



Editor: Sean Curtin

Managing Editor: John Toppon

In this issue we focus on various aspects of changing Japan. September 2009 itself heralded in seismic political change with the first non-Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Prime Minister since Tomiichi Murayama back in 1996, and more significantly the first unified opposite party to take power since the formation of the LDP in 1955. To mark such a pivotal moment Fumiko Halloran reviews several recent Japanese language books about the new Democratic Party of Japan government, its leader Yukio Hatoyama and potential future Prime Minister Katsuya Okada, the new no-nonsense Foreign Minister. These books were written before the DPJ's landslide victory in the 30th August general election and offer some fascinating insights into the new men at the political helm.

Our lead review looks at the state of mental health in Japan, a much neglected subject, but one which has become increasingly important as rapid socio-economic change continues to batter Japanese society. Sir Hugh Cortazzi and Sandra Lawman each offer their own insightful review of Yuko Kawanishi's new cutting edge book. Ian Nish and Roger Buckley review some significant books of recent years, while Peter Gysin examines a fascinating new publication on the impact of the Russo-Japanese war on Japan.

Sean Curtin

Contents

- (1) Mental Health Challenges Facing Contemporary Japanese Society (two reviews)
- (2) Hatoyama Yukio to Hatoyama-ke Yondai
- (3) Minshuto Kaibo
- (4) Minshuto No Yami
- (5) Seiken Kotai – Kono Kuni o Kaeru
- (6) Ultimate Crush
- (7) Japanese Society at War: Death, Memory and the Russo-Japanese War
- (8) Contested Governance In Japan: Sites and Issues

New reviews

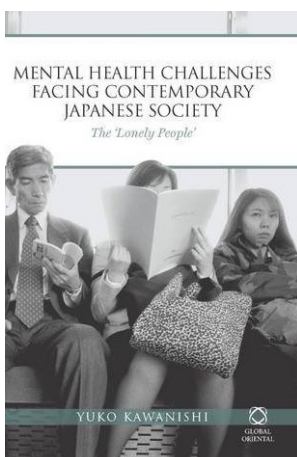
www.japansociety.org.uk/resources/the-japan-society-review

Archive

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

We are grateful to our regular reviewers:

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



Mental Health Challenges Facing Contemporary Japanese Society – The 'Lonely People,'

by Yuko Kawanishi

Global Oriental, 2009, 175 pages including index and bibliography

Hardcover, £30

ISBN: 978-1-906876-00-5

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

One of the main problems for Japanese today is that they take themselves too seriously. But is this not true of other peoples and does the diagnosis help? Our personalities are all conditioned not only by our genes but also by our environment including family and the traditional values we absorb.

Dr Kawanishi, who attended universities in California, Boston and Kyoto and has specialized in social psychology,

describes in this interesting book many of the stresses and strains of modern Japanese life and analyses the factors which have led to mental breakdowns and suicides. It has taken a long time for Japanese generally to recognize that mental health needs to be treated with as much seriousness as physical health. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labour (page 54) reports that "three quarters of those suffering from depression are not receiving any treatment." Dr Kawanishi notes that "There is an old Japanese saying that emphasizes the importance of being resilient: one should keep going even though falling seven times by picking oneself up eight times." In Britain also for far too long the stresses and strains of modern life were treated as flaws or weakness of character rather than problems of mental health. The answer was thought to lie in calling for the sufferer to show a stiff upper lip. It was only towards the end of the First World War that shell-shock was recognized as a mental illness and did not amount to cowardice. We have moved on from such simple analyses and Dr Kawanishi shows that Japanese opinion has also progressed, although probably not as far as in some other developed societies.

Dr Kawanishi's initial analysis of the Japanese psyche is not new. She notes (page 15) that *"Japanese thinking patterns are dominated by an almost excessive stress on valuing social relationships over the individual as an independent entity."* She emphasizes the bond developed between mother and child and notes that *"too much love can kill you."* She draws attention to the Japanese emphasis on *ittaikan* or *"oneness in the group."* She points out that the image of Japan as number one boosted Japanese self-confidence but this was followed by years of stagnation and loss of self-confidence.

