

## Original version

**Headline:** Emperor, empress read emotions in New Year's poetry gathering

Emperor Akihito, Empress Michiko and other imperial family members expressed their various feelings toward books in their poems for the New Year's Poetry Reading ceremony on Jan. 14. In the annual event at the Imperial Palace, "waka" poems composed by members of the imperial family, as well as 10 selected works from the public and those by judges, were recited.

This year's theme was "hon" (book).

According to the Imperial Household Agency, the emperor hand-sows seed rice in spring by himself every year, transplants 200 rice seedlings in a paddy field in summer, and hand-reaps the grain in autumn.

In a poem, Akihito describes how he harvested the rice plants in the gathering dusk of autumn in the paddy field in the Imperial Palace.

The work reads: "Yuyami no / Semaru ta ni iri / Minoritaru / Ine no nemoto ni /Kama wo ategau"  
(Entering the paddy field / In the gathering dusk / I place my sickle / At the root of the rice plant / Bearing a plentiful crop).

Remembering that she was able to find solace in books, the empress describes the sense of warmth and appreciation towards books in a poem: "Koshikata ni / Hon tou fumi no / Hayashi arite / Sono shitakage ni / Ikudo ikoishi"  
(How many times / Did I find along the way / Comfort and solace / In the sheltering shade / Of a wood by the name of books).

**Story date:** 01-14-2015

## **Edited version**

**Headline:** Imperial couple offer up heartfelt poems for annual reading at palace

Emperor Akihito captured a vivid image of the autumn harvest and Empress Michiko conveyed her affection for the written word in poems they composed for the New Year's Poetry Reading ceremony on Jan. 14.

During the annual event at the Imperial Palace, "waka" poems penned by members of the imperial family, as well as 10 works selected from the public by judges, were recited.

Under this year's theme of "hon" (book), the empress describes in one poem her passion for reading, saying, "Koshikata ni / Hon tou fumi no / Hayashi arite / Sono shitakage ni / Ikudo ikoishi" (How many times / Did I find along the way / Comfort and solace / In the sheltering shade / Of a wood by the name of books).

In his poem, Akihito describes harvesting rice plants in a paddy field at the Imperial Palace.

"Yuyami no / Semaru ta ni iri / Minoritaru / Ine no nemoto ni /Kama wo ategau" (Entering the paddy field / In the gathering dusk / I place my sickle / At the root of the rice plant / Bearing a plentiful crop)," the poem reads.

According to the Imperial Household Agency, the emperor sows rice seed by hand every spring, transplants 200 rice seedlings during the summer and reaps the grain by hand in autumn.

**Story date:** 01-14-2015

## **Original version**

**Headline:** Pirated DVDs of 'The Interview' selling well in Vietnam, Cambodia

HANOI--Vietnam and Cambodia may be among the few nations on friendly terms with North Korea but that has not stopped sales of pirated copies of "The Interview," a U.S. comedy about the assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The movie generated international interest late last year after Sony Pictures Entertainment, which produced the movie, was the target of a cyber-attack that included threats to bomb theaters in the United States that showed the comedy. Washington blamed Pyongyang for being behind the cyber-attack.

Such publicity appears to have generated the interest in "The Interview" in Vietnam and Cambodia. The two nations have exchanged visits with North Korea of high-ranking government officials, one sign of the friendly relations between those nations.

However, in an alley in central Hanoi, a store that sells pirated DVDs had its shelves filled with copies of "The Interview."

Placed only in a simple cellophane wrapping, the DVDs were selling for 15,000 dong (about 83 yen or \$.70).

A copy of the paper package said it was a Blu-ray disk, but the contents were actually a DVD. The sound and image was clear and the movie had Vietnamese subtitles.

The store employee was ambiguous about how the outlet got its hands on the DVD, but said a number of copies were already sold in January.

A store in Phnom Penh also reported the sale of 50 DVDs a week.

According to a Cambodian government source, the North Korean Embassy sent a document to the Cambodian Foreign Ministry early in January which said, "(the movie) damages friendly ties between our two nations."

The embassy asked the government to confiscate the DVDs.

However, a government source said, "The movie has spread over the Internet so it is difficult to seize the DVDs at this stage."

Although the movie eventually was released in U.S. theaters, there are no current plans to release "The Interview" in theaters in Vietnam and Cambodia.

**Story date:** 01-29-2015

## **Edited version**

**Headline:** Pirated copies of 'The Interview' creep into Vietnam, Cambodia

HANOI--A shop tucked inside an alleyway here that deals in pirated DVDs has its shelves filled with copies of "The Interview," a controversial U.S. comedy lambasting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The scene is not uncommon.

Pirated copies of the film, which depicts the assassination of the young leader, are selling well in Cambodia, too, despite calls by Pyongyang to tamper the spread of the material.

The movie generated international interest last year after Sony Pictures Entertainment, the movie's producer, was the target of a cyber-attack, comprising troves of internal data.

The group of hackers, which Washington believed were linked to Pyongyang, then threatened to bomb theaters in the United States that screened the satire.

The massive publicity generated interest in the movie worldwide, including Vietnam and Cambodia. Copies of the film plainly wrapped in cellophane sell at the central Hanoi shop for around 15,000 dong (83 yen, or 70 U.S. cents).

Notes on the packaging indicate the content is a Blu-ray disc, but it is actually a DVD. The sound and image quality are good, and the video has Vietnamese subtitles.

When asked how the outlet obtained the film, a store employee was elusive, only saying many copies have already been sold in January.

One store in Phnom Penh reported selling 50 of the illegal DVDs a week.

According to a Cambodian government source, the North Korean Embassy wrote to the Cambodian Foreign Ministry in early January, saying the movie "is damaging friendly ties between our two nations" and asked the government to confiscate the DVDs.

