



Editor: Sean Curtin

Managing Editor: John Toppon

Our bimonthly eclectic mix of stimulating Japan-related book, film and stage reviews kicks off with Sir Hugh Cortazzi's look at the centennial book of the Tokyo-based Japan-British Society. This Society was established in October 1908, having grown out of the Tokyo branch of our own Society. The work charts the first 100 years of its accomplishments, which include attracting several Japanese Prime Ministers to its events. The fact that there have been considerably more Japanese PMs than British ones, no doubt has given the Society an advantage over its British parent. Susan Meehan looks at the mesmerising 2009 Oscar winner *Okuribito* (Departures), while Fumiko Halloran explores the insightful and best-selling Japanese language book "Saraba Zaimusho!" (Farewell, Ministry of Finance!) which gives an insider's view on the secretive world of Japan's tight-lipped bureaucrats. We then explore the much talked about Japan-influenced production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Southwark Playhouse. William Farr offers his sobering assessment of "The Book of Sake" while Helen McCarthy examines the superbly colourful "Japanese Quilt Blocks" publication. We also analyze the merits of the Meiji Restoration from a modern day Tokugawa spin doctor perspective in "The Edo Inheritance." This issue also introduces a new semi-regular feature called East Asian Corner where we look at significant recent books on the East Asian region related to Japan. Our first offering in this category is Peter Lowe's "Contending with Nationalism and Communism: British Policy towards Southeast Asia, 1945-65."

Contents

- (1) The Japan-British Society Centenary Book
- (2) *Okuribito* (Departures)
- (3) *Saraba Zaimusho!* (Farewell, Ministry of Finance!)
- (4) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- (5) *The Edo Inheritance*
- (6) *The Book of Sake: A Connoisseur's Guide*
- (7) *Japanese Quilt Blocks to Mix and Match*
- (8) *Contending With Nationalism and Communism*

New reviews

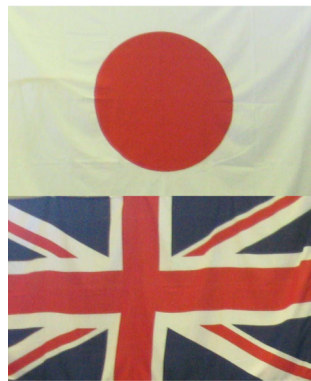
www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews.html

Archive

http://www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews_archive.html

We are grateful to our regular reviewers:

Sir Hugh Cortazzi	Anna Davis
Fumiko Halloran	Susan Meehan
Takahiro Miyao	William Farr
Ben-Ami Shillony	Tomohiko Taniguchi
Mikihiko Maeda	Simon Cotterill
Ian Nish	



The Japan-British Society Centenary Book

The Japan British Society, Tokyo, 2009, hardback.

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

The Japan-British Society celebrated its centenary in 2008. It was established as "The British Society" at an inaugural meeting on 20

October 1908. Its first annual dinner was held at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo on 27 November 1908. A branch of the Japan Society in London had been set up in Tokyo in 1902 and the British Society in Japan developed from this branch. The name of

the Society was changed to "The Japan-British Society" in April 1923. Its last meeting before the outbreak of war was a lunch held at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo on 28 March 1940. The Society was revived at a general meeting on 25 October 1951. Since then it has maintained and expanded a wide range of activities which like the work of the Japan Society in London have contributed to Anglo-Japanese understanding and friendship.

This centenary volume is the result of much painstaking research and is a valuable record of the activities of the Society over the last 100 years. It begins with forewords from the honorary patron HIH Prince Tomohito, from David Warren, the British Ambassador and current president of the Society, and from Sadayuki Hayashi, the chairman

of the council of the Society and former Japanese Ambassador to Britain.

The first part deals with the activities of the Society in the years up to the outbreak of the Second World War. As the pre-war records of the Society were destroyed during the war this is largely based on newspaper reports and is thus not as full as the subsequent parts covering the post-war era. The second dinner of the Society was held on 14 November 1909. Whereas the menu for the first dinner had consisted of French cuisine, the menu on this occasion was Japanese. The dinner was held in three large Japanese tatami rooms with various Japanese objets d'art on display including a painting by Kano Tanyū in the toko no ma. The guest of honour on this occasion was Field Marshal Lord Kitchener.

