



Editor: Sean Curtin

Managing Editor: John Toppon

Welcome to 2008's first exciting edition of The Japan Society Review. Within our new-look publication you will find the usual wide-ranging selection of riveting review articles on the latest Japan-related books and films. In this issue we have some fascinating pieces spanning Japanese politics and literature to gardening along with a look at some recent fictional books plus our regular film feature and much much more! This issue marks our return to regular publication and in the coming months the Reviews team will be providing you with the latest and most up-to-date reviews.

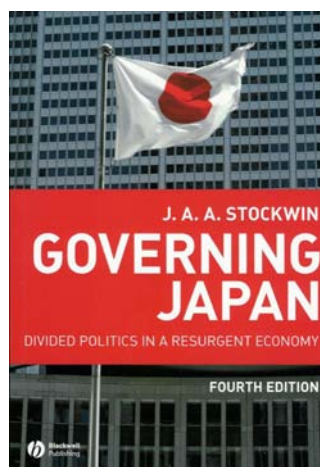
Sean Curtin

Contents

- (1) Governing Japan, Divided Politics in a Resurgent Economy
- (2) Under the Sun
- (3) Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa
- (4) The Last Concubine
- (5) The Straw Sandal or The Scroll of the Hundred Crabs
- (6) Kamome Diner
- (7) Designing and Creating Japanese Gardens
- (8) One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each
- (9) The Japanese Way - Garden Designs

New reviews: www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews.html

Archive: http://www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews_archive.html



Governing Japan Divided Politics in a Resurgent Economy

by J.A.A. Stockwin
Blackwell Publishing,
Oxford, 2008, 298 pages
including index and tables.
Paper Back £19.99
Hard Back £55.00
ISBN-13: 978 -1405154154

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Professor Arthur Stockwin, who was until recently Nissan Professor of Modern Japanese Studies in the University of Oxford, is the leading British expert on Japanese politics. His aim in this book has been "to make at least partly comprehensible what to the outside observer (and indeed to many Japanese themselves) often appears to be the great muddle of Japanese politics." His analysis is succinct and he has managed to unravel most of the complexities of Japanese politics.

This is the fourth edition of a work which was first produced in 1975, but many important changes have taken place in the way Japan is governed since the last edition in 1999. Much of the book attempts to assess these changes. This entailed rewriting a large section which now covers the political scene up to the appointment of Mr Yasuo Fukuda as Japanese Prime Minister in 2007.

Stockwin identifies "six broad areas of crisis." These are crises "of political power and accountability," "of political participation and non-involvement in politics," "of the Constitution and political fundamentals", "of

liberal versus illiberal ideas," "of ageing society and diverging life-chances," and "of national status and role." He considers that these crises are "all relatively serious, actually or potentially," but Japan as "a major and dynamic economic power" has a basically democratic structure and "the political system has repeatedly demonstrated its capacity to overcome crises and achieve reasonably satisfactory solutions to problems."

His analysis, which takes due account of economic and social as well as political factors, is based on careful research and observation and his judgements are fair and objective. He occasionally allows himself to make some shrewd and pointed comments, for instance that "prime ministers in Japan may be categorized as ranging from weak to moderately effective". At the presentation of his book at Daiwa House in London recently, he gave the palm to Shigeru Yoshida, but also praised Hayato Ikeda and Junichiro Koizumi.

After an introduction headed "Why Japan and its Politics Matter" Stockwin gives useful summaries of the historical, social and economic background. He also discusses the attempts at political reform in the 1990s and writes about "the Koizumi Effect" in the twenty-first century.

This section is followed by a chapter which tries to answer the question "Who Runs Japan?". In this he discusses the theories of writers such as Chalmers Johnson and Karel van Wolferen and notes that while Japan has unique features it is not "uniquely unique."

In commenting on the changing character of elections he explains the differences in the make-up of constituencies following the replacement of multi-member constituencies by a mixture of single member constituencies and an element of

proportional representation. Groups supporting individual candidates are not the equivalent of the local branches of political parties found in Britain.

He notes that Japan is “at once dynamic and conservative” and that “traditional styles of personal, “pork-barrel” politics remain embedded in the appeal and modus operandi of the LDP”. He regards the DPJ as essentially another conservative party, which is critical and fractious but which does not present a real alternative government of a different complexion. Ideology now plays a limited role in Japanese politics and personality still counts more than party. There is little sign that Japan is moving towards a two party system.

