



Blossoms and Shadows

Three different readings from our regular reviewers

Images of Japan

Sean Curtin examines a new collection in print

In this issue we focus on the Meiji era, which spanned the period September 1868 to July 1912. Susan Meehan and others explore the historical novel *Blossoms and Shadows* by Lian Hearn, which is set at the genesis of the Meiji era. Hearn states in an interview included at the end of the book that the Meiji Restoration ranks along with the French Revolution and American Civil War in terms of regional and global impact. It certainly marks the emergence of Japan on the world stage as a modern country. Hearn has produced a substantive work of historical fiction that brings alive the emergence of the Meiji era. It opens in 1857 and encompasses over a decade, which witnessed the dramatic twilight of the Bakufu (the Shogun's government) and the bright dawn of the Meiji. The novel is divided into four parts and the depth of history covered is quite breathtaking. Many of those who have read the book have found reading the novel two or three times brings out the true scale of this history-packed and elegantly crafted tale. In this issue Ali Muskett and Mike Sullivan also give their take on this epic novel.

Next we delve into *Images of Japan 1885-1912: Scenes, Tales and Flowers*, which is a superbly researched and visually stunning publication by Japan scholar Sir Hugh Cortazzi. It gathers together a wide variety of rare and exquisite prints from the latter part of the Meiji era. The primary link shared by all the bright and colourful images in this visually rich volume is that they were created for the European and American communities living in Japan. As such these works of art offer a fascinating window on the dynamic Meiji era. Sir Hugh Cortazzi's book represents the product of years of research and manages to conjure forth the sense of excitement Meiji Japan initially

created in the West. The stunning visual prints illuminate this vibrant period in Japanese history while collectively the pictures help recreate the sense of energy, drive and colour of the time.

In *Asia for the Asians; China in the Lives of Five Meiji Japanese* Paula S. Harrell has produced a well-researched study of five Japanese personalities of the Meiji era, who were closely involved with Chinese modernization. She demonstrates that Sino-Japanese relations have not always been confrontational. During the Meiji era many influential Japanese tried to forge a better understanding between the two nations. This in-depth book demonstrates both have much in common and how during the Meiji era bilateral ties were greatly enriched. Sir Hugh Cortazzi casts a critical eye on Alistair Swale's new work *The Meiji Restoration, Monarchism, Mass Communication and Conservative Revolution*, which examines the dynamics of the period. Sir Hugh also rounds off this issue with an examination of Brian Burke-Gaffney's new work *Holme, Ringer & Company, The Rise and Fall of a British Enterprise in Japan 1868-1940*. Holme, Ringer & Company were the dominant British firm in Nagasaki during the Meiji period. It was initially controlled by Frederick Ringer (1838-1907) and the firm remained in the hands of the Ringer family, including sons-in-law, until they were forced to leave or were arrested at the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941. Burke-Gaffney not only tells the fascinating story of the Ringer family and their business interests in Nagasaki and Shimonoseki, but also gives a good feel of what life was like in dynamic Meiji Japan.

Sean Curtin, June 2012

Contents

- 1) Blossoms and Shadows (Part 1)
- 2) Images of Japan 1885-1912: Scenes, Tales and Flowers
- 3) Asia for the Asians; China in the Lives of Five Meiji Japanese
- 4) Blossoms and Shadows (Part 2)
- 5) The Meiji Restoration, Monarchism, Mass Communication and Conservative Revolution
- 6) Blossoms and Shadows (Part 3)
- 7) Holme, Ringer & Company, The Rise and Fall of a British Enterprise in Japan 1868-1940

Editor

Sean Curtin

Managing Editor

Jack Cooke

Staff Reviewers

Susan Meehan and Michael Sullivan

Special Reviewer

Hugh Cortazzi

New reviews

www.japansociety.org.uk/resources/the-japan-society-review

Blossoms and Shadows (Part 1)

by Lian Hearn

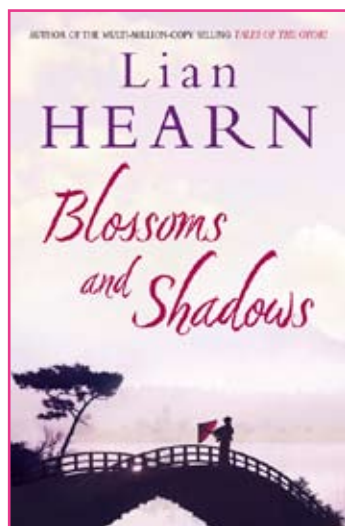
Quercus Publishing, 2011

400 pages, £12.99

ISBN: 978-0-85738-297-9

Review by Susan Meehan

Blossoms and Shadows is an absolutely riveting piece of historical fiction which brings alive a fascinating period of late nineteenth century Japanese history.



