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We kick off our first issue of 2010 reviewing a fascinating new book by George Olcott, "Conflict and Change: Foreign Ownership and the Japanese Firm." The author looks at three foreign owned Japanese companies and compares them to three regular firms. The book provides some thought-provoking insights into Japanese employment patterns, gender equality, attitudes towards shareholders along with a host of other topics. As a byproduct key characteristics of the contemporary Japanese company are highlighted, making this an extremely useful piece of research. Moving further afield, "Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy" is a new work on Tokyo's foreign policy toward the still relatively little known Central Asian states. Japan's involvement in this increasingly important geopolitical region has intensified in recent years, culminating in 2006 with a visit by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This book explains Tokyo's regional involvement to date and how it is likely to develop. Fumiko Halloran explores the new and immensely popular four volume tale by Toyoko Yamazaki, "Doomed Man" (運命の人). Yamazaki weaves a really gripping tale out of the so called "Nishiyama Incident" involving the leaking of some confidential documents relating to the secret political agreement which helped to secure the return of Okinawa. She also writes about the sad history of Okinawa, linking it to the current controversy about relocating Futenma base. Susan Meehan gives us her verdict on the award-winning documentary movie Gaea Girls, which follows the incredibly grueling training of a group of would-be Japanese women wrestlers. Sir Hugh Cortazzi rounds off this issue with a look at a new book on the painter Alfred East.

Sean Curtin

New reviews

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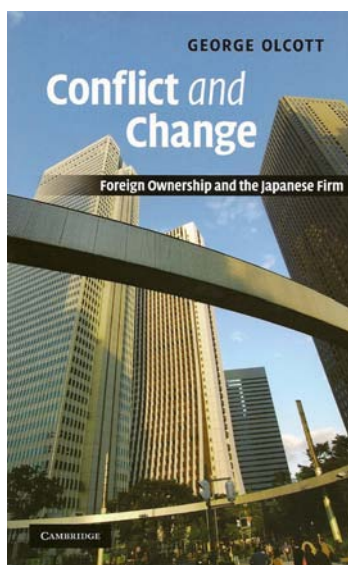
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We are grateful to our regular reviewers:

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

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Conflict and Change: Foreign Ownership and the Japanese Firm

by George Olcott

Cambridge University Press, 2009, 279 pages including index, Hardcover £55.00 ISBN 978-0-521-87870-8

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Three firms were studied by George Olcott in this well researched book, these were Shinsei Bank (formerly the Long Term Credit Bank),

Chugai Pharmaceutical Co and Nissan. He compares the trio of firms, which are controlled by foreign capital, with three firms in the same lines of business which are not identified.

The main themes (chapters) cover how different Japanese firms are in their recruitment and training, lifetime employment and career patterns, reward systems, female employees, as well as organisation and the decision-making process. The study is only concerned with white-collar workers.

Olcott in his introduction tells readers how when he was working for S.G. Warburg in Tokyo one Japanese company asked him to give advice on a brochure they had prepared for foreign investors. When he looked at the draft he was struck by the absence of any reference to shareholders. When he pointed this out, his Japanese interlocutors said "Naruhodo" [Oh yes, of course, but it had not been of course for them in the past!]. In the last few years Japanese firms have been forced to pay greater attention to shareholders but many Japanese firms, like some British banks, although in their case it is only the top employees and directors for whom the bank seems to be run, still seem to be managed primarily for the employees.

Japanese firms have been forced by the bursting of the bubble and increased competition to modify the post-war structure of life-long employment, decision-making by consensus through the "ringi" system, payment largely by seniority, and subordination of women. One modification

has been that a higher proportion of employees have been taken on as temporary workers who can more easily be laid off in a recession and whose benefits and salaries are lower than those of permanent staff. There has also been greater attention to shareholders as one of the stakeholders in the company, but it is clear from Olcott's study that even in the Japanese firms controlled by foreign capital, there is considerable reluctance to adopt western or perhaps we should say Anglo-Saxon ways of doing business and employing staff.

