

tors to Japan lived. Atagawa is smaller with climbing, cobblestoned streets winding from inn to inn. Through the clouds of vapor spiraling up from the springs and escaping from the boxes steaming the traditional hot springs cakes, you can glimpse the blue-green edges of the Pacific Ocean.

Yugashima and Odaru

Located in central Izu, these two *onsen* perch above glassy paddy fields, their *ryokan* wedged between the craggy hills characteristic of this part of Izu. Both are small and accessible only by bus from the eastern rail routes. Yugashima is a serene place with traditional inns and *rotenburo* on a river. Odaru is also known for its *rotenburo*, particularly one magnificent example fed by a steep waterfall.

Hakone-Yumoto

Like Atami and Ito, Hakone-Yumoto has always been a very popular *onsen* resort. It is situated near Ashinoko Lake, a beautiful spot with a grand view of towering Mount Fuji on clear winter days. The mineral waters are hot, salty and bountiful, with some baths large enough to hold 1,000 people.

Tonosawa and Dogashima

Tonosawa and Dogashima are part of the Hakone group of sixteen hot springs. They are quieter than those near Ashinoko Lake. The mountains crowd around leaving little space for developers to confuse the natural green with the gaudier hues of tourist trappings.

Special mentions

If you have the energy and time, I would encourage you to consider Takaragawa and Hoshi hot springs, both in Gunma Prefecture and reached by the Joetsu Shinkansen and then local buses. Takaragawa has large outdoor pools, separated from the river by chunks of rock and surrounded by snow in the winter.

This is a delightful experience in winter as you sit snug and warm while all around it is frosty and white. Hoshi is just as tempting. The baths are indoors, made of sweet-scented wooden frames resting on the pebbles of a riverbed. Both *onsen* are "one-inn" hot springs, a guarantee of tranquility and restful soaking, since the distractions in winter are few.

Finally, lest I forget, let me remind you to remember to use the right bath. Whatever the custom might have been, baths are now segregated by sex, marked with the *kanji* (Chinese characters) *otoko* for men and with *onna* for women. If you aren't sure, it's better to ask someone.

Tourist information office telephone numbers for reservations and further information are:

Atami: (0557) 82-3053

Ito: (0557) 37-6105

Shimoda: (05582) 2-1531

Yugashima and Odaru: (05583) 2-0290

Hakone Yumoto: (0460) 5-5700

Tonosawa and Dogashima: (0460) 5-5700

Takaragawa (Osenkaku): (0278) 75-2121

Hoshi (Chojukan): (02786) 6-0005

If you have a friend or a travel agent who can help with the phone call in Japanese, it will make things easier. These areas are, however, well acquainted with foreign visitors, and you should have no trouble once you get there. Happy soaking!

Anne Hotta

Author, *Guide to Japanese Hot Springs*
(Kodansha International, 1986)

Bookshelf

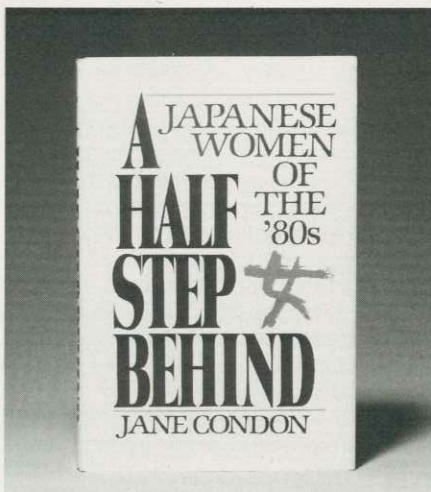
A Half Step Behind: Japanese Women of the '80s

By Jane Condon

Published by Dodd, Mead & Company

1985, New York

319 pages; \$16.95



Here is a timely and unusual work, timely for its look at Japanese women and unusual for its in-depth portrayal and refreshing lack of condescension. Over the past several years there have been numerous articles and books on Japan written by Americans as Japan's remarkably rapid postwar growth and its \$40-50 billion trade imbalance with the United States have inevitably attracted American attention. While the Americans were at first admiring and eager in their quest for the secrets of Japan's success, the pendulum has now swung back and they have gradually become critical. Turning their sights on Japanese society, they charge that the Japanese are workaholics living in inhumanly cramped housing, and Japanese women are pitiful, oppressed creatures, the last a view that has many Japanese women rather taken aback.

A Half Step Behind, however, goes behind these quick categorizations and lets Japanese women speak for themselves. Knowing from my own experience how reticent Japanese women can be, I am amazed at how Jane Condon has gotten so many women to open

up about their experiences and innermost feelings with the full knowledge that everything they said might later appear in a book. What kind of magic could the author possibly have used?