Her second Chapter on *"Mental Health at Work"* covers among other phenomena *karoshi* or death by over work which she describes as a form of suicide. She notes that long hours for many employees were regarded by employers as normal. She quotes a woman as saying of her son who killed himself after overwork that *"no matter how long he worked, his payroll would only record that he left work at 9 p.m."* Japanese employers, who insist on employees taking their holiday entitlements are very rare, although a few in the financial sector must surely have come round to recognizing that an employee, who never takes a holiday, could be disguising problems. She points out that the performance evaluations systems introduced in many Japanese companies instead of seniority based promotion structures have increased pressure to overwork.

Her third chapter devoted to the Japanese family, which is still influenced by the old pre-war *ie* or household system under a male head, makes dismal reading. She describes *"The contemporary family"* as *"an efficient arrangement for great economic growth."* She notes (page 70) that *"husbands spend less and less time at home with their wives and children. Their contribution to household chores is notoriously low...Home became a place for many Japanese husbands simply to rest before going back to work again next morning...With the husband often a weak and peripheral figure, the risk of a mother-child bond becoming too close is rather high."* She draws attention to the number of sexless marriages among young people in Japan today where the net reproduction rate is one of the lowest in the world. She asks: *"Is Japanese marriage at a crossroads?"* She thinks that (page 93) *"many of the problems Japanese families face today come from a strange mixture of warped post-war political and economic development, the haunting influence of Confucian-based ie ideology on the surface, and a deeper cultural, psychological orientation."*

This sets the framework for her discussion in chapter four of Japanese youth and its various problems including refusal to go to school, bullying, violence by children against their parents and the *hikkomori* or withdrawal syndrome which has become such a prominent feature in foreign commentaries on Japanese life. She notes that *hikkomori*, with its implication that the person concerned, like monks in olden times, is withdrawing from the world, *"sounds more benign and more like a*

temporary condition than 'personality disorder'" and thus tends to gloss over the reality. She feels (page 133) that it *"is ironic that, in an era of globalization in which communication with different kinds of people is crucial to the future and survival of Japan, many young Japanese suffer from an inability to relate to other human beings."*

Sadly Dr Kawanishi does not see any simple ways out of the psychological problems Japan confronts today. For her the Japanese need (page 158) *"to re-establish a healthy sense of boundary between the individual and others... and to learn how to do this"* or in other words (page 160) *"to create a new sense of independence that can coexist alongside a traditional Japanese self."* If they cannot do so *"the Japanese will continue to live a lonely and lightless existence."*

This is a thought-provoking if depressing book.

Review by Sandra Lawman

I first went to Japan because I thought it would be a schizophrenic society, with its emphasis on a maternal culture, its reserve and its mood swings. I think I was proved largely right, and it suited me to experience a society I thought I had some kinship with.

This book examines the mental health challenges facing contemporary Japan, and frames them in terms of the national psyche, such as it exists, and the pressures on the traditional psychology with the decline as a superpower and all that comes with post industrialisation. The author gives an incisive and coherent account of why there are now so many *"lonely people"* and why the country seems to be going through a depressive phase. She posits that the traditional strengths of group loyalty, self effacement and concealment of emotions are now contributing to some of the bad aspects today. She particularly emphasises people's difficulty with expressing emotions and communicating generally on a personal level, which is increasing with the failings in the economy.

Japanese people rightly pride themselves on subtle non-verbal communication, but somewhere along the way the ability to articulate problems has been lost, and the author claims this leads to pent-up stress which may contribute to the high levels of suicide. There is also an increasingly high incidence of clinical depression, which is often disguised as mental stress or mild depression to escape the stigma of something worse.

She looks at mental health at work, and the phenomenon of dying through hard work, and she investigates the current trend in family life, including sex, and the prevalence of *hikikomori*, where people withdraw completely from society and shut themselves up in their rooms. This has attracted considerable international media interest in the last decade or so, and it is still unclear whether in itself it is a mental health problem

per se, or has more of a social cause. Examination of this leads to a particular in depth look at youth, and the changes in society which are putting pressure not only on the young people but also on their families and workplaces. A phenomenon almost unique to Japan is violence in the home by children towards parents, which is on the increase, and which is the result of an unarticulated frustration.

Most of the book concentrates on common mental stresses and strains, which are becoming more prevalent, but, interestingly, the incidence of major illnesses such as schizophrenia or manic depression seems to be decreasing, with better treatment. These diseases are not so medicated yet as in other countries, and from my own research I know there is limited self-help, although there are groups out there. I was always taught that, whilst the main thing in British society is to 'stand on your own two feet,' the main tenet of Japanese society is 'not to stick out from the crowd.' The book does point to some measures which are now being taken to help those who deviate from the norm, but there is still some way to go.

