

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

describe widows historically: *kafu*, *yamome*, *goke* and from late Meiji, *mibojin*, which connotes “one who should have died with her husband, but has not yet died” (34).

The next three chapters draw on the author’s ethnographic interviews. Chapter 4 describes the situation of war widows, their poverty, activism and identity. One interviewee says, “People have forgotten now, but in those days, widows were called the ‘white lilies,’ the ‘beautiful reeds’ or the ‘blue orchids,’ we were the wives of the spirits of dead soldiers” (53). However, at the end of the war the full extent of widows’ poverty and suffering became clear. The author blames the government’s weak safety net but also the failure of many families to provide support, sometimes because of discrimination against widows, but primarily because their families were also poor and had little to offer in concrete help. In 1948, the proportion of single mothers receiving public assistance reached 60 percent (60). Widows began to organize themselves; by 1949 there were more than 2000 widows’ groups. Aoki’s interviewees eloquently express the pathos of their situation. A widow from a family that made charcoal: “Sometimes the wood doesn’t become charcoal; it just rots. I was like that too. I couldn’t become charcoal but I became like rotten wood and then dirt. That’s how I feel about my life” (70).

Chapter 5 is an ethnographic account of an upper-class widow organizing the memorial ceremony on the second anniversary after death. Through participant observation the author conveys the crucial role of widows in mediating between the real world of living people and the spirit world of the ancestors. Women provide the structure of the rituals, the care and nourishment of the dead, and the maintenance of family continuity.

The final two chapters highlight the feminization of poverty, which has belatedly received more attention in Japan. Women held only 15 percent of full-time jobs in 2006 and continue to fill the temporary, part-time ranks. The daily life of the widow is also described, especially the phenomenon of *widow watching*. “Even now I get tired of being watched all the time,” one woman complains. “We are suspected of trying to take the man in their life even though we have no interest.”

The author emphasizes there is no archetypal widow. The strength of her study lies in the narrative of widows’ roles in the family and society, past and present, with stigmatization and a lack of support. The apt quotations from her interviews vividly evoke the women’s voices, enriching the book and enhancing our pleasure in reading it.

My main concern is the discussion of caregiving. Aoki writes that woman should not be considered the sole caregivers and there should be a national program similar to national health care that would relieve women caring for both children and the elderly. But caregiving is changing; men, particularly husbands, are increasing as caregivers and the national long-term care program which Aoki briefly describes, is a significant attempt by

the government to share the burden of care for the elderly. I also wonder, didn't any of her interviewees remark on the satisfactions of caring for a spouse? Other researchers report that quite a few caregivers find this a positive experience.

Her conclusion that the legacy of single female-headed households in poverty is still a fact of life for widows is accurate. Aoki is optimistic that women are taking the lead in pushing society to redefine marriage. Her book should provide powerful ammunition for doing that.

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**KOREAN MASCULINITIES AND TRANSCULTURAL CONSUMPTION: Yonsama, Rain, Oldboy, K-Pop Idols.** *TransAsia: Screen Cultures.* By Sun Jung. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011. ix, 221pp. (Tables, graphs, figures, B&W photos.) US\$50.00, paper. ISBN 978-988-802-866-5.

In international communication studies one noticeable topic is the boom of Korean popular culture through East and Southeast Asia and beyond in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Since the late 1990s Korea has exported its films and TV dramas to Asian countries and many Korean celebrities—such as Bae Yong-Joon and Choi Ji-Woo (*Winter Sonata*, TV drama), Lee Young-Ae (*Daejanggeum*, a periodical drama), and Super Junior (13-member boy group)—have become transnational household names around Asia. The unprecedented success of Korean TV dramas around Asia has been termed as Hallyu in Korean and Korean Wave in English, which has led to scholarly interest. Although many scholarly works have been published in Korea, it is hard to find a book-length research publication to help Anglophone readers understand the phenomenon of the Korean Wave.

Sun Jung's book, *Korean Masculinities and Transcultural Consumption: Yonsama, Rain, Oldboy, K-pop idols* (*Korean Masculinities* hereafter) is a timely English publication that addresses this phenomenon. Dr. Jung's book focuses on how women respond to and interpret new Korean masculinities in various Asian regions. This book consists of five chapters. The first chapter discusses theoretical concepts through examination of recent Korean blockbuster films as a transnational hybrid form. The consideration of transnationality leads into the concept of *mugukjeok* (non-nationality or culturally odourless), which is the Korean pronunciation of Japanese *mugokuseki* that Koichi Iwabuchi critically examined in his book, *Recentering Globalization* (Duke University Press, 2002).

The other four chapters focus on case studies of different contexts of the transnational reception of Korean male stars. The second chapter