

**Editor: Sean Curtin**

**Managing Editor: Clare Barclay**

**M**irroring the recent seismic shifts in the Japanese political world, there have also been some equally significant changes for Japan Book Review. This issue marks an important milestone in the development of the Reviews project as we launch our new regular reviews of Japanese language books, publish our first fictional book reviews and introduce our new readers' comments section. While we have published reviews of Japanese language books in the past, we have now greatly expanded this project in collaboration with the Global Communications Platform in Tokyo and with assistance from the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) Japan-U.S. Discussion Forum in Washington. Our on-line version is designed to provide a new resource for reviews of Japanese language books and we hope it will develop into an important educational resource. Due to demand from our readership we are also beginning reviews of fictional books as well as publishing readers' comments about books we review. I hope these developments will enhance your enjoyment of this publication. Finally, remember that our website has a great many more reviews that we are unable to print.

**Sean Curtin**

Japanese language book reviews: [www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews\\_japan.html](http://www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews_japan.html)

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## Japan Book Review

### Nihonyo Tsuyoki Kunito Nare (Japan Be a Strong Nation),

by Yoshiko Sakurai,

*Diamond (Tokyo), 2007, 304 pages, ISBN 978-4-478-00140-0*

Review by Takahiro Miyao

Ms. Yoshiko Sakurai is a well-known journalist and social critic in Japan, especially famous for her rightwing and sometimes ultra-nationalistic stance. She regularly contributes her essays on social issues to various journals and magazines, and this book is a collection of such contributions of the past year or so. Her interests are wide-ranging, from such domestic issues as bureaucratic reform and education reform to such international problems as the history issues and the North Korea problem, a fact that can be seen in the table of contents in this book.

Her current state of mind is clearly expressed in the Introduction, where she maintains that the US is gradually losing its power, whereas China is rapidly increasing its presence and influence in Asia. In particular, Ms. Sakurai emphasizes that China has adopted "shrewd tactics" to isolate Japan morally by



publicizing the history issues and to weaken the Japan-US relationship by organizing anti-Japanese movements within the US, where the recent Senate resolution on the "comfort women" (or "sex slavery") problem is a result of such movements. She also points out that some high-ranking officials in the US government appear to be leaning toward China, rather than Japan, due to the lack of knowledge about China's intentions and Japan's position on their part. Therefore, she concludes that Japan should be strong and have the courage to speak out and insist on its principles and values for the purpose of overcoming adversity and leading the world in the 21st century.

Because of her seemingly nationalistic and anti-Chinese stance, Ms. Sakurai has become a very popular figure in Japan, especially among conservative Japanese, both young and old. Having read all the chapters of this book, however, one might wonder if she is a real nationalist as a Japanese (like Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara, who is well known for his book "The Japan That Can Say No") or a hard-core anti-communist conservative as an opinion leader regardless of her nationality. Actually, she is relatively optimistic about American intentions to support Japan (for example, she denies a change in the American stance toward North Korea), whereas she is overly critical of almost any move on the part of China. In this sense, her argument may be appealing more to conservatives in the US rather than to their Japanese counterparts.

All this could be understood well by looking at Ms. Sakurai's personal background; she was born in Vietnam, educated in Hawaii, and trained to be a professional journalist at the Tokyo bureau of the "Christian Science Monitor," before becoming a TV newscaster in Tokyo. Therefore, she should be considered an international journalist with critical views on communism in general and China in particular, rather than a nationalistic opinion leader in Japan. At any rate, Ms. Sakurai is one of the few Japanese women (rather, the few Japanese, for that matter) who can stand up and say no to China.

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



## Utsukushii Kuni E (Toward a Beautiful Country)

by Shinzo Abe,

*Bunshun Shinso, Bungei Shunju,  
2006, 232 pages (In Japanese)*

Review by Fumiko Halloran

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, at 53 the youngest to hold that office in the post-war period, has written a revealing book about his life, political philosophy, and vision for a good society. The timing of its publication was impeccable as the book hit the stores just before he was elected to the premiership. The book, "Toward A Beautiful Country," swiftly rose on the bestseller lists.

In his preface, Mr. Abe divides political leaders into those who fight for what they believe and those who choose not to fight. He counts himself among the former. For him, fighting

politicians take action for the people even if they are criticized, presumably by other politicians, opinion leaders, and the press. On the other hand, non-fighting politicians are those who may be agreeable on the surface but never take actions that would invite criticism.

He points to an episode in the pre-war British Parliament when Arthur Greenwood, a member of the Labour Party, questioned Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain who was seeking to appease the Nazi dictator, Adolf Hitler. Chamberlain's eloquence in answering Greenwood's questions almost stumped him but his colleagues shouted: "Arthur, speak for England!" Encouraged, Greenwood proceeded to give a powerful speech demanding that Britain go to war to stop Germany from its military aggression. Mr. Abe concludes that he wants to be a fighting politician who listens to the public saying "Speak for Japan."

