



Editor: Sean Curtin

Managing Editor: Clare Barclay

In this colourful spring issue our main theme is photographic books about Japan and we review an excellent selection of new books on the topic. We can only present a very limited number of photographs from these books in the following pages, but if you visit our website you will find a host visual gems. As usual, we also have some great reviews of new historical works plus exciting general interest books. The featured Japanese courtyard gardens book also boasts an array of impressive on-line photographs. Finally, don't forget that our printed edition only represents a fraction of our new reviews, all of which can be found on the website along with movie and stage reviews.

Sean Curtin

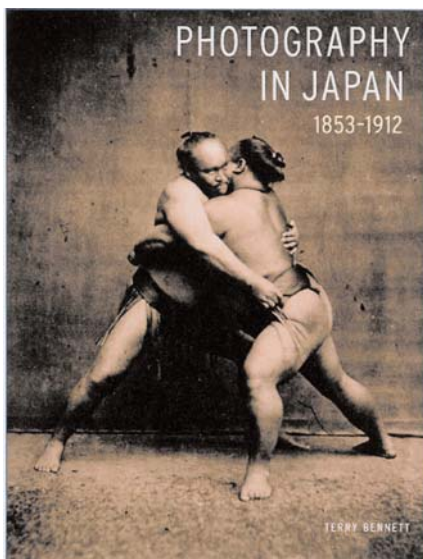
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Contents

- (1) Photography in Japan 1853-1912
- (2) Old Japanese Photographs: Collectors' Data Guide
- (3) Tokyo Love Hello
- (4) Hokusai's Project: The Articulation of Pictorial Space
- (5) Innovation and Business Partnering in Japan, Europe and the United States
- (6) Philipp Franz von Siebold and The Opening of Japan: A Re-Evaluation
- (7) A History of Japan, 1582-1941: Internal and External Worlds
- (8) Courtyard Gardens of Kyoto's Merchant Houses

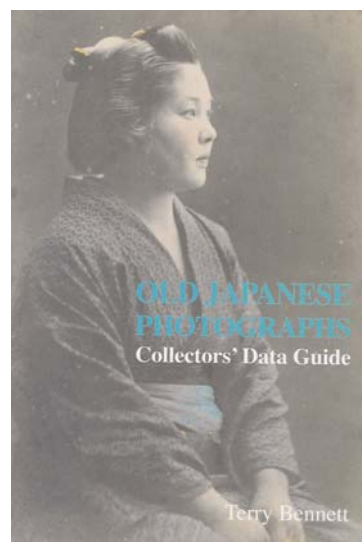
Japan Book Review



Photography in Japan 1853-1912,

Terry Bennett,

320 pages, 350 photographs (colour and black and white), Periplus Editions Tuttle Publishing, 2007, ISBN 080486337, £45



Old Japanese Photographs: Collectors' Data Guide,

Terry Bennett,

308 pages, over 200 illustrations, Bernard Quaritch, 2006, ISBN-10: 0-9550852-4-1, and ISBN-13: 978-0-9550852-4-6, £65.

Reviews by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Terry Bennett is a world expert in the history of photography in Japan and has done a vast amount of original research. His two new books bring together a vast amount of information never collected before and cover in detail the western and Japanese photographers who developed the art of photography in Japan. Anyone with an interest in this fascinating aspect of Japan in the last half of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century will find these books instructive and absorbing. For collectors of old Japanese photographs they will be indispensable.

The reproductions in the first volume are excellent in definition and the colour in the hand-tinted photographs is faithful to the originals.

Early Japanese photographs are of great benefit to the historian who can see through them contemporary images of people and events instead of having to rely solely on written records. The student of Yokohama-e (prints of foreigners, their buildings and their vehicles) can find the models on which the prints are based.

In his preface to *Photography in Japan* Bennett explains that his aims had been to provide an up-to-date picture of research into Japanese photo-history, to provide biographical details of early photographers, to stress the importance of identifying the photographer and to provide practical research tools. No doubt further research will add to what we know about the photographers and their images but those who follow will inevitably have to refer back to Bennett's pioneering work.