The book begins in 1857 and spans ten years, which are the twilight of the Bakufu (the Shogun's government) and febrile times. These were heady times indeed as Western powers were expanding their power in Asia, the Bakufu was crumbling and revolution brewing. It is no accident that the book is set in Choshu, present-day Yamaguchi, for this domain, along with Satsuma, present-day Kagoshima, was vocal in wanting to keep foreigners or barbarians out of Japan and the emperor, a figurehead in Kyoto, restored to power.

Opposition to the Tokugawa Shogunate was many-sided and deeply divided. Alliances and loyalties also shifted. Many young men in Choshu were activists loyal to the emperor, brimming with a sense of adventure and destiny and willing to abandon their home ties in order to influence change in Japan. The agitators were not only from the samurai or warrior class, but also included townsmen and peasants as volunteer fighters.

'From this kernel the story sprawls out ambitiously, portraying a historically-based account of events gripping Japan at large.'

Japan, which had been kept largely closed to the rest of the world from the late 1630s onwards was gradually being prised open. By 1854 the Treaty of Kanagawa had been signed opening the ports of Hakodate and Shimoda to the United States, and treaties were signed with Russia and the Netherlands in 1855. Extraterritoriality was granted to Americans in Japan in 1857 and commercial treaties were signed with the United States, Britain, Russia and France in 1858.

The book is replete with characters, some of whose names change depending on whether they're using their adoptive family's name, and events. It can't be read half-heartedly and I admit to having reached page 234 and then re-commenced the book in order to read it with more care and attention. This was certainly worth the effort.

For those unfamiliar with Japanese history the book

might prove difficult in places but the reader owes it to the author to persevere for it is Hearn who has done all the graft, i.e., years of research which she has then distilled and made accessible to us through this book. Making the effort with Hearn's novel pays off as the reader is rewarded with a richly layered story set in remarkable times.

Hearn centres the book on a doctor's family living in the village of Yuda in Choshu. From this kernel the story sprawls out ambitiously, portraying a historically-based account of events gripping Japan at large. The Itasaki family itself can be perceived as being subversive, mirroring Choshu's attacks on the status quo. Yunosuke Itasaki, the doctor and head of household, is an extremely enlightened man for his times being compassionate and with ambitions for his daughter Tsuru beyond marrying. Unusually for the times, he has her help him by preparing medicines and stitching up wounds.

Unlike many of his contemporaries who were frightened of foreigners, Yunosuke is descended from a family of rural physicians and studied in Nagasaki with men who had worked with Siebold (1796-1866), the first European to teach Western medicine in Japan, and Mohnike (1796-1866), another German physician who implemented the first nationwide smallpox vaccination in Japan. Yunosuke admired foreign scholars and had a collection of Dutch medical instruments, showing a readiness to move with the times.

Tsuru is a wonderful character; encouraged to become a doctor on the one hand, her mother tapped into other sensibilities by giving her a magic fan which unlocked her imagination. Tsuru herself is revolutionary and embodies the period described by Hearn. She is a modern female yearning to be a doctor and for more than a wifely role. Alas, things don't pan out as hoped for and I wonder how far society and the position of women in Japanese society have improved since.

Shoin Yoshida [吉田 松陰] is one of many illuminaries who feature in the book and who really existed. He was a brilliant intellectual who taught many of the illustrious individuals who went on to become leading lights in the new government (succeeding the Shogunate) such as Hirobumi Ito [伊藤 博文] and Aritomo Yamagata [山縣 有朋], both of whom went on to become prime minister. These figures add to the book's breadth and interest.

The book is divided into four parts. Hearn is wonderful at conjuring up place and in conveying the story of the Itasaki family. She has chapters dedicated to the wedding of Mitsue, Tsuru's older sister, and of Tsuru herself. She also devotes chapters to historical activists such as Shinsaku Takasugi [高杉 晋作], Genzui Kusaka [久坂玄瑞], Shoin Yoshida and Ryoma Sakamoto [坂本 龍馬], and to other famous individuals such as Lord Sufu, Yoshinobu Tokugawa [徳川 慶喜] and Thomas Glover. Deftly weaving major historical events into her

book, love, passion and intrigue are not missing either and keep the reader's interest from ever waning.

Admittedly the love scenes can be a little contrived, even funny at times... 'It was like sleeping with myself. I was both man and woman. I became him, and when it was over and we had fallen into the ecstasy that is near death, I was more myself than I had ever been.' Tsuru turns out to have 'insatiable lust' on occasion, surfacing from 'the lake of desire.'