Throughout the book, Mr. Abe goes back to British political history in which his hero is Britain's wartime leader, Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Abe discusses the difference between British and American liberals and defines himself as "conservative," adding that he wants to be a "conservative with open mind." Some American journalists have casually branded Mr. Abe as "right wing," which is not the same as "conservative." Had they read this book, they might have realized that Mr. Abe is a complicated person who examines issues from many angles.

From the time he was six years old, Mr. Abe grew up in a political environment that shaped his views. His grandfather, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, was criticized by opponents of the revised US-Japan Security Treaty in 1960. Mr. Kishi was convinced that by revising the 1952 treaty, which limited Japan's rights, Japan would gain a more nearly equal position in its security relations with the US even as the treaty committed the US to defend Japan. Opponents of the revised treaty, however, sought to demonize Mr. Kishi as a villain. From this experience, Mr. Abe seems to have learned to distrust sweeping political passions. He particularly developed a distrust of the press that he sees as having its own political bias and agenda.

Mr. Abe is no stranger to international politics. His father, Shintaro Abe, was the foreign minister in the cabinets of Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone from 1982 to 1987. In that role, Abe Sr. visited 39 foreign countries, taking Abe Jr along as his executive assistant 20 times. As Chief Cabinet Secretary in the Koizumi cabinet, Mr. Shinzo Abe made a strong impression on the public in foreign policy, such as statements on the North Korean kidnapping issue.

On issues such as the Yasukuni Shrine, economic sanctions against North Korea, revision of the constitution, and expanding the activities of the defense forces abroad, Mr. Abe pursues one theme, which is to establish Japan as a truly sovereign nation. He wants to lead a Japan that can assert its national interests in an equal relationship with other powers. He rejects, however, the stamp of narrow-minded nationalism and argues that one's love of country does not lead to excluding others.

On Yasukuni, Mr. Abe points out that prior to 1985, the Chinese government never criticized the visits by Prime Ministers Masayoshi Ohira, Zenko Suzuki or Yasuhiro Nakasone even though the names of Class A war criminals had been added to the registry at the shrine. After the Asahi

Shimbun criticized Prime Minister Nakasone's visit in 1985, the Chinese government began its campaign of criticism. Mr. Abe refers to the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty of 1978 that states the two countries agreed not to intervene into each other's domestic affairs. Obviously Mr. Abe believes that paying respects to the war dead is natural feeling for Japanese, making this a domestic issue. After his visit to China immediately after he was elected prime minister, the Chinese government has not brought up the Yasukuni issue. Even so, the issue will remain in the shadows as a potential threat for his foreign policy. Polls in Japan last year showed that a majority of Japanese supported Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visit to the shrine last August because they did not want him to cave in to the Chinese and Koreans. At the same time, they had complicated reactions to the issue of Class A war criminals. One argument was that it was not right to list the names of the war criminals because none had died in battle. Some were acquitted, others died before the verdict, and the rest were hanged. The Yasukuni issue has once again stirred debate about Japan's war responsibility among Japanese.

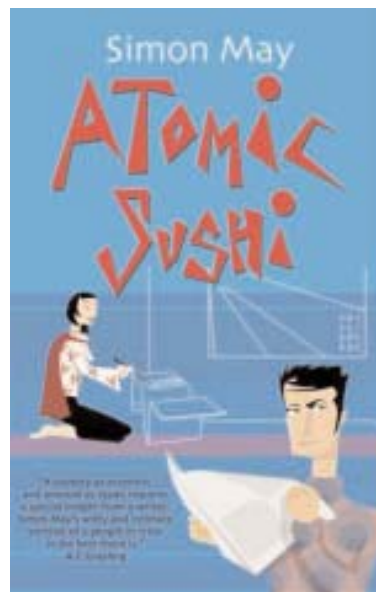
Mr. Abe spends considerable time on American foreign policy, starting with isolationism, Manifest Destiny, and the expansion of its military power in the 20th century. He cautions Japanese that their image of American Democrats as peace-oriented and Republicans as war-oriented is simple-minded and mistaken. He believes that regardless of party affiliation and different approaches, the American belief in maintaining superiority of their country is the same. For him, US-Japan alliance is vital not only for security but for shared values and beliefs in freedom, democracy, and a market economy.

Even with all this focus on foreign policy, Mr. Abe writes extensively on domestic issues including retirement and social security, aging, child bearing, education, and taxes. He wants to see a society that rewards those who work hard in a fair competition. He wants to see a Japan where the government protects its citizens, but encourages them to take initiative and not depend on the government. He wants to see a society that provides multiple opportunities. That may sound like an American dream but Mr. Abe's thinking is deeply rooted in Japanese history and cultural values.

What to make of him? He says he would be a fighting politician but would listen to the voice of the public. In this book, he goes to a considerable length to explain who he is and what his thinking is. Yet in recent polls, his approval rate has dropped from 70% at the outset to below 30% just prior to the catastrophic July 2007 Upper House election and even lower before his shock resignation in early September 2007. A major Japanese complaint was that he did not explain his thinking enough to show them where Japan was going. In contrast, Prime Minister Koizumi had a knack for sound bites on TV and never explained anything in detail, yet was very popular. Perhaps Mr. Abe's biggest challenge was his failure to capture the hearts of the Japanese public.

