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In our final issue of 2007, we have some excellent reviews and previews of the latest Japan-related books hot off the printing press. Our first article looks at a major new work by Sir Max Hastings on the dramatic final year that led to Japan's wartime defeat. We also feature three recently published Japanese language books which offer insights into the Koizumi years and the US-Japan relationship. New reviewer William Farr offers his verdict on a Japanese hot springs book, there is also another riveting reader's review plus lots more reviews and previews. Finally, Japan Book Review says a tearful farewell to our Managing Editor Clare Barclay. Clare has worked on Japan Book Review for over two years and we could not have produced it without her. Many thanks on the readers' behalf and we will miss you.

Sean Curtin

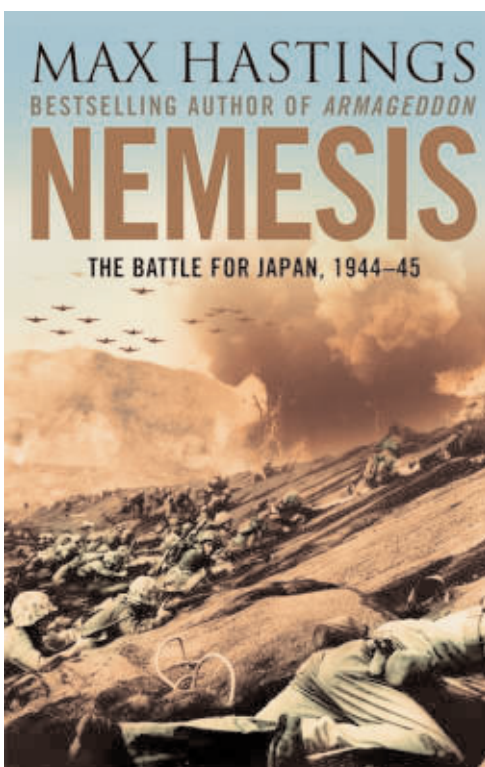
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Japan Book Review



Nemesis: The Battle for Japan, 1944-45

by Max Hastings

Harper Press, 2007, 673 pages including index, notes and bibliography, £25.

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Sir Max Hastings, who was a former editor of *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Evening Standard*, is Britain's ablest war historian. This book which covers the death and destruction which accompanied the end of the war with Japan follows his account in *Armageddon* of the defeat of Nazi Germany.

This is not a dry description of battle strategy and tactics but a lively account of the various campaigns from Burma to Okinawa which led up to Japan's defeat. The author includes many 'human interest' stories which show what the battles were like to the participants on both the allied and Japanese sides. Heroism, cowardice, suffering, appalling injuries and cruel deaths all have their places in this often heart rending and moving book.

Hastings is frank about the defects and flawed personalities of many the politicians, admirals and generals involved. One of the few to emerge as both a good general and as a fine human being is General Slim who led British forces to victory in Burma. On the American side he praises in particular Admiral

Nimitz. The flaws in the characters of both Mountbatten and MacArthur are exposed. I was well aware of the egotism and arrogance of MacArthur, but I had not realised that in the Philippines in March 1942 he accepted a gift of \$500,000 from the Philippine treasury. Hastings says of him: "MacArthur displayed a taste for fantasy quite unsuited to a field commander, together with ambition close to megalomania."

MacArthur had no liking for the British and did not want British participation in the defeat of Japan. His views coincided with those of many other American leaders. The Americans would do nothing to assist the British, French or Dutch to recover their former possessions in South East Asia, tended to be contemptuous of the British fighting in Burma and expect the British simply to do as the Americans told them. Sir Esler Dening, as political adviser to Mountbatten towards the end of the war, once observed acidly: "I often think that we might on important occasions remind ourselves that we are not yet the 49th of the United States."

Hastings does not flinch from describing in some detail the atrocities which Japanese forces perpetrated in occupied areas of China and the contempt which Japanese soldiers so often showed the Chinese. These make the Nanking incident seem a preliminary to the horrors to come. But other occupied territories suffered equal cruelties. The people of Manila, for example, were barbarously treated by the Japanese when American forces retook the city. The Japanese maltreatment of prisoners of war is well known but some additional gruesome details are included in Hastings' account. But alas cruelty begets cruelty. After Japanese soldiers immolated themselves, if possible with one or more of their captors, it can hardly be surprising that allied forces took few prisoners. No pity was shown by General Curtis LeMay who planned and executed the US fire and high explosive bombing raids on Japanese cities which caused more death and destruction than the two atomic bombs. Hastings gives graphic accounts of how Japanese families suffered as a result of these raids and is careful to record instances of Japanese kindness as well as cruelty. He has pity for the young men who were brainwashed into the kamikaze suicide attacks. He notes that while these did cause serious casualties in the American fleet they made no difference to the outcome of the war.

