Session 76: Reading the Modern: Computational Methods and the Historical Genealogy of Social Meaning

Friday, November 20 / 10:00 AM - 11:45 AM • Room 224 (2nd Floor), SSHA 2026

Impossible to Pursue Happiness:

A Historical Text Mining Study of Modern Japanese Books

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Self Introduction

- Since mid 1990s, I've been exploring the intersection of conceptual history and the sociology of knowledge using text-analytics.

- The formation and semantic changes of key terms in modern social sciences, as well as their impact on the broader literary spheres.

- Civil Society, Gender, Neo-liberal, State, Community in Japanese and English.

- My present focus is in *幸福 (KOFUKU)* & *しあわせ (Shiawase)* --e.g., Happiness, Well-being, Felicity--.

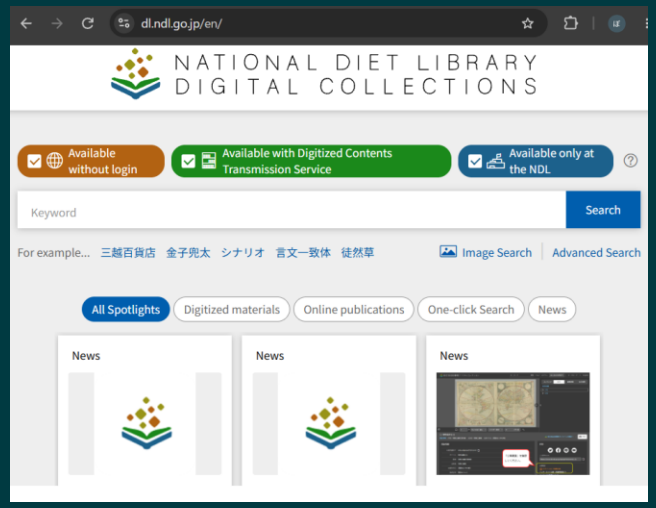
Today's Presentation

0. Materials, Method, Presuppositions.
1. Japanese Archetypal Discourses of Happiness: 1880s-1940s.
2. Teachings of Literary Giants: 1950s-1970s.
3. Re-enchantment of Happiness,
   and Precious Time of Intimacy:1980s-2000s.
4. Caricatured Overindulgence in Manga: 2000s-Present.
5. Points of Discussion .

0. Material, Method, Presupposition

Material: Japanese National Diet Library

- Mandatory deposit system. Over 40 million items.
- Covers most of book-style JP publications since 1870s.
- The OPAC system allows online search of bibliographical metadata.
- Over 4 million main texts searchable (copyright expired items).



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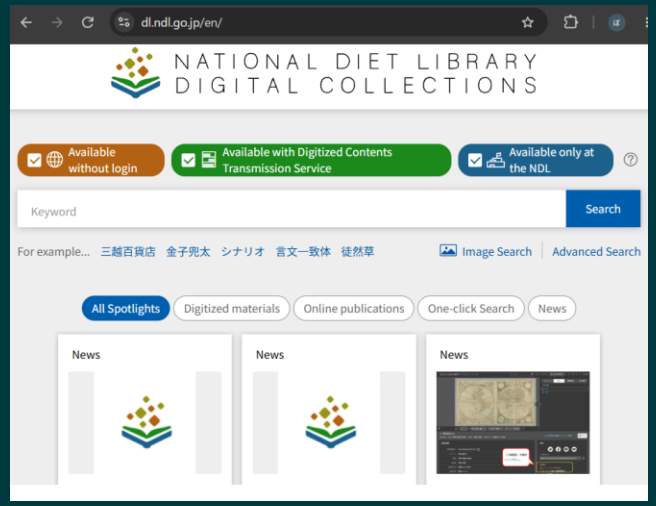
Method: Textanalytics, using MS-Excel only

- To derive meaningful insights by measuring the frequencies and proportions of words and phrases occurrences and co-occurrences in text corpora.

0. Material, Method, Presupposition

Datasource and Dataset:



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JNDL OPAC

Title Search: “幸” or “福” or “しあわせ”,

Span: “1860-2026”,

Material type: “Printed Books”,

Language: “Japanese only”.

Hits: 29,466 titles. (Include reprints and variant editions.

Exclude multi-volume titles.)