*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. The original review can be found here:*

<http://www.nbr.org/forauai/message.aspx?LID=5&pg=1&MID=26931>



## Atomic Sushi: Notes from the Heart of Japan,

By Simon May,

Alma Books, 2006  
(hardback) 2007  
(paperback), 256 pages,  
ISBN: 1-84688-002-5

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Unfortunately I missed the launch of the hard back edition of this book last year at the Daiwa Foundation in London. Many

members of the Society may have seen reviews in the *Financial Times* and the *TLS*, but some may have missed these. At any rate I think that it is worth drawing the attention of members to this amusing and ironic account of a year in Japan teaching philosophy at Tokyo University (the prestigious *Today*). The book is declared to be a work of fiction. This allows the author to use poetic licence and to disguise names, but it is clearly a personal account of some of his experiences in Japan.

Anyone who has had to cope with Japanese bureaucracy will find May's accounts of his encounters with university bureaucracy amusing if somewhat exaggerated. They may see in his frustrations a reminder of some of their own experiences although we should remember that bureaucrats the world over suffer from a lack of flexibility and a reverence for rules and precedents however stupid (Indian and some European bureaucrats have little to learn from their Japanese counterparts).

May notes the "stark contrast between the bureaucrats' insatiable appetite for empty procedures and their casualness over a vital educational matter" namely the university examinations. No clear standards were laid down for "setting or marking papers." There were no independent outside examiners and May was told that graduate students' in his department "were never failed." "Undergraduates did not have it too much harder" with 60% getting "excellent" and another 30% "good." "Today, among the hardest to enter of the world's universities, must therefore be one of the very easiest to leave."

His comments on the Dome in Hiroshima will be familiar to most observers of modern Japan. May reiterates what others have said before that "the Japanese people and, in particular, the public bureaucracies...have never come to terms with the evil of the fascist policies of the 1930s. The criminal acts of a perverted regime and national spirit have not been confronted to even a fraction of the extent that Germans have so courageously managed." Walking round the modern rebuilt Hiroshima he "couldn't help wondering how a nation so innately receptive to beauty could live among such atrocious ugliness."

Among the many amusing sketches in this book I particularly enjoyed his account of New Year in Kyoto and of "gate-crashing" a wedding in Hiroshima where, of course, no

one listened to the numerous speeches and instead pounced on the food. He is amusing about the ostentatious vulgarity of the wedding palace, the clothes of the bride and groom and the theatre of cutting the cake!

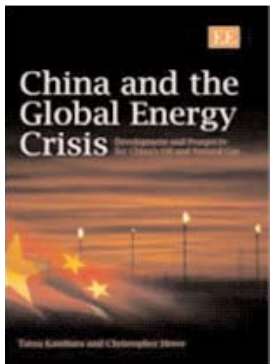
Simon May clearly enjoyed his year and derived much amusement from his encounters with Japanese, seeking wherever possible to meet people outside his university circle. Undoubtedly however Japanese food gave him his highest satisfaction especially sushi although he also admired Japanese *kaiseki* despite the huge cost at a high class restaurant such as at the Tawaraya inn in Kyoto. I was amused by how he was overcharged by a sushi master after he had lost face when May had drawn attention to a rat crossing the floor!

Well worth putting a copy of *Atomic Sushi* in your luggage for your next trip by air or rail!

## Atomic Sushi: Reader's Comments

by Ann Dent

British readers will find Simon May's "Atomic Sushi" interesting and very amusing, any Japanese reader will find it insulting. It is stated on a preliminary page, "This is a work of fiction," so what is fiction and what is fact? That an educated academic should have done so little research before taking up a prestigious appointment at Japan's top university is lamentable. Simon May's ignorance of the historical and psychological difference between the Japanese and the British, which is critical to any understanding or judgement, is evident in his book. To write an amusing account of a foreign civilization is open to bad taste, tactless behaviour and rudeness. I wonder if "Atomic Sushi" has been translated into Japanese? I sincerely hope not! Meanwhile, the Brits will laugh, have fun and enjoy it.



### China and the Global Energy Crisis - Development and Prospects for China's Oil and Natural Gas,

by Tatsu Kambara and Christopher Howe,

Edward Elgar publishing, 2007, 160 pages, ISBN-13: 9781845429669

Review by J. Sean Curtin

China's sky-rocketing energy demands are a significant factor helping push global energy prices steadily upwards. The seemingly unquenchable Chinese thirst for oil and gas is already putting tremendous strain on Tokyo's energy security strategy as resource poor Japan struggles to compete with its power-hungry neighbour. This superbly researched and timely book offers in-depth analysis of China's energy industry covering everything from its domestic oil and gas sectors to refining capacity and energy prospects as well as its future needs and the likely international impact. Understanding the global and regional dimensions of the rapidly shifting East Asian energy equation is becoming imperative as Beijing's

current and future energy needs are reshaping the dynamics of the world economy and rewriting geo-political relations.