Hastings gives graphic and absorbing accounts of battles such as those for Leyte, Iwojima and Okinawa. He tells us of the suicidal mission of the mammoth Japanese battleship *Yamato*. His account of the campaign in Burma brings out the horrors and the loneliness of the struggle. (It is a pity that he makes no mention of Louis Allen's epic account of the *Burma campaign in Burma: The Longest War 1941-45*.)

Hastings is illuminating in his account of the failures and inadequacies of Chinese resistance to the Japanese occupiers. He is highly critical of Chiang Kai Shek and the nationalists, but he also reminds us that the Chinese Communists were more interested in winning power in China than in fighting the Japanese. His account of the Soviet part in the final defeat of Japan sheds light not only on the American attitude towards Soviet involvement but also on the fighting in Manchuria and the loot which the Soviets garnered.

Many readers will inevitably be engrossed by what Hastings has to say about the rationale for the dropping of the atomic bombs and their impact on the thinking of Japanese leaders. Hastings concludes: "Considering the plight of civilians and captives, dying in thousands daily under

Japanese occupation, together with the casualties which would have been incurred had the Soviets been provoked into maintaining their advance across mainland China, almost any scenario suggests the far more people of many nationalities would have died in the course of even a few more weeks of war than were killed by the atomic bombs."

The lack of realism and appreciation of intelligence among Japanese military, naval and civilian leaders about what was possible for Japan in mid-1945 seems incredible to us today. It was not, of course, unknown in allied circles to doubt intelligence; MacArthur was often prone to believe only what he wanted to believe. But the Japanese leaders were far more inclined to wishful thinking and ignoring facts. Slim said that "while Japanese commanders were physically brave men, many were also moral cowards." Certainly the way in which for weeks and months after it should have been clear to any intelligent man that Japan was defeated and that the longer Japan waited the greater Japan and the rest of the world would suffer, Japan's leaders dithered and delayed, unable to take the courageous decision to accept defeat. The allied insistence on unconditional surrender was understandable but probably unwise. In fact the Potsdam declaration did contain words which clarified if they did not modify the meaning of unconditional surrender.

This book should be read by anyone who wants to understand the tragedies of the war against Japan. It also ought to be read by Japanese historical revisionists who like Japan's war leaders refuse to face unpalatable facts.

Nichi-Bei Domei-toiu Riarizumu (Emerging Realism of the Japan-U.S. Alliance)



by Tomohito Shinoda,

Chikura Shobou, 2007, 274 pages including notes and index, ISBN: 978-4-8051-0884-0 C3031

Review by Takahiro Miyao

Virtually no book has been written by a Japanese scholar to offer a coherent view on the history of the Japan-U.S. Alliance for the entire post-war period, although there have been some edited books including various views of multiple authors on this subject matter. One major reason for this seems to be the lack of an analytical framework, satisfactory from the Japanese viewpoint, to be able to understand the main events and episodes in Japan-U.S. relations throughout the post-war period.

In this book, Professor Tomohito Shinoda provides such a framework by applying the concepts of "realism" (realistic approach based on national power and security), "liberalism" (idealistic approach emphasizing international cooperation) and "constructivism" (analytical approach introducing the elements of ideals and ideologies). With this framework, he

tries to analyze the entire post-war period of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, from the occupation period to the present, during which time the basic nature of the Alliance has been undergoing fundamental change. As expected, the basic change might be regarded as "emerging realism," i.e., gradual change from liberalism toward realism, as suggested by the book title. What is interesting, however, is the timing and reasons for change, which Professor Shinoda spells out with his analytical framework.

In Chapter 3, "Change to the 'Reverse Course,'" Professor Shinoda singles out the role of George Kenan at the U.S. State Department in the late 1940s to push Japan toward more realism, eventually leading to Japan's rearmament right after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. However, Japanese political leaders, from Shigeru Yoshida down to Zenko Suzuki, had been keeping their liberal stance for more than two decades until Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone voluntarily accepted realism in the Japan-U.S. Alliance. Similarly, in Chapter 6, "Escape from Drifting Alliance," the importance of the Armitage Report in 2000 is emphasized in making a number of proposals reflecting the George W. Bush administration's realistic stance toward the Japan-U.S. relationship. However, it took Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi for Japan to accept the essence of the Armitage Report actively and to take concrete steps for strengthening the Alliance in the aftermath of the 9/11 incident.

While Professor Shinoda's analysis successfully reveals the nature of the historical change in the Alliance in a clear and simple way, its oversimplification is inevitable, as he himself admits in the Introduction. For example, the realism that Nakasone and Koizumi subscribed to was not necessarily shared by a majority of the Japanese people, not even by a majority of the ruling coalition party members. Probably, Professor Shinoda should have utilized the concept of "constructivism" in explaining more recent political developments, rather than adopting simple dichotomy between "realism" and "liberalism," in order to have a richer and deeper understanding of the dynamism of Japanese politics, especially since the Koizumi era.

