

Akihiro Odanaka and Masami Iwai, *Japanese Political Theatre in the 18th Century: Bunraku Puppet Plays in Social Context*. New York: Routledge, 2021. 228 pp. ISBN: 978-0367150624, \$47.95.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr.

Odanaka and Iwai have crafted a remarkable resource for students, scholars, researchers, and the casual Japanophile. Through close readings of individual *bunraku* plays within their specific historical contexts, the authors effectively frame the plays as enlightening products of their times, allowing the reader to understand both play and period. The book will have immense value for those engaged in the teaching and learning of history, theatre, theatre history, Japanese culture and literature, and Japan in general.

The volume contains a brief preface, followed by an introduction that presents the background and purpose, a chapter on the dramaturgy of *bunraku*, and eight subsequent chapters, each centered on a single play from the “golden age of *bunraku*”: 1703–1783 (9). Playwrights Chikamatsu Monzaemon and Chikamatsu Hanji dominate the volume, as they did during the period. However, other authors also state their purpose in creating this volume: “to make readable the texts of *bunraku*” (xvi). Not only do they succeed in doing so, but they do it cannily by analyzing plays already translated to English from other sources. Thus, *Japanese Political Theatre in the 18th Century* makes for an excellent companion text to volumes already published by Andrew C. Gerstle (*Chikamatsu: 5 Later Plays*, 2001), Stanleigh H. Jones, Jr. (*Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy*, 1985, and *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees*, 1993), and Donald Keene (*Chushingura*, 1971), among others.

The chapters on the individual plays are the heart of the volume, although the introduction and chapter on *bunraku* dramaturgy are invaluable in helping the reader understand the art form in the context of eighteenth-century Osaka. As the authors note, by 1748, the theatre district in Osaka had eight playhouses, only one of which was dedicated to *kabuki*. Six of them were puppet-based theatres. Histories of Japanese theatre tend to be Edo-centered as if *kabuki* was the major (and in some histories, only) theatrical form for the masses. Osaka, however, was dominated by puppet theatre, which, as the authors prove, is inextricably linked to Osakan history and identity. The plays produced during this period need to be read through that lens.

In the first close reading, Chikamatsu's *The Battles of Coxinga* (1715) is presented as one of several plays about the warrior Coxinga. In Chikamatsu's play, however, the authors observe that "the differences between Japan and China are repeatedly stressed," and the play itself is a meditation on the self-image of Japan in comparison to foreign countries (45). The play suggests that Japan was not as isolated as is sometimes indicated in this period. Fascinatingly, the authors also propose reading *Coxinga* "as a space opera," in all senses of the word, as exploration and heroic battles, all within an imagined and unexperienced (by playwright and audience, at least) space (42).

Subsequent chapters engage with the plays in context. *A Courtly Mirror of Ashiya Dōman* (1734) is read through its central character, an outcast, and serves as a means by which the audience may reflect upon social discrimination and class difference in historical and present Japan. The play is also significant for being the first drama to utilize the three-puppeteer model of jōruri/bunraku. *Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy* (1746) concerns the emperor, raising the question of the relationship between the Imperial court, the nobility, the military government (*bakufu*), and the commoners. The authors posit that the play demonstrates the "involvement of commoners in the power struggles of the nobility" (81) and, in doing so, gives the audience (themselves commoners) a role and stakes in Japanese history. Many of the *jidai mono* (history plays) involve the nobility and samurai. bunraku, particularly the genre of *sewamono*, advocates for the significance of commoners and merchants, making them equally worthy of involvement in a historical narrative. The 1746 play "talks about the relationship between the Emperor and his people" (96). *Sugawara*, the authors claim, writes commoners into the history of Japan, a fascinating and viable approach to that play.