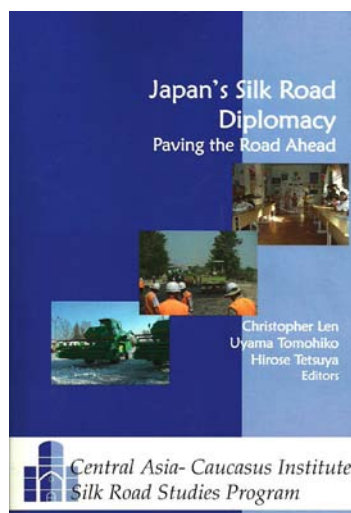
It would be wrong to condemn the whole Japanese system because of its undoubted weaknesses. It did bring stability and engendered loyalty. Its emphasis on equality helped to ensure harmony. Despite its weaknesses and over-hierarchical bureaucratic structures Japanese firms especially in manufacturing have generally retained their competitiveness, have continued to maintain their investment in research and development and generally managed to increase productivity. They did not always provide happiness and job satisfaction (some firms were ruthless in sending employees hither and thither without considering the implications for their families) but they did provide job security and reasonable rewards. Japanese firms under the old system would not dismiss anyone for incompetence, but would rather relegate them to the window. This was expensive and meant that the ambitious young employees often felt frustrated but the average employee was probably happier in the old style Japanese firm than in one run more on Anglo-Saxon lines.

The old system had, however, to change with globalisation. Deregulation became necessary to ensure that Japanese companies modernised to meet the changing patterns of world trade. Japan had to accept foreign capital and knowhow and this inevitably meant at least some elements of foreign management style.

Olcott's book shows that Japanese firms under foreign ownership can become more profitable and possibly better employers, but there is no single formula for how best to do this and change cannot be effected overnight. Much depends on the individuals involved and their sensitivity in handling the inevitable culture clashes. But these need not involve 'conflict,' a word in the author's title which is misleading.

Olcott quotes (page 248) a Nissan manager as saying: "You need to have for this kind of alliance people who are really open to other cultures, very globally minded, with a lot of understanding of different points of view." This clearly applies to both the foreign investor and the Japanese company involved. The author provides a list of the conditions for success (page 256) which should, as he says, be self-evident, but some intelligent people, foreigners and Japanese alike, sometimes, because of prejudice or obstinacy, fail to see the obvious. Of these conditions perhaps the final one provides the key: "an understanding that learning is a two-way process, that the local operation almost certainly will have something to teach the rest of the global organisation."

Those responsible in foreign companies contemplating investment in Japanese companies should read this book before plunging in with their wellington boots.



**Japan's Silk Road
Diplomacy -
Paving the Road Ahead**
edited by **Christopher
Len, Tomohiko Uyama
and Tetsuya Hirose**

**Central Asia-Caucasus
Institute & Silk Road Studies
Program (Institute for
Security and Development
Policy), Washington/
Stockholm, 2008,
Paperback.
ISBN: 978-91-85937-46-2**

Review by Sean Curtin

It is not quite two decades since the former Soviet Union's secluded Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) declared independence. Yet in the last twenty years their geopolitical profile has dramatically risen. Japan was relatively late to recognize their global significance, thus its regional strategy emerged at a gradual pace. This substantive new work gathers together the research of ten leading experts, who chart Japan's Central Asian foreign policy and provide a comprehensive overview of Tokyo's evolving regional approach.

During the Soviet era Central Asia barely registered in the Japanese consciousness, Tomohiko Uyama notes "Soviet Central Asia was never an object of great interest to Japanese diplomacy (page 106)." Consequently, post-Soviet Japanese engagement in Central Asia was relatively slow to take shape and can be divided into roughly three segments. These are phase one (i) spanning 1992-1997 (Japan's initial policy towards Central Asia), phase two (ii) covering 1997-2004 (PM Hashimoto's Eurasian Diplomacy/Silk Road Diplomacy) and phase three (iii) running from 2004 to the present (PM Koizumi's Central Asia Plus Japan initiative).

The first period commences with the independence of the five Soviet republics in 1992 and ends in 1997. Perhaps not surprisingly, in the first five years Tokyo focused relatively little attention on the region. Although the break-up of the Soviet Union afforded Japan an opportunity to engage with a re-emerged Russia and the new cluster of post-Soviet independent states, its initial efforts floundered. This was largely because foreign policy was too fixated on Russia, downgrading initiatives and policy towards Central Asia. Tokyo's keenness to resolve its decades-long territorial dispute with Moscow over the Northern Territories (South Kuril Islands), which the Soviet Red Army occupied at the

end of WWII, resulted in an overemphasis on relations with the Kremlin. Stalemate on the issue finally snapped Tokyo out of its myopia and turned its gaze towards the newly independent countries of Central Asia. Its inadequate response in the early post-independence period allowed China to make significant political and economic strides, signing various bilateral agreements and resource cooperation accords. Due to historic factors Russia also enjoyed considerable political and economic clout in the region. While counterbalancing the influence of both Beijing and Moscow was one foreign policy object, the region's abundant oil and gas reserves also offered a possible solution to Tokyo's challenging energy diversification strategy (see chapter 9 by Kuniko Shima).

