I have written this entire text without any sense of modesty or concern about being unduly outspoken. Let me explain why. People customarily humble themselves and seek to avoid appearing overly assertive, but when I came to this place, I resigned myself to my life being over at the age of thirty-five and resolved to regard the move here as the road of death, the journey to hell. Since the world no longer exists for me, it is as though I am no longer the same person who lived through the past. However much people may censure and condemn me, it hurts me not at all. Besides, the sort of person who would censure and condemn this book is not worth fearing. With compassion filling my heart and tears of grief soaking my sleeves, I have written it lamenting the crazed behavior I see all around. Each person in our country strives to enrich him or herself alone without thinking of the foreign threat or begrudging the cost to the country. Mired in strife, people throw goods away and fight over money that comes and goes. With this in mind, I feel neither pain nor irritation at being criticized by others. Please read this with that understanding.

Twelfth month, Bunsei 文政 1 [1818], Makuzu in the far north
Although there are many strange things in the world, some have become comprehensible through people talking about them. Among those matters which no one ever discusses, however, are some that I find strange indeed. After the passage of many years, I have finally come to understand what lies behind them.

Because of my late father’s way of thinking, I was prohibited from reading works in Chinese, and know nothing about them. And I do not know even one single line of Buddhist text. Even so, I have kept in mind that the Buddha and the sages were all men who extracted themselves from mundane concerns. With this as my guide, in recent years I have taken advantage of my leisure time to ponder things more deeply. Wishing to explain what I have been thinking about, I have written down my strange and peculiar solitary thoughts, the feelings that have so oppressed me. I have used some vulgar expressions in places where it is difficult to explain things without using colloquial language.

*Three Unsolved Puzzles*

Changes in the size of the moon
The behavior of female characters in the theater
The way concubines create disorder in a house

*Three Wishes*
To become a model for women
To realize that which is called enlightenment
To be of benefit to others

*Differences in the Size of the Moon*

Because people cannot view them up close, heavenly bodies are generally thought mysterious. Those who study such things, I have heard, have been able to clarify their fundamental principles. But although it is a trivial matter, I have not heard of anyone who has explained for certain why the size of the moon differs according to the perceptions of those who look at it. Finding this exceedingly strange, I asked people why this is the case. It is an optical illusion, they responded nonchalantly. It was hard to convince myself that this was so, and I have been wondering what optical illusions really are.

In comparing the moon to an object, most would say it is like a plate or a teacup or a dish for sweets. People who see it as a little bigger liken it to a tray, a brazier, or a pail. People who see it as huge compare it to a twenty-gallon barrel, a bathtub, or a rain barrel. Then there are those who see it as extraordinarily small, who say it is a sake cup, a rice bowl, or the grip for a sliding door. Each points to a different object. Why is it that if you ask ten people, they will compare the moon to ten different objects? I find this to be most strange.

*The Behavior of Female Characters in the Theater*

It is usually said that a woman should keep everything in her heart, say little, and be modest. Women [depicted] on the stage and in the puppet theater are com-
pletely different, though. Whether these characters are princesses or daughters raised with the utmost care, they inevitably go beyond the norms for women and make sexual advances to men. If an ordinary person had such a flirtatious daughter, would anyone think it was good? Nonetheless, no one censures theatrical characters. How strange! If I ask why female characters in plays behave so shamefully, people make nothing of it. “It’s just a play,” they say. But in my own mind I am not convinced. As the verse goes, “The paw that beckons from the shadows belongs to the tomat.” It seems to me that what is portrayed on the stage differs too much from human feelings.

Lowly Women Make Trouble for Households
From ancient times to the present, it has not been unusual for a house to experience bad fortune because of a concubine. Everyone thinks this is the way things are, but to me it is most strange. It is a pity that the heart of a noble man can be tormented by a concubine. I would really like to know the reason why.

Three Wishes
From the time I was a child I have believed that I should be of benefit to others, but I could not think of what to do. I remember the summer I was nine. I was sitting at my study desk when it came to me that I should become a model for women, and I resolved in my heart to do so. Just then in my practice book I found the poem

“The fifth month is my month,”
The cuckoo calls to say . . .

戸総おのがさつきと成行まゝ
Hototogisu / ono ga satsuki to / nariyuku mama . . .¹

Without thinking I added a different ending:

“The fifth month is my month,”
That thus the cuckoo calls is only what people think . . .

ほとゝぎすおのがさつきとなりゆくも只人々の心なりけり
Hototogisu / ono ga satsuki to / nariyuku mo
tada hitobito no / kokoro narikerei

“It seems you write poetry,” my mother said when I showed it to her. Thereupon she made me compose poems every day, which was so hard that I regretted having done such a heedless thing.

