Introduction to a Critical Study of Nakagami Kenji:
The Conceptual Framework of Being and Light
in "Misaki," *Karekinada*, and *Chi no hate shijō no toki*

KAKIUCHI Kengo

This study concerns processes of change within the central topology of three works that occupy a key position in Nakagami Kenji’s oeuvre: "Misaki" (The Cape), *Karekinada* (The Sea of Withered Trees), and *Chi no hate shijō no toki* (The Ends of the Earth, A Moment Supreme).

In examining how these linked works, known as "the Akiyuki trilogy," depict the hero, Akiyuki, and the setting, the roji or "alleyways," I have pursued a detailed analysis focused on two main points. The first is the process by which the author’s orthographic choices for the verbs *iru/aru* (to be, to exist) shift from the form associated with animate subjects to that associated with inanimate subjects, and the subsequent changes in this usage, which direct the reader’s attention to the topology of Akiyuki’s existence. The second is the different levels of symbolism generated by the images of light. The former process is a sign of the internal reality and process of Akiyuki’s establishment of a self; the latter are inscribed with a meaning that delimits "Akiyuki" and "the alleyways" as the most essential phase of the conditions that make the establishment of a self possible. Determining the relationship between these two points within a framework of multiple perspectives should therefore enable us to identify the core and contents of the trilogy’s theme.

Further, in view of the fact that both ultimately disappear after *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, and given the profound impact their disappearance will have on the author’s subsequent work, an understanding of the trilogy’s unifying theme and its transformations is clearly vital to any discussion of Nakagami’s later fiction.

This paper proposes a reading of "Akiyuki" and "the alleyways" in the Akiyuki trilogy from the above viewpoints. The central statement that emerges from such a reading should serve as a basis for further studies of Nakagami Kenji, since it can be seen to have influenced his entire body of work.