

NICHIBUNKEN MONOGRAPH SERIES No. 8

THE CONCEPT OF
“LITERATURE” IN JAPAN

SUZUKI SADAMI

TRANSLATED BY ROYALL TYLER

THE CONCEPT OF “LITERATURE” IN JAPAN

NICHIBUNKEN MONOGRAPH SERIES No. 8

THE CONCEPT OF “LITERATURE” IN JAPAN

SUZUKI SADAMI

TRANSLATED BY ROYALL TYLER



NICHIBUNKEN

International Research Center for Japanese Studies

Kyoto

©2006 by the International Research Center for Japanese Studies

All rights reserved by the International Research Center for Japanese Studies.
No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission, except for brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

First English edition published in March 2006
By the International Research Center for Japanese Studies
3-2 Oeyama-cho, Goryo, Nishikyo-ku, Kyoto 610-1192, Japan
Tel. 075-335-2222
Fax. 075-335-2091
Website address: <http://www.nichibun.ac.jp/>

Layout by Shishikura Masashi
Printed by Saik Wah Press Pte Ltd
ISBN 4-901558-31-5
ISSN 1344-4972

CONTENTS

Preface	xi
Introduction Literature (Bungaku 文学) Today:	
Why Question the Concept of “Literature” Now?	1
What Can “Literature” Do?	1
The Decline of “Literature”	2
The Significance of Questioning “Literature” Now	4
Toward Reconstruction	6
1. Doubts about “Literature”: Locus of the Problem, Methods of Approach	9
1.1 The Vagueness of “Literature”	9
1.1.1 The Difficulty of Defining “Literature”	9
1.1.2 A Glance at the Dictionary	11
1.1.3 The Range of “Literature”	14
1.1.4 The History of the Related Value Judgments	16
1.2 The Snares of Convention and History: A Critique of Previous Studies	19
1.2.1 The Discrepancy between Standpoint and Method	19
1.2.2 How the Blinders Work	22
1.2.3 Removing the Blinders	25
1.2.4 The Structure of This Book	28
2. “Literature” in English and Chinese: Categories and Their Underlying Concepts	33
2.1 The Ambiguity of “Literature” in English, and Its Modern Meaning	33
2.1.1 The History of “Literature”	33
2.1.2 “Belles Lettres” and “Romanticism”	35
2.1.3 Nationalism and Literary History	37
2.1.4 On Realism	41
2.2 The History of Wenxue (Bungaku) in China	43
2.2.1 The Origins of the Word “Wenxue”	43
2.2.2 The Philological Significance of <i>Shi</i> 詩 (“Poetry”)	46

2.2.3	The Study of “Wenzhang” 文章 (Letters)	48
2.2.4	The Later Reformulation	52
3.	The Reception and Reformulation of “Bungaku”: From Early Times to the Tokugawa Period	57
3.1	From Early Times to the Medieval Period	57
3.1.1	“Bungaku” in Antiquity	57
3.1.2	“Bungaku” in Heian Times	60
3.1.2.1	The Rise of “Japanese Bungaku,” and the Stratification of “Official History”	64
3.1.3	“Bungaku” in the Medieval Period	65
3.2	Bungaku in the Tokugawa Period, and Consciousness of Genre	69
3.2.1	The Re-establishment of “Bungaku”	69
3.2.2	The Dissolution and Re-establishment of “Bungaku”	72
3.2.3	History of Poetry (詩史) and Discourses on Poetry (詩話)	76
3.2.4	Consciousness of Genre	78
3.3	Cultural Nationalism in the Tokugawa Period	82
3.3.1	Aspects of Cultural Nationalism	82
3.3.2	The Thought of Motoori Norinaga	85
3.3.3	“Bungaku” in the Years Leading Up to the Meiji Restoration	89
4.	The Birth of “Bungaku” as a Translation Term	95
4.1	The Encounter between “Literature” and “Bungaku”	95
4.1.1	How the Term Came into Being	95
4.1.2	The Disparity between “Bungaku” and “Literature”	97
4.1.3	“Bungaku” in the Work of Nishi Amane	99
4.1.4	The Stability and Instability of a Translation Term	103
4.2	The Beginnings of “Japanese Literature”	106
4.2.1	“Lamenting the Stagnation of Japanese Literature”	106
4.2.2	The Concept of “Japanese Bungaku”	109
4.2.3	The Beginnings of the “History of Japanese Bungaku”	111
4.3	“Bungaku” in a Transitional Age	115
4.3.1	The Problem of “Higher” and “Lower” Bungaku	115