In discussing domestic political issues he underlines the problems facing Japan with its declining and ageing population. He is concerned by the “clear trend since the 1990s towards illiberal policies in certain areas” and considers that “central government power is subject to insufficient restraint, whether from opposition parties, Parliament, the judiciary, the media or the voluntary sector ... recent governments have shown worrying signs of riding roughshod over opposition including the media”.

The chapter on the constitution provides valuable background to the problems involved in amending the constitution and includes the text of the changes proposed by the LDP.

In his chapter on the political implications of foreign and defence issues he reminds readers that Japan’s GDP is still more than double that of China and that China is now Japan’s second largest trading partner. He believes that the era of “Japan-Passing” in the 1990s is over and that “an innovative Japan brand” has been developing. “If politicians could be persuaded to understand and develop the comparative advantages that Japan now has, as a sophisticated post-industrial society in a globalizing world, the future for the country could be bright indeed.” He is thus cautiously optimistic for the future of Japan.

There is much food for thought in this stimulating and informative book. It contains, with its numerous tables, all the essential facts for understanding the Japanese political scene. It should be read and kept for reference by all foreign diplomats and journalists who have to attempt to interpret Japanese politics.

Under The Sun

by Justin Kerr-Smiley

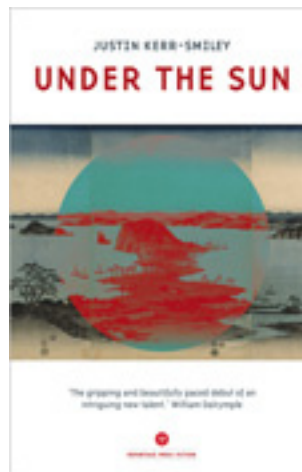
Reportage Press, 2007 243 pages.

Hardback £16.99

ISBN13: 978 - 0955572937

Review by Susan Meehan

In Under the Sun, Justin Kerr-Smiley’s debut novel,



we are introduced to young Flight Lieutenant Edward Strickland. Strickland, whose study of Greats at Oxford is curtailed by the onset of the Second World War, develops, over the course of the book, from a young RAF Spitfire pilot, into a more worldly individual coming to terms with the loss of love, friends and comrades.

Deployed to the South Pacific in the closing stages of World

War Two, Strickland, flying sorties over the Carolines, is shot down by a Japanese submarine countering his attacks. Plummeting to the sea and to certain death, he is noticed and rescued, however, by a group of Japanese soldiers stationed on a remote island, anxious at all costs to remain concealed, and unsure as to what to do with the captured enemy.

While Under the Sun makes for compelling and tense reading at times, once the theatre of war moves from Europe to the South Pacific, the clichés and episodes of florid language become too many to list and Strickland seems more like a character out of James Clavell’s Shogun than a believable war hero.

Like Clavell’s 17th Century Pilot-Major, John Blackthorne, whose trading ship runs aground off the Japanese coast, Strickland narrowly escapes death by his captors, who then proceed to protect and look after him despite endangering themselves in doing so. In both cases the non-Japanese becomes an accepted and integral part of the group in which he’s landed.

The world inhabited by Strickland and the Japanese island-garrison is a bit too idyllic at times, somewhat reminiscent of Asterix the Gaul’s enclave, “... one small village ... still holds out against the invaders ...” It is fanciful to think that the island harbours no dissenters who may want to harm Strickland.

Then there is Commander Hayama, a textbook character personifying a range of cliché which, one would hope, are no longer prevalent – though fierce he is also sensitive with exquisite fine tastes. Brutal to Strickland initially, Hayama not only gives an outward appearance of sensitivity with his feminine face and smooth skin, but this entomologist manqué spends his free time either collecting or cataloguing his butterflies, changing into his kimono to play the violin, writing haiku, burning incense or praying to his ancestors for illumination.

The language is cringeworthy at times; the friendship between Hayama and Strickland is rendered thus, “... their friendship had survived the ordeal and their souls were now forged together like the steel of a

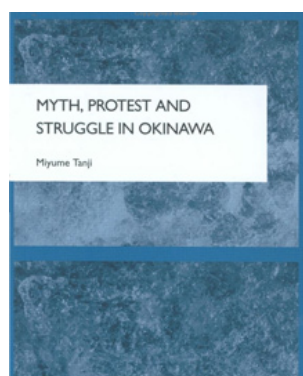
samurai's sword. Whatever the gods decreed, they would face it together."