The history covered is quite incredible. That Choshu clansmen revolted against the Shogunate in 1865 and were able to defeat it with their superior discipline and equipment is simply extraordinary, as is the story of the Choshu Five who came over to study in England in 1863. The 150th anniversary of this event is sure to be celebrated widely in Japan and the UK in 2013.

On 3 January 1868, seventeen year-old Mutsuhito published an edict restoring all power to him, the emperor, and abolishing the shogunate. The abolition of the Bakufu, the restoration of the emperor and the creation of a new political organisation is known as the Meiji Restoration. Emperor Mutshuhito (1850-1912) who called his reign Meiji (enlightened rule), witnessed fundamental change and modernisation in Japanese society. Choshu through such figures as Hirobumi Ito, Aritomo Yamagata and Koin Kido [木戸 孝允] dominated politics until the end of the century.

As Lian Hearn states in an interview included at the end of the book, the Meiji Restoration is up there with the French Revolution and American Civil War in terms of impact. The next instalment in the story of Japan featuring the last rebellion of the samurai in 1877 would make for another fascinating book.

Blossoms and Shadows and the historical period it spans came to mind when I read a review of Patricio Guzmán's film *Salvador Allende* recently. All you need to do is substitute Chile with Japan in order to get a potted appraisal of what happened in Japan during the twilight of the Bakufu and the death rattle of the samurai, 'What happened in Chile over a period of two decades does not have to do with a particular circumstance or a particular reality. It has to do with human nature, with dreams, hopes, cowardice and the most amazing callousness. And all this is universal enough to speak to anyone who wishes to listen.' (Pamela Biénzobas on Patricio Guzmán's 2004 film *Salvador Allende* in 'Senses of Cinema,' 8 February, 2005)

One of my few criticisms of the book is that it could do with a catchier title. I hope *Blossoms and Shadows* will also encourage readers to pick up Japanese history books.

Images of Japan 1885-1912: Scenes, Tales and Flowers by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

The Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, 2011

140 pages, £6.95

ISBN-13: 978-0954592134

Review by Sean Curtin

This is a superbly researched and visually stunning publication by Japan scholar Sir Hugh Cortazzi. It gathers together a wide variety of rare and exquisite prints from the latter part of the Meiji era. The primary link shared by all the colourful works presented in this visually rich volume is that they were created for the European and American communities living in Japan. As such these works of art offer a fascinating perspective and window into this dynamic period of Japanese history.

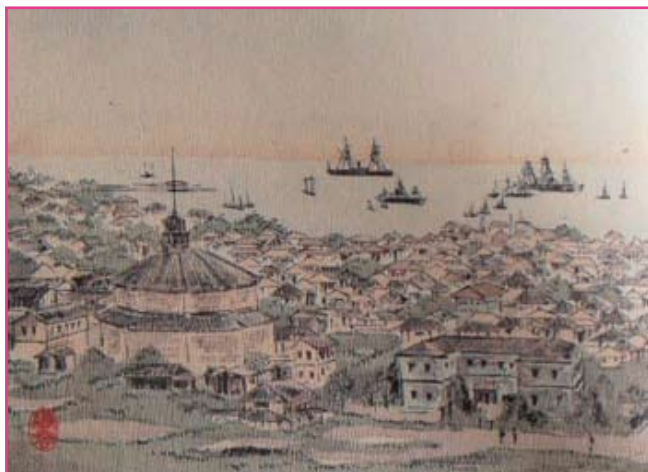
The driving force behind a large volume of these artistic works was Takejiro Hasegawa (長谷川武次郎) 'an enterprising publisher in Tokyo' who started off by producing translations of Japanese fairy tales for the foreign resident's market in the mid-1880s. These books became highly popular which resulted in the range, topic and scope of the publications being rapidly expanded.

Sir Hugh provides samples of the various genres covered by Hagegawa's publications as well as looking at other books generated in the wake of the foreign resident book boom. He utilizes his extensive knowledge and expertise of Japan to assemble and interpret these works. This is a mammoth undertaking and this book represents the product of years of research conducted by Sir Hugh. The result of this scholarship is that the book conjures forth a sense of the excitement Japan initially created in the West.

Sir Hugh writes, 'The aim of this volume is to present examples of Japanese illustrations on crepe and ordinary paper produced for the amusement and perhaps edification of the foreign community in the second half of the Meiji period (page 6).' He charts the origins and history of this type of publication and explores its various genres. Japanese paper of the period was easily torn, so the more robust crepe, which gave the printed pictures a highly textured feel, was used.



