

A Country Where Sex is Not a Sin!

Japanese culture has a sensual element that is quickly discernible, even to the most casual and hurried visitor, and it is not a false promise. Showing remarkable commonsense, the Japanese recognized from the beginning that sex is a natural function and is something that is required to maintain good health—not to mention that it is essential for the survival of the species!

As a result of this practical view of human sexuality and its expression, one typically finds very ordinary people engaged in the sex business. For some, it is a side job; for others it is a full time profession.

“Health care” is one of the “covers” that is used in the sex business (as a sop to those who have adopted a Christian viewpoint regarding sex, which includes the Japanese government).

Those that do not use the term “health” in the name of their operations, generally use it in their advertisements.

The dozens of thousands of “soapland” massage parlors around the country, where hot baths and special massages are the order of the day, now compete with upscale places that range from elegant to opulent.

Some of these modern versions of the old bordello exploit special niches that give them extraordinary appeal—like the one where all of the “services” are provided by married women who work in elegantly furnished “playrooms” that have private showers. The women providers “mother” their male patrons...something that is powerfully attractive to the male ego.

As in the U.S. and elsewhere, these businesses are widely promoted in special as well as mainstream media, including the Internet. And as elsewhere in the world, law enforcement in this industry consists of token efforts. #



Photo by Lois (Bambi) Kawashima
Amazing Japan contributor Sandra Martine-Mori interviews Yasuyuki Yabuki, Director of Marketing, Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau, at the opening of a new tourist information office in the Japan Chamber of Commerce Building in downtown Tokyo.

The Japanese Are Coming!

Another sign that Japan is rapidly recovering from the economic doldrums of the past decade is the growing popularity of “Fly-and-Cruise” package tours that the Japanese are buying as if they might go out of style.

Japan’s leading tour wholesalers report an extraordinary jump in their sales of ocean cruises that require buyers to fly to the departure port to board the cruise ships of their choice.

What makes this encouraging trend even more interesting is the big yen that the travelers are forking over for cruise packages.

The cost of a short cruise, in a windowless cabin, begins at around \$2,000. An 18-day cruise to Antarctica goes for about \$10,000 to \$15,000—plus a couple of thousand for tips to the staff!

Among the more popular destinations: Alaska, the Canadian Maritimes, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean.

At the beginning of this new trend the majority of the fly-and-cruise vacationers were retirees. Now their numbers include middle-aged couples and even some in their 20s and 30s. #

The Wisdom of Proverbs In Japanese Culture

John Erskine Banta

TOKYO – Proverbs, which might be called distilled folklore, are apparently indigenous to all cultures, and often reveal more about the philosophy and psychology of a people than what they are generally given credit for.

Japanese culture is especially rich in *kotowaza* (koh-toh-wah-zah) or proverbs not only because it is ancient and has been very sophisticated for a long time, but also because of the influence of Shintoism, Buddhism, Taoism and Zen Buddhism -- all of which (many say) are more philosophically and metaphysically profound than Christianity.

Still, the most profound proverbs, with only slightly different wording, can be found in virtually all old cultures -- an obvious sign of the universality of humanity,

despite racial and cultural differences. Some examples of Japanese proverbs:

Oya kohkoh wo shitai toki ni oya wa nashi. (Oh-yah koh-koh oh she-tie nee oh-yah nah-she)

By the time children realize the virtue of their parents and what they owe to them, the parents are gone.

Oya no iken to hiya zake wa ato de kiku. (Oh-yah no ee-kane toh he-yah zah-kay wah ah-toh day kee-kuu.)

Just as it takes time for cold *sake* to make one pleasantly mellow, it takes time for children to recognize the wisdom of their parents.

Kawaii ko ni wa tabi wo saseyo! (Kah-wah-ee koh nee wah tah-bee oh sah-say-yoh!)

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Japanese Proverbs

Cont'd from Page 1

Parents should let their children experience some of the hardships of life for their own good.

Atama hagete mo uwaki wa yamanu. (Ah-tah-mah hah-gay-tay moh uu-wah-kee wah yah-mah-nuu.)

A bald head does not stop philandering.

Bijin ni toshi nashi. (Bee-jeen nee toh-she nah-she.)

Beautiful women have no age.

Deru kui wa utareru. (Day-rue kuu-ee wah uu-tah-ray-rue.)

A protruding nail (or person!) gets hammered down. (Still basically true in Japanese society.)

Hyaku bun ikken ni shikuzu. (He'yah-kuu boon eek-kane nee she-kuu-zuu.)

Hearing 100 times is not as good as seeing once. (Ask any traveler!)

I no naka no kawazu, takai wo shirazu. (Ee no nah-kah no kah-wah-zuu, tah-kigh oh she-rah-zuu.)

A frog in a well does not know the ocean. (A narrow mind equates very well with a well.)

Kunshi hyohen. (Koon-she he'yoh-hane.)

A wise man changes his mind.

Musume o miru yori, haha wo miyo. (Muu-sue-may oh me-rue yoh-ree, hah-hah oh me-yoh.)

Look at the mother instead of the daughter. (Many husbands wish they had.)

Sake wa honshin wo arawasu. (Sah-kay wah hoan-sheen wo ah-rah-wah-sue.)

People reveal their true selves when drunk. (Belief in this saying is the reason why it is common for Japanese to go out of their way to get new colleagues and business contacts drunk at the first opportunity.)

Makeru ga kachi. (Mah-kay-rue gah kah-chee)

He who is defeated wins. (Look at Japan today!)

Ju yoku go wo seisu. (Juu yoh-kuu go oh say-ee-sue)

Win by yielding. (The secret of aikido.)

