

FEATURE

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INTERVIEW : ECONOMY INSIGHTS

Professor Emeritus

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Western Economic History

KANAGAWA UNIVERSITY

Magazine

# PROUD BLUE

English  
version **02**

December  
2017

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## PROUD BLUE:

Kanagawa University publishes the Japanese version of *PROUD BLUE* as a public relations magazine focused on our research and researchers. The title refers to our school color. This English version is based on the second and fourth Japanese issues, published in July of 2015 and March of 2017.



## FEATURE

# Deciphering the Modern World from Marx's Perspective

We are living in the era of capitalism.

The first thinker to thoroughly examine its essential nature was Karl Marx (1818 - 1883), an intellectual giant who lived in the 19th century and had an enormous influence on the 20th.

Akihiro Matoba has been engaging with Marx for almost fifty years.



## The Source of a Commodity's Value

\$179,365,000 for *Women of Alger (Version O)*, a painting by Pablo Picasso. \$141,285,000 for *Pointing Man*, a sculpture by Alberto Giacometti. These were the winning bids at an auction held at Christy's in New York on May 11th of last year. These extraordinary sums were reported with surprise in the media, and according to news reports broke the record for the highest prices paid for works of art at auction.

Various goods or commodities exist in this society, and the price of the same commodity changes over time and in accordance with prevailing circumstances. For example, a book I bought for ¥1,800 will fetch almost nothing if I sell it to a used book store, and this store will then put it on sale for only ¥100.

Price is determined by the balance of supply and demand. This is considered common sense in the modern era. It is even taught in schools. But Matoba points out that this balance is not the only factor that determines price.

"A commodity has an essential 'value' that supports its price. How much labor is needed to produce it? Marx believed this is what determines a commodity's value."

The balance of supply and demand does of course have an effect on a commodity's value, but at its root there is labor as the work of human beings. This view, called the "labor theory of value" was the starting point of Marx's approach.

## What is Capitalism?

Price and value —. They are similar but not the same. Matoba begins by noting, "The sense that Marx is difficult or unapproachable stems from the fact that he addresses topics we tend to overlook as we casually go about our daily lives," and then explains the relationship be-

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Matoba began drinking wine more than thirty years ago when he was studying in France. Marx's birthplace, the town of Trier in southwest Germany, is also a wine-producing region. Marx and Engels liked red wine, the color of which represented "revolution." In recent years Matoba has begun stocking his research office with wine and holding "salons" with scholars, members of the media, and students. Matoba says, "Talking to other people is stimulating, and new ideas will often come to you."

tween them as follows.

"In the 1870s, toward the end of Marx's life, an economic theory called 'marginal utility' came into vogue. In this approach the examination of the essential value of a commodity was abandoned, value was taken to be a buyer's subjective satisfaction (utility), and buyers were assumed to determine their purchasing behavior so as to maximize the utility obtained from the amount paid. Taking this view, the payment of such a vast sum for the Picasso painting means the buyer felt it had a corresponding amount of utility."

This theory is called the "subjective theory of value" because of its claim that value is subjective. This simple view that put aside the difficult question of the nature of value came to be widely accepted. Matoba criticizes this approach, however, for making it difficult to grasp the essential nature of capitalism.

"Capitalism is the ceaseless self-propagation of capital. You invest capital and obtain profit, then invest this profit again for a greater return, constantly increasing your capital. This process is the essence of capitalism. The

problem is that when you leave out the fact that value is underpinned by labor, you cannot properly explain the mechanism by which profit is created. You might think it is enough to just buy low and sell high, but if everyone tries to do this nobody will make anything and economic activity will collapse."

Marx refers to profit as "surplus value." As this phrase indicates, profit is part of the value created by labor. While the value created by labor should belong to the laborers, capitalists do not hand all of it over to them. They take a "cut" for themselves, and pay what remains to the laborers as wages. This "cut" of created value is profit (surplus value).

## The Beginning of the End of Capitalism

In *Das Kapital* Marx conducts a thorough analysis of capitalism. In addition to explaining the relationship between labor and value and the mechanism by which profit is created, he also clarifies the essential paradoxes of capitalism. This was the essence of Marx's thought.

Matoba elaborates, "One of these paradoxes is known as 'the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.' The 'rate of profit' is the ratio of the profit obtained to the capital invested. As the name of this law implies, at the end of its maturation capitalism is destined to see a tendency of the rate of profit to fall, putting the brakes on the growth of capital."

It is difficult to explain why this law arises in the space allotted here. But what Marx described is already coming to pass. The Bank of Japan's "zero interest rate policy" designed to promote growth is emblematic of this. The interest on financial capital is the source of the profits of industrial capital that makes and sells things. Looking at society as a whole, the fact that it is necessary to set interest rates close to zero points to an underlying state of affairs in which it is difficult to raise profits. This argument has



The three volumes of *Das Kapital* that belong to the university's library. From top to bottom, a first edition of Vol. 1 (1867), a first edition of Vol. 2 (1885), and a first edition of Vol. 3 (1894). All of them are German editions. In the 20th century *Das Kapital* was edited at centers of Marxist-Leninist research in what was then the Soviet Union, and even today the most commonly read Japanese translations of this text are based on these Soviet versions. Editions from before Soviet interference are extremely precious, and these books emit a quiet dignity undiminished by the passage of time.

## SIDE STORIES

### Inviting students to go abroad. Students change when they see the world.



Photographs from destinations on an overseas trip with students. "Perhaps because of anxiety over their language not being understood, students seem to tighten up," Matoba says. After coming back to Japan, they also show a greater interest in the books in his research office.

### Students feel it too! A deep love for Marx.



A portrait of Marx drawn by a student six or seven years ago. Matoba says it was left instead of a message when he wasn't in his research office. He never erased it, and it still greets visitors today. An actual photograph is shown on the left. The drawing is quite accurate.

### He looked for a hat that suited a beard. As for its true purpose...



Matoba has been growing a beard since last year. Is it because his love for Marx has grown even stronger...? We can't be sure. He has begun collecting hats that suit his beard. He also wears a hunting cap.



received a lot of attention since it was put forward last year by economist Kazuo Mizuno (a professor at Nihon University) in his book *Shihonshugi no Shūen to Rekishi no Kiki* [*The Death of Capitalism and the Crisis of History*] (Shūeisha Shinsho).

If capitalism is ending, what sort of society will come after it? No one can say. Even Marx, who saw great potential in communism, was careful to avoid predictions about the future. As for why this was the case, Matoba speculates, "It may have been because he was more than well enough aware that predictions of the future incorporate the limitations of their era." He then adds, "People living in the present era must think about what is to be done going forward."

## A Half-century of Walking with Marx

Matoba's encounter with Marx spans nearly half a century, stretching all the way back to 1967 when he was in his third year of middle school. Matoba seems nostalgic as he reflects on it today. "That year it was exactly a hundred years since the publication of *Das Kapital*. My relationship with Marx began when I happened to pick up a book explaining *Das Kapital* that had been published to commemorate this anniversary in a bookstore."

When Matoba failed his high school entrance exams, the words of Marx offered him encouragement after experiencing this setback.

"Suffering, humanly considered, is a kind of self-enjoyment of man" (*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*).

Then he went to university "to study Marx" and got to where he is today.

Matoba says that through his dedication to the study of Marx from the impressionable period of his early teens, "Marx became my mother tongue."

"Marx's perspective is said to be idiosyncratic and difficult, but to me this way of looking at things is fundamental, so it seems stranger to be able to take any other point of view." Of course, in order to view Marx objectively from the outside, it is also necessary to study various other fields including contemporary social circumstances.

## Akihiro Matoba

Born in Miyazaki Prefecture in 1952. Completed course work for a doctorate in economics at Keio University's Graduate School. Doctor of Economics. Now a professor at Kanagawa University after having held various positions including assistant at Hitotsubashi University's Center for Historical Social Science Literature and assistant professor at Tokyo Zokei University. Has written many books, including the recently published *Daigakusei ni Kataru Shihonshugi no 200 Nen* [*200 Years of Capitalism as Told to University Students*] (Shōdensha Shinsho).

Remarking, "Someday I'd like to write a biography of Marx," Matoba tells us about the surprising true nature of his life. While it is said that Marx wrote *Das Kapital* in the midst of abject poverty as an opposition scholar unable to find steady employment because of his criticism of capitalist society, Matoba says that this was a fiction created in the Soviet Union to glorify him.

"Both Marx and his wife grew up in wealthy households, and his close friend Engels was a successful capitalist. There is a letter in which he begs Engels for money, but that is because he was a profligate spender. The income Marx received was almost enough to be described as upper class."

A half-century devoted to Marx —. It's easy enough to say these words, but what was it that captivated Matoba for so long?

"Marx was a classically educated, erudite man, and while deciphering his meaning is not easy, no matter when or how you read him there is intellectual stimulation to be gained. This is Marx's great attraction. How to interpret Marx and how to implement Marxism are important questions, but what I want to bring to light is the figure of the Marx himself that lies behind his thought."

A vein of thought that is never exhausted no matter how deeply it is mined. Matoba continues to explore this great mountain.