The amazing diversity and mixture of styles of Hasegawa's publications often makes these types of prints difficult to



categorize. Sir Hugh mainly groups the works by genre to give an impression of the variety the artists produced but he concedes that at times the border between one genre and another becomes blurred. He also includes a selection of early photos produced for foreigners, these started life as postcards before evolving into printed publications. Like the prints, these early photographs capture some of the exotic appeal that captivated early travellers to Japan and made the country an object of fascination in the West.

The great charm of this work is the stunning visual prints that are gathered together in this single volume. They shed a fascinating light on this vibrant period in Japanese history and collectively the pictures help recreate the energy, drive and colour of Meiji Japan.

Depending on personal taste, each reader will find their own favourite chapters. I particularly enjoyed Chapter 5 'Catalogue of a Japanese Exhibition,' Chapter 6 'Calendars,' and Chapter 7 'Books of Photographs.' On calendars Sir Hugh observes, 'Although calendars are not, strictly speaking, illustrated books, Hasegawa Takejiro's crepe paper calendars feature some of the most attractive prints ever produced by his team of artists, engravers and printers (page 57).' While on the Japanese Exhibition publication he notes, 'Now rare, the catalogue consists of 33 double-sided colour prints of famous scenic places and daily life in Japan. It is the equivalent of a travel brochure designed to attract foreign visitors and one of few crepe books to include images of contemporary Japan (page 51).'

Each Chapter contains a beautiful selection of prints and photographs which seem to capture the feel and essence of the era. Sir Hugh deserves to be commended for his tireless scholarship in gathering these rare works together, putting them in their historical context and for once more bringing them into the public domain.

Asia for the Asians: China in the Lives of Five Meiji Japanese by Paula S. Harrell

Columbia University, Merwin Asia, Portland, Maine, 2012

406 pages

ISBN: 978-1-97385-20-0

Review by Hugh Cortazzi

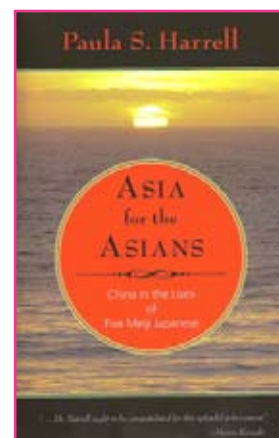
In this interesting study of five Japanese personalities of the Meiji era, who were closely involved with Chinese modernization, Dr Harrell shows that the relationship between Japan and China was not always confrontational and that there were many influential Japanese who worked in their differing ways for better understanding between Japanese and Chinese. Dr Harrell, who is a China-Japan scholar specializing in twentieth century and contemporary history, brings to this carefully researched book a new insight into some of the Japanese personalities who worked in China during, and subsequent to, the Meiji period.

Dr Harrell emphasises that the five personalities in her study as well as other Japanese, who spent years in China either as employees of the Chinese government or in other capacities, were not sent there by the Japanese authorities but went there by their own choice. Their choice reflected the extent of the debt Japanese culture owed to China and to the fact that Confucian philosophy was embedded in Japanese thought. But Japan's success in modernization often led to a somewhat patronising tone in their assessments which in turn inevitably rankled in Chinese minds.

The Japanese defeat of Czarist Russia in 1905 was seen by the Chinese as an Asian triumph.'

The first personality covered by Dr. Harrell is Prince Atsumaro Konoe [近衛 篤磨] who became the first president of the Dōbunkai (Common Culture Society – 同文会) in 1898 'to promote greater understanding of China in Japan.' Konoe was part of the Meiji Emperor's inner circle and head of the House of Peers. Both within Japan and on his visits to China he spoke with authority. He saw the need for political change in China on the lines of the changes made in Japan following the Meiji Restoration. Harrell notes (page 313) that 'He was convinced that a strong partnership between the two rising Asian nations was in their mutual interest at many levels, particularly as a counterweight to Western dominance in Asia. This was the message of Asia for the Asians. He liked to call the new policy an Asian Monroe Doctrine.' The Japanese defeat of Czarist Russia in 1905 was seen by the Chinese as an Asian triumph. 'Thousands of Chinese students flocked to Tokyo to learn the lessons of Japan's success.' But Asia could not be isolated from the rest of the world.

Unokichi Hattori [服部宇之吉], who is Dr Harrell's second



subject, 'had studied China his entire school career' and 'had a thorough knowledge of Chinese philosophy, history and traditional institutions.' His experiences in Peking during the Boxer rebellion had a profound effect on him. After study in Germany he returned to China to become head of the teacher training division at the newly established Peking (Beijing) University, but the terms of his contract were vague and he was often frustrated. He regretted that the Chinese 'failed to understand the real Japan.' Hattori noted that the Chinese were using an increasing number of Japanese terms and idioms both because of the significant presence of Japanese advisers and because 'hundreds of Chinese students educated in Japan were . . . taking posts in new government agencies.' He doubted, however, whether 'truly close relationships' at a personal level could be developed (page 119). Hattori and other Japanese employed by the Chinese authorities were sceptical whether China was able 'to govern itself.'