Sandra Lawman lived in Tokyo in the early 1980's until she left with a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia. Since then she has lectured on mental health in Japan, done a study of the Japanese mental health service user movement, and written a paper on the added value of trust and foundation funding to the health and social care NGO sector in Japan. She also worked at a major Japanese company in London throughout the 90's.

Japanese public is eager to understand who he is as a person and political leader.

Seiho Mori's concise book is useful in explaining the Prime Minister's extraordinary family history. It goes back four generations to Kazuo Hatoyama, the Prime Minister's great grandfather. He was born in 1856 into a samurai family in Okayama Prefecture, three years after Commodore Perry's black ships appeared in the Uraga Bay and graduated from a school that was later to become the Faculty of Law at Tokyo Imperial University. He studied at Columbia College in New York, then moved to Yale University to receive a masters and doctorate in jurisprudence, and returned to Japan in 1880. He was briefly a lecturer at the Tokyo Imperial University but was soon elected to the Tokyo Metropolitan Legislature. In 1892, he was elected to the House of Representatives and was later appointed as Speaker of the House.

Kazuo's eldest son, Ichiro, graduated from the Faculty of Law at the Tokyo Imperial University and, after his father's death, was elected to the Tokyo Metropolitan Legislature. That was followed by winning a seat in the House of Representatives in 1915. Ichiro served as the Chief Cabinet Secretary for Prime Minister Giichi Tanaka and later as the Minister of Education in the Tsuyoshi Inukai's Cabinet in 1931. In 1943, Ichiro criticized General Hideki Tojo which resulted in his exile to Karuizawa. After the war, Ichiro returned to Tokyo as the president of Nippon Jiyu-to (Japan Liberal Party, later shortened to Jiyu-to) and won a majority in the 1946 House of Representatives election. But GHQ ordered Hatoyama to be purged from public life, which drove him back to Karuizawa. In 1951, he suffered a stroke that paralyzed him. After a partial recovery from his illness, Ichiro struggled with Shigeru Yoshida, president of Nippon Jiyu-to, and eventually won the premiership as the president of Nippon Minshu-to (Japan Democratic Party) in 1954. He was instrumental in merging the Jiyu-to (Liberal Party) and Minshu-to (Democratic Party) to form the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party, which his grandson, Yukio, finally succeeded in unseating. Ichiro's legacy includes restoring diplomatic relations with the then Soviet Union. He retired from politics in 1956 and died three years later.

Ichiro Hatoyama, Ichiro's eldest son, was born in 1918. He, too, graduated from the Faculty of Law at the Tokyo Imperial University but chose a bureaucratic career by joining the Ministry of Finance (MOF). Returning from the Imperial Navy duties during the war, he immediately rejoined the MOF and rose to become its vice-minister in 1971. After retirement from MOF, Ichiro was elected to the House of Councilors and was the foreign minister in the Takeo Fukuda Cabinet of 1976. Although his political career was long, he remained in the shadow of his father's legacy.

Ichiro and his wife Yasuko had two sons, Yukio and Kunio, and a daughter, Kazuko. Following family



**Hatoyama Yukio to
Hatoyama-ke Yondai
[鳩山由紀夫と鳩山家四
代] (Yukio Hatoyama
and the Four Generation
Hatoyama Family)**

by Seiho Mori

**Chuko Shinsho La Clef,
September, 2009, 186 pages,
Paperback, 720 yen
ISBN-13: 978-4121503305**

Review by Fumiko Halloran

Yukio Hatoyama is under intense scrutiny as Japan's new Prime Minister and the leader of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) which finally wrestled power from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) after its monopoly in governing for over half a century. A flurry of new books have come out on Hatoyama as a person and what his party might do to solve Japan's domestic and diplomatic problems. Nicknamed the "Alien" because of his enigmatic personality and his wife Miyuki's even more eccentric behaviour - she claimed that she once flew to Mars and eats the sun every morning - the

tradition, both brothers graduated from the University of Tokyo, but Yukio from the Engineering Department with a major in applied physics, and Kunio from the Faculty of Law. Kunio showed an interest in politics even in his childhood and became an assistant to Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka. After Tanaka resigned due to a scandal, Kunio experienced a series of ups and downs, sometimes winning, sometimes losing, in various elections. He is today in the House of Representatives as a member of the LDP and has served as minister of justice and minister of general management in recent cabinets.