Matoba has published over thirty books related to Marx. The three volumes of his *Chōyaku "Shihonron"* [*An introduction to "Das Kapital"*] (Shodensha Shinsho. Vol. 1 is pictured on the left) were published right around the 2008 financial crisis, and became bestsellers with over 100,000 copies sold. Recent works include *Daigakusei ni Kataru Shihonshugi no 200 Nen* [*200 Years of Capitalism as Told to University Students*] (Shodensha Shinsho) and *Marukusu to tomo ni Shihonshugi no Owari wo Kangaeru* [*Thinking about the End of Capitalism together with Marx*] (Akishobo. Pictured on the right). He is translating the works of Karl Marx into Japanese with the detailed notes and commentaries, "Manifest der Kommunistische Partei", "Zur Judenfrage", and "Zur Kritik der Hegel'schen Rechts' Philosophie" were published (Sakuhinsha).





## FEATURE

# Making Sense of Women and Liberation in Japan through Popular Culture

Lined up on the bookshelves in James Welker's office are *shōjo* manga (girls' comic) books adorned on their covers with wide-eyed, smiling girls and *dōjinshi* (fanzines) depicting male-male romance narratives called "boys love" (BL). This office is where Welker conducts research on gender and sexuality in Japan. This *shōjo* manga and BL, often seen as part of Japan's unique contribution to global popular culture, emerged in Japan out of the struggle by women and girls for liberation.



Associate Professor  
**James Welker**

Department of  
 Cross-Cultural Studies  
 Faculty of Foreign Languages

Japanese Modern and  
 Contemporary Cultural  
 History, Gender and  
 Sexuality, Globalization

## "Gender" in Japan Is Not an Import

"My current research began as an investigation of links between the women's liberation (*ūman ribu*) movement, the lesbian community, and fans and artists of '*shōnen'ai*' (boys love) manga. These three spheres all were born in the early 1970s and have had a profound impact on gender and sexuality in Japan. In my research on these spheres, I draw particular attention to connections to Western culture, including American and Western European cultures," Welker explains. These three spheres are no simple imports from or imitations of Western culture, however. In response to oppressive patriarchal culture, women in Japan sought to improve their social status in part via adopting and adapting Western culture, and in so doing created their own novel cultural forms. In explaining this cultural exchange, Welker has developed a concept he calls "transfiguration," by which he means "change in transit from one culture to another." Welker explains that, "Researching how Western culture has been 'transfigured' in Japan gives us a better sense of shifts in local understandings of gender and sexuality here, as well as the development of current social conditions for women."

## *Shōnen'ai* Comes from Efforts to Liberate Love

In manga and prose fiction in Japan there is an original genre often called "boys love" (BL). While one might expect that gay men constitute the bulk of readers of this genre, most creators and consumers of BL are female. In fact, the genre emerged in the early 1970s within *shōjo* manga (girls comics) as a result of efforts to liberate women and girls' romantic and sexual expression.

"*Shōnen'ai* was created by female manga artists in order to circumvent norms for women and girls' sexuality and romantic relationships. Takemiya Keiko is known for having drawn the seminal *shōnen'ai* work *Kaze to ki no uta* (The song of the wind and the trees). You might say that this work represents a kind of resistance against gender and sexual norms imposed on women and girls. In the 1970s, when this work was first published, as a result of powerful patriarchal norms, women were quite oppressed in many aspects of their daily lives, including their relationships with men. When depicting romance or sex in a female-male relationship, the woman or girl would necessarily be limited to a largely passive role. But by depicting a male-male relationship, that problem could be avoided. And that's how *shōnen'ai* manga, the





*The Hite Report*—a collection of the voices of 3000 American women on their sexual experiences as well as their opinions about their sexuality in the context of patriarchal social norms.



*Our Bodies, Ourselves* (left)—a book that developed out of a workshop on “women and their bodies” at a women’s liberation conference held at Emmanuel College in Boston in 1969, just as the feminist movement was beginning to grow stronger. The volume, which was published commercially in 1973 (above left), features these activists’ discussion of their experiences of their own bodies and their struggles with the medical establishment. In Japan, the volume was published in Japanese translation in 1974 and inspired new books (above right).



Lining the bookshelves of Welker’s office can be found numerous manga, magazines, and *dōjinshi* (fanzines).



Takemiya Keiko debuted as a manga artist at the age of seventeen with the one-shot “*Ringo no tsumi*” (The apple crime). Her other notable works include *Faraa no haka* (Pharaoh’s tomb) and *Tera e...* (To Terra). She is currently the president of Kyoto Seika University.

earliest form of BL, was created.”

*Kaze to ki no uta* is set in a boarding school in late nineteenth-century France. Welker describes the narrative as a transfiguration of the worlds depicted in the novels of Herman Hesse and Luchino Visconti’s *Death in Venice* (based on a novel by Thomas Mann). In part, “Takemiya was seeking the sexual freedom that was considered [in Japan] to be part of the European way of life,” Welker explains.

Another trigger for Takemiya’s was Inagaki Taruho, known for his *Issen ichibyō monogatari* (One thousand and one second stories) among other works. In fact, Taruho is likely the first writer to use the term “*shōnen’ai*.” Published in 1968, Taruho’s collection of essays about the eroticism of loving boys, *Shōnen’ai no bigaku* (The aesthetics of boy loving), had a significant impact on early *shōnen’ai* manga artists. *Shōnen’ai* was the precursor to fan-produced “*yaoi*” works beginning in the mid- to late-1970s, as well as contemporary BL manga, novels, and other media. The term “boys love” itself comes from the tagline of a manga magazine. Today, “boys love,” “*yaoi*,” and “*shōnen-ai*” [sic] are used in English and other languages around the world to name translated and original works emanating from this narrative form originally developed in Japan.

“I’ve recently become quite interested in BL

comics, prose fiction, live-action films, and other media in the context of Asia. That’s why I’ve organized a symposium to be held in July 2017 about BL media in East, Southeast, and South Asia. I plan to compile the papers presented there into an edited volume on the subject.”

## Freedom Can Begin with Language

Translations of foreign publications are an important resource for unraveling transfiguration within the women’s liberation movement. The Japanese women’s liberation movement, often called “*ūman ribu*,” coalesced at the beginning of the 1970s. One impetus for its emergence was the late 1960s student activist organization Zenkyōtō. At the organization’s demonstrations, men were on the front lines while women were largely relegated to making rice balls. Given the socio-political struggle the student activists were engaged in, some female members of Zenkyōtō were quick to see the injustice inherent in this arrangement. Beginning around the same time, some key books from the women’s liberation movement in the US were beginning to be translated into Japanese. Among the earliest was *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, first commercially published in the U.S. in 1973. (The 1974 translation was titled

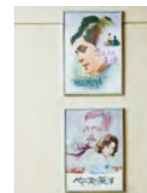
## SIDE STORIES



### The Name “Boys Love” Comes from a Magazine’s Tagline

The genre name “boys love” was first used in the tagline for the magazine *Image* (*Imāju*), published by Byakuya Shobō. “BOY’S LOVE♥COMIC” adorned the cover, just above the title of the very first issue in 1991.

### Beautiful Boys in the Films that Influenced *Shōnen’ai*



Films had a significant impact on the artists who created *shōnen’ai* (boys love). For instance, *Les Amitiés Particuliers* (These special friendships) inspired Hagio Moto’s *Tōma no shinjō* (The heart of Thomas), and *Death in Venice* influenced the worlds illustrated by Takemiya Keiko.



*Onna no karada: Sei to ai no shinjitsu*, meaning “Women’s bodies: The truth about sex and love.”) The book took up topics including female genitalia, menstruation, and pregnancy, shedding light on the physiology of women’s bodies. “A revised edition of the book was published in Japanese translation in 1988 as *Karada, watashitachi jishin* (Bodies, ourselves), and in the process the translators created new words to refer to the body and its functions. Most of the original Japanese terms contained the characters for ‘shame’ (*chi*, 恥) or ‘negative’ (*in*, 陰), creating barriers to talking openly about natural things. The newly coined terms replaced these characters with a more neutral character for ‘sex’ or ‘sexuality’ (*sei/shō*, 性), in an effort to rethink the way we talk about women’s bodies. And instead of a vague euphemism about physiology (*seiri*, 生理) to talk about menstruation, they chose a somewhat more direct term meaning ‘monthly occurrence’ (*gekkei*, 月経). They also coined a gender neutral term for nurse (*kangoshi*, 看護師) to replace a term was specifically female (*kangofu*, 看護婦). The latter terms remain in common use, though the gender neutral term for nurse is written with different characters now (*kangoshi*, 看護師).”

Several years after the original translation of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, a translation of *The Hite Report* (1976) was published in Japanese. The book was based on a survey by Shere Hite of 3000 American women about their sexual experiences and feelings, including with and toward other women. The 1977 Japanese translation was the first widely available collection of personal testimonies about lesbian experiences in Japanese that was not presented in a salacious matter. A decade later *Onna o ai suru onnatachi no monogatari* (Stories of women who love women) was published, containing a large section of with the testimonies of 234 women, modeled after Hite’s survey. This book, frequently called a lesbian “bible,” has long been considered the first commercially published book in Japan written by and for lesbians.