Misako Kawahara [河原操子] was the only woman among the five. Her main concern was women's education.

Naniwa Kawashima [川島浪速] was employed to advise on police reform. He lived in China for twenty five years and was a dedicated student of Chinese history and language. He was vehemently anti-Western and thought that war with the United States was inevitable. He favoured 'the secessionist aspirations of China's ethnic minorities' and pressed his views in no uncertain terms on the army general staff in Tokyo. In 1926 he told a Tokyo audience that after years of experience of the Chinese character he had 'come to the painful conclusion . . . that the Chinese people are beyond hope' because they were like 'loose sand [p.223].'

Dr Harrell's last subject is Nagao Ariga [有賀長雄], renowned as an international jurist who became constitutional adviser to Yuan Shikai [袁世凱]. Ariga argued strongly against group V in the 21 demands [二十一條] which Japan made on China in 1915. The Japanese leadership in the genro [extraconstitutional oligarchy that dominated the Japanese government] accepted the arguments and Takaaki Kato [加藤 高明], then Foreign Minister, had to resign. Ariga's importance lies more in his role in establishing the Japan Red Cross and in relation to the Hague Peace Conferences than in the China context, but Dr Harrell's portrait of him is well drawn.

It is impossible in a short review to do justice to these five portraits or to bring out adequately the salient points which Dr Harrell makes about the Japanese role in the modernisation of China. Students of Far Eastern History who study these five portraits will realize that attempts by Chinese, Japanese and Western scholars to summarize the background to Sino-Japanese antagonism often over simplify what was a complex and multi-layered relationship.

Blossoms and Shadows (Part 2)

by Lian Hearn

Quercus Publishing, 2011

Review by Susan Meehan

400 pages, £12.99

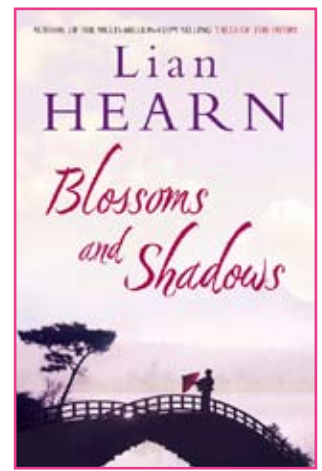
ISBN 978-0-85738-297-9

Review by Ali Muskett

Blossoms and Shadows by Lian Hearn (real name Gillian Rubinstein), is set in 19th century Japan, and is narrated by fictional character Tsuru. The daughter of a doctor, Tsuru is raised in a world of medicine where, due to cultural restraints of the time, she is allowed only a glimpse of the life she desires. Working alongside her father, Tsuru helps to mix medicines and stitch up wounds. She dreams of one day sewing up sword wounds on the battleground, but observes that no warrior would want to be 'stitched up by a girl.' At the end of the day, she knows she is just a woman, and can never be accepted as a doctor in this man's world. Women are expected to marry and have children, not develop an intense curiosity about the inner workings of the human body, and a longing to 'cut them open.' But life alongside her father has nurtured a dream in Tsuru's mind; a dream that some day women and men will work side by side.

Marriage to a doctor whom she loves ought to provide a way into the world Tsuru imagines, but only leads to more frustration. Tsuru's passion and persistence cause her life to take an unexpected turn, treading the fine line between sanity and madness, tradition and the rise of modern Japan. Playing a game of forbidden love and deception, Tsuru tastes the world of men, but it is not a world she can remain a part of. While slightly slow to start, it is this twist in Tsuru's tale that brings *Blossoms and Shadows* to its peak. Florence Nightingale is mentioned, and there is hope that Tsuru may take on the task of 'reforming the nurses,' but this comes to nothing and, after the excitement and intrigue of the middle of the book, the story simply peters out to a rather disappointing end.

The time immediately before the Meiji Restoration of 1868 was a turbulent time for Japan, featuring wars and political unrest. Setting a novel in this period is no mean feat, but Hearn clearly seems to have done her research. About half of the main characters in the book are fictional, the other half historical, but that doesn't make the story any less feasible. Reading *Blossoms and Shadows* is like zooming in on a thick, dusty history book and finding a story that one can actually relate to. The great figures, like Sakamoto Ryoma, are well known and much documented. But Hearn gives the story of the 'opening' of Japan a more personal touch by trying to focus the tale on one family. Although fictional, this human story of love and war is quite plausible.