Yukio, on the other hand, seemed to be content with an academic career. He studied at Stanford University to earn a doctorate, then returned to Japan and landed on a teaching job at Senshu University in Tokyo. While at Stanford, according to Yukio himself in an interview in "Hatoyama Yukio No Leader-gaku" (鳩山由紀夫のリーダー学 - Study on Leadership of Yukio Hatoyama) published

by PHP, he was impressed with Americans who were individualistic, yet would unite as Americans when it came to patriotism. He claims to have chosen the political life and had his own patriotism awakened by his American experience.

In 1986, Yukio was elected to the House of Representatives as a Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) member from a Hokkaido district where the Hatoyama family had long ties with the local community through its working farm. He remained in the LDP until 1993 when he joined a series of minority parties. In 1996, he teamed up with Naoto Kan to form the Democratic Party of Japan, which absorbed other minor parties and eventually merged with the Liberal Party headed by Ichiro Ozawa in 2003. Several publications claim that when Yukio formed the DPJ, his widowed mother Yasuko provided 2.1 billion, repeat billion, yen in campaign expenses. The real power in the Hatoyama family seems to be Yasuko, a frail, soft-spoken, elegant woman whose political insight is respected. Her wealth comes from her parents, the Ishibashi family founders of the Bridgestone Tire industrial empire.

The wives and mothers in the Hatoyama family have been extraordinary as the clan expanded its power through marriages among elite families in political, academic, and business fields. Kazuo Hatoyama's wife, Haruko, was a pioneer in the higher education of women in the early Meiji period. She founded Kyoritsu Joshi Shokugyo Gakko (Kyoritsu Women's Vocational School, later to be Kyoritsu Women's School System). Ichiro's wife, Kaoru, was also an educator, helping Haruko in running the school system and affiliated

educational institutions. She was a confidant of her husband Ichiro throughout his career. Ichiro's wife Yasuko, through her family's wealth and connections with other prominent families, brought the Hatoyama family a special status on the political power map. Yukio married Miyuki, a former member of the Takarazuka theatre troop. She is a lifestyle consultant and has published several cook books. Yukio's wife, Emily, is a former model and actress. She was born to an Australian father and a Japanese mother. Both wives have campaigned for their husbands but have not been active in public life like their great grandmother-in-law or grandmother-in-law. Yasuko, their mother-in-law, rarely appears in public.

A different version of this review first appeared on the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) Japan-US Discussion Forum and is reproduced with permission.

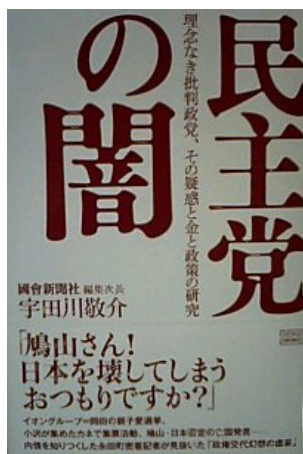


Minshuto Kaibo
[民主党解剖] (Anatomy of the Democratic Party of Japan)

by Sankei Shimbun
Political News Division

Sankei Shimbun-sha No Hon,
July 2009, 228 pages
Paperback, 1300 yen

ISBN-13: 978-4819110648



Minshuto No Yami
[民主党の闇]
(The Democratic Party of Japan in Darkness)

by Keisuke Udagawa

Seiko Shobo, July 2009
253 pages, Paperback,
1575 yen

ISBN-13:978-4880862507

Reviews by Fumiko Halloran

The Sankei Shimbun and Keisuke Udagawa books reviewed here were published before the 30th August 2009 general election, and were best sellers snatched up by voters who were eager to learn more about the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and how the party would steer a course head for the country.

Udagawa's rambling book focuses on new elected

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's criticism of the bureaucracy as unrealistic, on his support for voting rights for foreign permanent residents (mostly Koreans) as dangerous and unconstitutional, and on his generous social welfare programs as lacking financial resources. The author devotes three chapters to several financial scandals that could undermine the accountability of the Hatoyama regime. The author warns readers, many of whom wanted major changes in politics, not to be swept up by a superficial political tide but to look at the Democratic Party of Japan as it is.

