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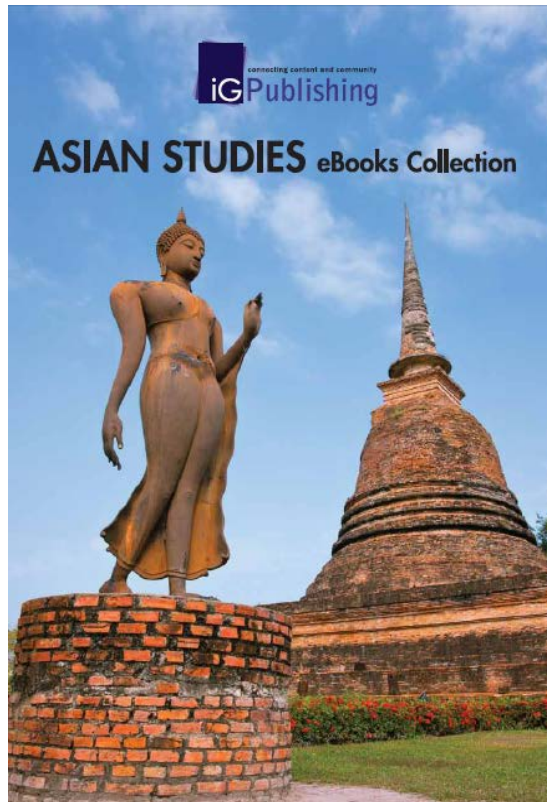
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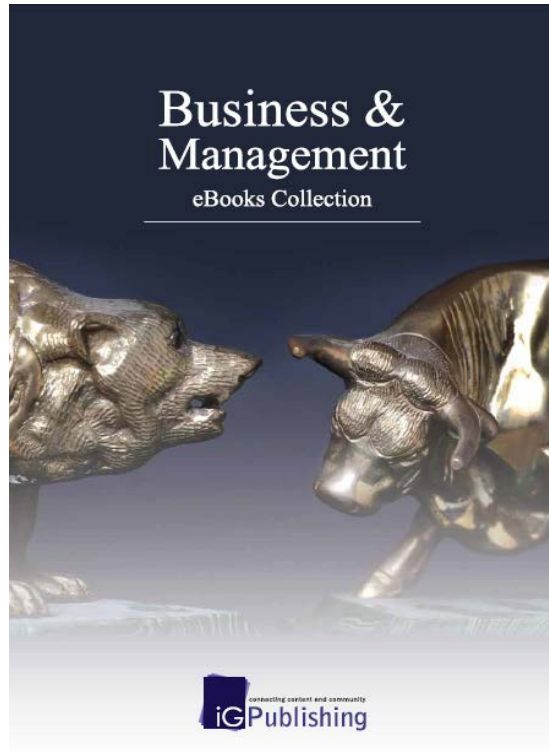
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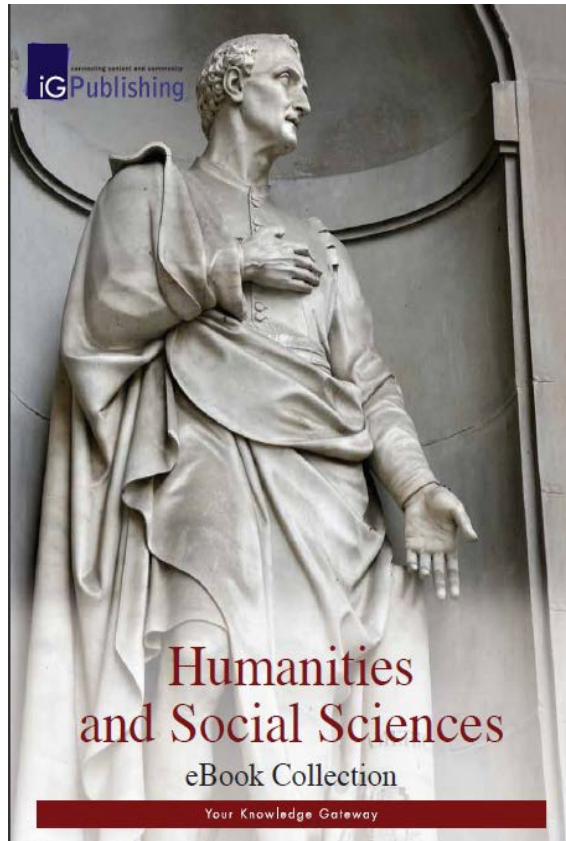