In 1911 the Society was reported to have had 213 members. Its objective was described as being "the encouragement of the study of British affairs and the furtherance of Anglo-Japanese friendship" (目的—英国の事物に関する研究を奨励し且つ日英兩國の交誼を増進せしむるにあり.) The Society's first honorary patron was Prince Fushimi; its second was Prince Yamashina.

It is interesting to note that a speaker at a meeting of the Society on 9 October 1911 was the Fabian socialist Sydney Webb who was visiting Japan with his wife Beatrice. Colin Holmes gave an account of the Webbs' visits to Japan in Britain and Japan 1859-1911 Themes and Personalities, (Routledge 1991).

The visit of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) to Japan in 1922 attracted much publicity and he was given a warm welcome by the Prince Regent (later the Showa Emperor) and by Japanese crowds. Somewhat oddly this volume records the visit by quoting comments on it by the French Ambassador Paul Claudel. There are accounts of the visit in The Prince of Wales Eastern Book published by Hodder and Stoughton for St Dunstan's in 1922 and in With the Prince in the East by Sir Herbert Russell, published by Methuen also in 1922. The former includes many photographs of the visit, but neither account mentions a Japan British Society occasion, although no doubt members of the Society attended many of the functions which marked the prince's visit.

A noteworthy pre-war development was the establishment of a Shakespeare medal. This was awarded every year from 1929-1938 and revived after the war. The last Shakespeare medal was awarded in 1982 to NHK, the Japanese public broadcasting organization, for broadcasting the series of productions of Shakespeare plays made for the BBC.

Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of this book

should contact the Japan British Society in Tokyo: <http://www.japanbritishsociety.or.jp>). The Japan Society library has several copies which may be borrowed by members.



Okuribito (おくりびと) directed by Yōjirō Takita

2008, 131 minutes

Review by Susan Meehan

Okuribito (Departures), winner of the 2009 Oscar for "Best Foreign Language Film," upsetting the much talked about *Waltz With Bashir*, opens with a mesmerising winter scene in the photogenic Shōnai area of Yamagata Prefecture and doesn't fail to continue impressing, amusing and tugging at the heart strings.

His career as a cellist in tatters, halted when the orchestra he plays with is rudely dissolved, Daigo Kobayashi, played by heart throb Masahiro Motoki - who erupted onto the scene in the 1980s with the all boy band "Shibugaki Tai," then going on to star in several films, including "Sumo Do Sumo Don't" - returns to his native Sakata from Tokyo. With hardly a penny to his name, the idea is to live rent-free in his deceased mother's home.

Eager to find work, in order to support his steadfast wife, Mika, Daigo applies for a job at NK Agency "assisting departures." He is invited to an interview and in the humorous scene which ensues, is given the job on the spot. Having imagined NK Agency to be a tourist agency, Daigo is perturbed to find that he will, in fact, be assisting those "departed" from this world. Receiving a wad of money from his lugubrious new employer and with no other job prospects in sight, Daigo becomes an unwitting and unlikely "mortician." He has never been near a dead body - his grandparents died when he was very little, his mother died when he was abroad and his father has not been seen since leaving home when Daigo was six - so how will he fare with cleaning cadavers and making them look beautiful?

Daigo regards his newfound work as a trial or perhaps a punishment for having left his mother. He takes his job seriously, soon finding it fulfilling and becomes extremely fond of his quirky colleagues. (I found it improbable, but not a real problem, that Daigo's occupation is, on the whole, portrayed as



a 9-5 job despite the fact that death doesn't abide by this routine.)

Daigo tries to keep the exact nature of his job secret from his wife – she knows he works in “ceremonies” and imagines this to mean weddings. When Mika, played by Ryoko Hirose, finally discovers the true nature of Daigo’s job, she becomes disgusted and finds him filthy. A childhood friend also deserts him, regarding him as “polluted.” Daigo, the consummate professional, resolutely carries on with his job, ultimately earning his detractors’ and audience’s respect and admiration.

