Outside Tokyo

Kofu: the Lingering Shadow of Shingen

One day two years ago, I had a call from my son who lives in Tokyo. He had just bought a car and was planning to drive from Tokyo to Kofu with his wife to spend the weekend with us. The last thing he said before hanging up was, "I'll see you in about two hours." How times have changed since we first traveled the Koshu-kaido. In the early days it was a five-hour trip from Omori in Ota-ku to Kofu via the old Koshu-kaido!

If it has been some time since you took a drive out this way, or since you visited the Kofu valley, you will be surprised at the changes that have taken place and you will be amazed to hear of the changes that are planned for the future. It is expected that Japan's first operational magnetically levitated train will link this former country of Takeda Shingen with the capital so that Kofu will virtually be a "bed town" of Tokyo. It is anticipated that the population of Kofu will jump from the present 210,000 to 500,000.

I have been asking people around Kofu, "What has changed the Kofu valley from the sleepy agricultural area it once was to the technopolis it has become in recent years?" Just as I expected, the answer is almost always linked to the improved transportation facilities.

Other reasons given refer to the relative abundance of cheap land, clean water, pure air and a pool of skilled workers. After all, Kofu is one of the world centers for the manufacture of jewelry. In order to maintain this position, they have recently established a school of jewelry design. A research center for stone polishing has been in operation in Kofu for some time.

When I came to Kofu 31 years ago, much of the industry in the Kofu valley could be typified as cottage industry. People did work such as winding electri-

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cal coils or making artificial flowers on a piece-work basis in their homes or in small family-owned factories. It was the kind of industry that depended on cheap labor and was vulnerable to such things as model changes. I can remember seeing men build truck cabs by hand, working with hammer and file.

Ingenuity of farmers

Like many other cities, Kofu had been burned out by air raids during the latter stages of World War II. But it seemed to me that it took longer for Kofu to recover because there was not the substantial industrial activity of Nagoya or Tokyo. The surrounding countryside with its vineyards, peach orchards, sericulture and rice-growing seemed to be carrying the prefecture along financially. Kofu city catered to the needs of these farmers and served as the center of government.

Today, fruit growing continues to be an important part of the life and economy of our prefecture. Expansion into other fruit such as cherries and kiwi fruit show the ingenuity and enterprise of our farmers. An assist from lowa farmers years ago helped to improve the quality of our local hogs and the raising of broilers for market is substantial.

KEEP stands for Kiyosato Experimental Educational Project, which is known for its work in encouraging dairy farming in the highland areas. KEEP has made the area of Kiyosato at the foot of Mt. Yatsugatake famous and in recent years it has become very popular with young people. Long holiday weekends find many driving from Nagoya or Tokyo via the Chuo Expressway to Kobuchizawa interchange and then to Kiyosato on the "Hachimaki" road which skirts the mountain. The town

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itself has taken on a carnival atmosphere with outlandish pink souvenir shops and coffee houses. But if you decide to go, you ought to visit KEEP and try their ice cream. It is made from the milk of Jersey cows which were introduced from the United States after the war. The story of KEEP and its founder Dr. Paul Rusch is well-known and many have made their first acquaintance with Yamanashi Prefecture by this route (see, for example, "Kiyosato: Alpine Paradise" in the September/October 1986 Journal).

In 1987, however, the interest was focused on an earlier period of our history, since it was announced that the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corp.) 1988 Sunday prime-time drama will feature the story of Takeda Shingen (1521–1573). Many people are being asked to don the armor of the Sengoku (warring states) period (ca. 1480–ca. 1570) to refight the famous battles of Japanese history for the benefit of the video cameras. Of course, Takeda Shingen is one of the more colorful persons of Japanese history. In fact, if you



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 Missionary of the Lutheran Church in America

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-



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

