examples of calligraphy.

All this is surrounded by the highest mountains and some of the finest scenery in Japan! You will breathe clean air, drink the best water, and see Japan as it should be seen. You will see where

Tokyo's electricity is generated and where its peaches are grown. You will bump into stories of how grapes were introduced by a Buddhist priest during the Heian period (794-1185) and you will understand why the famous Nichiren (1222-1282) made Mt. Minobu his headquarters.

You will see how Japanese paper is made, where *hanko* (name stamps) are carved, watch skilled stone carvers grinding semiprecious stone, visit wineries and distilleries. You can visit some of the most modern facilities for the manufacture of electronics devices such as calculators, computers and robots.

All this just two hours drive from Tokyo!

Rev. Norman Lund
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America



ed into two sections entitled "Inside the Japanese" and "Cultural Tradition in Japan Today."

The variety of ruminations by well-known professors and several writers (all but two of whom are Japanese) offer some answers to the basic questions posed but, more interestingly, offer insights into what Japanese intellectuals themselves deem important about Japanese cultural development and what they think non-Japanese should know about Japan's unique historical development and the way "we Japanese" think.

The discussions of *chanoyu* and rejection of the term "tea ceremony" by Yasuhiko Murai is enlightening as is Mitake Katsube's essay on "The Three Types of Bushido" which analyzes the famous 47-*ronin* episode and lord-vassal relationships in general.

We get the usual discussions on how very different the Japanese brain is from the Western brain in Kazuyoshi Kino's simplistic essay on Zen. "The Japanese are simultaneously logical and emotional, and this is why they find it so easy to become one with nature." Ah so. We are told yet again that "Prince Shotoku virtually shaped the Japanese nation himself," this time by Takeshi Umehara of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (known widely today because he wrote Ennosuke's "Super Kabuki" play, *Yamato Takeru*).

Ivan Morris' fine analysis of the Japanese predilection for tragic heroes is given an appreciative reading by Kazuaki Saito that should make readers rush to read Morris' outstanding book, *The Nobility of Failure*. Father Milward's article, "Missionaries' Views on the Japanese" heaps compliment upon flattery, viz., "... in the Japanese of today... a charming

Bookshelf

Essays on Japan from Japan

Edited by Public Relations Dept., Nippon Steel Corporation
Published by Maruzen Co., Ltd.
1987, Tokyo
180 pages; ¥2,300

What are the essential features and characteristics of Japanese culture? What are the traditional origins of contemporary Japan? In order to answer these formidable questions, Nippon Steel approached 28 "eminent specialists and thinkers" to ponder "a culture uniquely suited to the climate and natural environment of their island country" and the "lasting fruit of time's ceaseless progression." The resulting collection of short essays, which originally appeared in the company's house organ, presented on facing pages in Japanese and English, is divid-



politeness in conversation in which they are superior to all other nations. It has also occurred to me, on many an occasion, that the Japanese (to borrow the words of Christ) are 'not far from the kingdom of God'; though for some reason they are reluctant to commit themselves to the Christian faith."

"The Japanese Work Ethic" by Mikio Sumiya is maddeningly simplistic although the rice-paddy mentality is given its due. No mention of the foreign aid, such as food, management consultation and study programs abroad, extended to Japan in the immediate postwar years is made in Isamu Miyazaki's "Japan's Economic Dynamism" although the writer is apparently confident that today, "individual Japanese are beginning to think in international terms."

"Modern Japanese Architecture" by Teijiro Muramatsu is a fascinating short tribute to the work during the late Meiji period of Japanese master carpenters and he predicts the development, in the very near future, of "new indigenous architectural styles that are not copies of Western styles." "Shared emotional space" in Japanese linguistic activity and in writing leads into Fumio Eto's analysis of the sensitivity of young Japanese to images and to what is called "the unique Japanese physical sensibility".