In his introduction Bennett explains how photography came to Japan. In Chapter 1 he describes the first images and first cameras used in Japan and the complicated and bulky equipment then needed to take images and to develop and print them. He gives many examples of the stereo images which became popular. Chapter 2 is devoted to the first western studios but he notes that, while some of the western photographers such as Felix Beato were outstanding, a number of able Japanese photographers, such as Shimooka Renjo and Ueno Hikoma entered the photographic business and produced some very good photographs. Because of the difficulties involved in outdoor photography at the time and the need for long exposures photographs of people and of Japanese at work inevitably involved poses which sometimes seem false or wooden. But the photo by Beato of a samurai on his horse in 1867 p. 94 is realistic.



Chapter 3 is headed "1870s: Japanese Competition" but includes a number of foreign photographers. Bennett discovered the first photograph ever taken of a Japanese Emperor. This was a secretly taken photo (page 138) by Baron Raimund von Stillfried-Ratenicz of the Emperor Meiji and his

entourage at Yokohama on 1 January 1872. The Japanese authorities were furious and confiscated the negative, but a print came to light at a London auction a few years ago. Perhaps as result of the clandestine photo official portraits of the Emperor and Empress were taken shortly afterwards. In the same chapter Bennett describes the first illustrated paper produced in Japan *The Far East* which began publication in May 1870 in Yokohama. (There is more about this journal in *Collector's Data Guide*).

Chapter 4 covers the 1880s which Bennett describes under the heading "Western Studios give way." Chapter 5 on the 1890s is described as "Japanese Studios dominate" and Chapter 6 on the 1900s is headed "In full control." In fact throughout the period covered by this book both Japanese and western photographers competed but also cooperated. One of the most extraordinary and eccentric of the western photographers was Adolfo Farsari (1841-98). He trained his colourists so that they "accurately reflected the actual colours in Japanese costumes, scenery and architecture." But others were equally successful as photographs of flowers by Ogawa Kazumasa (reproduced on page 212) show. This is of a



Japanese lily and was produced in the 1890s:



Ogawa was also a fine photographer of people as can be seen from this masterly portrait of an old couple (page 215):



There is no doubt that early photographers in Japan were real artists as well as good technicians with the camera as the following three photos show:

Woodland scene by Enami Tamotsu, 1890s, (page 234)



Mt Fuji in snow by Elias Burton Homes, 1890s (page 357)



Walter Clutterbuck: Boats at Naha Harbour, Okinawa, 1899, (page 249)



Tokyo Love Hello,

by Chris Steele Perkins,

Editions Intervalles, January 2007, 240 Pages, £29.00, ISBN 2-916355-05-7

Review by Clare Barclay

Emerging from the sideline images taken during his four-year study of Fuji-san, Chris Steele-Perkins has produced a photographic overview of everyday life from the instantly recognisable in western society to that only seen by someone truly immersed in the culture of Japan.

Written in French and English this volume includes 100 photographs as well as an introductory essay by Donald Richie.

The photographs provide a cultural reading of Japan that can be interpreted differently depending on the viewers' background knowledge of the country. Having lived in Japan during the time when the early images were taken, I instantly have a recollection of this period and the book enables me to reminisce and identify with the subjects based on my own experiences. Others coming to the book with an entirely clean slate in terms of their knowledge of Japan may read the images differently, whilst those who have been immersed in the culture to the extent that Richie has may agree that the images show the "incongruity of contemporary Japan."

Spanning the period from 1997 to present, each image is presented with the month and year in which it was taken as well as a simple statement of the subject content. It is left up to the viewer to absorb the often multiple meanings and on several viewings their reading may change as a great deal of the images are very information rich.

A few of the pictures are reminiscent of images taken by Henri Cartier-Bresson or Elliot Erwitt but ultimately Steele-Perkins brings his own creative style to the collection in a vibrant way.



