

Associate Professor Kumiko Okuno, Department of Language and Culture Studies, Graduate School of Literature and Human Sciences



Associate Professor Okuno's field is Japanese literature, specifically modern literature such as the works of Ryunosuke Akutagawa. In the past ten years or so, she has been researching the influence of *kodan* storybooks on modern Japanese literature. While Akutagawa is famous for his works based on *An Anthology of Tales From the Past (Konjaku Monogatari-shū)* and so on, it appears that he and other modern writers also used *kodan* storybooks, which were the manga of their time.

She says that the aim of Japanese literature scholarship is to produce recensions and annotations of literature works—which are cultural assets—based on the highest standards possible and then pass them down to later generations, thereby enabling, for example, Japanese high school students hundreds of years from now to read Akutagawa's *Rashomon*. This kind of research on stories' sources is useful for doing so.

We're able to read *The Tale of Genji* today thanks to the annotations avid readers and scholars have been producing over hundreds of years.

Associate Professor Okuno says that just like the *miyadaiku* carpenters that restore and preserve temples, shrines, and palaces, Japanese literature scholars are proud to be passing on culture. They engage in their studies with the wish that these literary works written in beautiful Japanese will be read by generations to come.

Incidentally, Ryunosuke Akutagawa was a friend of the first president of Osaka City University, Kyo Tsuneto. The latter's family entrusted a valuable set of materials—including over one hundred letters written from Akutagawa to Tsuneto—to the university's Tsuneto Memorial Room, and Associate Professor Okuno is also engaging in research that makes use of these documents.

Another side

Associate Professor Okuno is both a scholar and the mother of a first-grader. While she has trouble finding time for herself, sometimes she takes a break by going to see theater, from Takarazuka to opera and kabuki. Last year, she went with her child for the first time to a kabuki play, and hopes to do so more often in the future.