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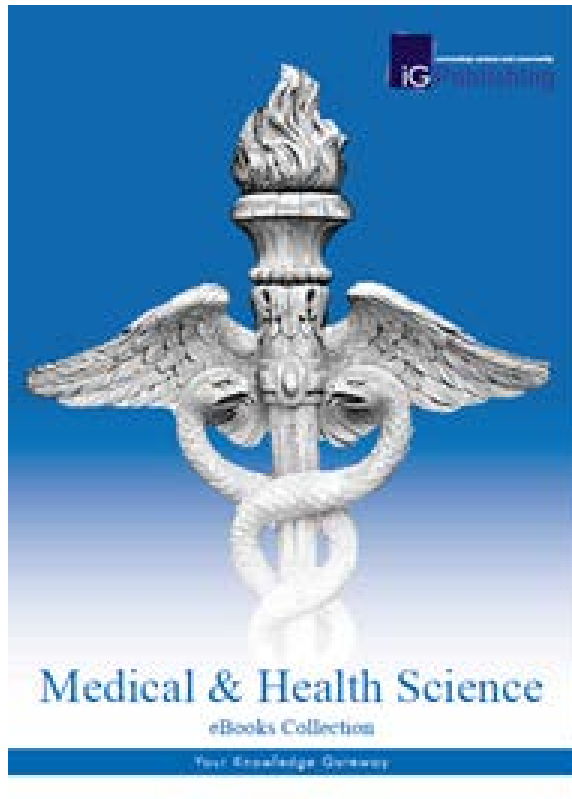
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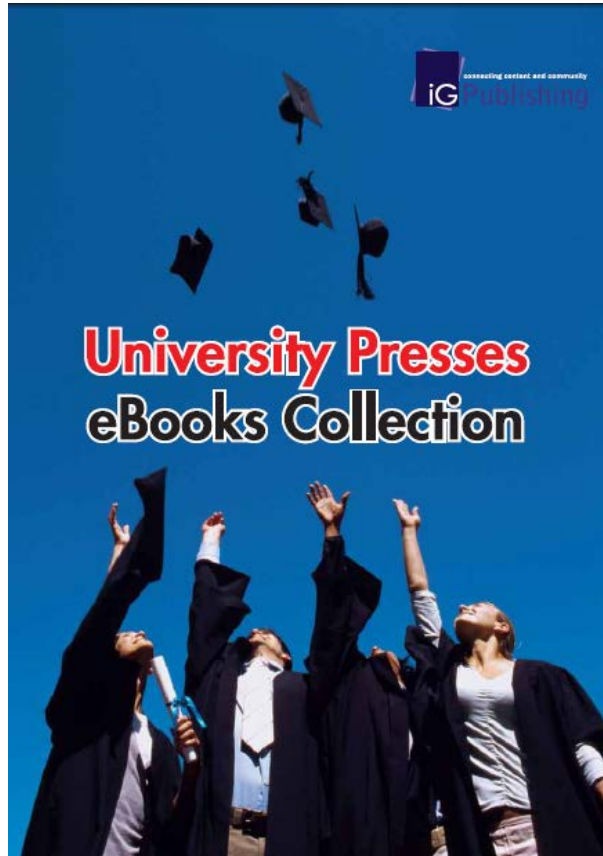
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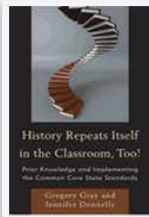