My grandmother on my mother’s side excelled at womanly accomplishments, including calligraphy. She even knew how to write kanji in the cursive style. I heard it was largely owing to his mother’s teachings that my uncle [Kuwabara]

¹ Similar phrases appear in a number of waka from the major imperial and private collections, but we have not been able to find an exact match.
Takatomo 桑原隆朝 [1744–1810] was known even at a young age for his skill in calligraphy. Our family temple was Zen Buddhist, and when I heard that my grandmother had achieved enlightenment under the guidance of a Buddhist priest, I was most envious. At the time, I was thirteen or fourteen, and I, too, longed to find a way to experience enlightenment. My parents laughed, saying that this was not something for a young girl to study, and refused to take my wish seriously. But in my heart, I never ceased to wonder why I could not achieve what my grandmother had or to abandon my desire for enlightenment.

Hoping to become a model for women, I took the conventional rules rigorously to heart and waited for my parents to arrange my affairs. To gain experience and learn about the world, at sixteen I went into service at the lord’s residence and remained there for ten years. At twenty-six I took leave to return home to help my mother, who was weakened by illness, and to take care of my youngest sister, who was still a child. Some years later, we lost our mother, and at thirty-five, I came to this province.

Having time to myself, I determined to straighten my heart, get rid of bad habits, and discipline my body, when suddenly I found my mind floating and felt as if I were elevated above the ground. From that point I was content and carefree. My mind moved freely hither and yon, while ordinary people seemed as heavy as stones. I did not know what to make of this, but when I mentioned what had happened in a letter to my younger brother in Edo, he replied that this was probably the sort of thing that Buddhist works call enlightenment. What a joy it was to realize that I had attained the enlightenment for which I had wished since I was thirteen or fourteen years old and without even a bit of proper study! I cannot describe how high my spirits rose.

Thereafter I knew intuitively that there is a rhythm generated between heaven and earth that accords with the number of days and nights. Why is it, I had wondered, that those who seem to violate the way of the sages often succeed in this world, while those who try to be righteous do not? I came to realize that it is because righteous people tend to lag behind the rhythm of heaven and earth, while those whose behavior is mixed keep in time with the rhythm. The reason why some people do not succeed, no matter how much they try, is because they do not follow the rhythm of heaven and earth. There is nothing strange about this. Looking back at my own early life, for example, I see that I matured much too early, and thus I have a hard time getting along with other people.

About the time I was forty-five or forty-six, I by chance encountered a work called Kojikiden 古事記伝. In it I read that when human beings were first born into this world, those who, upon examining their bodies, realized that they had a surplus were men, and those who believed they had a lack were women. My

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2 Written by Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), Kojikiden is a detailed commentary on the account of the age of gods and early history contained in Kojiki 古事記 (712). Although the commentary was not published in its entirety until 1822, by 1797 seventeen volumes had appeared and would have been available to Makuzu before she wrote Hitotori kangae.

3 Makuzu alludes here to the exchange between Izanagi and Izanami in Kojiki. See Philippi 1968, p. 50.
long-standing puzzlement as to why the relations between men and women are so disagreeable was all at once resolved.

Women exist for the sake of men; men do not exist for the sake of women. It would be a mistake to think of them as equal. Even if she is the more intelligent, how can a woman who thinks she is lacking something triumph over a man who always thinks of himself as having a surplus? Because it is with the help of men that women survive in this world, they can live comfortably if men do not find them disagreeable. Realizing that the male body differs from her own, a woman should humble herself in her dealings with men, not only with the man on whom she depends, but also those who have some business with the household, and even the servants she employs. If a woman correctly examines why men find her disagreeable, she will inevitably discover that it is because she is disrespectful. For a woman who ought to obey men to look down on them is contrary to the norms of proper behavior. It is for that reason that she is disliked.

Knowing that it will suffice for women to learn this one lesson, I hope that in the end I will be able to achieve the goal I set at the age of nine, to become a model for women. But since I am not in a position to expound these points to the world at large, I fear my solitary thoughts may be in vain.

Let me try to discuss the differences between the feelings of men and women. A woman who hears that a Zen monk has castrated himself simply thinks of it as a splendid act of determination. She thinks this way because his body is not her kind of body. The story of a snake entering a woman’s vagina, on the other hand, so horrifies women, whether young or old, that their hair stands on end.4 Because his body is different from a woman’s, a man who hears such a story thinks nothing of it, but tales of castration must strike straight at his heart.

Even though an onnagata 女形 in the theater has a woman’s appearance, since he has a man’s body, in his heart he harbors abusive feelings toward women. As he performs he thus in fact takes pleasure in what should be a pitiable scene. I finally came to realize that is why he performs in ways that appeal to the men in his audience. Women, on the other hand, take no pleasure in a villain’s capturing a beautiful young woman and doing with her what he wishes.

In that in examining our bodies, we become aware of a surplus or a lack, it is clear that human feelings are rooted in the genitals and spread from there throughout our bodies. When men and women make love, they battle for superiority by rubbing their genitals together. For a husband and wife who are one this may not be an issue. In cases of romance, though, a man may be thrown by a weak woman. The two reproach each other as to whose love is greater because at the bottom of their hearts neither wants to be the loser, neither wants the other’s love to be weaker than his or her own. In the pleasure quarters, there may be rigorous rules regarding such interactions but I leave this writing for women

4 Stories of a woman having sexual relations with a mysterious stranger who turns out to be a snake or deity in disguise are widespread in Japanese folklore. As in Kojiki and Nihon shoki 日本書紀 stories of this sort are associated with Mt. Miwa 三輪 in Yamato, the motif is known commonly as the Mt. Miwa motif. See Philippi 1968, pp. 178, 204, 415–16.
brought up in warrior houses who have difficulty in dealing with the lower classes.

