

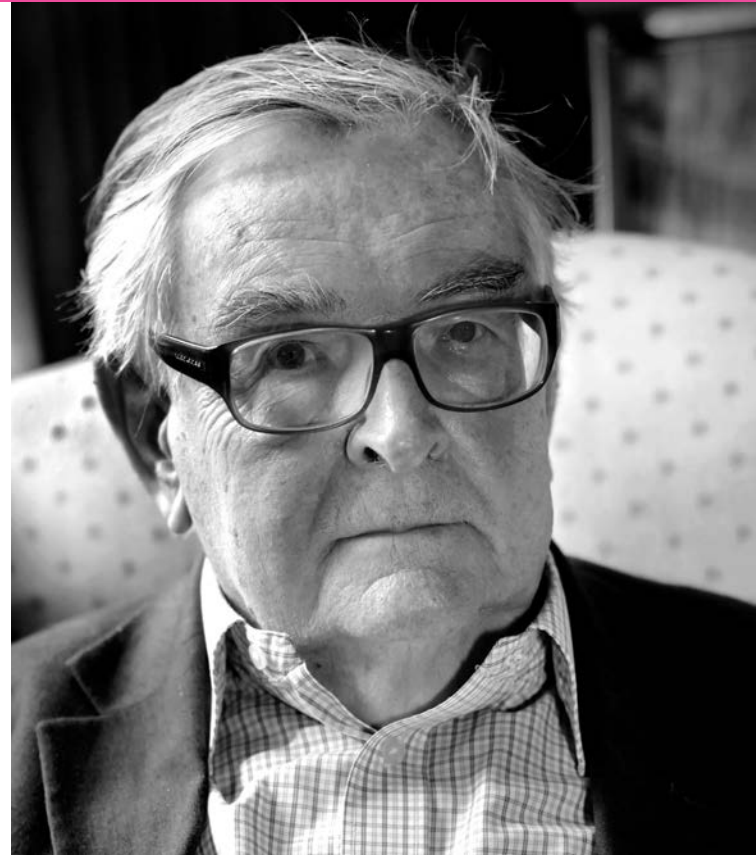


This issue of *The Japan Society Review* is dedicated to the memory of Sir Hugh Cortazzi, former British Ambassador to Japan (1980-1984) and Chairman of the Japan Society (1985-1995), who died on Tuesday 14 August 2018, at the age of 94. Sir Hugh was the most distinguished Japanese specialist of his generation in the Foreign Office, and his association with the Society began long before he became Chairman. He was Chairman of the Society during its centenary year (the year of the Japan Festival 1991), and his involvement continued undiminished until his death.

One particular aspect of the contribution Sir Hugh made to the Society was his invaluable work as reviewer for *The Japan Society Review*. From the first issue of this publication in January 2006, Sir Hugh contributed reviews about an impressive variety of topics and books related to Japanese politics, history, economy and art. He did so out of intellectual curiosity and a genuine desire to encourage the understanding of Japan and of the history of Anglo-Japanese relations. His writing always offered the reader a critical and informed perspective on the content of the books and on Japan itself.

Reviews by Sir Hugh have appeared in almost every single issue of *The Japan Society Review* for more than 12 years (previous issues are available on our website). This issue includes two reviews he wrote only a few weeks before his death and that show the wide breadth of his knowledge and interests. *Van Gogh & Japan* is the catalogue of an exhibition held this year at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam which explored the influence of Japanese prints in the paintings of Van Gogh. *Return from Siberia. A Japanese Life in War and Peace, 1925-2015* is an unusual biography tracing the life of an ordinary Japanese man and how he coped in war and peace and adapted to a changing Japan.