Tsuru's story is interspersed with occasional chapters from the points of view of historical figures such as Shinsaku Takasugi (高杉 晋作— an activist and military reformer), Botoni Nomura (a loyalist poet and nun), Seiichiro Shiraishi (a wealthy merchant and supporter of Choshu activists) and Shoin Yoshida (吉田 松陰— a teacher and reformer), but the necessity of these chapters is questionable given the strength of the fictional characters' stories. In fact, closing the book with such chapters detracts from what could be a really touching piece of historical fiction.

Hearn admits herself that 'The idea of writing a novel set in this time seemed utterly beyond me' and when reading *Blossoms and Shadows* it's hard to imagine how she ever kept track of all the characters (as a reader, it's a challenge, but there is a handy list in the front of the book). It would be impossible to write a novel set in such a time and not allude to historical figures, but perhaps it wasn't necessary to include quite so many characters in this already ambitious novel. The reader could get bogged down with trying to remember who's who, and in the end not really enjoy the story itself. Tsuru's struggles, both personal and professional, are enough of a hook to make this a page turner, without adding the weighty confusion of all of those additional historical figures.

To the average reader, this novel may feel a bit too heavy, bursting at the seams with historical details, long names of Japanese people (including many name changes along the way), and unexplained Japanese vocabulary (a glossary might have been a good idea). However, for someone with an interest in Japanese culture, it ought to be quite pleasurable reading. *Blossoms and Shadows* is a slow-burner though, and requires some persistence, commitment and serious interest in Japan to make it to the end of this hefty tome.

It's worth adding that, if you approach *Blossoms and Shadows* expecting it to be similar to Lian Hearn's other books, you might find yourself more than a little bit disappointed. *Blossoms and Shadows* has a very different tone compared to that of Hearn's popular historical fantasy series, *Tales of the Otori*. However, Hearn's ability to transport the reader to a world where trees chirp with the sound of cicadas and geisha entertain behind the paper-thin walls of tea houses has not been lost. Her writing, at times slightly weaker than in previous novels, is engaging for the most part. *Blossoms and Shadows*, probably best described as literary historical fiction, tries to be a story of romance, war and revolution. This is a little too much for one novel, and Hearn might have considered splitting the story into another series, or perhaps scaling the story right down to focus much more on just the fictional characters.

Blossoms and Shadows is not a bad piece of fiction at all, but it sadly did not live up to Hearn's other novels.

The Meiji Restoration, Monarchism, Mass Communication and Conservative Revolution by Alistair D. Swale

Palgrave Macmillan, 4 Nov 2009)

216 pages, £52.00

ISBN-10: 0230593860

Review by Hugh Cortazzi

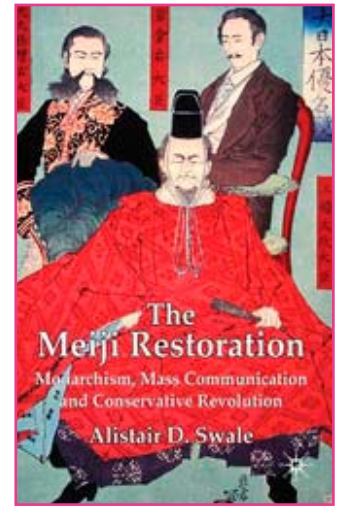
This book by Alistair Swale who is a senior lecturer

at the University of Wakato New Zealand is not for the general reader interested in learning about this important period in Japanese history. It seems to have been written for fellow historians already well versed in the history of the Meiji Restoration.

The first chapter deals with 'Japan within the World system: Urbanization, Political Stasis and Western Economic Expansion'. Swale then considers what he terms as 'The Meiji Coup d'État'. Subsequent chapters cover 'Mass Media and the Development of Civil Culture', 'The more thorough fulfilment of the Restoration' and the Imperial Household, the Popular Press and the Contestation of Public Space, The concluding chapter is entitled Conservatism, Traditionalism and Restoration.

Swale asserts that the Meiji Restoration was not so much an 'instantaneous event' but more 'a far-spanning movement that had profound roots in the social conditions and intellectual discourse of the late Edo period'. He asserts that 'the Imperial Household possessed what the Shogunate did not: the capacity for charismatic inspiration, a religious dimension that would enable incongruent forces and disparate elements to be recast into a new whole as if they had always been destined to be so conjoined.' He notes that the experiences of the West 'had a decidedly cautionary impact on many Japanese students'. He stresses that it was not inevitable that the 'political configuration' of the new Japan would be liberal or 'universalist'. It was 'perfectly possible to establish a quasi-oligarchical political structure along with an anti-individualist ethos within the compass of the national community.'

