



# The Curious Casebook of Inspector Hanshichi: Detective Stories of Old Edo

*Kido Okamoto*

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"That year, quite a shocking incident occurred. . . ." So reminisces old Hanshichi in a story from one of Japan's most beloved works of popular literature, *Hanshichi torimonochô*. Told through the eyes of a street-smart detective, Okamoto Kidô's best-known work inaugurated the historical detective genre in Japan, spawning stage, radio, movie, and television adaptations as well as countless imitations. This selection of fourteen stories, translated into English for the first time, provides a fascinating glimpse of life in feudal Edo (later Tokyo) and rare insight into the development of the fledgling Japanese crime novel.

Once viewed as an exclusively modern genre derivative of Western fiction, crime fiction and its place in the Japanese popular imagination were forever changed by Kidô's "unsung Sherlock Holmes." These stories?still widely read today?are crucial to our understanding of modern Japan and its aspirations toward a literature that steps outside the shadow of the West to stand on its own.

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