The analysis in the Sankei Shimbun book is far more thorough, with a list of DPJ proposals on each issue. Interestingly, while Hatoyama as the head of the DPJ is prominently written up in the first chapter, the rest of the book gives much space to Ichiro Ozawa's role in the party and future elections. Sankei foresaw the double power centres in the party. Ozawa resigned as head of the DPJ after the arrest of one of his assistants who was allegedly involved in illegal financial contributions from a construction company. Ozawa, however, controlled campaign strategy for the 30th August general election that brought a sweeping victory to the DPJ. Prime Minister Hatoyama thus appointed Ozawa as party secretary general. Ozawa is known for his controversial remarks such as Japan needing only the U.S. Seventh Fleet to be based in Japan for the nation's protection. How much Hatoyama can rein in Ozawa remains to be seen. Whether Ozawa continues to have ambitions about becoming prime minister also remains to be seen. Political observers say that the financial scandals embroiling Ozawa along with his health problems (he has suffered heart attacks in the past) might be a handicap.

From these two books and the review of the Hatoyama study above, one gets the impression that Yukio Hatoyama has several faces. He is an idealist who advocates the spirit of "fraternity" (友愛 Yu-ai), a slogan in the French Revolution. He is a liberal who advocates a social welfare state that is kind to those in need. And he shows signs of a Machiavellian politician who plays hardball. Born into a wealthy family, his remarks on the poor and the unfortunate often sound out-of-touch. Yet he is quick to shift position to keep power. The scrutiny of Japan's new Prime Minister's political leadership and his stand on various policies shows that the future of his new regime is impossible to predict.



Seiken Kotai – Kono Kuni o Kaeru [政権交代—この国を変える] (Change of Political Power – To Change This Country)

by Katsuya Okada

**Kodansha International,
2009, 104 pages
Paperback, £18.00**

ISBN: 9784770030931

Review by Fumiko Halloran

Katsuya Okada is Japan's new no-nonsense Foreign Minister in the first DPJ Cabinet, a onetime head of the party and the man Prime Minister Hatoyama narrowly beat to become party leader. This book was published in 2008 but still has material that can be legitimately examined to see where DPJ is heading in governing. Readers might be disappointed if they are looking for his thinking on Japan's foreign policy; his book is devoted to the domestic political situation.

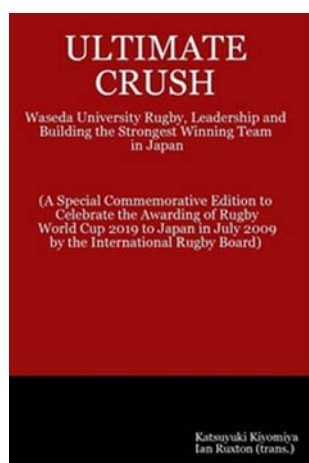
A semi-autobiographical book, Okada narrates his political career steeped in pushing for political reform including changes in the electoral district system while he was a member of the ruling LDP. As a thirty-three year old former MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry, currently Ministry of Economic, Trade and Industry) official and a new member of the House of Representatives in 1990, Okada was disappointed by the way the LDP conducted politics, by factional fights, by close relations with interest groups and the corruption that rose from it; by sluggish efforts to change the status quo; and by lukewarm policy debates.

Riding on a wave of reform, Okada quit the LDP in 1993 and joined the Shinshin-to (New Progressive Party) that, with other opposition parties, succeeded in toppling the LDP briefly. The coalition government of Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa collapsed in less than one year, however, and the LDP returned to power. Okada asserts that a new DPJ prime minister and his cabinet should take away power from the bureaucrats in policy making, including the control of personnel appointments and budget proposals. Priorities should focus on social welfare including retirement pensions, local autonomy, and reform of the financial structure and reducing the national deficit. Although foreign policy is not discussed in this book, Okada has had considerable overseas experience. When he was a MITI official, he and his wife spent a year in 1985 at Harvard University, where he was a guest scholar at the Center for International Affairs (Kokusai Mondai Kenkyusho). He describes with nostalgia their life in an apartment on the bank of the Charles River. Every weekend they had a party to which they invited

Americans and foreign students from Malaysia, the Philippines, Korea, China, Nepal, Venezuela, Mali, and other countries. He says he learned about the cultural diversity of the world community and the importance of freedom, in addition to being proud of his own country. Observing American politicians, particularly President Reagan, at the time of national crises, Okada realized what politicians could do for their country and began to contemplate a political career for himself. During the last few years, he travelled overseas extensively, meeting with political leaders in many nations.

