were in a vacuum; this leads to the danger of a "we-they" dichotomy when comparing the two countries, and it may make Japan seem "exotic" to students. If some European comparison is included, it often turns out that the United States is the anomaly; we are "exotic" in international comparisons, from crime rates to education, health care to the homeless. Of course, the dichotomy problem is not unique to *Tora no Maki*. The lesson on automobile use (I:109) avoids this pitfall and is one of the most effective for that reason.

I now turn to individual content issues with the goal of making these lessons more accurate and useful. Again, my attention to detail here is unusual, but the set has been placed in many classrooms, and the great majority of information on Japan is accurate, so teachers should not hesitate to utilize the lessons best suited to their needs.

What follows are my suggested modifications for several lessons. The lessons are identified by volume and page numbers.

I: 44 The yen is now almost 66 percent lower at 130=$1.00, but this will change; check your local newspaper business section for current exchange rates.

I:51 Yen exchange rate again (in this case the date of the rate is given, a good idea).

I:54 Dubious dated assumptions for role-playing. Is it really still true that "American car manufacturers have not yet succeeded in building a car which is small, cheap, and high quality to compete with Japanese cars?" Pick your own candidate, but I would say that GM's Saturn is arguably cheap and good enough to compete. Since much of the information is from JAMA, there is danger of bias in this trade simulation.

I:55 Students are told to act like Japanese: ". . . polite, honorable, careful and thoughtful. . . ." The implied stereotypes about Americans here are too obvious to comment upon.

I: 62 It is not strictly true that "the only images in Shintō shrines are mirrors," and there are statues of *kami* such as Hachiman, although not in most shrines. Although the 1868 law separating Buddhist deities and *kami* was meant to end the use of *shinzō* (*kami* statues), in fact some shrines still maintain them. Usually shrines use the mirror as the *shintai* (body) of the *kami* enshrined.

I: 68 Hideyoshi did confiscate weapons from peasants, but not so much to reduce the potential for violence as to monopolize it for his own ends; this is a little different from "gun control" as it is understood in our own violent society, and in fact the NRA would likely point to the event as showing the need for personal weapons.

I:75 This lesson on Hiroshima follows the Japanese view of themselves as victims in the war. It does not deny the tragedy of nuclear attack to recognize that Japanese were also aggressors.

II: 67 has another Hiroshima lesson. One might ask for a lesson on Japanese objectives and treatment of civilians (including their own comfort women) in World War II. Teachers using these lessons might also have students read Paul Fussell's *Thank God for the Atomic Bomb* for a clear viewpoint of the other side of this issue.

I: 98 Although the AP article on land prices in Japan is from May, 1995, teachers should attempt to find out current prices.

II: 33 Thousands were killed in the 1923 Kantō Earthquake, nearly 143,000 in fact.

II: 52 The discussion of women in politics neglects their significant role in local and consumer issues.

II: 90 Although I do not follow popular singers, I suspect that Tetuya is Tetsuya Komuro.

II: 119 While the calligraphy lesson is one of the most interesting, simpler *kanji* would be easier for students to attempt; some of the works cited above have such examples.

II: 144 Beginning in 2002, schools will not be in session on Saturdays.

II: 159 I believe it was tradition, existing property rights, and other economic factors that prevented Tokyo from being rebuilt on a "rational" pattern after 1923 and 1945, not for "protection from invasion." Perhaps the source is referring to the military origins of Edo castle, but that is not clear from the passage.

II: 164 The picture identified as "Meiji Shrine" is certainly not the inner shrine, nor does it appear to be one of the outer gates.

II: 178 Some of the words in the Japanese Food Vocabulary contain nonstandard romanized vowels in lieu of the macron: *budou* for *budō* (grapes); toufu for tofu (bean curd); *toumorokoshi* for *tomorokoshi* (corn); *kyuuri* for *kyuri* (cucumber); *shouyu* for *shōyu* (soy sauce), although the macron would be on the "u" in this case. ■

The Tiger's Foreboding Allure

By Gary DeCoker

Gary DeCoker

Without a doubt, the teachers who participate in the Keizai Koho program and NCSS publishing efforts receive many benefits from both activities. But after reviewing the *Tora no Maki* lesson plans, I wonder whether other educators, too, can benefit from these teachers' efforts. Although the goal of the *Tora no Maki* series, to bring Japan into the K-12 classroom, is admirable, the publications as they exist may in some cases do more harm than good.