Even more overworked is the following passage, "... the sun rose like a nymph from the deep, naked and tender as a newborn, flames flickering and falling from her shoulders in a burning watery garment, the sea coiling and writhing like a serpent beneath her feet".

And there seems to be a certain lack of imagination in the depiction of Inoue. Hayama's orderly, the good Japanese, happens to be a Christian from Nagasaki, almost implying that a Buddhist would be incapable of the same kindness. Perhaps in order to make up for this, we later read that, "Karma was not only a tenet of Buddhism but also of Christianity. St Paul had said precisely this in his letter to the Galatians when he wrote, 'whatever man sows, he shall reap.' The two faiths had many aspects that complemented each other. They were like two halves of the same fruit and in the middle were the pips, the seeds of faith."

Contrived situations including a shark attack and seppuku continue apace and the typos (Hamaya instead of Hayama, repetition of words: to to, written written etc) don't help either.

Still, an interesting read and a percentage of the proceeds goes to a good cause!



Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa by Miyume Tanji

Routledge, 2006, 234 pages
including index, maps,
glossary and abbreviations.
Hardback £85.00
ISBN13: 978 - 0415365000

Review by William Farr

Tanji sets out a strong and quite explosive thesis right from the beginning of Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa as she argues that the struggling relationship of the Okinawan population with its Japanese overlord and American military presence is one that has been fraught (and often fought) with difficulty. A nerve is struck straight away in the book as Tanji recounts an incident in 1995 where three American marines kidnapped and then gang-raped a young Okinawan girl. Okinawa was plunged into the international spotlight, which exposed the fact that American forces enjoyed extraterritorial privileges, and incidents of this sort rarely ended in a just outcome.

The Okinawan people have seen their own land and people used and abused, with little or no respect for rights and privileges, and when the Okinawan people

have sought help from the Japanese government they have often been ignored. Until the late nineteenth century Okinawa, known then as Ryukyu, was under the authority of the Satsuma domain in Southwest Kyushu after it was invaded in 1609. At that time Ryukyu was a tributary of China. Negotiations later by the Japanese government with China over the value of Okinawa, placed it firmly within Japanese rule, but negotiations had also discussed the splitting up of the Ryukyu kingdom. Islands were to have been given as gifts to the Chinese. This sets the tone early in the existence of Okinawa [for the Japanese] as an elaborate bargaining chip and buffer against the outside world.

Okinawan princes and rulers tried to retain power over their diminishing strength at the hands of Japanese rule, but all this was at a cost to the common Okinawans. In the 1920s for example, Okinawan peasants facing famine conditions turned to eating the wild-growing cycad palm tree. If not processed properly, the leaves are extremely poisonous. As a result many Okinawans died in what became known as 'palm tree hell'.

In 1947 the American military viewed Okinawa as "justly acquired by the sacrifice and casualties of American youth in the Battle of Okinawa" (p55). Over 45,000 acres of land was occupied, mostly farmland as it was cultivated and flat - important for the creation of military runways. The farmers of Ie-Jima (Ie Island) believed that if they co-operated with the invading American forces, the Americans would help them re-build. The people of Ie-Jima were in fact glad the Americans had won, as they thought the Japanese military treated them with contempt. Re-building did not occur and the American forces continued to claim more land - often using armed soldiers. This was because at the time Okinawa was seen as being strategically important for regional security against the communist bloc.

After World War II, Okinawa had an uncertain future, occupied by American forces with the Japanese government having no central control over the land. Okinawan schoolteachers wanted the land to return to Japanese rule, an opinion that divided the country. In many ways the Okinawan people did not want to return to the abuse suffered under Hirohito, yet occupying American forces were proving to be no better. For the farmers of Ie-Jima in 1953 and 1954, a slogan of 'Bulldozers and Bayonets' summarized their often helpless struggle against occupation.

Myths surround the Okinawan people, such as the idea that they took part in collective suicides in World War II. Images from World War II programmes come to mind, of individuals throwing themselves from cliffs rather than be captured by invading American forces. Yet these collective suicides were whole

villages were killed were never the result of warped collective thinking, but rather compulsory deaths, imposed by the military. This was changed in the official version of events through the intervention of Monbusho (the Education Department) into the re-writing of Japanese history textbooks in the early 1980s, where events such as the suicides and what is now known as the 'Rape of Nanking' were effectively deleted from history.

