

Roppongi is not just about the cleanup of a misbehaving nightclub district; the backdrop is also about reforming how people live in Tokyo and setting a new, high standard for Japanese urban life" (198). There are shades here of the gentrification process in many of the world's other large cities.

As I wrote at the outset, this is a book about Roppongi, but it is also a book of personal reflection. Cybriwsky writes with empathy (for his Japanese as well as non-Japanese subjects), as well as with irony. He is, he writes, no longer fond of the district. "Roppongi changes for the better, but my opinions of it decline" (260).

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LANGUAGE LIFE IN JAPAN: Transformations and Prospects.
Routledge Contemporary Japan Series; 34. Edited by Patrick Heinrich and Christian Galan. London and New York: Routledge, 2011. xviii, 252 pp. (Tables, figures.) US\$140.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-415-58722-8.

This 13-chapter volume illustrates, from a variety of perspectives, a multifarious and complex language life in Japan undergoing further transformations. As Heinrich and Galan state, "Japan is, and always has been, multilingual, and the image of a monolingual society it presents both to its own people and the rest of the world is purely a modernist fabrication." (2) They maintain that modernity attempted to bring order to the "chaotic" language life in Japan by imposing "standard Japanese" and the idea of imagined linguistic homogeneity for the purpose of security (but at the expense of freedom). Under the influence of modernist ideologies, Japan is experiencing a loss of diversity, as the minority, autochthonous languages of Japan are now critically endangered or virtually extinct (for example, Ainu). At the same time, mobility and globalization have brought new diversifications.

Significant transformations are being observed in societal recognition of diversity, largely due to estheticism and entertainment, and in attitudes towards security and freedom. Many of the studies suggest an ongoing shift towards more freedom of language choice albeit persistent modernist ideologies. A new way of balancing security against freedom in language policy seems to lie in the reframing of the nation: civic nationalism, "a redefinition of the Japanese nation on civic, not ethnic, grounds" (Heinrich, 48), and what Takao Katsuragi calls "cultural nationalism" (212) which values national cultural diversity and promotes solidarity and mutual learning rather than tolerance or mutual indifference.

This volume undoubtedly elucidates the reality of language and society in present-day Japan and the historical and socio-political background behind it. Authors provide eye-opening accounts of how the grand

narrative of modernity (i.e., a homogenous nation-state) was constructed and how reality was concealed by the promotion of a literacy myth (Hitoshi Yamashita), the creation of public broadcasting language as the “correct” standard language (Takehiro Shioda), and coercive uniformity in reading and writing instruction in the Japanese schools (Christian Galan).

The volume also illuminates ongoing transformations of language life. Some involve changes in language itself (e.g., changes in writing systems due to technological advancements such as cell phones discussed by Nanette Gottlieb, and regional dialects affecting the “standard language” explicated by Fumio Inoue). Others are more societal or political, revolving around various issues such as language rights (most notably concerning the use of Japanese Sign Language among the Deaf) (Goro Christoph Kimura), changes in the school system (Galan), in official manuals for public signs leading to plurality in Tokyo’s linguistic landscape with explicit promotion of Chinese and Korean in addition to English (Peter Backhaus), and in the preferred use of the Japanese language with Asian business counterparts, alongside the increased use of English in business discourse (Hiromasa Tanaka and Aya Sugiyama), and the spread of Japanese words (Tessa Carroll) due to internationalization.

Despite the shift toward greater interest in diversity, challenges remain. Kimura cautions that the discourse for advancing support for language rights is ironically “deeply rooted in modern conceptualizations on language, ethnicity, identity and the way that these concepts are interlinked” (31) in that it assumes individuals’ “allegiance to a single language” (27) as their “mother tongue” when in fact individuals have multilingual and multicultural identities. Similarly, Heinrich argues that increasing interest and efforts to revitalize endangered autochthonous languages such as Uchinaaguchi, a language of Uchinaa (Okinawa), is obstructed by the ideas that “being Japanese is a fixed and monolithic state” (48) and that membership in the Japanese nation-state requires allegiance to the Japanese “standard language” as an individuals’ mother tongue. Furthermore, Yuko Sugita discusses the problem of the target of language revitalization having often been “‘pure,’ ‘authentic,’ ‘traditional’ language” (55) which diverges from reality. She suggests that the recognition of actual language practices among bilinguals and semi-speakers, which reflect hybridity and plurality within individuals, would help promote language revitalization.

Some chapters fall somewhat short of the expectations set forth in chapter 1. While Inoue’s chapter illuminates the processes surrounding changes in spoken Japanese, notably de-standardization by incorporating expressions from other dialects (“new dialect *forms*”), I was misled to believe that the chapter would also discuss diversification due to emerging new *dialects*. Though Tanaka and Sugiyama’s chapter on language and power in business meetings discusses marginalization of non-native

speakers in business discourse, it does not present original analysis of such intercultural business discourse. Rather it reports an analysis of intra-organizational Japanese business discourse practice, which is speculated as causing problems if transferred to intercultural business interactions. Whether Japanese businesspeople bring in the same practices in intercultural business discourse is an empirical question that would require further analysis.

All in all, the volume is a welcome and timely contribution, shedding light on the dynamics of present-day transformations of language life in Japan. Many chapters provide the valuable suggestion that the key to overcoming the legacy of modernity and essentialism lies in re-conceptualizations of nation and language.

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WIDOWS OF JAPAN: An Anthropological Perspective. *Japanese Society Series.* By **Deborah McDowell Aoki.** Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press; Portland, OR: Exclusively distributed by International Specialized Book Services, 2010. xiii, 178 pp. (Tables, B&W photos.) US\$34.95, paper. ISBN 978-1-92090-128-8.

A friend told me about her grandmother who was widowed in her late twenties in rural Shimane prefecture. The oldest child of a “good” family, her parents made her return to her natal home and remarry. It was understood that she would leave her two young children behind in her husband’s family. She never saw them again.

Deborah McDowell Aoki’s comprehensive study of Japanese widows brings into focus the complex, ambiguous, often tragic history of the impact of spousal death on Japanese women. Her eight years of research from 1996 included 58 interviews with women from urban and rural areas. She states the themes in the introduction: “the fetishism of female bodies to protect and embody family honor, the historical role of state formation in creating family and kinship systems, and the integrative functions provided by women” (1).

After a survey of the anthropological literature on women and widowhood in world history, including the Confucian ideology in which patriarchal families became the model of how societies should be organized, Aoki turns to the history of widows in Japan. Japanese women in the Heian period had considerable freedom in choosing a partner, even after widowhood, primarily due to the prevalence of matrilineal marriage residences. The Meiji period, the low point in women’s legal status and family role, saw the institutionalization of the patriarchal family system (*ie seido*). Aoki traces these changes through the various words used to