Stairs over road in Shinjuku. Tokyo 05/1997

Business District of Shinjuku. Tokyo 10/1999



This eclectic mix of images certainly gives an insight into modern Japan and includes some personal images of the photographer, which are quite enlightening in terms of his inspiration. There are indeed some images that show the sometimes-misunderstood aspect of the Japanese in terms of their fun loving nature, which is on occasion demonstrated in what westerners may view to be an obscure manner; but also a wide range of images, which give just a glimpse into a culture so different from what we experience in Britain. Covering a wide range of topics from the business world to school and social life as well as the life of a Japanese pampered

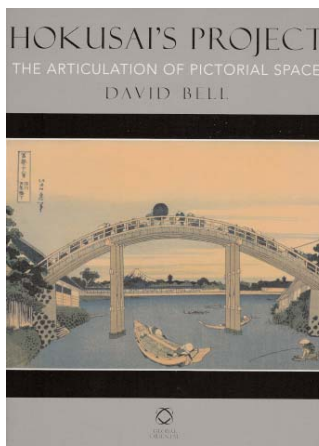
pet the images don't follow any consistent theme or time scale in any particular order but rather a jumble of topics. The majority however feature the people of Japan in a range of situations and could be considered a cultural study of the country through photography in a certain time or rather Tokyo in a certain time captured for posterity on film.



Children on the way to school. Tokyo 03/2002

Chris Steele-Perkins has succeeded in showing some overriding elements of Japanese culture from their use of technology to their street culture as well as their roots in tradition through festivals and offerings at temples for good fortune. Whilst this is not an all encompassing volume on the culture of Japan it does provide a good snapshot of life in Japan in the early part of this new century. The book offers something for those both familiar with Japan and those who have no direct contact with the country.

Chris Steele-Perkins was born in Burma in 1947 and has been a Magnum photographer since 1979.



Hokusai's Project: The Articulation of Pictorial Space,

David Bell,

189 pages including bibliography, glossary and index, numerous colour illustrations, *Global Oriental*, 2007, ISBN 978-1-905246-15-1

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

David Bell of the University of Otago, New Zealand, is a specialist in ukiyo-e and has written a number of books for specialists in Japanese art history including *Ukiyo-e Explained* published by *Global Oriental* in 2004. His new book is a useful addition to the many volumes written about Hokusai, his life and his art. It will be primarily of interest to students of Japanese colour prints.

David Bell explains that his study concentrates on how Hokusai employed "pictorial conventions in the organization of pictorial space" or in other words how he set about making pictures. Bell is concerned not with who Hokusai was or what he did but rather with "why his works appear the way they do."

In his "Prologue: Hokusai's Project" Bell draws attention to

Hokusai's mastery of drawing and his determination that "the drawn image represented the real object in a convincing manner." Chapter 2 is entitled "How Hokusai Learned his Trade" and shows the extent to which he absorbed the styles of the various schools of Japanese painting and western perspective. Hokusai was, however, to quote Laurence Binyon, a "fiercely independent but eclectic figure, constantly changing course, in his artistic career as in his personal life, unable to resign himself to any settled mode of existence, and so completely industrious as to be quite insensible to the world about him." Bell notes that Hokusai increasingly diverged from ukiyo-e's emphasis on the hedonistic world of the theatre and the Yoshiwara, and "focussed on the humble, the everyday, the unremarkable."

Chapter 3 "Hokusai, Fuji and the Articulation of Pictorial Space" is the longest in the book, although Bell points out that "Fuji pictures occupy a relatively small part of Hokusai's project." Bell draws attention to the imaginative way in which Hokusai depicted Fuji and how "by constructing a deep pictorial space" he "could represent the landscape itself in a naturalistic manner, and could arrange the incidental interest of figure groups, architectural complexes or well-known landmarks within convincing pictorial contexts." After discussing Hokusai's famous thirty-six views of Mount Fuji (in fact there were forty-six views in the series) Bell turns to the less well-known "hundred views" which were "constructed within closely delimited, sometimes almost minimalist, means." One of the most striking is that of "Fuji in a Downpour" (page 135, plate 52):

"Fuji in a Downpour"

The fourth and last chapter is entitled "Hokusai: Flowers, the Poets and Aesthetic detachment." Here Bell draws attention to Hokusai's delicate juxtaposition of a bird or an insect with the fugitive beauty of flower petals."

