



Editor: Sean Curtin

Managing Editor: Clare Barclay

Our first issue of 2007 features a major new Japanese book on the Second World War, "Who Was Responsible?" which has generated considerable international debate. We also review other books on the topic which examine different aspects of Japan's wartime past. You will also find the usual broad selection of stimulating reviews on the latest books about Japan. In this issue we look at new works on Japanese literature, Sake brewing, administrative reforms and have a special section on books about early European travellers to Japan. You will find exclusive special offers on many of the books reviewed. Please remember that this publication only represents a fraction of the reviews available on our website. We also review movies, the stage, arts and Japan related events. Japan-UK Review is constantly adding new on-line articles, so it is definitely worth a weekly visit to the homepage.

Sean Curtin

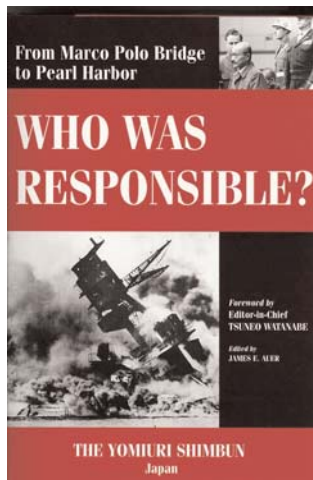
New reviews: www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews.html

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

Contents

- 1) Who Was Responsible? From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor
- 2) Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan
- 3) Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature
- 4) The Book of SAKE, a Connoisseur's Guide
- 5) Administrative Reform in Japan
- 6) Secret Memoirs of the Shoguns: Isaac Titsingh and Japan, 1779-1822
- 7) Japan Extolled and Decried Carl Peter Thunberg and the Shogun's Realm, 1775-1796

Japan Book Review



Who Was Responsible? From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor,

Edited by James E. Auer,

The Yomiuri Shimbun, 2006, ISBN4-643-06012-3, 410 pages including index, £20, available through JP-Books (UK) Ltd, Lower Ground Floor (Mitsukoshi), Dorland House, 14-20 Regent Street, London SW1Y 4PH. Tel.: 020 7839 4839. Fax: 020 7925 0346 (e-mail: jp-books@london@lineone.net)

Special 10% discount on this book by quoting your Japan Society membership at the store or in mail order purchases.

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Tsuneo Watanabe, the editor-in-chief of the Yomiuri Shimbun, which has a circulation of over ten million, the largest of any Japanese newspaper, established in 2005 a committee of Japanese journalists. The committee was to

produce a careful historical analysis with the aim of telling the Japanese people, a majority of whom were born after the war: "Who was responsible for starting the Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War, why they did so and why the nation kept fighting until many of its cities had been almost completely reduced to ashes." The committee worked for fourteen months studying a wide range of documents and sources. This book in English and two volumes in Japanese contain the findings of this committee.

While this book inevitably cannot tell the whole story it is a devastating critique of Japan's leadership in the Showa War which the Yomiuri calls the period 1931-45. It does not pull any punches. It states boldly that "Japan misread the prevailing international situation in 1941 when it went to war against the United States." Japan failed to formulate realistically its war aims or an exit strategy. "For Tojo and others the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere through war with the United States and Britain was Japan's last resort to make China surrender." The Japanese army's refusal to withdraw from China scuppered any hope in 1941 that War could be avoided. A comparison in 1940 between the national strength of Japan and the USA in 1940 (page 115) reveals the extent of Japan's gamble in attacking America. The misreading of intelligence, assessments based on wishful thinking, combined with cover-ups of failures made defeat inevitable. Prime Minister General Hideki Tojo was for instance only informed of the defeat at the battle of Midway "more than a month later (page 149)."

The report makes clear that the army and the navy were

frequently in discord. The cliques in both services exacerbated the situation. After the war ended Tojo told (page 150) former foreign minister Mamoru Shigemitsu: "The fundamental reason [for Japan's defeat] was the lack of control. The Prime Minister... did not have the authority to control the reins of its military forces."

Intrigues and deliberate disobedience by relatively junior officers of orders from Tokyo led to the escalation of the war in China and to appalling mistakes in other theatres which resulted in vast numbers of military and civilian casualties. The Guadalcanal campaign in 1942 in which 20,000 Japanese troops died (15,000 as a result of starvation) was "a tragedy born in a war without strategy."

Japan's political leaders are shown to have been criminally culpable. Hideki Tojo is held by the Yomiuri as "most responsible." The second most guilty man was Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe who allowed "the Japanese military to act on its own." But others, including middle-ranking officers, some of who did not face trial before the Tokyo International Military Tribunal, are also condemned by the Yomiuri. These include other politicians as well as military and naval figures. Prime Ministers Hirota and Koiso as well as Kido, the Lord Privy Seal, are sharply criticized. Foreign minister Matsuoka and Lt General Oshima, Japanese ambassador to Nazi Germany, who consistently overestimated Germany's chances of victory, are condemned not least for pushing the disastrous tripartite pact with Germany and Italy. The members of the Diet are rightly censured for their failure to do anything effective to hold the government responsible for its failures. The list is long and convincing.