By 1997 Japanese diplomats had finally begun to grasp properly the true geopolitical importance of Central Asia and the Caucasus region. If Japan wished to remain a global player, it could not afford to fall further behind Russia and China on its regional doorstep, consequently it decided to upgrade its strategy.

In this new atmosphere Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto introduced the concept of "Eurasian Diplomacy" and more specifically "Silk Road Diplomacy" in a speech delivered in 1997. He outlined Japan's foreign policy not only towards Russia and China but also significantly towards the nascent Central Asia states ("Silk Road Diplomacy") and Caucasus region. Hashimoto set out a vision in which Japan would strive to improve its relations with these young nations with the aim of fostering political and economic stability. Tokyo would assist in integrating them into the international community, and so contribute towards the establishment of a "peaceful Eurasian continent" through enhanced cooperation. Hashimoto dramatically declared that it was time for Japan to craft a new Eurasian diplomatic perspective, one which would be "viewed from the Pacific" rather than "from the Atlantic." Christopher Len states, "this strategy sought to promote the idea that Japan as an Asian state could play a leading role in influencing Eurasian affairs" (page 31). Hashimoto's Silk Road Diplomacy set a clear course and a substantive relationship gradually began to take shape. While the new policy was in reality not so radically different from previous policy, the Hashimoto initiative gave it an enormous boost and the "Silk Road Diplomacy" project provided the necessary framework to take an invigorated policy forward (see Chapter 10 by Hirose Tetsuya).

As bilateral ties strengthen, Tokyo searched for new initiatives to take relations to a higher level. It was even suggested that Japan should join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which was founded in 1996 and initially comprised China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan (the Shanghai Five). When Uzbekistan later joined it was renamed the SCO (see Chapter 4 by Akihiro Iwashita). However, the SCO idea was rejected and Japan in consultation with the Central Asia states decided to inaugurate its own body. The establishment of the "Central Asia Plus Japan" initiative under the Koizumi administration signalled the next phase in Tokyo's Central Asia strategy.



Prime Minister Hashimoto in Central Asia

In 2004 the Central Asia Plus Japan initiative was launched in a speech by Foreign Minister Yuriko Kawaguchi, signalling another important milestone. Christopher Len observes, "In essence, the Central Asia Plus Japan initiative is a continuation of the Silk Road Diplomacy set out in 1997" (page 40). He further comments, "Japan's initiative was welcomed by the Central Asian governments. This is because Japan's efforts and contributions complemented the primary objectives of the Central Asian regimes, namely, regime survival, economic growth and state autonomy" (page 41). Tomohiko Uyama believes the policy "is based on Japan's experience with ASEAN, a relative success in the history of Japanese diplomacy" (page 112).

Japan's Official Development Assistance 2005 Report explained its Central Asia policy objectives, stating they were based on two pillars: "(1) to further enhance efforts to strengthen bilateral relationships and develop closer ties between Japan and each Central Asian country, and (2) to advance dialogues with the entire Central Asian region in order to promote intraregional cooperation aiming at further development of the Central Asian countries" (page 39). The report also clarified that the enterprise (including Turkmenistan as an observer), was "initiated with the objective of materializing the second pillar."

In August 2006, in the penultimate month of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's administration, he visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the first such visit by a serving Japanese PM. Some sceptical observers viewed Koizumi's trip as primarily an attempt to secure energy resources for Japan combined with an effort to counterbalance the regional influence of China and Russia. However Timur Dadabaev is convinced it was much more, marking a significant milestone. He writes "Koizumi's visit to Central Asia exceeded all previous efforts of Japanese diplomacy and aimed to accomplish a breakthrough in relations with regional states" (page 130).