As for concubines of townsperson origin, only a woman skilled at throwing whatsoever man she chooses would think of seeking an audience with the aim of becoming the lord’s concubine. Knowing nothing of such things, a naive lord will be deceived into thinking of her as an innocent, and will be shamed by always being thrown and trampled on by her. From the day she is employed, she will seek every opportunity to get him in her clutches. How regrettable it is to employ women like this at a high salary. What a concubine wishes is to bring low not just the palace but the entire country, so that she may do as she pleases. This is the sort of thing that concubines and servants (joshi shōjin 子小人) want.  

The teachings of the sages call upon people to keep their hearts under control so as to prevent them from becoming disordered. Because all noblemen study at least a little of such teachings, the maids in the domestic quarters can grab those whose hearts are fettered (striving to become righteous is a fetter), pick them up, and throw them. How regrettable this is! A good-looking but base-born woman should not be employed to serve in close proximity to the lord.

People may think that the way of the sages (hijiri no michi 聖の道), having been used for public affairs since ancient times, is indeed a true way. In fact, however, it is simply a system made by human beings and borrowed from China. It is a fancy implement, for use in the world at large, like a cart on the highway. When there are difficult matters of public concern, the only way to move them ahead is to put them on the cart and push. So as to be prepared for such an eventuality, it is necessary to be clear about the cart’s general features and to keep it ready outside the gate, but it should not be used for household affairs. As an implement it is clumsy, and people can get hurt. I do not say this without knowing good from bad. (The members of my family upheld the way of the sages, but we seven siblings met with suffering. I have thus pondered these matters over the years and have written down these thoughts for the sake of future generations.)

As the way of the sages usually works well when people are upright in spirit, good people let themselves be guided and fettered by its teachings. But when people who don’t care a bit about Confucian teachings do just as they please, those whose hearts are fettered are inevitably put in the weaker position and will always suffer losses. When we sincerely appreciate the teachings of the sages and believe them to be true, we bind our hearts with our own hands many times over without even knowing it. We become estranged from the pulse of our country (wagakuni no ninki わが国の心汽), and totally out of phase with the rhythm of heaven and earth (tenchi no hyōshi 天地の拍子). How dreadful, how dreadful!

Do we not reverently call the sacred imperial country (sumeramikuni 皇国国)
the land of the kami 神? By “kami” we do not mean simply the superior people of ancient times. Doesn’t “kami” also refer to something present in people’s hearts that cannot be expressed in words? It is because human feelings surge forth and circulate more quickly in Japan than in any foreign country that it has been revered by others and endowed with the name of the divine country. If we recognize this superiority of our own country, why should we cling to Chinese teachings?

Since ancient times, those regarded as great scholars have favored Chinese laws and have tried to remake our country in their pattern. In so doing they have all fallen into the same rut. Holding Chinese learning alone to be true learning, they have lost their way and have failed to understand the pulse peculiar to the people of our own country. They look down on those who do not read Chinese works as dunces, but in trying to push things ahead by forcibly imposing Chinese learning, they fail to match the rhythm of heaven and earth, and ultimately they prove far inferior to such dunces.

My father held that I would not suffer any disadvantage at all if I were kept from reading Chinese works. There were times when I deeply regretted his attitude in this regard. Now, however, I realize that I can think and write about such things [as those discussed above] because I did not fall into Chinese ways of thinking. I have become aware how admirable my father’s stance was.

We who are born between heaven and earth will surely live out our entire lives in peace if we take the number of days and nights and the rhythm of heaven and earth as a fundamental principle, always choosing to do what fits the principle and avoiding that which does not. Both the teachings of Buddha and the way of the sages are systems created by human beings; they did not arise of their own accord. Phenomena that never change are the revolutions of the sun and moon (megura hitsuki めぐる日月), the number of days and nights, and the rhythm that floats through them all. People who do not consider this important do not know the truth.

It is a mistake to see changes in size as pertaining only to the moon. Nor is it only the moon that is seen differently by different people. Stage actors seem good or bad depending on the minds of those who watch them. The same is true of trees and grass, furniture and implements, and myriad other things: they all seem good or bad depending on people’s preferences. This phenomenon is even more pronounced in how people view books. There is no literature more delightful than The Tale of Genji. Yet Hime kagami ひめかがみ (Mirror for Young Ladies) declares, “It is better for young women and children not to read it.” Such a statement makes this splendid tale appear to be disreputable. And what about my own foolish writings that I have set down as I pleased? I would really like to hear how people of later times will judge them.