. . . if teachers follow the lessons too rigidly, they may end up fostering rather shallow thinking and promoting stereotypes.

My criticism of the publications should take nothing away from the Keizai Koho program. I cannot quarrel with the idea of giving teachers a first-hand look at Japan and encouraging them to develop lessons. Participants in previous Keizai Koho and other teacher excursions to Japan surely could use the lessons in the *Tora no Maki* series to good advantage. But for the teacher who never has been to Japan, the lessons lack sufficient context. More troublesome, if teachers follow the lessons too rigidly, they may end up fostering rather shallow thinking and promoting stereotypes.

The lack of historical and cultural context on Japan results in part from the decentralized U.S. system of education. Few teachers have access to a detailed course of study that includes specific guidelines for teaching

about Japan. Standards documents such as the NCSS "Curriculum Standards for Social Studies," used as an organizing framework for *Tora no Maki*, provide generic statements and leave the specific content to the local schools. The NCSS document authors, for instance, present detailed descriptions of ten thematic strands, but purposefully avoid any specific historical and cultural content. According to the Foreword, "state and local decisions will augment and enhance the framework these national standards provide" (xvii).[1]

Each of the lessons in *Tora no Maki* makes reference to one or more of the ten strands. Many of the elementary and middle school lessons refer to strand one, "Culture," which includes the statement, "Explore and describe similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures address similar human needs and concerns."

An elementary school lesson, "Global Reflections" (I:31), suggests meeting this objective through student research. The lesson itself, however, presents a rather short bibliography of primarily tourist books on Japan and relies heavily on videos, guest speakers, and a children's book, *A to Zen: A Book of Japanese Culture* by Ruth Wells.[2]

For a teacher and students unfamiliar with Japan the lesson lacks sufficient Japan content. Students may develop skills of "exploring and describing similarities and differences," but they might not develop accurate understandings of Japan. The assessment section of the activity skirts the issue of content knowledge with this statement, "In critical thinking situations there are no right or wrong answers. Most of the assessment should be subjective." An experienced teacher with a knowledge of Japan might pay more attention to the content. But students and teachers without Japan background could end up contrasting various aspects of U.S. and Japanese society, but ignoring the accuracy of their comparisons.

Without sufficient knowledge of Japan, a teacher can easily fall into the trap of transmitting mere stereotypes. A high school lesson, "Working Conditions and Work Ethic" (I:103), leads students to explore the relationship of working conditions and the work ethic in Japan and to make inferences about the work ethic in the U.S. The crux of the lesson is Japanese workers have a good work ethic because they are provided for by their companies. Employees at Mazda, the example given in the lesson, benefit from the company hospital, dormitory, supermarket, sports facility, loan programs, and company training opportunities. An essay on the Japanese work ethic in the appendix concludes, "Japanese workers not only work long and hard for the company, but also tend to do so with visible enthusiasm. . . . The Japanese, then, are among the world's most diligent workers."

Teachers using this lesson are encouraged to compare the Japanese work ethic with their own observations of the U.S. work ethic. The structure of the lesson, however, seems to lead the student to the conclusion that the U.S. work ethic suffers because U.S. companies do not take care of their workers. This stereotype, found repeatedly in U.S. media during Japan's

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"bubble economy" of the 1980s, ignores the dramatically different approaches to company paternalism in the two countries. Most American workers would not want a company dormitory, hospital, nor supermarket. They probably would prefer to receive higher wages which they could spend wherever they choose on the open marketplace. Without the cultural context, the students can only conclude that the Japanese approach creates a superior work ethic. This stereotype from the 1980s continues a decade later even as the Japanese economy struggles, while the U.S. continues to have the highest worker productivity rate in the world.