2006 saw the emergence of another significant strand in the regional policy weave with the launching of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity (AFP) initiative. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), under the then Foreign Minister Taro Aso, described the AFP as a new pillar for Japanese diplomacy. Aso, who later served as Prime Minister (24 September 2008 – 16 September 2009), enthusiastically supported the idea. Yuasa Takeshi comments, "Foreign Minister Aso Taro himself was one of the driving forces behind the AFP initiative. He used it to make not only

diplomatic appeals, but also proposals to distinguish his vision regarding the contemporary situation in Eurasia and (roughly) diplomatic strategy" (page 48). Takeshi is generally positive towards Aso, describing him as a man who "announces his own ideas in simple words to Japanese citizens" (page 50), ironically a quality he was criticized for when prime minister. The AFP initiative stressed the importance of "value-oriented diplomacy."

Aso's keenness for the idea was demonstrated when in June 2007 he published a book of his own speeches and monologues, "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity [自由と繁栄の弧], (Gentosha, 2007).



自由と繁栄の弧

while Erica Marat stresses people to people exchanges within the AFP initiative (page 99).

By Japanese standards, Aso enjoyed a relatively long stint of two years at MOFA (31 October 2005 – 27 August 2007) which enabled him to promote the idea vigorously. However it was not sufficient time to bring the AFP concept to "maturation" and after Aso was replaced as Foreign Minister the initiative was not pursued under the administration of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda (26 September 2007 – 24 September 2008) and his Foreign Minister, Masahiko Kōmura. Yuasa Takeshi observes, "the AFP appears to have been withdrawn as a main initiative of Japanese foreign policy. Since then, the AFP as a regional concept has hardly ever been discussed" (page 47). Surprisingly, this situation did not change when Aso succeeded Fukuda to the Premiership in September 2008, but the overriding focus of Aso's administration was mainly devoted to dealing with the dire economic situation and trying to stave off almost inevitable electoral defeat from a buoyant opposition. If Aso had won the August 2009 election, he may well have refocused on the policy he promoted so enthusiastically when Foreign Minister.

It is too early to evaluate Japan's diplomatic achievements under the AFP framework and how they will evolve under the new administration of Prime Minister Yukio Hatayama and his successors. The new Democratic Party of Japan government has yet to set out its own vision for Central Asia. The book takes us up to the Fukuda administration of 2008, Christopher Len gives Tokyo a fairly favourable assessment up to this point, "Japanese efforts to engage the



Taro Aso launches the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity

ahead as Japan seeks to consolidate its position in Central Asia. This invaluable book provides an excellent basis for understanding how its foreign policy may develop and interpreting Tokyo's stance towards this pivotal region.

Central Asian leaderships and to help the region develop links with the rest of the world, beyond Russia and China, should be acknowledged as a significant contribution by this Asian nation and be supported" (page 46). Niklas Swanström is equally positive, stating that Japan "has an important role to play in balancing Russia and China, and in guiding the Central Asian economies closer towards greater openness" (page 156). However, there will almost certainly be many challenges



A Doomed Man [運命の人]

by Toyoko Yamazaki
[山崎豊子]

Bungei Shunju, April-June 2009, 4 volumes, 256 pages per volume, ¥ 1524 each.

- volume 1: ISBN 978-4163281100;
- volume 2: ISBN: 978-4163281209;
- volume 3: ISBN: 978-4163281308;
- volume 4: ISBN: 978-4163281407,

Review by Fumiko Halloran

The author, known for her best sellers on the corruption of power and social injustice, has come out with a novel that explores the political dynamics surrounding the return of Okinawa from the U.S. to Japan in 1972. Thinly disguised as fiction, the book is based on research and interviews. Even the real names of the politicians, diplomats, and journalists are easy to guess from the fictional names in the novel.

The tale focuses on "The Nishiyama Incident," or "The Return of Okinawa Agreement Confidential Document Leak Incident," a scandal that is still alive. In 2007, Takichi Nishiyama, a former reporter for the Mainichi Shimbun who was a central figure in the scandal, filed a civil suit against the Japanese government to overturn the verdict in a trial that found him guilty of obtaining confidential government

documents. He demanded compensation for damaging his reputation but the court rejected his claim, citing the expiration of the pertinent statute.

The beginning of the tale stretches back almost four decades. In 1971, negotiations between the U.S. State Department and the Japanese Foreign Ministry over the return of Okinawa were intense. Prime Minister Eisaku Satoh was determined to achieve the reversion, declaring that Japan would not be free of the wartime trauma without the return of Okinawa.

