

The Map of My Life

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I. Childhood	1
1. The World of the Kiri-ezu	2
2. The Knapsack in Light Brown	15
3. Our Universe	32
4. Weights on a Child's Mind	39
Chapter II. As a Student	45
5. At Middle School	45
6. The Days Before and After the War's End	53
7. About Death	62
8. How I Studied	64
9. Evil Ambition and Arrogance	67
10. Three Years at the University of Tokyo	80
Chapter III. As a Mathematician	97
11. My Embarkation as a Mathematician	97
12. As a Teacher	101
13. In Paris	107
14. In Princeton	112
15. Return to Tokyo	118
16. One Year in Osaka	124
17. At Princeton University	128
Chapter IV. A Long Epilogue	145
18. Why I Wrote That Article	145
19. Impressions of Various Countries	146
20. You Will Find Out	160
21. The Other Side	164
Appendix	169
A1. That Conjecture	169

A2. A Letter to Freydoon Shahidi	174
A3. Two Letters to Richard Taylor	176
A4. Response	182
A5. André Weil as I Knew Him	193
Afterword	211

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

There are many autobiographies and memoirs without a preface, which I think is normal. In my case, however, the purpose of this book is manifold, and I include many things that may not strictly be called my recollections. Therefore I need to explain why I write them. First of all, I want to write not only about myself but also about my time, or rather, the atmosphere of the time. Thus I include many things that are completely ordinary and known to almost everyone of my generation. I do so because they are so ordinary, they will never be written, and as a consequence, will be forgotten.

Next, I have included my opinions on various historical events and thoughts about human nature, most of which are what I wanted to say at least once, and for which most likely I would not find a platform elsewhere. Such opinions can be found in many autobiographies, and more of them appear in this book.

In the latter part of the book, I write about mathematics, and inevitably I use technical terms. I would advise the reader who is not familiar with these terms simply to read through the passages in question without trying too hard to understand them. After all, this book is not about mathematics, but about how my life is related to the development of mathematics, and I believe that to understand that interaction, it is not necessary to have any special knowledge of mathematics.

1. The World of the Kiri-ezu

My ancestors were samurai retainers of a feudal lord in the Edo period (1603–1867). Tokyo was called Edo then. Each lord was the ruler of his fief, but was required to come to Edo and reside there for several months or so. Then he would return to his fief and this was repeated. Of course some retainers and their families followed him, but some of them had permanent residence in Edo. Those retainers were called *jofu*, which roughly means “constantly in the capital.” My ancestors were such *jofu* for about seven generations. Even their tombs were in Edo. My great-grandfather was the last one who served the lord. When I was a child, I thought anything related to Edo was something in the days long past, but the period between 1867 and my birth is more than ten years shorter than my age now. Indeed, the streets of Tokyo in my childhood were, albeit wider and paved, in the same position as in the Edo period. I think they remained so even until around 1970.

None of my forefathers made a name in history. There are only two historical documents in which the name of one of my ancestors appears. In the mid-nineteenth century, a few publishers in Edo sold maps of the city, about thirty sheets for the whole city. Each sheet, about eighteen inches square covering about one square mile, indicates the plots occupied by feudal lords, and the names of their *jofu*-retainers are written in many small rectangular plots adjacent to the plot of their lord. Some Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines are also shown on the map, but the quarters occupied by the working class are squeezed into disproportionately small areas.

Shimura Kosanji, the name of my great-great-great-grandfather, is one of the hundreds of such names found on two maps published in 1851 and 1854. The two maps are nearly identical, and cover a district called Ushigome, a part of Shinjuku Ward of the present-day Tokyo. In fact, I spent much of my childhood within the same district, and so I walked on the same roads and visited the same Shinto shrines as Kosanji did. The maps indicate also the Buddhist temple on whose grounds was the cemetery

where my ancestors were buried. Most of them were born and died in Edo, which was the case with my grandfather too. The maps of this type are called *Edo kiri-ezu*. Hereafter I refer to the particular one showing the house of Kosanji as *the Ushigome Kiri-ezu*, or simply *the Kiri-ezu*.