Building from that chapter, the next one, on *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees* (1747), offers an alternative history to that of the *Taiheike* or the *Heike Monogatari* and "merges the nobility of failure, as symbolized by Yoshitsune, with the commoners' desire to participate in history" (101). In this chapter, the volume clearly reveals that it is not concerned with just theatre history but with framing history through the theatre. The link between the desire for commoners to "participate in history" and bunraku is also present in "Japan's national epic," *Kanadehon Chūshingura* (1748), the subject of chapter six, which Odanaka and Iwai pose as "a drama of the samurai as seen through the eyes of the commoners" (120). They also make a compelling case for seeing the play as a crypto-*sewamono*,

rooted in deals, honesty, and negotiations as much as, if not more than, bushido and loyalty. It is a play about “money, love and trust” (135), which puts it in the same category as most *sewamono*. Read this way, the play concerns the loyal retainers who behave very much like commoners, and conversely, it can be read to show that commoners also have honor and loyalty.

Chikamatsu Hanji’s *The Genji Vanguard in Ōmi Province* (1769), perhaps not as well-known as the previous plays, offers an insight into Osakan identity and attitude towards the Tokugawa Shogunate by narrating the story of Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Local pride in Toyotomi, bunraku, and the history of Osaka come into play, offering a contrast to kabuki theatre of Tokugawa (or Edo) period. *Mount Imo and Mount Se: Precepts for Women* (1771), on the other hand, displays the growing influence of kabuki on bunraku, as well as Hanji’s fascination with rebels. In the case of this play, however, the rebels are women engaging in illicit love affairs. *Mount Imo* is “a political play in the sense that Eros is not given a proper place in the male struggle for power” (182). One would not call it a feminist play by any stretch of the imagination, but it does engage directly with gender politics and discrepancies at the highest levels of government. The final play is *Travel Game while Crossing Iga* (1783), Chikamatsu Hanji’s last great play and one of several about the period concerning the Iga vendetta. Unlike previous plays, in context, *Travel Game* suggests the absurdity of revenge and signals that the era of such “heroics” is ending. A brief conclusion ends the volume, and, like the rest of the book, it is well-written, insightful, and carries implications beyond the subject at hand.

Overall, *Japanese Political Theatre in the 18th Century* is eminently readable, engaging, and informative. It places significant bunraku plays in context while arguing for the importance of bunraku not just as a theatrical form but as a series of historical snapshots that help understand eighteenth-century Japan. I suspect the book will be welcomed by undergraduates, graduates, scholars, and researchers and will find a prominent place on the Japanese theatre shelf with other ground-breaking works that serve as excellent introductions to the topic and allow for deep reading of the material in English. Kudos to the authors for such a remarkable volume.

Takashi Horie, Hikaru Tanaka, and Kiyoto Tanno, eds., *Amorphous Dissent: Post-Fukushima Social Movements in Japan*. Tokyo: Trans Pacific Press, 2020. 244 pp. ISBN: 978-1920901851, \$41.95.

Reviewed by Yuichi Tamura

The Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, and the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident led to the emergence of social activism movements that have not been seen in Japan since the 1970s. This revival of social activities in 21st century Japan naturally attracted the attention of scholars interested in understanding and theorizing about collective action. *Amorphous Dissent: Post-Fukushima Social Movements in Japan* is a culmination of these scholarly endeavors, bringing together articles about various social protests in post-3.11 Japan written by authors from various disciplines, such as political science, history, and sociology.

Most importantly, this book introduces the concept of “amorphous,” originally used in natural science, to advance our understanding of today’s social movements. While the term generally signifies the absence of form, shape, organization, or unity (37), the authors use it to capture those features of post-3.11 social movements that are qualitatively different from the ones in the post-war period (1950s–1970s). During these critical years, when there was a significant upsurge in social movement activities in Japan, protests were led by established groups who headed the associated institutions, such as labor unions or student organizations. Recruitment and mobilization depended on preexisting status identities, such as workers or university students, and those who participated in collective protests were united under ideological and movement goals. But in the amorphous social movements, these conventional factors for protest mobilization do not exert the same level of influence and may even have a negative impact by making people steer clear of social protests. The analyses of post-3.11 social movements in *Amorphous Dissent* found that established leaders did not lead collective demonstrations such as the anti-nuclear power movement, that there were no hierarchical organizations through which recruitment and mobilization were undertaken, and that participants did not share any overarching ideology. Instead, protest participants were, as the authors put it, “an extremely random assortment of people” (5) from diverse backgrounds with a broad range of

motives to join the event without an official long-term commitment to it. The large-scale mobilization in the post-3.11 movements was made possible because of the “amorphous” nature of the protests.