The steep rise in Chinese energy demand is a concrete sign of Beijing's emerging superpower status. In 1976 China was a significant energy exporter, but by 2006 it was consuming approximately 8% of the world's oil output while only producing 4%. The massive deficit is a factor partially explaining why world energy prices have risen so rapidly in recent years, but the complete picture is, of course, far more complex. Increasing uncertainty over the security of supplies and the rise of India are also equally important factors in the equation.

The book comprehensively traces the dramatic history of the Chinese gas and oil industry from its early days to the present and provides projections for future developments. Despite various difficulties and setbacks in the early decades, "Deng Xiaoping's policy of reform and the 'open door' changed the prospects for the industry by enabling it to tap into foreign resources of many kinds, by bringing China into international oil and energy markets, and by revolutionizing the organization and management practices of the pre-reform industry" (page 26).

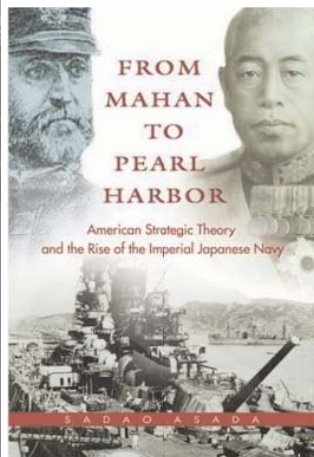
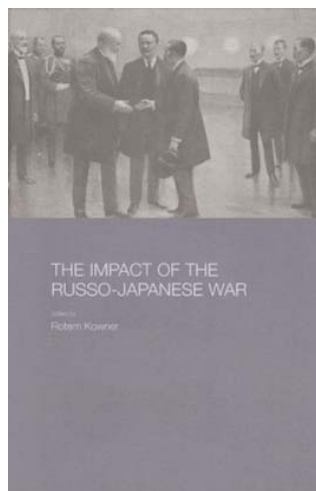
The book gives a fairly comprehensive account of all of China's on-shore and off-shore oil and gas fields plus infrastructure initiatives like the massive West to East gas pipeline project. China's current on-line natural resources span a huge area stretching from the Central Asia oil fields of the far-flung Xinjiang province to the controversial Pinghu gas field in the cold depths of the East China Sea.

The analysis is accompanied by useful maps and charts as well as facts about areas of potential reserves such as the Manjar West oil and gas zone in Xinjiang's remote Tarim Basin which "Japanese and other foreign companies have been allocated blocks for survey and exploration work on the basis of production-sharing agreements" (page 88). The Tarim Basin in particular holds great potential but also enormous challenges. The authors comment, "the prospect of large revenues from development of the Tarim fields and the pipeline raises major political issues for Beijing" (page 95)." Determining exactly how much potential oil and gas reserves China has is extremely difficult, the authors feel that most assessments underestimate the situation, and "there are probably substantial opportunities for further petroleum exploration in China" (page 43).

The book provides a superb analysis of China's refining and distribution capacity, pointing out imbalances and anomalies in the current system. One of the few criticisms one can make of this work is that some of the information is rather too technical for the non-expert, but this is generally compensated for by the introductions and summaries in each chapter which lay out the main facts in a clear and understandable fashion. The final chapter presents the key points in a digestible format with some interesting analysis. Projections about future development and outlooks for the various energy sectors are also provided, enhancing the overall work. Some important reminders are given about the difficulties of producing accurate projections and how some factors such as innovation can rapidly alter the status quo. The authors observe, "because of rapid modernization and structural change in the economy, Chinese energy-using patterns are shifting in quite radical ways - mostly in the direction of becoming more energy intensive" (page 111). The dynamics are changing at

breakneck speed as the phenomenal growth in car ownership demonstrates while the extensive development of the road infrastructure network seems certain to generate an even bigger demand for gasoline which is certain to have a global impact (page 103). This trend has the potential to harm Japan which competes for resources with the same suppliers.

The authors conclude that based on the present evidence, China's oil demands are manageable and will not necessarily lead to any destabilization in global energy markets. There is a need to further develop the domestic market and continue economic and structural reforms. Future supplies from the newly emerged Central Asia nations are also likely to alter Beijing's relationship with these nascent states and change the geo-political dynamics of the region. There is great potential for future partnerships and cooperation with foreign nations, especially Japan, which is a leader in energy-saving technology, something Beijing desperately needs. The Middle Kingdom's energy requirements are enormous and how it meets them will have a massive regional and global impact. Despite the book's rather alarming title the overall analysis is not a particularly negative one and it finishes on a fairly positive note rather than predicting a crisis. The authors contend that the global impact of China is not necessarily harmful for the world economy, while strong Chinese demand is likely to cause some serious headaches for Tokyo and change the geopolitical status of Beijing's energy rich Central Asian neighbours. This well-researched study represents a significant contribution on a topic of immense regional and global importance.



