

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.

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## Japanese Seniors, Pioneers in the Era of Aging Populations

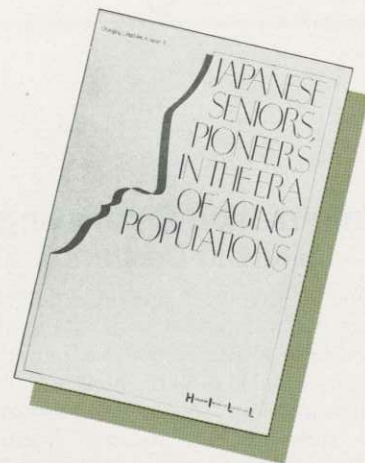
*Published by Hakuodo Institute of Life and Living*

1987, Tokyo

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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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