The most successful lessons focus narrowly on one aspect of Japan and compare it to the U.S. Elementary lessons compare festivals (I:25), student interests (II: 35), and school slogans (II:77); middle school lessons compare constitutions (I: 63), stock exchanges (II: 21), and business practices (II:129); high school lessons compare policies for the elderly (I:127), and economic policy (II:151). The writers of these more successful lessons carefully avoid making broad generalizations that are not supported by the information they present. Teachers who have background knowledge on Japan could easily implement these lessons into their curriculum.

In conclusion, I think that the *Tora no Maki* series might better be shared only among the participants of the Keizai Koho and similar teacher-exchange programs. By distributing it to members, NCSS risks appearing to promote an unstructured, patchwork approach to meeting its thematic standards. Although the *Tora no Maki* activities do, in fact, illustrate the standards, they fail to provide a well-developed approach to the teaching about Japan. U.S. teachers with an interest in teaching about Japan need more than just lesson plans.

Perhaps NCSS could follow the models of organizations such as Project Wild and the Great Books Program by offering copies of *Tora no Maki* to teachers who take extended workshops on Japan. Or a less complicated approach would be to include an annotated bibliography of resources for the study of Japan by Japanese Studies experts and a cautionary essay on the importance of content knowledge. Unfortunately, NCSS President Pat Nickell, in the preface to *Tora no Maki I*, seems to disparage such experts by stating that the publication of lessons "reflects the real work of real teachers who work with real children. It is not the work of theorists or philosophers" (I:5).

Decisions about curricular content are difficult, especially in a multicultural society. The tendency of social science professional organizations and some state governments to neglect content in their curriculum documents, however, leaves teachers in an ambiguous world of ungrounded objectives. NCSS could contribute more to social studies education by producing a publication that outlines content about Japan that is appropriate at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. These publications could use *Tora no Maki*-style lesson plans to illustrate this content. As a series of unrelated lesson plans, however, *Tora no Maki* seems to have only limited value. Teachers without Japan-content background, who pick up these volumes hoping to find a few quick lessons on Japan, could easily go awry. ■

NOTES

1. *National Council for the Social Studies, Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Washington, D.C.: 1994).
2. Ruth Wells, *A to Zen: A Book of Japanese Culture,* illustrated by Yoshi (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992). This nicely illustrated book falls victim to a common practice among children's picture books: its contents depict, almost entirely, Japanese traditional culture with a limited number of images of modern Japan.

Putting "the Tigers" in their Classroom Context

By Linda S. Wojtan

. . . although evaluation of creativity and approach are matters of opinion, all of the lessons should be credited for their ground-breaking attempt to link Japan-related content to the social studies standards of the National Council for the Social Studies.

First I would like to thank my colleagues for their thoughtful perspectives on *Tora no Maki: Lessons for Teaching about Contemporary Japan*, vol. I and II, and express my appreciation for the invitation to respond. Space considerations require that I comment only on a few key issues and leave many unaddressed.

Professor Rice states that a review of other supplementary materials confirms that *Tora no Maki I* and *II* does not "set new standards in content or creativity." Having extensively used all the materials he cites, I must differ, and express not only my own viewpoints, but also those of many colleagues. Many in the field of precollegiate Japan studies have praised *Tora no Maki I* and *II*, specifically for presenting fresh material, especially in the lessons focusing on *hansei*, deregulation, *kendama*, the aging society, *kaizen*, and the Tokyo Stock Exchange. Further, although evaluation of creativity and approach are matters of opinion, all of the lessons should be credited for their groundbreaking attempt to link Japan-related content to the social studies standards of the National Council for the Social Studies. Since these standards are often mandated, such linkage encourages usage of these lessons by teachers and legitimizes their place in the curriculum.

The lessons in both volumes were designed for use in a wide variety of classrooms, including those having no Internet access. Therefore, lesson authors were careful to avoid Internet-dependent lessons, since even when connections are available, they can be uncertain and sometimes frustrating for both teachers and students. Unfortunately, Professor Rice does not acknowledge "Japanlinks: Using the Internet to Investigate Modern Japan" (II:41), a notable lesson based entirely on the use of the Inter-