## The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War

Edited by Rotem Kowner

Routledge, 2007, 348 pages including bibliography and index  
ISBN 987-0-415-36842-7.

## From Mahan to Pearl Harbor: The Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States

By Sadao Asasa

Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 2006, 388 pages including

bibliography and index, ISBN 1-55750-042-8.

Review by Ian Nish

*Arma virumque cano.* These two books deal with armaments and the men who used them. There has been a flood of books dealing with the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 published since the centenary. The distinctive feature of the book edited by Professor Kowner is that it deals with the impact the war had on Japan and Russia and on practically all countries worldwide. The chapters are written by country experts and confirm the widely-accepted belief that there was hardly a country which was not affected by that war, especially those in Asia. These eighteen authors broadly agree that, although the war with Russia was not a global conflict, its impact was greater than the earlier Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5 and that its consequences were gradual, largely for financial reasons. It is not possible to make individual comments on the many insights in the book except for one general observation. This is the paradox that, whereas relations between the old enemies, Russia and Japan, changed from enmity to friendship by 1907, in the case of the United States, which had been host to the peace conference between the belligerents at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, relations with Japan deteriorated markedly and very quickly. As the editor writes, "the initial goodwill on both sides of the Pacific before and during the clash in Manchuria turned into a slow diplomatic deterioration" [Kowner, 15]. So much so that in 1907 the Americans updated their War Plan Orange to protect the waters of the Pacific Ocean against the Japanese menace, while Japan in her Imperial Defence Plan of that year declared the United States to be the "hypothetical enemy" of her navy.

1907 is in fact the starting-point of professor Asada's magisterial study which tells the story of American-Japanese naval relations from that year through to the outbreak of the Asia-Pacific war in 1941. In its 1907 Defence Plan Japan had set out the need for a 70 percent fleet ratio vis-à-vis the US Navy and the case for a buildup to an 8-8 fleet. Although the US had thus been recognized as an enemy of the future, Asada feels that the US and Japan had managed to reach a détente around the time of the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-2. But their failure to get acceptance of their claim for 70 per cent fleet ratio alienated large section of opinion in the Japanese navy. Thus, the Naval General Staff began to fight with the Navy Ministry after the death in 1923 of the strong-minded navy minister, Admiral Kato Tomosaburo, who was in Asada's view the navy's last effective leader. Generally speaking, the General Staff looked for a large fleet, while the ministry bureaucrats favoured meeting obligations under their existing naval limitation treaties like those of Washington and London. This conflict of ideas increased during the 1930s and the General Staff tended to exercise more influence over decision-making. After Japan distanced herself from the naval treaties in 1935-6, the new Imperial Defence Plan set out the navy's demands for expansion south, for acquisition of oil resources and for an increase in the size of the navy.

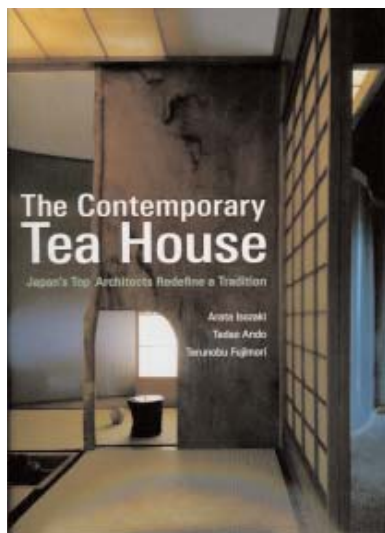
Professor Asada has published many articles on these subjects over the years as his research has progressed and now gives a clear and well-ordered distillation of his ideas.

His monograph is especially impressive on the Washington Conference and on the factions and personalities in the interwar navy. His book is the sequel to his authoritative book in Japanese on the same theme: Ryotaisenkan no Nichi-Bei

kankei : Kaigun to seisaku kettei katei [Todai Shuppankai, 1993]. Specialists will find many new and original ideas in both books, while general readers will find them readable and coherent.

Wars and navies are still with us; and these volumes covering the first half of the twentieth century still have much relevance.

## The Contemporary Tea House: Japan's Top Architects Redefine a Tradition,



Arata Isozaki, Tadao Ando and Terunobu Fujimori,

*Kodansha International, 2007, 136 pages, 200+ full colour photographs and sketches, ISBN 13: 9784770030467, £22. Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi*

This addition to Kodansha's architectural series is likely to be of interest not only to students of architecture and the Japanese way of tea but also to a wider readership. Arata Isozaki

and Tadao Ando are world famous architects. Terunobu Fujimori who is an architectural historian is a professor at the University of Tokyo.

Anyone interested in Japanese culture will be conscious of the role which traditional tea houses and the cult of tea have played in the history of Japanese civilization, but probably few are aware of the designs and building of tea houses by famous Japanese contemporary architects.