Three editors of this book, Takashi Horie, Hikaru Tanaka, and Kiyoto Tanno, wrote the excellent Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Amorphous Dissent*. These sections introduce readers to “amorphous” movements, whose applicability is shown in case studies in subsequent chapters. Here, the authors claim that the recent series of amorphous movements emerged because Japanese society, in general, has gone through “amorphization” (27). The authors contextually explain the rise of amorphous dissent in terms of how Japan as a system is fragmented due to the end of economic growth, globalization, and denationalization, as well as cultural shifts in identity bases and human relationships. As people pursue more heterogeneous and fleeting lifestyles in a more fragmented Japan, it becomes difficult to form relationships based on “a single crystallized identity” (32). The amorphous nature of social movements today reflects Japan’s general social transformation.

In addition to this groundbreaking introduction of the concept “amorphous” into the field of social movement research, this book can be read, particularly by those specializing in Japan Studies, as an empirical research study of contemporary social movements reflecting the general cultural contexts of twenty-first century Japan. After presenting the guiding concept and the overall framework of the book in the Introduction and Chapter 1, each subsequent chapter provides an analysis of a specific “amorphous” social movement: the anti-nuclear power movement (Chapter 2), the Anti-National Security Legislation campaign (Chapter 3), the Amateur Revolt (Chapter 4), the anti-U.S. military base protest movement (Chapter 5), and the anti-hate speech campaign (Chapter 6). Each case study not only provides a reliable sequence of social mobilization that clarifies the applicability of the concept “amorphous” but also densely covers the Japanese historical background that led to the emergence of each campaign. Those interested in Japan will find the coverage and analytical commentary on recent protests extremely compelling and valuable.

Two issues are left underexplored, which may point to directions for future research. First, while this book is strong in analyzing how mass mobilization took place amorphyously, there is no full evaluation of

movement outcomes. The post-3.11 amorphous movements, such as the anti-nuclear power movement and the anti-National Security Legislation campaign, were successful in mobilizing mass participation, but they failed to achieve their goals. The authors mention that, in general, the very nature of amorphous movements – that is, their dependence on weak and loose networks for recruitment, absence of organized leadership, and the diversity of participants' motives – makes it difficult to sustain large-scale protests and to attain overall campaign goals. The authors, especially Takashi Horie in Chapter 3, also identify several achievements of these amorphous activities, such as raising consciousness about social issues and making protest participation more feasible for a much larger number of people. It would be more intriguing, however, if the authors provided an in-depth examination of why the amorphous anti-nuclear power movement did not succeed in preventing the reopening of nuclear plants and why the anti-National Security Legislation campaign in 2015 could not stop the passage of the legislation. Such an analysis would be valuable in practical terms since future protests amorphously mobilizing a significant number of participants can learn from these cases to map out how to use amorphous dissent to achieve campaign goals.

Second, as emphasized, the introduction of the term “amorphous” to characterize social mobilization is truly insightful. However, this book misses the opportunity to contribute to the theoretical developments in social movement research. How does this identification of an “amorphous” nature evident in contemporary Japanese social movements fit into or refute the existing theoretical models of social activities, such as resource mobilization theory, political process model, or new social movement theory? It is often the case in the social sciences that theoretical models developed in the study of a Western social phenomenon are applied to cases in Japan, only to find either that Japan provides another example to confirm the theories or that Japan is an exception to them. But the concept of “amorphous” seems to have the potential to reverse this trend and to open up a process of theoretical revision or addition in social movement literature. For this purpose, this reviewer wishes that the volume included a conclusion in which the authors would discuss how this idea of “amorphous” captures some features of social movements that previous theoretical models are not equipped to explain and,

thus, how it allows scholars to have a new framework to examine and analyze a variety of social protests around the world.