Tojo's cabinet was described (page 204) by Prince Takamatsu, the Emperor's younger brother, as "a regime of terror which will stop at nothing." He is said to have asked Morisada Hosokawa: "Is there no one who will assassinate him?" The plots which were made to oust Tojo from office are an appalling indictment of the machinery of government in war-time Japan.

The Yomiuri emphasises that more than 3.1 million Japanese died in the Showa war. Of these some 800,000 were civilians. Although Japan initially won some astounding victories there was never any chance that Japan could be victorious in a full scale war with the United States. By 1944 at the latest it should have been clear to Japanese leaders that Japan had lost and should sue for peace, but Japan's military were fanatical, blind and obstinate. They would not admit defeat. Even after the devastating fire-bomb raids on Tokyo in March 1945 and the occupation of Okinawa following an internecine struggle involving huge casualties on both sides they preferred to fight to the death on the mainland. Prime Minister Admiral Kantaro Suzuki, who was old and deaf, wanted to find a way out, but Foreign Minister Togo wrongly thought that the Soviet Union could be used as an intermediary. Suzuki unwisely responded to the Potsdam declaration that Japan's position was one of *mokusatsu* which was interpreted as meaning that Japan would ignore it. The atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945 were the American response and delivered the coup de grace. Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai, one time Japanese Prime Minister, is recorded as having said (page 201) that "the atomic bombings and Soviet entry into the war are, in a sense, a godsend because we don't have to say that we'll stop the war due to the domestic situation."

The Yomiuri, however, for understandable reasons criticises the Americans for the use of the atomic bombs and for the indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets. It also condemns Soviet behaviour in violating the non-aggression pact and for the mistreatment of Japanese prisoners after the

war.

The role of the Showa Emperor has not been ignored. The Yomiuri concludes that his behaviour was within the framework for a constitutional head of state. He did from time to time express misgivings often in elliptical language such as quoting a poem by his grandfather the Emperor Meiji and it is clear that he was not always properly and fully informed of what was happening in the field. He did finally intervene, when the cabinet asked for his decision, and he confirmed that the Potsdam declaration should be accepted. Could he and should he have been more explicit in his criticisms? Would attempts have been made to replace him by his brother Prince Chichibu if he had done so? These are some of the questions which remain unanswered.

This book deserves to be widely read and the Yomiuri are to be congratulated on producing this study in the face of the attempts of Japanese revisionist historians to declare that the war was a defensive one. It does not, however, tell the whole story. While a brief account of General Mutaguchi's campaign at Imphal is given the war against British possessions in East Asia is hardly covered at all. The appalling treatment of the population of Singapore by General Yamashita is not mentioned. Nor is there any mention of the building of the Burma-Siam railway and the mistreatment of allied prisoners of war there and elsewhere in South East Asia. Even the horrific Bataan death march is ignored. While these events may not be considered to justify the atom bombs they do explain why Japan was so widely hated in allied countries in 1945.

The book does not exempt Japanese leaders for their wanton sacrifice of Japanese youth in the kamikaze attacks, but these together with the fanatical behaviour of some Japanese soldiers in the field and the absurd rhetoric of Japanese military leaders were important factors in persuading allied leaders that extreme measures had to be taken if mass casualties were to be avoided in an attack on the Japanese mainland.

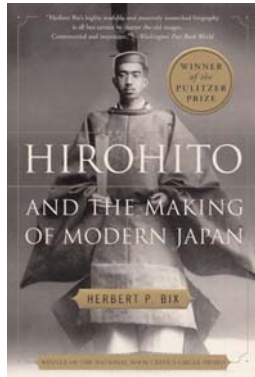
The debate about whether the atomic bombs should or should not have been used will continue for generations. More attention should perhaps be paid to the question of whether the allied adherence to "unconditional surrender" was wise and sensible in the wars against Germany and Japan. If the allies had indicated that they were willing to negotiate, could the war have been ended earlier?

The main lacuna in this book is that it fails to analyse how it came about that the Japanese military took independent action and were allowed to get away with insubordination if not treason. Reference is made to the ordinance first instituted in 1900 whereby the Ministers of the Army and the Navy had to be senior serving officers thus giving the army and the navy a veto on the formation of Japanese cabinets. But this is a symptom not the cause of the problem which lies in the growth of Japanese nationalism and imperialism. The Meiji government decided that to unify the country the position of the Emperor should be strengthened. Unfortunately this led to the development of the cult of the Emperor and of state Shinto. Concepts of "national polity" were elaborated and extreme nationalist and right wing organizations were allowed to develop. If these facets had been covered in any depth it would have meant discussing the whole of modern Japanese history, but a chapter could surely have been devoted to the philosophical and psychological background to Japanese actions and behaviour in the Showa war.

The book points out some of the lessons to be learnt. Some of these are relevant to the current conflict in Iraq. These are the importance of accurate intelligence and unbiased reporting, objective interpretation and analysis of intelligence,

a willingness to recognize the facts of what is happening on the ground, and a readiness to acknowledge failure. War aims need to be fully thought through and an exit strategy worked out in advance.

Although this is a minor point, the bibliography is misleading. It states that "There are only a small number of English language academic books about Japan's war history covering the first half of the 20th century up until World War II." I am not an expert in this field but there are many books in English known to me which should have been listed.



Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan,

By Herbert P. Bix,

Harper-Collins, New York, 2000,
800 pages, ISBN 0060931302

Review by Ben-Ami Shillony

More than ten years after his death, Hirohito (or Emperor Showa as he is now called) continues to draw attention and generate controversy. To many people in the world he personifies Japan's aggression before and during World War II, its extraordinary postwar recovery, and the intricate continuities between the two periods. Most of the writings about him focus on his role in the "Fifteen Year War" (which lasted for less than fourteen years). Almost everything he did prior to that upheaval is considered as preparation for it, and most of what he did after the war is treated as a consequence of it. The book under review, the largest and most detailed biography of Hirohito in English, follows that pattern. Superbly written, meticulously researched, and vigorously advertised, it received the 2000 National Book Critics Award for Biography and Autobiography, and the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction. Its main thesis contends that Hirohito, contrary to the conventional view that he was mostly a titular figure, was the actual wartime leader of Japan who decided on strategy and operations. After the defeat, with the help of the American occupation which needed his cooperation, he contrived a massive cover-up of his wartime role. This enabled him to conceal his culpability and to remain on the throne. Hirohito's refusal to assume responsibility distorted the nature of postwar democracy and pacifism and prevented the Japanese from confronting their past.

Blaming Hirohito for the war is not a new idea. Thirty years ago, David Bergamini, in his controversial book *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy* (William Morrow, 1971), accused the emperor of instigating the war and of personally ordering the atrocities. Four years later, the Japanese historian Inoue Kiyoshi, in his *Tenno no senso sekinin* (Gendai hyoron-sha, 1975), described Hirohito as a reckless reactionary responsible for the war. In the last decade, Herbert Bix broached his theory of the emperor as the war leader in his article "The Showa Emperor's 'Monologue' and the Problem of War Responsibility" (*Journal of Japanese Studies*, Summer 1992), while Irokawa Daikichi in his book *The Age of Hirohito: In Search of Modern Japan* (Free Press 1995) accused Hirohito for

failing to prevent the war. The postwar cover up has been expounded in John W. Dower's book *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (Norton, 1999).

In this volume, Bix puts to final rest the belief that the emperor was an uninformed, helpless puppet in the hands of the military. Very few would argue with him over that. But he turns to the other extreme, claiming that Hirohito was the "major protagonist" (p. 520) of the war. Other historians, examining more or less the same material, reached different conclusions. Stephen S. Large, in his *Emperor Hirohito & Showa Japan* (Routledge, 1992), found that the emperor was involved in the war as an informed observer and as a sanctioner of military plans, but he never initiated, decided or dictated policy. Hata Ikuhiko, in his *Showa tenno itsutsu no ketsudan* (Bungei shunju, 1994), claimed that during the years 1937-1945 Hirohito made only one important decision, that of ending the war. Peter Wetzler, in his recent book *Hirohito and War: Imperial Tradition and Military Decision Making in Prewar Japan* (University of Hawaii Press, 1998), pointed out that in accordance with the political tradition of Japan, the emperor was only one of several participants in the decision making process. Therefore he had to be consulted, but could not dictate to others. Wetzler dismisses the theory that Hirohito was a frustrated peace lover, but he rejects Bix's claim (as presented in the 1992 article), that the emperor led Japan in war. On the basis of the wartime records, he concludes that Hirohito was well informed on military planning, was often consulted, occasionally made suggestions, but at no time did he determine strategy in the manner of a Western commander in chief.

Bix bases his theory on the vast powers that the emperor wielded, on the aggressive edicts, orders, and declarations that he issued, and on the hawkish persons that he appointed to leadership positions. Indeed, the Meiji constitution established the emperor as a supreme ruler, invested him with the powers to declare war and determine policy, and gave him direct command over the armed forces. Bix claims that this derived from "the ancient notion that the emperor was the medium through which the gods worked their will (p. 54)." Therefore Hirohito was burdened with "enormous responsibilities from which he could have no escape so long as he ruled (p. 442)." Yet the historic facts are different. In both the ancient tradition and the modern practice, the emperors were symbolic rulers, sanctioning the policies of those whom they had officially "chosen," but who in fact gained power by their own means. The Meiji constitution removed responsibility from the emperor and invested it in his government. All the rescripts, edicts, and declarations of the emperor, which Bix quotes extensively and to which he attaches great importance, were composed by the cabinet or other government organs. All the appointments that he "made" had been decided in advance by others and "humbly submitted" to him for approval. All the military orders that he "issued" had been formulated by the armed forces and presented to him for signature. On some occasions his personal views were taken into consideration, but except for August 1945, he was never expected to make a major decision.

The rest of the review is online:

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



Events Review



Lord Mayor's Memoirs on East Asia

David Brewer, the former Lord Mayor of London: "The Japan Society is doing a great job in promoting UK-Japan relations and emphasizing the importance of Japan to the UK economy."

