

***Shikohin* and Its Marketability**

- Price of Mineral-water and the Value of 'Pleasure' in Contemporary Japan

Masatoshi Takada

School of Human Environmental Science, Mukogawa Women's University

6-46, Ikebiraki-cho, Nishinomiya-shi, Hyogo 663-8137, Japan

Summary

The word *Shikohin* in Japan language generally encompasses materials which humans may consume without a nutritional intent but rather for their stimulatory potential. We can list, for example, alcoholic drinks, tobacco, coffee and tea. In contrast, rice, salt and water are necessary 'foodstuffs' previously not regarded in any way as *Shikohin*. However, there has recently been a shift in the way we look at such materials.

Of course, rice is an important basic food which supplies calorific value to the human body. Salt is also an indispensable foodstuff for survival. However, contemporary Japanese show strong interest in non-nutritional characteristics like scene and taste when they buy them, even choosing more expensive goods if they are to their liking. Until recently Japanese people have been content with tap water for drinking but there is increasing interest in bottled mineral water despite the fact that it is almost two thousands times more expensive. The reasons for these phenomena are linked to changes in people's sense of value. That is to say, they are looking for many types of pleasure instead of abundance. This article is an introduction to cultural studies of *Shikohin*.