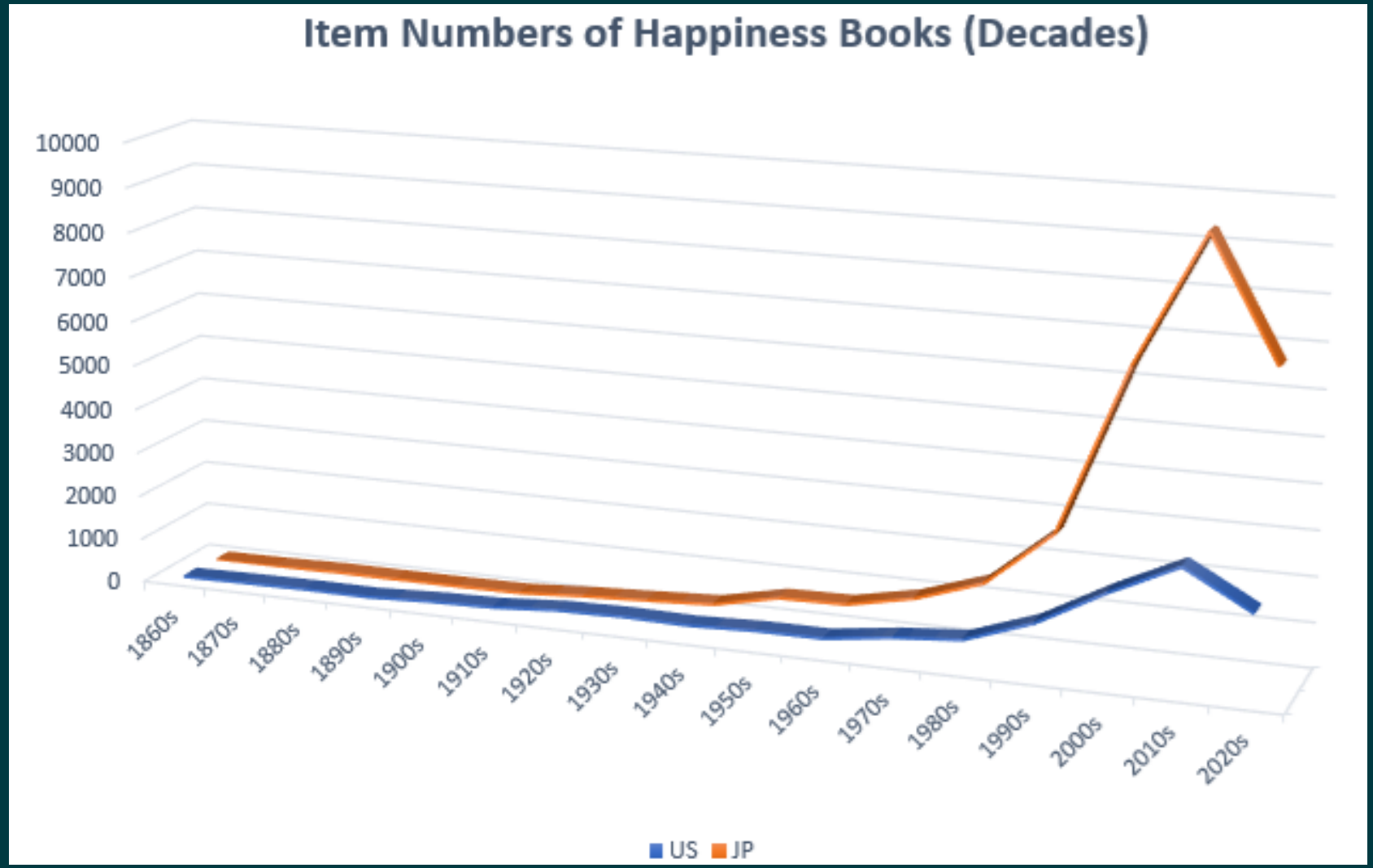
0. Material, Method, Presupposition

Presuppositions:

1) Books on happiness provide ***normative guidance*** to people who no longer know what happiness is or how to attain it, but wish to find out. (***I DO NOT*** understand them as representing the views of happiness that people actually hold.)

2) Happiness Question come to be a big issue only for whom ***the basic necessities of life have been secured***. (In affluent societies ***nobody knows*** what happiness is, and everybody seeks it desperately.)

0. Material, Method, Presupposition



1950s-1970s:
Overcoming of poverty.

1980s-1990s:
Normalization of mass consumption.

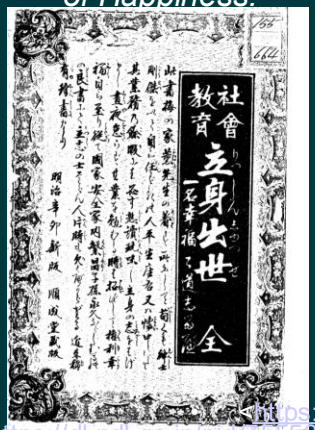
2000s-:
What is this unusual Growth?