Kane areba baka mo danna. (Kah-nay ah-ray-bah bah-kah moh dahn-nah)

With money a fool can be a lord. (Need we say more!)

Binbo nin no ko takusan. (Bean-boh neen no koh tock-sahn)

Poor people have many children.

Tabi no haji wa kakisute. (Tah-bee no hah-gee wah kah-kee-sue-tay)

Travelers have no shame. (They do things they wouldn't do at home.)

Business people dealing with Japan, as well as recreational travelers, can get a lot of mileage out of their relationships with the Japanese by now and then tossing a well-known *kotowaza* into their conversations. Of course, it had better fit!

Recommended source: *Even a Stone Buddha Can Talk: Wit and Wisdom of Japanese Proverbs*. Available online at Amazon.com.

John Erskine Banta is General Manager and Director of Radisson Miyako Hotel Tokyo.

#

Want Some Seaweed In Your Bread?

Japanese bakers bake some of the best bread in the world. Now when you eat bread in Japan you may also be getting a helping of extract of seaweed.

A Japanese producer of alginic acid has developed a thickening and stabilizing agent that makes bread bake up fluffy without losing its moisture content from the heat.

The key ingredient in the powdered agent is a polysaccharide extracted from seaweed.

Seaweed, a common ingredient in the traditional Japanese diet, is loaded with trace elements that are essential for health, including some gold.

It is surely a given that the maker of the new fluff agent, Kimica Corporation, will soon begin to export it to the bread makers of the world. #

Pet-Watching Camera Hooked to Cell Phones

In Japan there are "dog inns," "dog hotels," "dog parks," and dog accessories that cost dozens of thousands of dollars. In other words, many pet owners in Japan treats their dogs like pampered members of the family.

The latest in Japan's pet world is an inhouse camera that can be operated by remote to send still pictures of pets to their owners' cell phones via email.

Called "Peppot Camera," the device takes a still photo after an infrared sensor confirms that a cat or dog is within the view of the lense. After taking the shot, the camera then automatically dials the cell phone number of the owner, giving the owner 15 seconds to respond by dialing the camera, which then sends the photo by email.

To receive the photos, the cell phone owner has to be a subscriber to a data telecom service provided by DDI Pocket, Inc.

The Peppot Camera (shouldn't it be the "Petpot Camera?") is made by Matsushita Electric Works, Ltd. in Osaka.

Man Most Popular With Ladies is Korean

An important sign of the new times, in particular the way younger Japanese view Korea, is the fact that the most popular movie star among Japanese—especially women—is a Korean male: Yong-Joon Bae.

The news media describes Bae as just the most prominent element in a "Korean cultural boom" that is washing over Japan.

Bae owes his popularity in Japan to the Korean soap opera "Winter Sonata," a drama involving romantic triangles, incest and amnesia. It has been aired three times, and seems destined to be shown again.

According to the Japanese news media, women love Bae because he always says and acts in precisely the way women most appreciate, and respond to. The media adds that the reason for this is that the scriptwriters of the drama are two women.

The popularity of the Korean drama highlights a contradiction in the Japanese attitude toward the several hundred thousand Koreans who were born and raised in Japan.

While individually many ethnic Korean residents of Japan have become successful in business and in the arts, as a group they are still discriminated against by both the corporate world and various government laws. Cont'd

This situation is even more contradictory when it is known that much of the cultural that Japan now claims as its own was originally brought to Japan by Korean immigrants, who may have also founded Japan's Imperial line. #



Radisson Miyako Hotel Tokyo

Radisson Miyako Hotel Tokyo is situated in a portion of a huge landscaped garden created for Japan's industrialist and statesman Aiiichiro Fujiyama. The area is now noted for its museums, upscale residences and the Tokugawa era Sengaku-Ji (Temple), which includes the tombs of the celebrated 47 Samurai who were ordered (in 1701) to commit ritual suicide by the Shogun after they had revenged the unjustified death of their lord.

The hotel adjoins the famed Happon Garden Restaurant.

Make reservations online at:
rm-rez@tokyo.miyakohotels.ne.jp

Language Institute Moving To Protect Japanese

There are two languages in Japan. Regular Japanese, and English pronounced as if it were Japanese. The Japanized English is called *katakana* (kah-tah-kah-nah), and is so common that almost no Japanese ever says more than a sentence or two without using one or more Japanized English words.

There are, in fact, thousands of English katakana that have become an integral part of verbal and written communication in Japan, which suggests that it has become much easier for native English speakers to communicate with the Japanese because they know and use so many English terms.

Perish the thought. When the English words are pronounced in Japanese they become a different language that foreigners, like the Japanese, have to learn before they make sense.

Cont'd in Next Column

Two of my favorite examples: *buredo* (buu-ray-doh) and *buru bado* (buu-ruu bah-doh).

Give up? ...*Buredo* is bread, and *buru bado* is blue bird.

The situation has gotten so "bad" that the National Institute for Japanese Language is trying to reduce the number of katakana words in government documents....and is going to seek public opinion on the challenge.

Two of the words the Institute wants to eliminate, and replace with Japanese terms, are *riterashii* (ree-tay-rah-shee-ee) and *sutansu* (suu-tahn-suu). Don't sweat it. The first word is literacy, and the second word is stance.

In a survey, the Institute found that many young people prefer the Japanized English words because they are easier to understand than the Japanese equivalents. #

Taking Unusual Steps To Break Old Barriers

For generations introducing anything new in Japan was virtually taboo. This included ways of doing things as well as allowing foreign workers into the country.

This policy has changed in many areas, of course, but only a few categories of foreign workers are in Japan legally, resulting in some typical subterfuges to allow others to come in.

One of the ploys is designating certain areas or industries as "special structural reform zones," allowing foreign workers to be brought in despite the laws banning foreign workers.