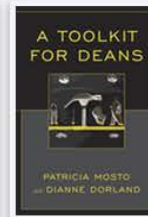
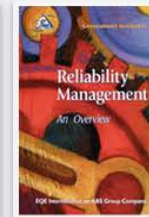

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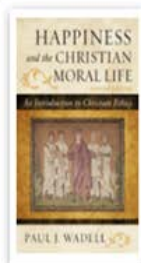
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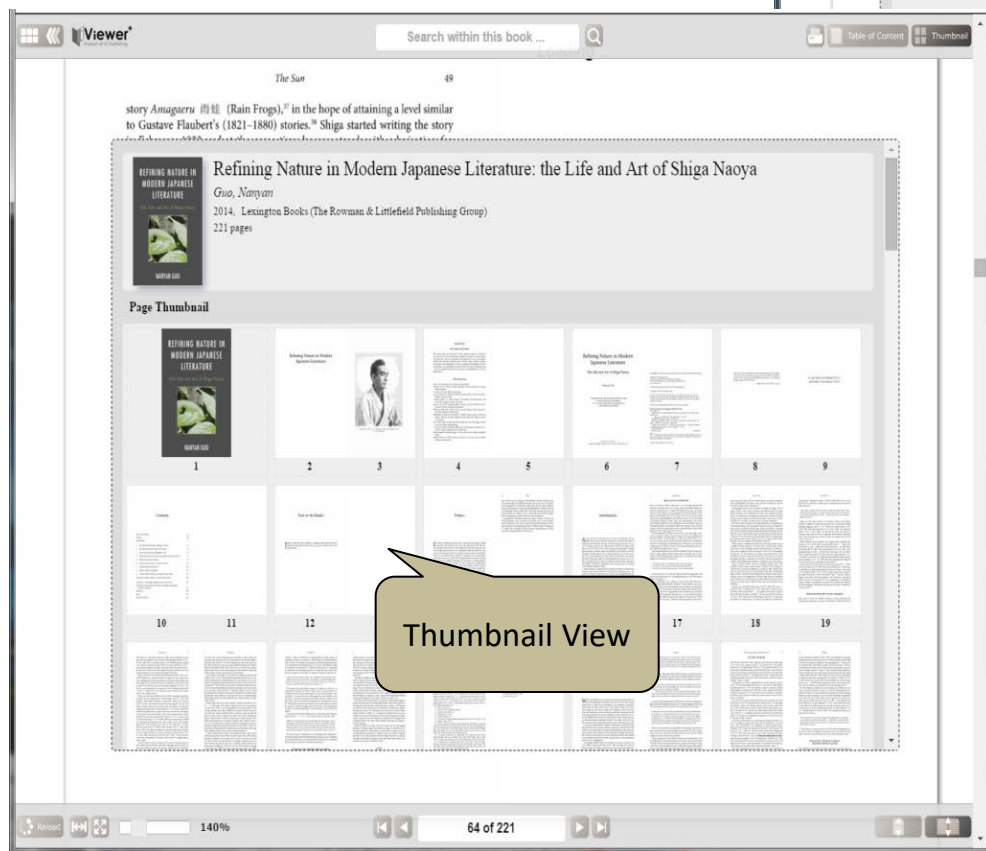
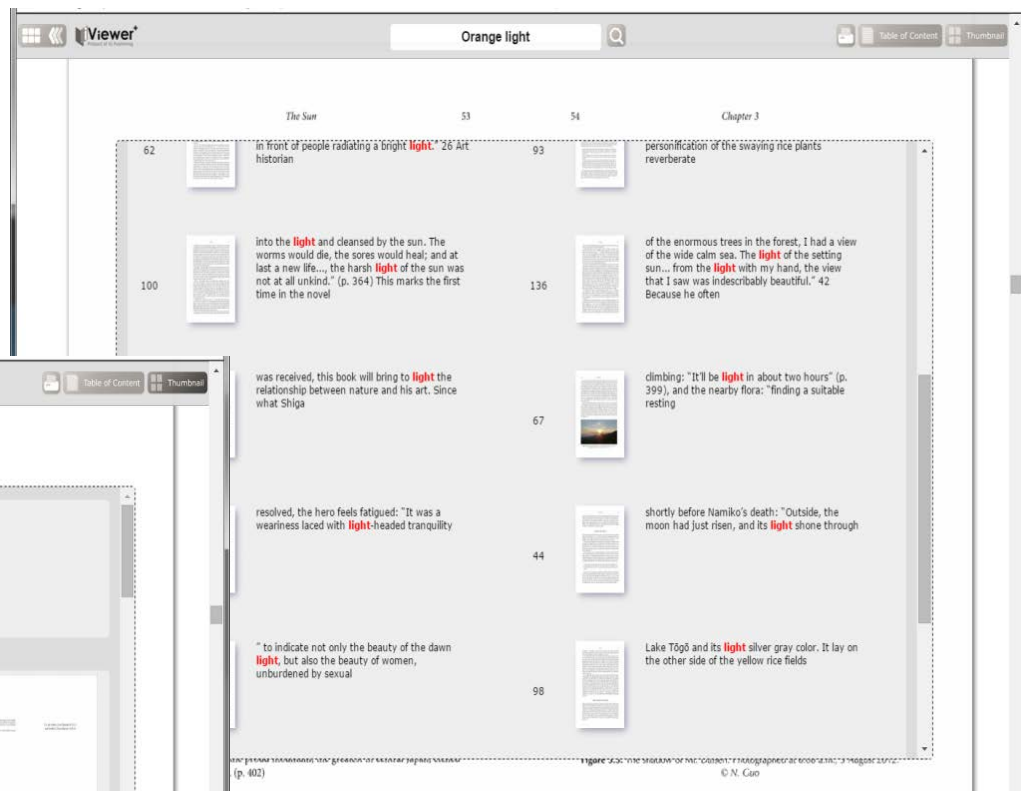
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story *Amagaeru* 雨蛙 (Rain Frogs),<sup>37</sup> in the hope of attaining a level similar to Gustave Flaubert's (1821–1880) stories.<sup>38</sup> Shiga started writing the story