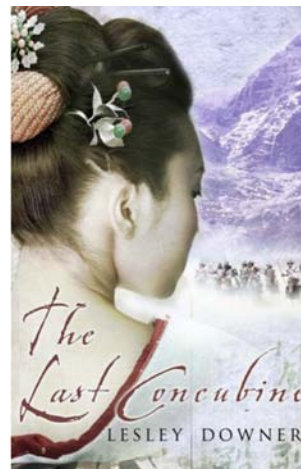
At times like this the Okinawan protest movement has often burned the familiar Japanese national Hinomaru flag, as in 1987 at an annual sports event in Yomitan village. Here the flag was burnt in protest at continued pressure to use the flag for public events. For many Okinawans, the Hinomaru flag still symbolizes the old Japanese army and the military as it was under Emperor Hirohito.

After World War II the Okinawan people have sought to adapt to the hard regime of the US military – and have since rediscovered their own method of protest and provocation in an effort to reclaim their own island and identity. Some have even sought to exploit the situation by focusing on business opportunities.

The Okinawan population has faced difficulties in the development of its own personality. Various factions grow, some die but all in Tanji's view are complex and contextually organic. Within each group various battles are fought to find a voice, and more often than not the dominant US military has achieved its aim through a divide and conquer approach.

The Okinawan struggle (Okinawa toso) is not clear-cut and the people's movement is "fragmented, untidy, and marked by conflicting ideas, definitions and methods of protest" (p178). The huge American military industrial complex dominates the post World War II experience of the Okinawans, but from this Okinawa has started to piece together its own collective history from its own sources, ignoring revisionist history.

This is an intellectually tight and well-crafted piece of work. The book may be of value to readers interested in the re-emerging idea within international and intra-national politics of small nation-states growing beyond the larger unions they are a part of, especially through burgeoning cultural identity. Tanji points out that the crashing of a cargo helicopter into the Okinawa International University campus in August 2004 brought about protest as 81 per cent of the Okinawan population called for the air base nearby to close. The struggle for the Okinawan people is clearly not over yet, but perhaps a singular voice of protest is becoming a reality.



The Last Concubine by Lesley Downer

Bantam Press, 2008, 480 pages.
Hardback £12.99
ISBN 13: 978 - 0593057537

Review by Anna Davis

Lesley Downer's first novel chronicles an unexpected romance that grows in the gulf between old and new in nineteenth century Japan. Romantic love, a nameless

concept in the society of the day is an interesting theme, but the real page turner is the historical backdrop, taking us from the secretive and elegant women's palace to the bloody samurai battlegrounds.

"It was a challenge to write a love story set in a society in which there was no concept of romantic love – and without ever using the word 'love!'" admits the author. The backdrop to her story, however, is a seemingly effortless creation and left me thirsting to know more about the era.

Sachi, our heroine, begins life as a peasant in a small village. At the age of eleven she is spotted by the journeying princess and taken off to the women's palace where we are given a fascinating glimpse into the lives of the three thousand women who live within its walls. Sachi slips into this evocative world of beauty, envy and female companionship, into a life that revolves around one man – the shogun. At fifteen Sachi becomes his concubine. As her lifelong friend Taki tells her, "It is the greatest thing that could ever happen to a girl."

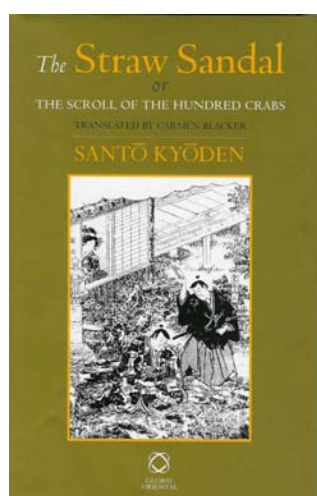
However, this quiet glory and the inner calm of life in the women's palace is quickly whisked away from Japan's last concubine. Black ships have arrived from the West, civil war ravages and eventually reaches even the sheltered women's palace. As Sachi flees from the palace, acting as a decoy for the princess, she is rescued by a dashing warrior. Here enters our hero, who becomes the unsuspecting subject of an enduring love affair. Sword play, friendship, disguises and dedication all rear their heads as Sachi and her female companions struggle to create a new destiny in a country thrown on its head. Amidst the drama, Sachi must also confront and explore a shocking revelation about her past that leaves heroine and reader puzzling over who the last concubine really is.