The active support of Sir Hugh for *The Japan Society Review* was not limited to his own writings as reviewer, but this publication also greatly benefited from his contacts and position as a prominent figure in relation to Japan in the UK and beyond. Thanks to Sir Hugh many authors and books have been covered in these pages by expert reviewers and made known to our interested readers, including the two volumes reviewed in the second part of this issue. The review of *The State of the Japanese State: Contested Identity, Direction and Role* by Gavan McCormack was commissioned personally by Sir Hugh to Professor Arthur Stockwin after attending a book launch at Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation in June 2018. He found the book very interesting but commented: "I had thought of offering to review the book, but Professor Arthur Stockwin gave at the presentation a masterly



commentary on the book and I realised that he could do a much better review than I could". The last review in this issue, *Lansdowne: The Last Great Whig* written by Simon Kerry also has a strong connection with Sir Hugh. Thanks to his help, this biography of the British politician Lord Lansdowne was reviewed by Professor Antony Best, co-editor with Sir Hugh of *British Foreign Secretaries and Japan 1850-1990*, launched at the Society's AGM in July 2018. An essay on Lord Lansdowne was included in *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits*, volume X, the final volume - compiled and edited by Sir Hugh - of a series which profiles people, organizations, and themes related to Anglo-Japanese engagement.

Sir Hugh was a driving force behind *The Japan Society Review* and he will be greatly missed. As Sir David Warren, Chairman of the Society, wrote in his obituary, Sir Hugh "was an inspiration to many (...), both as a diplomat and as a scholar. He epitomised the virtues of both diplomacy and scholarship – industry, expertise, objectivity, truthfulness – and he never stopped working, writing, learning, and pushing for a better understanding between our two countries". Rest in peace.

Alejandra Armendáriz-Hernández

Contents

- 1) *Van Gogh & Japan*
- 2) *Return from Siberia. A Japanese Life in War and Peace, 1925-2015* by Oguma Eiji
- 3) *The State of the Japanese State: Contested Identity, Direction and Role* by Gavan McCormack
- 4) *Lansdowne: The Last Great Whig* by Simon Kerry

Editor

Alejandra Armendáriz-Hernández

Reviewers

Sir Hugh Cortazzi, Arthur Stockwin, Antony Best.

Image by Jeremy Hoare

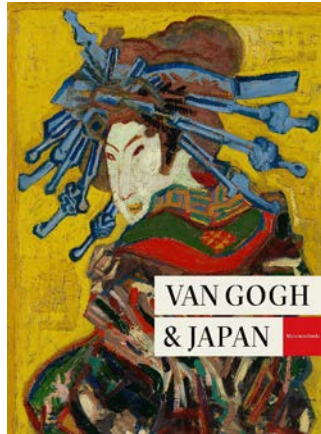
Van Gogh & Japan

Catalogue for an exhibition held from 23 March to 24 June 2018 at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam

Van Gogh Museum, Hokkaido Shimbun Press, Mercatorfonds – distributed by Yale University Press (2018)

ISBN-13: 978-0300233261

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi



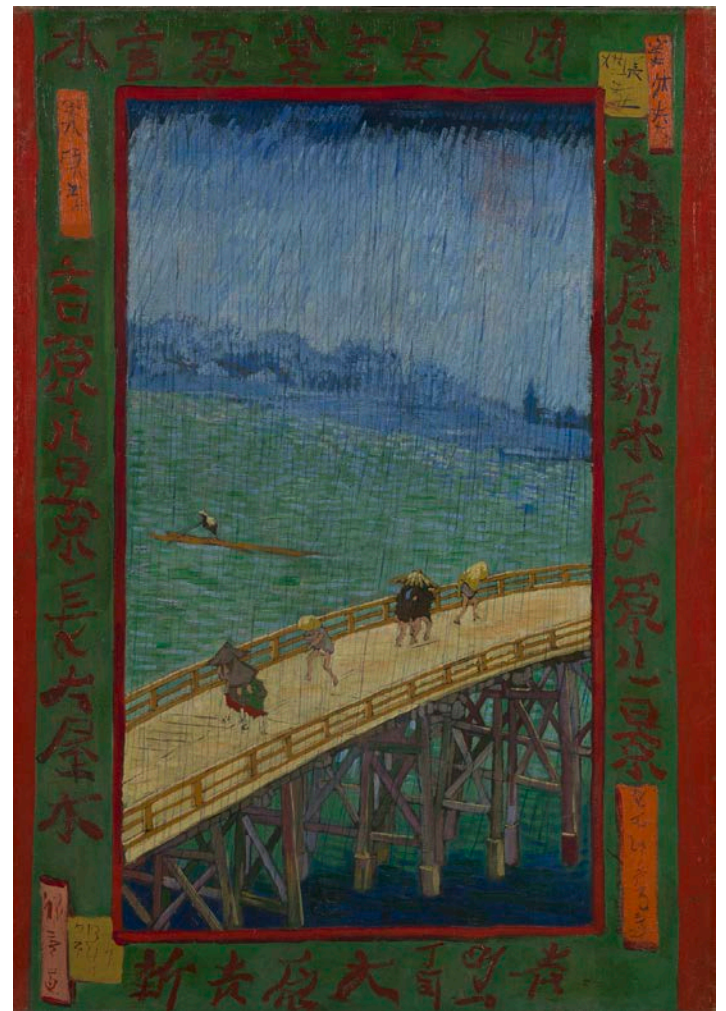
I was unable to get to Amsterdam to see this exhibition, but I bought this fine exhibition catalogue of works by Van Gogh and of Japanese prints that inspired him. Although a catalogue, however good, is not an adequate substitute for viewing a picture with one's own eyes, this is a book which all admirers of Van Gogh as an artist and anyone interested in learning more about Japanese influence on western art will want to add to their library.