As the quotations cited above show this is a densely written book. It is not made easier by the author's tendency to use long sentences which have to be read more than once before their meaning is apparent. This sentence on page 10 is an example: 'Maintaining traditions "authentically" requires the retention of the matrix of their production more or less intact, something that is quite impossible when the culture of the village artisan and the relatively self-referencing folklore of the rural community gives way to mass migration of the populace to urban centers which form the focus of development in mass communication and the centralized coordination



of a standardized national educational system.' It is clear from the number of references cited that the author has researched his subject widely, but I was surprised by a number of omissions. For instance when writing about Fukuzawa Yukichi he does not refer to the study of Fukuzawa by the late Dr Carmen Blacker nor to the translation of Fukuzawa's autobiography by the late Professor Kiyooka. There is no indication that he is aware of the writings of Andrew Copping on Japanese students in Britain. Nor is there any mention when discussing the Emperor Meiji of Professor Donald Keene's monumental study of the Emperor.

Blossoms and Shadows (Part 3)

by Lian Hearn

Quercus Publishing, 2011

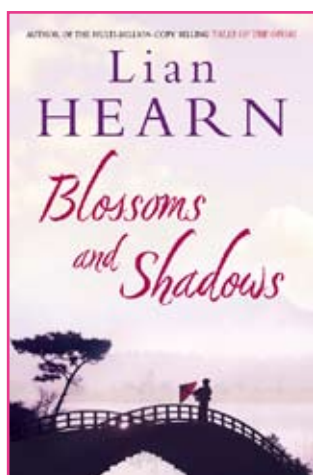
400 pages, £12.99

ISBN: 978-0-85738-297-9

Review by Michael Sullivan

By the start of the nineteenth century Japan had been in isolation for centuries, the arrival of American ships forced the opening up of the country to foreign trade, visitors, technology and ideas, with resultant chaos and change at a quick pace. Tsuru is the daughter of a doctor, her family's connections allow her to meet many of the young men of the time who, although they are inspired by foreigners and eager to learn their ways, at the same time wish to expel them from the country. Meanwhile, across Japan a deep flaw becomes apparent in the way that the country is governed as arms are taken up in revolt against the Shogun for seemingly allowing foreigners to do what they want, amid claims that the protesters are loyal to the relatively powerless Emperor. It is a situation that leads to great confusion amongst people at every level of society; foreigners are bad yet good, while rebellion to the government (the Shogun) is perceived as support of the government (the Emperor). In this turbulent time Tsuru sees at first hand the attempts of the young men of Japan to learn about this new, wider world, to learn new technologies of war and to change the government.

However, she isn't limited to just watching as she herself struggles to fit in within a rapidly changing society, although talented as a doctor she is not allowed to become one. Fortunately, as the daughter of a doctor and the wife of a doctor she does receive training, but it doesn't mean she can ever be accepted as a real doctor, or does it? As the struggle for power between rival factions, and between Japanese and foreigners, spirals into more and more violence, society itself is stretched to breaking



point and turned upside down. Men dress as women and women dress as men, and abandoned by her husband who goes to follow a war that she is forbidden from being involved in, Tsuru finds herself becoming an entirely different person. Surrounded on all sides by war, the deaths of loved ones, the abandonment by her husband and the discovery of a forbidden love, Tsuru has to come to terms with herself and with the birth of a new Japan.

Holme, Ringer & Company, The Rise and Fall of a British Enterprise in Japan 1868-1940 by Brian Burke- Gaffney

Global Oriental, 2012

236 pages, €90 / \$125

ISBN: 978-90-04-23017-0

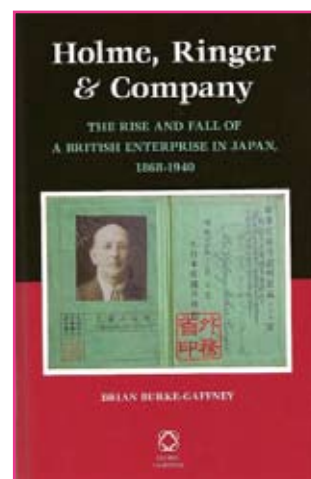
Review by Hugh Cortazzi

Ask anyone interested in relations between Britain and Japan what British merchant was most closely associated with Nagasaki the reply is likely to be that of Thomas B. Glover, described by his biographer as a Scottish samurai. But Glover & Co went bankrupt in 1870 and Glover moved to Tokyo, only returning to Nagasaki following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war. The dominant British firm in Nagasaki in the Meiji period was Holme, Ringer & Company which was controlled by Frederick Ringer (1838-1907). The firm remained in the hands of the Ringer family including sons-in-law until they were forced to leave or were arrested on the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941. Burke-Gaffney in this book tells the story of the Ringer family and their business interests in Nagasaki and Shimonoseki.