Many of the characters really did exist (the shogun, the princess and the three thousand women of the palace, to start) and Lesley Downer has weaved her story into a concrete time and place. She is the first to admit that there is not extensive documentation about the women's palace. However, she has tempered the various settings with her own imaginings and

understanding; Lesley is a woman who knows Japan. She lived in the country for over ten years. To research "Geisha: The Secret History of a Vanishing World" she spent six months living amongst the geisha and sharing in their lives.

With the historical references and beautiful settings so firmly laid down, the evolution of a love that could hardly be identified as such is the story's most complex element. The unexpected and fleeting romantic moments must have felt so to the characters as well as the reader, and Lesley Downer has done a good job to ensure the consistency of this improbability.

Enjoy the love story along the way but read this for the sheer beauty of the era, the drama and glory, and for the glimpse into a little-known world as seen through a fusion of history and imagination.



The Straw Sandal or The Scroll of the Hundred Crabs by Santō Kyōden

**Global Oriental, 2008,
166 pages.**

**Hardback £35.00 (Japan
Society members can order
direct from the publisher at
a discounted rate).**

ISBN 13: 978-1905246649

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

This book was launched at Daiwa House in London on 22 January. Peter Kornicki, Professor of Japanese at Cambridge University, and Dr James McMullen, a former pupil of Carmen and a lecturer in Japanese literature at Oxford University, spoke about the book and about Carmen as a teacher and scholar. Sadly owing to ill-health Carmen could not be present but Dr Michael Loewe, her husband, who has known Carmen since their days at Bletchley Park during the war and has for many years worked with Carmen, spoke on her behalf. Many members of the audience including scholars, former pupils and close friends paid tribute to Carmen's many outstanding qualities. I felt honoured to chair this meeting and noted in my remarks her great contribution to the Japan Society which she helped to resuscitate after the war and for which she acted as the first post-war editor. All her friends want to thank Marie Conte-Helm and the Daiwa Foundation for generously hosting this event.

Carmen explains in her preface that during the war she came across in a book shop in London a copy of W.G. Aston's History of Japanese Literature published in 1899 and saw in it a reference to Santō Kyōden and his "masterpiece" Mukashi-banashi Inazuma-byōshi

(A Tale of Times Long Past: Lightening on the Cover). She "proceeded to read about the ghosts, suicides, and terrific combats found therein." She longed to find the original book in Japanese but doubted whether she would ever find a copy in war-time Britain. One day, however, Arthur Waley, the great oriental scholar and translator, invited her to look at his books and she saw there a copy of Kyōden's masterpiece. When she expressed particular interest in it, Waley told her to borrow it, adding "keep it as long as you like" and she still has it.

As anyone who has tried to read books written in the Edo period will know, these can be very difficult to understand. They are likely to be written with abstruse characters and phrases, and contain references to Chinese and Japanese literature. By the time she acquired Waley's copy Carmen had not progressed very far with her study of Japanese. Nevertheless she began to translate the book working in her digs with lighting which was barely adequate for reading English texts let alone small Japanese characters. The text lacked a commentary and notes so it would have been a mammoth task to translate it even for one accustomed to Edo period Japanese. But she persisted in her efforts, although eventually she had to put it aside and did not return to it until many years later. It is a tribute to her scholarship and persistence that despite her debilitating illness she managed finally to finish the translation with help from her friends and former colleagues who all encouraged her to continue to work on the text.

As Peter Kornicki pointed out at Daiwa House, Carmen's translation is felicitous. It reads smoothly and does not sound like a translation. She clearly enjoyed this piece of Edo period "blood and thunder" with its series of unlikely coincidences, escapes, murders, suicides and fights. As Kyōden said in his introduction of 1805, "the novel is based on a playbook for the puppet theatre" in which melodrama so often featured.

Kyōden was a successful writer, but the authorities exercised a close censorship over publications and some of his satirical pieces attracted their attention. He was sentenced to spend fifty days under house arrest and in handcuffs. As a result of this punishment he no longer featured the pleasure quarters in his stories (although he no doubt still frequented them). Instead he turned to melodrama for his themes. Even so he could not set these in contemporary Japan for fear of offending the narrow-minded Bakufu officials but had to place them in the fifteenth century, although he did not bother to conform to historical facts. For instance, guns which did not reach Japan until the Portuguese arrived in the sixteenth century feature in the Straw Sandal.