As mentioned in the Postscript, Professor Shinoda's work in this book may be regarded as a counterargument to some of the well-known studies by U.S. scholars on the Japan-U.S. Alliance which are entirely based on the stance of "liberalism." At any rate, this book should be considered a landmark for the study of the Japan-U.S. Alliance in the post-war period, and a significant contribution to our understanding of the basic nature of the Alliance, which is currently under intense review, at least, on the Japan side in the aftermath of the historic defeat of the pro-U.S. ruling coalition in the Lower House in July 2007.

Takahiro Miyao is Professor and Head of the Japanese Institute of Global Communications.

This review was produced in collaboration with the Global Communications Platform and first published on the Platform: <http://www.glocom.org/>



"Koizumi Kantei Hiroku" (Confidential Records of the Office of Prime Minister Koizumi),

by Isao Iijima,

Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha (Japan Economic Journal), December 2006, 334 pages, 1800 yen

"Kozo Kaikaku No Shinjitsu: Takenaka Heizo Daijin Nisshi" (Truth of Structural Reforms: Diary of Minister Takenaka Heizo),

by Heizo Takenaka,

Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, December 2006, 344 pages, 1800 yen



Reviews by By Fumiko Halloran

When Mr. Junichiro Koizumi was elected in April 2001 to the presidency of the Liberal Democratic Party (and thus, in Japan's parliamentary system, prime minister) few politicians, opinion leaders, journalists, and private citizens imagined that he would lead the nation for five years and five months, among the longest tenures in the post-war period. When he became the national leader, Japan's economic and financial situation was so dire that there was fear abroad that Japan might trigger a worldwide financial crisis.

During that period, however, Prime Minister Koizumi launched reforms in the national budget system, special public corporations, the postal savings and insurance system, and the medical insurance and national pension systems. By the time he stepped down in September 2006, the national budget system had been restructured, legislation to privatize the highway public corporations and postal savings and insurance system had passed as had legislation to reform the medical insurance and national pension systems. Mr. Koizumi's goal was to streamline the bloated bureaucracy that wasted the taxpayer's money, to privatize nationally run organizations as much as possible, to cut the national deficit, and to reenergize the private sector, particularly the banking system. Japan had suffered from a ten-year recession after the collapse of the bubble economy.

Premier Koizumi's success was achieved only after brutal debate about his policies and acrimonious attacks on the prime minister and his team, particularly Dr. Heizo Takenaka, an academic with a PhD in economics. Mr. Koizumi chose him to be Minister of State for Economic & Fiscal Policy and to lay out the framework of Japan's economic and financial recovery. It was no wonder that the opposition to the reforms was fierce since each reform would strip power from numerous interest groups. Opponents ranged from retired senior government officials who had enjoyed lucrative second careers in public corporations to general construction companies that were accustomed to getting large scale highway and urban development projects from politicians who brokered deals on government financed projects in exchange for election campaign contributions. Lobbying by business groups was intense. Bureaucrats who had enjoyed powerful control over budgets and legislation were dismayed to see their control over policy taken over by the Office of the Prime Minister. At every step of reform, senior bureaucrats resisted the changes, even openly lobbying against the prime minister. In at least one case, Mr. Koizumi, through Minister Nobuteru Ishihara of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transportation, fired the president of the Japan Public Highway Corporation (Nihon Doro Kodan) for resisting reform.

Three months after Mr. Koizumi stepped down, two books revealed in detail how these policy debates were conducted, how the Koizumi cabinet dealt with opposition to reform, and above all, the role politics played in efforts to bring about reform. These books are valuable primary sources for research on the Koizumi years.

Isao Iijima, PM Koizumi's chief of staff, wrote one. He was in the center of domestic and foreign policy-making as Mr. Koizumi's aide for 35 years. He was considered to be Mr. Koizumi's alter ego.



Dr. Takenaka, the minister of state for economic and fiscal policy, wrote the other. In addition to that post, he was later appointed to be Minister of State for Financial Affairs and finally as Minister of Internal Affairs & Communications, to oversee the entire structural reform. At first, his position was a political

appointment but, in 2004, he ran in an election and was elected to the Upper House. Last September, he resigned from parliament at the same time Prime Minister Koizumi stepped down and immediately began to write this book based on the diary he kept during his tenure as a cabinet minister. He is back at Keio University as president of the university's Global Security Institute and a frequent visitor to the UK.

