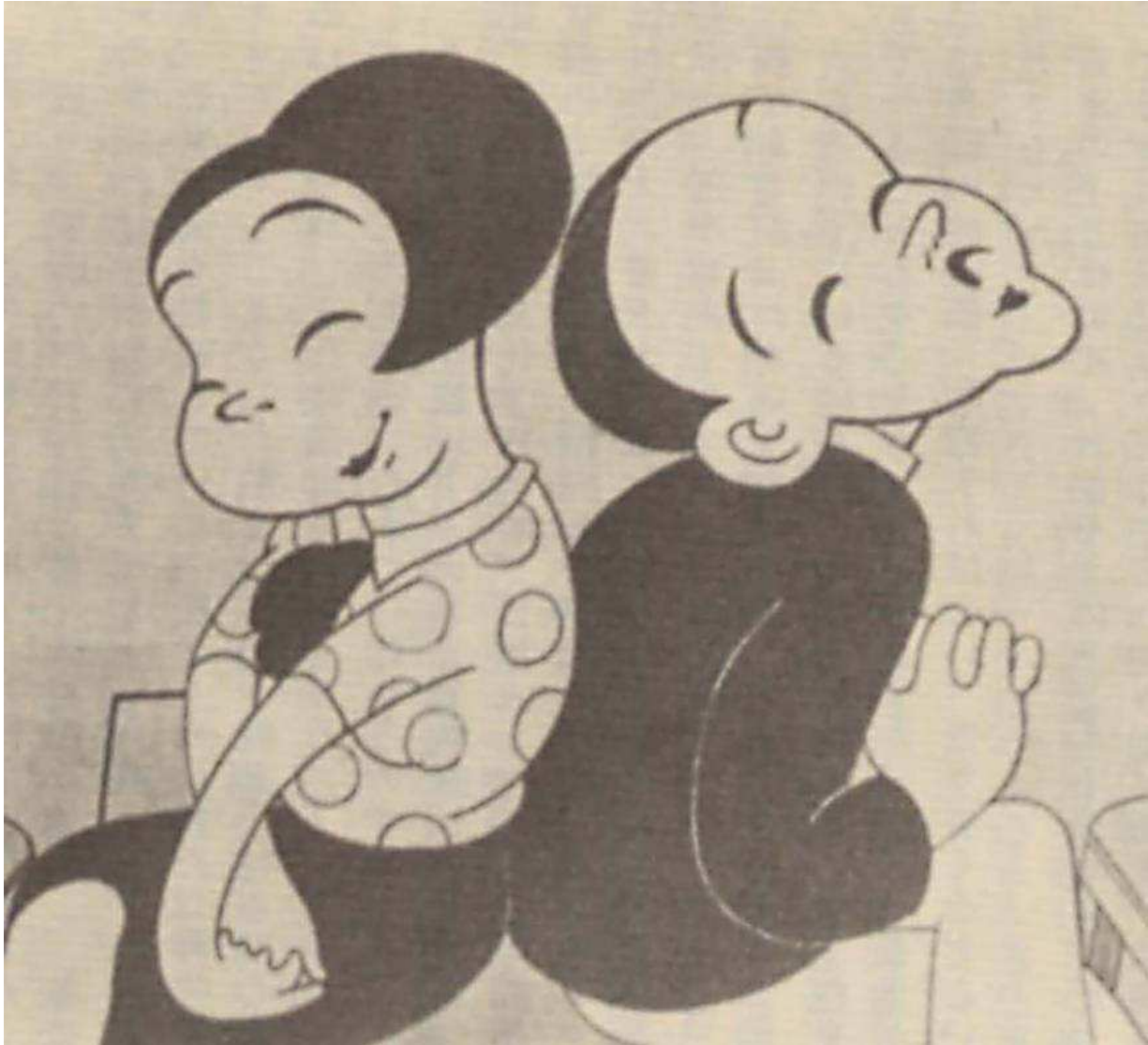


thejapantimes

CULTURE



Proto anime: A still from Japan's first animated talkie (above), the 1932 'Power and Women in Society (Chikara to Onna no Yo no Naka)' by Kenzo Masaoka. | WIKI COMMONS

[BOOKS / REVIEWS](#)

An inside look at the anime industry

BY [MARK SCHILLING](#)

SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES

[ARTICLE HISTORY](#) | JAN 11, 2014

Many books about anime and its makers have been published abroad in English and other languages, but few are by Japanese critics and scholars. In Japan, it's the reverse, with non-Japanese anime writers excluded from publishers' lists.

Japanese Animation: East Asian Perspectives, Edited by Masao Yokota and Tze-yue G. Hu, University Press of Mississippi, Academic. Rating: ★★★★★

Bridging this gap is "Japanese Animation: East Asian Perspectives," a collection of articles by academics from Japan and elsewhere in East Asia, as well as by Japanese animators themselves, edited by Masao Yokota, a professor of psychology and animation at Nihon University, and Tze-yue G. Hu, a U.S.-based independent animation scholar.

Originating from a panel on East Asian views of Japanese animation at the 2008 conference of the European Association for Japanese Studies, the book is something of a grab bag, but most of the entries are relatively free of academic jargon, if not always smoothly translated. It is also packed with the sort of information on industry history and individual careers that English-language authors, writing more for fellow anime *otaku* (geeks) than general readers, often either skimp on or ignore.

Some of the articles are inside baseball, such as Masashi Koide's and Hiroshi Ikeda's dauntingly detailed, slightly gossipy essays on the history of the Japan Society for Animation Studies, a group of animators and animation scholars that Yokota once chaired; or Tokumitsu Kifune and Sonoko Ishida's technical, scene-by-scene description of how they and their company IKIF+ incorporated 3-D computer graphics into Mamoru Oshii's 2004 dystopian SF anime "Innocence (Ghost in the Shell: Innocence)" and four entries in the "Doraemon" feature animation series.