The book begins with a historical introduction by Professor Terunobu Fujimori on "The development of the tea room and its meaning in architecture." He explains how the first tea houses developed from the tea contests (tocha) in which samurai participants had to identify correctly the provenance of a particular tea. He describes the first tea houses which were termed iori (hermitages) where men escaped from the towns to the countryside for quiet contemplation. Their huts came to be about 3 metres square or 4.5 tatami (yojohan) in size. The first tea houses in the gardens of Japanese mansions were generally of this size, although the only surviving tea room used by the famous tea master Sen no Rikyu in the sixteenth century, the Tai-an in Kyoto, had only two tatami mats.

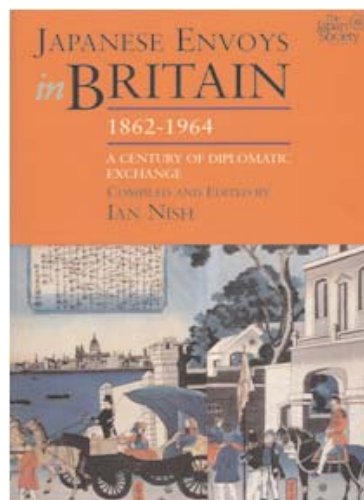
Professor Fujimori goes on to outline the development of the traditional Japanese tea house in the Meiji period as well as in the pre-war and modern eras. He notes that Kingo Tatsuno, Japan's first modern architect, who studied with Josiah Conder and is famous especially for the design of the Marunouchi Tokyo station building, did not regard the tea room as "legitimate architecture." Even the great modern architect Kenzo Tange who died in 2005 never designed a tea house. Indeed he is reported as saying: "I don't do houses!"

The next generation of Japanese architects has recognized the important role of the tea house in Japanese culture. The war years, according to Fujimori, "filled Isozaki's imagination with images of destruction and a sense of loss" and "he came to regard irony and paradox as the essence of reality." This led him in 1974 to build his first tea-room, the Kobo-an, in 1974. The tea-room was "the catalyst which enabled him to move out from Tange's shadow." Ando's debut work was "Row-house Sumiyoshi, a small urban, stand-alone residence which was completed in 1976."

The first chapter, devoted to the tea houses of Arata Isozaki, describes and illustrates some of his outstanding designs using contemporary building materials. The Uji-an and the Yoidorebune are particularly impressive. The second chapter by Tadao Ando is headed "The conflict between abstraction and representation." His aim, he declares, is "to explore abstract concepts by expressing them through material phenomena." Ando's tea houses include a "tent tea-house" and "paper tea-house." Chapter 3 is devoted to the tea houses of Terunobu Fujimori. One of his designs is a tea house on stilts which some may find way-out. Chapter 4 describes and illustrates tea houses by Kengo Kuma and Hiroshi Hara.

Not all the modern tea houses will appeal to traditionalists and some of the examples are not easy to appreciate. Nevertheless this book should help to increase understanding of the approach of some of Japan's famous and outstanding architects to an important element in Japanese culture.

## Japanese Envoys in Britain, 1862-1964: A Century of Diplomatic Exchange,



compiled and edited by Ian Nish,

*Global Oriental/Japan Society, 2007, 255 pages, ISBN 978-1-905246-32-8, £55.00*

Review by Sir Graham Fry

Next year the UK and Japan celebrate 150 years of diplomatic relations, and just on cue comes this book, Japanese Envoys in Britain (1862-1964), which contains biographical portraits of Japanese diplomatic representatives up to 1964. Its counterpart, British Envoys in Japan, was published by the Japan Society in 2004 and is about to appear in Japanese translation. Now we have both sides of the story.

The Japanese envoys were a distinguished group. After their time in London, eight became Foreign Minister and two (Kato Takaaki and Yoshida Shigeru) became Prime Minister. So this book introduces not only the envoys to London but also many of the most important figures in Japanese foreign policy.

Their experiences mirror the history of the period. To start with, Japan was learning from the West, and there is much emphasis on the Japanese students sent to the UK and the

British experts sent to Japan. Although Japanese diplomats struggled to have their country recognised as the equal of the European powers, they eventually succeeded not only in revising the "unequal" treaties but in entering a formal alliance with the UK in 1902. This was the apogee of the friendship between the two countries. Sadly, later envoys had to contend with the slide into a war which none of them could prevent, and after the war with the bitterness which it left behind.

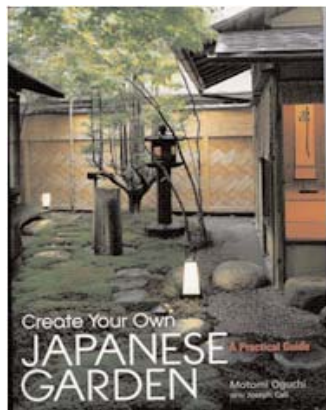
Many of the envoys were strong, independent personalities. Hayashi Tadasu had his memoirs banned from publication by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Aoki clashed so often with his own Foreign Minister that he eventually suffered the rebuke that a Count (the Minister) did not expect counter-instructions from a mere Viscount (Aoki). On the other hand, the envoys could also be tough with the British when necessary. Chinda, for example, stood his ground when the imperious Lord Curzon tried to browbeat him and gave an "almost impassioned" defence of his country.