Read this review online

<http://www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews/06lordmayor.html>

Europe and Japan: A Historical Perspective,

by Sir Hugh Cortazzi,

Annual Meeting of the Canon Foundation in Europe, the Canon Foundation, Windsor, Saturday 11th November 2006

Read this review online

<http://www.japansociety.org.uk/reviews/06canonfoundation.html>



Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach

by Rachel Hutchinson and
Mark Williams

Routledge, 2006, 345 pages
including notes and index,
ISBN 978-0-415-36185-9

Reviewed by Suefen Tsai

Identity is the product of the process of associations and dissociations that simultaneously shapes and is shaped by social and discursive practices. As such, self-definition is often posited in the binary structure of phenomenology, with a Self that engages in an ongoing dialogue and negotiation with an Other. As editors Rachael Hutchinson and Mark Williams note in their introduction to *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach*, a new substantive volume in the discussion on Japanese identity, "We define one thing in terms of another thing, or indeed in terms of a 'nothing,' in order to seek some kind of truth as to the essence of the thing defined" (page 3). The Self and the Other are thus symbiotic agents in the formation of identity which are at times complementary and inclusive and at other times contrasting and exclusive. The fluidity and complexity of the Self and Other relationship is what invites attention and interrogation, or as Hutchinson and Williams explains, "Rather than speaking in terms of a binary system of two opposed singular entities, therefore, we must speak in terms of negotiation, blurred and shifting boundaries, and conclude that it is in the process of contact, observation, and representation that identity

is defined" (page 7). The goal is to advance the discussion of identity from a reductive and essentialised understanding of the Self and Other to a nuanced exploration of their dialogic relationship.

The product of this endeavour is *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach*, a collection of essays by a select group of accomplished Japan scholars analysing the narrativisation of the Self and Other by various Japanese writers of the twentieth century, with a particular focus on how these constructions are mediated by socio-political contexts at various junctures in Japan in the last century and these writers' personal persuasions and experiences. These essays tease out the motivations that drive the deliberate (dis)associations with the Other crafted by Japanese authors and how the Japanese identity is molded by the inter-subjective contestations between the Self and Other.

The Japanese authors whose works are studied in this volume range from those whose names are familiar to western readers, such as Natsume Soseki and Yukio Mishima, to those not so well-known outside of Japan, such as Kajii Motojiro and Oshiro Tatsuhiro in order to show what Hutchinson and Williams have termed, "the wide spectrum of writers engaged in the critical apprehension of the Other" (page 9). The essays in this volume reveal how the malleable Self and Other are shaped by a confluence of issues ranging from gender, race, (post)colonialism, orientalism, modernity, national identity, power dynamics, to materiality and spirituality. Underpinning these essays is Michel Foucault's theory of discursive power which asserts that power and knowledge is manifested through the language of creation and Jacques Lacan's theory of unfulfilled and fragmented yearning for the other, whereby the imagined Other becomes a Doppelgänger of the Self's own desires and uncertainties.

Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner's essay "Hermes and Hermès: Othernesses in modern Japanese literature" and Susan Napier's chapter entitled "Meet me on the other side: Strategies of Otherness in modern Japanese literature" are fitting works to initiate this discussion on the Self and Other as the former provides a necessary discussion on how Japan's encounters with foreign cultures (from Chinese to American and European) developed concepts of Otherness in Japanese literature and the latter engages issues of gender tension, division and unity of the Self and Other, and the permeability of the boundary between Self and Other. These ideas form the foundation that the remainder of the book rests on, which is divided into three parts, each engaged with a particular category of "Other."

Part I concerns "The Outside Other," which focuses on the conceptualization of foreign others by Japanese writers who were traveling abroad such as Nagai Kafu, Tanizaki Jun'ichiro and Yokomitsu Riichi. Rachael Hutchinson's discussion of Nagai Kafu's *Tales of America*, Adrian Pinnington's essay on Tanizaki Jun'ichiro's relativisation of orientalist paradigms, and Stephen Dodd's exploration of Kajii Motojiro's negotiation of Selfhood in the face of encroaching western influences show how the Western Other is used as a trope through which power, freedom, agency gender roles, and colonial legacy are negotiated by the Self and Other. Furthermore, Japan's ambivalence towards its identity vis-à-vis the foreign Other is revealed in Douglas Slaymaker's analysis of Yokomitsu Riichi's works, which demonstrates how "Japan oscillated between its identity as a colonizing imperial power even as it was a member of a subjugated, colonized Asia" (page 111). In

some cases, the foreign Other is a symbol of advancement and freedom that juxtaposes against Japan's restrictive Confucian world-order; while in others, it is a metaphor for the anxieties of modernity that are overtaking traditional Japanese society. In all cases, however, the foreign Other functions as a mirror for self-reflection and self-critique for the Japanese Self.