The book requires a concentrated effort on the reader's part as Bell's writing is dense and his sentences often long and convoluted.

The colour of the reproductions is uneven.



Innovation and Business Partnering in Japan, Europe and the United States, edited

by Ruth Taplin,

Routledge, 2006, ISBN 0-415-40287-5

Review by J. Sean Curtin

As the juggernaut of globalization relentlessly races forward, the importance of global innovation is becoming a crucial factor in economic competitiveness. This book assesses the different innovation strategies small and medium-sized

enterprises (SMEs) are adopting in Japan, Europe and the United States. It also explores the European Union's chances of being able to meet the innovation challenge posed by Japan, China, India and the United States - planet Earth's four most dynamic innovators. Business partnering is seen as an essential strategy for SMEs to keep their competitive edge.

Humanity is riding a breakneck innovation rollercoaster as the stock of scientific knowledge incredibly doubles every five years, creating the potential for breathtaking advances. In a world where some new technologies may have the capacity to reshape the global economy, innovation has become the critical factor in the battle for global economic survival. It's an arena in which Asia's position is continually strengthening while Europe needs to take swift action if it is not to fall behind. New technologies, shorter product development lead-times, revolutionary new business models and concepts along with lower labour costs are giving China and India a crucial edge in this make-or-break element of the global economy.

This book argues that the innovative abilities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) hold the key to future economic success. This is especially the case for Europe which cannot hope to keep up with its competitors without more innovative SMEs. A new SME model for Europe is proposed based on business partnering and collaborative alliances for new ventures and high-technology research and development. This strategy offers a viable alternative to mergers and acquisitions (M&A) as it allows companies with limited resources to maximize their individual strengths and drive forward investment in innovation.

Today, it is not just Japan that invests heavily in innovation, China has tripled its spending on research and development (R&D) over the past five years, while India produces more science graduates each year than the whole of the EU combined. East Asia is also galloping ahead in the area of intellectual property (IP) with China, South Korea and Japan accounting for about 25% of all registered patent applications globally.

In a series of highly readable essays written by international experts the book (i) explores the rapidly shifting global innovation landscape and the value of business partnering for SMEs; (ii) analyzes the importance of SMEs in pushing forward Japanese innovation; (iii) examines the challenges facing the EU and suggests suitable solutions; and (iv) looks at American models for sustaining a position as a leading global innovator.

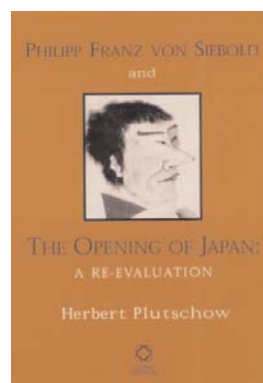
Takuma Kiso and Akio Nishizawa provide a wealth of material on Japanese innovation strategies which has not before appeared in English, making this book an excellent resource for those who want to understand more about the dynamics of Japanese innovation. Other chapters examine innovation in the United States and European countries. In the introductory chapter, "Business innovation globally at a crossroads," Anthony Murphy analyzes the situation from a global perspective, setting out some of the challenges facing the European Union. He observes, "In the near future the world will be in the grip of the claws of the Chinese dragon and the Indian Tiger."

In a chapter entitled "Can Europe make it?" Ruth Taplin explains why many large European companies have been able to adapt to the fast moving changes created by the global innovation challenge, but crucially many SMEs have not. Most

large companies in Europe have developed in size through M&A, unlike in the US where many big companies have grown out of smaller ones (75 percent of large US firms founded since 1980 have grown from small beginnings). This has meant that while many large companies in Europe are moving explicitly to a new model of corporate innovation, pro-actively building a global network of innovation partners, and setting up cost-sharing innovation consortia, at the other end of the spectrum a great many European SMEs are doing little and failing to fulfill their potential.

The reasons for European shortcomings are examined utilizing new case studies from SMEs in the UK, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. This stimulating chapter has some great insights into the innovation dilemmas confronting European SMEs. A major reason for their lack of success is that R&D costs for innovation are beyond the means of the average European SME, which undertake seven to eight times less research activities than their American counterparts. This comparative weakness is all the more acute in light of the fact that SMEs account for 65 per cent of European GDP, but only 45 percent in the US.

