

**AN ADOPTED HUSBAND  
[SONO  
OMOKAGE]. TRANSLATED  
FROM THE JAPANESE**

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An Adopted Husband [Sono Omokage]. Translated from the Japanese by Shimei Futabatei & Buhachiro Mitsui & Gregg M. Sinclair

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SHIMEI FUTABATEI & BUHACHIRO MITSUI & GREGG M. SINCLAIR

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AN ADOPTED  
HUSBAND

[SONO OMOKAGE]

*Translated from the Japanese of*

FUTABATEI

*by Buhachiro Mitsui and*

*Gregg M. Sinclair*

HASEGAWA,  
TATSUNOSUKE



*New York*

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1854, when through Commodore Perry's treaty with the Shogun, America induced Japan to forsake her policy of national seclusion, the novels of that country consisted mainly of a few court romances, some historical stories filled with impossible and improbable incidents, and some books of humour and satire. Mr. Aston, in his *History of Japanese Literature*, describes the court romance, *Genji Monogatari*,—written by a woman in the tenth or eleventh century—as “realistic.” He characterizes *Hakenden*, the masterpiece of Bakin (the foremost novelist of old Japan), as “full of physical and moral impossibilities, and often pedantic and wearisome.” And of Ikku's *Hizakurige*,—which has been compared to the inimitable *Pickwick Papers*—he writes, “It is hopeless by translation to give any idea of the copious flow of rollicking humour which pervades every page of this really wonderful book. It is a picture of real life, for every detail of which Ikku has drawn on his own observation.” These illustrations are suggested as representative only of the best literature—exclusive of dramatic, poetic and philosophical writings—of the pre-modern period. And as the sun was setting on the Shogunate government, the writers of the Bakin “school” were the most important. Bakin himself was a voluminous writer, an inventor of marvellous plots, a moralist of a certain static kind; and he unquestionably gave standing to the novel. However, as serious



literature his work is distinct from the novels of today, in Japan and in other countries, by the calm realistic manner in which he introduced the supernatural, and the impossible feats which he sometimes demanded of his characters. Bakin's followers were fairly proficient as artificers of the extravagant and the fantastic, but they lacked the genius and the technique to create enduring literature.

The collapse of the Shogunate government and the Restoration in 1867-8, followed by the arrival of Europeans and Americans in the character of technical advisers to the young government, and as teachers and missionaries, brought about great changes in the life of the people. Japan was started on her inexhaustible quest for Western knowledge and Western efficiency. The new spirit of the awakened people, and their struggles with the conservatives of the day, has been admirably recorded by Stevenson in his article on Yoshida.<sup>1</sup> Japan was eager to learn Occidental methods in education, in business, in religion, in the military. Newspapers were established; private schools and colleges were founded; the new leaders in a multitude of ways tried to prepare the people for a changed society. In contrast to her previous myopia, Japan now had her eyes on the widest horizon. Europe and America succeeded to the position of importance that China formerly had occupied.

It is to be expected that Japan in her cravings for outside knowledge would take advantage of the writings of the European and American masters. The period of the eighties was one of translation and transition for Japanese literature. Japan became acquainted with Rousseau, Montesquieu, Darwin, Mill, Smiles; and in the late eighties and nineties was introduced to Hugo, Longfellow, Campbell,

<sup>1</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson: *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*.

Dostoievsky, Turgenev, de Maupassant, and many others. The impact of these minds upon the Japanese was most important, for, as Dr. Miyagi Setsurei writes in an article on *Translation in Chuo Koron*, "Taking a somewhat broader view of the subject it is true to say that we owe much of the rapid progress which has marked the Meiji era to the fact that it has been an age of translations. If we compare it with the 700 years of feudal rule and stagnancy that preceded it, we see what the importation of foreign ideas has meant to us as a nation."<sup>1</sup>

And Prof. Yaichi Haga is more specific in his article on the "*Literature of the Meiji Era*": "Takusuke Nakae, who had been in France, translated Rousseau's *Contrat Social* under the title of *Manyaku-Rori*, and its reception was so great that the Imperial Rescript issued in 1881, promising the inauguration of constitutional administration within ten years was said to be due to the idea of popular rights widely diffused through that book."<sup>2</sup>

And this was a period of transition, too; transition from the Bakin grotesques to the beginnings of present-day naturalism. Dr. Tsubouchi struck the first blow for the new form in his *Essence of Novel-writing*, published in 1886. He urged novelists to write about real people, to reveal their minds and characters, and to forsake the fantastic method of old. The history of the struggle is an interesting one, but it is too long to be given in detail here. Dr. Tsubouchi himself has indicated the first advance in his admirable preface to the Japanese edition of this translation. ". . . The writer who contributed most to the correction of this erroneous tendency in Japanese literature

<sup>1</sup> A transcript of this article may be found in *The Japan Weekly Mail*, June 12, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> Okuma: *Fifty Years of New Japan*.

was the author of *Sono Omokage* [translated as *An Adopted Husband*].

"True, before Futabatei, some writers had argued for the reform of literature and some had even attempted the production of new works based on new ideals; yet not one of them had been able to bring about such a transformation. At this juncture Futabatei appeared. The publication of his first work, *Ukikumo*, gave a new turn to the general taste for reading. His next productions, translations of Turgeniev and some other Russian masters, the technique of which was entirely new in his day, encouraged this new tendency in Japanese literature. His last works, *Sono Omokage* and *Heibon*—his masterpieces—will remain as testaments to his short but fruitful life."

Prof. Soma, of the Department of Literature, Waseda University, confirms this high praise. "This principle [Dr. Tsubouchi's] was very clearly shown in Futabatei's *Ukikumo*. He avoided creating characters from fancy, but he drew from living models . . . out of practical life. He showed clearly . . . that we must look beneath the surface . . . that we must look at life psychologically in order to understand it. . . . Indeed, *Ukikumo* is an earnest study of life itself, and a serious work in which the author tried to catch the inner life of human beings."<sup>1</sup>

The life of Tatsunosuke Hasegawa, who assumed the pseudonym Futabatei Shimei, resembles in many respects the progress of Japan during the Meiji era [1868-1912]. He was born but a year or so before Meiji Tenno was established on the throne, and he died three years before the great Mikado was laid to rest at Momoyama. The

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Gyofu Soma: *The New Literature of Japan*. Published in Japanese, May, 1914.