Apparently Kosanji was not of high rank, because, if he were, his descendants would have remembered him to be so, and would have boasted about the fact, but there is no such thing. However, Kosanji was a diligent man. He left many small notebooks in which he recorded various facts concerning his service to the lord. For example, the lord would give a banquet in honor of some important person; Kosanji would be in charge of it, and would record the menu in his meticulous hand. Also, he learned judo (jiu-jitsu) and kendo (kenjitsu, Japanese fencing) with a teacher, and reached the highest level in both subjects, as evidenced by the fact that the teacher gave him two certificates of the most formal kind.

Each certificate is a scroll, whose main part consists of a long list of various martial techniques. Then there is a pedigree showing who taught whom forming a long line that ends with the name Shimura Kosanji. There is also a warning that everything must be kept secret; if anything is disclosed to an unauthorized person, then the violator will be punished by Marishisonten (Marici, a Hindu god of war). I remember especially the item on the judo scroll concerning how to tie a criminal with a cord. The note below it says that "it is a standard rule that the cost of the cord is 333 mon." A mon roughly means a penny. Perhaps it meant that the teacher would give a cord to the disciple in addition to the scroll, and the latter would pay the former 333 mon.

I think the scrolls are authentic, and I am certain that Kosanji and his teacher took them seriously. For my family members, however, they were objects of mere curiosity. I was very disappointed when I looked at them for the first time, as it looked like the table of contents of a book without text. But of course one could not expect anything other than that. The teachers of other activities such as flower arrangement, music, calligraphy, and dancing

issued certificates in those days, and do so even today. But I don't think that any such certificate was a scroll. Why scrolls? I think they needed a long piece of paper to list all the items that were taught. Then it would have been natural to make a scroll, though of course a scroll would have made the certificate look grander and more valuable.

In the Edo period there was a school of mathematics, whose originator was Seki Takakazu. He and his successors were able to develop the theory of algebraic equations and even infinite series; they almost invented differential and integral calculus in their own way, but did not reach the refined level of Western mathematicians. In any case, what they had achieved was quite sophisticated, and I'm sure they gave out certificates to their students, and I even think that some teachers warned their students with possible punishment by some god, if not Marishisonten, but I doubt that the certificates were scrolls.

As for my great-grandfather, Issei, the family legend says the following. At the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868), he naturally became unemployed, but somebody connected to the well-known aristocratic Konoe family gave him a chance of serving one of the Konoes. Konoe is the family name of court nobles of the highest rank, belonging to the Fujiwara clan. However, Issei decided against the idea, saying that "A loyal samurai does not have two masters."

I must emphasize that none of his family were proud of him for saying so. On the contrary, everybody resented him. Apparently Issei was a lazy man. My grandfather, Kintaro, referring to his classmate who later became a well-known professor at the University of Tokyo, used to say, "I was better than he in elementary school. Therefore I would have been more successful in my career, if my father had been employed and had let me get through college," which is of course a standard line uttered by any frustrated person. After giving birth to her first son Kintaro, Issei's first wife died. Issei then had a second wife, who came from a family richer and of higher rank than the Shimuras.

It is said, however, that she was not very smart, and too carefree. She would say, "Today I am afraid I am short of money. I think I'd better sell one of my silk robes." In fact, she had brought many silk robes when she married Issei. In those days, a fishmonger, besides being a shopkeeper, would also visit the home of every regular customer, carrying fish in an oval tub. After selling a robe, she would say, "That large bonito in the tub looks fresh; I must buy it." Then she would buy it. Such a woman was she, but no family member resented her. On the contrary, she was gentle and liked by everybody. Kintaro, especially, had fond memories of her as a very kind stepmother.

In the Edo period and even after the Meiji Restoration any marriage of the samurai class was normally arranged between families of the same fief. That was so for the wife of Kintaro, but this time she came from one of the poorest families in the fief. Also, she was not very kind to her daughter-in-law, my mother. It causes me deep regret that I am related by blood to the lazy samurai but not to the kindly woman who exchanged silk robes for fresh fish.