Paul Norbury has included with the text many of the original black and white illustrations and these add

greatly to the attractions of this charming little book which will, I hope, find the readership it deserves among all who are interested in Japanese literature.

Kamome Diner (Kamome Shokudo/Ruokalla Lokki) Directed by Naoko Oigami

Released in 2006, 102 mins

Review by Fumiko Halloran

The Japanese movie "Kamome Diner" (The Seagull Diner) sparkles with humour, friendship, cross-cultural communication, delicious food, insights into life, and enigma, all wrapped up in a Japanese diner in Helsinki, Finland.



Sachie, a Japanese woman who is in Finland for reasons unknown, opens a family-style diner in Helsinki. No Finns, however, come into what they see as an exotic diner because they don't know what to expect. Finally one day a teenage boy wanders in for coffee and tries to strike up a conversation in Japanese with Sachie. He is crazy about Japanese animation. Unable to answer the boy's question about an animation song, Sachie spots another Japanese woman in a bookstore and asks her about it. Midori knows the song and ends up moving into Sachie's apartment and helping in the diner. Yet another, older, Japanese woman comes into the diner. Masako is stuck in Helsinki because her luggage has been lost by an airline. The three women work as a team and finally a few Finns come to try Sachie's cinnamon buns and eventually sample her Japanese food.

The story has no dramatic turn of events but rather a series of small episodes of interaction between and among Japanese and Finns that sends a strong message: regardless of different cultures, we are all humans sharing similar emotions and sentiments. This is opposite to the theme in the American movie, "Lost in Translation", which depicts Americans in Tokyo totally bewildered by Japan and suffering from an acute sense of alienation.

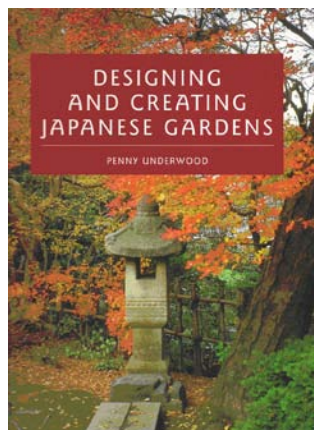
My favourite scene is a drinking contest between a

belligerent Finnish woman and Masako. At the end of the bout, the three Japanese take the drunken Finnish woman to her home. She starts telling the story of her life to Masako in Finnish, and Masako listens with sympathy. When the three leave the house, Masako tells the other two that the woman's husband walked out on her and that she was lonely and wanted her husband back. Sachie and Midori ask Masako if she understands Finnish. Masako cheerfully says "lie" (No).

Sachie is an enigma. In her late 30s, she's single, never tells her friends why she is in Helsinki, why she opened the diner, or how she's getting on with her life. She is quiet, efficient, friendly and caring, yet holds back from disclosing anything about herself. We learn that she is a student of Aikido who easily wrestles a large Finnish man to the floor when the three women discover that he has sneaked into the diner to steal a coffee maker. He turns out to be the previous owner of the eatery whose business failed, and the coffee maker is actually his.

Sachie is played by Satomi Kobayashi whose superb acting moulds the story and characters with subtlety and restraint into a seamless movie. Based on a novel with the same title by Yoko Mure, the director, Naoko Oigami, has succeeded in making an excellent movie that could potentially have been difficult because it is in both the Japanese and Finnish languages, and is played by Japanese and Finnish actors. I saw the movie with English subtitles during the Hawaii International Film Festival in Honolulu in November 2007. In this version, the audience was treated to a three-language cross-cultural experience. The theatre was packed and there was constant laughter and warm feelings among the audience.

Cast: Satomi Kobayashi, Hairi Katagiri, Masako Motoi, Tarja Markus, Jarkko Niemi.



Designing and Creating Japanese Gardens

by Penny Underwood

**The Crowood Press, 2005,
192 pages, including
bibliography and index.
Hardback £25,
ISBN 13: 978 - 186126 7832**

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

I recently reviewed a book with a similar title published in 2007 by Kodansha International (Japan-UK Review Volume 2 No 4, August 2007). This was "Create Your Own Japanese Garden: a Practical Guide" by Motomu Oguchi and Joseph Cali. Had I known of Penny Underwood's book I would have reviewed