7 Hime kagami was a text on morals for women by the Confucian scholar Nakamura Tekisai 中村惕齋. The introduction was written in 1661 and the preface is dated 1687. Published versions date from 1709 and 1712.
I am convinced that the instinct of all creatures who live between heaven and earth is to fight for superiority. Down to the beasts, birds, and insects, there is no creature who does not compete. People train their children by praising them as better behaved than others, or by warning them that they will be laughed at for falling behind someone else. Do we not say such things because people are at bottom competitive? Do we not always say that one thing is better or worse than another? Even frivolous pursuits are lively and exciting if there is some degree of competitive feeling; to have no competition at all makes them dull.

It is because gambling involves a decisive defeat or victory that it is such an interesting game: those caught up by it will go so far as to wager their family’s residence, while folks of the lower classes will even peel off and bet the single garment they are wearing, leaving them naked in the cold. In the old days, even people of high rank indulged in gambling, and in *Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草 (*Leaves of Idleness*), Priest Yoshida [Kenkō] 吉田兼好 [1283?–1350?] recorded gamblers’ strategies. This is because in the old days gambling was not scorned as it is today, so it was not something to be kept hidden.

In Russia gambling is not forbidden. When one first hears this, it sounds disgraceful. Since the country is cold, however, the houses are multistoried like a stack of steamer baskets. Prosperous families add as many floors as they can afford, up to a height of seven stories. Though the houses have windows, the glass is fixed so that one can only look at the outside from within. There is no way to appreciate the flowering trees and grasses, which, in any case, bloom at most one hundred days out of the year. There being no gardens, the moon revolves vainly in the sky, lighting up the rooftops. In these circumstances gambling is permitted because people have no other amusements.

Today in Japan, prohibitions against gambling are severe. Nevertheless every month one hears pitiful stories of lower-class people who are unable to refrain from secretly engaging in gambling. How sad it is!

*The World of Strife*

In the past, the world was in turmoil because people disputed over land and fought over provinces. Today is an age when people’s hearts are in turmoil because they are caught up in the fight over gold and silver, but since hearts can be neither seen nor heard, nobody notices this. The lower classes and the poor come to know this situation early on because of the hardships they suffer, but those from noble or wealthy families have no idea because they are rich. Having but a limited understanding of the world, they indulgently give away the treasures of money and rice as though they were millet, thinking that providing charity to the lower classes is a benevolent act. This is deplorable!

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8 Makuzu probably refers here to episode 126, in which Kenkō warns that it is not wise to bet against someone who suddenly wagers all his money, because he is about to begin a winning streak. See Keene 1967, p. 107.
Where Money Resides
(I have written the following because noble people are not aware that people of the lower classes pay attention only to where money resides.)

Money stays with people who respect and appreciate it. Nobody dislikes money, but it does not stay with people who want it simply to use it. Money borrowed from the townspeople truly is a borrowed thing, because, bearing interest, it circulates back to its origin. Even if people give money to the poor, it doesn’t stay with those to whom it is given. It disappears when it is handed over to moneylenders to cover old debts or is used to buy food or to pay servants. Because the money bestowed on the poor is procured from the townspeople, their profits double as the money circulates, while the daimyo and samurai suffer losses. Even among the warriors, those who do not care about what they wear or eat, but find pleasure solely in seeing their money increase, will accumulate money. As for townspeople who make their way in the world regarding money as their master and enslaving themselves to it, money never ceases to flow into their hands.

Everywhere in today’s world, warriors who have used up their resources have no recourse for survival other than to bow and scrape before usurers, imploring them, however distasteful it may be, for loans. That those shysters should condescend to people in addition to charging interest is most deplorable. Townspeople raise the price of goods day by day and month by month even as they try to lower their quality, while peasants plot year by year to reduce their rice taxes. Caught in the midst of this disordered world, warriors remained unaware of this for years, until eventually these shysters succeeded in draining off from them as much gold and silver as they could. Nowadays, having become dependent on townspeople to be their moneylenders, certain domanial lords let them take control of their sources of income. They live their days relying on the power of the townspeople. Isn’t it as though the townspeople with their army of money have taken the lords captive?

Having been born into this disordered world, dominated by the strife over money, people are naturally influenced by its spirit. Warriors consider it valorous to receive an increase in stipend or reward and to pass their wealth on to their descendants. But why don’t the lords realize that this means that with each generation they divide more of their land among their subordinates and pass impoverishment on to their posterity? Those who want to make their own even a slight bit of land chiseled from their lord’s holdings may be on his side when they take up bow and arrow, but in this age dominated by the fight for gold and silver,

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9 This is perhaps a criticism of the “70 percent fund” (shichibu tsuamikin 七分積金) established as part of the Kansei reforms carried out by Matsudaira Sadanobu 松平定信. Under this system, the costs of town administration levied on the house owner class of Edo townspeople were reduced. In return, 70 percent of the amount saved was set aside for procuring rice for famine relief and loans to the poor. To increase the capital available for such purposes, a considerable amount of the funds set aside was not used as direct grants to the poor, but was first lent out at interest to well-to-do townspeople. See Ooms 1975, pp. 100–101.
aren’t they enemies of the domain? How sad it is that noble people do not know that this is the way of the world. Would that they were aware that the enemies coveting their wealth are everywhere, and returned fire in all directions! Why cannot they avoid poverty by noiselessly and invisibly shifting wealth in their own direction?