The scholarly essays in this catalogue include 'The beginnings of the "Japanese Dream": Van Gogh's acquaintance with Japan', 'In the light of Japan: Van Gogh's quest for happiness and a modern identity', 'Van Gogh's Japan: Embracing an idea', 'After the dream: Van Gogh and Japan in his last months in Paris and Auvers-sur-Oise', 'Van Gogh's Japanese prints: From dealer's stock to artist's collection' and 'Chronology: Van Gogh and Japanese Art'. The book also contains a bibliography and list of the works exhibited.

In the winter of 1886-1887 Van Gogh bought from the art dealer Siegfried Bing for 100 francs 660 Japanese prints. He made a down payment of ten francs, but never paid the ninety francs he owed Bing. This seems to have been an impulsive purchase. The prints were, Van Gogh recognized, 'run-of-the-mill' prints with an average price of three sous, which at the time was the equivalent of the price of an aperitif.

Almost all the prints he bought are now in the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam. Japanese artists whose prints feature particularly often in the collection were Kunisada, Kuniyoshi and Hiroshige. Hiroshige was the Japanese artist whose prints first attracted the attention of the impressionists and early western connoisseurs of Japanese art. Van Gogh's collection did not include any prints by Hokusai although he must have seen many Hokusai prints and recognized the incomparable genius of the latter's prints.

The catalogue shows how much Van Gogh was inspired and influenced by Japanese prints and by the image of Japan which was reflected in the Japanese prints in his collection. Van Gogh was never a copyist nor derivative artist. Even his famous 'reproduction' of a Hiroshige print of a bridge in the rain is much more than just a copy (see image 1).



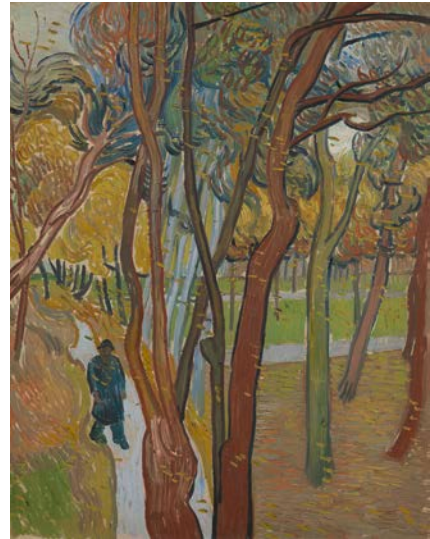
Img. 1 - *Bridge in the Rain* (after Hiroshige)
Paris, October-November 1887

The vibrant colours of Japanese prints stimulated his imagination and the strong sunlight of southern France made him think he was in the Japan of his dreams. Some of his paintings were of subjects beloved by Japanese artists such as the paintings of a peach in blossom (img. 2) or orchards in Arles (img. 3).

The way Japanese artists painted seascapes was reflected in some of his paintings of boats such as the one of St Marie de la mer (img. 4). The painting of the garden of St Paul's Hospital of 1889 surely was inspired by the way Japanese artists depicted trees (img. 5).