In the novel, Ryota Yuminari (Nishiyama in real life) is a star reporter for Maiasa Shimbun (Mainichi Shimbun) who has broad contacts with politicians and officials. Overconfident and arrogant, Yuminari does not hesitate to play games with sources and information. He has an investigative reporter's instinct for finding big stories, particularly when officials try to hide information.

An unsolved issue in the negotiations is payment for returning property requisitioned by the U.S. forces. The Japanese government expects the U.S. to pay for restoring property to usable condition. Otherwise, U.S. forces would leave behind concrete structures and damaged land. Earlier, in 1961, the U.S. had paid for restoring farmland to its original condition. This time, however, the State Department tells the Japanese that the U.S. Congress is in no mood to pay \$4 million (about 1 billion yen at the exchange rate then) as the U.S. government had pledged that no further compensation would be paid to the Japanese.

The Japanese balk, pointing out that the Japanese government had already agreed to pay U.S.\$320 million to buy American utility, water, and financial corporations, to pay severance to base workers, to cover the cost of removing nuclear weapons, and to cover the cost for transporting American forces elsewhere. Prime Minister Satoh insisted that \$4 million should be paid by the U.S. so that the Japanese government could avoid criticism that Japan had "bought" the return of Okinawa.

To preclude the \$4 million issue from becoming the last obstacle to reversion, in the book the American Embassy's Minister Sneider (Richard Sneider being his actual name in real life) proposes to establish a trust fund with Japan's \$4 million, out of which compensation would be paid to the property owners, thus avoiding Congressional scrutiny. Minister Sneider tries to persuade the reluctant Japanese negotiators that appearances are more important than substance in this instance.

Further, Sneider demands that Foreign Minister Aichi (Kiichi Aichi in the real world) write a letter to Ambassador Meyers saying the Japanese government intends to pay \$4 million to the U.S. for compensating the property owners in Okinawa. He assures the Japanese that the letter would remain confidential. Otherwise, Sneider warns that prospects for the return of Okinawa may be at risk; he suggests that the State Department officials believe in a solid U.S.-Japan alliance but the Senate and the Pentagon are concerned that the return of Okinawa may reduce the effectiveness of the U.S. military presence in Asia.

Foreign Minister Aichi meets U.S. Secretary of Defense Rojard (actual name Melvin Laird) in Paris at an OECD conference. Pressed with the demand from Sneider and a time table for announcing the conclusion of the Okinawa negotiations, the Japanese team in Tokyo sends confidential cables to the foreign minister in Paris outlining the American demands. At a press conference in Paris, the foreign ministry announces the conditions of the agreement, saying the U.S. will compensate Okinawan property owners without mentioning the secret agreement that the money will come from the Japanese government.

In June 1972, the signing ceremony for the return of Okinawa is televised via satellite in Washington and Tokyo.

During the Diet debate on the ratification of the agreement, the reporter Yuminari obtains drafts of three top secret cables from Tokyo to Paris from a source in the foreign ministry; they clearly indicate the scheme for the trust fund. He writes articles based on these cables but without revealing documentary evidence.



Frustrated that exposing the trust fund does not develop into a major issue, Yuminari meets with a member of the Japan Socialist Party, Hiroshi Yokomizo (Takahiro Yokomichi in the real political world) who is eager to use Yuminari's information to attack PM Sabashi (Satoh in our universe). Yuminari shows copies of the cables to Yokomizo but did not give them to him. In the

next Diet debate, the prime minister, the foreign minister, and the foreign ministry's director general of the America bureau all deny the existence of a secret agreement.

Yuminari decides then to give copies of the cables to Yokomizo, believing he can protect his source and still deliver evidence of government deception. Yuminari warns Yokomizo not to show the copies in public but Yokomizo does so anyway. In addition, photocopies appear in a rival newspaper.

An eruption ensues and an investigation into the source of the leaked cables is launched. PM Sabashi is furious that the fiasco has interrupted the smooth sailing of Diet ratification. Sabashi calls the Director General of the Police Agency to demand that Yuminari be found criminally responsible. Sabashi's ambitions include winning a Nobel Peace Prize for the return of Okinawa and he will not accept all his work and effort being thwarted by a journalist.

At this juncture a sexual scandal involving Yuminari comes into the story. A secretary, Akiko Miki (Kikuko Hasumi in our reality), of a senior foreign ministry official, stuns her superior when she confesses that she is Yuminari's source. She voluntarily submits herself to the police.