The film, hilarious and sad in turns does a lot to dispel the taboo of death and rehabilitate those who have jobs which involve dealing with the dead. My only complaint is that some of the scenes drag. Other than this it is a fine and enjoyable film despite the subject matter. I pondered how such a film would be made in a multicultural country. Set in the UK there would be scope to focus on all sorts of eccentricities: eco-friendly coffins; references to Mr Ghai, the devout Hindu hoping to overturn a Newcastle Council decision preventing funeral pyres; humanist ceremonies and unusual funeral songs for starters.

Motoki plays the role of his life in this film, showing tremendous versatility and sensitivity, and is well deserving of the accolades it has brought him. The director of NK Agency and Daigo’s boss, Shōei Sasaki, played by Tsutomu Yamazaki, is also outstanding.

The film won Best Film, Best Director (Yojiro Takita), Best Screenplay (Kundo Koyama), Best Actor (Masahiro Motoki), Best Supporting Actor (Tsutomu Yamazaki), Best Supporting Actress (Kimiko Yo), Best Cinematography, Best Film Editing, Best Sound Mixing, Best Lighting at this year’s 32nd Japan Academy Prize.

高橋洋一
官僚すべてを
敵にした男の告白

さらば 財務省！



Yoichi Takahashi,
“Saraba Zaimusho!”
さらば財務省
(Farewell, Ministry of
Finance!)

Kodansha, March 2008
(11th printing in August
2008), 282 pages.
Paperback ¥ 1700

ISBN-13: 9784492211793

Review by Fumiko Halloran

Yoichi Takahashi, a former career official at the Ministry of Finance (formerly the Okura-sho [大蔵省] before it changed its Japanese name to Zaimu-sho [財務省] – although the English translation remains the same) has written an explosive book criticizing his own ministry. His forthright critique propelled the book into a national best seller.

As implied in the subtitle, “Kanryo Subete O Teki Ni Shita Otoko No Kokuhaku” (官僚すべてを敵にした男の告白), which translates Confessions of a Man Whom All Bureaucrats Hated as Their Enemy, he was someone the Ministry hated because he kept pointing out the flaws in its policy. His proposals to reform the bureaucracy upset those who wielded power over politicians and interest groups.

The Ministry could not ignore him, however, because of his expertise in collecting and analyzing numbers which often pinpointed an unpleasant reality in the Ministry’s fiscal management. The Ministry could not fire him because they could not find an instance where it could claim he violated the civil service code. Ministry officials used every tactic possible to force him to resign, from demotion to leaking damaging information to the press and even refusing to associate with him. But Takahashi refused to capitulate and succeeded in launching bureaucratic reforms while serving Prime Minister Jun’ichiro Koizumi, Minister for Economic and Fiscal Policy Heizo Takenaka, and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe after Koizumi left office. He finally resigned in 2007 after Prime Minister Abe resigned and is currently a professor at Toyo University.

A graduate of Tokyo University with a major in mathematics, Takahashi joined the Ministry at the age of 25 in 1980. He says he was not particularly interested in government, preferring an academic career, and was pursuing a second degree in economics at the University. The Ministry, however, actively recruited him.

Takahashi admits that, from the start, he was an outsider as the Ministry was dominated not only by graduates of Tokyo University but by its Faculty of Law. He asserts that when he joined, only three mathematics majors had joined the Ministry

in the post-war period. That was a major flaw, according to him, because those who studied law were not necessarily familiar with the latest financial and fiscal theories and were not capable of mathematical analysis.

Early in his career, he was once praised as a saviour of the Ministry. Takahashi proposed to install an assessment of risk in fiscal investment policy, which was handled by the rizai (finance) bureau. The bureau took postal savings deposits and social security premiums and lent them to government financial institutions and special public corporations. During high economic growth, this was useful to improve infrastructure but over the years the waste in many public corporations was criticized. Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in 1997 ordered an overview of the system.