His first press conference as foreign minister took place on 17th September 2009; the transcript is posted on the Foreign Ministry's homepage and is likely to be archived for long term reference. Okada covered a range of issues, including investigating secret agreements between the U.S. and Japanese governments on the movement of American nuclear weapons into or through Japan; he ordered the Foreign Ministry to come up with a report by November. He commented on North Korea's abduction of Japanese citizens, saying that without further information, sanctions would continue, and indicated the Maritime Defence Forces refuelling operation in Indian Ocean in support of international operations in Afghanistan would not be extended but Japan would consider other forms of assistance.

Public opinion polls show that more than 70% of the citizens approved of the new cabinet in its early days. Whether the DPJ can resolve economic troubles, help the elderly and families with children, narrow the gap between the haves and have-nots, establish stable relations with the United States and Asian neighbours, and play an effective role in international community will be closely watched both by the Japanese themselves and people overseas.



Ultimate Crush: Waseda University Rugby, Leadership and Building the Strongest Winning Team in Japan

**by Katsuyuki Kiyomiya
Translated by Ian Ruxton**

**North Carolina, Lulu Press,
2006, 150 pages, Paperback,
£17.00**

ISBN: 978-1430303213

Review by Ian Nish

This book was inspired by the death of Katsuhiko Oku (1958-2003) who will be known to many readers as the

former Counsellor of the Japanese Embassy in London with special responsibility for the Japan Information and Cultural Section. Subsequently he was gunned down in an ambush during duty in Iraq and was given the posthumous title of Japanese ambassador to that country. His connection with this book is that he was an Old Boy of Waseda Rugby Club for which he had played and with which he kept close ties. The author of this book set up in his honour a Non-Profit Organization, the Oku-Inoue Fund for the children of Iraq, just as rugby-playing associates in London set up a similar fund in his name. The name of Oku was thus commemorated along with that of his colleague Masamori Inoue with whom he died.

This is a rugby autobiography written by Katsuyuki Kiyomiya (1967-), rugby player and coach of Waseda University team for five years from 2001 to 2006. It was originally published in Japanese as *Kyukoku no shori* (Ultimate Crush) [Kodansha 2006] and contains not just an account of his Waseda career but also his theories on rugby tactics. Professor Ian Ruxton of Kyushu Institute of Technology, himself an enthusiast for Japanese rugby, offered to translate the volume because he felt that *"one of the reasons why the Japan Rugby Football Union unfortunately failed in its bid to bring the Rugby World Cup 2011 to this country was the lack of knowledge of Japanese rugby throughout the world."* (page iii) His translation captures well the conversational style of rugby talk and, combined with his extended introduction, is an enlightening read.

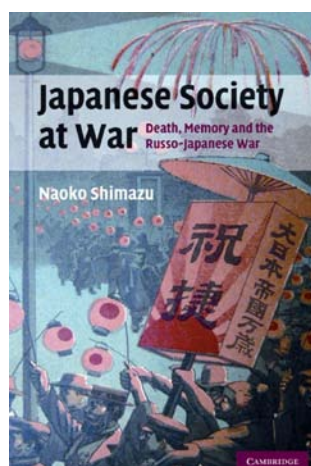
Kiyomiya, a former captain of Waseda, was nominated as coach when he retired from playing. But he met resistance from the players because he was a forward and they wanted a back. He was eventually accepted and his coaching methods proved to be successful in his first season and took the side out of a long period of poor performances. At the end of his first year, the team was thought to be fit to tour the UK as part of the *"Anglo-Japanese cultural exchanges"* which Counsellor Oku was organising. But the team needed a slogan, characteristically in the English language. Counsellor Oku put up many suggestions and *"Ultimate Crush"* eventually met with approval from the team. (Hence the title of this book.) Its exact implications are vague; but clearly opponents were well advised to take cover.

Whatever the mystic properties of the slogan, Kiyomiya restored the fortunes of the Waseda team, which was successful in the Kanto Universities League, beating their arch-rival Kanto Gakuin in the University Championships in January 2005. They also played well in the All-Japan Championship matches and against visiting teams from Oxford and Cambridge. There were ups and downs of fortune; but broadly he accomplished great things.