I would humbly like to tell this to our lords.

PART II

Once I realized that my heart was floating and elevated above the earth, I was able to understand matters in their entirety, and I have put together some of my thoughts. For example, the inclination to fight for money that earlier arose in the hearts of people of the lower classes has sprung forth and is growing rapidly. People of the upper classes ought to be deeply concerned, but they do not seem to be at all aware of the situation. Unable to bear seeing this, I have written about these things here.

The revered and august Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大御神 is a female deity. Princess Okinagatarashi おき長たらし is also a female deity, and she conquered foreign countries.\(^\text{10}\) In later times, there has been no greater work than The Tale of Genji, beautifully written by Murasaki Shikibu. In a book that came from a Western country, I saw a [picture of a] woman about to perform a dissection.\(^\text{11}\) Why, then, can’t we be ambitious even though we are women?

I hear that in countries where the five grains are scarce and writing is horizontal, lifespans are short because people eat meat. When they are no more than thirty, their hair turns white, and if they reach the age of fifty, they are considered to have lived a long life. In the sacred imperial country of Japan, perhaps because we usually eat grains, lifespans are long. People’s hearts are shallow, however; it never occurs to them to plan for the long run, and many things are done in vain. Even if one lives for ten thousand years, if one produces nothing

\(^{10}\) This is the legendary Empress Jingū 神功皇后, said to have led an invasion of Korea in the third century.

\(^{11}\) Makuzu perhaps refers here to the frontispiece of Ontleedkundige Tafelen (Amsterdam, 1734), a Dutch translation of Adam Kulmus’s (1689–1745) Anatomische Tabellen. The frontispiece depicts a woman holding a knife and about to embark on dissecting the corpse of another woman. At least two copies of this work are known to have existed in late-eighteenth-century Edo. One belonged to Maeno Ryōtaku 前野良沢, who was a friend of Makuzu’s father, and Makuzu thus might have had the opportunity to see it. Kulmus’s work was translated into Japanese as Kaitai shinsho 解体新書 (published in 1774), but for this edition the frontispiece from a different Western work was used. The revised version of Kaitai shinsho, however, Jūtei kaitai shinsho 重訂解体新書, reproduced Kulmus’s original frontispiece. Since this revised version was published in 1798, Makuzu may be referring to it. A reproduction of the frontispiece may be found in Sugimoto 1987, p. 230.
to bequeath to others, one’s life will have been of no value. In countries where meat is eaten, people establish themselves in a trade between the ages of thirty and forty. But they are able to strike out on their own, engage in rigorous deliberation, and think things through. Aren’t they to be envied for achieving what Japanese people cannot? If people thought this way in our country, how could we be inferior to the foreigners?

When a country is big and has few people, it provides a good environment to think clearly. When a country is small and has many people, they become intoxicated by others, and there is no room for long-range thinking. Those who dedicate themselves to pleasure realize that they are like insects playing in the flowers, but find it difficult to forsake these frivolous habits. They are too lazy to commit themselves to anything substantial. This has become the way of doing things in our shallow country. Today’s lords may occupy a position of respect as domanial rulers, but if no one tells them, they will likely never know that they are just like the Ezo 蝦夷, who were tricked by the cut-off end of a measure of rope.

(In the past there was a directive that a certain number of fish per resident was to be supplied as tribute from Ezo to Matsumae 松前. Since the Ezo don’t know their numbers, the official in charge of collecting the tribute would tie a knot in a rope for each fish the Ezo provided. Then he would play a trick in counting the knots. When he reached a thousand, he would cut off the end of the knotted portion, making it look as if the quota had not yet been fulfilled. I have heard that the Ezo did not realize that that the officials were taking more fish than they were supposed to.)

Owing to their competitive spirit, people of lowly status fight to acquire gold, silver, and rice. Many a lord and retainer has been enslaved by the townspeople like a puppet on a string because of this strife. Although warriors make a show of effort and strive for splendor in their processions to and from Edo (sankinkōtai 参勤交代), it is all the dazzle of borrowed money. If the string held by those supplying them with funds were cut, they could not walk a step on their own. Kept tightly in thrall, even the lords of high-ranking houses cannot find any way to escape.

Among the local goods that authorities bestowed upon the Russian named Adam [Laxman],12 who had come to repatriate Japanese who had been blown off course, was a box of tobacco. “Japan is well known for producing tobacco,” he said with delight. When he opened the box, however, he discovered that a thin layer of high quality leaves had been spread on top, but underneath the leaves were of extremely low quality. He smiled and threw the tobacco away without smoking it. When I heard about this, my heart broke. Even now I grieve over our country’s shame. Unquestionably this occurred because of the selfish greed of the official in charge and the tobacco dealer, but it is typical of our country to

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think it is all right to do something like this to those who do not understand our language. How lamentable! If our people had a sense of shame, they would not have done this. It is shameful beyond shame that our country’s shallowness was displayed to this upright and honorable foreigner.