Part II is focused on "The Other inside Japan," which deals with those who are considered Japanese but who perceive themselves on the periphery of the Japanese society, such as the *burakumin* (whom Mark Morris calls "Japan's invisible minority" (page 128) and the *hibakusha* (the atomic bomb survivors). Mark Morris and James Raeside's respective analysis on the treatment and representation of the *burakumin* alterity in Shimazaki Tōson and Noma Hiroshi's works highlight the othering process existent within the Japanese society and interrogate the constitution of the Japanese Self. David Stahl's analysis of Oe Kenzaburo's reconstitution of the postwar identity of the *hibakusha* further questions how the progressively reified *hibakusha* became "objects of political manipulation and contestation" (page 213) and how "self-serving conflation of collective Self and Hiroshima Other" (page 212) gave voice to the myth of national victimization. The perennial struggles by the *burakumin* to gain acceptance and agency in the wider Japanese society, often by effacing their own identity, reveal the cleavages within the Japanese Self just as the construction of the *hibakusha* as an abstracted symbol of the victimized Japanese Self functions as a manifestation of Japanese wartime and postwar ideology and politics. The soul-searching regarding Japan's role during and after World War II is further elucidated in Mark Williams' essay on the works of Shiina Rinzo, who is traditionally recognized as the representative writer of the *Sengoha* (*après guerre*) literary coterie. According to Williams, the legacy of *Sengoha's* literary texts is best assessed as the voice of the Japan's marginalized and oppressed working-class masses. Namely, *Sengoha's* most enduring contribution is "the concomitant vision of otherness as a more positive element, as a liberating concept, one in which difference is celebrated and in which the existence of such an opposition can be used as a means of positive affirmation as opposed to negative rejection" (page 238). The essays in this section direct attention to not only the complicity and culpability of the Self in the formation of these various constituents of the Internal Others, but also (and perhaps more interestingly), to how the emerging agency and empowerment of the Internal Other complicates the Self.

Part III analyses "The Complicated Other of the Liminal," those who weren't Japanese but were forced to become Japanese as a result of Japanese colonialism in Asia, such as the Taiwanese, Koreans, and Okinawans. The liminal Other are those who occupy the middle ground and question whether the Other can ever become the Self. Leith Morton examines the Okinawan Other through *yuta*, the mantic female (shamans), in Oshiro Tatsuhiko's fiction and concludes that "Okinawa and its culture became an 'other' inside Japan, a mirror in which the Japanese could re-envision and re-interpret their own cultural and literary tradition" (page 257). Similarly, Catherine Ryu asserts that Yi Yang-Ji's texts show how "the presence of *zainichi* Koreans has necessitated a more finely calibrated notion of 'Japaneseness,'" and that "at the level of perception, *zainichi* Koreans confound the very physical and linguistic distinction between the Japanese Self and the Other" (page 313). Using Sato Haruo's writings as examples of how the Japanese marginalized the Taiwanese with a constructed "primitiveness," Faye Yuan Kleeman illustrates how "Japanese colonialism is founded upon a Japanese brand

of 'Orientalism' that turns against its Asian neighbors the superiority of a Western modernity that it had only recently acquired for itself" (page 272). The liminal Other thus becomes a vehicle to challenge the notion of a monolithic Japanese Self as well as a driving force in the hybridization of the Japanese identity.

An interesting motif found in all three parts of this volume is the use of the female as a site for identity exploration. Susan Napier introduces a vision of the female extrapolated from Natsume Soseki's works as "an uncanny repository of the past" and "a mediator to an Other world that the contemporary male can no longer penetrate" (page 41). Rachael Hutchinson analyzes how feminist readings of Nagai Kafu's narratives wade into implications of power relations between men and women and how the domination and submission in these relationships are "read as metaphors for racial domination, colonialism, and slavery" (page 59). Rebecca Copeland discusses how the rendering of the Japanese female into a marginalized Other is subverted by the female protagonist in Uno Chiyo's epistolary work, who "uses her pen not only to bridge the gap between herself and her husband, but to reaffirm, to rewrite herself" (page 178). Leith Morton expands on the agency of Oshiro Tatsuhiko's *yuta* in re-asserting the Okinawan identity against the double-coloniality of Japanese control and American occupation. Faye Yuan Kleeman reads the Taiwanese female protagonists in Sato Haruo's fiction as a symbol of a "modern protest against the feudalistic disenfranchisement of women." These examples are only a handful of the unique and thought-provoking themes on women found in *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach*. The richness of this topic justifiably argues for an independent section of "the Female Other." Perhaps the readers will be privileged to an expanded edition including such a section in the near future.

The textualisation and contextualisation of the Other is brilliantly and convincingly argued in *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach*, enlightening the readers to not only multiple interpretations of the Other but the elasticity of the Self as well. Taken together, the essays in this volume successfully persuade the reader to view identity as a process of "becoming" rather than of "being" and recognize that identity is a shifting consciousness conditioned by the interaction and negotiation between the Self and Other. This delightfully well-written book is a highly recommended reading for all students of Japan studies.

Japan Perspectives



Japan's Global Strategy,

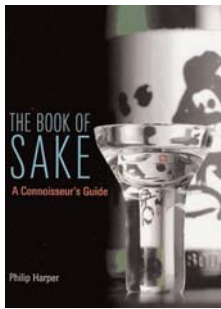
Koji Omi, Japan's Minister of Finance,
Chatham House, London,
Friday 12 January 2007

Koji Omi, Minister of Finance:
"It is important to improve cultural relations between Japan and the UK."

Review by Sean Curtin

Read this review online

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



The Book of SAKE, a Connoisseur's Guide,

by Philip Harper,

Kodansha International, 2006, 96 pages, 150 colour photographs, ISBN 4770029985, hardback £14.99

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

I used to be asked sometimes by people who had never been to Japan "Do you like sake?" This is rather like asking you when you have been to France whether you like wine! Sake, as this guide explains, is as varied as wine. It can be quaffed simply as a good drink or savoured by the connoisseur.