This book provides a global perspective on key economic trends as well as offering some excellent comparative material on Japan. It makes an important contribution to our understanding of the dynamics of global innovation and business partnering.



Philippp Franz von Siebold and The Opening of Japan: A Re-Evaluation

by Herbert Plutschow,

Global Oriental, 2007, 240 pages, ISBN 978-1-950246-20-5, £50

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Philippp Franz von Siebold is much admired and revered in Japan as one of the three great interpreters of Japan to the West during Japan's years of "seclusion." He was a meticulous scholar and his books about Japan mainly in German were an important source of information about Japan for the Americans and other powers in their efforts to "open" Japan in the middle of the nineteenth century. His role in these efforts is the focus of Plutschow's study.

Plutschow's book begins with a brief account of Siebold's first period in Japan from 1823-29 including his visit to Edo and his subsequent arrest and expulsion. After a summary of his achievements as a scholar Plutschow devotes a major part of his book to a discussion of the influence which Siebold had, through his correspondence, on the Dutch, Russian and above all on the American efforts to open Japan. He then describes Siebold's second visit to Japan from 1859 until his second expulsion in 1861. The next chapter deals with Siebold's subsequent attempts to influence the Russian and French governments in relation to Japan. Finally Plutschow recounts what happened to Siebold's daughter by his Japanese wife and his two sons born to his German wife.

While Plutschow does his best to defend Siebold, his picture of Siebold is of an unattractive personality. His egoism, vanity and arrogance were prominent features and there is no indication that he had any sense of humour. He was also a womaniser; both his Japanese and German wives were neglected and he took a Japanese mistress on his second visit. Siebold's interest in and sympathy with Japan were genuine even if he allowed himself to think that he alone understood Japan. He regarded himself as the Europe's greatest, indeed only, expert on Japan. Unfortunately his judgements about what was good for Japan were sometimes mistaken. Siebold "actively sought, not a Westernized Japan, but a continuation of Japan's feudal institutions, which he believed constituted the foundation of 'this happy country.'" (page 34)

Plutschow has had access to correspondence between Siebold and members of the American and Russian expeditions to Japan and with the government of the Netherlands which show that his advice was sought if not always followed. Plutschow says (page 101) that Siebold gave advice to the British government and that he met Lord Palmerston and Queen Victoria in 1851, but that "no details are known." If such meetings took place it seems most unlikely that no trace could be found in the National Archives or in Queen Victoria's papers. The author is of course right in asserting that no one country, let alone one individual, can claim the kudos for opening Japan. This was an historical process with multiple facets.

The author has clearly worked hard on the Siebold papers. Unfortunately he has not studied fully the papers which explain the background to some of the events he describes. He does not seem to be aware of the various accounts, including my own, of the attack on the British legation at Tozenji in Edo in 1861, of the Namamugi incident in the same year, the British attack on Kagoshima and the joint operations to reopen the Shimonoseki straits in 1862. There are a number of unfortunate misprints such as John Russel for Lord John Russell, Colonel Neal for Lt Col Neale etc. He is also wrong to refer to England when he means Britain and he makes a number of historically questionable assertions such as that [page 198] "the parley [the negotiations following the Namamugi incident] eventually led to British support of the pro-imperial, anti-shogunal faction in Japanese politics." These errors and omissions sadly detract from a book which throws some interesting new light on Siebold and on the opening of Japan.

A History of Japan, 1582-1941: Internal and External Worlds.