The latest example of this is in the health care industry, where the government has agreed to create a number of "special zones" for Filipino nurses, who are in high demand. #

Digital Writing Pen Makes Debut

Hitachi Maxwell Ltd., a Tokyo company, has introduced a writing pen that is also a miniature computer. It is able to store up to 40 pages of text and drawings, and then transmit the data to a personal computer via a USB cable.

The data has to be written or drawn on a special notepad that interacts with the memory chip in the pen. The

notepad is sold with the pen as a set. It is designed to be used for note-taking during meetings and on other occasions. #

Olive Oil Island In Inland Sea

Shodo Shima (Shodo Island) is a small island in Japan's scenic Inland Sea that has been suffering from an economic downturn—particularly in the number of tourists traditionally drawn by the bucolic rural setting of the island with its central core of tree-covered mountains, its olive orchards, and tiny farms.

With the number of its farmers down to a few, and the only one other industry of any consequence being the cultivation of olive trees, the residents of the island have mounted a major campaign to increase the number of olive trees and the annual production of olive oil.

The government has designated the island as a "special zone," where the residents can try a corporate approach to things that were previously prohibited. In this case, the residents of Shodo Island have been granted permission to engage in the cultivation of olive trees as a corporate venture.

The first olive trees were planted on Shodo Shima during the Meiji era (1868-1912) at the request of the government, because of its warm, mild climate. Visitors who would like to see Japan as it was might want to look in on Shodo Shima. #

Japanese Fuel-Cell Cars May Win Energy Race

There is growing evidence that Japanese automobile makers will begin mass production of fuel-cell driven vehicles before American and other manufacturers take this long overdue step.

In their usual way of coming together in the face of a "foreign enemy," Nissan, Honda and Toyota have joined forces to build a state-of-the-art fuel-cell production facility in Kanagawa Prefecture, which adjoins Metro Tokyo on the south and southwest.

Plans of the 3-way consortium call for a fuel-cell powered vehicle pow-

ered by a proprietary stack to be ready for the market in 2007. The first sales will target government agencies, including U.S. government entities.

Nissan spent over 85 billion yen on fuel-cell research between 1998 and 2003. #



Café California

A new breakfast, lunch and dinner restaurant brings the charm and ambiance of San Francisco to bustling Tokyo. Located off the lobby of Miyako Hotel Tokyo, *Café California* has over 40 California wines on its menu. The upscale café seats 106 patrons on the inside and 84 in an outside terrace.

200,000 People Reach Top of Japan

The last tally of people who reached the top of Mt. Fuji during the past summer's climbing season was put at approximately 200,000, which was far from a record.

The climbing season for Mt. Fuji lasts for only two months—July 1 to August 31—because of the weather, which can change from sunny and calm to a raging wind and rain or snow storm in an hour or so.

There are four trails to the peak of Mt. Fuji, with the most popular being the one on the side facing Tokyo, with Fuji-Yoshida city being the starting point. During the peak climbing period—August 7 to August 16—climbers are required to take shuttle buses for the final leg to Station 5, and begin the actual climb from there. Only the hardest hikers begin the climb from Station 1.

A massive volcano cone, Mt. Fuji has eight peaks at the top, and it takes about 90 minutes to hike around the crater edge.

There are sleeping accommodations, a post office, and pay phones in the crater, so climbers can mail post cards from the top of Japan, and use the pay phones to make calls if they don't have cell phones. #

Builder Planning Ginza Skyscraper

Recent changes in Japan's redevelopment laws have opened the door for the building of skyscrapers in the Ginza district, and debate between builders and storeowners in the area are now hot and heavy.

One site approved for redevelopment is now occupied by the flagship of the Matsuzakaya department store chain, which has teamed with the famed Mori Building Company, and plans to erect a 178-meter high commercial and residential complex to include offices and a hotel.

Prior to the law change, the height limit in the Ginza district was 56 meters, so high-rise buildings and towers in the district will have a dramatic impact on its image.

The Ginza district was the first location in Japan to have Western style shops, and the main street—*Chuo Dori* (Chuu-oh Doh-ree), or Central Avenue—was the first to have streetlights and brick sidewalks, making it the most popular shopping and strolling place in the city.

Town Takes Steps To Attract Tourists

Unazuki is the largest hot spring resort in mountainous Toyoma Prefecture, and for over 80 years it attracted people from far and wide... But by the end of the 1990s, things had slowed down.

Now the town has added some new attractions to rebuild its tourist industry. One of the new attractions is an *Ashi-Yu* (Ah-she-Yuu) or Foot Bath, which is said to have medicinal properties. The local railway offers free passage for tourists during the winter months.

A traditional summer feature of the town that is being continued: kabuki plays at the Unazuki International Hall.

The region is noted for the scenic beauty of its mountains and foliage, especially in the fall, when the leaves turn brown and gold. #

Gangster Gets Mad At Slow Book Service

A member of one of Hiroshima's most famous *yakuza* (yah-kuu-zah) criminal organizations recently wrote a book about his life.

When he went into a local bookstore and ordered a copy of the book, the sales clerk was not exactly friendly or efficient, so he demanded to see the manager.

The manager apparently didn't resolve the situation to the gangster's satisfaction, and, according to him, was attacked by the *yakuza*.

The police were called and the gangster was arrested. His book got a lot of national publicity...which no doubt impressed a lot of authors. #

Kabuki Actor Becomes "Rock Star Hot"

Kabuki used to be something that a few die-hard Japanese and unwary tourists went to see, but there has been an Edo (old Tokyo) like revival of interest in the esoteric drama, with actors being treated like rock stars, and their concerts selling out as soon as they are announced.