Img. 2- *Peach Tree in Blossom*
Arles, April 1888



Img. 5 - *The Garden of Saint Paul's Hospital ('Leaf-Fall')*
Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, October 1889

Van Gogh's kingfisher by the waterside in oils on canvas could have been found in a Japanese album of bird prints and his painting in oils also of 1887 of a crab on its back could have been inspired by a Japanese print (imgs. 6, 7).



Img. 3 - *Orchards in Blossom, View of Arles*
Arles, April 1889



Img. 6 - *Kingfisher by the Waterside*
Paris, July-August 1887



Img. 4 - *Seascape near Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer*
Arles, June 1888



Img. 7 - *A Crab on its Back*
Paris, August-September 1887

The way in which Japanese artists portrayed their human subjects in their prints inspired Van Gogh as can be seen in his painting of a peasant woman perhaps influenced by the way in which Japanese peasant women were depicted (imgs. 8-9).

In a brief review only a few of the fascinating images in this catalogue can be reproduced but I hope that the few I have chosen above will inspire readers to seek out copies of this catalogue and go to the Van Gogh Museum when they visit Amsterdam next. §



Img. 8 - *Peasant Woman Binding Sheaves (after Millet)*
Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, September 1889



Img. 9 - *Woman Gathering Shells, right sheet of the triptych View on the Tideland in the Third Month Edo, first month 1855* Utagawa Kunisada (1786 – 1865)

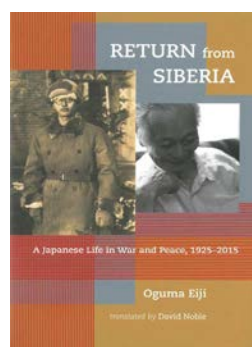
* *Images courtesy of Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)*

Return from Siberia. A Japanese Life in War and Peace, 1925-2015

by Oguma Eiji
translated by David Noble

International House of Japan(2018)
ISBN-13: 978-4924971455

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi



Most biographies are about famous people. This is the story of a Japanese man who has no particular claim to fame. He had a tough time before, during and after the war. Its interest lies primarily in the light it throws on Japanese life and how one quite ordinary Japanese coped in war and peace and adapted to a changing Japan.

This account of the life of Oguma Kenji by his son was based on a series of in depth interviews and family papers. It traces the life of a Japanese, born in 1925 who survived the war and lived into his nineties.

The book begins with an account of Kenji's childhood in a disjointed family in Saroma in Hokkaido and from 1932 in Tokyo. His mother died of tuberculosis and he hardly remembered her. His father who came from Niigata remained in Hokkaido while Kenji who had been sent to Tokyo was looked after by relatives. His grandfather ran a sweet shop selling Japanese cakes. The family was poor although not destitute. Living standards in Japanese cities before the war were low. As the war in China developed, shortages of basic essentials grew and life became harder. Kenji managed to get to a technical high school and found a job with a company, which in due course became Fujitsu. Although he was not in good health he was

called up at age 19 in November 1944 and enrolled as a private soldier.

His unit was sent to Manchuria almost immediately, without adequate training and equipment. Their area was soon overrun by Soviet forces following the Soviet's late entry into the war in East Asia shortly before Japan surrendered. Inevitably Kenji and his comrades were transferred to Siberia where they were little more than slave labourers. The book's account of these difficult years in which many Japanese prisoners died in appalling conditions is the most interesting section of the book.

The clothing available for Japanese prisoners was inferior to that of the Soviet army and many suffered from frostbite in the harsh Siberian winter. The crowded, the inadequate diet and poor living conditions reduced prisoner morale and work efficiency. Their labour value began to seem even to some of the Soviet authorities to be outweighed by the cost of keeping them as prisoners, and pressure to repatriate most of the prisoners grew.

During the latter half of 1947 the prisoners were subjected to intensive indoctrination and self-criticism sessions. 'If you didn't participate enthusiastically you were labeled a reactionary', Kenji declared, so he played along for fear that his repatriation would be further delayed.