When Takahashi was assigned to the finance bureau, he discovered that there was little risk management in the system. While the bureau acted like a large national bank, there was little consideration given to the ever-present risks due to fluctuations in interest rates and the time lag between deposit and lending. Total deposits at the time were 400 trillion yen; even a slight change in interest rate could thus mean a huge loss.

His report was ignored but on his own, he formulated a plan for Asset Liability Management (ALM) that had been developed in the US in the 1990s. He wrote a book with co-authors entitled "ALM" (Ginko Kenshu-sha -銀行研修社), 1996. When a new director general of the finance bureau read Takahashi's paper outlining the disaster approaching in the ministry's own bankruptcy, he was called back on to install ALM, which he did in a short time.

In 1982, Takahashi befriended Dr. Heizo Takenaka who was his superior at the Ministry's Zaisei Kinyu Kenkyusho -財政金融研究所 (Institute for Capital Investment Studies). Takenaka had been seconded from the Development Bank of Japan. He was 31 years old, a graduate of Hitotsubashi University, another outsider. Takahashi was 27, and they organized various study groups and co-authored papers and articles for economic and business newspapers and magazines.

In 1998, Takahashi went for three years to Princeton University where he befriended Prof. Ben Bernanke, later to be the head of the Federal Reserve System. On his return to Japan, Takahashi got a call from Takenaka who had become the minister for economic and fiscal policy in the Koizumi cabinet. In secret meetings, they began to discuss specific ideas about government reform. Takahashi's role was at first hidden from his superiors and colleagues because he was suspected of being

someone who would propose ideas that would diminish their power. They also feared losing a comfortable retirement in cushy positions in special public corporations and government financial institutions, a practice called "amakudari" (天下り - descending from heaven).

Takahashi's vision of the future of government was clear; he advocated smaller government with an efficient bureaucracy and would transfer many government functions to the private sector. By reducing the government programs and increasing efficiency, tax spending and waste would be reduced. That, in turn would stimulate the economy. His argument was not ideological but was based on simulations of scenarios. He asserted that without reforming big government and cutting spending, Japan's economy could not be sustained. Prime Minister Koizumi began in 2001 to push for reform of the postal system, which included banking and insurance businesses.

However, specific plans to privatize the postal system were not clear cut at the beginning, and it took three years to overcome opposition from supporters of the existing postal system, to build consensus on plans for privatization, and to reprogramme the postal system's software.

Four corporations took over mail, revenue stamp, banking, and insurance, and an umbrella corporation supervises the entire operation. While the format on the surface had not changed that much, postal corporations have to compete with commercial banks and insurance companies to retain customers. Complete privatization including joining the stock market would be finalized by 2011. Takahashi recalls fierce criticism and counterattacks from politicians who were supported by the postal service interest groups.

Takahashi's talent was well known among senior LDP leaders. Each time Prime Minister Koizumi or Prime Minister Abe tapped Takahashi to lead a task force, he willingly accepted as he believed he was essentially a government official serving each cabinet's policy. However, this cost his promotions within the Ministry of Finance where he was branded as a trouble maker who would upset the status quo and would not obey orders.

When you read this kind of book, it is easy to be swayed by the image of a knight on a white horse demolishing a giant enemy called government. Indeed, this book generated much interest among people who had little knowledge about the fierce power struggles within and among the ministries considered to be filled with the best and the brightest. Takahashi takes credit where it is due, showing little humility. I can imagine he must have been like a yapping dog or a Siren

warning of dire consequences and disrupting the Ministry's comfort zone. I cannot help but feel, however, that the senior leaders in the MOF could have used Takahashi's talent wisely. Too bad their 'bureaucratic training to smooth over differences' pushed Takahashi out. He has come out with this book that does not paint a pretty picture of the elite class.

Takahashi's book disclosed a lack of accountability for wasted tax revenues, the inability of senior bureaucrats to remedy troubles, and the unwarranted elitism of government officials, particularly in the Ministry of Finance. They banded together to protect their power and disregarded the national interest, according to him. He warns that soon the government will not be able to attract bright and dedicated talent, pointing out that between 2002 and 2006, some 300 career officials from all ministries left the government.