By L.M. Cullen,

Cambridge University Press, 2003, xiv+357 pages, 0-521-52918-2

Review by Ben-Ami Shillony

(Review first appeared in Reviews of Institute of Historical Research, February 2004)

There are several novel things about this book that make it worth reading. The first one relates to the author. Unlike most other historians of Japan, who come from the areas of Japanese or East Asian studies, the author of this book arrives from an unexpected field. L.M. Cullen is professor of modern Irish history at Trinity College, Dublin, and a scholar of early

modern trade. An acquaintanceship with a Japanese scholar (Matsuo Taro) in Dublin and two more years at Hosei University and the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto turned the expert in Irish history, in a remarkably short time, into an expert in Japanese history. In this book the author demonstrates a proficiency in the Japanese language, a familiarity with the Japanese sources, a mastery of the historical details, and a grasp of the voluminous scholarship on this subject in the west and Japan. His knowledge of western history and the history of trade enables him to look at Japanese history in a new and fresh way.

The second novelty is the periodization. We are accustomed to the classical division of Japanese history into premodern and modern eras, with the dividing line being the opening of Japan in 1854 or the Meiji Restoration of 1868. In the sub-division of those eras, we have been taught that the last part of premodern Japan was the Tokugawa period, which started with the battle of Sekigahara in 1600 and ended with the fall of the shogunate in 1868; while the first part of modern Japan was the imperial period which ended with the defeat of 1945. Instead of that conventional periodization, we are presented here with a 360-year story that starts in 1582 (the rise of Hideyoshi) and ends in 1941 (the attack on Pearl Harbor). This forces us to rethink the premodern and modern history of Japan in new paradigms as a continuum.

The third novelty lies in the book's approach. Most history books of Japan focus on personalities, ideas, perceptions, and political differences. This book focuses on economic and political interests, multilateral interactions, and strategies of survival. Social developments are explained in terms of trade, growth, and administrative changes. The protagonists of this book are neither the great individuals of classical historiography, nor the feuding classes of Marxist historiography, but rather the interest groups which acted and reacted in complex national and international systems. The decisions of the policy makers are judged by their effectiveness to promote their group interests.

After an introductory first chapter, Chapter 2 ("Japan and its Chinese and European worlds, 1582-1689") discusses foreign trade in East Asia in the seventeenth century. It shows that unlike the situation in Europe, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, where international trade implied a vast exchange of voluminous goods, foreign trade in East Asia was restricted to the exchange of high-value goods (like silk and silver) carried on a small number of large ships. As international trade was of less importance in East Asia than in the west, the international traders there were viewed with suspicion, and the governments tended to impose controls on the conduct of trade. The author claims that the closure of Japan in the 1630s (he refers to it as "sakoku," although the term was coined only in the nineteenth century) was not a sharp change, as portrayed in the standard textbooks, but rather a refinement of previous controls. The exclusion of the Portuguese and the confinement of the Chinese and the Dutch traders to the port of Nagasaki was motivated by a wish to preserve the balance between shogun and daimyo more than by the fear of Christianity

Chapter 3 ("The Japanese economy, 1688-1789") describes the phenomenal economic growth of Japan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It dismisses the theory that the eighteenth century was a period of stagnation, and asserts that despite the fall in foreign trade and a few harvest failures, the economy continued to grow. Edo became a huge consumption

centre for shogun and daimyo, Osaka turned into a great marketing and finance centre, and Japan's coastal trade was the largest in the world. Chapter 4 ("An age of stability: Japan's internal world, 1709-1783, in perspective") describes the eighteenth century as an era of unprecedented security and stability, when threats of foreign invasions (European or Chinese) and internal turmoil finally disappeared. This eased the way for the authorities to seek and acquire European ("Dutch") knowledge to promote their interests.

Chapter 5 ("Prosperity and crises, 1789-1853") describes the economic problems of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the ways in which the shogunal and daimyo authorities grappled with them. Far from proving the ineptitude of the national and local governments to handle the situation, as some historians have argued, the author regards the measures that were taken as wise responses, given the fiscal and administrative constraints of that time. In clear difference from the old regimes of Europe, which tried to solve similar problems by increasing taxation and indebtedness, the Japanese acted in a clever way by cutting expenditures. Chapter 6 ("Sakoku under pressure: the *gaiatsu* of the 1850s and 1860s") shows the rationality with which the shogunate responded to the growing military threat of the west in the mid-nineteenth century. Contrary to the conventional image of an inefficient and irresponsible government which failed to lead Japan in the right way, the author maintains that under the difficult internal and external circumstances the government acted remarkably well. It possessed a realistic perception of the threat, it achieved a degree of national consensus, and it managed to ward off the foreign peril in exchange of modest concessions.