4.3.2	The Shadow of Posterity	117
4.3.3	The Survival of Humanistic “Bungaku”.	120
5.	The Concept and Its Supporting Structure	123
5.1	Meiji Culture, and the Revival of Classical Chinese and Japanese Studies	123
5.1.1	The Reformulation of Learning and Education	123
5.1.2	English Studies and Chinese Studies	129
5.1.3	The Concurrent Revival of the Classics	131
5.2	“Literature” and Tokyo University	135
5.2.1	The Founding of the Faculty of Letters	135
5.2.2	The Imperial University and Its “College of Letters”	140
5.2.3	Two Levels of “Bungaku”	142
5.3	The Meiji View of Language and Literacy	145
5.3.1	Conceptions of “the National Language” and “Unification of the Spoken and Written Language”	145
5.3.2	Literacy and Style in the Meiji Era	147
6.	The Rise of Modern “Literature” in Japan	151
6.1	Ideas of “Improvement”	151
6.1.1	The Idea of “Art” (<i>Bijutsu</i>)	151
6.1.2	The Improvement of Poetry	153
6.1.3	The Shift in the Position of the Novel	154
6.2	Is <i>Shōsetsu shinzui</i> Canonical?	159
6.2.1	Faithful Portrayal of Human Emotion and Life	159
6.2.2	The Concept of “Bungaku” in <i>Shōsetsu shinzui</i>	162
6.2.3	Some Reactions	165
7.	A Struggle of Ideas	169
7.1	A Season of Controversy	169
7.1.1	“Bungaku” Broadly and Narrowly Defined	169
7.1.2	The Debate over <i>Ukishiro monogatari</i>	172
7.1.3	The Invention of the “History of Japanese Literature”	175
7.2	A Concept Questioned	180

7.2.1	From <i>Bi Bungaku</i> (Belles Lettres) to <i>Jun Bungaku</i> (Pure Literature)	180
7.2.2	The Controversy over “Hard Literature” and “Soft Literature”	183
7.2.3	What Was at Issue	188
8.	The Acceptance and Evolution of Modern “Literature”	193
8.1	The Acceptance of Modern “Literature”	193
8.1.1	Three “Histories of Japanese Literature”	193
8.1.2	The Term “Bungei” (Literary Art)	197
8.1.3	When Modern “Literature” Became Established	199
8.2	Splits and Reversals: Their Rise and Evolution	205
8.2.1	Splits and Reversals	205
8.2.2	“Mass (<i>Taishū</i>) Literature” and “Pure Literature”	208
8.2.3	Changing Views of “National (<i>Kokumin</i>) Literature”	212
8.3	The Concept of “Japanese Literature” and the Evaluational Reformulation of the Classics	214
8.3.1	The Formation of “Japanese Literature”	214
8.3.2	The Scope of “Japanese Literature”	220
8.3.3	The Evaluation of <i>Man’yōshū</i>	222
8.3.4	The Evaluation of <i>Genji monogatari</i>	226
8.3.5	The Evaluation of Bashō’s Haikai	234
8.3.6	From <i>Shi</i> 史 to <i>Rekishi</i> 歴史	241
9.	The Idea of “Modern Japanese Literature”	247
9.1	Postwar Critical Strategies	247
9.1.1	The Starting Point of Postwar Criticism	247
9.1.2	Aspects of Strategy	249
9.2	The Formation of the Idea of “Modern Literature”	252
9.2.1	The Term “the Modern Period”	252
9.2.2	An Image of “Modern Japanese Literature”	255
9.2.3	In the “New Order”	256
9.2.4	Where to Place the Origin?	258
10.	On the Origins of “Modern Japanese Literature”	263

10.1 The Pitfalls of History as History of Realism.	263
10.1.1 The Bias toward Modernizationism	263
10.1.2 Another Explanation of the Origins	267
10.1.3 Is <i>Shasei</i> (Sketch) Realism?	269
10.1.4 The Trap of the “Unification of Spoken and Written Language”	272
10.2 <i>Shasei</i> : The Idea and Its Expressions	275
10.2.1 <i>Shasei</i> according to Masaoka Shiki and Kunikida Doppo	275
10.2.2 Tokutomi Roka’s <i>Shizen to jinsei</i>	280
10.2.3 Shimazaki Tōson’s Sketches	284
11. Strategies for Restructuring.	289
11.1 A New Analytical Theme: “Overcoming the Modern”	289
11.1.1 The Invalidity of “Modern versus Anti-modern”	289
11.1.2 Freeing the Novel from the Modern	291
11.2 “Overcoming the Modern”: Rise and Evolution	295
11.2.1 First Glimmerings	295
11.2.2 Establishment	300
11.2.3 Development	303
11.3 The Myth and Reality of “I-fiction” in Japan.	308
11.3.1 The Significance and Character of “I-fiction”	308
11.3.2 The Formation of <i>Shinkyō Shōsetsu</i> (Mental-state Fiction).	311
11.3.3 Re-coining the Concept of “I-fiction”.	314
12. Conclusion: Toward a History of Literary Art	319
12.1 Toward a Reformulation of the “History of Literature”	319
12.2 Toward a History of Literary Art	321
12.3 A Critique of the Concept of Expression	325
Afterword	327
List of Personal Names	329
Glossary of Terms	339
Bibliography	343
Index	411