Sake used not to be generally available in Britain. Now sake brands can be bought in some supermarkets as well as in Japanese food shops and of course in the proliferating Japanese restaurants. Sake is becoming an increasingly popular beverage in Britain. But there are still far fewer sake connoisseurs than wine buffs over here. This guide should help to redress the balance and increase the enjoyment of sake, even if it is likely to be many years before there are as many different sake brands on sale in Britain as there are of wine.

While sake has been brewed outside Japan e.g. in California, it is essentially a Japanese drink and it seems unlikely that sake will ever be produced in as many countries as wine and beer. Most imbibers of sake understandably consider that sake goes best with Japanese cuisine, but Philip Harper notes the Japanese saying "*nihonshu wa ryori wo erabanai*" which he translates freely as "sake does not get into fights with food." He declares that "sake goes well with many non-Japanese dishes" including Western, Chinese and Indian food. Many readers will take some convincing that the true flavours of sake can be tasted with a hot Indian curry, but Harper is a true sake convert and like many converts is an extreme enthusiast for his favourite tipple!

The book is in four chapters. The first explains to the reader what sake is all about and deals among other topics with such questions as the temperature at which sake should be drunk and the type of cups to use. Sake can be drunk hot, luke- warm or cold depending on the mood and taste of the drinker, the season and the food which accompanies the sake. The second chapter describes the different types of sake and the specialised vocabulary which is part of sake lore.

The third chapter, which introduces the reader to local breweries and sake styles, includes twenty pages devoted to local sake types and producers. Once you get to know a few of these "*jisake*" you may well find that you develop a contempt for the popular brands in much the same way as the connoisseur of 'real ale' feels about the run of the mill pub beers belonging to the major chains.

The fourth chapter entitled "The Brewer's Craft" explains the various stages in brewing sake from the treatment of the raw material (polished rice) to storage and shipping. As with beer and whisky water is a key element (80% of sake is water). So are the types of rice used, but "their influence on the final flavour is not as all-pervasive as is true of the various strains of grape used in wine-making." The author notes that "the

traditional pattern of sake being brewed and consumed in one-and-a-bit year cycle is still prevalent" but there are younger types coming to the market as well as more mature varieties. So we don't have to drink our sake young although "vintage" is not a term to apply to good sake.

Interesting aspects of sake which emerge from Harper's study are the colourful labels with their often idiosyncratic calligraphy, the shapes of the bottles and other containers including the kegs or barrels used in celebrations.

Administrative Reform in Japan,

by Toshiyuki Masujima,

Institute of Administrative Management, 2006, ISBN 906596037

Review by Sean Curtin

To properly understand Japan's spectacular postwar economic transformation and its subsequent struggled to adjust in the post-bubble nineties, it is vital to grasp the administrative dynamics which uniquely underpinned its economic success and are determining its future. This book is an enlightening overview of the major administrative reforms spanning the early postwar years to the present day. It explains the significance of all the main changes that have shaped Japanese government and seeks to rank their individual importance. In this context, the reform policies initiated by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto (1996-98) receive the highest rating and are singled out for particular praise.

The author, Toshiyuki Masujima, is a former high-ranking bureaucrat who became an academic after retirement. Occupying these dual realms allows him to offer a rare academic-insider's perspective on some of the key reforms of the postwar era. The book greatly benefits from the fact that the author personally knew and closely worked with many of the key political reformers of the last decades, including former Prime Ministers Yasuhiro Nakasone, Morihiro Hosokawa and Ryutaro Hashimoto.

The author was at the very heart of some of the major postwar reforms, which elevates the insights of his analysis far beyond that of a normal academic study and provides truly unique angles on how key reforms evolved and the forces which ultimately forged their final forms. The study is also especially valuable because it is one of the few English language books on administrative reform written by a Japanese scholar.

While the author meticulously charts the evolution of administrative reform in the latter half of the last century, his prime objective is to highlight the significance of the so called "Hashimoto reforms," which trace their origins back to 1996. By placing these reforms in their proper context, it becomes possible to appreciate their "revolutionary" aspects and better comprehend their likely long-term impact on Japan.

The analysis begins with an examination of why the first Provisional Commission on Administrative Reform (Rincho I) was established in 1961, its aims and eventual impact. Likewise, the second Provisional Commission on Administrative Reform (Rincho II) of Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki in 1981 is skillfully dissected, furnishing the reader with a comprehensive overview of their characteristics and accomplishments. This creates the necessary benchmarks with which to compare and assess the reforms started under Prime Minister Hashimoto in 1996 and continued under his successor Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi.

The Hashimoto reforms finally came into effect on 6th January 2001 when among other things the number of central government ministries were reduced by half and the framework upon which Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi would later develop his own reform drive was established.

This is a well-written and superbly researched book in which Professor Masujima provides a clear step-by-step analysis of Japanese postwar administrative reform and the relative importance of each one. There are many easy to follow charts which summarize the key developments and fact-packed appendices. The footnotes also deserve a mention as they are laced with gems of information that only an insider would have access to and enhance the analysis in the text. This book is a valuable resource and contributes to our understanding of how Japanese government functions.