Yuminari is summoned for police questioning but by the time he arrives, the police have a full confession from Miki and Yuminari is arrested. He is charged with having “aided and abetted” a public servant to disclose confidential matters. Yuminari spends 10 days in jail before being released on bail.

The incident ignites wide press coverage, roiling public opinion, and stirring outrage among journalists who make Yuminari a hero for fighting to protect news sources and the right of free expression against government pressure. His newspaper hires lawyers. Other newspapers support Yuminari on the need to protect sources, criticizing the government’s deception, and asserting the public’s right to know.

When the trial opens in the Tokyo District Court, however, the prosecution discloses that Yuminari and Miki, a married woman, had had intimate relations. The implication is that Yuminari obtained top secret information by taking advantage of their relationship. Yuminari asserts that it was a relationship between consenting adults and he never pressed her to supply information; rather, she gave documents to him as a favour.

But the damage is done and public opinion turns against him. Maiasa editorials are unable to justify the way Yuminari obtained confidential information. Support for Yuminari and his newspaper plummet. Public outrage damages the paper’s reputation and subscriptions drop as it is boycotted. The defence team tries to emphasize the public’s right to know, dismissing the sexual relations as irrelevant. Senior foreign ministry officials deny the existence of a secret agreement, claiming loss of memory about the three cables. Prosecutors, aware of the displeasure of the prime minister and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, are relentless in chasing Yuminari while the defence team paints the government as a powerful machine trying to deny the press access to information that should shed light on major issues of state.

The Tokyo District Court, in which three judges without a jury make rulings, finds Yuminari not guilty but rules that Miki has violated the civil service code. She is sentenced to six months in prison with one year of probation. The prosecutors appeal Yuminari’s not guilty verdict to the Tokyo Superior Court where the first verdict is overturned and Yuminari is sentenced to four months in prison and one year on probation.

Miki begins to paint herself as a victim of Yuminari’s sexual harassment. She collaborates with a reporter of the Shukan Shincho weekly magazine and appears on television talk shows. Yuminari remains silent even though his lawyers urge him to treat Miki as a hostile witness. Yuminari’s marriage breaks up, he resigns from his newspaper, and goes into his family business of produce supply in Kyushu as he prepares for a trial at the Supreme Court. That court, however, refuses to hear the case, ending his hope of clearing his name. He ends up selling his family business and becomes addicted to gambling on horses and binge drinking.



Several years later, Yuminari finds himself in Okinawa after having been rescued from a suicide attempt on a ship heading toward Okinawa and retreats into seclusion. Gradually he begins to reconstruct his life by getting involved with Okinawans who still carry the scars from the battles of 1945 in which one in three Okinawans were killed. After that terrible ordeal

they then had to live for decades under the iron rule of American forces.

In 2000, the Kyokunichi Shimbun (Asahi in our realm) reports that a professor at Ryukyu University has discovered a memorandum between Minister Sneider and Director General of America Bureau Magoroku Yoshida (real name Bunroku Yoshino) in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. It outlines the scheme of the trust fund. Yuminari’s suspicion is now proven but Yoshida continues to deny there was such an agreement even though his initials are on the document. The novel ends with reconciliation between Yuminari and his wife at the Peace Memorial Museum in southern Okinawa.

The author of the novel writes in an afterword that most of the former foreign ministry officials involved in the Okinawa negotiation declined to be interviewed. In 2006, however, Hokkaido Shimbun interviewed Bunroku Yoshino, the former director general of the America Bureau who signed a memorandum on the secret agreement. He admitted its existence and said he lied on orders from Foreign Minister Yohei Kono when the Asahi story broke out. Yoshino’s motivation to finally come clean is not clear, but at the age of 86, he talked in detail about the negotiations.

The \$4 million compensation was a small portion of the \$685 million the Japanese government paid to the U.S. Yet that small deception ruined the lives of Nishiyama and his family, Kikuko Hasumi and her husband, and several senior Mainichi editors. The Mainichi Shimbun never recovered from the boycott and its subsequent decline in subscriptions. Several foreign ministry officials suffered from reprimands. Perhaps the real victims were the property owners in Okinawa who received only \$1.4 million, not \$4 million, in compensation.

This four volume novel is a page turner that skilfully weaves historical narrative with complex characters and human drama. In the background is the theme of arrogance within Japan’s bureaucracy that does not take into account personal suffering in the larger scheme of foreign policy. That bureaucracy is indifferent to the need for a healing process for the Okinawans who suffered from the Japanese military during the war, then from the American military in the post-war period. Yamazaki, herself a former reporter for the Mainichi Shimbun, looks hard at the role of the press in politics.



