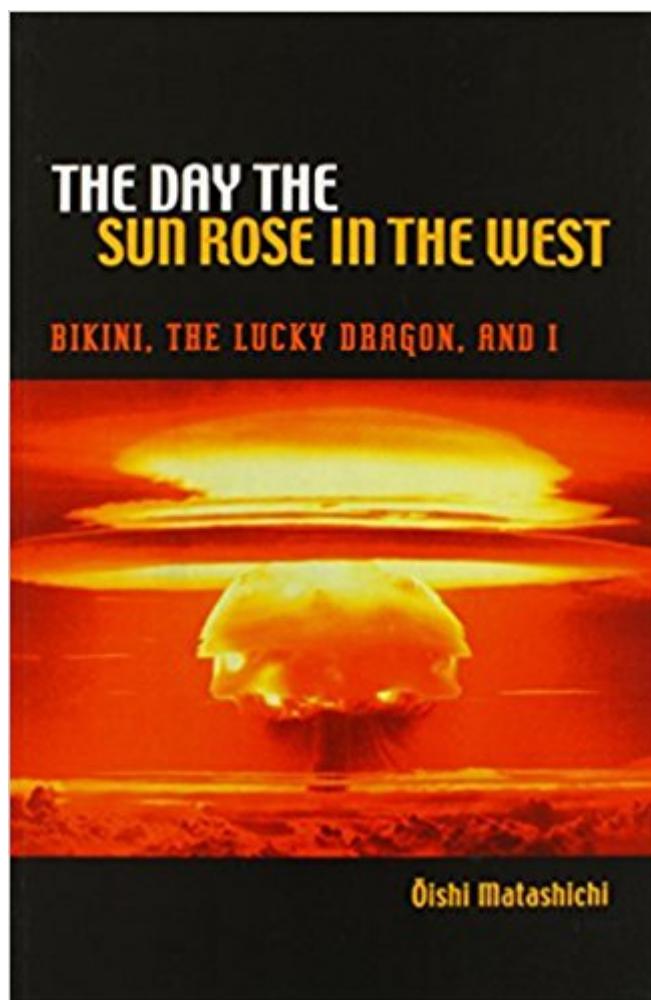


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The Day The Sun Rose In The West: Bikini, The Lucky Dragon, And I (A Latitude 20 Book)



Synopsis

On March 1, 1954, the U.S. exploded a hydrogen bomb at Bikini in the South Pacific. The fifteen-megaton bomb was a thousand times more powerful than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, and its fallout spread far beyond the official “no-sail” zone the U.S. had designated. Fishing just outside the zone at the time of the blast, the Lucky Dragon #5 was showered with radioactive ash. Making the difficult voyage back to their home port of Yaizu, twenty-year-old Oishi Matashichi and his shipmates became ill from maladies they could not comprehend. They were all hospitalized with radiation sickness, and one man died within a few months. The Lucky Dragon #5 became the focus of a major international incident, but many years passed before the truth behind U.S. nuclear testing in the Pacific emerged. Late in his life, overcoming social and political pressures to remain silent, Oishi began to speak about his experience and what he had since learned about Bikini. His primary audience was schoolchildren; his primary forum, the museum in Tokyo built around the salvaged hull of the Lucky Dragon #5. Oishi’s advocacy has helped keep the Lucky Dragon #5 incident in Japan’s national consciousness. Oishi relates the horrors he and the others underwent following Bikini: the months in hospital; the death of their crew mate; the accusations by the U.S. and even some Japanese that the Lucky Dragon #5 had been spying for the Soviets; the long campaign to win government funding for medical treatment; the enduring stigma of exposure to radiation. The Day the Sun Rose in the West stands as a powerful statement about the Cold War and the U.S.-Japan relationship as it impacted the lives of a handful of fishermen and ultimately all of us who live in the post-nuclear age.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This is a compelling account of an incident that few of us remember today, but which had an impact far beyond the few fishermen on the Lucky Dragon #5 who were irradiated in the Bravo test sixty-some years ago. It is a glimpse of the world situation at the time through the lens of the unfortunate fate of the ship and its crew. The author captures the tension between Japan and the U.S. over the incident, which occurred soon after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the anti-nuclear testing crusade that was beginning even back then, the self-righteous insistence of a nuclear power on continuing nuclear tests even while asserting limited responsibility for damages, and so much more." --Francis X. Hezel, S.J., director of Micronesian Seminar

Oishi Matashichi was born in 1934 and went to sea as a boy of fourteen. On March 1, 1954, the ship on which he was sailing encountered what one crewman called "the day the sun rose in the west." The Bikini test ("Bravo") of the U.S. hydrogen bomb contaminated the ship and its crew with radioactive fallout. Once he had recovered from the dire immediate effects on his health, Oishi left the sea and became the proprietor of a laundry shop. Late in life he became a peace advocate--telling his story to groups of schoolchildren throughout Japan. In 2010 he traveled to New York to appear at the nuclear non-proliferation treaty conference. Richard H. Minear is professor emeritus of history at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a prominent translator of survivor accounts of Hiroshima.

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