Overall, *Amorphous Dissent* provides an excellent analysis of post-3.11 social movements in Japan. It is rich in empirical information, and its conceptual anchorage in the introduction of “amorphous” is truly groundbreaking. This is a must-read for academic audiences concerned with the potential for mass mobilization in highly developed societies. This book is readable, rich in evidence, theoretically compelling, and valuable to any university course teaching Japanese society.

Araceli Tinajero, trans. Daniel Shapiro, *Kokoro: A Mexican Woman in Japan*. New York: Escibana Books, 2017. 172 pp. ISBN: 978-1940075471, \$20.00.

Reviewed by Raul Caner Cruz

The Western fascination with Japan has a long history and has seen its expression not just in the realm of scholarship but in literature as well. In the nineteenth century, famed Japanophile Lafcadio Hearn strove to describe the Japanese character – as he saw it – in his book *Kokoro*. That word, *kokoro*, is one of those terms which defy a straightforward translation: in anglophone terms, it may just as easily be thought of as “heart,” “mind,” “spirit,” or all at once. But Hearn was a European of mixed ancestry, and the Japanese *kokoro* he described was that of the revolutionary Meiji Era. In her own book of the same title, Araceli Tinajero provides us with a snapshot of the heart and mind of 1980s Japan. She does so self-consciously, as a Mexican woman whose love of Japan derives in no small part from how she finds herself and her country reflected in this far-flung archipelago. But just as Mexico left her imprint in Japan through Tinajero and others like her, Japan helped mold Tinajero into the woman and academic she eventually became.

Kokoro: A Mexican Woman in Japan is part travelogue, part memoir. Tinajero writes in a casual, conversational style, as one who shares reminiscences of their trip with close friends. Jokes, interjections, and digressions abound. Those looking for a detached anthropological work squarely focused on Japan may be disappointed. The book is personal rather

than objective, literary rather than academic. It is about Tinajero as much as about what she encounters, about Mexico almost as much as it is about Japan. For the right reader, this is an asset. How many books can the English speaker find that talk so extensively about the Japanese love for Mexican food, music, wrestling, or the Spanish language? Japan's relationships with the US, the UK, and Germany are well documented, but there is a subtle attraction to the Spanish-speaking world that often goes unnoticed. In her account, Tinajero cannot help *but* notice it: the Aztec calendar in Nagoya's Central Park is to her like a Mexican flag firmly and proudly planted on foreign soil. That sense of connection between Japan's *kokoro* and Mexico's *corazón* (in her usual style, Tinajero might point out the two words' loose resemblance) and unabashed love for her homeland permeates the entire narrative. For instance, hardly any praise of Japan or its people fails to be accompanied by a discussion about her own Mexican kinsfolk's equivalent but distinct virtues.

The book is divided into nineteen chapters, each covering a particular incident or aspect of Tinajero's life in Japan. All chapter titles are in Japanese, serving as a sort of cultural aperitif to specific anecdotes. Some, such as "Ikebana (Flower Arranging)" and "Yakyū to Sumō (Baseball and Sumō Wrestling)," should be self-explanatory even to those who know little of Japan. The likes of "Arubaito (Part-Time Work)" and "Katakori (Stress)" introduce somewhat more obscure concepts. Others offer more intriguing hooks specific to Tinajero's experience: "Ninjin to Tamago (A Carrot and an Egg)" tells of the typical diet of her Japanese roommates, who lived through the scarcity of World War II in Japan; "Akai Toyota (Red Toyota)" concerns a serious accident she had riding the titular car and the hospitalization that followed; and "Buta Mitai (You Look Like a Pig)" leads with a rude comment she received from a local doctor.