A Midsummer Night's Dream directed by Jonathan Man

Performed at the Southwark Playhouse, 19th
February 2009

Review by Susan Meehan



The Japan Society's Contemporary Lifestyle Committee organised a special theatre evening on 19 February, for Society members to watch *A Midsummer Night's Dream* followed by a Question and Answer session with the actors, director and technical crew - all inclusive at a bargain rate.

Noticeable on entering the intimate theatre was the *Kabuki*-inspired walkway, reminiscent of the *hana-michi*; the *Noh*-inspired pine tree or *kagami-ita* painted on the back of the stage and the actors clad in simple kimono. The Japanese influence on this production was no surprise given that the British Chinese director, Jonathan Man - of the Yellow Earth Theatre - lived in Japan for a number of years.

He transported the action of the play to feudal Japan, placing it in Kaga, the old name for Ishikawa Prefecture, where Man has lived. This relocation to *samurai* Japan with rigid hierarchical strictures was entirely plausible given the prominence of the court and ancient laws in this play, apparent right from the start as the play begins with Egeus, Hermia's father, ready to invoke an ancient law and

see her killed if she refuses to marry Demetrius, his choice of suitor, in favour of Lysander, whom she professes to love.

A Midsummer Night's Dream pits the fantastical and magical world of the forest fairies against the world of the Duke and Duchess. Man goes one step further by clearly demarcating the world of the mechanicals, or labourers, by expertly drawing on the Japanese theatre traditions of *Noh*, *Kabuki* and *Kyogen*.

Noh, a classical form of stylised and slow Japanese theatre which has been performed since the 14th century was used to define the court; while the less formal, less solemn and more dynamic *kabuki*, was reserved for the fairies. *Kyogen*, a more slapstick and comical type of theatre, was used by the mechanicals.

Man additionally used language as a demarcator. The fairy world, dominated by Oberon and Titania, largely spoke Japanese as opposed to the nobles and the mechanicals who spoke English peppered with the odd Japanese word.

The insertion of Japanese was great fun for anyone with a smattering of the language. I picked out the use of *dame*, *honto ni*, *utsukushii*, *anata* and *demo* amongst other expressions. When Helena and Hermia squabble in the forest, I was amused by Helena being called *gobo* (burdock root) and Hermia being called *issun boshi*, the fabled Japanese dwarf, and stored up these words for future use! I also enjoyed hearing Mustard Seed called Wasabi in Japanese. It all made such sense.

The actors were very good and energetic and must be commended for having handled multiple roles, multiple theatre styles and the use of English and Japanese so effortlessly.

Lysander, the versatile Matt McCooey, who also played Bottom with characteristic self-importance and bombast stood out, as did You-Ri Yamanaka, playing a very coquettish Titania and regal Hippolyta. The greatest laughs were reserved for Puck, Jay Oliver Yip, who stole the show with his impish antics and ninja-style flights across the stage.

Though Kenji Watanabe's (Theseus/Oberon) English was noticeably less fluent than that of the rest of the cast, his bursts of Japanese, ironically, did not seem to bother the audience in the least. Memorable was his angry outburst in Japanese having lost his temper with Puck's ineptness.

All in all, it was a thoroughly entertaining performance with good casting. Trying to gauge the reactions of non-Japan Society members in the audience, I spoke to an older woman during the intermission who told me it was the best

production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* she had ever seen; no exaggeration. Having no connection or familiarity with Japan, she wasn't disconcerted by the mixture of languages and said she'd loved the energy and movement of the production.

Sitting next to some students from the local John Ruskin School, on an evening out with their drama class, I gleaned an insight into their enjoyment of the play. They enthused about Lysander, laughed at Bottom and Titania's flirting, found Nina Kwok's lion very cute and were intrigued by the versatility of the fan as a prop to symbolise cups and the mechanicals' scripts and the love-juice and doubled over with laughter each time Puck darted around the stage. Their interaction gave the play a life of which Shakespeare, or indeed the Globe Theatre, would have been more than happy.