Actually, it was not magic at all, just the honest integrity of a good reporter. Jane Condon was born in Brockton, Massachusetts in 1951. After studying political science at Wellesley College, she earned a master's in education at Harvard. Condon has worked as a journalist for *Fortune* and *Life* magazines and has contributed to *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. In 1981 she came to Japan with her banker husband and, until their return to the United States in December 1985, worked as the Far Eastern correspondent for *Time* and *People* magazines.

During her four years in Japan, Condon traveled extensively throughout the country, interviewing a total of 200 women in places like Sapporo, Sendai, Kanazawa, Tokyo and Kagoshima. From beginning to end, Condon maintained a journalistic approach, letting the women speak for themselves during long, unhurried sessions. While she did not intrude herself, her presentation of these interviews shows a deeply felt warmth and caring.

The title *A Half Step Behind* is intended to represent the position of women in Japanese society today as Condon judges their present standing. In the past, the obedient Japanese woman was expected to walk at least three steps behind the man. Today she has moved up considerably, but is not quite yet on an equal footing.

The 25 women whose stories appear in *A Half Step Behind* have been carefully chosen to represent "Family," "Education" and "Work." Comparisons are made among women in old-fashioned arranged marriages, those in modern marriages of choice and wives whose families adopted (literally) the groom. Divorce, feminism and pornography are covered, as are birth control and abortion. There are school teachers and students, zealous "education mothers" and young girls who have failed their university entrance exams and are boning up to try again. The "Work" section alone includes the career woman and the short-term office helper, the farmer and the blue-collar factory worker, the geisha and the bar hostess.

Throughout, the author's focus is on the common humanity of all her subjects, women and men. One phenomenon illustrating this common humanity was a 1983 television drama series. A fictionalized program about a poor country girl who, after many trials and tribulations, makes good, *Oshin* was broadcast throughout the country and proved extremely popular with a 45% viewer rating. It seemed that everyone, from housewife to corporate executive, was watching the 15-minute morning program. The heroine, *Oshin*, was lauded as the epitome of the perfect Japanese. Neither the program nor its extreme popularity warranted much serious news coverage, but to Jane Condon the widespread

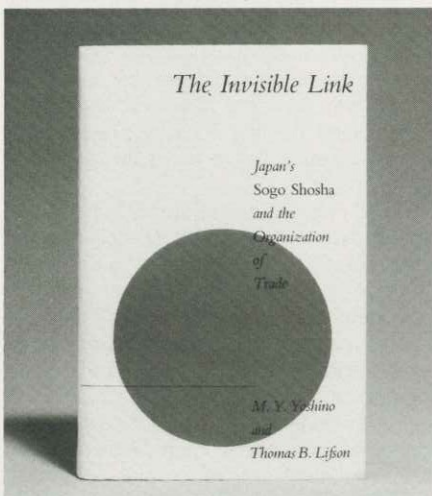
interest in the show spoke of an "Oshin syndrome," which Condon dubbed the "Oshin-drome." So taken was the Japanese mass media with her coinage that Condon was awarded a special commendation by a Japanese publishing house.

It would be a pleasure indeed if the author would next direct her penetrating gaze to Japanese men. Not Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, Sony's Akio Morita or even Honda's Soichiro Honda, but the average, garden-variety, Japanese man-in-the-street man. She might well open up a whole new vista on Japanese society.

Machiko Minegishi
Manager, Corporate Communications
ALC Press Inc.

The Invisible Link: Japan's Sogo Shosha and the Organization of Trade

By M.Y. Yoshino and Thomas B. Lifson
Published by the MIT Press
1986, Cambridge, Massachusetts
291 pages; \$19.95

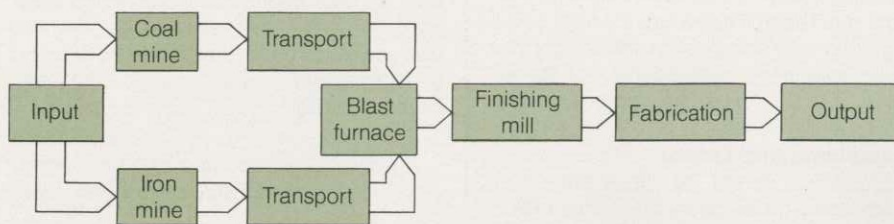


At the very outset, the authors explain that they had considered a long list of possible translations for *sogo shosha*, including general trading firm, trading house, comprehensive trader and many more, but finally opted to use the Japanese generic term *sogo shosha* because none of the English terms quite seems to convey the full scope of this kind of company's resources and operations.

As Japan has developed into an international trading power, its *sogo shosha* have both propelled and benefited by that growth, and Japan's six leading *sogo shosha* now rank among the ten largest non-U.S. companies listed by *Forbes* magazine. Together, they handle fully 4% of the world's trade, and 10% of America's exports. Their names are Mitsubishi, Mitsui, C. Itoh, Marubeni, Sumitomo and Nissho-Iwai.