The last two chapters are devoted to modern Japan. Chapter 7 ("Fashioning a state and a foreign policy: Japan 1868-1919") shows how the Meiji government became convinced that westernization was the only way to preserve independence and achieve strength and prosperity. According to Cullen, the Meiji reforms were not reactionary or oppressive measures, as left-wing historians claim, but rather rational and pragmatic responses. They neutralized opposition, freed productive forces, and mobilized resources for development. In the international arena they obtained western support, making Japan into a strong and modern state that could defeat China and Russia within one decade. Chapter 8 ("From peace [Versailles 1919] to war [Pearl Harbor 1941]") differs from the others. The positive and optimistic picture of the Tokugawa and early Meiji regimes turns here into a negative and pessimistic view of Japan in the twentieth century. The rationality which had characterized the Japanese governments from the early seventeenth century broke down in the 1930s, leading the country to a disastrous war and foreign occupation. The author does not stop in 1941, but discusses shortly the postwar governments, which in his view have been characterized by an amalgam of rational and irrational elements.

This is a thought provoking book, providing interesting information and interpretation, but it also invites criticism of both its assumptions and conclusions. The first element that can be questioned is the periodization. Granted that any division of history into rigid periods is arbitrary, the adoption of a new division requires persuasion. Why start "A History of Japan" in 1582 and end it in 1941? When Toyotomi Hideyoshi assumed power in central Japan after the assassination of Oda Nobunaga in 1582, the country was still in the throes of internal war. It was only in 1590 that Japan was unified under

Hideyoshi, and only in 1600 that Tokugawa Ieyasu defeated his opponents and established the long rule of his family. Starting the premodern (or some would say modern) history of Japan in 1600 may look old-fashioned, but it is more sensible than starting it in 1582. Ending the story in 1941 is even more questionable. In that year Japan had already been at war (with China) for four years and the attack on Pearl Harbor was a culmination of the policy of expansionism that had been developing for at least a decade. The end of this process occurred in 1945, when the whole militaristic and imperialistic structure collapsed, and not in 1941, when it embarked on its final stage.

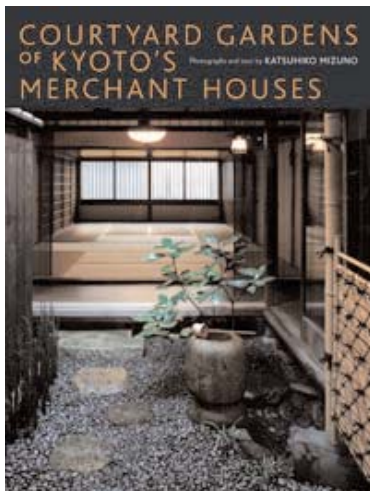
The sub-division of this period, as proposed in the titles of the chapters, raises similar questions. One wonders why the chapter on "The Japanese economy" carries the dates 1688-1789. Nothing special happened in 1688, except for the change of the era name from Jōkyō (which lasted for four years) to Genroku (which lasted for six years), and nothing special happened in 1789, except for the suppression of an Ainu rebellion in the far north and the change of the era name from Temmei (which lasted for eight years) to Kansei (which lasted for fifteen years). These two dates make more sense in Europe, where they stand for the Glorious Revolution and the French Revolution, than in Japan.

A more problematic feature is the use of the dichotomy of rationality and irrationality, sometimes phrased as pragmatism and recklessness, or realism and adventurism. These attributes rest on hindsight. Everything which succeeds is ultimately praised as far-sighted, rational, pragmatic and realistic. Everything that fails is ultimately condemned as short-sighted, irrational and unrealistic. Was Ieyasu's policy of inward orientation more rational than Hideyoshi's policy of external expansion? Yes, because we know the outcome, but no if we look at the personalities of these two leaders, both of whom were highly pragmatic. Was "sakoku" more rational than the continuation of openness to the outside world, as the author claims? Yes, because we know the positive outcome, but no if we think about the risks that self-isolation involved. The author's assertion that "Realism was one of Japan's strengths from the 1850s onwards; abandonment of realism was the country's later undoing in the 1930s" (p. 13) is historically problematic, because the people who make the decisions never know the outcome. There were many moves before the 1930s (like the decision to attack Russia in 1904) which might have ended in disaster, and there were later initiatives (like the negotiations with the United States in 1941 about a new status quo in Southeast Asia) that might have ended in success.