The part about Yuminari living in Okinawa in the fourth volume is somewhat contrived. Neither Yamazaki nor Nishiyama mentions that he actually lived in Okinawa. The fourth volume gives much space to the collective suicides by Okinawan civilians after the American landing in 1945. It dwells on the American military bases that Okinawans have endured and the crimes committed

by American soldiers. Yamazaki intends to drive home the harsh reality of life in Okinawa for Japanese readers who are unfamiliar with its history but she may be faulted for possible overkill in the novel.

The return of Okinawa was hailed by the Japanese government as marking the end of the wartime trauma. The U.S. government asserted it was evidence of the democratic processes in which the former warring nations agreed on the peaceful reversion of occupied territory. But the Okinawans themselves were excluded from the negotiations even though they allied themselves with Japan's opposition parties and the activists who criticized, distrusted, and rejected the approaches of both governments.

For those who criticize the U.S.-Japan alliance, the belief is strong that Okinawans will not be at peace so long as the Americans stay there. Since the U.S. military is not likely to leave Okinawa, peace of mind will not come to Okinawans. At the same time, Okinawa's economy depends on the bases and subsidies by the Japanese government. Life goes on but Okinawa's history is still an open wound in U.S.-Japan relations. For that reason, Toyoko Yamazaki's novel will be widely read.



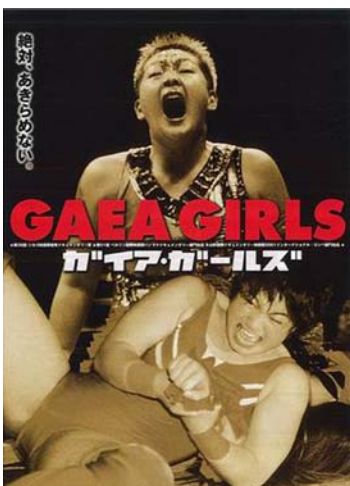
the Gaea Girls' stark boot camp, unobtrusively allowing stories to evolve in documentary style. 'Gaea Girls' corresponds to a sumo wrestlers' 'stable' or training centre, perhaps, and the young girls sacrifice any independence, freedom and privacy they may have in their all-consuming quest to become top wrestlers. They sleep in bunk beds in less than salubrious conditions and train all the time.

Early on in the documentary we witness a stomach-churning pro-wrestling match (many more follow) in which the women fighters don't hold back – from belly-flopping onto the prostrate adversary, already flattened and knocked to the ground by powerful drop kicks to the face and body; to pulling one another's hair and to using a lit burner on the other's face, the violence is extreme and no punches are spared. At this point I was ready to leave the cinema and the scenes of women with blood-caked hair, split lips and blood-splattered faces well behind, but thought I would be rewarded by seeing the film through to the end.

The documentary goes on to focus on Takeuchi, a budding wrestler in her late teens whose abiding ambition it is to debut as a professional. Takeuchi has to pass a tough trial, i.e. undergo a series of bouts against the rest of the Gaea Girls to prove her mettle and to this end is constantly training. Early on in the documentary Takeuchi comes across as a spirited personality excitedly revealing that she wants to become a pro-wrestler in order to prove herself and become "somebody," but becomes rather taciturn and troubled as the film progresses and her training intensifies.

Takeuchi's commitment - given the tough training, the brutal telling off by top wrestler and mentor Chigusa Nagayo, a powerfully built woman and advocate of 'tough love' who has taken this group of young girls under her wings - is truly incredible. Failing her first trial, Takeuchi is not allowed to become professional as, not cutting the mustard, she would discredit the Gaea Girls. The pasting she receives during the punishing trial bouts and the abuse she receives from Chigusa for not fighting back are hard to stomach.

All in all I did not fully regret watching the film in its entirety as the documentary is original in focusing on and highlighting a little-known aspect of Japan and the characters are truly interesting. What I really wanted to know, however,



Gaea Girls [ガイア・ガールズ]

directed by Kim
Longinotto & Jano
Williams

2000, 100 minutes
(Available on DVD from 25
January 2010 as double
release: Gaea Girls/Shinjuku
Boys).