He was eventually repatriated in 1948, but had no home to go to and his old employer had no job for him. The small amount of money he received was eroded to practically nothing by the postwar inflation. Kenji had returned to a homeland in ruins and devastated by the war. He drifted from one job to another and was unable to settle down. He was weak from his years in Siberia and in 1951 was diagnosed with TB. The only method of treatment at that time in Japan was to live as a patient in a sanatorium in the country. Once admitted he could only be released back into the community when he was declared free from infection. This took five years and when in 1956 he was released he only had one lung.

Kenji had once again to look for work. He eventually settled down and developed a business selling sporting goods. In 1961 he married Hiroko, the author's mother. She was five years younger than him. Their accommodation in those days was still primitive, but the Japanese economy was developing quickly and life gradually improved.

Kenji had never been to university, but he was a reader. In the 1970s he bought all six volumes of the Japanese translation of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag*

Archipelago. These volumes evoked memories of his life in Siberia and his political awareness, but Soviet efforts to win his support for communism had failed. When he learnt of the atrocities committed by US soldiers in Vietnam he thought that 'they seemed almost child's play compared with what the Japanese army had done' (p. 235). He could not understand how Japanese could attempt to deny the facts of the Nanking massacre and told his son: 'The perpetrators of the atrocities had been complete animals on the battlefield' (p. 236). He was not impressed by the nationalism of Mishima Yukio whose suicide 'simply seemed to prove that he was crazy'.

In 1988 the Japanese government was finally induced to establish a programme to prove a 'solation' to former Soviet internees. The Japanese government had consistently refused compensation to all victims of the war, Japanese and foreign alike. Kenji at first did not apply for a 'solation'. He was not impressed by the scheme. The government, he declared to his son, 'paid out full pensions to high-ranking military personnel but guys like me were supposed to be content with Yen 100,000 in government bonds and a silver cup from a foundation whose executives were a bunch of former bureaucrats parachuting into a cushy retirement. This is bullshit, I thought' (p. 265). He later changed his mind and applied, but he was appalled to discover that Korean and Taiwanese members of the Japanese forces who had become Soviet prisoners did not qualify. So he sent half his 'solation' to a Korean comrade. In 1997 the Korean brought a case in the Japanese courts for compensation. Kenji joined this application. The case eventually came before the Supreme Court, which rejected it in 2002. Kenji suffered a stroke that caused some temporary paralysis.

This book has been well translated and put together although I noted a few repetitions. I commend it to anyone interested in the social history of modern Japan and to anyone who wants to know more about what Japan was like for ordinary Japanese in the twentieth century.

In reading about Kenji's life I could not help recognizing how lucky I had been. I was born a year before Kenji and joined the RAF in 1943 in which I remained until 1948. I saw Japan in its desolation in 1946 and was able to observe at first-hand how the country and the Japanese people managed to go from poverty to riches in little more than a generation. §

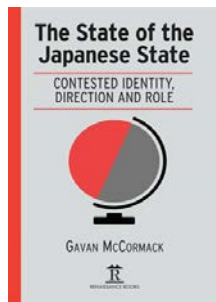
The State of the Japanese State: Contested Identity, Direction and Role

by GavanMcCormack

Renaissance Books (2018)

ISBN-13: 978-1898823711

Review by Arthur Stockwin



Gavan McCormack is an Australian scholar well known for his critical analyses of Japanese politics and government, author of *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence* (1996); *Client State, Japan in the American Embrace* (2007), and several major works on Okinawa, as well as extensive writings on Korea. He is quintessentially a scholar engagé, who also has unrivalled knowledge of relevant sources in both English and vernacular languages.

The present work brings his scholarship to bear on the successive governments of Abe Shinzo (2006-7 and 2012 to the present). McCormack divides Abe's career into "Abe 1" (1993 – when he first entered the National Diet – to 1997, (when he stepped down after a year as prime minister); "Abe 2" (2012-2016), and Abe 3 (2017-2018). He regards the rise to power of Abe both in 2006 and in 2012 as substantially based on two right wing nationalist organisations, the *Nihon Kaigi* (Japan Association) and the *Shinto Seiji Renmei* (Shinto Political Association). Nearly all members of his cabinets have belonged to one or both of these bodies, as have many back bench members of the Liberal Democratic Party. Their members in general are illiberal, sceptical about human rights, intent on revising the "Peace Constitution", and coloured by nostalgia for the pre-war regime.