One of these stars, Ebizo Ichikawa, is the 11th Ebizo in the famed Ichikawa kabuki clan, and recently replaced his aged father, who was the 12th Danjuro Ichikawa.

Ebizo's performances are so popular that people are complaining that they can't even get a telephone call through to the box office to reserve tickets.

The kabuki star has been hired by Ito En, a noted tea company, as its television spokesperson. Photo albums of his performances are selling like the company's famous green tea. #

Police Say No To Cutting Off Finger

It has long been tradition among Japan's notorious *yakuza* gangs that when a lower ranking member ran afoul of his boss in any way, or tried to

quit the organizations, he was ordered to cut off one of his little fingers—if he didn't quickly volunteer to do so on his own.

And yakuza with fingers missing used to be a common sight in hotels and other public places they customarily frequent. But times have changed.

When a 21-year old member of the famous Yamaguchi Gumi crime syndicate was told to cut off one of his fingers, he went to the police.

The police investigated the situation, and ordered his boss to give up the practice of having underlings cut off their fingers.

Some ex-yakuza wear false little fingers to mask their past. #

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Editor

Boyé Lafayette De Mente

Associate Editor & Graphics Designer
Demetra de Ment

Contributing Editors

Sandra Martine-Mori

Glenn Davis

Moritaka Matsumura

Photo Journalists

Bruce Wyman

Lois Kawashima

Email

editors@amazingjapan.info

Employee Training Goes High-Tech

What appears to have been the world's first digital factory was opened in Japan in 2000, with all employee training and production feedback fully digitalized.

The factory, officially called "Digital Factory," was launched as a subsidiary by the Roland Corporation, and featured an assembly line system based on cell-type production.

Individual employees assemble complete units of printers and other equipment by following instructions on a

monitor that provides 3-dimensional imagines of the products.

The initial plant was so successful Roland switched all of its plants to the new system, including one in Taiwan.

A company spokesman said a new employee could be trained in the morning and become fully productive that afternoon.

In addition to virtually eliminating the time factor in employee training, the new system also dramatically increases production control. #

Towel for Washing, Not Drying

Toray Industries, one of Japan's large makers of artificial fabrics and consumer products, has introduced a towel that cleans, rather than dries, the body.

The towel is made of polyester material that has a 3-layer structure with an air-filled cushion in the middle. The material is made of fibers only 2 microns in diameter, which sounds like they are too small to be seen without a microscope.

Toray says the towel removes dirt that is deep in the skin by generating lather that penetrates the skin and draws it out, and that users do not have to scrub hard for it to work.

The towel is sold under the brand name Toraysee Nameraka Body Towel. *Nameru* (nah-may-ruu) is the Japanese word for "lick."

Car Owners Must Pay Disposal Fee

Starting in January 2005 Japanese car owners will have to pay an upfront fee to cover the future cost of disposing of plastic materials, fabrics and chloro-fluorocarbons when the vehicles are finally recycled.

The fees will be paid to car dealers and car importers, who will be responsible for disposing of these three categories of materials that are left over after a car is junked and compacted.

The fees, which will be set later and will be determined by the make of the car, its weight, the number of airbags, etc. will be added to the cost of new vehicles. Fees for cars already on the

road will be added to the annual registration charges.

Fees may run as high as \$600 for some vehicles. #

Names Now Have Upbeat Meanings

In pre-democratic Japan (before 1945-46) parents gave their children no nonsense, serious names that were designed to contribute to health, a long life, prosperity, and so on, generally with Confucian overtones.

Japan Times columnist Kaori Shoji notes that in the world of names, things have really changed. Instead of naming girls *Take* (Tah-kay), which means bamboo (because it grows tall, straight and strong), girls are more likely to be named *Misaki* (Me-sah-kee), which means "Beautiful Blossoming," or *Mirei* (Me-ray-ee), which means "Beautiful Bell."

Another popular girl's name is *Reika* (Ray-ee-kah), which translates as "Exotically Beautiful Fragrance."

Still other parents give their kids foreign sounding names; often by just pronouncing the foreign names as if they were Japanese.

But there are official limits on what parents can name their children. One father tried to name his newborn son *Akuma* (Ah-kuu-mah), which means "Devil," but when he went to the local Ward Office to register the name it was refused and had to pick another name.

I still appreciate the name *Tome*, used in earlier times by parents who already had as many children as they wanted. It means "Stop." #

Japanese Students Take Backseat to Chinese

Japanese high school and university students taking math and science classes used to score the highest in the world, but no longer. A recent survey revealed that this honor now belongs to Chinese students.

One Japanese academic involved in the survey said the Chinese scores were "astonishingly high," in comparison with Japanese scores. The survey also found that the scores of Chinese students continued to improve throughout their school years, while those of

Japanese students generally stopped when they became seniors.

However, Japanese students scored higher than the Chinese in biology.

This and other examples of the deterioration of the educational level of high school and university graduates in Japan has resulted in increasing calls for the reinstatement of the curriculum and discipline that was characteristic of Japan's educational system until the end of the 1980s.

However, the chances of the Education Ministry being able to turn back the clock are exceedingly slim—at least until the situation becomes so critical that the threat to the economy can no longer be ignored and becomes politically doable.

The Past Returns To Osaka

Nostalgia for the color, cheerfulness and soul-satisfying elements of the past is growing rapidly in Japan, and is bring back some of the ambiance that has been lost to modernity and Westernization.

One of the latest examples is the Dotombori Gokuraku Shoten Gai in Osaka, which translates as the Dotombori Heavenly Shopping Street (or Center), which in reality is the 5th, 6th and 7th floor of the Sammy Ebisu Plaza Building in Osaka's Chuo Ward.