Review by Susan Meehan

Building on the success of "Divorce Iranian Style" and "Shinjuku Boys," Longinotto and Williams spent three months in Japan filming female pro-wrestlers 'interned' at

was where these girls had come from and what had set them on the path to train in such a violent, nasty and bloody sport, albeit it a popular one given the number of enthusiastic followers and spectators. What would their lives have become otherwise and what were they trying to prove? What illusions did they have about pro-wrestling? What did their families say, if anything? Were they running away from something? Sadly, these questions were left unanswered.

In the Q&A following the screening at the Renoir Cinema on 31 January 2010, Longinotto said that pro-wrestling can be a vehicle for young Japanese women to do something for themselves; it is this which I found most difficult to swallow. To my mind the poor girls in the documentary were nothing more than indentured wrestlers at boot camp living on a pittance, being physically and visually abused and encouraged to become professional, no doubt, in order to rake in money for Gaea and bring them more exposure and sponsorship. It is hard to believe that the girls had many other options in life.

Takeuchi eventually does turn professional, most certainly a result of the depletion of new recruits through absconding, and does not last long. In her debut professional bout she is left reeling by the Gaea Girls' own Satomura and only manages to fight a few more months, we were told at the Q&A, before retiring and finding work at a petrol station

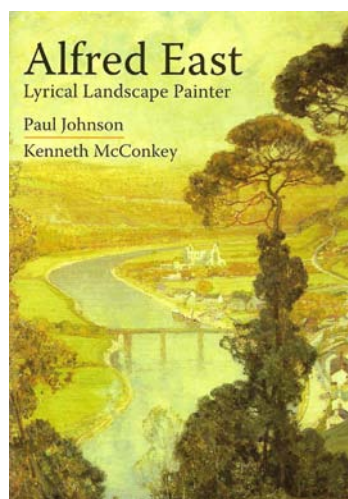
These seem to be impressionable girls without many options, somehow lured in by an almost cultish outfit masquerading as a sporting centre. Perhaps fame and glamour are attained in some cases, but at what senseless cost.



“An Angry Night” which even in this reproduction shows his use of colour and shade:

East was born in Kettering in 1844 as the son of a boot-maker and he started in business with his brother who was twenty years his senior. He developed gradually into a landscape painter. Apart from painting English scenes he travelled widely in Europe and the United States. He later became a decorator, etcher and educator. Reproductions of his paintings in this volume are divided into sections entitled “Earlier British pictures,” Japan, France, Italy, Venice and Sicily, Spain and Egypt and Later British works.

The introductory part of the book covers his life and career until his death in 1913. His relationships with the Royal Academy and the RBA are discussed. Kenneth McConkey writes about “East and the Edwardian Grand Tour” in an essay entitled “Picturesque Imperialist.” East may not have achieved the highest accolades from the critics but Edmund Gosse who was a leading critic of the early decades of the twentieth century declared at the opening of the Kettering Gallery, which East created, that he was an artist “who was first and last a painter of exquisite distinction and full of originality.”



Alfred East Lyrical Landscape Painter

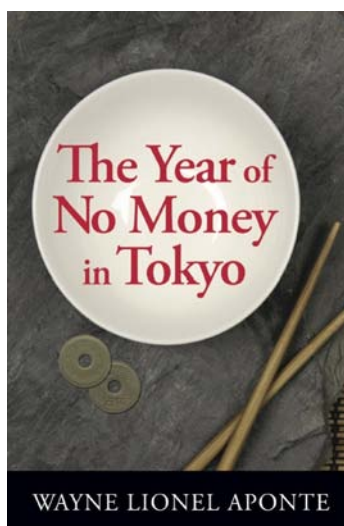
by Paul Johnson and Kenneth McConkey

Sansom and Company,
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Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Sir Alfred East RA (1844-1913) was a founder member of the Japan Society in 1891. He was commissioned by Marcus Huish, director of the Fine Art Society in New Bond Street in 1888 to “paint the landscape of Japan.” He travelled to Japan with Charles Holme and Lazenby Liberty who were also fascinated by Japan. East’s diary of this visit was published in 1991 under the title *A British Artist in Meiji Japan* (edited by me and published by In Print). As Paul Johnson writes in this volume “Many of the subjects painted by East ... were the typical sites of interest to foreign visitors but some were pure landscapes. East saw through



Next Issue:

**The Year of No Money
in Tokyo**

by Wayne Lionel
Aponte

In the next issue of the Japan Society Review we will be looking at Wayne Lionel Aponte’s book, *The Year of No Money in Tokyo*.