He discerns a break early in 2017 (Abe 2 to Abe 3) with the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States. This leads him to identify Abe as strengthening Japan's "servile" relationship with the US. He was the first major world leader to meet Trump after his inauguration, and has been on close terms with him ever since. McCormack points to a "paradox" (his term) that the most "nationalist" Japanese prime ministers have also been the most "servile" (p. 47). This suggests that any contemporary Japanese nationalist faces the dilemma of how to promote Japanese interests and prestige while requiring American military support, leading to accusations of subordination to American priorities. McCormack favours the kind of Japanese autonomy that might follow a radical reorientation of foreign policy towards engagement with Asian powers, including China. He

sees Hatoyama Yukio (Prime Minister under a non-LDP administration in late 2009 and early 2010) as attempting but failing to implement such a policy. He argues that the failure of the Obama administration to cooperate with the aim of the Hatoyama Government to remove the US marine base out of Okinawa was the main reason for his fall (though Hatoyama's failure to provide himself with a fall-back position was also important).

There is much argument in this book with which it is easy to agree. Successive (mainly LDP) governments have been illiberal, both domestically and internationally. This has worsened since the 1980s (ever since Nakasone, Prime Minister 1982 to 1987). For many years Japan has been run by a power elite comprising the political leadership, government bureaucracy, big business, other interest groups including agriculture, and not least from the government of the United States. Successive governments have given lip-service to liberalism and democracy, particularly the Abe administrations. Freedom of speech and human rights are under attack at the present time.

A striking feature of the present book is the large amount of space devoted to the vexed issues of Okinawa and its US bases. I know of no other work on recent Japanese politics and government giving Okinawa so great an emphasis. McCormack should be regarded as the world expert on the detail of Okinawan politics and local struggles against American military bases. Okinawans have had a raw deal over many decades, and from a Tokyo perspective they seem remote, for some nationalists not properly Japanese, and essentially expendable. Okinawa island is also small (a minor fraction of the size of Yorkshire), yet some 20 per cent of its land is used for US bases. And this after the sanguinary battle for control of the island towards the end of the war, in which a staggering proportion of its population was slaughtered, or ordered to commit suicide. The struggles over the proposed relocation of the US Marine base from a densely populated urban area to an area of outstanding environmental importance on the coast has taken over 22 years to resolve, but the opponents of the move appear now to face defeat.

Some of the book's arguments are contestable. Japan may be a client state of the United States, but during the 1980s Japanese economic boom Detroit auto-workers were smashing up Toyotas in protest against a Japanese "economic threat". "Client state"

phenomena have emerged during more recent economic stagnation and now demographic decline.

It is not entirely clear what alternative there might be to the Japan-US Security Treaty. An American general famously stated that the Security Treaty is the “cork in the bottle”, having the ulterior motive of blocking independent Japanese defence policies under a nationalist government. It is at least arguable that if Japanese defence policy were detached from that of the United States, this might disturb regional stability.

Whereas McCormack tends to emphasise political continuity, structural change over the past twenty years has been striking. The system of factions within the LDP created pluralism within it up to the 1990s. Leaders such as Miyazawa Kiichi, a supporter of the 1997 Constitution and Minister of Finance for long periods, were highly influential, while the non-LDP opposition parties had some blocking power. Today, after the 1994 reform of the lower house electoral system, a much more monolithic LDP, weakened opposition parties, weakened LDP factionalism, weakened LDP committees, much more power to the executive (after the Hashimoto reforms of the late 1990s), Abe can do more or less what he wants, though he is putting his power at risk through scandals where he is accused of cronyism. To some extent factions are coming back, but essentially as

organisational support groups for rival LDP leadership candidates.

The book does not sufficiently acknowledge that since 1945 Japan has been essentially at peace, by contrast with the period 1868-1945 which Japan was at war on average every 10 years. This was brought about by a combination of the Constitution’s “peace clause” and the Security Treaty, and is surely a magnificent achievement. But this may be breaking down to some extent, in the context of a resurgent imperialist China and a still unresolved situation in Korea, not to speak of nationalist attitudes within Japan.