What is lamentable about our country’s shallow ways is that people feel that they are knowledgeable simply if they read Chinese and Japanese books and study long-established things. No one talks about the need to reflect on the situation of the country as a whole. Thinking about why this should be so, I concluded that, rich in material goods and with abundant pleasures available, people fritter away their time in amusements. Or else, as people work at this and try to correct that, the years pass, and even if they come up with some ideas in their old age, there is no one with whom to discuss them, so in the end their ideas come to naught. Would that there were people who, following the example of countries whose writing is horizontal, would build on what was done by those before them, reflect broadly on the situation of the country as a whole, and conduct affairs in a way that would not bring us shame in the eyes of foreigners. How shameful to be looked down upon by people of other countries for the shallow outlook that leads us to trade copper that lasts for ten thousand generations for sugar that melts when you lick it.

Chinese, who rely only on book learning, are rigid in their thinking and earth-bound. Because of this, they have difficulty looking at a country in its entirety.

Japan is a country with too many things to occupy our attention. It will not do to leave the serious matter of the number of days and nights as merely a project to think about in one’s spare time. It is of utmost importance to make it a national practice (kunibito no sadame 国人のさだめ) to use the number of days and nights as a framework for thinking about things. No matter which example we pick, the myriad matters in this country will proliferate with the passage of time. We need to be properly selective in dealing with such things.

I feel envious when I consider the customs of Russia. The czar is like the head of the Ikō 一向 sect. Although there are various institutions resembling Buddhist temples where corpses are buried, as there is only one religion, there is no strife. I hear that the Russian people wish to offer gifts to the czar. Not even the most prominent officials have retinues; only the czar is accompanied by attendants, and they are no more than five in number. They walk around the city as they please.

When people reach the age of marriage, their parents take the couple to be wed to the church. First, the man is called before the priest, who asks, “Do you take this woman to be your wife, intending to be with her for life? Do you have any second thoughts?” After hearing the man’s reply, and confirming his intention, the priest then calls the woman and asks her the same questions. If the two are

13 Makuzu presumably saw a resemblance between Ikō power at the end of the sixteenth century and the theocratic powers of the czar.
14 Makuzu has tera 寺, literally temple.
of the same mind, the priest makes them husband and wife. It is said that to be faithless (sotogokoro 心) is a serious crime for both men and women. I hear there are also young men who cannot make up their minds of their own accord. Instead of someone being designated to be such a man’s wife, a large number of women—including those of good families—are offered for his consideration, just as if he were choosing a prostitute. He then decides to marry the one he likes best.

I also hear that when Adam [Laxman] said that Japanese lords were accompanied by many attendants, the Russians declared it must be a lie and refused to believe him.

At Russian religious establishments, I have heard, there are always shelters sustained by donations for old people and children who have no one to care for them. Since the five grains are not grown in Russia, there are no peasants. Those who keep beasts, both cattle and sheep, are comparable to Japanese rice dealers. Since those who manage mercantile affairs are at the same time officials, they want to ensure the welfare of their countrymen and do not covet the profits of others and seek to enrich themselves. The father of the Russian called Adam [Laxman], who sent shipwrecked Japanese all the way back to Ezo, is said to have held a position comparable to that of Japan’s junior councillors (wakarōjū 若老中), and he was also the head of a cabinetry shop and a seller of glass. Livestock wholesalers are appointed senior councillors and sake wholesalers are chosen for other posts. Officials are thus the heads of this wholesaler or that, and since they engage in trade as gentlemen, prices are appropriate, and the country is not racked by strife. It is their wish, I hear, to enrich the country by engaging in trade.

Envying foreign ways is not as strange as it seems. Even in our country, some things are oriented towards expanding upon excellent inventions rather than discarding them. The kabuki theater is such a thing. For one, all who work in the theater must be united with the rhythm; that is, the rhythm that exists naturally between heaven and earth. Is it not because the theater takes this as its principle that it is awe inspiring? People take simple beggars’ tricks, think up one sleight-of-hand after another, and stage astonishing wonders. We thus cannot say that nowhere in our country do people think through things in a superior fashion and combine their ideas. The head of the Ikkō sect thoroughly understood the course of gold and silver and found ways to make these return of their own accord.15 Taking these two examples as our guide, if our countrymen would put their minds to developing superior ways of doing things, why should they not succeed?

If only there were a way to prevent the turmoil caused by people being caught up in the conflict over money! The rise in prices is no more than embezzlement on the part of the townspeople. Even though they have been robbed in this way

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15 In his comment on this passage, Takizawa Bakin 滝沢馬琴 remarks that Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), the founder of the True Pure Land (Ikkō) tradition, playing on people’s wish to be reborn in paradise, developed ways of extracting money from believers. Dokkōron, p. 331.
time and time again, the warriors continue to hold complacently to their existing ways, so the townspeople divide things up as they please. Isn’t it regrettable that over and over again, warriors are cheated of their wealth, just as were the Ezo with those famous knotted ropes! (Isn’t it because the townspeople are free to raise prices as they please that the warriors are pressed in this way?)