“I treat *Onna o ai suru onnatachi no monogatari* as a transfigured version of *The Hite Report*. In other words, *The Hite Report* wasn’t merely imported as is. It helped inspire a way of learning and thinking about lesbians locally. And Hite’s method of surveying women about their sexuality, however closely it was followed by Sawabe Hitomi, who produced the volume, didn’t result in a mere imitation but a very different kind of

book.”

## Women’s Liberation Remains Distant

To what extent have these various attempts to liberate women been effective? Although Welker believes that “It has become at least a little easier for women to talk about their own sexuality,” at the same time “Women in Japan cannot be said to be liberated in this society.” “Look at the Diet, commentators appearing in the media—people with influence are still almost all men. While in certain contexts, men can make somewhat obscene jokes or comments on television, it’s really not acceptable for a woman to do the same. And why not? Is there a good answer for that?”

Welker sees the arrest of artist Rokudenashiko (Igarashi Megumi) as an example of this kind of intense pressure on women. While her arrest for electronic transmission of obscene materials in July 2014 was not directly for producing art based on her genitals, it was that art that brought attention to her and the art itself was confiscated for use as evidence against her. “These books about women’s liberation and so on dating to the 1970s, as well as *shōnen ai* manga have a lot to teach us about the struggle for liberation by women in Japan. Sure, writers and translators along with manga artists may have seen the freedom that appeared to be present in Western culture with a kind of yearning or “*akogare*.” But rather than just seeing the West as offering an escape hatch or something to just copy, they transfigured some of what they saw into weapons to use in their own struggle right here in Japan.”



### James Welker

Born in Ohio, USA, Welker completed a PhD in East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of British Columbia and a visiting researcher at Josai International University prior to joining the Department of Cross-Cultural Studies in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Kanagawa University as an associate professor.





### Three *Little Red Riding Hoods*?

Once upon a time, there was a girl called "Little Red Riding Hood." When she was walking through the woods on her way to her grandmother's house, she ran into the Big Bad Wolf. The Big Bad Wolf figured out where Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother lived, got there first, and devoured her. Then he dressed up as her grandmother and waited for her to arrive. When Little Red Riding Hood, oblivious to what had happened, arrived at her grandmother's house, the Big Bad Wolf sprang at her and ate her up. This *Little Red Riding Hood* ends abruptly here. It was written in 1697 by Charles Perrault. The happy ending most of us are familiar with, in which the huntsman comes and pulls both the girl and her grandmother out of the Big Bad Wolf's stomach, is found in the Brothers Grimm's version published in 19th-century Germany.

Little Red Riding Hood also appears in a French oral folktale known as "Grandmother's Story." In this tale, however, not only does the young female protagonist not wear a red hood, but she escapes the wolf by relying on her own wits and manages to return home unharmed.

"There is no single "original" story for fairy tales. Fairy tales are traditional narratives, but interestingly enough, any author is free to re-write them," says Mayako Murai. None of the three *Little Red Riding Hoods* described above can be regarded as the "original." "Fairy tales survive by being retold in ways that reflect social and cultural changes. Perrault was a French courtier writing at the end of the 17th century. A 'warning' not to be taken in by the sweet words of bad men before you are married can be found in his version of *Little Red Riding Hood*, which was written for young, unmarried women."

### Mayako Murai

Ph.D. in Comparative Literature,  
University College London, 2001.  
Has been in her current position  
at this university since 2004.

## FEATURE

# We still live fairy tales

Like singing songs long familiar to our ears, any one of us can immediately call to mind several fairy tales.

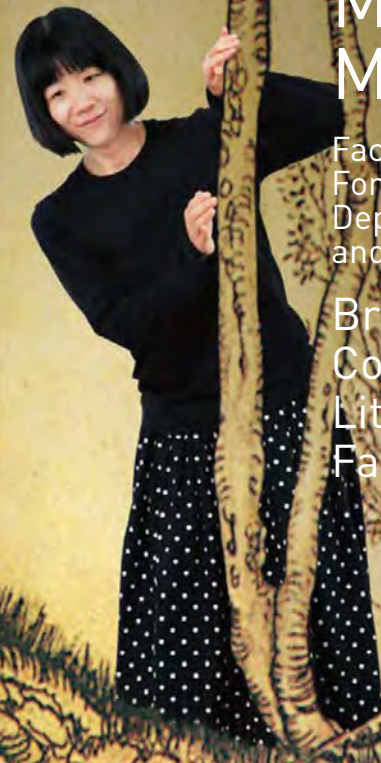
Memories of the first stories we encountered in our lives — these of course influence us as individuals, but they also influence the state of our society. For example, fairy tales may make women behave in a "feminine" manner.

Welcome to the depths of fairy tales, whose bottom remains unfathomable no matter how deeply we try to read.

## Professor Mayako Murai

Faculty of  
Foreign Languages  
Department of English  
and English Literature

British Literature,  
Comparative  
Literature,  
Fairy-Tale Studies





## The World is Made of Fairy Tales

Murai's main research interest is the "intertextuality" of fairy tales; she examines and comments on how the structures and motifs of a particular fairy tale can be found in aspects of contemporary culture such as literature, art, and cinema. Through her studies she has developed close relationships with artists and writers both in Japan and overseas.

"The study of fairy tales includes the fascinating process of finding particular stories or patterns of context in chaos. For example, people may be baffled when they encounter works of art and literature that they find difficult to understand. When they use fairy tales as a lead to start talking about such works, the world begins to look different," says Murai.

The fairy tales we encounter over and over again from childhood become the flesh and blood of our thoughts and determine our patterns of thinking without our being aware of it. In this sense, life may be a story of the reliving, reorganizing, and reconstructing of fairy tales. Fairy tales exist in the depths of our mind and melt into the world around us by being incorporated into literature, art, and cinema. Murai scoops them up, recrystallizes them, and critiques them.

"To me, the world appears as a complicated combination of fairy tales. So when I see something happening in front of me, I think to myself, 'Oh, I know this.' Amidst the chaos of reality, finding patterns I know gives me clues about what to make of it. It allows me to think of ways to analyze what is going on objectively and to break free of the patterns I tend to fall into."

## Gender Today as Constructed by Fairy Tales

Murai also thinks about gender from the perspective of fairy tales. "Among traditional fairy tales, we see a dominant value system in which men oppress women. For example, when the

hero accomplishes something, in nearly every instance a beautiful woman appears and ushers in a happy ending. Looking at this from the perspective of gender, we can describe it as an imprinting of power structures that are extremely oppressive of women. Women do not achieve tasks on their own as subjects but are relegated to the status of objects in the realm of the hero's subconscious."

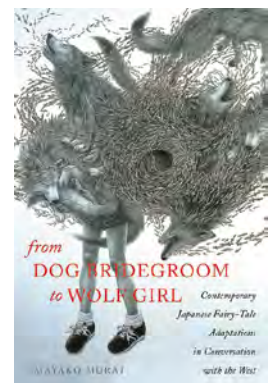
*Snow White*, for example, can be read as the story of the prince finding and acquiring a beautiful woman rather than that of Snow White's self-actualization. Fairy tales in which a male principle operates strongly tend to be selected for fairy-tale collections such as the Brothers Grimm's. Similarities can also be found in the formation of modern patriarchal societies. Murai is also a scholar who searches for an escape from this image of oppressed women, or, to use Angela Carter's word, the "demythologizing" of women, in fairy tales.

"I want adults to try reading fairy tales. They are written in a style that seems perfectly 'transparent' on the surface. Children usually experience this layer alone. When you become an adult and are able to investigate their deeper layers, you are struck by one universal conflict or paradox after another. The stories of the Brothers Grimm are fairy tales everyone knows, but if you try reading them again, you may find something no one else has discovered that is of use to you in your own life."

If society is something that represents human consciousness, then it would not be at all strange to find at its heart a context of fairy tales familiar to most people from childhood. The intertextuality of fairy tales encompasses not only works of art and literature but the world we live in.



When it comes to fairy tales adults should read, Murai recommends we "begin with the stories of the Brothers Grimm." A photograph of *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*.



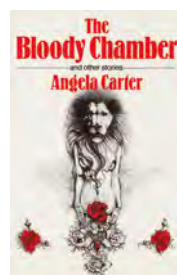
The art on the cover of Murai's new book, *From Dog Bridegroom to Wolf Girl*, is a work by contemporary artist Tomoko Konoike. Wolves and a girl emerge from its beautifully complex composition.

## SIDE STORIES



**A single volume of fairy tales opened the door to her research.**

Murai was awakened to the study of fairy tales by *Victorian Fairy Tales*, a book assigned in her seminar class when she was a university student. She met its editor, Jack Zipes, fifteen years later at an academic conference.



**The theme of her first article was "female desire."**

In the first article of her career as a scholar, Murai wrote about Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*. This book was a groundbreaking collection of retold fairy tales that focused on female desire.