At the same time, the long struggle of Ikeda, a former animation director for the Toei Animation Studio and currently a university professor, and his fellow academics to establish animation as a legitimate topic for scholarly research and university study makes for grimly fascinating reading. He also hits the mark in describing the "authoritarianism, class consciousness and conservatism typical in (Japanese) universities."

Of more interest to foreign animation fans, particularly ones who have absorbed most of their anime history from Westerner-written Wikipedia articles, are Nobuyuki Tsugata's brief overview of developments since Japan's first animated film was released in 1917, Makiko Yamanashi's essay on the relationship of pioneering *shojo* manga (girls comic) artist Osamu Tezuka and the Takarazuka all-women musical theater troupe, and biographical sketches of anime pioneers Noburo Ofuji and Kenzo Masaoka by Akiko Sano and Yasushi Watanabe.

Early Japanese animators, as these and other articles make clear, did more than simply borrow themes and techniques from the West. Ofuji, whose short films were later screened at the Cannes and Venice film festivals, began in the 1920s with *chiyogami* animation — a style that used the techniques of Japanese paper craft — though when talkies became popular in the 1930s he switched to a cartooning style closer to the “smooth” American norm, with admixtures of local stories and artistic motifs.

Meanwhile, in making Japan’s first animated talkie, the 1932 “Power and Women in Society (Chikara to Onna no Yo no Naka),” Masaoka used a combination of local cutout and foreign celluloid animation. He later introduced a then-expensive all-celluloid process, though he had to close his studio in 1935 when aid from his wealthy father dried up. Undeterred, Masaoka went on to make “Kumo to Tulip (Spider and Tulip),” a 1942 animated fantasy criticized by censors for its lack of wartime fighting spirit, but afterwards proclaimed an early anime masterpiece.

There is much in the book about post-war animation as well. Of particular note is Korean scholar Dong-Yeon Koh’s essay on the Korean reception of Japanese TV animation classics “Tetsuwan Atomu (Astro Boy),” featuring Osamu Tezuka’s atom-power robot boy, and “Mazinger Z,” which was based on Go Nagai’s comic about super-powered robots and their human “pilots.”

Both shows appeared on Korean television in the 1970s, nearly a decade after the Japanese TV debut of “Tetsuwan Atomu” in 1963. Koh observes that Tezuka’s style of coloring the hero blue and the villain red helped the show escape the strict anti-communist censorship of Korea’s militaristic government, despite Tezuka’s strong antiwar beliefs. Meanwhile, the popularity of the fiercer “Mazinger Z,” with its battling robots, Koh says “centered on the new weapons, later incorporated into plastic models from each episode.”

The book concludes with Ikeda’s reminiscences of the making of “Soratobu Yureisen (Flying Phantom Ship),” a 1969 animated feature directed by Ikeda and produced by Toei Animation from a comic by Shotaro Ishinomori. Featuring a boy hero whose parents are killed by a giant robot apparently sent from a flying ghost ship, the film, Ikeda notes, “reflected the social conditions of the period,” including the poisoning of the nation’s food, drink and environment in the interest of corporate profit and economic growth.

Young Toei animators, Ikeda adds, including future Studio Ghibli co-founders Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata, absorbed influences from not only the events of that turbulent era, but also the methods of such veteran directors as Tadashi Imai, Satsuo Yamamoto, Tomu Uchida and Tomotaka Tasaka, who worked at the adjacent Toei studio. “(They) had the opportunity to watch the experienced directors directing their live-action films through a window of the building of the animation studio,” Ikeda writes.

That, I believe, is an observation that Wikipedia has yet to Hoover up, one of many that make this book worth perusing by anyone interested in Japanese animation, from whatever part of the world.

LATEST BOOKS STORIES



'City of Devils' review: Reliving the heady days of gangster land Shanghai (<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2018/07/07/books/book-reviews/city-devils-review-reliving-heady-days-gangster-land-shanghai/>)

The space was bare. Except for a dirty mattress, there was no furniture. Bugs were crawling on the walls, the chamber pot reeked. Unshaved, unwashed and alone, Jack Riley had only a few benzedrine ...



British, Japanese or somewhere in between? Kazuo Ishiguro questions nationhood from the 'third sp...

(<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2018/06/30/books/british-japanese-somewhere-kazuo-ishiguro-questions-nationhood-third-space/>)

When Kazuo Ishiguro received the Nobel Prize in literature last year, there was some confusion, especially in Japan, as to the writer's nationality. Born in Nagasaki in 1954, Ishiguro moved to t...



'The Penguin Book of Japanese Short Stories': Memorable shorts from the greats of modern literature

(<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2018/06/23/books/book-reviews/penguin-book-japanese-short-stories-memorable-short-greats-modern-literature/>)

Newly released, "The Penguin Book of Japanese Short Stories" serves up a feast of literature, a smorgasbord of over 30 widely varied modern Japanese writers.

[MAIL THE EDITOR \(HTTPS://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/CONTACT-US/READER-MAIL/\)](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/contact-us/reader-mail/)

[ERROR REPORT \(HTTPS://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/ERROR-REPORT/\)](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/error-report/)

[REUBLISHING \(HTTPS://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/ABOUT-US/REUBLISHING/\)](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/about-us/republishing/)

[COMMENTING POLICY \(HTTPS://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/ABOUT-US/COMMENTING-POLICY/\)](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/about-us/commenting-policy/)

Lihao Hotel Guozhan Branch

₩41,322

★★★★☆



Taishideng International Hotel

₩57,054

★★★★☆



Days Hotel Beijing New Exhibition...

₩69,911

★★★★☆



Booking.com