Of particular interest are the two great pre-war Ambassadors, Matsudaira and Yoshida. Both won many British friends and took risks in the cause of peace. Matsudaira stuck his neck out over Manchuria, and Yoshida tried on his own initiative and with no cover from Tokyo to negotiate an Anglo-Japanese agreement in 1936-7.

This book does not only describe the twists and turns of negotiation. It also presents something of the daily life of the envoys and their families, and of the British circles they moved in. Ayako Ishizaka for example recalls her diplomatic childhood and her British nanny, who properly taught her that "got" was American and not good English and that "young ladies never hate, they dislike". Mme Yoshida perfectly mixes British experience with Japanese sensibility by feeding the swans on the Thames and observing that as she looked up "I saw a full moon rising over the fir tree".

This book contains many such moments of amusement and interest. Perhaps the thread running through it is how individual diplomats have tried down the years to reduce the gulf of incomprehension with which the UK and Japan started out. Ian Nish, the editor of this book and author of many of the portraits, notes that initially even the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was one of mutual ignorance. Even today, when travel and the internet have brought us much closer together, and the job of an Ambassador has changed enormously, we still have a need of people with a deep enough knowledge to interpret one society and culture to the other.

*This review originally appeared in the Japan Times and is reproduced with the permission of the author.*



## Create Your Own Japanese Garden: A Practical Guide,

Motomi Oguchi and Joseph Cali,

Kodansha International, 2007,  
114 pages, 500 colour photos  
and 100 other illustrations,  
ISBN 10:4770028040 and  
ISBN 13:9784770028044, price  
£16.99.

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Oguchi is an experienced Japanese garden designer who has designed more than 400 gardens. In his introduction the author stresses that the history of Japanese gardens is linked to property size, architecture and the surroundings. He has been influenced by his attachments to the arts of tea, ikebana (flower arrangement) and bonsai. From the tea ceremony he learnt about *wabi-sabi* which he explains as being "to patiently strive for perfection, to leave pride and envy behind." From flower arrangement he learnt "the importance of and fleetingness of living things." Bonsai had taught him "much about the life of trees and the action of soil, water, and air upon them." It has also taught him "about creating naturalness from the unnatural."

He draws attention to the principles of garden design set out in the eleventh century *Sakuteiki*. He paraphrases these as being:

1. "According the natural conditions of the site, design each part of the garden tastefully, recalling how nature would present itself."

2. "Study the work of past masters and, considering the desires of your heart [or the customer's] create a new work, mindful of what has gone before."

3. "Recall the beautiful and tasteful scenes of nature, and by putting yourself into the work create a garden full of harmony and the feeling of such places."

He comments: "These guidelines have a clear direction - naturalness, tastefulness, and harmony." He goes on to list "formal elements and design devices" such as asymmetry and *shakkei* (borrowing scenery).

The book is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is devoted to "Approaches, Entrances and Front Gardens," chapter two to "Courtyard and Dry Landscape Gardens," chapter three to "Tea Gardens and Tree Gardens," chapter four to "Interior and Veranda Gardens in Commercial Spaces" and chapter five to "Special Touches, Restoration and Maintenance." The book contains much practical advice, for instance on how to make plaited bamboo fences, create a stone bridge and assemble and place stone lanterns.

As Oguchi is a Kyoto garden designer inevitably his advice and his designs are primarily for those living in a Japanese environment. While he does design gardens for western style houses in Japan this is a relatively minor element in his book. His gardens are mostly designed to go with Japanese houses with sight lines from a Japanese *tatami* room directly into a Japanese garden, although he does illustrate one or two gardens "tailed for viewing from above as well as ground level." (page 68)

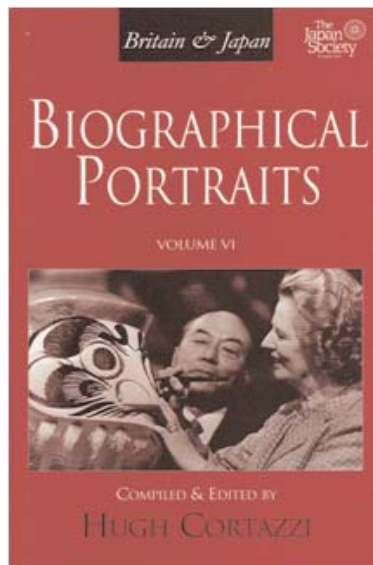
Perhaps inevitably some of his gardens look contrived and artificial in comparison with historical gardens, but they may look more natural as they mature.