My father inherited various things, including the scrolls. There were several swords, a spear, a halberd, a matchlock, and other old-fashioned weapons, as well as some tea-bowls and tea utensils for the tea ceremony, owned by Issei's second wife. All these were kept in a large oblong wooden box. My father was employed by a bank, and was often transferred from one branch to the other. Therefore I guess he carried such relics of the feudal age whenever he moved, and I feel sorry for him. My brother still has the scrolls but all else were destroyed by the American bombing during the war.

My grandfather on my mother's side apparently had no regular occupation. He had no son but four daughters, of whom my mother was the third. She was neither proud nor ashamed of him; she only mentioned tidbits of his easy-going life-style, but I gathered from what she told me that he was lazy too, and so I inherited another lazy fellow's blood. She was born in the western rural part of Nagoya, which had belonged to the fief of the lord of my ancestors. Therefore my father married a woman of the same fief as his father

and grandfather did. I suspect that her reticence about her father had its roots in her ambivalence to her rural upbringing, because her later life as an adult was completely urban. Here is one of her favorite stories about her experiences in elementary school. One day her teacher made her stand in the corner. She thought it unjust, stomped out of the school, and ran to her house, while her classmates noisily cheered her on from the windows. Before narrating another of her stories, I first have to explain a folk tale every Japanese knows, which is about an injured sparrow and an old man who saves her.

After letting the recovered sparrow return home, one day he tried to visit her, shouting loudly, “Sparrow, sparrow, where is your home?” He finally found her living in a bamboo grove, and was entertained by her family. When he bade them farewell, they brought out two wicker baskets, one large and the other small. Then they let the old man pick whichever he liked. Being modest, he chose the small one. Arriving at his home, he found a great quantity of treasures in the basket. One of his neighbors, a mean old woman, envious of his luck, injured a sparrow, nursed it, let it go, and went to the same place in the bamboo grove. Being greedy, she demanded the large basket, and got it. As it was heavy, she took a rest on the road. She was anxious to see inside, and opened it. Out came an army of evil monsters, who devoured the wicked woman.

At my mother’s elementary school, a music class consisted of the pupils singing a simple song, accompanied by an organ played by an old teacher. The song goes like this:

Sparrow, sparrow, where is your home?

Chi-chi-chi, chi-chi-chi, this way in the bamboo grove.

According to my mother, this was customary not only in the first grade, but also in *every* grade; the pupils were always singing, “Chi-chi-chi, chi-chi-chi, . . .” I am inclined to believe her, as she was not very talented in creating a story.

However, I hear that most professors in law or social science teaching at Japanese universities simply read their notebooks, and

let the students copy what they read. Also they use the same notebooks year after year, and therefore they are singing their own “Chi-chi-chi, chi-chi-chi,” The maxim “A university professor is the next easiest profession after a beggar” really rings true.

I was born on February 23, 1930 in Hamamatsu, a city 135 miles west of Tokyo, whose population was more than 200,000 at that time. I have no recollection of my life there. According to what my mother told me, my family moved from one house to another in the city. I visited the old place after moving, and came back crying and shouting, “I saw a caaaaat!” She amused herself by repeating this story to me, and even told it to my wife. I suppose her point was, “He, who has such a solemn face now, was once like that.” I don’t find it interesting, as I have no recollection of it. It would have been more interesting if I had seen a grinning caaaaat.

What I remember about my childhood begins in March, 1933, when my family moved to Tokyo. We lived in an old-fashioned one-story house situated very close to where my ancestors Kosanji and Issei lived, but that was a coincidence.

There was a dense network of streetcar lines operated by the municipal government of Tokyo. One-way fare for an adult was seven sen, irrespective of the distance; a sen was equivalent to half an American penny then. Transfer tickets and various kinds of discount were available, so the system was a convenient and practical way of transportation, comparable to, and possibly more so than, the present subway system in Tokyo; the only drawback was its slowness. The first subway line was built in 1927, and in 1939 it became the present Ginza line connecting Asakusa with Shibuya. It was the only subway line in Tokyo until 1959, when another line was built. In addition, trains ran on state-owned railroads, the Yama-no-te and Chu-oh lines, which are the same as those of today.