In the Q+A session following the play, we heard that 2000 local school children had been to see it, unfazed by the use of Japanese. As Jonathan Man explained, they wouldn't have understood all the English either, so not understanding every word of the play was simply not an issue. We also heard that the actors had only three weeks in which to prepare for the production – an incredible feat given that they had to learn Japanese words in addition to different Japanese theatrical styles. Asked about specific instances in which Japanese styles were used in the play, the actors said they drew on Japanese-style “eye-movement and expression” and Nina Kwok said her lion sketch was entirely inspired by Japanese *kyogen*.

Speaking with Man after the play, we heard that his next project with the Yellow Earth Theatre is a production of *Medea*. We wish him all the best with his next venture.

The Edo Inheritance **by Tokugawa Tsunenari, translated by** **Tokugawa Iehiro**

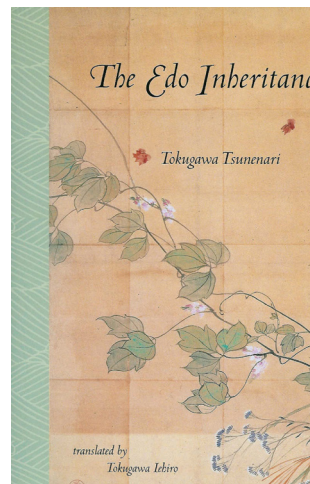
International House of Japan, Tokyo, 2009, 200 pages.
Hardcover, ¥2,500

ISBN: 978-4-903452-14-2

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Tokugawa Tsunenari is the eighteenth head of the main Tokugawa family (*honke*). He used to be an executive at the leading Japanese shipping company NYK. In 2003 he established the Tokugawa Memorial Foundation in Tokyo. He gave a lecture in London in the spring of 2009.

Tokugawa Tsunenari has tried in this book to present the Tokugawa Shogunate's achievements. This is understandable in view of his position as head of the family, but his book cannot be read as an objective



history of this fascinating period in Japanese history. His book sadly contains almost nothing about the vibrant merchant civilization of Tokugawa which is surely one of the most important elements in 'The Edo Inheritance.' There is nothing in this book to explain the colourful and fascinating culture which developed despite the stultifying and often cruel

bureaucracy which was a feature of the Tokugawa Shogunate. The index contains no reference to any of the great literary and artist figures of the era such as Basho, Saikaku, Kenzan, Korin, Harunobu and Hokusai to name only a few of the leading artists and writers who contributed so much more than the Tokugawa shoguns to the greatness of Japanese civilization.

The writer is right to emphasise that the Meiji Restoration was not the complete break with the past which some Japanese and foreigners have suggested that it was. He is also correct in drawing attention to positive features such as education in Tokugawa Japan. But his attempts to compare Tokugawa Japan with Europe, drawing special attention to the barbaric treatment of witches and the unsanitary behaviour of European courts, suggests that his study of European history has been at best superficial. His treatment of the third Tokugawa Shogun Iemitsu and of the fifth Shogun Tsunayoshi paints too rosy a picture of both men.

In his chapter on “The Natural and Spiritual Foundation of Japanese Culture” he asserts that “Japan is the only industrial nation in the world that has a civilization with a tradition of choosing to coexist with nature.” Perhaps, but Japanese governments over the last half-century have done much to destroy Japan's natural heritage with concrete excrescences and roads to nowhere.

The Book of Sake: **A Connoisseur's Guide** **by Philip Harper**

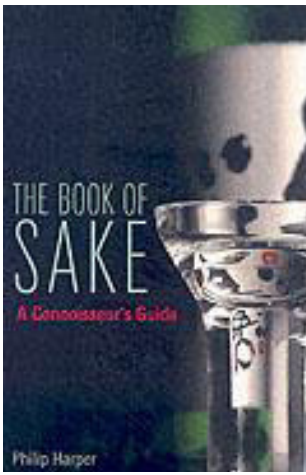
Kodansha, 2006, 96 pages including glossary,
photographs.