Secret Memoirs of the Shoguns: Isaac Titsingh and Japan, 1779-1822,

Annotated and introduced by Timon Screech,

Routledge 2006 pp 265 including illustrations, glossary, notes, bibliography and index, ISBN 10: 0-700-71720-X and 13: 978-0-700-71720-0

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Isaac Titsingh was one of the more interesting and intelligent heads of the Dutch trading post at Dejima off Nagasaki. He first went to Japan in 1779 and spent some forty-four months there before his final departure in 1784. He wanted to compile a compendium of papers based on translations from Japanese sources, covering 'all there was to know about the shogun's realm'. Unfortunately the project was too great for any one man and it is not clear how proficient he really became in Japanese. He was also not a finisher. When he died in 1812 he 'had virtually nothing in print'. However, a French edition of some of his papers appeared in 1820 entitled *Mémoires et anecdotes sur la dynastie régnante des djoguns*. This text was translated into English and published in 1822 under the title of *Illustrations of Japan*.

Professor Screech's edition presents selections from the English version. Part I consists of the 'Secret Memoirs' which is largely a series of anecdotes about the shoguns and their entourage. Some of these shed an interesting light on life and mores in Tokugawa Japan but cannot claim to be a history of the shoguns. Part II includes a series of 'essays on Japanese civilization' including a short account of Japanese ritual suicide, a subject which clearly fascinated Titsingh who often refers to it in his 'anecdotes'. His essay on Japanese poetry is mainly concerned with satirical verse and as Screech notes his translations 'are not particularly close'. The main item in Part III 'Other Observations' is the so-called 'Secret Diary' of Isaac Titsingh which deals principally with his negotiations with the Japanese on trade matters. The final item is 'Titsingh's Philosophical Discourse', an essay sent by Titsingh to his friend Goto Shozaemon, head of the Nagasaki office. Screech comments that this discourse marks 'an important moment in the transmission of Enlightenment thought in Japan'.

The introduction of seventy-four pages includes much fascinating information about Titsingh's life and career. After leaving Japan, Titsingh served in Bengal where he met the famous Indian diarist William Hickey. He later led a Dutch Mission to Peking. Sadly his collection of artefacts which he had received in his ambassadorial collection was lost. But

when he was in London during the Napoleonic wars he met Sir Joseph Banks, the president of the Royal Society to whom he donated his collection of minerals from Japan.

Screech's introduction contains much of interest about the Dutch life and trade in Japan. He reminds us that one of the tasks imposed by the Japanese authorities on the head of the Dutch was to report on events in the rest of the world. 'Always the VOC [The Dutch East India Company] filtered out what it was not in their interest for the shogunate to know, though Edo sometimes found out such matters via the Chinese.' Towards the end of the eighteenth century there was an increasing interest in the outside world. The *Komo Zatsuwa* (Tales of the Red-haired Barbarians) published in Japan in 1787 after Titsingh had left was often inaccurate but it carried a print of a hot air balloon oddly described as being called 'Tuilleries'.

The Dutch found it very frustrating having to deal with the bureaucracy of the bakufu. The Dutch interpreters were often more of a barrier than a help to trade. There were too many of them; their linguistic abilities and knowledge were strictly limited. He records that on one occasion two of them came to him 'oozing with pomposity. After much circumlocution, they sang the old song that the governor could not change anything this year...'

In Titsingh's time the main export from Japan bought by the Dutch was copper which they traded in India, but this trade became less and less profitable as European copper reached India. The Japanese governor at one point proposed to export 'Chinese satin, silk pansies [sic] and gold bullion in return for bird's nests'. Titsingh rejected this arguing that the Dutch traded direct with China. The Japanese expected the Dutch to send two ships a year to Japan to trade, but Titsingh found that there was not enough profitable trade to justify the costs of these ships and the number of voyages was cut much to the annoyance of the Japanese.

Titsingh took advantage of the women provided by the Maruyama pleasure quarters but did not father any children in Japan. Screech has some interesting comments on this aspect of the Dutch life in Japan noting that 'the Maruyama was known as the sole accessible site of international sexual encounter, and this spawned many comments, salacious and humorous, and many pictures' (page 45).

Professor Screech has performed a valuable service for students of Tokugawa Japan and of contacts between the West and Japan by resurrecting Titsingh's writings from obscurity. They are not as interesting or informative about Japan as those of the three famous doctors to the Dutch enclave Kaempfer, Thunberg and von Siebold, but they do provide some information which the others did not learn or record.



Annual Talk by the British Ambassador in Tokyo,

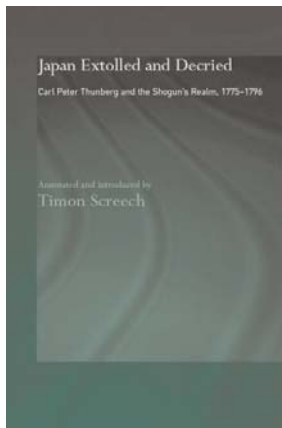
Sir Graham Fry,

East India Club, London,
Wednesday 17th January 2007
(event supported by ANA)

Sir Graham Fry: "Improving the relationship between Japan and the UK is precisely what the Japan Society is all about."