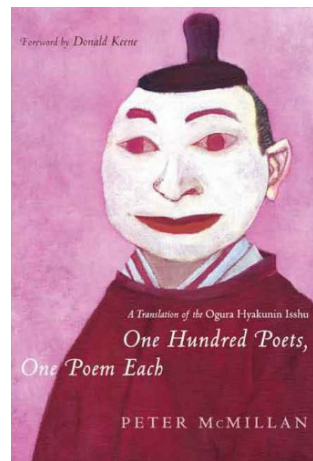
them together, particularly as Penny refers to some Japanese gardens in Britain including one in Dorset, another in Hampshire and the Kyoto garden in Holland Park. I feel a special connection with the Kyoto garden, as it came about after I had approached the Chairman of the Kyoto Chamber of Commerce and Industry for funds for a Japanese garden as part of the 1991 Japan Festival in the United Kingdom which marked the Japan Society's centenary.

I pride myself perhaps wrongly that when I heaped praise on gardens in Kyoto and suggested that the garden be called the Kyoto Garden, this helped to induce the Chamber to make the generous donations which made possible the designing and building of the garden in Holland Park. I also believe, again perhaps wrongly, that the 1991 Festival and the creation of the Kyoto Garden was at least a partial catalyst for the establishment of the flourishing Japan Garden Society in Britain. In this context I was disappointed that the author makes no mention of the Japan Garden Society or its real achievements in reviving Japanese gardens in Britain and bringing together enthusiasts and experts as well as designers and suppliers of materials for building Japanese gardens here. As I said in my review in the August issue, the best advice to anyone interested in creating a Japanese garden in Britain is to get in touch with the Japan Garden Society, join it and read their excellent quarterly journal *Shakkei*.

My task here is, however, to review this book rather than promote the Society of which I am the honorary President. One of their expert members might be better qualified than I am to review this book.

Penny Underwood's book is not only a practical guide to making a Japanese garden but also a general introduction to Japanese gardens. It covers much the same ground as the volume which I reviewed previously. The most useful chapter is, I think, Chapter 8 "Planning a Japanese Style Garden in the West" in which she stresses the importance of finding the right soil and of course, ambience. But her comments on structural features (chapter 7) and on maintenance considerations (chapter 9) are valuable, as are her views on plants and planting (chapter 5). Her final chapter on the gardens of Japan inevitably is not comprehensive and will disappoint the well travelled professional. This said, the coloured photographs in the book are generally very good.

It is unfortunate that the author did not have her text read by someone competent in the Japanese language. Occasionally she uses macrons, but often when really needed she leaves them out. For some Japanese words which she uses I could not identify the characters in my *Kenkyusha* dictionary. Her bibliography also struck me as inadequate.



One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each by Peter McMillan

Columbia University Press,
2008, 194 pages.
Hardback £23.50
ISBN 13: 978 - 02311143981

Review by Takahiro Miyao

This is a fascinating book about Japan's traditional "waka" poems, written by an Irish poet who is currently teaching at a Japanese university. The subtitle of this book is "a Translation of the Ogura Hyakunin Isshu," where the Ogura Hyakunin Isshu is a set of one hundred "waka" poems written by various poets from the seventh century through to the early thirteen century and compiled around 1237 by the famous poet and scholar Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241). "Waka" is a poetic form expressed in lines of 5, 7, 5, 7 and 7 syllables, which is called "tanka" in modern Japan.

Peter McMillan has successfully made it an artistic work, in which the hundred poems are displayed in the author's English translations, accompanied by calligraphic versions in Japanese and symbolic drawings of the individual poets. Furthermore, Japanese typed and romanized versions of the poems are included in an appendix for the reader's convenience. The design of the book itself is quite attractive, as a caricatured but still artistic figure of Fujiwara no Teika is shown on the book cover, reflecting the aesthetic sense of the author who has a gallery specializing in contemporary Japanese art.

As McMillan clearly states in his introductory chapter, the purpose of his translation is "to provide a readable and poetic translation that ... will open to a wider readership who will find in these versions something of the depth and beauty of this magical collection." In other words, his translation is neither a detailed explanation nor a purely artistic remake of the original Japanese poems, but rather a poetic English expression of the original waka with correct interpretation "faithful to the heart of the original." This approach has turned out to be fruitful in producing an excellent translation of the Ogura Hyakunin Isshu, as pointed out by Donald Keene, who contributes a foreword to this book, in which he praises McMillan's translation and states that "[it] has restored the importance and beauty of a collection of poetry too often dismissed as merely 'pretty.'"