McCormack has unearthed fascinating material about the role of the Showa Emperor in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, though the conclusions he draws from this may perhaps be exaggerated. But he says little about that Emperor’s refusal (and that of the present, liberal-minded, Emperor) to visit the Yasukuni Shrine since 1978 when the souls of 14 alleged war criminals were enshrined there.

In conclusion, the present work focuses on some extremely unhealthy aspects of Japanese politics, not least in the area of human rights and freedom of speech. But in anatomising governments under Abe, he perhaps underestimates the very real problems Japan has with China, not to speak of the fluid situation in the Korean peninsula. §

Lansdowne: The Last Great Whig

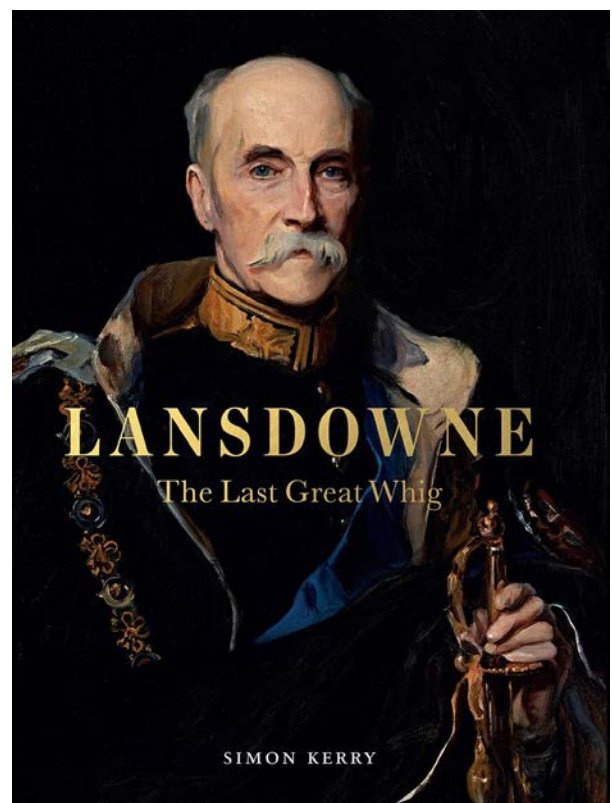
by Simon Kerry

Unicorn (2017)

ISBN-13: 978-1910787953

Review by Antony Best

The 5th Marquess of Lansdowne was one of the most important political figures of his age. Between 1883 and 1917 he was a constant figure in British imperial, foreign and domestic politics, serving in succession as Governor-General in Canada, Viceroy of India, Secretary of State for War (during the first half of the Boer War), Foreign Secretary, and the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords. For those interested in Japan he is best known as the Foreign Secretary who negotiated for Britain in talks that led to the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Despite this stellar career, Lansdowne has been comparatively ill-served by historians. In 1929 a biography was written by



Lord Newton but since that date there has been no overview of his life, despite the attention paid to his contemporaries, such as Lord Salisbury, Arthur Balfour and Sir Edward Grey. The book under review, which is written by one of Lansdowne's descendants, is an attempt to fill this gap.

In this volume Simon Kerry has had the advantage of being able to draw on the large collection of Lansdowne papers that have recently been deposited at the British Library. Combining these with a thorough combing of other archival sources both public and private, he presents us with a fuller picture of the 5th Marquess than we have ever had to date. As the title of the book suggests, Kerry sees his forebear as a man primarily shaped by Whig values. Lansdowne is thus presented as a pragmatic figure devoted to public service and the common good, but one who found himself challenged by the increasing radicalism and rapid social change of the period. Kerry clearly admires his ancestor and the reader too may well be impressed by Lansdowne's devotion to duty and to his reasoned and reasonable approach to politics. Some may even be led to lament that we no longer seem to have such figures of balance and authority who are willing to contribute so eminently to public life.