In April 1936 I was enrolled in the elementary school situated next to a Shinto shrine which was shown almost at the center of the Kiri-ezu. Japan was becoming politically unstable in the 1930s and there was a well-known failed coup d’état on February 26 that

year, in which two ministers and a high army official were killed by soldiers. But the daily life of an ordinary citizen was not much affected. In fact, I remember the five years after my coming to Tokyo as one of the happiest periods in my life.

In 1938 my family moved to a house in Nishi-Ohkubo, also in Shinjuku Ward, which was about a fifteen-minute walk from the old place. I still went to the same elementary school until the fourth grade, but changed to the school in Nishi-Ohkubo, and completed the fifth and sixth grades there.

Speaking about those happy five years, I think the atmosphere of a large shopping district like Shinjuku was not much different from today, and I remember a certain feeling of affluence of the area, though of course there were poor quarters elsewhere. Besides, the streets of Tokyo were not beautiful, if not dirty. The novelist Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), who became a Japanese citizen with the Japanese name Koizumi Yakumo, thought so, and disliked Tokyo not only for that reason but also because there were some English and American men in the city with whom he did not want to be associated, as he always had the feeling of being an outsider. However, he eventually came to Tokyo, and lived in a house in the Ushigome district near the Buddhist temple called Kobudera, which is clearly shown on the Ushigome Kiri-ezu. After several years, he and his family moved to a new house in Nishi-Ohkubo, which was very close to my elementary school, and he died there.

The Kiri-ezu also shows a small shrine dedicated to Benten (Sarasvati, a Hindu goddess of water), which is usually called Nuke-Benten for some reason, and another shrine called Nishimuki Tenjin, dedicated to a well-known poet-scholar who died in 903, which once occupied a relatively large domain for such a local shrine. These shrines were just a few minutes walk from my house and also Kosanji's. The streetcar line No. 13 ran from east to west on the road that divided the Kiri-ezu in two. One of the stops of this line was just in front of Nuke-Benten, where my family boarded the streetcar whenever we went to Shinjuku. There was (and still is) a slope going down westward from the Benten

shrine, lined with many stores, and my family usually shopped for everyday goods there. There were also tradesmen taking orders at their regular customers' home for commodities such as rice, soy sauce, oil, vinegar, sake, charcoal, and firewood. At the end of the slope, there was a middle school, which, according to rumors at the time, was for boys of rich families who were not smart.

Halfway down the slope there was a Chinese restaurant called Ko-Ran. Whenever I walked by that place, I smelled something that suggested delicious cuisines, and so I had a vague desire to eat in that restaurant someday, but that never happened, though my family had dishes supplied by them when we had guests. To do honor to my parents, I must note that they later brought me to some good restaurants, perhaps better than Ko-Ran.

There were some places of business of the type we do not find these days. Next to the shrine of Benten was a shop that made bows and arrows; a half dozen men, sitting on a wooden floor, would be shaving bamboo sticks. Just opposite was a small printing press, which would make loud noises with moving printing machines. There was also a small place which we children called *Hebi-ya* translated as the "snake shop." It displayed a viper in a small glass bottle placed in the window. I never saw any customer going in there.

I also remember an advertisement on a wall for a dressmaker called Midori-ya. In those days, practically all housewives were in kimono, except in the summer, when they wore simple clothes in the Western style. I never saw any pupil in elementary school in kimono. Middle schools were not coeducational. The boys and girls from seventh through eleventh grade wore uniforms stipulated by each school. The girls even wore raincoats designed especially for the school. As for Midori-ya, I never knew where it was; I am not even sure whether it was really a dressmaker, as the advertisement simply said "Dresses Midori-ya". However, as there was not much demand for Western-style women's clothing, it is inconceivable that it was a retail shop for such goods. Japanese women in

Western clothes became common, or rather, standard only after the war.

On the opposite side of the Midori-ya advertisement was a cheap restaurant, which had a sign for shaved ice in the summer. The front of the place was always open, so that one could see a few men, who looked like laborers, sitting on the chairs. After a few years, that house along with adjacent buildings was replaced by some houses with colorful roof tiles. They were of the type that was called *bunka jutaku* in Japanese, which may be translated as “up-to-date residences.” Walking northward from my house a few minutes, I once observed a few girls standing on the rooftop of a two-story Western-style house painted in cream, which was later destroyed by a fire one winter night.