This book is an ambitious attempt to describe the complex workings of the *sogo*

Diagram of the basic steps in the steel industry and the *sogo shosha's* involvement



shosha, companies that are not well understood even by most Japanese, much less by Western observers. The "invisible link" in the book's title is thus an attempt to draw upon the associations conjured by Adam Smith's "invisible hand" and Alfred Chandler's "visible hand" in describing the way the *sogo shosha* link manufacturers and distributors worldwide.

Modern Japanese industrial exports began with textiles, specifically with cotton yarn and cotton cloth, and the *sogo shosha* were the point men in the effort to earn the hard currency needed to promote national policy goals of "promoting industry and producing more" and "rich nation, strong military." Indeed, much of Japan's modern history is bound up with the struggle for access to resources and markets, a dual search that the *sogo shosha* largely led.

It is impossible to discuss the *sogo shosha* without mentioning Mitsubishi and Mitsui, the two biggest, and discussing the *sogo shosha's* role in the *zaibatsu*, a distinctively Japanese entity that needs to be understood in any analysis of the Japanese economy. The authors patiently trace each *sogo shosha's* role in its respective *zaibatsu* in trading steel, petrochemical products, synthetic fibers and agricultural products over the past 40 years as the Japanese economy grew.

The rise of Japan into one of the world's great steel producers was also a period of rapid growth for the Japanese economy and the golden age of the *sogo shosha* as the *sogo shosha* were involved every step of the way from mine to market. They helped find the resources and finance their development, saw that the coal, iron ore and other resources were transported to integrated steel works (often themselves partially bankrolled with *sogo shosha* support), handled the difficult scheduling logistics from furnace to mill to fabricator and then shepherded the finished products through the distribution system in Japan and overseas (often to associated companies in other industries). In short, the *sogo shosha* provided all of the logistic support, know-how and financial assistance needed for lower costs and enhanced competitiveness.

In many ways *sogo shosha* grew and developed in linkage with the Japanese steel industry. The *sogo shosha* have also been in constant liaison with the rest of Japanese heavy industry, and, since industries such as steel and petrochemicals thrive on economies of scale, they have constantly sought to develop new resource supplies, new markets and even new products to help their clients and themselves.

Following the oil crisis in 1973, the *sogo shosha* scrambled to develop new competitive strategies for diversification. C. Itoh coordinated a joint venture between Isuzu Motors and America's General Motors and Mitsubishi Shoji became Kentucky Fried Chicken's franchisee in Japan. Others went into plant exports, resource development and third-country trade.

Even prior to the oil crisis, in 1969, Mitsui Bussan had purchased its own grain elevators in Oregon and Montana to handle American grain exports to Japan, and its 1978 acquisition of Cook Industries' grain business provided the final impetus to break through the major American grain companies' stranglehold on soybeans, corn and wheat. It took nearly a decade, but Mitsui Bussan was finally a leading international grain trader.

There are numerous other examples of the diverse and wide-ranging activities of the *sogo shosha*, but the most typical are of the third-country trade variety. This kind of trade that involves neither imports to nor exports from Japan applies the *sogo shosha's* experience and know-how on a global scale. Whether or not this strategy will enable the *sogo shosha* to survive into the 21st century, claim the authors, depends to a great extent on their organizational and managerial capabilities and on their capacity to fulfill the important function the authors have dubbed the "invisible linkage."

From cotton textiles to steel distribution, from multinational joint-venture coordination to grain elevators, from developing energy resources to third-country trade, the *sogo shosha* have throughout their long history adapted their linkage functions to the needs of the times. Today they once again confront a time of transition as the economic focus switches from the traditional heavy industries to sophisticated, high-technology and knowledge-intensive industries.

This work offers a careful and accurate study of *sogo shosha* history and presents an astute analysis of the *sogo shosha's* future options. There are numerous challenges confronting the *sogo shosha* today and while the authors suggest some possible solutions and express the hope that the *sogo shosha* will be flexible enough to keep up with the changing world environment, there is no telling how the *sogo shosha* may change in the years ahead.

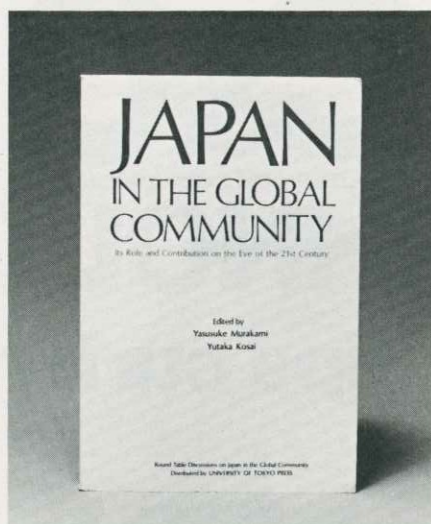
Michio Itoh
Senior Deputy General Manager
Information & Research Division
Mitsui & Co., Ltd.