Kerry recognizes, though, that Lansdowne did make errors, none more so than his rejection of Lloyd George's 'People's Budget' of 1909 which helped to spark a two-year long constitutional crisis. Kerry is not, however, willing to criticize Lansdowne for the most controversial act of his political career; the 'peace letter' that he sent to the *Daily Telegraph* in November 1917. Kerry sees this as a profoundly moral act that had beneficial consequences in that it forced the Allies into a more open debate about war aims and helped to influence some of the more positive thinking that would emerge over the following two years. This is an interesting point, but not one that this reviewer is particularly well-placed to interrogate.

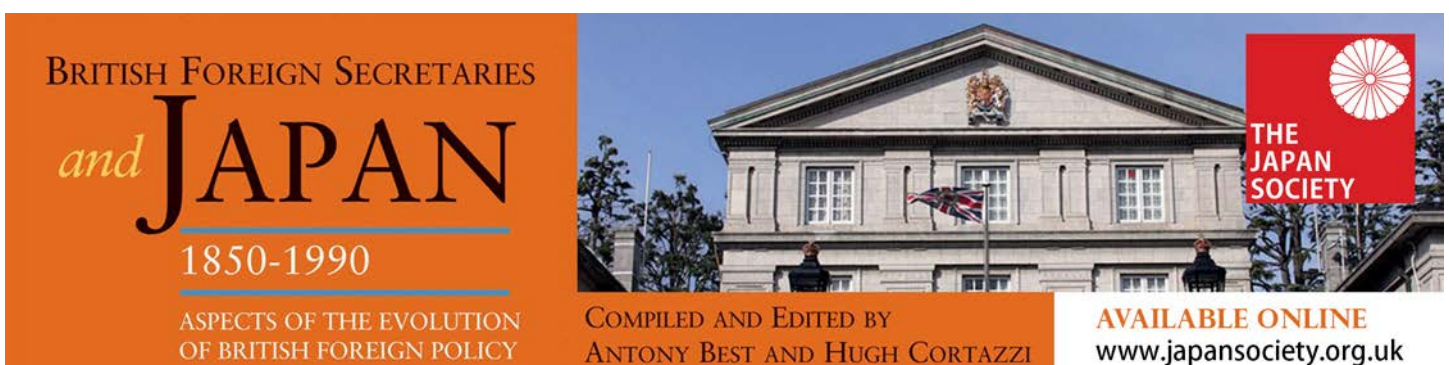
In regard to British relations with Japan, Kerry does not deviate much from what is already known from the work of Ian Nish. He rightly observes that

Lansdowne was more flexible than his predecessor as Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, and that he skilfully handled the various questions raised by his Cabinet colleagues as the alliance moved towards its conclusion in late 1901 and early 1902.

Where one might differ from his interpretation is in his assertion on p.157 that Lansdowne always knew that there was a risk of Japan's going to war, while others believed the alliance would force Russia to retreat and thus negate the chance of conflict. It is probable, although not clearly stated, that Kerry's stance is based on the letter that Lansdowne sent to King Edward VII in 1904 in which he made a claim along these lines. But a letter two years after the act does not necessarily indicate what one felt at the time; certainly Lansdowne's argument in December 1903 that Britain should act to prevent war from breaking out makes him look less assured than Kerry would suggest. In addition, Kerry goes too far in taking the line that the decision to sign the alliance met with little opposition as foreign policy was approached largely from a bipartisan perspective.

The reality is that a notable section of the press had nothing good to say about the alliance and that behind the scenes a number of Liberal politicians were critical of the treaty, including Sir Edward Grey. This is important because in 1905 the Conservative perception of Liberal disdain towards Japan was one of the factors that persuaded Balfour, the Prime Minister, from an early resignation. The government was determined to negotiate and sign the second alliance with Japan before the Liberals came into power.

In conclusion, this book fills a significant gap in the literature. It works by not only providing a thorough and informative biography of an important political figure but also by shedding light on a fascinating if troubled period in our national life. It leaves behind the lingering impression of a reasonable man wrestling with strong forces in a rapidly changing and increasingly unfamiliar world. §



BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARIES
and JAPAN
1850-1990
ASPECTS OF THE EVOLUTION
OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

COMPILED AND EDITED BY
ANTHONY BEST AND HUGH CORTAZZI

AVAILABLE ONLINE
www.japansociety.org.uk

THE JAPAN SOCIETY