## FEATURE

# Making the World Laugh with *Rakugo*

“Laughter” may be humanity’s oldest language. Laughter transcends national borders, and humor brings people together. *Rakugo* is a traditional form of Japanese humor, but its innovation continues in the present day. Kimie Oshima is a *rakugo* artist and “humor studies” scholar who is expanding the possibilities of this art form throughout the world with “English *rakugo*.”

Professor  
**Kimie Oshima**

Faculty of  
 Foreign Languages  
 Department of  
 Cross-Cultural Studies

Cross-Cultural  
 Communication,  
 Social Linguistics,  
 Humor Studies

## Kimie Oshima

Received a Ph.D. in Education (Sociolinguistics) from International Christian University’s Graduate School in 2002. Conducts research specializing in “the effects of laughter and humor” in the teaching of English as a second language and communication in general. Has been giving performances of *rakugo* in English overseas since 1997. Takes the stage herself to perform both classical and new works of *rakugo*. Has been a professor in Kanagawa University’s Faculty of Foreign Languages’ Department of Cross-Cultural Studies since 2014.



## *Rakugo* as “Universal Humor”

— A corpse lies fallen by the side of the road. A crowd has gathered on the familiar laneway. “I think it’s Kuma!” The man speaking in front of the corpse is Hachigorō. “Kuma” is his close friend, Kumagorō. “You know him?” asks one of the villagers in the crowd. “I sure do! He’s like a brother to me!” Hachigorō replies, instantly bursting into tears. “I’m so sorry...” The villager offers words of consolation. But Hachigorō says, “How awful... Kuma’s at my place (a type of Japanese town-house called a *nagaya*). He must have forgotten that he’d died and fallen asleep. I’ll go and get him right away!” He stands up and runs off so quickly it’s like his legs have turned into wheels, kicking up a cloud of dust in his wake. Going to get the dead man who is supposedly lying right here? What on Earth could he mean...

Right now, Japanese *rakugo* is enjoying acclaim in various countries overseas, including the United States, Israel, and Singapore. These shows that are making the world laugh are “English *rakugo*.” Kimie Oshima is one of the performers bringing these stories to the stage. “The definition of humor is ‘a deviation from the ordinary.’ The reason *rakugo* makes people laugh all over the world is that it possesses ‘universal humor,’ that is, humor that is part of our essence as human beings and can be understood by anybody, anywhere. The most common ‘universal humor’ in *rakugo* is ‘stupidity’ — anecdotes that invite laughter at ‘human stupidity.’ In the classic *rakugo* story introduced above, *Sokotsu Nagaya* [Blunder house], the stupidity of Hachigorō (the ‘blunderer’), who rushes off to his house (*nagaya*) to get his friend whose corpse he has just seen with his own two eyes, somehow gets a relieved laugh from the audience. By selecting anecdotes, translating and creating them while extracting these sorts of elements, English *rakugo* was born.” The topics of *rakugo* anecdotes are all universal themes such as problems between men and women, bereavement, and everyday stories

involving merchants and shopkeepers. Even if the antiquated language is sometimes confusing, people living in the current era still burst out laughing. The same is true of people in other countries with different cultures. From the perspective of the rest of the world, however, Japanese people are sometimes thought to be “serious” and “lacking of a sense of humor.” Because of this, trying to make the world laugh with a form of comedy invented a long time ago, could itself be a ridiculous story—the kind found in *rakugo*. But Oshima says, “It’s the fact that it’s so old that makes it possible.”

“It is said that 400 years ago there were 2,500 classic *rakugo* stories in Japan. Through a process of natural selection, this number has been whittled down to 350. It’s only the stories with universal humor, which still holds true today, that have managed to survive over such a long period of time to exist as today’s *rakugo*.” *Rakugo* is able to transcend national borders because it is an “inheritance of humor” that has already transcended time.

### Japanese people who are transformed by humor

Oshima’s English *rakugo* began out of a desire to “spread the image of Japanese with a smiling face.” “In humor studies there is a theory that ‘laughter does not make enemies.’ So, what sort of impression is created by this image that we ‘unsmiling Japanese’ have as impassive and lacking in humor? I wanted to change the status of Japanese people in the context of international communication.” At the age of twenty-six, Oshima discovered *rakugo* while studying Japanese humor. In the midst of assembling *rakugo* artists from the Kansai area, creating English *rakugo*, and going on tour overseas, Oshima began to take the stage herself. During breaks between performances, she conducts “guerrilla theater” at elementary

schools in the countries she visits, asking, “Would you let me show you my act?” “I want children around the world to grow up to be adults who remember ‘the funny Japanese person who came to our school one day and showed us *rakugo*.’ Because then once they go out into society as politicians and business people, they’ll think of the Japanese as a people with a good sense of humor.”

English *rakugo* is also performed in Japan. It is attended by many foreigners, of course, but also by Japanese children who grew up overseas and other young people. Most of them later attend a regular *rakugo* performance. In other words, English *rakugo* is a bridge connecting young people to traditional *rakugo*. Leading teachers in the *rakugo* community have praised this development too, saying, “Even among us there are those who were brought here by English *rakugo*.”

Oshima is also trying to change humor in corporations. She has created a methodology out of the “deviation from the ordinary” humor cultivated in English *rakugo*, and is developing it as a corporate training program to increase the capacity for humor in businesses and other organizations. “Feeling anger and stress in ordinary life is a big negative, because it just weakens and undermines the person in question. I think the solution is the flexibility and creativity we get from humor. If we can appreciate what is interesting or funny about our situation, our irritation turns to laughter. Once we can laugh at anything, we can enjoy ourselves more.” Managers at large corporations as well as people affiliated with various government ministries and agencies attend her training programs.

In the smile Oshima gives when bringing the classical humor of *rakugo* to both other countries and Japanese society, there is a glint of the new supported by the old.

### Locations of Overseas Performances



America	Pakistan
Norway	Guam
Singapore	China
Malaysia	Turkey
Australia	Bulgaria
Thailand	Macao
The Philippines	Germany
India	Israel
Brunei	Belgium



Talking about how English *rakugo* is a “California roll.” Its spirit is one of “using unorthodox methods to spread throughout the world.”

## SIDE STORIES

### An image of Japanese people as gourmards even in ancient times hidden in the “slurping” of soba noodles



In the *rakugo* called *Toki Soba* there is a scene in which soba noodles are eaten with a loud slurping sound. Why do Japanese eat them like this? Because by mixing the noodles and broth with air as we eat them our noses are better able to savor their scent. Including this kind of information in English *rakugo* whets the intellectual curiosity of the audience.

### “I want to talk with Jackie” The autograph that became a turning point



Oshima was a big fan of Jackie Chan, and received an autograph from him when he came to shoot *Winners and Sinners*. Oshima learned English because she wanted to be able to have a conversation with Jackie the next time they met.



Oshima has appeared in *NEW CROWN 3* (Sanseidō), an English textbook used by many middle school students in Japan. The title of the article in which she appears is “Rakugo Goes Overseas.” A revised version is scheduled for publication next year.



## What makes a human being a human being?

"Anthropology is a 'field of study that is not immediately useful.' For precisely this reason, however, it is useful over the long term." Kawada evaluates anthropology, the field into which he has long poured his heart and soul, in this manner reminiscent of an exchange between Zen monks. His point is that anthropology, which takes the long view of humanity over tens or hundreds of thousands of years, can offer a longer term perspective on the problems occurring in the world today without being swayed by political or economic circumstances like "fields of study that are immediately useful."

Kawada calls the research method he himself employs "triangulation of cultures," and describes it as follows.

"In the case of land surveying, a position is accurately determined by measuring from three points. By studying three [cultures] including the own culture of a scholar, I believe he can

relativize his own subjective point of view and more accurately pick up on the characteristics of each specific culture." The cultures Kawada has chosen to study are those of Japan, France, and West Africa.

Viewing human beings as "animals with culture" and elucidating the characteristics of the culture of humans as a biological species - this is Kawada's anthropological perspective. To this end he has paid close attention to "the body." While "the body" is the foundation from which culture emerges, it also has significant conditions imposed upon it by this culture of its own creation. This is something "cultural triangulation" makes clearly apparent.

"For example, in Japan 'crawling' is seen as a completely normal behavior for infants, but this is not the case in Europe and Africa. The French in particular are loathe to let a child crawl around on all fours, and there is even a custom of putting children inside something called a 'étui à enfant' (case for baby) that resembles an umbrella stand."

Kawada also points out that that significant

## Distinguished Professor Junzo Kawada

Institute for the Study  
of Japanese Folk Culture

Anthropology

FEATURE

## Does Homo Sapiens Really Have "Wisdom"? (An Anthropologist's Aphorism)

The scientific name for humanity in biology is "homo sapiens," which means "person with wisdom," and we are classified as belonging to the Hominidae family of primates along with creatures such as gorillas, chimpanzees and orangutans. But Junzo Kawada, who has spent the majority of his eighty three years studying anthropology, sharply and profoundly questions whether modern humanity is worthy of this appellation.