1. Japanese Archetypal Discourse Patterns of Happiness: 1880s-1940s

A) Accidental Fortune

Target Readership: Towns people.
Happiness what?: Material abundance.
Achieve how?: Karma (Maintaining traditional values).

K.Okamoto: *The Seeds of Happiness.*



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K.Umenoya: *The Path to Happiness.*



<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/758509>

B) Christian Evangelism

Target Readership: Angry farmers, college Student

Happiness what?: Christ's Resurrection.
Achieve how?: Karma. Longing.

K. Kurosaki: *Return of Prodical Son.*



<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/3454746/>

Sharing the Gospel with today's students.



<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/1092103/>

1. Japanese Archetypal Discourse Patterns of Happiness: 1880s-1940s

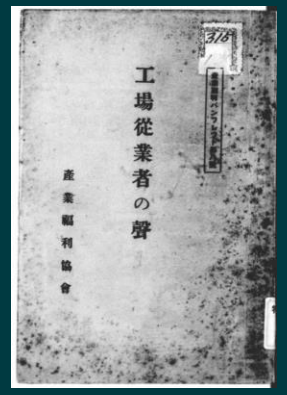
C) **Employee's Benefit**

Target Readership: Factory owners and executives.

Happiness what?: Non-salary benefits for improving productivity.

Achieve how?: Compromise between labor, management, and government officials.

Worker's Voice



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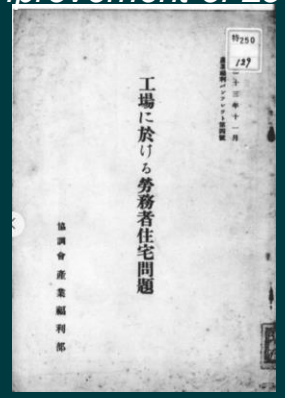
Improvement of Lodging



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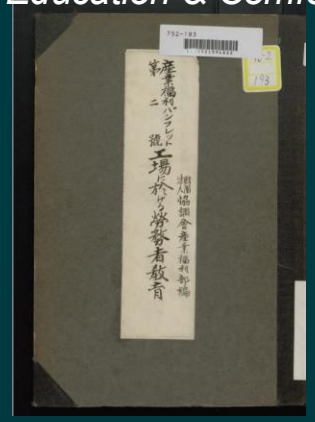
Education & Comfort



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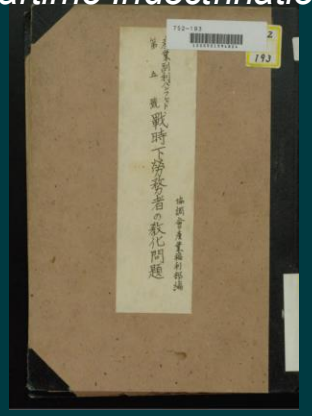
Wartime Indoctrination



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2. Teachings of Literary Giants: 1950s-1970s

D) Post-War Brain Freeze

Target Readership: Growing affluent urban masses.
Happiness what?: No substantial explanation.
Achieve how?: Maintaining traditional values (Following A).

T.Shimazaki: T*he Visitor whose name is Happiness* (Story for Children)



- <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/1668396/1/19>

S.Mushanokoji: *Happy Person* (Essay)



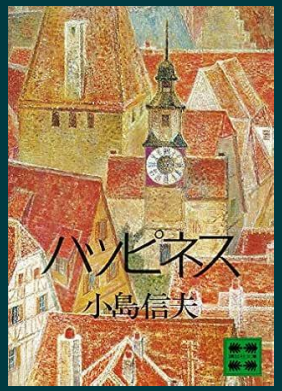
<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000158/files/53185_67353.html>

H.Masamune: *Happiness in Human Life* (Play Script)



<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/1668617/1/126>

N. Kojima: *Happiness* (Novel)



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2. Teachings of Literary Giants: 1950s-1970s.

E) Good interpersonal communication, based on proper manners (European conception of Happiness)

Target Readership: Growing affluent urban masses.

Happiness what?: Build intimacy.

Achieve how?: Learning etiquette and manners (Following A & D).