When I interviewed McMillan in person a couple of months ago, he told me that "waka" is probably one of the most natural ways of expressing Japanese minds and feelings, and certainly more so than "haiku," which may be a little too rigorous by the Japanese standard,

due to the strong influence of Zen Buddhism from mainland China. That might be one of the reasons why the Imperial family is keeping the tradition of the New Year Poetry Reading Ceremony (utakai hajime) with strong support and active participation by the Japanese public, and "waka," now known as "tanka," is quite popular and widely accepted, especially by Japanese women, as part of the contemporary literature, according to McMillan.

No one would fail to notice McMillan's love for waka and respect for Fujiwara no Teika, and to be impressed with his deep understanding of the Japanese waka tradition and his excellent artistic skills to represent it in English. In a sense this book is already a classic to be treasured in this field. Eileen Kato, who accompanied McMillan to visit the grave of Teika in Kyoto near the completion of this book, concludes in her afterword that "this translation for the general reader has been a labour of love" and she is "happy at last to see [the Hyakunin Isshu] available in this unpretentious, reliable and satisfyingly poetic translation."

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

The Japanese Way - Garden Designs by Maureen Busby

**JGS Publishing, 2008, 127 pages,
(188 colour photographs and 111 line drawings &
water colours).**

Hardback £25.00

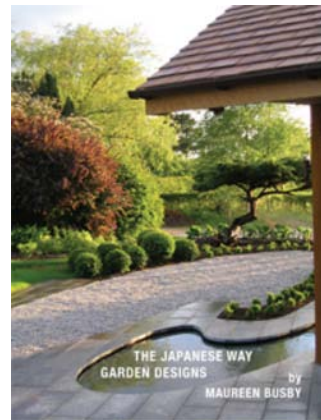
ISBN 13: 978-0955818806

Review by Colin Ellis

Maureen Busby was an exceptional individual who took up garden design in her fifties after a very successful first career in education. In the 12 years before her sudden and untimely death in 2006 she had become a highly respected garden designer and was elected a member of the Society of Garden Designers in 2001. This book is exceptional too.

Between 1994 and 2006 Maureen Busby worked as a sole practitioner on about 130 garden design projects of which some forty form the principal content of this book. Those in the book range in size from a window box to a half acre garden and each is presented using a common format - client brief, site appraisal and interpretation of the brief. Each project is well illustrated using before and after photographs, plans, plant lists and the watercolour concept sketches that she prepared for each client. However, her clients rarely asked for a Japanese garden but rather for "something minimalist," "something restrained and

understated," only occasionally for "something with a Japanese feel." This book illustrates her success in meeting those wishes in the Japanese way.



In his introduction Graham Hardman, Chairman Japanese Garden Society, draws attention to the depth of knowledge and understanding that Maureen Busby brought to focus in her work. She firmly believed that nature must be closely observed and understood before it can be interpreted and she enjoyed illustrating this principle by quoting

the 17th century Japanese poet, Basho, "Learn about a pine tree from the pine tree. Learn about a bamboo stalk from the bamboo stalk." As Sir Hugh Cortazzi observes in his Preface "...she had the aesthetic understanding needed to design and build in a non-Japanese environment gardens which are a true reflection of Japan."

The projects are divided into six sections: Rear Gardens, Town Gardens, Courtyard Gardens, Roof and Balcony Gardens, Front Gardens and Show and Exhibition Gardens. This last category includes the two gardens that she designed and constructed at the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) flower shows (Hampton Court and Chelsea). Each was awarded the very prestigious RHS Gold Medal.

The book is well written and beautifully illustrated and works at many levels just as gardens themselves do. People who like looking at gardens will enjoy it, people who design gardens will admire it, people who seek solace in gardens will find it, and those studying the art of good design will learn from it. For although this is not on the face of it a "how-to-book" there is a very great deal to be learnt from it.

In Britain if you are interested in gardens in the Japanese style and hope one day to make one of your own then this is very much a book for you but you should also join the Japanese Garden Society and there make direct contact with the leading specialist designers and suppliers of whom Maureen Busby was one. The Society also publishes to its members an excellent quarterly journal *Shakkei* devoted to gardening in the Japanese style.

Copies of this book are available (price £25 plus p&p) from The Secretary, The Japanese Garden Society, 'Woodzened', Longdene Road, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 2PQ. Alternatively you can telephone 08450944584 or email enquiries@jgd.org.uk.