### Junzo Kawada

Born in Tokyo in 1934. Graduated from the University of Tokyo's Department of Education Cultural Anthropology Course. Received a Ph.D. in Ethnology from University of Paris V. After holding various positions including professor at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies' Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, currently serves as distinguished professor at Kanagawa University and visiting scholar at its Institute for the Study of Japanese Folk Culture. Has written, edited, and translated many books. Recent publications include <Hakobu Hito> no Jinruigaku [Anthropology of <Homo portans, or People who Carry>] (Iwanami Shinsho, 2014).



differences caused by culture can be seen in behavior that involves almost no intervention by tools, such as excretion of bodily waste, sexual intercourse, and childbirth, and even in how we laugh, cry, walk and sleep. It is by no means the case that our bodies are controlled solely by our own wills. Taking these patterns of behavior we follow semi-consciously as “what makes a human being a human being” and investigating what lies behind them — this is the field of inquiry called “anthropology.”

## What is Lost when Culture is Gained

Kawada continues.

“Uttering words is also a technique of the body. There is nothing that adheres to the body as closely as language.”

There is an intimate connection between the ability to speak and walking upright on two legs. Through the lowering of the vocal chords and the development of the mouth’s organs of articulation, human beings gained the ability to manipulate and combine sounds and speak as we do today.

Having obtained language, eventually humanity also acquired the written word. But writing is not universal to human beings. Kawada lived with the Mossi, a people who do not have a written language, and studied their way of life in Burkina Faso, Africa.

“They don’t have a written language because they don’t need it. They each speak a richly individual ‘personal language,’ and they have the sparkle of ‘anarchic voices’ that have not been standardized by written education. Whenever I play, in Japan, a recording of African nighttime story telling, they are surprised at the vivacity of voices.”

Instead of writing things down, the Mossi people have developed another method of “recording” — a “drum language” that tells stories through the sound of drums. They express words by distinguishing different kinds of tapping through subtle sensation in their fingertips. The sense of touch in their fingers is

directly linked to the language center of their brains.

“Touch-typing on a keyboard and reading braille also rely on the sense of touch. Surely it was not by chance that Helen Keller learned language through the sensation of touch in her fingertips.”

Language is unmistakably an act of the body.

“The world began without the human race, and it will end without the human race”

This phrase appears in *Tristes Tropiques*, a book published by Kawada’s mentor Claude Lévi-Strauss in 1955. In the 4.6 billion year history of the Earth, homo sapiens has only existed for the past 200,000 years. Human beings are merely latecomers to the planet. Lévi-Strauss is quietly warning us that we must not forget this fact.

Half a century has passed since these words were written.

“Over the past hundred years the human population has drastically increased from two billion to seven billion, we continue to massacre each other in staggering numbers over and over again, and every day we are pushing a large number of other species to extinction. We have nuclear weapons capable of destroying the world ten times over.”

Is this what an animal with “wisdom” does? Kawada sees human arrogance at work here. Self-control is always present in the behavior of the other primates, and it is only human beings that seem to have lost this ability to hold ourselves in check.

“It may be that by using our intellect to create culture, human beings have lost our self-control”

There has been a marked diminishment of the body in the modern era. Science and technology have reached a high level, informationization has progressed, and we have become able to live our lives without using our own bodies. To live our lives while using our bodies and knowing our place, and to regain our self-control. Isn’t this the true “wisdom” human beings need right now?



Notebooks from Kawada’s time doing fieldwork in Africa. With his notes and sketches he made a detailed record of the local people’s way of life. These extensive notebooks were the source of his precise, thoroughgoing research. The notebook pictured is from around 1976.



### **Afurika no onbunka [The Sound Cultures of Africa] IV, V, VI**

The final three volumes of reports on overseas research Kawada has been in charge of since 1995 were published by Kanagawa University. The texts were printed in the official language of the countries surveyed, and serve as an example of how to bring the results of research back to the communities in which it was conducted.

## SIDE STORIES



**Young musicians learning how to tell the story of the dynasty by watching an elderly musician, who was the head palace musician in the Eastern Dynasty of the old Mossi Kingdom (photography by Kawada)**

Kawada has an affinity for photography, and this black and white photograph from 1968 was one he took, developed and printed himself. This shot that could not have been taken without having established a relationship of trust with the local people represented a pivotal moment in Kawada’s time with the Mossi.





## “Me” as a Disassembled Japanese Person

Beginning in 1979 when he was thirty-one years old, nearly every year Komma conducted participatory observational studies, or fieldwork conducted while living with the local population, in a place that had been considered an unexplored region of world until the middle of the 19th century. This place he has visited for as long as eight or nine months at a time, and always for at least one or two months, over a period of thirty-eight years, is located deep in the countryside of Kenya, East Africa. There the Kipsigis, a people who speak Kalenjin, a Nilotic language, inhabit a region that cuts across the Great Rift Valley, an enormous valley that spans the entire continent, from North to South. “From the time I was a student with ambitions of becoming a cultural anthropologist, in my own mind I had resolved to go to Africa, the land furthest away and most different from my own. To this end I did my best to teach myself Swahili.”

One of the reasons Komma ended up being sent to study the Kipsigis was that his graduate school mentor at Hitotsubashi University, Nobuhiro Nagashima, felt he could rely on his Swahili language ability. Professor Nagashima studied social anthropology at Oxford University, and played a vigorous role in developing this discipline by carrying out fieldwork in East Africa. Nagashima dispatched Komma, who could already speak Swahili, to pioneer the new frontier of the study of the Kalenjin-speaking peoples.

“It is said that fieldwork is more difficult to begin than to carry out, and in this case it certainly was; spending two days on a bus from Nairobi to the village where the Kipsigis live, finding a place to live, and beginning my new lifestyle was really tough. The Japanese “me” that had gone there was broken into a million pieces. I had to rebuild a new “me” from scratch and become a member of that society.”

### Finding a Through Line in the Midst of Chaos

The Kipsigis say that they came South from Egypt a very long time ago, and their language is indeed very different from those spoken by other peoples in Kenya. Their bodies are also slender. They treat cattle as valuable property, and have a unique (“cattle complex”) culture in which cattle sometimes play the role of money. Traditionally they did not have a written language; in other words, they are a non-literate culture. Komma has carried out a meticulous, “low-flying” examination of this society over a

## FEATURE

# To the most distant, different land

Fieldwork in Africa spanning thirty-eight years. There were people being buffeted by the waves of colonization and modernization. They were people who had traditionally possessed neither written language nor rulers. What was anthropologist Toru Komma looking for among these people, and what did he find?

Professor

## Toru Komma

Faculty of Human Sciences  
Department of  
Human Sciences

Cultural Anthropology

### Toru Komma

Born in 1948 in Toyama Prefecture. Completed a doctoral course in Hitotsubashi University's Graduate School of Social Sciences. Holds a Ph.D. in social anthropology. Took up his current post in Kanagawa University's Faculty of Human Sciences after holding various positions, including professor in this university's Faculty of Foreign Languages. Has written many books including *Kawa no Kioku* [Memories of a River] (Tanushimaru-Chōshi Vol. 1) (Co-author, winner of the 51st Mainichi Shuppan Bunka Shō [Mainichi Publishing Culture Award] and the 56th Nishinippon Bunka Shō [Nishinippon Culture Prize], 1996), *Firudowāku Kotohajime* [Prolegomenon to Fieldwork] (Ochanomizu Shobō, 2016), and *Bunka wo Orikaesu* [Superimposing Our and Other Cultures] (Seiga Shobō, 2016).





period of thirty-eight years. Once a local resident even came to his hut in the middle of the night asking to be driven to the hospital. While fully sharing in the life of the community in this way, Komma observed and recorded everything he could about the Kipsigis people. The results of this endeavor eventually grew into an enormous mountain of details. He was left to search for a through line or necessary connection that would cut through the confusion of these innumerable fragments. Komma describes this as the true pleasure of anthropology.

"The colonization of South America by Catholic nations took place gradually over several hundred years through the technique of "internal domination" over indigenous peoples. In Africa, however, beginning in the second half of the 19th century this process was carried out much more quickly by various types of Christian missionaries from varied countries. Against a backdrop of overwhelming military force, various literate systems that require writing, such as government, religion, timekeeping, and markets, were introduced all at once to societies like that of the Kipsigis that had been non-literate. Small ethnic groups were crammed into this rigid framework by force. This was very hard for African people to accept."

As this process progressed, a split emerged between elites who flexibly internalized European values and underwent modernization and the remaining majority of the population. Komma's interest was in the details of the way of life of this majority that had been left behind. "They escape colonial rule and become independent, but then the brutal oppression carried out by fellow Africans begins. Within this context, the Kipsigis came up with a system in which they live together while using cattle as a banking system to make deals with each other. Owning many cattle should have allowed them to live wealthy lives, but colonization had created a society in which it was impossible to live without money. They had no choice but to make immediate responses to these circumstances. They were inevitably engulfed in the market economy. I was there at the time when this was going on, considering these issues and living alongside them. I was perhaps experiencing a greatly condensed version of what my ancestors had gone through over a much longer period of time. I was watching it unfold right in front of my eyes. It was like a time machine riding."