Mr. Iijima begins his book with an explanation of PM Koizumi's strategy to succeed in radical reform of the government's structure. First, Mr. Koizumi could exercise leadership because he was not a traditional Liberal Democratic Party politician. He won the LDP presidential election by ignoring factional games and appealed directly to three million LDP members who reflected the public's desire to see a change in politics. Indeed, throughout his tenure, PM Koizumi continued to enjoy public support, from a high of 88% at the time of his winning the premiership to 62% at the end, according to Japan News Network of TBS TV Station.

Second, PM Koizumi set clear goals that the public could understand and support. To achieve this goal, the Koizumi team came up with a strategy for a public relations campaign, including an electronic magazine, "Lion Heart," that drew the attention of more than one million viewers. Mr. Iijima writes that the prime minister's office studied the different nature of the media and divided it into the printed press, TV, and radio journalism, inviting different sets of editors and reporters for meetings with the prime minister himself. Town meetings by the prime minister and cabinet ministers were set up to have direct conversation with the citizens.

PM Koizumi established the pattern of setting comprehensive policy proposals without consulting his own party, which resulted in a confrontation with the LDP Policy Research Council (Jiminto Seimu Chosa-kai). Mr. Koizumi authorized policy proposals by the Council on Economic & Fiscal Policy (Keizai Zaisei Shimon Kaigi), then made public on the cabinet homepage the conference materials and the minutes three days after each meeting. Further, rebuttals by ministries to specific proposals were also posted on the homepage. This meant the public and the press had access not only to the proposals but information on who supported and opposed each.

Both Mr. Iijima and Mr. Takenaka make it clear that this advisory council was the key player in the efforts for reform. It was established by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and continued by Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori but it came into full function under PM Koizumi. The members included cabinet ministers (finance; internal affairs; economy, trade & industry), the chief cabinet secretary, president of the Bank of Japan, minister of state for economic and fiscal policy, and four representatives from the private sector such as academics and business leaders. During his reign, Prime Minister Koizumi attended and chaired all 187 meetings.

Mr. Iijima focused on recruiting reform-minded bureaucrats to work for the prime minister and orchestrated the political battle in getting legislation passed. Dr. Takenaka laid out the framework and specific measures for reform in close consultation with the prime minister. Their relationship went back more than ten years before Mr. Koizumi won the premiership, when both were members of a study group that discussed ways to get out of the collapsed bubble economy. Dr. Takenaka argued against the traditional approach of pumping public funds into large-scale projects intended to lift the economy. He argued that not only was it wrong policy but it was done because of the close relations among the LDP politicians, business executives, and bureaucrats. That had to be broken. Eliminating wasteful projects, reducing the issuance of national bonds, and privatizing public corporations, as well as reducing subsidy to local governments were their ultimate goals.

PM Koizumi's passion for structural reform has a long history, starting in 1970's when he was parliamentary vice minister of the Ministry of Finance and the national deficit was escalating. As Minister of Health and Welfare and then Minister of Posts and Telecommunications in the 1990's, he tried to restructure the flow of funds from postal savings, postal insurance, and national pension into supplementary budget but was not taken seriously. When he ran unsuccessfully in the LDP presidential elections in 1995 and 1998, his policy speeches focused on the same theme. In his third attempt, in 2001, he again advocated an efficient, stronger but smaller government to stop the hemorrhaging of public funds.

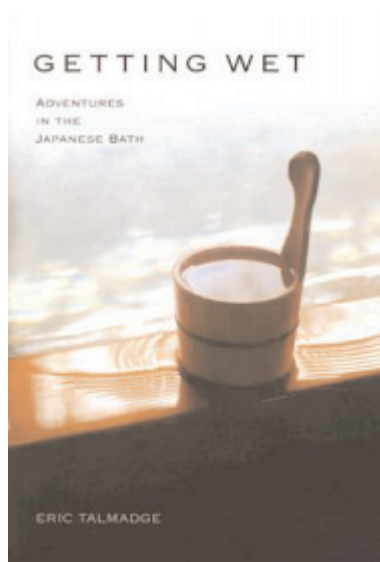
Both books describe in detail the fierce opposition to the reforms, PM Koizumi's never changing convictions, and his charisma that earned the loyalty of those who worked for him. Dr. Takenaka was especially grateful that, each time he felt criticism and personal attacks wearing him out, PM Koizumi gave him encouraging words. At the same time, with shrewd political skill, Minister Takenaka reached out to key LDP leaders and senior bureaucrats whenever a major proposal came up, to do a thorough "nemawashi" (prior briefing and negotiation). He seemed to have abundant patience to weather criticism and to find common ground with his political enemies.