Zuihitsu, a characteristically Japanese form of essay, takes on real meaning in Barbara Yoshida-Krafft's fine piece but Isamu Kurita's explanation of *zuihitsu* is unconvincing, despite the protestations it contains regarding the, guess what? "The unique character of the Japanese and Japanese culture."

Other topics include drama, education, religion, women and the Meiji Restoration.

The quality of translation varies enormously. The smooth translations are a joy to read; the poor ones make you want to fling the translator into a library to read deeply of good English. Translators often lapse into "Japlish" and jibberish unless they drink frequently at the well of pure language offered up by outstanding writers. Typographical errors such as "sharmanism", "kimono robes" and "kimonos", and "best-selling novel, *shogun*" are annoying.

After reading all 29 essays, I felt I had been stimulated intellectually at times and enlightened in several areas. I did end up, however, with an urge to open my shoji and glass doors to cry out for all of Tokyo to hear, "Down with Japanese uniqueness!" I've been unique to exhaustion and boredom by professors, pseudo-intellectuals and businessmen. Will modish "internationalization" cut down on the frequency of the usage "uniquely Japanese"? It is an outcome devoutly to be wished. Distinctive, characteristic, fascinating, rewarding, yes. Cannot every country's culture be considered unique? It's time Japari stopped the tiresome bleatings about its unique culture which is still held to be incomprehensible to all but *wareware Nihonjin*.

As an introduction to Japanese culture for someone not fairly well versed in its history and arts, this book may prove difficult because of the wealth of references to works of Japanese literature and art and to historical personages and periods. To those deeply interested in Japan and familiar with its culture, *Essays on Japan from Japan* is an interesting, albeit occasionally controversial, adventure down many paths.

Barbara C. Adachi

Tokyo-based writer on Japanese arts

Japanese Seniors, Pioneers in the Era of Aging Populations

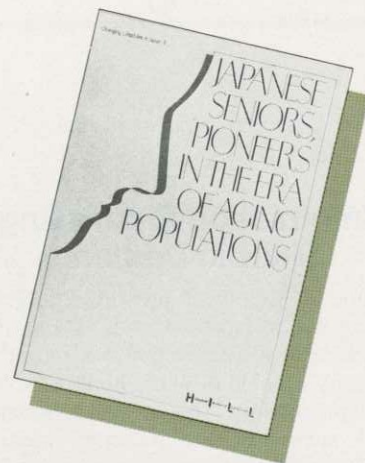
Published by Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living

1987, Tokyo

261 pages; ¥35,000

This is the fourth in a series of annual research studies which the publisher is conducting on the Japanese attitude toward life. This latest report in the series puts the spotlight on the daily activities and consumption propensity of senior citizens, aged between 60 and 74, living in cities. It is a compilation of the results of interviews with 1,950 persons.

In 1955, people over 65 years of age



accounted for no more than 5% of Japan's total population. By 1985, the ratio had already reached 10%. It is forecast, furthermore, that by 2010 the percentage will be 20%, or one out of every five Japanese.

Along with this aging of Japanese society, the attitude toward life of senior citizens is also undergoing big changes. This book analyzes the behavior patterns of the present generation of senior citizens who are, so to speak, pioneers in the process of the aging of society, and attempts to foresee the kind of changes that might occur in the future.

The book describes the subjects of the survey as the first generation in Japan to have bought television sets, motor cars and washing machines. These people prefer a Japanese-style meal for lunch and dinner, but one out of two likes a Western-style breakfast of coffee or black tea with toast.

Of course this is only a small example, but in analyzing the vast amount of data gathered in the survey, the book draws a picture of the typical urban senior citizen as one who maintains Japanese values and spirit while demonstrating a deep understanding of Western values and absorbing elements of the Western lifestyle. This generation also takes pride in the fact that it laid the foundations for the economic prosperity which Japan enjoys today.

The survey probes the daily life of senior citizens from the moment they wake up in the morning until they go back to bed at night and covers activities ranging from shopping to travel. It will certainly answer any question that the average reader may have concerning the way of life of senior citizens in Japan. ■

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