

Eurasian
Research Bulletin



The Development Of 20th-Century Japanese Literature: Modernism, War Experience, And Postmodern Transformations

**Nasirova Zukhra
Khatamjanovna**

Chirchik State Pedagogical University Lecturer at the Faculty of
Preschool Education

ABSTRACT

The twentieth century occupies a special place in the history of Japanese literature. This period was characterized by significant political, social, and cultural transformations that influenced literary development. The modernization process, Western cultural influence, World War II, and postwar reconstruction shaped new literary trends and artistic expressions. Japanese writers combined traditional aesthetic values with modern literary techniques, creating works of international significance. Authors such as Natsume Sōseki, Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, Yasunari Kawabata, Yukio Mishima, and Kenzaburō Ōe contributed greatly to the evolution of Japanese literature and its recognition worldwide. This article examines the major stages of twentieth-century Japanese literary development, highlighting the influence of modernism, war experiences, and postmodern tendencies on literary creativity.

Keywords:

Japanese literature, twentieth century, modernism, postwar literature, cultural transformation, literary development, identity, tradition, globalization, literary innovation.

Introduction: Japanese literature has a long and rich history rooted in classical traditions, poetry, and narrative prose. However, the twentieth century marked a turning point in its development. The rapid modernization initiated during the Meiji era continued into the twentieth century and transformed Japanese society. Economic growth, industrialization, urbanization, and increasing contact with Western countries created new intellectual and artistic challenges for writers.

As Japan sought to modernize while preserving its cultural identity, literature became an important medium through which authors explored questions of individuality, morality, social change, and national consciousness. The century witnessed the emergence of realism, naturalism, modernism, and later postmodernism, each contributing to the diversification of literary forms and themes.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the development of Japanese literature in the twentieth century and to examine the factors that influenced its transformation from traditional literary forms to globally recognized modern works.

The Emergence of Modern Japanese Literature

The foundations of modern Japanese literature were established in the late nineteenth century, but their full development occurred during the early twentieth century. The introduction of Western literary theories and genres encouraged Japanese writers to experiment with new forms of expression. Traditional storytelling methods gradually gave way to psychological realism and individual-centered narratives.

One of the most influential figures of this period was Natsume Sōseki. His novels explored the psychological struggles of individuals living in a rapidly changing society. Works such as *Kokoro* and *Sanshirō* address themes of loneliness, alienation, and the conflict between traditional values and modern life. Sōseki's literary achievements helped establish the modern Japanese novel as a major artistic form.

Another important literary movement was naturalism, which emphasized realistic depictions of everyday life and human emotions. Naturalist writers sought to portray society objectively and to reveal the psychological motivations behind human behavior. This movement played a significant role in shaping the literary landscape of early twentieth-century Japan.

Modernism and Literary Innovation

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed the rise of modernist literature in Japan. Influenced by European literary movements, Japanese writers began experimenting with narrative structure, symbolism, and psychological depth. Modernist literature reflected the complexities of modern urban life and the growing sense of uncertainty experienced by individuals.

Among the leading modernist writers was Ryūnosuke Akutagawa. His short stories are characterized by sophisticated narrative techniques and philosophical inquiry. In works such as *Rashōmon* and *In a Grove*, Akutagawa explored the relativity of truth and the ambiguity of human morality. His innovative storytelling methods influenced later generations of Japanese writers and contributed to the modernization of Japanese prose.

Modernist literature also reflected the tensions between traditional cultural values and the pressures of modernization. Writers increasingly focused on subjective experiences, fragmented identities, and existential questions. These themes became central to Japanese literary discourse throughout the twentieth century.

The Impact of World War II on Japanese Literature

World War II had a profound effect on Japanese society and culture. The devastation caused by the war led many writers to question established ideologies and to examine the moral consequences of conflict. Literature became a means of expressing collective trauma and reflecting on national responsibility.

During and immediately after the war, many authors portrayed the suffering of ordinary people and the destruction of traditional social structures. Themes of loss, despair, and disillusionment dominated literary works. Writers sought to understand the causes of war and its impact on human life.

A significant literary figure of this period was Yasunari Kawabata. His novels combine traditional Japanese aesthetics with modern psychological insights. In *Snow Country* and *Thousand Cranes*, Kawabata presents a delicate portrayal of beauty, loneliness, and cultural transformation. His literary style reflects a deep appreciation for Japanese artistic traditions while addressing contemporary concerns.

The postwar period also witnessed the emergence of atomic bomb literature, which focused on the experiences of survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These works became an important part of Japan's cultural memory and contributed to global discussions about war and peace.

Postwar Literature and Existential Concerns

The decades following World War II were marked by rapid economic recovery and social change. Japanese literature responded to these developments by exploring questions of identity, morality, and personal freedom. Writers examined the psychological consequences of modernization and the challenges of adapting to a new social reality.

One of the most controversial and influential authors of the postwar era was Yukio Mishima. His works often focus on themes of beauty, death, nationalism, and spiritual conflict. Novels such as *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* reveal his concern with cultural

decline and the search for meaning in a modernized society.

At the same time, existentialist ideas gained popularity among Japanese intellectuals. Literature increasingly emphasized individual responsibility, alienation, and the search for authenticity. These themes reflected broader philosophical debates taking place both in Japan and around the world.

Contemporary Trends and Global Recognition:

In the second half of the twentieth century, Japanese literature achieved international recognition. Writers addressed global issues while maintaining a distinct cultural perspective. Their works were translated into numerous languages and attracted readers worldwide.

A leading representative of contemporary Japanese literature is Kenzaburō Ōe. His novels examine social justice, human rights, disability, and the legacy of nuclear warfare. Ōe's literary achievements earned him the Nobel Prize in Literature and established him as one of the most important voices in world literature.

The globalization of Japanese literature also encouraged greater interaction between Japanese and international literary traditions. Contemporary writers incorporated elements of postmodernism, including metafiction, fragmented narratives, and intertextuality. These innovations expanded the possibilities of literary expression and contributed to the continuing evolution of Japanese literature.

Conclusion:

The development of twentieth-century Japanese literature reflects the complex historical and cultural transformations experienced by Japan. From the emergence of modern literary forms to the exploration of war trauma and postmodern identity, Japanese writers continuously adapted their artistic practices to changing social realities.

The contributions of Natsume Sōseki, Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, Yasunari Kawabata, Yukio Mishima, and Kenzaburō Ōe demonstrate the richness and diversity of Japanese literary culture. Their works not only shaped national

literary traditions but also influenced global literary discourse.

As a result, twentieth-century Japanese literature occupies a significant place in world literature, offering profound insights into human experience, cultural identity, and the relationship between tradition and modernity.

References:

1. Keene, D. *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
2. Sōseki, N. *Kokoro*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1914.
3. Akutagawa, R. *Rashōmon and Other Stories*. Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1915.
4. Kawabata, Y. *Snow Country*. New York: Vintage International, 1996.
5. Mishima, Y. *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
6. Ōe, K. *A Personal Matter*. New York: Grove Press, 1969.
7. Nasirova Z.H. A study of twentieth-century Japanese literary processes // International journal of advanced research. Indiya. Impaktfaktor 6,8. 2021 g. № 9 832-839.
8. Nasirova Z.H. Descriptive skills of Japanese writers. Asian Journal of Multi dimensional research 2021.// - S. 121-124.
9. Nasirova Z.H. "The theory of neosensualism" in XX century Japanese literature // vos. - , 2022. - 12-son. - B. 107-
10. Nasirova Z.H. Japanese literature in the context of world literature vos, Volume 4, Issue 3, Mar., 2023