Mr. Iijima was born in 1945, Dr. Takenaka was born in 1951, and they are products of Japan's post-war period. But their careers were quite different. Mr. Iijima served only Mr. Koizumi during his entire career as "hishokan" (secretary; a combination of executive and legislative aide). Dr. Takenaka, a graduate of Hitotsubashi University, was with the Japan Development Bank, was a senior analyst at a think-tank affiliated with the Ministry of Finance, and taught at Harvard, Osaka University, and Keio University. Mr. Iijima was thoroughly familiar with the legislative process and party politics while Dr. Takenaka was a novice in politics. He found a wide gap between politicians and policy experts and saw a shortage of policy experts. Despite the differences in experience, the two shared PM Koizumi's passion for his goals and worked hard to achieve them.

There may be a valid criticism that both books are attempts to justify the Koizumi regime. In that sense, every book written by a politician is suspect. There is already criticism that, while the reforms may have saved Japan from a worsening economic and financial crisis, it created a widening gap between winners and losers that may threaten the safety net and the social fabric of Japan. What is striking about the two books, however, is that they articulate the Koizumi team's sense of the crisis of a nation in deep trouble, their ideas and solutions, their strategies and framework of policies connected with each other, and the political tactics for dealing with reform. Taken together, these books certainly present a vision for the future governing of Japan.

A different version of this review first appeared on the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) Japan-U.S. Discussion Forum and is reproduced with permission of the author. The original review can be found here:

<http://www.nbr.org/forau/message.aspx?LID=5&pg=3&MID=27329>



Getting Wet - Adventures in the Japanese Bath

by Eric Talmadge

Kodansha Europe Ltd
(Japan), 2006, 272 pages
(Hardback), ISBN:
9784770030207

Review by William Farr

Hidden beneath the dustcover of the English version of 'Getting Wet' by

Eric Talmadge is the Japanese sign for Onsen, or Sento, and for anyone who has ever lived, travelled or worked in Japan for any length of time the Japanese hot spring or public bath is instantly recognisable. The hidden symbol nicely summarises the fact that to find the best experience of bathing today Mr Talmadge had to travel far and wide and in many ways, the Onsen of the past is becoming a dying, and more hidden part of Japanese culture.

Talmadge writes with an obvious love for the bath in Japan in all its shapes and forms, with a wide ranging discussion on the Japanese love of soaking, through to an interesting description of modern-day "super Onsen," which is all encapsulated by a good geographically deterministic view of the relationship between the Japanese environment and Japanese culture.

The upside of being a volcanic country is the hot springs, but the downside can be the volatile nature of volcanoes such as on the Izu islands south of Tokyo which is now barely inhabited due to a massive eruption in 2000. Lingering poisonous gas means that many of the younger generation have now sought more stable roots on mainland Japan.

Mr Talmadge has a natural inclination toward the scientific aspect of balneology, the science of bathing, and everything from an explanation of why we go wrinkly (too much osmosis) through to the fact that there have been outbreaks of Legionnaires disease due to the lack of cleanliness at public baths makes for fascinating reading. The Japanese company of Tsumura is mentioned on a couple of occasions as a company which treats the science of bathing very seriously. Particular temperatures, the location of the body, (water up to the neck) the duration of the bath, (no more than twenty minutes) make the whole bathing experience very methodical and scientific.

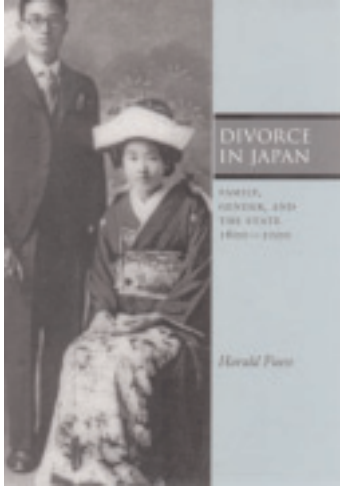
I was very interested to read about the prefecture where I spent time whilst on the JET scheme - Tottori. However, I was not expecting the town where our mid-year conference took place to be the location of a potentially radioactive mineral bath. The radium present at Misasa whilst being natural - unlike many Japanese Sento which in the 1990's were embroiled in a scandal due to not being truthful about the freshness of their water and the mineral content within - is present at very low levels and must be far better for you than the electric shock bath. Electric shock baths, or Hertz baths are now all the rage and even though as Mr Talmadge explains, they possess very low voltage one was still enough to make Mr Talmadge's hand cramp up. This surely would make for a bathing experience of the strangest sort.

The Onsen of the future must surely be in the mould of the Oedo Onsen Monogatari in Tokyo, a "Supaa Sento" which has themed rooms, where people bathe without nudity, and can handle thousands of people in a day.

The most harrowing chapter must deal with the "Soaplands," a word which was developed by vote after the previous name of "Turkish Bath" eventually became synonymous with prostitution and the Turkish Embassy complained. In Tokyo the soaplands are hidden even though they are very close to the centre of the city. Strangely enough the only way to reach the Tokyo soapland is by taxi. There carnal pleasures are dealt with in a system which developed as a result of a loophole in the law - washing was not viewed as prostitution under Japanese law and anything else over and

above that is between consenting adults. Mr Talmadge places this chapter where it belongs, toward the back of a good book.