Maxim Gorky: *Happiness* (Novel)



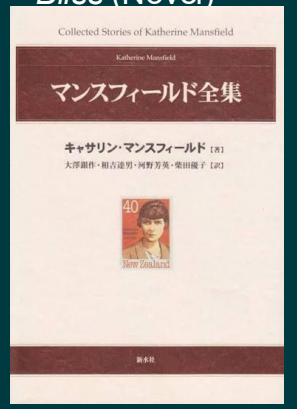
<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/1137047/>

Emmy von Rhoden: *The Stubborn Girl* (Juvenile Fiction)



<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/1633207/>

Kathline Mansfield: *Bliss* (Novel)



<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/1694695/1/118>

Thomas Mann: *The Will to Happiness* (Novel)



<https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001758/files/55967_56079.html>

3. Re-enchantment of Happiness, and Precious Time of Intimacy: 1980s-2000s.

F) Divination for the Age of Mass Consumption

Target Readership: Established new middle class.

Happiness what?: Improvement of basic necessities (Mixing A, C, D, E).

How to achieve it: Karma, controllable by divination (Magical than A).

Dr.Kopa: *Interior Decor Brings Happiness By Feun Shui Divination.*



J. Yamaguchi: *House Divination that calls happiness.*



H. Nakai: *Palmistry for Women: Lines of Happiness and Fortune.*



Y.Komine: *Astrology for Your Happy Marriage.*



3. Re-enchantment of Happiness, and Precious Time of Intimacy: 1980s-2000s.

G) Special Dinner Table with Loving Ones

Target Readership: Established new middle class.

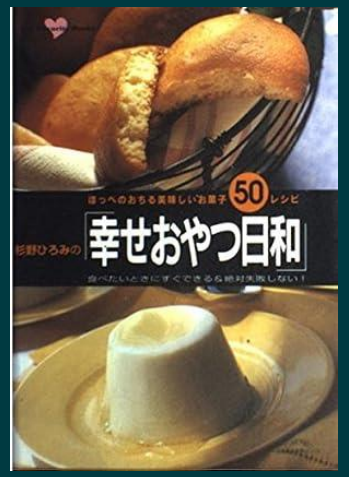
Happiness what?: Sharing the pleasure of taste with someone you love (Similar to F. Mixing A, C, D, E).

How to achieve it: Arranging homemade food nicely (Close to A & C).

K.Kobayashi: *Happy Cooking All Around the World.*



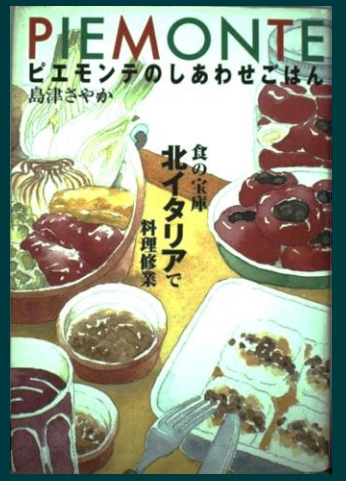
H. Sugino: *Happy Snack Days: 50 Sweets Recipes.*



Shufu no Tomo: *Nurture Your Love by Cooking Together Happily.*



S.Shimazu:*Happy Meals in Piedmont: Treasure Cuisines of Northern Italy*



4. Caricatured Overindulgence in Manga: 2000s-Present.

H) Caricatured Overindulgence

Target Readership: Youth who presuppose an information-driven consumption society.

Happiness what?: Thoroughly spoiled girl (Ironical) (Roasting F & G).

How to achieve it: Excessive hospitality (Ironical) (Roasting F & G).

S.Fukada (et.al): *I'm Giving the Disgraced Noble Lady I Rescued a Crash Course in Naughtiness: I'll Spoil Her with Delicacies and Style to Make Her the Happiest Woman in the World!.*





https://comicpash.jp/episodes/d3dc4162025d7

U.Sada (et.al): *The Exiled Grumpy Chef and the Famished Girl's Happy Other World Meal.*





https://piccoma.com/web/viewer/127823/3572492

5. Points of Discussion

Eight Types of Modern Japanese Teaching of Happiness

1880s-1940s

A) Material Fortune by Karma.

B) Christian Evangelism.

C) Laborer's benefit system under the national mobilization.

1950s-1970s

D) Vacuous content of happiness & traditional norms.

E) Intimacy building by learning manners.

1980s-2000s

F) Improvement of daily material life by divination.

G) Intimacy building and preservation by cooking.

2000s-Present

H) Caricatured overindulgence.

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Fatalist view of happiness

Utilitarian view of happiness

Intimacy happiness

5. Points of Discussion

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2000s-Present

H) Caricatured overindulgence.

What on earth is this?

Rejection of the established ideas of happiness?

Refusal to be domesticated?

A stepping-stone toward the search for "true happiness"?