### Anthropology is Gaining Freedom

Komma says, "To study culture is to realize that it is culture that both constrains and creates

you, and, by relativizing this, to obtain freedom." As a result, he also says that anthropology is a field that tries to liberate humanity toward broader possibilities. This idea leads into the following remarks about the Kipsigis people.

"In Kipsigis society, instead of there being indigenous rulers there is a social institution called "age sets" in anthropology. Young people in the lowest set belong to the warrior grade. Elderly people in the highest set, on the other hand, play a religious role and are feared and respected for their spiritual powers, such as curses, obtained through their proximity to the spirits of the ancestors. No one is eminent, and everyone is eminent. Various powers are dispersed among the members of a particular generation without being monopolized by any one individual, and I suspect it is quite a good society. In Japan we only hear about elderly people being treated as a nuisance and the industrialization of nursing care, but looking at the Kipsigis people it seems that growing old and senile can also be a good and natural lifestyle. The Kipsigis bring to our attention things we cannot see in a society with a culture that has been industrialized and medicalized through science and technology."

This year Komma will once again travel to the village of the Kipsigis. There is a house the villagers built for him at some point along the way, so now "I just have to cover my travel costs," he says, laughing mischievously. From non-literate systems to literate ones that rely on writing, from a clanship to a nation, from reciprocity to capitalism – the Kipsigis have lived through radical changes to bridge these profound gaps. For Komma, a scholar who has lived with them and through them sought to discover hidden, unknown universals, this adventure continues.



Kipsigis family trees, created through intensive interaction and observation. circles (○) indicate women, triangles (△) indicate men, vertical lines show generations and horizontal lines sibling relationships.



A gourd flask used by the Kipsigis. They carry these containers filled with both fresh and fermented milk around with them.

## SIDE STORIES

### A wide variety of research topics, from flatulence to *kappa* [a mythological aquatic monster in Japanese folklore]

Komma is known for a diverse range of scholarship, including discourse on flatulence and the lyrics of Japanese singer-songwriter Yūmin (Yumi Mattōya), and he received the Mainichi Shuppan Bunka Shō [Mainichi Publishing Culture Award] for his *Tanushimaru-Chōshi* [A Historiography of Tanushimaru Machi], which greatly advanced the study of *kappa*. He says that *kappa* were like "Death" or "death gods" that appear in various legends of countries around the world. At first glance these diverse topics may seem unrelated, but Komma says that a close connection can be uncovered if we look at them from the perspective of "taboo" and "crevices in categories."





## FEATURE

# A Journey through Space and Time beyond National Borders. The Power of Writings seen in Minority Ethnic Groups, the Yao People

The Yao are a minority ethnic group originating in China that have spread widely throughout mountainous regions of Southeast Asia. While for centuries they have been divided into small populations living hundreds or thousands of kilometers apart, the Yao have nevertheless managed to preserve and hand down their ethnic knowledge. The vehicle that has transmitted their identity across time and space to the present day is sacred texts written in Chinese characters.

Professor

**Ritsuko Hirota**

Faculty of Business Administration  
Department of  
International Business Administration

Minority Ethnic Groups,  
The Yao People

## The Yao People, Who Preserve and Hand Down their Culture through Writing

The people known to others as the “Yao” have spread from South China throughout a wide area of Southeast Asia, with a total population of around 3,500,000 living in China, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar. While they do not have any central governing system, the individual groups that have been living thousands of kilometers apart from each other for hundreds of years have handed down an almost identical body of knowledge of ritual and customs. What has supported this distinct ethnicity has been its sacred texts written in Chinese characters.

Hirota explains, “In the past they made their living using swidden cultivation, moving through mountainous highlands without regard for national borders. There is even a group of them who moved to America in the 1970s as refugees from Indochina. The Yao preserve their own culture while coexisting with the cultures of the places to which they have immigrated. They do this because they inherit homologous texts as the basis of their knowledge of rituals and customs. These sacred texts are a symbol of the identity that binds Yao people together across time and space. I was drawn to this unique culture, and began to study it.” Hirota is a folklorist, and through her fieldwork she too is working to preserve and hand down Yao culture.

The priests from different groups copy from each other’s texts to enhance their own libraries. A priest may end up carrying as many as a hundred volumes of these sacred texts.

## Rituals are Musicals of Ethnic Knowledge

Rituals conducted using the sacred texts play an important role in enabling the Yao to preserve and hand down homologous ethnic knowledge from one generation to the next and

Ritsuko Hirota

Born in 1957 in Chiba Prefecture. Graduated from Waseda University’s Faculty of Education in 1981. Completed a master’s course in literary studies at Keio University in 1986. Received a Ph.D. in literature from Kokugakuin University. Currently a Professor in Kanagawa University’s Faculty of Business Administration’s Department of International Business Administration. Was director of the Kanagawa University Yao Culture Research Project Institute from 2008 to 2015, and currently serves as director of the Institute for the Study of Yao Culture ([www.yaoken.org](http://www.yaoken.org)) that was established in April of 2015. Major works include *Mien Yao no Kayō to Girei* [Songs and Rituals of the Mien-Yao] (Editor, Daigaku Kyōiku Shuppan) and *Chūgoku Minkan Saishi Geinō no Kenkyū* [Studies on Chinese Folk Ritual Arts] (Fukyosha).



across vast distances.

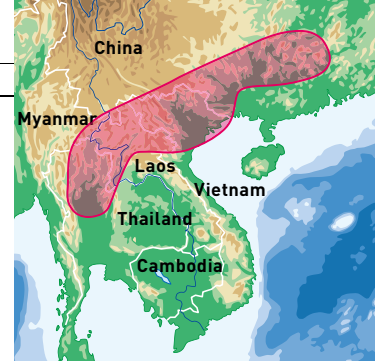
A single priest may perform up to seventy rituals per year. *Pien Hung Great Song* is one of the main sacred texts recited during these rituals that describe the myths and historical episodes of the Yao people. In one of these myths their ancestors encountered a powerful storm when they were trying to cross the sea by boat after leaving Nanjing. After offering prayers to Bienfun and pleading for his aid, they managed to reach land safely. Pien Hung came to be known as the savior of the Yao people. During the ritual in the worship of Pien Hung, pigs are offered on an altar and mythological scenes are reenacted. In front of this altar, sometimes in between riddles being asked and answered, the text of the *Pien Hung Great Song* is chanted like a song. The Yao's rituals are like musicals that allow them to reaffirm their ethnic traditions and learn them using all five senses. "The Chinese Han people also often use written texts in their rituals, but in the case of the Yao these texts are owned by ordinary people, who perform rituals in addition to their regular occupations. And while the deities worshipped by the Yao include the three main Taoist gods, Yen Si (元始), To Ta (道德), and Leng Pu (灵宝), the content of their sacred texts differs from Taoism, interpretations based on the Yao worldview and concept of divinity having been added to create something close to a folk religion."

### "Maybe I'm Not a Scholar"

While the situation differs depending on the region, today difficulties are emerging among the Yao regarding the handing down of their ritual culture to the next generation. Fewer and fewer young people want to become priests who carry out rituals. In 2008 Hirota established the Kanagawa University Yao Culture Research Project Institute (which became the Institute for the Study of Yao Culture in 2015), and has also undertaken initiatives to address these sorts of social issues affecting the Yao. One of these is creating educational materials for the Yao youth. The handing down of Yao culture is undergirded

by the learning of Chinese characters. As the sacred texts use an old style of writing, special training is required. The method of chanting is also very complicated, with the words used in the sacred texts being given readings different from those used in everyday speech, and rhythms and melodies that differ depending on the specific text being added to the pronunciation. Hirota has been engaged in turning vocal data, video footage, and textual data concerning how the classical texts are read during rituals into educational materials and distributing them in the various regions where they have been gathered. She is also supporting the education of the artists who create the "divine paintings" that play an important role in Yao rituals. She says that these painters cannot develop the skills required without being in an environment in which they can focus on their religious practices without worrying about supporting themselves in their daily lives. "Maybe I'm not a scholar. If I were a scholar I might disapprove of people on the outside interfering in the handing down of another ethnic group's culture. But I truly want to support this ongoing inheritance, because the ritual culture of the Yao is a precious cultural resource for humanity."

At first glance the Yao may appear to be under the influence of Han Chinese culture, but they are a unique people who have sublimated this influence into their own distinct cultural and religious perspective. This is something they have in common with the Japanese. "The Japanese adopted Chinese characters into our own culture, but with systems like the *manyōgana* we borrowed the sounds of these characters to represent Japanese words. We also used Chinese characters to set down our own thoughts and feelings. The Yao are likewise a people living in the vicinity of China who came to use the Chinese writing system. Westernization = globalization is fine, but I think it may also be necessary to take the Yao as an example and reexamine the value of the distinctive cultures of peoples who used Chinese characters to systematize their own thought."



Distribution of the Yao people. At present there are roughly 2.7 million Yao living in China, 45,000 in Thailand, 20,000 in Laos, 750,000 in Vietnam, and an additional 25,000 who immigrated to America as refugees.