Dotombori has been famous for centuries as a shopping and entertainment district, and has kept much of its traditional flavor. But this new "center" goes all the way back to the days of the Shoguns. Most of the employees are middle-aged or older.

The enterprise consists of some 50 restaurants, bars, souvenir shops, a shrine, a theater and an acrobatic musical square. Entertainment includes stand-up manzai comics and rakugo storytellers. Food choices include special delicacies from all over the Kansai region.

As in the old days, colorfully dressed vendors stand outside the shops, calling out to passersby and often bantering with them. The whole atmosphere is cheerful enough to make you forget the hurly burly of today's world.

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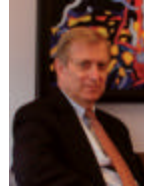
Japan's Amazing "Off-Budget Budget"

By Donald Westmore

Executive Director, American Chamber of
Commerce in Japan

TOKYO—Did you know that the world's largest savings institution is not a bank, or even by some definition a financial institution?

The government-owned Japan Postal Savings holds in trust nearly 30% of Japan's \$13 trillion in household savings, dwarfing those of Mitsubishi-Sumitomo-UFJ, the world's largest private bank.



Not only that, the world's largest life insurance provider is the government-owned Japan Postal Insurance, with assets larger than those of all other insurance providers in Japan put together.

Both of these institutions are part of the Japan Posts, and function as a huge "off-budget budget" for elected and career government officials to award pork barrel projects at low cost and with little accountability.

This flow of funds—from wage earners to postal savings and insurance, to the ministries, to public works and other projects, and finally back to favored firms and their employees—is the financial cornerstone for the entire Japanese political economic system.

For example, the construction industry—a much-favored recipient—directly employs 11% of the workforce, or 7.4 million people, employed by more than 500,000 mostly small and medium sized companies. That's a lot of votes, not to mention livelihoods.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has made privatizing not only the Japan Post and the highway corporations, but eventually all of the 163 public corporations in Japan the centerpiece of his economic reform policies.

This vast array of public entities provides huge numbers of jobs—Japan Post alone has 25,000 facilities and 270,000 employees—and has helped to give Japan an unusually even distri-

bution of income. But it also is a prime cause for the "dual structure" of the Japanese economy.

A few world-class manufacturing exporters make up for inefficient and uncompetitive industries that account for two-thirds of Japan's GDP.

Mr. Koizumi knows that unless the productivity of these sectors is raised, Japan will be unable to support the growing number of retirees with a steadily shrinking workforce.

The Prime Minister faces a genuine Catch 22. The Japanese model that produced so much success in the past must change in fundamental ways or the country risks defaulting on its pension and health care commitments.

And to carry out reforms of this magnitude he needs strong support from the ruling coalition LDP/Komeito parties, as well as the Japanese people. Yet the coalition's political strength depends on its ability to deliver benefits to its constituents.

If this quasi-socialist system changes, many Diet members will face unemployment, and in the short term significant numbers of ordinary voters will lose jobs.

All businesses in Japan, foreign and domestic, have a vital interest in solving this dilemma. The economy must be weaned from dependence on public and quasi-public financing and relieved of market distortions caused by the heavy presence of public corporations. But the political system must find ways to deal with the social costs.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan's Privatization Task Force, led by ACCJ Vice President Allan Smith, recently issued a report on applying global "best practices" based on experience in other countries and studies by the OECD and World Bank.

The principles covered subjects such as ensuring transparency, removing special tax and regulatory privileges, preventing abuse of market power, and creating a level playing field.

The principles are basic to a market economy, but that is precisely the point.

In many ways the Japanese economy does not work on the basis of market economy principles. Whether Prime Minister Koizumi and other reformers

succeed in expanding the areas where those principles obtain while providing a cushion for those adversely affected is a political as well as economic issue of the highest importance to us all. #

Book Review:



New Tastes in GREEN TEA: A Novel Flavor for Familiar Drinks, Dishes, and Desserts, by Mutsuko Tokunaga, Foreword by Jane Pettigrew, translated by Yoko Toyozaki and Stuart Atkin. Kodansha International. Hardcover. 128 pages. ¥2,500.

Divided into four parts [A Tea Drinker's Guide; All About Green Tea; Cooking With Green Tea; and Other Facts About Tea], this is the ultimate tea book.

In addition to covering the basics of tea and tea-making, it also features tea recipes for health and beauty treatments, as well as for desserts, breads, other savory foods, and modern beverages like smoothies and lattes.

Beautifully illustrated with numerous color photos, the book is as visually pleasing as a work of art. It puts the world of green tea into the reader's hands, bringing an underappreciated flavor into the kitchen as a cooking ingredient as well as a beverage.

The ancient Chinese belief that green tea contains many trace elements that are extraordinarily beneficial to the health has now been confirmed in numerous scientific tests, resulting in a boom in green tea drinking worldwide.

This book takes the use of green tea to its highest level, far beyond the

mundane position it has occupied in the past.

The author of the book, Mutsuko Tokunaga, is one of Japan's most renowned food stylists, noted for her magazine and newspaper articles and radio and television programs on green tea, and for her Japanese language books on tea.

Jane Pettigrew, who wrote the foreword for the book, is one of England's leading authorities on tea and the author of a number of books on the social history and use of tea. Her insightful preface to the book adds enormously to its flavor.

Kodansha International senior editor Tetsuo Kuramochi and his staff also deserve kudos for their formatting and design contributions to the book. For details, see: www.kodansha-intl.co.jp,

Heat of Summer Recalls Old Traditions

This past summer it got hotter in Tokyo and other parts of Japan than any other time on record, bringing on nostalgia for the past when people were far less rushed and could take the time to engage in "before air-conditioning" practices to help them beat the heat.