The order of the chapters is not strictly chronological. The book begins with Tinajero's original visit to Japan starting in 1981 and ends with her belated return in 2008. But the bulk of it concerns her two prolonged stays between 1981 and 1984, and in-between the organization tends to be by subject matter, e.g., the chapter on flower arranging is set in 1984, while the latter one on Japanese sports takes place in 1982. On a large scale, this structure reflects the stream-of-consciousness style with frequent tangents throughout the piece.

One of *Kokoro*'s greatest assets is its unexpected visual component. Photographs of Tinajero and Japan in the 80s are appended to several chapters to illustrate the preceding narrative. They enrich the reading experience in a myriad of ways. The author incorporates cultural tidbits such as the Japanese variety show *Waratte itomo* or *sumō* wrestler Chiyo no Fuji: But even by themselves, the array of pictures offers a sense of progression. The first set has the feel of tourism: Tinajero set against some Kyoto landmark, smiling at the camera. In later chapters, the reader will see her working for local enterprises, in a domestic setting alongside Japanese friends, or simply walking her dog in an otherwise nondescript scene.

Early on, Tinajero remarks that, though Mexico is her home, she found a second one in Japan. The photographs show as much in their own terse but eloquent style. They also reflect another theme of *Kokoro*, mentioned earlier – those places where Japan and Mexico intersect. One set shows Tinajero in various styles of traditional Mexican dress as she stands in front of the bold Japanese proclamation 世界と名古屋 (*sekai to Nagoya*, the world and Nagoya), on the occasion of the 1982 Sister Cities Fair (Nagoya, Tinajero's abode for most of her stay in Japan, had Mexico's capital as one of its sister cities). But compelling as these are, the book's most effective use of photographs comes at the end, where a final set provides a mostly pictorial epilogue to the memoir. While the text does not go beyond 2009, the pictures are not so constrained. In them, we see her in 2010 outside Nagakute's Takayoshi Museum of Mexican Art, a project from whose fruition she derived a great deal of personal satisfaction, as a lecturer on Latin America at the University of Tokyo in 2014, and even a 2015 Japanese-language feature by the Ryukyu Shimpo dealing with her academic work on Cuba. They show that not only is Tinajero's relationship with Japan far from one-sided, but it continued beyond *Kokoro*'s narrative and was alive and well as recently as 2015.

A discussion of the present edition of *Kokoro* would not be complete without discussing Daniel Shapiro's translation. Inevitably, a fair amount is lost in the transition from Spanish to English. Some readers may notice awkward or confusing expressions, but these are rare and minor issues. A greater loss is one of flavor and what could be termed authenticity. Shapiro does a good job of translating the casualness of Tinajero's writing, but not so much its Mexican quality. Bland English declarations substitute the colorful

Spanish originals: “como la tierra de uno no hay dos” (literally “like one’s land there isn’t two”) becomes “there is no place like home,” and the idiomatic “No manches” (literally “do not stain [it]”) turns into “You’ve got to be kidding,” which, while semantically equivalent, misses the local slang of the original Mexican expression. The translator can hardly be blamed for the resulting stiffness in some of the language used in the English version. After all, this is not Shapiro’s first time translating literary works from Spanish, and it is just these sorts of idiosyncrasies that are bound to frustrate a translator’s best efforts. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that Tinajero’s original voice did not survive the translation process altogether.

Regardless, the spirit or *kokoro* of the piece remains intact. The past is a foreign country, akin to the proverbial river one may step on but once. In that sense, *Kokoro* is the chronicle of a lost world, written from a unique perspective. As Tinajero wistfully points out in the latter parts of her memoir, you *cannot* go back to Japan – not 1980s Japan, and certainly not *her* 1980s Japan. Too much has changed. However, it is still possible to experience it vicariously through accounts such as this one. And in our more cynical era, it does the *kokoro* good to read a story about international rapprochement and the sunnier side of our globalized world.