Hardcover, £16.99

ISBN: 9784770029980

Review by William Farr

The growth of sake drinking in the West has gone hand in hand with the growth of books on the subject, as well as the consumption of Japanese



food and drink. In the last ten years in particular, and especially within the United States, specialist shops and writers have emerged. The United Kingdom though is lucky enough to have the only non-Japanese Master Brewer in the form of Philip Harper. In "The Book of Sake" Harper, accompanied by tasting guidance from the esteemed sake critic Haruo Matsuzaki, puts his

knowledge into a well-written tour of the world of sake for the connoisseur. Additionally, having been fortunate enough to meet Harper as recently as October 2008 at a British Sake Association function, his wit, enthusiasm, and energy for sake is clearly apparent in writing as well as in person. This writer has the utmost respect for all those in the sake industry who toil through the long cold winter months, the months when the bacteria needed to brew sake can be best controlled. Philip Harper not only toiled through many cold winter months over many years but also learnt the complete art of sake brewing from the hardest and most physically demanding jobs upwards, and so must be applauded all the more for entering the sake world the hard way. Not only that but the sake industry is a traditional element of Japanese society and so to break into that world, gain acceptance, and reach the highest standard as a master brewer makes Philip Harper's views on sake all the more poignant.

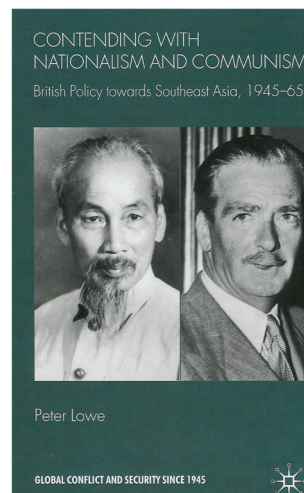
Early chapters in this book – unlike others in the genre - do not swamp the reader with scientific facts and figures on how sake is made. Rather we are drawn into the sake world gradually using a bottom-up approach that focuses on the versatility of sake. Whether sake is chilled and drunk alone, served with food, heated, or imbibed with fugu-fin (hire-sake) the diversity of methods available for the enjoyment of sake is on show. Delicate photography such as the wonderful picture on page 25 show the grades of colour that sake can possess from clear varieties through to rustic copper coloured versions.

It is particularly heartwarming to read that at Philip Harper's brewery they are unapologetic as they drink sake by pouring a bottle into a kettle and then proceeding to warm the kettle on a stove. This image may sound very abrupt and basic, but this clear simplicity of personal yet enriched design stands as a hallmark of Mr. Harper's philosophy of sake. We are positively encouraged to explore, increasing our understanding of subtle sake flavours in isolation or in relation to food.

At various points in the book, green indented boxes reveal a little more of the language of sake from nihonshudo (sake metre value) to umami (hearty deliciousness) and so we are gradually educated in the ways of the sake world. Regional variations are discussed in chapter three, as is the master brewers system of which Mr. Harper is part. The science of sake brewing is left to the end of the book. What is excellent is that the reader can take from the book snippets of information at leisure, and so gradually build up a view of sake.

A good glossary, with sake specifications of top brands, and then a wonderfully indented Brewer's Notebook on the inside back page made me wish for a pocket version of the book, along the lines of popular Japan Travel Bureau "Japan in Your Pocket" series. The book is well illustrated and all photographs are accompanied by good explanations. Any sake lover, or any British sake lover should ideally have this guide on their bookshelf.

Unabashed, clear, always seeking to make the reader think about sake and in particular why you like it in the way you do, this is a refreshing addition to the canon of Western writing on sake. The overwhelming impression from the book is that however you drink sake, you will not be judged, as long as you enjoy it. Super Kanpai.