These pastimes included watching fireworks in the evenings, taking in summer street festivals that featured food and drink stalls, listening to scary stories, and drenching oneself with cold water in the backyard.

Another of the old customs that was recalled by some this summer was the practice of sending greeting cards to family members and friends, with messages about taking it easy during the hot days and words of comfort.

These custom was known as *sho-chuu mimai* (show-chuu me-my), which may be translated as "words of comfort in the midst of heat."

Old Rice Ball Returns Prosperity to Town

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* recently carried a story about how a 2,000-year-old rice ball brought back optimism and prosperity to Rokusei Town in Ishikawa Prefecture after its economy was de-

vastated by the collapse of its textile industry.

The story started when the petrified remains of a 2,000-year-old rice ball was unearthed from ruins in the town in 1987.

Town resident Kyoshi Tani, who had lost his job in a textile mill, had been growing rice in a 100-square meter plot as a hobby. He began experimenting with the ancient strain of rice, and gave some of it to his friends who raved about its stickiness and sweetness—both highly valued qualities in Japan.

Tani gradually expanded the size of his rice paddy and began to promote his *kodai mai* (koh-die my) or "ancient rice" to town businesspeople. Before long, a restaurant was offering kodai mai rice balls to its customers, and a sake brewer began producing the traditional rice wine from kodai mai.

In 1996 Tani helped found an association of local residents to promote other enterprises using *kodai mai*. Soon noodles and rice crackers were being made with *kodai mai* and packaged as gifts.

Door-to-door insurance salesmen began to use the packaged items as incentive gifts. Others began giving them as congratulatory gifts.

Tani's *kodai mai* rice paddy now covers 15,000 square meters, and the town is on its way to recovering from its decades long slump.

More Dinosaur Bones Found Near Osaka

For the first time, dinosaur fossils have been found in the Kansai region (Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe) region of Japan, and are said to be the best preserved dinosaur bones found in the country so far.

Discovered on Awaji Island, which is part of Hyogo Prefecture, the bones are that of a plant eater called hadrosaur, that lived some 70 million years ago, had 500 teeth, and was about 10 meters tall.

Similar dinosaur fossils have been found on the main islands of Japan; all of which have been traced to the mainland of Asia.

The dinosaurs had bills like huge ducks, and a fringe on top of their heads. #

Newscaster Brought Down By Her “Watermelon Bra”

The Western religious-based obsession of regarding female breasts as erotic appendages that are dangerous to mankind has infected Japan, and is having some strange consequences.

One of the odd consequences of this breast obsession involved a television newscaster who worked for Japan’s prestigious NHK public broadcasting company in Yamagata Prefecture.

The 26-year-old female newscaster was attractive and was fairly competent as a “talking head” but what really made her stand out, and especially popular with male viewers, was her 96-centimeter (about 40-inches) bust line.

The news media picked up on her and began referring to her as Miss Sui Kappu (sooey kahp-puu), which means “Miss Watermelon Cups,” in an obvious reference to her bra size.

National attention resulted in an agent offering her news casting services to big-time stations. She got one “gig” that was heavily promoted as “Miss Sui Kappu,” was virtually laughed off of the screen, and quickly disappeared from the public eye.

She eventually reappeared doing special programs, such as milking a goat (after first groping for the udder of a male goat) on location in Portugal.

News Media Say Men Don’t Need Partners

The news media that covers the “unofficial” side of life in Japan reports that some thirty percent of the country’s large population of single men between the ages of 26 and 30 say they do not need girl friends or wives to take care of their “biological urges.”

A recent survey of this group reports that approximately one-third of the men say it is simply too much trouble to create and maintain a personal, intimate relationship with women, and that they prefer to spend their time doing other things.

According to the survey, the reason these men are comfortable with this lifestyle is because of the presence of the huge *fuzoku* (fuu-zoh-kuu), or “erotic entertainment industry,” where

their “urges” can be taken care of and there are no subsequent obligations.

The *fuzoku* industry, in one form or another, has been a staple of Japanese culture since ancient times.

Ginza Making Comeback As Entertainment Center

Tokyo’s famous Ginza district reigned as the high-end mecca of bars, cabarets and nightclubs from the early 1950s through the 1970s, and then declined as the cost of doing business in the area had gone sky high, and hundreds of other entertainment districts had sprung up in different parts of the city.

There was a further conspicuous decline in the number of Ginza night time spots in the 1990s and following the turn of the century, but beginning in 2003 the booming economy ended the decline, and a slew of hostess clubs (legally designated as cabarets) are once again enlivening the Ginza scene.

But even an hour at one of the clubs can set you back from \$300 to \$500...and one of the prime reasons for this (unknown to most foreign visitors) is that customers are charged for each hostess that graces them with her presence, and in many clubs it is common for the hostesses to circulate from one group to another...

The clubs are now competing with each other to attract the most attractive and skilled hostesses in preparation for the big year-end spending spree by companies aiming to impress their customers and oblige them for the coming year.

Hostesses generally get paid a guarantee plus commissions based on how much their customers spend. The most attractive and skillful ones can make as much as \$1,000 in one evening. Some customers hoping to make time with favorite hostesses after hours tip them directly and generously.

Among the big investors in the new clubs: loan sharks, waste processing companies, profit-making school owners, and former bar and club owners who made a fortune during the heyday of Japan’s “bubble economy,” and are looking for a repeat of the good old days. #

Doing Business in Japan—A Country Far Far Away!

Boyé Lafayette De Mente

I have often observed that in doing business in Japan it is far more important to have an MCA (Master of Cultural Administration) than an MBA.

Cultural elements in Japanese behavior in general and in the Japanese way of doing business in particular take precedence over many things that Western business people hold dear.