For a pre-school boy like me, the snake shop, Midori-ya, the cheap restaurant, *bunka jutaku*, the Western-style house in cream, and the girls on its rooftop were unknowable objects of my curiosity, which was never satisfied.

Two houses and ours shared a courtyard behind a gate with a pair of wooden doors facing the street. The style of our house was out of date, but had some interesting points which I describe later. The courtyard had more than adequate space for children to play. At night the gate would be bolted, but there was a side door which I think was not locked.

The house in front of the gate was occupied by a retired army general, and had a pair of gateposts made of granite. The family’s New Year decoration pines were the tallest in the neighborhood. I thought he was a very old man, but he was perhaps in his late sixties. His son was an army officer killed in a battle somewhere some years ago, survived by his wife and son. They lived in a small house built on the same property, separate from the main building. The boy was my classmate in elementary school and also a playmate even in pre-school days. I often had snacks with him in his house. We two, together with his mother and grandfather, would comment on the fish in the tub brought by a fishmonger to

their place. There was nothing extraordinary or mysterious about this family, as I could see practically everything there.

I had a memorable experience with their northside neighbor, however. One day at the age of four or five, I was playing with two children of the same age in the courtyard in front of my house, when a young woman opened a door on the wall on the other side of the street, smiled at us, and invited us into the garden of her house. I was later told that she was a newlywed, and was living with her husband and parents-in-law. She was pretty, about twenty years old, and wore a simple but elegant kimono. I don't remember what we did then; perhaps she gave us cookies. It was my vague impression that somebody advised her to let us leave, though she and we children wanted to be together much longer, and we were naturally disappointed. The memory of this visit remained a puzzle, if I may call it so, which was never solved. It may have been simply that she saw a few innocent and sweet boys, and spontaneously wanted to play with them. But the door was never opened again for me, and she and the house became another unknowable existence.

There are some ordinary goods that are commonly available today, but not in those days. Let me mention some of them. Electric washers and vacuum cleaners are such appliances; electric refrigerators existed, but not in ordinary households, which used iceboxes, with chunks of ice delivered from an ice shop. The state-owned radio broadcasting system started in 1925 but there was no television. Some of the most popular radio programs were broadcasts of intercollegiate baseball games. But they were interrupted occasionally by stock quotations, which everybody detested. Professional baseball was played for the first time in 1936 among the seven teams established then, but they gained the same degree of popularity as intercollegiate ones only after the war.

There were no electric rice cookers. Every household in Tokyo had gas ranges, and some families used them for cooking rice, but there were many who heated the pot on a kitchen stove by burning firewood, and my family was one of them. This was so until around

1938. The iron pot was made for the single purpose of cooking rice, and had a heavy wooden lid. The rice cooker works even in one's sleep, but one cannot burn firewood while sleeping. Therefore my mother would rise at 5:30 in the morning to start the fire in the stove. In those days I used to sleep next to her, and I would also rise at the same time, and help her tend the burning wood in the stove, and do a few other things necessary for our breakfast. My brother and sisters would still be in deep sleep. Later I read the biographies of several dutiful sons born into poor families who became famous men. They gave me an inferiority complex, as I thought I was not as good as they, but I consoled myself by thinking that, "Well, I at least tended the kitchen stove." At that time I would go to bed before eight in the evening.

Some Western-style buildings built relatively recently, such as colleges, hospitals, and government facilities, had radiators. That was so for some elementary schools that were rebuilt after the Great Earthquake of 1923. But the elementary and middle schools I attended had not been damaged by the earthquake, and as a consequence were heated by coal stoves. Also, most families, except for very rich ones, warmed themselves with a charcoal fire in a brazier. It is well-known that Lafcadio Hearn complained bitterly about the coldness of Japanese houses in the winter, in both Matsue and Tokyo. More than thirty years later we were still shivering from the cold, as he had been. I would be shivering even some twenty more years later, to which I turn in a later chapter.

Few homes had telephones. Many households had maids but not telephones. It is quite possible that maids outnumbered telephones in Tokyo households in the early 1930s. Car ownership in those days meant owning a chauffeured automobile. Taxis were abundant; it was easy to hail one on any busy street. There was a fifty-yen silver coin, which was roughly equivalent to an American quarter at that time, and which was the base price for a taxi ride, and one could even bargain for a discount.