A similar tranquility is achieved at the end of *A Dark Night's Passing* when Kensaku, who is critically ill after descending from Mt. Daisen, and his wife



## Refining Nature in Modern Japanese Literature: the Life and Art of Shiga Naoya

Guo, Nanyan

2014, Lexington Books (The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group)

221 pages

### Table of Content

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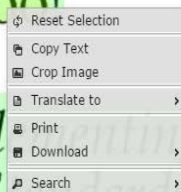
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Shiga Naoya (1863-1971). Photographs of  
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The novel describes it thus:

He must have slept for some time as he sat there, his elbows resting on his knees. When he opened his eyes again, the green around him had begun to show in the light of early dawn. The stars, though fewer now, were still there. The sky was soft blue—the color of kindness, he thought. The mist below had dispersed, and there were lights here and there in the villages. When he turned around, he saw the mountain orange light that became more and more intense and suddenly everything around him became

The “orange light” is the sun rising or setting. He witnessed this truly beautiful and touching scene and therefore conclude that the time of day was the same.

According to Shiga, “The morning view of Mt. Daisen at the end of the second half of the novel was a scene I had seen myself twenty-four years earlier. I never visited Daisen before writing the scene. . . . Fortunately when I wrote it, the scene had previously appeared vividly in my mind, probably because the impression it made on me was so strong. I was pleased that I was able to completely describe my feelings.”<sup>34</sup> Shiga’s capability to remember and describe his experiences of twenty-three years before is amazing.<sup>35</sup> But did Shiga really see what he described?

### THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION IN DESCRIPTION

It is commonly believed that Shiga faithfully described what he saw on the mountain. However, I believe that there are fictional elements in this description, which may tell us more about the main character’s state of mind than the actual scenery. Let us examine the following passage.

But there was no sign of activity yet in the villages immediately below, which lay still and dark in the shadow of Daisen. Kensaku then saw for the first time the sharply delineated outline of this shadow in the distance as it retreated from the bay and crept toward him over land, allowing the town of Yonago to emerge in the light. It was like a great dragnet being pulled in; or it was like the caressing shadow of a passing cloud. And so Kensaku watched with emotion this rare sight—the shadow of the proud mountain, the greatest in central Japan, etched boldly across the land. (p. 402)

The expression of “a great dragnet being pulled in” certainly reminds the reader of the Izumo mythology of pulling islands toward the mainland by the god Yatsuka Mizuomitsunu no Mikoto 八束水臣津野命, who used Mt. Sanbe 三瓶山 and Mt. Daisen to anchor the pulling ropes. Shiga’s description can also make the reader wonder whether the mythology itself was inspired by the shadows of the two mountains in ancient times.

However, Shiga’s description was questioned by local people of the Daisen region, who think that the mountain shadow cannot possibly reach the “bay” and pass over Yonago 米子 during summertime when Shiga visited the mountain; it could only be viewed in winter.<sup>36</sup> My research suggests that Shiga’s description is partially based on his imagination. My two trips to Mt. Daisen on 26 July and 3 August 2012 confirm that the sun rose about 5:11 a.m. and the mountain shadow appeared at 5:32 a.m. when the sun reached a certain height. The shadow only reached the top of Mt. Hatsuka 母塚山, about eighteen kilometers west of Daisen, not as far as the Nakanoumi 中海 bay, nor the city of Yonago. Then, as the sun continued to rise and the compass point moved toward the southeast, the shadow gradually decreased in length. It took four minutes for the shadow to move four kilometers away from Mt. Hatsuka due southeast. Then it took another forty-seven minutes to move seven kilometers away (see figure 3.3).

In sum, the short length of the shadow and its slow movement lack the dynamism of “a great dragnet being pulled.”



Figure 3.3. The shadow of Mt. Daisen. Photographed at 6:08 a.m., 3 August 2012.

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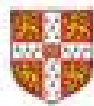


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