These differences are reflected in the laws of the country as well as in the etiquette and ethics of the business community...and they can be formidable barriers to doing business successfully.

Many of the foreign companies that have succeeded in Japan did it the hard way, and spent an awful lot of energy, money and time in the process. Some were fortunate enough to hook up with Thomas J. Nevins, founder and CEO of Technics in Management Transfer, Inc. (TMT).

A 1972 graduate of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations of Cornell University, Nevins did the fieldwork for his degree in Japan. Following graduation he returned to Japan, first working in the trade union movement as a writer and translator, becoming intimately familiar with its inner works and its leaders, including its most radical members, often spending days at hot spring spas with them when working on special programs.

This experience made Nevins the leading foreign authority on Japan’s labor laws, personnel policies, and human resources management, and led him to establish his own consulting firm to aid foreign companies in Japan.

In addition to providing consulting services to foreign companies in Japan—and wanting to enter Japan—Nevins turned his writing skills to producing numerous papers on how to maneuver through the minefield of practices and laws that made up Japan’s corporate world.

Some of these papers became his first book, *Labor Pains & the Gaijin*

Boss, published by the book division of *The Japan Times* in 1984. This book contained the knowledge about Japan's social insurance, government programs and business-related cultural insights that he had accumulated over a period of 14 years.

During this period, Nevins also became fluent enough in Japanese to begin conducting seminars in that language as well as negotiating with labor union officials on behalf of clients.

His second book, *Taking Charge in Japan*, also published by *The Japan Times*, came out in 1990. This book focused on helping foreign firms in Japan deal with their "people problems" and recruiting needs. Other books followed, some of which were published by JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization).

This year, Nevins has so far published two more books, *JAPAN TRUE OR FALSE – People Problems, Costs & Restructuring*; and *KNOW YOUR OWN BONE*.

Japan True or False, a large book (over 600 pages), is an accumulation of all of the insights Nevins has gained in 35 years of working "in the trenches" on labor and management problems in Japan, posed as 63 true or false questions that are divided into five groups that reflect the areas of his expertise.

These groups are: (1) compensation and benefits—design and change. (2) rules of employment and retirement benefits—set-ups and adjustments. (3) staff reductions and downsizing. (4) problem employee solutions – terminations. And (5), unions and staff relations.

Nevins' answers to the 63 questions he poses sometimes read more like novelettes than business prose, including some racy vignettes as well as humor, but they provide the kind of hard-hitting nitty-gritty stuff that companies typically do not get from other consultants or attorneys.

In fact, many of the pearls of wisdom and advice that Nevins proffers are just the opposite of the orthodox views one gets from such people. It is not a dull read! [Portions of the book are translated into Japanese and French.]

Cont'd in next column

If there is one overwhelming message of this book, it is that top foreign management in Japan runs into serious trouble if it is more concerned with the legalities of an action than with understanding the best strategy, tactics, and communication process surrounding the action.

If you want sensible and fair rules of employment, salary, retirement, and other benefit programs; want to be able to smoothly and effectively reduce staff, or weed out poor performers; want to have better and more productive relations with a union or your workforce; want help in buying out a partner, doing due diligence before acquiring a company, changing the benefits or influencing the corporate culture of a company you acquire or merge with...this book is worth more than its weight in gold.

Japan True or False can be ordered direct from TMT. For purchasing and other details, go to www.tmt.aba.com

Haiku-of-the-Month

Buson Yosa

(1716-1783)

Ima tsukuru

Aki wo tsukuzuku

Houshi kana!

The mournful song
Of the crickets
Mark the passing of fall!

Travel-Word Of-the-Month

Benkyo

(Bane-k'yoh)

Japan is still a shopping mecca for all kinds of electronic devices, from digital cameras and wristwatches that monitor your health to for a wide variety of arts and folk crafts that are unique.

But unlike some other countries, Japanese merchants do not have the reputation of being into haggling.

And yet, many of them do regularly give discounts when asked, especially those who cater specifically to tourists, both domestic and foreign.

One of the standard polite ways of asking for a discount is to use the word *benkyo* (bane-k'yoh), which literally means "study."

When used in this sense, the idea is that you ask the merchant "to study" his price, his profit margin, etc., and give you a lower price.

There are two or three common ways of using this term. One is: *Benkyo shite kudasai* (bane-k'yoh ssh-tay kuu-dah-sigh), which literally means "Please study (it)"—that is, please lower your price.

Another usable expression is *Benkyo dekimasu ka?* (bane-k'yoh day-kee-mahss kah?, or "Can you lower the price?"

It is not the practice in Japan for department stores and other high-end shops and boutiques to give discounts, but that is not to say they don't do it.

Some will, and there are often special discounts that are available to students, teachers, etc., that are available for the asking.

Benkyo is an easy word to pronounce and remember and should be added to your travel vocabulary.

Business-Word Of-the-Month

Sabisu

(Sah-bee-suu)

Sabisu is the Japanese pronunciation of the English word "service." But it means more in its Japanese form than it does in English.

In addition to the standard meaning of providing "after-service" for the maintenance and/or repair of products, and giving extra service in the sense of going beyond what might be the norm or the expected in catering to customers in order to win their goodwill and retain their business, *sabisu* is also commonly used in Japan in the sense of giving a discount.

If you say *Sabisu shite kudasai* (sah-bee-suu ssh-tay kuu-dah-sigh) to someone clerk, etc., the meaning is "Please give me a discount."

This expression may be used in a retail store or in business talks where one is discussing prices, percentages,

etc., when you want a better deal than has been offered.