Ordinary people are unable to put up any resistance to what actors do because they cannot encompass what has been accomplished by building upon ingenious innovations and combining the wisdom of numerous people. So impressive are the actors’ performances that even though it is clear that their actions are not for real, people throughout the country are mesmerized into feeling as if they have been brought to a state of enlightenment. But since the actors are driven by the desire to make money, their accomplishments are not of benefit to the country.

Long ago, there was a man named Kawamura 川村 somebody-or-other (after his retirement he was called Zuiken 随軒).\(^{16}\) When he was young, he worked as a day laborer on building projects, and having earned some quick cash, he thought he would go to the Kyoto-Osaka region to look for work, sightseeing along the way. At the post town of Ōtsu 大津, he happened to meet someone who read people’s fortunes by looking at their faces. “You have a superior face,” the fortune-teller said. “You should become famous, but it will be difficult to succeed if you follow ordinary ways. It would be better to try things out in Edo.” Thinking that there was something to what the fortune-teller said, Kawamura headed back to Edo, but by the time he arrived there he had spent all his money on travel expenses and had not one coin left.

“Whatever shall I do?” he wondered, folding his arms across his chest. It was just past the middle of the seventh month, and as he stood on the shore of Takanawa 高縄 watching the waves roll in and out, he suddenly noticed that a large number of reed bundles that had been cast out to sea as Obon offerings had washed up on the shore. He picked up the melons and eggplants wrapped in the reeds, salted them down as pickles, and went off to peddle them to laborers. (It seems that at this time canals were being dredged here and there.) “Tastes great!” the laborers said, and in no time at all he had sold out his wares. It’s said that he then used these earnings as capital and made a fair fortune trading in pickles.

Afterwards Zuiken became head of a contingent of day laborers. He submitted the lowest bid for scaffolding for a construction project at the shogun’s castle and won the contract for the job. Until that time, scaffolding had all been made of lumber held in place by clamps. Lumber and clamps were expensive and portage costs were high, so Zuiken came up with the idea of using wooden poles for the weight-bearing parts and making the rest of bamboo and rope. Not only was the scaffolding easier to construct, the rope held it together better than

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\(^{16}\) Zuiken lived from 1617 to 1699. By the end of his life he had become so important to the bakufu that he was made a hatamoto. In Mukashibanashi, Makuzu records the same stories about Zuiken’s cleverness that she gives here. See Mukashibanashi, pp. 124–26. Most of the episodes she relates appear in the popular miscellany Okinagusa 翁草 (preface dated 1776, published 1784). See Furuta 1964 and Okinagusa, pp. 161–66. On Zuiken, see also Crawcour 1966.
the clamps, and thus there were fewer injuries. As a result, everyone adopted Zuiken’s methods, and he once again earned a lot of money. He decided to start a lumber company and put up an impressive shop, but before he had laid in even a single stick of lumber, a fierce fire broke out in the windward direction. Immediately he came up with an idea. He set his own house on fire and took his family by express palanquin to the Kiso 木曾 mountains.

When he got there he announced, “I am a lumber dealer from Edo. I have come to stock up on lumber because of a great fire there. I want to buy up all the lumber in the Kiso mountains.” Not knowing who he was, however, the Kiso people refused to sell without a deposit. At a loss as to how to persuade them otherwise, Zuiken caught sight of a crying child of about four. He pulled three gold ryō out of his pocket, made a hole in one of them with a short sword, and gave it to the child to play with. Seeing this the Kiso people were convinced that he must be truly rich and sold him all the wood he wanted. So terrible was the Edo fire that it destroyed a third of the city. After four or five days, wholesalers came one after the other to Kiso to stock up on lumber, but since Zuiken had already cornered the market, they had to buy from him. Without any advance payment, but simply using his wits, he managed to make a thousand ryō.

Having prospered from the fire, Zuiken became a major figure in the lumber trade. When the shogunal government needed two thousand pieces of lumber, he put in a low bid just as before, and was ordered to procure the lumber. He then devised a scheme to cut expenses for the labor involved in displaying the wood for the official inspection. Instead of carrying all two thousand pieces to the place of inspection, he would take only one thousand and pile them in such a way that there seemed to be two thousand. It was through such devices that he was able to guarantee a lower price than the others. He spoke to the officials privately about this plan and convinced about half of them, but there was one conscientious official, a Confucian scholar of the Zhu Xi school whom he found difficult to approach. Wondering what strategy he might use, he found out that there was a rare Chinese text that the official wanted to see. Hastily memorizing the names of some books, he posed as a scholar, went to that official, and brought the conversation around to this text. When the official said that he would like to see the text, Zuiken said, “Fortunately, I happen to own it. I will show it to you immediately.” Once he had procured the text, he showed it to the official, who, after browsing through it in delight, returned it. The next day it was conveyed to his attendants that the text he had returned the previous day was missing one volume; perhaps, it was suggested, it had gotten mixed up with other things. When this informal overture reached the official’s ears, he was mortified. He himself searched his entire house but could not find the volume. Meanwhile, the time arrived for the lumber inspection. Zuiken brought out one thousand logs and piled them up as though they were two thousand. Although the official thought

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17 The Meireki 明暦 fire of 1657.
this should not be allowed, because he was so mortified at having lost the volume, he pretended not to notice.