The book's strength lies in the panoramic view that it presents, but its weakness lies in sweeping and dubious generalizations that this approach produces. It is difficult to agree with the author that "Japanese history poses greater problems of interpretation than the history of other countries" (p. 17). It seems highly exaggerated to say that "in some respects, up to 1945 Japan had remained the bakufu that it had still been under Meiji: a wide range of groups existed whose interests never fully converged" (p. 279), as it seems greatly overstated that "in a sense, Japan's place in the world has never been settled since 1868" (p. 282). These generalizations obscure the historical picture of Japan more than they enlighten it.

This review continues online:

<http://www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews/07history.html>



Courtyard Gardens of Kyoto's Merchant Houses,

photographs and text by Katsuhiko Mizuno, translated by Lucy North,

Kodansha International, November 2006, 160 pages (149 colour plates and 8 illustrations), ISBN: 4770030231, £25.

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

This is a book which will fascinate all lovers of Japanese gardens. It provides an introduction to the tiny gardens, generally referred to as *tsuboniwa*, incorporated into Japanese houses in Kyoto. These, unlike temple and palace gardens, are not normally open to visitors. A *tsubo* is a Japanese measurement of a small area approximately 35.5 feet square. Not all tiny gardens were necessarily of this size but the term underlines the small scale of these gardens.



In his preface Mr Mizuno explains that these gardens were developed as essential parts of the typical Kyoto town house or *machiya*. In the late sixteenth century merchants built single storey wooden houses along the sides of the streets of the capital. These had a narrow frontage on the streets as taxes were assessed on the width of a house's façade, but extended a long way to the back. The *tsuboniwa* were built to provide greenery and air, so essential in a hot climate such as that of Kyoto in summer. Mizuno points out that the heart of the *machiya* architectural design was "the desire to live as much as possible in harmony with nature - to treat it with respect and affection, at the same time as fully utilizing its blessings and gifts." *Machiya* are "dwelling places that are gentle, both to nature and to human beings who live in them."

The author gives plans of *machiya* in both the *omoteyazukuri* style where the storefront is separated from the residential part of the house and the *daibeizukuri* style where the house was built behind a wall directly abutting the main thoroughfare. The book then depicts *tsuboniwa*



in Kyoto houses through a series of excellent photographs. Sixteen merchant houses are covered in part I, twelve fine restaurants and teahouses in Part II and twenty four residences in part III. The book also contains notes on stones and plants used in *tsuboniwa* and some garden plans.



It is difficult to choose some typical examples from such an excellent collection of photographs, but here are some which I

particularly liked. The inner garden of the Shikunshi, a kimono shop, is simple and refreshing (page 18). The intermediate garden of Yuzuki, an accessories shop, is a *tsuboniwa* "best described as a walkway that connects the front rooms of the house with the rooms in the wing behind (page 25)." The rear garden of Suzuki Shofudo (maker of paper products) has (page 39) "an Orube lantern and several streaked green stones...on a gourd-shaped carpet of hair moss" with a bamboo fence "whose light colour echoes the Shirakawa gravel." In the main garden of the Shiraume, a traditional Japanese inn (page 52), all the stone features are small and low creating an "overall effect, both graceful and spacious." The front garden of the Tamura residence (page 116) filling "a simple rather shallow rectangle... necessitated a very simple design, a well corb made of Shirakawa stone...a medium-sized washbasin, stepping stones of Kurama rock, and...small evergreen bushes. The result is light and open."



There are many other photographs to delight the eye and make the reader wish that he could not only revisit Kyoto but also somehow arrange private visits to a few of these houses with their charming little gardens.