Anyone living in Britain who wants to build their own Japanese garden here would find this book of interest but it is not a full and sufficient guide for our needs. The book for instance stresses the important role of *madake*, the thick stemmed bamboo which grows so profusely round Kyoto but which cannot be grown in normal conditions in Britain. It also assumes that other types of bamboo can be easily found here and that the necessary stones and mature trees are readily available. Japanese gardens can be successfully developed in Britain as was demonstrated at the exhibition of photographs of Japanese gardens at the Japanese Embassy last year and for instance by the garden designed for the RHS show at Chelsea two years ago by the late Maureen Busby. But they are

inevitably more difficult to design here than in Japan as they need to suit the British environment. They are also more difficult to build because of problems of finding the necessary materials and expertise. Anyone new to Japanese gardens needs to be aware of the importance of avoiding the "twee" and of thinking that a Japanese garden necessarily depends on a stone lantern and other artificial ornaments.

The simple answer in Britain if you are interested in Japanese gardens and hope one day to make your own is, of course, to join the Japan Garden Society and make contact with the specialist designers and suppliers who have made the society into such a flourishing organization and who produce the excellent quarterly journal *Shakkei* devoted to Japanese gardens and all that goes with them.

*The hon, secretary of The Japan Garden Society, is Mrs Ann Dobson, Woodzend, Longdene Road, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 2PQ, (telephone: 0845-0944584, email; enquiries@jgd.org.uk*



## Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits, Volume VI,

Edited by Sir Hugh Cortazzi,

*Global Oriental in association with the Japan Society, 2007, 368 pages, ISBN 978-1-905246-33-5*

Review by Adrian Pinnington

This book is the latest (and, sadly, probably the last) of the volumes about Anglo-Japanese relations that have been sponsored by the Japan Society of London since 1991. The series, together with two companion volumes on British and Japanese diplomats, now comprises nearly 250 essays. This volume contains an invaluable index for the series as a whole.

Edited by the indefatigable Sir Hugh Cortazzi, who also contributes six of the essays, this volume is characterized above all by variety. The 34 essays cover politicians, royalty, businessmen, scholars, writers and artists.

At one end, we have scholarly studies, such as Peter O'Connor's piece on the journalist Hugh Fulton Byass, which actually manages to cram an account of the fortunes of the entire English language press before World War II in Japan into 12 pages; at the other extreme, there is Roger Buckley's elegant meditation of under five pages on the difficulty of knowing just what experiences the cult British novelist, Angela Carter, actually had in Japan.

Some pieces are based on research; others are personal memoirs - including no less than three accounts written by relatives or descendants of the subjects - containing much information not available elsewhere. Other essays are based primarily on archival materials, making them essential reading for historians of the period.

Reading the excerpts from, for example, the account of the Showa Emperor sent to London before the state visit by the British ambassador or the "Confidential Aims" of Prime

Minister Edward Heath's visit to Japan, we feel that special thrill that comes from reading something not originally intended for public consumption. The volume ends with the British Embassy's report on the Beatles' visit to Japan in 1966.

Collections of essays are always hard to review - a mere list of the topics would use up the available space - but certain common themes do emerge. One of these is the strong strain of Japanophilia that has existed in modern Britain, despite diplomatic estrangement and war.

The most surprising example is Winston Churchill, who is convincingly shown by Eiji Seki to have had "a friendly, understanding and compassionate attitude" toward Japan throughout his life.

A second theme, particularly evident because of the inclusion of a number of essays about prominent Japanese businessmen, is the enormous role played by Britain in Japan's modernization. This is linked to a third theme, the blindness shown by the British to Japan's economic potential until very late.

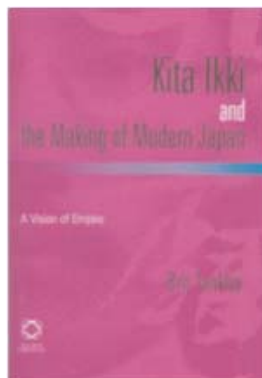
A fourth theme is the characteristic sense of gratitude that many Japanese have felt toward Britain and the positive role that this has played in relations. Another theme is the importance of diplomatic relations between two countries that are monarchies, something that has been both an advantage and a source of many subtle difficulties.

There are only two essays in the book about Anglophile Japanese intellectuals. One is Norimasa Morita's absorbing account of the impact of England on the novelist and critic Kenichi Yoshida. The other is Rikki Kersten's piece on the influence of Oxford liberalism on the political thinker, Masao Maruyama. I would like to have seen more studies of this kind, showing us the cultural impact of Britain on Japan.

But if you want to know what the Chachiru-kai (Churchill Society) does, or why so many British royal family members had themselves tattooed in Japan, or which Japanese car is named after the hero of Little Lord Fauntleroy, or why the Beatles concert roused the ire of the right wing, then this is the book for you. In fact, I can recommend it to anyone interested in the intriguing course of Anglo-Japanese relations in modern times.

*This review originally appeared in the Japan Times and is reproduced with the permission of the author. Adrian Pinnington teaches comparative literature at Waseda University.*

## Updated Review Kita Ikki and the Making of Modern Japan: A Vision of Empire,



by Brij Tankha,  
*University of Hawaii Press/Global Oriental, 2006, 272/352 pages. ISBN 1901903990/ ISBN 1-901903-99-0*  
Review by Ben-Ami Shillony

Read the new review here:

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