(Map originally created by Kōichi Okamoto of the Institute for the Study of Yao Culture)



During a ritual the altar is decorated with more than twenty divine paintings. The three paintings in the photograph depict the three main Taoist gods, with Yen Si (元始) in the center, To Ta (道德) on the right, and Leng Pu (灵宝) on the left. (Lanshan County, Hunan Province, China).



The dissected pig is said to be the model of a boat, with its liver representing the anchor, its intestines the rope, its fat the sails, and the flesh placed on its head the handkerchief used to pray for a safe crossing during the ritual of the storm at sea. (Lanshan County, Hunan Province, China).

## SIDE STORIES



### A priest who paints the gods of the Yao

A priest living in Sa Pa District, Lào Cai Province, Vietnam. He is holding a ceremonial horn and cane. Artists do not only paint; they must also receive a thorough education that allows them to understand the sacred texts and attain the highest rank as a priest.



### Ethnic knowledge cut into seven-character quatrains (jueju)

A passage referring to Pien Hung in a copy of *Pien Hung Great Song* owned by a priest in Ngoc Lac District, Thanh Hoa Province, Vietnam. The sacred text is arranged in upper and lower lines of seven characters each, with four of these lines taken together forming a single quatrain (jueju).



## FEATURE

# Understanding what Underpins China, a Global Superpower, by Looking at Shanghai, an International City

China occupies an important position in the East Asian economic region. Shanghai, the country's largest municipality, is an international hub with several faces —

a revolutionary city shaped by the Chinese Communist Party, a colonial city that housed concessions belonging to various foreign nations, and a multicultural city in which people of various races, including Westerners and Japanese, live side by side.

By decoding the history of Shanghai through its popular media, the “roots” of China, are revealed.

Professor  
**An-Suk Son**

Faculty of Foreign Languages  
Department of Chinese

History of Modern China,  
History of Shanghai,  
History of Foreign Concessions  
in East Asia

An-Suk Son

Born in 1965 in Seoul, South Korea. Prof. An-Suk Son took up his current position as professor at Kanagawa University's Faculty of Foreign Languages after completing a doctoral program at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 1998, obtaining his Ph. D., and working as a full-time lecturer at the School of Law, Hokkaido University. Specializing in the history of modern China and the history of Shanghai, he has authored many books, including *Kindai Chūgoku Toshi Annai Shūsei* [Compilation of Guides to the History of Modern Chinese Cities].

In 1842, the Qing dynasty (China) and Great Britain signed the Treaty of Nanjing. The Opium Wars that had begun with friction over the British opium trade were the first invasion of Qing territory by the British.

The Qing lost the war, and through the Treaty of Nanjing the ports of Guangzhou, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Ningbo, and Shanghai were opened and had foreign “concessions” established within their territory. These “concessions” were leases established under terms that were extremely unequal to China; while they remained Chinese territory, all political and judicial authority belonged to Western powers. These concessions functioned as the focal points of the political, economic, and military activities of Western influences in China.

## A Real Rendition of the “Paris of the East” Portrayed in the Media

“To study Shanghai is to bring light to the current realities of China and East Asia,” says An-Suk Son, who studies various media created in Shanghai.

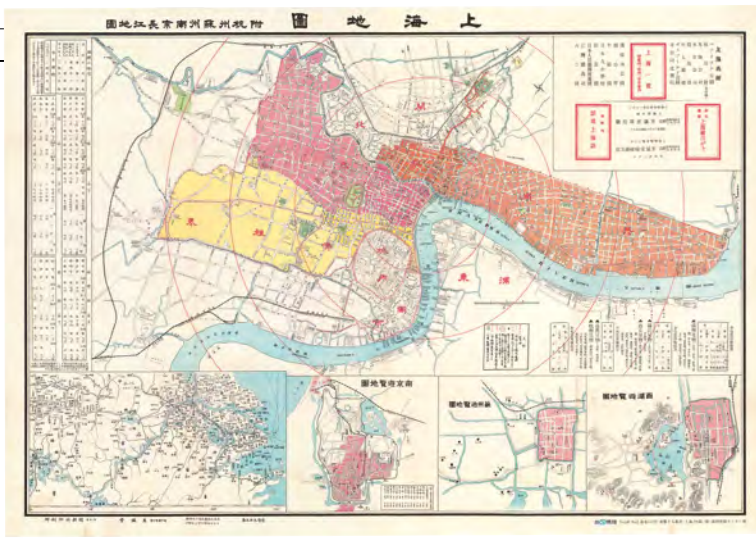
“After the 1840s, Shanghai successfully developed into the largest commercial and industrial city with a trading port in China. This era also saw the birth of the mass media industry in East Asia. Ships and people looking for business opportunities began to gather in Shanghai after the port was opened. What controlled the movement of this wealth was the information found in the media such as newspapers and magazines of various countries produced in Shanghai's concessions.”

A French concession and a concession called the “International Settlement” shared by Britain and the United States were established in Shanghai, with these nations sometimes cooperating with each other and sometimes intensely opposing each other in their struggle for de facto power. It is often mistakenly believed that an official Japanese concession was established in Shanghai, but this was not the case. Japan did not begin participating in the running of these concessions until the “Shanghai incident” in the 1930s.

On the other hand, Japan and the various Western nations engaged in the struggle over concessions in Shanghai and had all print media written in English, French, and Japanese from quite early on. Japan, for example, published *Shanghai Shinpō*, a Japanese-language newspaper, in Shanghai from as early as the 1890s.

Western countries entered into the highly profitable redevelopment of Shanghai's port and oil companies while keeping a close eye on military conflicts, and the “information warfare” that developed offered a miniature representation of world politics and economics. By





Shiseidō *Shanghai Map* (Kaishinsha Insatsu, 1925). The yellow area is the French concession, while the pink and orange areas are the International Settlement occupied mainly by British and American interests. Most Japanese lived in the Hongkou District in the center of the International Settlement.

knowing how China's internal politics were reported in the media that emerged in each country's concession at that time, we can decode the significance of this miniature representation. "Looking at *The North China Herald*, a Western newspaper, it is clear that journalism intended to further the interests of its own country's concession was being developed. When this newspaper reported on events such as the "Northern Expedition" (the military campaign waged by the National Revolutionary Army led by Chiang Kai-Shek with the aim of toppling the Beiyang army in Beijing), for example, its focus was not on idealistic ideas such as the justness of the National Revolutionary Army or the unification of China, but rather on the pronouncements of Chiang Kai-Shek who pledged to protect the lives and property of foreigners."

Even in the midst of this idiosyncratic system of concessions and unstable political environment, ordinary people continued to go about the business of their daily lives with vigor. The splendors of Shanghai were such spectacular that it was dubbed "paradise of adventure" and "the Paris of the East," and in Japan it was referred to as *mato* — "the demon city."

In the 1920s and 1930s, Shanghai's development progressed to the point that it became the financial center of China. There was ample entertainment available, including screenings of the latest Hollywood movies. A popular magazine was created to introduce Chinese people to a new way of life in this city that was accumulating wealth from around the world. The title of this illustrated magazine was *The Young Companion* in English and *Liangyou* [lit. *Good Friend(s)*] in Chinese. Its first issue was published in 1926. "When we hear the word 'China' in Japan, the first things that come to mind are images of the Chinese Communist Party and revolution. But Shanghai offered a vibrant pop culture and urban lifestyle; the everyday lives of *lǎobǎixìng* (ordinary people), far from revolving around politics and revolution, were occupied with

things like watching plays and movies and going to swimming pools in the summer." The cover of *The Young Companion* was graced by leading Chinese film actresses of the day, and turning its pages readers would find content such as a story on beauty salons that performed perms, advertisements for cosmetics, advice on participating in sports (something that was unusual at the time), and celebrity gossip. "Radio broadcasts began, and the French company Pathe, a record company that was the equal of Columbia Records in America, created the 'era of records' in Shanghai. The 1920s were an era that saw the spread of prototypical modern pop culture there."

### Ongoing Reevaluation of the Concessions

Shanghai's glittering prosperity continues even today. According to JETRO (The Japan External Trade Organization), Shanghai's 2015 GDP reached over 2.5 trillion CNY (roughly \$400 billion). But at the root of Shanghai's prosperity as an international city lies the concessions established through the unequal Treaty of Nanjing. For Chinese people these concessions are also emblematic of historical humiliation.

"In China, the concessions came to be thought of as symbols of the thwarting of distinctly Chinese development. But today a complete reversal of this interpretation of history is underway in this country. In recent years there has been an ongoing reevaluation of the role of the concessions in which they are seen as having brought about the rapid progress seen in today's China."

In exchange for the humiliation of the concessions, as its history unfolded Shanghai obtained the "seeds" of cosmopolitanism. These seeds took root in Shanghai's history, and grew into the mighty tree that is China as a global superpower. "No one can jump ahead to the future while living in the present. The media of Shanghai's past can perhaps teach us the 'charms' of this kind of history."

## SIDE STORIES



### Shanghai's "mixed culture" in which past and present co-exist

The cover of *The Young Companion* illustrated magazine featured actresses who appeared in films and the "Beijing opera" that had been developed in the capital during the Qing era. In the Shanghai of the 1920s and 1930s, traditional culture mixed with modern, international culture.