There were many department stores in Tokyo, which did not look much different from those of today; the elevators and

escalators worked well. When I went to Paris in 1957, I found the department stores there rather old-fashioned, dimly lit, with sluggish escalators, and thought those in Shinjuku in my childhood were much better.

One thing we saw daily in those days but not today was an ad-balloon. There was a popular song:

Today again high in the sky is the ad-balloon,
I thought he was busy in his office this afternoon,
Ah, but on the contrary,
I'm angry, I'm angry,
That's perfectly natural, don't you agree?

What was the husband doing? Women working in companies had low-level jobs such as typists, telephone operators, and salesclerks. In any case, an extramarital affair between such a female worker and her boss was nonexistent, and was never the subject of a romance novel, though there was a novel called *The Chastity of the Husband*. A broom was often mentioned as the wife's favorite tool for punishing the husband, which may be compared to a rolling pin used in France for the same purpose. Once a Japanese journalist said that women and stockings were the two items in Japan that became much stronger after the war, which may be true, but in fact Japanese wives before the war were strong enough to brandish brooms. No pachinko parlors existed in those days. There were dance-halls, and even popular songs about dancers, but I am incapable of comparing them with those of today. I can only mention that those who frequented dance-halls and caused scandals were the wives of well-known men of the upper-class.

Most of the popular songs at that time were corrupt to a similar extent. Here is another, which a record company issued around 1929:

Shall we see a film, or have some tea?
Or much rather, shall we run away,
Together on the Odakyu line?

“Wine” instead of “tea” would make a better song in English, but tea is the word in the original. The Odakyu line, opened in 1927, is

the electric railway that connects Shinjuku with Odawara, a coastal city facing the Pacific Ocean, which, in the fifteenth century, was a larger and more developed town than Edo, but is now a city with little distinction, smaller than Hamamatsu, that has nothing to be proud of other than kamaboko, a type of boiled fish-cake. The operating company strenuously objected to the song, but later dropped the issue, having realized that it was good publicity. Nobody else cared, but after several years the situation would change. In fact, sometime in 1937 the government prohibited record companies from selling records which were deemed corrupt.

Incidentally my father was born in Yokohama and raised in Odawara, and my grandfather was the boss of the bosses of ditch-diggers in Odawara. My father probably had fond memories of kamaboko, but it is unlikely that the Odakyu song made him reflect on anything else.

There were also popular songs that were not so objectionable. Here is an example:

La, la, la, red flowers carried on a wagon,
Spring has come from the village to the town,
Let's buy some violets from that flower girl so sweet,
Whose dreamy eyes send us spring's treat.

This song was first heard around 1937. In 1984 I visited Shanghai and went from there to Su-zhou and Hang-zhou by train. Many popular songs of various countries were interminably played on the train. Suddenly I was startled to hear, "La, la, la, red flowers carried on a wagon," which unexpectedly made me look back on my youth. My retrospection was interrupted by an announcement when the music ended. According to the translator, it said, "The mothers on the train must not let their children urinate on the floor."

Another thing which was common in Tokyo in those days but not today is the vacant lot. In fact, there were many vacant lots in the Ushigome and Ohkubo districts, where children and even adults played baseball, and flew kites and model planes. Also, most of the Shinto shrines then had wider precincts than today.

Occasionally a few cedar or Japanese cypress trees were left in the lots, and they perfectly suited children's climbing. I was quite good at this activity. Some mathematicians were known to be good mountain climbers, but I never found tree climbing mentioned in the biography of any mathematician.

2. The Knapsack in Light Brown

The house I lived in from the age of three to eight adjoined a military school for artillery and engineers, separated by a black wooden wall. The school had many horses, and so the wind often brought their smell. I also heard the metallic sounds of shoeing horses, but I never knew what the place looked like, until the day when a storm brought down the wall and I met several soldiers and officers, who were friendly and cheerful.