Toward a Global Role

Readers who enjoyed the *Journal's* July/August feature "Japan in the Global Community" will be pleased to know that the full text of the report it was based upon is now available through the University of Tokyo Press. The 180-page soft-cover book is priced at ¥2,500.

This report, drawn up by MITI's blue-ribbon Round Table Discussion on Japan in the Global Community, seeks to assess Japan's economic, political and cultural context, to delineate the basic conceptual framework that should govern Japanese actions in the years and decades ahead and then to identify specific policies for implementation.

Premised upon the idea that international relations will inevitably become increasingly interdependent and that Japan must assume greater responsibility for the smooth functioning of global systems, the report recommends more attention to internationally harmonious economic and personal relations—including greater transnational economic integration



and stepped-up overseas investment, more joint research and personal exchanges and increased efforts for world peace and stability.

While a supplementary data section of over 50 figures and tables substantiates its arguments, the report is intended not as the definitive last word but as one contribution stimulating the debate on these issues now taking place within Japan.

Business Japanese Series Complete

Business Japanese, Nissan Motor's very successful venture into language and business education for non-Japanese working in Japan, has now been completed with the publication of Volume II and cassette tapes.

This work (reviewed in the May/April 1985 *Journal of Japanese Trade & Industry*) is being used at JETRO's new School of Business Japanese in Tokyo as well as in a number of overseas university programs.

Taste of Tokyo

Restaurant Kisoji

Clothing, food and shelter are the basic physical needs of people everywhere, but the reader will probably agree with me that people of various nations differ regarding which of the three they emphasize.

I had always been under the impression that the people of Amsterdam, which I visit once a year on business, belonged to the category which, unlike the Latins and the Chinese, does not place much emphasis on food. However, during my latest trip to Amsterdam, I learned of a restaurant which is equal if not superior to my favorite restaurant in Paris, the Taillevent. Thanks to Mr. A. Tanaka, the director of JETRO's Amsterdam office, who took me to the restaurant, I now have another pleasure to look forward to in my annual visits to that city. The name of the restaurant is Molen De Dikkert. I was told that "Molen" means a windmill hut and "De Dikkert" is a chubby person. The restaurant is modeled after a 16th century windmill hut, and in its reproduction and interior the greatest attention was paid to detail to make it attractive and elegant.

The menu on the day I was taken there consisted of smoked salmon combined with fresh minced salmon, grilled turbot with tomatoes and parsley sauce and duckling breast with honey and preserved duck liver. San Cerre white wine was an excellent accompaniment to the food. It was a most satisfying repast, and the price for two persons was 370 guilders, less than half of what one would be charged in Tokyo for similar fare. It impressed on me anew how ludicrously expensive the price of food, not to mention housing, is in Tokyo.

This caused me as a Japanese to question whether the Japanese economy is really in good shape.

A popular dish among foreign visitors to Japan is *shabu-shabu* (thin slices of beef dipped for about three seconds in boiling water at the table and eaten with a sesame sauce). *Shabu-shabu* has become one of Japan's representative dishes. At famous restaurants in Tokyo which have *shabu-shabu* on their menu, such as Zakuro and Serina, the cost including alcoholic drinks easily comes to ¥20,000 (about US\$130) per person. Even at such prices, these restaurants seem more economical than places like Aragawa, the steak house in Shimbashi, that charge ¥20,000 for a 200-gram steak. They may taste good, but such prices make one wonder whether he is eating meat or money. Similar bills are common in famous French and Chinese restaurants in Tokyo.

This time, therefore, I decided to introduce an excellent restaurant where *shabu-shabu* as tasty as that in top Tokyo restaurants is served at less than half their price.

The restaurant is Kisoji, a chain based in

Nagoya, whose president's policy of "inexpensive and delicious *shabu-shabu*" is faithfully followed. There are 19 Kisoji outlets throughout Japan, with eight in Tokyo alone, four of which are around the Ginza. "Kisoji" is the name of an ancient highway in Japan. In keeping with the name, the interior is decorated in folkcraft style to create a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere. The management plans to expand the chain to more than 30 restaurants within the next two years. This alone is ample evidence of how well it is accepted.

The famous Matsuzaka beef is used and three *shabu-shabu* courses are offered at ¥3,600, ¥4,800 and ¥6,800 per person. The ¥3,600 course is quite ample, and even with drinks, you will get back a lot of change from a ¥10,000 note.

Address: 5th Floor, World Town,
Ginza 5-chome (next to Ginza Core Bldg.)
Tel: (03) 574-8806
Open: 11:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.
(Yoshimichi Hori, editor-in-chief)