### The everyday lives of ordinary people recorded in advertisements

A page of advertisements from mass-market illustrated magazine *The Young Companion*. The object the young woman is holding against her armpit is what today we would call a "deodorant stick."



Son, a scholar born in South Korea. He entered Tokyo University's Graduate School to study Mao Zedong. His life was then changed by the autobiography of a Shanghai merchant his research supervisor gave him as material for an essay, causing him to devote himself to the study of Shanghai.



# Fugger and List. Examining these Giants of German Economic History

Fugger, one of the wealthiest men of the 16th century. List, one of the unique economists of the 19th century. Minoru Morota has focused his economist's gaze on these two major figures.

What drew Morota, a renowned authority on European economic history, to these two individuals in particular?

Professor Emeritus  
**Minoru Morota**  
Western Economic History

## Minoru Morota

Born in Shizuoka Prefecture in 1928. Graduated from Tokyo University's Faculty of Economics in 1952, and in the same year became a research fellow at the University of Tokyo Graduate School. Holds a Ph.D. in Economics. Became a professor in the Kanagawa University Faculty of Economics in 1965 after having served as a lecturer and associate professor in the Fukushima University Faculty of Economics. Held various positions including Deans of the Faculty of Economics and Dean of the Graduate School Economics. Now Professor Emeritus at Kanagawa University. Books include *Fuggaa Ke no Isan* [*The Legacy of Fugger*], *Furiidorihhi Risuto to Kare no Jidai — Kokuminkeizaigaku no Seiritsu* [*Friedrich List and His Era — The Birth of National Economics*], and *Bannen no Furiidorihhi Risuto — Doitsu Kanzei Dōmei no Shinro* [*The Final Years of Friedrich List — The Course of the Zollverein (the German Customs Union)*].



Two texts he read after the war had ended that played a pivotal role in Morota's youth. Both are first editions.

## Enjoying Academic Freedom after the War

Still healthy and vigorous, he speaks passionately about his research. It is impossible to believe that next year he will celebrate his ninetieth birthday. He happens to have been born in the same year Kanagawa University was founded — 1928. Today Morota remains Japan's most preeminent scholar of European economic history, particularly German economic history in the 16th and early 19th centuries, and the pride of Kanagawa University.

"When I was in middle school it was wartime, so I spent all my time working in a munitions factory. After graduating from middle school I entered the Naval Academy, but the war was soon over. I ended up getting into university, but because of my family circumstances I had to take a year off and work a part time job in Shizuoka, where my family home is located. During this period I read two books that had a powerful effect on me. Under their influence I decided to take a seminar class in Western economy when I began my studies at university."

These two books were *Shūkyō Kaikaku to Kindai Shakai* [*Reformation and Modern Society*] (Hisao Ōtsuka) and *Kindai no Shiteikikōzōron* [*Historical Structure of Modern Society*] (Tomoo Matsuda). Along with being stimulated by the dynamism of understanding history with a focus on

economics, the joy of being able to freely pursue academic inquiry after the war had finally ended was decisive in setting the course of Morota's life as a young man.

## People of Great Wealth Necessitated by War

When Morota speaks of his own work, he divides it into an early period before joining the faculty of Kanagawa University and a late period that followed his taking up this position. The main topic addressed by his work in the former was early capitalism in 16th century Germany, and he conducted research and analysis in which he viewed Jacob Fugger the Rich, one of the successful merchants in Southern Germany during this period, as the main character in a historical drama. Fugger demonstrated an innate talent for business, earning immense profits in mining and other ventures, using his accrued capital to make loans to not only princes and nobles but even the Holy Roman Emperor, and becoming one of Europe's wealthiest men in a single generation. "Among the underlying circumstances that allowed for a large-scale financier like Fugger to emerge and operate as he did in the 16th century was a change in the nature of warfare. Wars fought by knights were replaced by wars fought mainly by mercenaries, and vast sums of money were required in order to obtain



skilled soldiers for hire. In conjunction with the development of guns and cannons, this led to a long period of incessant warfare in which tens of thousands of men were mobilized. For major nations and feudal lords, procuring the funds to wage war was a matter of life and death, and this made the existence of very wealthy men like Fugger a necessity.”

The 16th century was an era of Reformation, and Fugger, who wore the face of a devout Catholic as well as that of a usurer, was viewed as an enemy by Martin Luther. Luther played a leading role in Reformation, but the study of Fugger is necessary in order to understand the economic background against which this movement occurred. We then encounter another face of Fugger as a pioneer of social welfare who established an institution for the relief of the poor day labourers and handworkers in Germany that came to be called the “Fuggerei in Augsburg.”

## Encountering List

Morota was invited to participate in a symposium on 19th century German capitalism by University of Tokyo professor Tomoo Matsuda, the author of one of the two books that had sparked his interest when he was young, and this event kicked off what he describes as his “late period.”

As evinced by the fact that Elizabeth I brought mining technicians from Germany to England, in the 16th century industry was more developed in the former. In the 18th and 19th centuries, however, Britain, France and the Netherlands would become the three most powerful economies in Europe. Factors such as the national devastation wrought by the thirty years war led to a reversal of position between Germany and Britain within a very short span of time.

“At the beginning of the 19th century new German borders were established at the Congress of Vienna, and sovereignty of thirty-nine states of various sizes was recognized within Germany. These states began collecting customs tariffs or duties, something that greatly inconvenienced German commerce. Voices were then raised calling for the abolition of tariffs or duties and progress toward economic unification. This formed the basis upon which German economics was developed. I conducted research focusing on the formation and development of this customs union, and Friedrich List’s name began to pop up in various contexts such as the construction of railroads. This caught my attention and I felt I had to learn more about him.”

In Morota’s final lecture, delivered in 1999 when he reached the age of mandatory retirement, he declared that he would continue to study List. True to his word, Morota has since dedicated

himself to this research.

“In his twenties List studied British economists such as Adam Smith on his own, and eventually taught public administration at a university, but he came to have doubts about the theory Smith advocated in which free trade bring about economic prosperity. He suspected that in reality Germany industry was being ruined by the influx of goods made in Britain.”

## Building a Bridge between Theory and Practice

List was exiled to America when he was in his thirties, and there he demonstrated talent and practical ability as an entrepreneur, becoming wealthy through successful railroad and mining ventures. He said that America had attained its rapid development by building canals and railroads and implementing a policy of protective tariffs, and suggested that what was unfolding before his eyes was the best “textbook” on economics.

“List could not forget Germany. He would no doubt have been successful as an entrepreneur if he had stayed in America, but he threw this away and returned to Germany. There he drew on his experiences in America, working to advance Germany’s development through efforts such as constructing its first long-distance railroad in Leipzig.”

List’s major work, *Das nationale System der politischen Oekonomie*, incorporates the idea he had stated in America that every nation must have its particular Political Economy appropriate to its own nation. This book became a classic translated into fifteen languages, and Morota says that even today it is widely read and remains influential among people in developing countries and those who have doubts about the global economy.

“List was a ‘man of action’ who tried to build a bridge between theory and practice. I have tried to make clear why he undertook such activities and the nature of the important work he did in the development of the German economy. I want List to be more widely read among young people in Japan.”

Morota says that in his home he has the ten volume (twelve book) complete works of Friedrich List, the entirety of which is said to have been read by very few people even in Germany, as well as *Das Zollvereinsblatt* [*Customs Union Bulletin*], a bulletin List edited that ran to more than four thousand pages. A contented looking Morota says with a smile, “I don’t have the energy to go to the library to study, but I have no shortage of things to read.”



Two of Morota’s own books, *Furiidorihhi Risuto to Kare no Jidai* — *Kokuminkeizaigaku no Seiritsu* [*Friedrich List and His Era — The Birth of National Economics*], and *Bannen no Furiidorihhi Risuto* — *Doitsu Kanzei Dōmei no Shinro* [*The Final Years of Friedrich List — The Course of the Zollverein (the German Customs Union)*].



List’s life was portrayed in a film made in Germany in 1943. The man standing beside the woman just to the right of the center of this photograph is the actor who played List. The film’s title was *Der Unendliche Weg*, which can be translated as *Road Without End*.



## Tracing Fugger’s Footsteps

When Morota went to the University of Tübingen in what was then West Germany as an overseas scholar in 1974, he conducted a research survey of the Fuggerei, a social housing project established by Fugger in Augsburg that still exists today (pictured in the photograph), and Fugger family castles that remain in various other areas. If you were an impoverished worker and a devout Catholic you could live in the Fuggerrei for an extremely low rent.





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## PROUD BLUE

Publisher: Research Support Department,  
Kanagawa University  
Translators: Robert Chapeskie,  
James Welker (pp.7-9)

CD: Haruka Tamefusa  
(Tosho Printing Company, Limited)  
Kanako Kurosawa

(Tosho Printing Company, Limited)

AD: Mitsunobu Hosoyamada  
(Hosoyamada Design Office)

D: Christian Gusukuma  
(Hosoyamada Design Office)

Takumi Kawaguchi  
(Hosoyamada Design Office)

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(Tosho Printing Company, Limited)

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