However, a government source said, "The movie has spread on the Internet, so it is difficult to seize the DVDs at this stage."

Though the movie was eventually released in U.S. theaters, there are no plans to screen it in Vietnam and Cambodia.

The two nations have exchanged visits by high-ranking government officials with North Korea.

**Story date:** 01-29-2015

## Original version

**Headline:** Bit actor in samurai productions dreams big to become swordfight master

KYOTO--A 'kirareyaku' role in samurai productions, usually the main villain's henchman who gets slaughtered by the sword of the hero, only appears several minutes on screen, but it allegedly takes a decade to master the unique bit player role.

As a fresh face actor in the world of samurai films and dramas, Kazuto Seike is still given only minor roles, including kirareyaku. But the son of a well-respected "tateshi" swordfight master and choreographer Mitsuhiro Seike, the 24-year-old has a big ambition to succeed his father's fame.

"I believe that samurai productions are already a part of Japan's traditional culture, and I want to be an established tateshi who helps carry down this tradition to the future generation," Seike said.

Seike is one of the youngest members of Toei Tsurugikai group of swordfight actors, based in the film company Toei Co.'s studio in Kyoto's Ukyo Ward. His father Mitsuhiro, 57, is the only remaining tateshi swordfight choreographer in the group, giving daily training to kirareyaku actors and arranging swordfight scenes in samurai films and dramas.

The profession of swordfight choreographers traces its history back to early 20th Century at around the same time when the first Japanese film company was established in 1912.

During the heyday of samurai movies and dramas from the 1960s to the mid-1970s, there were nearly 80 actively tateshi in studios across Japan, according to the Japan Actors Union.

Since then, the number of samurai productions and swordfight choreographers dwindled, and there currently are five tateshi registered with the union.

While kirareyaku roles are usually minor characters unceremoniously killed in samurai films, they must obtain skills to make heroes look good and naturally fade from the screen during the act of dying. It is commonly said that it takes around a decade for an actor to become a good kirareyaku and far more years to become a tateshi swordfight master.

When Seike was an early teen, he became fascinated by not only by heroes in samurai productions but also kirareyaku villains, more so than stars in kung-fu and other action movies.

After graduating high school, he asked his father to allow him to enter the world of samurai productions and give him training to become a tateshi. But since samurai production has long passed its prime, the father rejected his request.

But Seike could not give up his dream to become a tateshi and took up small roles in samurai movies and dramas as a part-time actor while attending a local university.

After graduating the university last spring, he asked his father again to admit him to the entertainment industry, and the father said yes this time, adding that the son is now old enough to make a judgment for himself.

As an apprentice tateshi, Seike spends hours training as a swordfight actor at a training hall in Toei's studio six days a week. The voluntary training often takes three straight hours. To earn living, he also takes minor roles, including kirareyaku, in samurai productions.

"I advise Kazuto to first 'steal' swordfight techniques from senior actors by copying their actions without asking them about know-hows," said Mitsuhiro, who became professional tateshi when he was in his mid-30s after taking kirareyaku roles for years.

## Edited version

**Headline:** Samurai bit actor plays the part in quest to be swordfighting master

KYOTO--They are often on screen for just minutes, only to be killed. But the unique bit role of 'kirareyaku' in samurai productions--typically the principal villain's sidekick--is said to take years to perfect.

As a fresh face in the world of samurai films and dramas, Kazuto Seike still gets only minor roles, including kirareyaku. However, as the son of respected "tateshi" swordfighting master and choreographer Mitsuhiko Seike, the 24-year-old has great ambitions.

"Samurai productions are deeply embedded in Japanese culture," Seike said. "I want to become an established tateshi who helps pass on this tradition to future generations."

Seike is one of the youngest members of the Toei Tsurugikai group of swordfighting actors, which is based in Toei Co.'s studio in Ukyo Ward, Kyoto.

His 57-year-old father, the only remaining tateshi swordfighting choreographer in the group, gives daily training to kirareyaku actors and arranges swordfighting scenes for samurai films and dramas.

The profession of swordfighting choreography dates back to the early 20th century, around the time the first Japanese film company was established in 1912.

During the heyday of samurai movies and dramas from the 1960s to the mid-1970s, there were nearly 80 active tateshi in studios across Japan, according to the Japan Actors Union.

Since then, the number of samurai productions and swordfighting choreographers has declined, leaving just five specializing in the art registered with the union.

While kirareyaku are usually minor characters unceremoniously dispatched by the hero in samurai films, they require the ability to make the hero look good, by naturally fading away on the screen during the moments of death. It is commonly believed that it takes about a decade for an actor to become a quality kirareyaku and many more to become a tateshi swordfighting master.

As a teen, Seike was fascinated not only by heroes in samurai productions, but also kirareyaku villains, more so than characters in kung fu and other action movies.

After graduating high school, he asked his father to allow him to enter the world of samurai productions by training him to become a tateshi. However, as samurai films had long passed their prime, the father rejected his request.

However, Seike could not give up his dream of becoming a tateshi and took on small roles in samurai movies and dramas as a part-time actor while attending university.

After graduating last spring, he again asked his father to help him enter the entertainment industry. This time, the father approved, adding that the son was now old enough to decide for himself.

As an apprentice tateshi, Seike spends about three hours, six days a week, voluntarily training as a swordfighting actor at a hall in the studio. To earn a living, he also takes on minor roles, including kirareyaku, in samurai productions.

Mitsuhiko became a professional tateshi when he was in his mid-30s after taking kirareyaku roles for years. He offered words of wisdom for his son's own apprenticeship, saying, "I told Kazuto to first 'steal swordfighting techniques from senior actors by mimicking their movements, without seeking explicit instruction."