Having reached the pinnacle of prosperity through such means, Zuiken decided to retire and study Buddhism. While in seclusion for three days, he came up with a plan to cut a new channel for the Yodo 洲河 river. On the morning of the third day, he hitched his kimono up behind him and crying, “Cut a new channel for the river!” ran to petition the authorities [to approve the project]. His request was granted, and the plan carried out. Even now, people benefit from this innovation. To be sure, Zuiken was a remarkable man of genius, yet doesn’t the fact that he sought his own prosperity by exploiting others make his the wisdom of a base man?

It is said that Osaka is the place that controls the source of gold and silver and oversees their circulation. No doubt the old contentious habits remain in the hearts of Osaka people: driven by base passion, they enjoy making their own region flourish and enriching themselves by exploiting people from the Kantō region. Is this not dreadful!

Since there are no books in Japan that serve as appropriate teachings about our country’s ways, from the time people begin to study they rely on Chinese books. It is thus futile to study a little bit with the idea of refining one’s way of thinking since then the ideas one already has become useless. And if one studies seriously, one will become hesitant and discouraged. This is because one is learning another country’s rhythm. I wish there were works that could serve as the teachings of our own country.

When people were still backward, there may have been some point to making use of the teachings of another country. But in this fine age when even those of low station have the aspiration to learn, why should we rely on the works of another country? Only when we give priority to developing perceptive minds that understand without being told what it is that makes the gods of our country gods, will all things be as they should be. Is not such perceptivity the way of our country? Could there be another country where people leave the matters of their own country aside to study the books of other lands?

I often heard my father lament that our people don’t know our country in its entirety, and that they are wise in small matters but stupid about big ones. The rise and fall of commodity prices, being an important public matter, should be handled by the government; instead it is left up to the townspeople, so prices rise and goods decline in quality. Since the income from warriors’ holdings is fixed, they are open to attack and seizure by townspeople. Warriors don’t even have the means to return fire in this battle. This is truly stupid!

The following Japanese products are known in other countries: gold, silver, copper, iron, crystal, rice, salt, paper, sea-slug, dried sea-slug, and tobacco. There must also be numerous medicines. While salt and sugar are comparable products, salt stands first. (Salt is indispensable for everyday life. Sugar is used as a medicine and also in tea cakes.) Since in other countries the sea is far away, salt is scarce. When we sell salt we measure it by the eye while sugar is weighed pre-
precisely. It is wrong to disdain salt just because its abundance in Japan has resulted in a surplus for everyday use and reduced its price.

Cherry blossoms and camellias are noted flowers of Japan. (I don’t know why an excellent variety is called Chinese camellia.) Lacquer and cypress are also Japan’s specialty products. There is lacquer in other countries as well, but not much, and it is of inferior quality. Chinese and Dutch lacquer are not lustrous, and the Japanese art of inlaid lacquer is especially admired in other countries. I’m sure there are other Japanese products of this sort as well. (I mention Japanese products here, because women and children seem not to know that various things are products of our country.)

One way in which Japan is superior to other countries is that people are quick and inevitably win in contests of wit. For another, Japan’s mountains produce gold, silver, copper, iron, and other metals. (Because there was such a plenitude of these things, year by year we let them be shipped to other countries, and now there is not enough.) I would like to see us exchange salt for sugar in trade with other countries. Where Japan is inferior to other countries is that people are impatient, have short attention spans, and can’t think things through or come up with far-reaching ideas. To be fond of what is pleasing at the moment is bad. It is also bad to be fond of what delights the eye regardless of the expense, and to think that anything that gives pleasure is good. All such things are evanescent. Because we spend our lives at play, even a rich country becomes poor. What I wish is that the treasures of the country, having once flowed out, will return again and again, in constant circulation.

Aren’t ancient writings known today because the ideas of knowledgeable persons who have studied old texts have not been discarded, but rather have been expanded upon? If you don’t discard good things, but build upon them, you will obtain wonderful results, so don’t think that there is no use in learning about the ways of other countries. A solid, stable government will be established precisely through learning about various countries in their entirety.

(Note by the commentator:¹⁸ Kudō Heisuke 工藤平助, Makuzu’s father, was famous for his knowledge of Dutch studies. Having listened often to her father’s discussions since childhood, Makuzu here recklessly praises the activities of foreigners and makes arguments such as these.)

¹⁸ Probably Takizawa Bakin.
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