Our house had a larger garden than those of most middle-class households at that time. It had two old cherry trees, a pomegranate tree, a camellia, a hydrangea, a Japanese medlar, and a Cape jasmine. In the center was a pine tree and a white enkianthus, both beautifully shaped in the traditional fashion. The house was a rented one, and the gardener hired by the landlord would come to trim the trees, which was a common practice in those days. There was a backyard with a persimmon tree that bore large and sweet persimmons. The tree was commonly called *Hyakume-gaki* in Japanese, which may be translated as "One-pound-persimmon-tree," though the fruit was not that big. It was my favorite for obvious reasons.

There was a storeroom in the house, in which my father's wooden oblong box was placed. In Japan, girls have the traditional Doll's Festival on March 3, and the Boy's Festival is on May 5. Several days before any such festival, the relevant dolls and ornaments would be brought out of the storeroom and would be displayed in the living room. Then several days later, they would be stowed away. In the living room was an alcove called *toko-noma*, where a Japanese painting suitable for the season would be

hung. These can be seen even today, but are becoming less common now, I think. In those days, every household, at or above the middle-class level, did such things tirelessly. I cannot but recall such days with keen nostalgia. Forty or fifty years later, I would find such dolls in American antique shops. Some were high quality pieces with sufficient patina, yet did not evoke any sentiment on my part. I still had the tender memory of the dolls displayed in the room with a carved transom window and a pair of shelves in a side alcove, both in antique style, but the dolls in front of me were mere objects with price tags.

A five-minute walk northward would lead me to an avenue called Ohkubo Dori, which was already in the Kiri-ezu, and hasn't changed its name since then. On the north side of the avenue was a military school, whose eastern side was an army hospital, and whose western side housed another military school. In the Edo period the shogun lived in Edo Castle situated in the center of the city, and all feudal lords had their official residences nearby. In addition, some of them had villas in locations somewhat farther away.

The lands occupied by those military establishments, about 110 acres, once formed the huge garden of Toyama Villa belonging to the lord whom my ancestors served. The garden was famous for its beauty, but known only to the lucky invited few, which included the shogun of the time and notable feudal lords. I doubt that any of my ancestors ever set foot in the garden, with the possible exception of Kosanji, who might have arranged the meals of the honored guests. Probably my jofu ancestors merely dreamt that some day they or their descendants would be able to have a view of the garden. In fact, I, as a pre-school boy, once realized their dream on a sports day of one of the military schools, as every nearby resident was allowed to enter.

Some other lords also built landscape gardens in their villas as well as in their fiefs, and most of them are now famous parks, popular destinations of tourists. Toyama Villa, the largest of all

such gardens, was an exception, as it was occupied by the army until the end of the war. At present, only a small portion of it, called Toyama Park, is open to the public, the remainder being sites for schools, apartments, and government buildings.

In Toyama Villa there was, and still is, a manmade hill called Hakoneyama, about 45 meters above sea level, which was the highest point in the old city of Tokyo in the 1930s. There was also a Shinto shrine called “Ana Hachiman,” abutting the north side of the garden; *ana* means hole or cave. There was indeed a small cave in the precincts of the shrine. A magazine for boys at that time carried a serial adventure novel about a masked samurai who reached Edo Castle from the cave through an underground passage. Thus, I might say, my childhood was connected to Edo in that fashion. One of the best-known authors of such novels published by the magazine was a teacher at my elementary school, but he quit teaching when I was a second grader.

As I said earlier, my family moved to a house in Ohkubo, which was two-storied in contrast to the previous one-story house. That made my life somewhat more interesting, as I was able to move from one upstairs room to the other by walking on the tiled roof, and even to a room downstairs by climbing down a tree. I am certain that my parents were unaware of such acts of mine. Also I was able to see Mt. Fuji clearly from a window on the western side. The house was well-made and relatively new, but lacked the character of the old house; the garden was far smaller. It is said that a rich man kept his mistress (or rather, one of his mistresses) there. That may have been true, and her secret lover might have carried out the same athletic performance on the roof as I did. But I was not old enough to imagine such; I was merely at the age of being disappointed by the fact that the persimmon tree of the new house was of the astringent type.

I am the youngest child with three sisters and a brother, and naturally was brought up indulgently. However, I don't think that affected me in any negative way. I often observed the self-centered-