Frederick Ringer was born in Norwich where he died and was buried. He had firm views and imposed his own rules on the company. He insisted that 'all Japanese employees maintain their integrity by wearing only Japanese clothing and footwear and, similarly that foreigners refrain from unsightly forays into Japanese culture and society.' He frowned on interracial marriage. One partner working with the Ringer subsidiary in Shimonoseki, Neil B. Reid, had to hide his liaison with a geisha and only had limited contacts with his natural son. The latter took the name Fujiwara Yoshie and went on to found the Fujiwara opera company.

The Ringer family residence known as *niban* [Number two] at Minamiyamate in Nagasaki is preserved in Nagasaki's Glover Garden and has been designated an 'Important Cultural Asset.'

Ringer's business interests covered a wide range



from shipping, the tea trade, flour mills to kerosene tanks. These latter were for Samuel, Samuel & Co. from whose Japan trade The Rising Sun Oil Company developed into Shell Oil Company.

Frederick Ringer had a particular attachment to the Nagasaki Hotel whose company he founded and which opened its doors in September 1898 only a few months after the opening of the Royal Hotel in Norwich to which Frederick Ringer returned before he died. The Nagasaki Hotel was designed by the British architect Josiah Conder who has been described as the father of Japanese architecture. It had fifty-six rooms 'furnished with large brass beds and teak furniture . . . [and] private telephones' but it charged four yen a night 'or the average cost of a month's room in a Japanese inn.' It opened at a time when the port of Nagasaki was still booming, but Nagasaki's importance soon declined sharply and the Nagasaki hotel became an ever increasing drain on Ringer's resources. Eventually in February 1908 the hotel and its contents including a stock of fine wines were sold. They had a problem when it came to disposing of the expensive tableware which was marked NH. Fortunately the Nara Hotel which opened in the same year came forward as a buyer.

'As Belgian consul in 1895 Frederick Ringer found himself involved as judge in a murder case.'

Burke Gaffney relates how Holme, Ringer & Company came to open a branch in Shimonoseki. This arose from the company's interests in shipping and fishing including whaling. The company's subsidiary 'Woriu Shokwai' came to represent British interests in the straits between Shimonoseki and Moji in Kyushu.

Burke-Gaffney has some amusing stories about the jealousies between consuls and merchants who for their part were only too glad to become honorary consuls for countries such as Belgium and Denmark which could not afford to appoint career consuls.¹ As Belgian consul in 1895 Frederick Ringer found himself involved as judge in a murder case.² Fortunately for Ringer there was evidence that the woman who was alleged to have been murdered had in fact committed suicide.

Frederick Ringer envisaged that his family would continue and develop his business in much the same way as other family businesses in Japan went on from generation to generation. But Nagasaki's importance in shipping and trade declined. It became instead one of Japan's main ship-building centres and Shimonoseki could not be a substitute for the firm. Moreover the environment for foreign firms deteriorated rapidly in the 1930s as the military came to dominate Japanese life.

In 1940 the Ringers were accused on the flimsiest of grounds of spying and members of the Ringer family were arrested. Vanya Ringer was tried, fined and given a suspended prison sentence.³ The firm was forced to close.

Vanya Ringer was killed in action during the war. Michael Ringer was captured in Sumatra and suffered as a Japanese prisoner of war. After the war was over and he had become a British Indian Army Major he was summoned to give evidence at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) in December 1946 about Japanese treatment of prisoners of war.

Surviving members of the Ringer family were regular visitors to Japan after the war. They had to make numerous representations to gain compensation for their properties in Japan which had been confiscated and vandalized. Holme, Ringer & Company continued to maintain a small office in Shimonoseki/Moji for many years after the war. The last manager and British consular agent was Perry. S. Mihara.

This book supplements the picture of life for expatriates in Nagasaki given in Burke Gaffney's *Nagasaki: The British Experience, 1854-1945*, Global Oriental, 2009 [see the review in JSR issue 23]. For anyone with an interest in the history of the British community in Japan in the Meiji period this book makes fascinating reading.

NOTES:

¹ Britain maintained a consulate at Nagasaki until the outbreak of war and a post in Shimonoseki for some twenty years at the beginning of the twentieth century.

² Under the 'unequal treaties' dating from 1858 jurisdiction over nationals of the treaty powers was vested in the consular representatives of the treaty power.

³ I included brief references to these incidents in volume VIII of *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits* just published. See chapter 39 on 'The Death of James Melville Cox . . . and Arrests of British Citizens in Japan in 1940 and 1941'. Burke Gaffney gives a fuller account. Venice International Film Festival in September 2011.