There are so many remarkable little stories and facts within this book that it is definitely worth a read for anyone thinking about travelling to and within Japan. For those who already live in Japan, Talmadge provides excellent insight into the country with good advice to novice Onsen-goers and interesting asides for the more seasoned bather.



Divorce in Japan: Family, Gender, and the State, 1600- 2000

By Harald Fuess

Stanford University Press, 2004,
226 pages, ISBN 0-8047-4357-6

Review by Sean Curtin

For most Japanese, divorce is generally seen as something that was historically rare, mainly initiated by men, and today's relatively high rates are considered to be an aberration that goes against "traditional Japanese values." In reality, a hundred years ago Japan had one of the highest divorce rates on the planet and marital break-up was commonplace. Many Japanese are completely unaware of these facts and in some cases unwilling to accept a reality which contradicts an imagined golden past.

Harald Fuess' impressive historical study of divorce in Japan offers a comprehensive and superbly researched guide to an important, but until recently much misunderstood, social phenomenon. Covering a four hundred year period up to 2000, Fuess meticulously charts divorce's convoluted evolutionary trajectory. The reader is taken on a fascinating journey spanning the centuries, and concludes by offering some illuminating insights into the nation's recent upsurge in marital dissolution which has seen Japanese divorce rates match European Union averages.

The invented tradition of a centuries-old low divorce culture is something the state promoted in the pre-war years and today's conservative politicians perpetuate. This has deeply ingrained the concept in the national psyche, even if it is not actually true. Even though the country's present divorce rate is very near the European average, many Japanese are convinced it remains low by international standards. While some of this can be attributed to the tendency to only compare Japan with the United States, which has an abnormally high divorce rate, the idealized version of the past is the primary culprit.

There exists such an enormous disconnect between historical reality and popular myth that misconceptions dominate, effectively distorting domestic and foreign coverage of the topic which impedes proper understanding not only of historical but also of contemporary divorce trends. By providing a coherent and comprehensive analysis, Fuess makes sense out of what at times seem like counterintuitive trends and along the way he masterfully debunks most of the myths surrounding divorce.

Why were historical divorce rates so high in comparison to Europe and North America? Why did official rates drop so sharply after 1898? Was the fall a result of the new Meiji Civil Code adopted in the same year? Why did divorce levels begin rising again in the 1960s and what do current rates tell us about contemporary Japanese society? The author convincingly explains the enigmas surrounding Japanese divorce, producing a must-read book.

For decades, social scientists have struggled to adequately explain Japan's supposedly unique divorce trends. For example, it used to be believed that as a society industrialized, its marital dissolution rates would increase due to improvements in female economic status, better gender equality in education, greater social freedom, inter alia. This view conveniently explained divorce patterns observed in Europe and North America. However, in the 1960s scholars realized that Japanese divorce trends did not conform to this model. As industrialization gathered pace, Japan's rates decreased and were in fact the complete opposite to what modernization theories had predicted. This is just one of the many conundrums Fuess' comprehensive work helps to put in context.

By skillfully utilizing a broad spectrum of modern and classical Japanese and European language material, Fuess furnishes the reader with the most comprehensive English language guide ever assembled. Among his primary sources, much of it difficult-to-access material, are government documents, court archives, legal records, demographic studies, ethnographic commentaries, personal writings, diaries, memoirs and a wealth of survey data and statistical material. The author marshals this formidable arsenal to systematically demolish the myths and misconceptions that distort our understanding of Japanese divorce.

Fuess offers a detailed account of historical divorce related practices and customs such as divorce temples and trial marriages that have long been misrepresented in Japan, and even more so in European writings about the country. Utilizing a wealth of historical documents and surveys he explains the background before and after the introduction of the Meiji Civil Code, telling the story of how marriage was institutionalized. He deftly explains how depending on the particular sources used by historians, the interpretation of divorce rates can substantially vary.

A considerable volume of past English language research, with a number of notable exceptions, created the simplistic impression of historical divorce as purely a male persevere with wives being the victims of their husband's whims or cold-hearted in-laws' schemes. Fuess provides a far more rounded and multi-dimensional picture, illustrating how the process was highly complex and more balanced.

He demonstrates how the high divorce rates of the Tokugawa and early Meiji period functioned as a means to regulate the spouse selection process. He explains that wives and their natal families could, and often did, initiate marital dissolution. Indeed, before the promulgation of the Meiji Civil Code, the whole concept of marriage for ordinary people was quite different from what we understand today, and indeed remained so for a few decades afterwards.