The connotation of *sabisu* is not as bold or sharp as asking for a discount or lower price outright. It includes the idea that the relationship is not just a one-time quickie, but is or will be ongoing and that a better price is not out of order because you are, or will be, a good customer...

It is also important to keep in mind that if you ask for, and get, a favor from someone in Japan, you are expected to be ready and willing to return the favor sometime in the future.

Miyako Hotels & Resorts

Radisson Miyako Hotel Tokyo

Minato Ku, Tokyo
Tel 03-3447-3111; fax 03-3447-3133

Hotel Kintetsu Universal City

Osaka
Tel 06-6465-6000; fax 06-6465-6040

Kanazawa Miyako Hotel

Kanazawa
Tel 076-261-2111; fax 076-261-2113

Yokkaichi Miyako Hotel

Yokkaichi City
Tel 0593-52-4131; fax 0593-52-4141

Tsu Miyako Hotel

Tsu, Mie Pref.
Tel 059-228-1111; fax 059-227-3764

Shima Kanko Hotel

Kashikojima, Mie Pref.
0599-43-1211; fax 0599-43-3538

Hotel Shima Spain Mura

Ise-Shima Nat'l Park
Tel 0599-57-3511; fax 0599-57-3501

The Westin Miyako

Kyoto
Tel 075-771-7111; fax 075-751-2490

New Miyako Hotel

Kyoto Station, Kyoto
Tel 075-661-7111; fax 075-661-7135

Nara Hotel

Nara
Tel 0742-26-3300; fax 0742-23-5252

Miyako Hotel Osaka

Osaka
Tel 06-6773-1111; fax 06-6773-3322

Tennoji Miyako Hotel

Osaka
Tel 06-6628-3200; fax 06-6628-8686

Koshien Miyako Hotel

Nishinomiya
Tel 0798-48-1111; fax 0798-48-5111

Hakata Miyako Hotel

Fukuoka
Tel 092-441-3111; fax 092-481-1306

Okinawa Miyako Hotel

Naha
Tel 098-887-1111; fax 098-886-5591

Radisson Miyako Hotel

San Francisco
Tel 415-922-3200; fax 415-921-0417

Best Western Miyako Inn

San Francisco
Tel 415-921-4000; fax 415-923-1064

Miyako Inn & Spa

Los Angeles
Tel 213-617-2000; fax 213-617-2700

RESERVATIONS CENTER-JAPAN

0120-333-001 (toll free)

RESERVATIONS CENTER-U.S.

1-800-336-1136; fax 213-621-7627
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Recommended Japan Links

www.japanvisitor.com

Detailed information and services on Japan as a travel destination, from accommodations, air transportation, bars, books, embassies, and restaurants to the weather, and more. Also info on Korea.

www.japan-zone.com

Comprehensive, literate compendium of things Japanese, from general information to arts, crafts, culture, climate, history, politics, and sightseeing attractions to sports...with gallery of photos. Created and maintained by Mark McBennett.

www.ELTnews.com

Largest site and voice of English language teachers in Japan. Features include a free weekly newsletter, ELT books, book reviews, events calendar, job search, interviews, world news, a Kid's World, popular comics, and more. A unique window to Japan.

www.jnto.go.jp

Official website of the Japan National Tourist Organization responsible for promoting tourism to Japan. Covers topics of interest to travelers.

www.gate39.com

Excellent source of news and general information about Japan, along with shopping for things Japanese online.

www.japanlink.com

Useful information for businesspeople, from contacts to event schedules.

www.japantravelbooks.com

Free E-books on Japan by Boye Lafayette De Mente.

www.radisson.com/tokyojp_miyako

The website of Radisson Miyako Hotel Tokyo, with room rates, facilities and contact information. Special rates for reservations made online at: rm-rez@tokyo.miyakohotels.ne.jp

www.japaninc.com

Leading English language monthly magazine on IT, business, and social changes in Japan

www.japanair.com

The official Japan Airlines site

www.japanorama.com

Great collection of things Japanese

www.lkontravel.com

Specializes in travel to Japan

www.japanreference.com

Major portal to web sites on Japan

www.japantimes.co.jp

The daily Japan Times newspaper

www.yomiuri.co.jp

Daily English edition of the world's largest newspaper.

www.japan-access.com

Major portal to things Japanese

www.jinjapan.org

Major Japan information network

www.travelerstaes.com

Publisher of insightful, helpful books on traveling in Japan and the world.

www.japan-guide.com

Copious guide to things Japanese

www.tokyutravel.com

Los Angeles office of leading Japanese travel agent, specializes in corporate travelers, and selling Japan Rail Passes. #

www.japan.co.jp

Comprehensive cyber directory of well over 90,000 Japan-related websites, most with English content; some in French, Spanish, German, Russian, etc.

www.nisekohirafu.com

Leading ski, snowboarding tour operator based in amazing Hokkaido, Japan's Snow Country. Specializes in international clientele.

www.japanshoten.com

Japan Shoten translates as "Japan Store." U.S. based, it stocks a wide selection of books on Japan, and normally ships within two or three days. Other articles/items being added.

www.jobsinjapan.com

Mother of all Japan job-listing web-sites, with extensive classified ad listings for accommodations, travel, things for sale, etc.

www.yamagatakanko.com/english/index.html

Official tourism website of Yamagata Prefecture. Very nicely done and worth a visit. Yamagata is famous for its hot spring spas, ski resorts and national parks. Zao is rated as Japan's top ski resort, and is equally famed for its hot spring spas. Numerous festivals.

www.tourism.metro.tokyo.jp (English)

www.kanko.metro.tokyo.jp (Japanese)

This is the website of the tourism development office of Tokyo Metropolitan Government, which operates three tourist information centers in Tokyo. Features standing attractions in the city as well as current events.