

Japan’s outspoken nun & author Jakucho Setouchi dies at 99

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Jakucho Setouchi, a Buddhist nun and one of Japan’s best-known authors whose works include novels depicting passionate women and her translation of *The Tale of Genji*, a 1,000-year-old classic, into modern language, has died. She was 99 years old.

Setouchi was already an established novelist before she shaved her head and became a nun at age 51. She was mostly based at a small temple in Kyoto, where she wrote hundreds of books from biographical novels to romance, often depicting women defying traditional roles.

Even in her late 90s, she was active in writing and giving talks, but her health declined recently and she had been treated at a hospital in Kyoto, where she died of heart failure, according to her temple, Jakuan.

Born Harumi Setouchi in 1922 in the city of Tokushima on the southwestern main island of Shikoku, she debuted in 1957 and has since published more than 400 books. Her stories of independent and somewhat rebellious women won many female readers.

Setouchi brought *The Tale of Genji* back to life with her 1998 translation into modern, easy-to-read Japanese, gaining new fans to an ancient story. It took her six



ILLUSTRIOUS LIFE. Japanese Buddhist nun and author Jakucho Setouchi speaks in Kyoto, Japan, in this June 1, 2017 file photo. Setouchi, one of Japan’s best-known authors whose works include novels depicting passionate women and her translation of *The Tale of Genji* into modern language, has died. (Keiji Uesho/Kyodo News via AP, File)

years to finish.

Setouchi said the work’s appeal to readers today is largely because of author Murasaki Shikibu’s examination of the main character Genji’s passions and of relationships between men and women. *The Tale of Genji* chronicles the life of the Shining Prince, who was the son of an emperor, and one of his concubines.

“It’s been 1,000 years since the book was written, but relations between the sexes haven’t changed all that much,” Setouchi said in an interview with The Associated Press. “For women today, the book is a good lesson in what men like and don’t like. For men, it’s still a good primer in how to seduce women.”

Her edition sold 2.5 million copies.

She maintained her curiosity well into her 80s when she wrote a novel on her cellphone under a penname, “Purple,” after the name of the author of *The Tale of Genji*, Murasaki, or “purple” in Japanese. She also used social media to communicate with her young fans.

Setouchi’s own life resembled a character in one of her stories. At age 25 and married to a scholar, she fell in love with her husband’s student and left him and their three-year-old daughter, saying she would be a novelist.

Her earlier book, *A Flower Aflame*, was criticized for its sexual scenes, unusual for novels written by a female author in a male-dominated world of literature then.

After she entered Buddhism and became a nun in 1973, she established her base in the ancient capital of Kyoto and regularly gave religious talks there and around the country. Her events were always packed with fans of all ages, including many women seeking her advice about life and relationships.

Setouchi was also a pacifist and anti-nuclear activist.

She fasted at her Kyoto temple to protest the 1991 Gulf War and the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

She also joined disaster-hit residents at anti-nuclear rallies in Fukushima after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Her last novel, which she finished at age 95, was *Life*.

“If I’m reborn, I want to be a novelist, and a woman,” she wrote.

By Zen Soo
The Associated Press

HONG KONG — Southeast Asia’s largest ride-hailing company Grab tumbled in its market debut, following a \$40-billion merger in a special purpose acquisition company (SPAC) deal.

years to finish.

Setouchi said the work’s appeal to readers today is largely because of author Murasaki Shikibu’s examination of the main character Genji’s passions and of relationships between men and women. *The Tale of Genji* chronicles the life of the Shining Prince, who was the son of an emperor, and one of his concubines.

“It’s been 1,000 years since the book was written, but relations between the sexes haven’t changed all that much,” Setouchi said in an interview with The Associated Press. “For women today, the book is a good lesson in what men like and don’t like. For men, it’s still a good primer in how to seduce women.”

Her edition sold 2.5 million copies.

She maintained her curiosity well into her 80s when she wrote a novel on her cellphone under a penname, “Purple,” after the name of the author of *The Tale of Genji*, Murasaki, or “purple” in Japanese. She also used social media to communicate with her young fans.

Setouchi’s own life resembled a character in one of her stories. At age 25 and married to a scholar, she fell in love with her husband’s student and left him and their three-year-old daughter, saying she would be a novelist.

Her earlier book, *A Flower Aflame*, was criticized for its sexual scenes, unusual for novels written by a female author in a male-dominated world of literature then.

After she entered Buddhism and became a nun in 1973, she established her base in the ancient capital of Kyoto and regularly gave religious talks there and around the country. Her events were always packed with fans of all ages, including many women seeking her advice about life and relationships.

Setouchi was also a pacifist and anti-nuclear activist.

She fasted at her Kyoto temple to protest the 1991 Gulf War and the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

She also joined disaster-hit residents at anti-nuclear rallies in Fukushima after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Her last novel, which she finished at age 95, was *Life*.

“If I’m reborn, I want to be a novelist, and a woman,” she wrote.

Grab goes public in \$40-billion SPAC deal, slides in market debut

such as deliveries of groceries and takeout meals, digital payments, and financial services.

It now operates in 465 cities across eight countries in Southeast Asia — Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and

Winner of five Tony Awards including Best Play!

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME



ON STAGE THROUGH DEC. 24

SENSORY-FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE | DEC. 21, 2021

Don't forget the rest of our season!

THE GREAT LEAP
Jan. 15 – Feb. 13

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH
Jan. 22 – Mar. 6

AUGUST WILSON'S GEM OF THE OCEAN
Mar. 5 – Apr. 3

FREESTYLE LOVE SUPREME
Apr. 8 – May 1

RENT
May 21 – Jun. 26

Members of the cast of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Photo by Owen Carey.

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE AT THE ARMORY

GET TICKETS TODAY!

503.445.3700 • PCS.ORG

SEASON SUPERSTARS

Regional Arts & Culture Council

MILLER FOUNDATION