Fuess also charts the post-Civil Code shifts in public attitudes towards divorce and examines how the idea of trial marriages gradually disappeared. He also investigates the

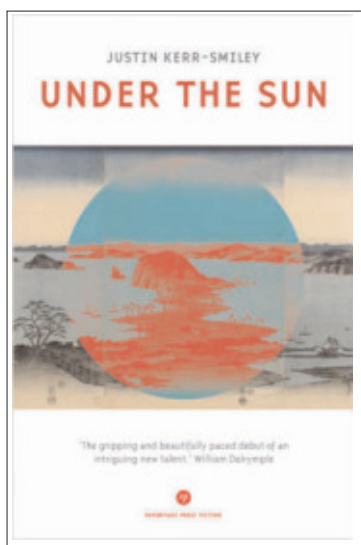
impact that the legal barriers of the new Civil Code had on thinking about divorce, explaining why marriage began to take on the mantle of the more solemn social institution today's Japanese are familiar with.

By painstakingly reconstructing the past, Fuess traces a clear line of continuity to the present. His aim is to show that in some respects contemporary Japanese women are not necessarily that much better off when it comes to divorce than their historical counterparts. Indeed, in some important aspects of modern divorce legislation, there remain serious gender inequalities.

One example of this is the current child maintenance system which is totally inadequate and effectively allows delinquent fathers to abandon all financial responsibility for their offspring with impunity. Another is the ridiculous six-month remarriage ban slapped on Japanese female divorcees which does not apply to men who can re-tie the knot the instant they dissolve a marital union. Despite recent legal battles and campaigns to amend this anachronistic law, it still remains in force.

It is hard to fault Fuess' extensively researched and eloquently argued book. If I were forced to make any minor recommendations, it would be for the inclusion of a few more charts and graphs in the chapter on postwar divorce. Also, it might have been illuminating if Fuess had decided to include references to earlier English language works that have blatantly misrepresented historical practices like the divorces temples. While some would no doubt have enjoyed a little academic bloodletting, Fuess' superb scholarship means most readers will not feel the need for a demolish job of earlier works.

Harlad Fuess has to be congratulated for producing the most comprehensive English language social history of Japanese divorce to date, making a significant contribution not only to Japanese studies but also to the field of family studies. His masterful use of such a wide and diverse range of material, as well as a commendable array of research techniques and skills, places this impressive work in a class of its own.



Reader's Comments: Under The Sun

by Justin Kerr-Smilely

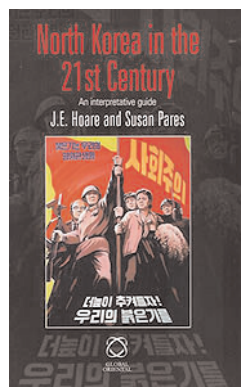
Reportage Press, 2007, 243 Pages, ISBN13: 9780955572937 (Hardback), £16.99p

Comments by Jon Risfelt

I really enjoyed this novel which is set during the dying months of World War II when Japan and Britain were

still bitter enemies. The story revolves around a young RAF pilot, Flight Lieutenant Edward Strickland, whose plane is shot down in the South Pacific while attacking a submarine. Strickland almost drowns and is then captured by less-than-happy Japanese troops based on a nearby island. The leader of

the Japanese contingent is Captain Tadashi Hayama and at first he appears to Strickland to be an inhuman monster. Not unsurprisingly, as an enemy pilot Strickland does not receive a warm welcome from his hosts who initially treat him very badly. As the novel progresses both Strickland and Captain Hayama gradually get to know and understand one another. By the end, they are friends and each sees the other as a human being and not a foe. The book is a great exploration of the way ordinary people cope with some of the absurdities of war. Under the Sun spins a credible and gripping yarn. It also benefits from some good background research which help make it a terrific read. It's a great debut novel by Justin Kerr-Smilely. Those who know Japan and the armed forces will probably enjoy this book the most but I would also recommend it to anyone interested in modern Japan.



North Korea in the 21st Century, An interpretative guide

by J.E. Hoare and Susan Pares

Global Oriental, 2005, ISBN 1-901903-91-5 (Cloth), 1-901903-96-6 (Paperback), 253 pages (including index, references/bibliography and black and white illustrations).

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Dr Jim Hoare opened the British Embassy in Pyongyang, capital of North Korea, the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, in 2001 and was the first British diplomat and Chargé d'Affaires resident in Pyongyang. He and his wife Susan Pares, who accompanied him in Pyongyang and worked with the United Nations, have provided in this book a valuable introduction and guide to North Korea, which will be most useful for visitors and future foreign residents in a country about which so little is known in the West and which is generally referred to by various clichés

The first and most important part of the book, headed "Understanding the DPRK," outlines the basic facts necessary to understand the nature of North Korea today. The first chapter entitled "Politics with North Korean Characteristics" describes the attitudes and methods employed by the regime. The authors point out that in North Korea (page 5) "what matters is not what you are now, but what your family once was. There is, in other words, no escaping one's past." The indoctrination process, the personality cult and the emphasis on conformity are explained.