Contending With Nationalism and Communism: British policy towards Southeast Asia, 1945-65 (Global Conflict and Security Since 1945) by Peter Lowe

Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 312 pages including notes, bibliography and index. Hardcover, £55.00

ISBN-13: 978-0230524873

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Peter Lowe presents in this study a clear account of the complex and often inter-related problems in Southeast Asia which faced British ministers and officials in the first twenty years after the end of the Second World War. It is based on meticulous research in the National Archives. Memoranda, minutes, official despatches and telegrams from British missions in the various capitals are quoted in ways which bring out the difficulties faced by the British government in an area of the world which was no longer central to British world interests but which could not be neglected, if only because of

residual imperial responsibilities and the wider international ramifications of the issues involved. Not the least of these were the implications for Anglo-American relations which is a theme running throughout this book.

Lowe concludes (page 247) that "Overall British politicians revealed a certain arrogance in their diplomacy with their counterparts in Southeast Asia; at the same time they understood the processes at work and British policy demonstrated flexibility and a willingness to compromise." He notes that "Communism was identified as the principal threat in 1948. The menace was exaggerated in the later 1940s and early 1950s...The communist threat was real but not as comprehensive as feared." Britain was forced to recognize that independence for Malaysia and Singapore was the price they had to pay to defeat the communist threat. "British ministers and officials employed a blend of pragmatism and judicious concession in negotiating with nationalist leaders; they knew that time was not on the side of colonial empires." There were reactionary British officials especially in Burma in the early post-war years, but French and Dutch ministers and officials were more wedded to colonial rule than the British. Such colonialist attitudes complicated and delayed solutions in Indo-China and Indonesia.

Peter Lowe's study does not deal directly with Japanese involvement with the problems of Southeast Asia in the years covered by this study, but the unrest and destruction throughout the area were, of course, the result of the war and Japanese occupation. The Japanese were also responsible for inflaming nationalism in the Asian countries which they occupied, although as Lowe points out (page 12) "The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, as implemented by Japan between 1942 and 1945, represented the imposition of Japanese imperialism rather than liberation: most Japanese were interested primarily in exploitation of Southeast Asia for economic and military purposes." In Indo-China after the Japanese surrender "the British suspected that the Japanese were assisting Vietnamese revolutionaries" (page 31). Japanese forces in Indonesia were also a problem for British and Indian forces which moved into Java in September 1945. Esler Dening, who was sent to Java in October 1945, and who had served for many years in Japan before the war (he later became the first post-war British Ambassador to Japan) (page 35) "was alarmed at the role played by the Japanese: 'I have come to the conclusion that the Japanese have left underground organizations throughout South-East Asia, and in view of their known methods ...they are likely to be very hard to detect'". "Between 1945 and 1948 British ministers and officials wrestled as best they could with the legacy of Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia" (page 41).

Against this background and with memories of Japanese atrocities still fresh in ministers' minds it was not surprising that the British were reluctant to see Japanese adherence to the Colombo plan (designed to assist recovery in the area) when the issue was discussed in 1951/2 (page 76). The Japanese were in due course admitted and a Foreign Office planning paper produced in 1959 declared (page 79) that "The West should work with Japan for three reasons: to discourage cooperation with communist states; to build Japan as a counterweight to China and to utilise Japan's valuable experience as 'the only fully industrialised Asian power.'" Japanese membership of SEATO was never a possibility. The British regarded Japan as "disruptive" (page 92); in any case Japan would have been precluded by the post-war constitution from joining such a defence pact.

Lowe in his chapter on "Britain, Indonesia and the Creation of Malaysia" refers to the Japanese role in attempts to end "confrontation," but does not comment on this in much detail. Perhaps we in the British Embassy in Tokyo put too much stress on what we saw as Japanese meddling and on the undisguised pro-Sukarno attitude of many Japanese officials particularly Oda Takio, the vice-minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who had been Japanese Ambassador in Djakarta. In this context readers should look at pages 196/7 of my portrait of Sir Francis Rundall, the British Ambassador at that time, in *British Envoys in Japan 1859-1972*, published by global Oriental in 2004 and "Marked for Peter Lowe"

Peter Lowe's carefully researched study should be read by anyone interested in the end of empire in Southeast Asia and the various conflicts and tragedies which disturbed the peace in the area in the first twenty years after the Second World War.