Read this article here:

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



Japan Extolled and Decried Carl Peter Thunberg and the Shogun's Realm, 1775-1796,

Annotated and Introduced by
Timon Screech,

Routledge, 2005, 319 pages
including notes and index, ISBN
0-203-02035-9, £75.

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

This is a parallel volume to *Secret Memoirs of the Shoguns, Isaac Titsingh and Japan, 1779-1822*, also annotated and presented by Professor Screech. The writings about Japan by Thunberg and Titsingh are important for students of Japan's relations with the outside world in the Edo period and Professor Screech has provided a valuable service by ensuring that they are available in more than a limited number of specialist libraries. His meticulous introductions and endnotes clarify many obscure points and fill in the background as well as providing details of the lives of Thunberg and Titsingh. Of the two, students are likely to find Thunberg more interesting than Titsingh. It is a pity that the books are so expensive, but limited demand probably makes this inevitable.

Thunberg, who was Swedish, studied at Uppsala University under the famous botanist Linnaeus who formulated modern scientific classification of plants. In the end he succeeded to Linnaeus' position at Uppsala. As a young man he qualified as a doctor of medicine and became an expert botanist, a field in which he determined to make his mark by studying plants in various parts of the world. In order to do so, he joined the Dutch East India Company (VOC) as a physician and after spending some time at the Cape of Good Hope reached Batavia where he managed to get himself appointed as doctor to the Dutch factory at Dejima in Nagasaki. He arrived there in the summer of 1775 and stayed nineteen months. While in Japan, Thunberg accompanied the head of the Dutch factory on the annual mission sent to the shogun in Edo. In Edo Thunberg, who was much more highly qualified than the usual "barber-surgeon" to the Dutch mission, met a number of prominent Japanese physicians to whom he taught aspects of western medicine including the treatment of syphilis. He also collected, while in Japan, a large number of plants which he recorded and illustrated in his *Flora Japonica* published in 1784. He gave an account of his travels in the four volumes of his *Resa (Travels)*, which appeared between 1788 and 1793. The third volume and part of the fourth volume covered Thunberg's observations on Japan. Professor Screech's book reproduces all Thunberg's writings about Japan with only very minor omissions of largely technical botanical information.

According to Hopton, who produced the English translation of the *Resa*, Thunberg did not write with "the greatest elegance or precision" but "had the strictest regard for truth." Certainly Thunberg's account of his stay in Japan contains much of interest and information about Japan which added significantly to what had been known in the West about Japan hitherto. Thunberg rightly emphasised that Japan had changed in the century which had passed since Engelbert

Kaempfer had been in the country in the final decade of the seventeenth century and whose *History* had appeared in 1727-8. But, as Screech points out, Thunberg's account of Japan was at times, e.g. in his description of religion in Japan, little more than "fiction."

The following description of the Japanese by Thunberg, which contains twenty-five adjectives, has, according to Screech, "to be read as Thunberg's polemic. Many of the comments are flatly contradicted by his own remarks elsewhere":

"The Japanese are in general intelligent and provident, free and unconstrained, obedient and courteous, curious and inquisitive, industrious and ingenious, frugal and sober, cleanly, good-natured and friendly, upright and just, trusty and honest, mistrustful, superstitious, proud and unforgiving, brave and invincible." In his preface Thunberg had said of Japan with rather less hyperbole: "Here...are found both useful and pernicious establishments, both rational and absurd institutions, yet still we must admire the steadiness which constitutes the national character, the immutability which reigns in the administration of their laws and in the exercise of their public functions, the unwearied assiduity of this nation to do and to promote what is useful..."

His descriptions of events during his stay and of what he saw in Japan are more interesting than these generalisations. I particularly liked his account of how the Dutch tried to smuggle goods into Nagasaki. The captain "dressed himself in a blue silk coat trimmed with silver lace, made very large and wide and stuffed and furnished in front with a large cushion... the captain was frequently so loaded with goods that when he went ashore he was obliged to be supported by two sailors, one under each arm." However the Japanese officials had rumbled what was going on and put a stop to such subterfuges.

Japanese bureaucracy must have added hugely to the expenses of the Dutch trade. The reverence for precedents, which anyone who has served in Japan knows is still very much part of bureaucratic life, was strong among the Japanese bureaucrats controlling the movements of the Dutch. Thunberg as a botanist wanted to explore for plants in the neighbourhood of Nagasaki. All sorts of obstacle were thrown up. The Japanese looked for precedents and discovered that many years earlier an assistant surgeon had been given permission to look for plants. At first this was regarded as sufficient grounds to give Thunberg the necessary permission. "But on closer examination, it was found that the surgeon had been only a surgeon's mate and that consequently I, as principal surgeon, could not enjoy the same privilege!"

Readers of Kaempfer will recall that when he was a member of the Dutch mission to Edo they were forced to act, dance and sing for the amusement of the court. In Thunberg's case the head of the mission merely had to make formal obeisance to the shogun and the mission to pay their respects (and of course give presents) to the various senior officials.

Thunberg's descriptions of life at the Dutch factory in Nagasaki and of their journey to Edo are very readable and greatly help us to understand what life was like in Japan over two centuries ago.