The "labour camps" and the reports of human rights violations are described, as is the bizarre and ghoulish way in which the dead Kim Il Sung has been retained as President and who is "revered" in ways which make the cults of Stalin and Mao Tse Tung seem tame.

The book brings out the way in which history has been 'interpreted' to support the regime and the Confucian emphasis on loyalty and the relationship between rulers and ruled exploited. The North Korean slogan *juche* (self reliance) was first expounded by Kim Il Sung in 1955 and is reiterated endlessly in regime propaganda.

All the chapters in this first part covering the role of history,

the rise and fall of the North Korean economy, society, cultural values and the outside world provide a succinct analysis of the country and its post-war history. Among the fascinating little nuggets in these chapters is a brief description of the Ryugyong hotel (page 46), known to Koreans as "the 105-storey building", but never completed: "the vast pyramid crowned with a crane that has never been retrieved, now adds a surreal touch to the Pyongyang skyline" which foreign visitors are not supposed to photograph.

Another example of the peculiar ways of the regime is the fact that, although for a time mobile phones were allowed, in May 2004 "the right to use a mobile phone was withdrawn from all users, foreign and Korean."

The authors in their accounts of the sorry state of North Korean agriculture and the decline of industry note that nonetheless real changes are occurring. Despite the continuing shortages of food, energy and clean water "North Korean society, at the start of 2005, is clearly in better shape than it was seven to eight years before."

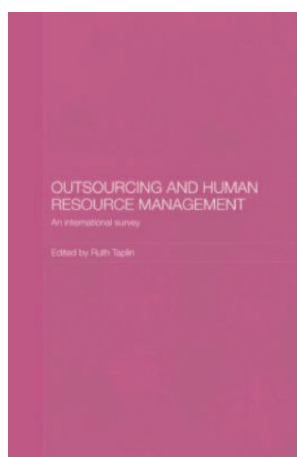
They note the limited development of a few markets and say (page 82): "The impression now is of a society that is becoming differentiated and unequal." But the state remains ubiquitous and all powerful, as is clear from their comments on the state of religion and the arts in North Korea.

Since the late 1980s five churches have been or are being built in Pyongyang. "The initiative, attributed to Kim Jong Il, to construct an Orthodox church in Pyongyang and to provide it with a congregation illustrates the decisive part the state plays in religious affairs (page 90)."

The arts (pages 91/2) "are encouraged, not for their own sake or as an outlet for individual ability and sentiment, but primarily as an element in official policies." "In few places has the subordination of intellectual activity to ideological considerations...become so entrenched as in the DPRK (page 110)."

In their chapter on "The Outside World" the authors trace the history of North Korea's relations with the rest of the world and "the very limited exposure" of its diplomats to the world. This "produced a generation with great suspicion of outsiders and a dour and unyielding approach to negotiations (page 113)." The authors outline the development of relations with South Korea and give a fair, if brief, summary of the problems between North Korea and Japan.

The rest of this review can be read on-line here:
<http://www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews/06northkorea.html>



Preview: Outsourcing and Human Resource Management: An International Survey

by Ruth Taplin (Editor)

Routledge, 2007, 264 pages, ISBN: 9780415428910

Preview by Sean Curtin

In today's global world outsourcing is an increasingly popular strategy deployed by a variety of Japanese institutions, including the financial services industry, automotive sector, IT industries, multinational companies and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This book assesses the problems and solutions surrounding outsourcing in the international context focusing on Japan, North and South Korea, the UK, South Africa, Mexico, Eastern Europe, China and India. It includes detailed comparative case studies.



Editor and author Ruth Taplin with contributing author Cint Kortmann at the book's well-attended launch which was held at the Blossom Street Restaurant in the City (London) on Tuesday, 20th November 2007.



Preview: The Tokyo Look Book

by Philomena Keet and Yuri Manabe,

Kodansha International Ltd, Japan (Japan), 2007, Paperback, 192 pages, ISBN: 9784770030610

Preview by Sean Curtin

This is a visually stunning book on Tokyo street fashion which by means of some superb photos introduces all the various styles to be found in Tokyo today as well as the people behind them. Along with the fab photos are some interesting interviews and commentaries. Philomena Keet, one of the authors, carried out 15 months of fieldwork for her anthropology PhD (at SOAS) on the topic of Tokyo's spectacular street fashion. This book represents some of her best visual research. She looked at the creative and individualistic street fashions that have been made famous through the magazines FRUiTS and Tune.



This book was launched a very lively event held at Daiwa Foundation Japan House in London on Tuesday, 20th November 2007.