Yet despite the positive message of this book in favour of rugby, there is at the end a note of disappointment about the present state of Japanese rugby. He writes

"This is because the number of students and high school pupils playing the game is decreasing...When I was a player, rugby was very popular. High school rugby was broadcast nationwide on television, and Hanazono Rugby stadium was packed day after day. But now there is not even a pale shadow of that." (page 142)

Kiyomiya is an evangelist for rugby and seeks by this and other books to restore the popularity of the sport in Japan and its international image.



Japanese Society at War: Death, Memory and the Russo-Japanese War

by Naoko Shimazu

Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare (No. 28), Birkbeck College, University of London, 2009, 354 pages. Hardcover, £55

ISBN-13: 978-0521859349

Review by Peter Gysin

The Russo-Japanese war, the author reminds us, was hugely symbolic – the first victory for a non-white, non-Christian, emerging nation over a white, Christian, developed counterpart, it inspired nationalist revolutionary movements in Asia and the Russian empire itself. Histories of the war tend to focus on the “big picture,” diplomatic machinations leading to, and concluding, the fighting, and the epic land and sea battles (the scale of the slaughter should have made this, not World War I, the conflict to end romantic notions of warfare). This book examines the smaller, human picture.

Received wisdom ascribes Japan’s victory to a combination of national unity (in contrast to revolutionary racked Russia), proximity to the theatre of war, her strategic alliance with Britain and better planning, but mainly to the spirit of the Japanese soldiers, willing, perhaps even wanting, to die heroically. Such self-sacrifice, reinforced by accounts such as Sakurai Tadayoshi’s *Human Bullets* (Sakurai bewails the drowning of an officer, not for the fact of death but as a lost opportunity to die in battle) made a huge impression on foes and observers alike. Subsequently, in the Russian Civil war, Bolshevik officers could sometimes only maintain morale by assuring troops that their Japanese foes were Korean; later, Soviet commentators denigrated Japanese soldiers as *smertniki* (death seekers).

Dr Shimazu paints a more complex picture of Japanese society (military and civilian) than that propounded by contemporary state propaganda or, for that matter,

western observers, modifying a number of stereotypes. Japan’s national character was not monolithic - there was a peace movement, her army too had its sceptics, deserters and suicides. Conversely, Russians, less motivated, could also fight to the death.

Russia’s defeated Commander-in-chief Kuropatkin cited the education of Japan’s rank and file (unlike their often illiterate Russian counterparts) as a key factor in her triumph. Many (with official encouragement) kept diaries; conscripts’ vivid accounts of their journeys across Japan before embarkation, and impressions of Manchuria and Korea (generally unfavourable) and opponents (grudging respect) form a memorable part of the book. The author shows how the journey from home village to port, seeing famous temples, castles and scenery for the first time, cheered by crowds at stations en route, instilled in the conscripts a sense of patriotic identity – assuaging but not removing anxiety over the fighting to come and the effect on their dependents should they, the breadwinner, perish. Loyalty to the state conflicted with family obligations. To sugar the pill, the state came up with the slogan “honourable war death” – but conscripts did not, “buy” this notion (more appropriate for the samurai class to which they did not belong) even if they could only criticise it obliquely.

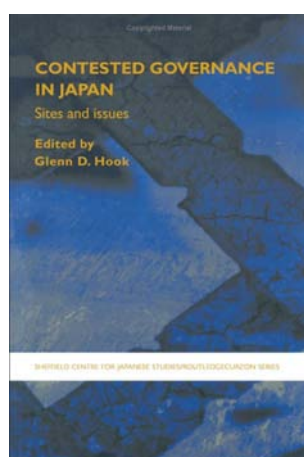
Similarly jaundiced could be the reactions of those who had experienced fighting to the patriotic fervour of the domestic public, who often treated the war as an excuse to party. But gatherings mean crowds and even patriotic crowds can and did get out of hand – with sometimes fatal results. If the Japanese authorities struggled to dampen patriotic fervour – undignified in a nation seeking to portray itself as civilised – they were scarcely less able to hold back the peace activists. We learn that (surprisingly) anti-war journals, along with poems and works of art on the futility of war death, continued to be produced throughout the conflict.

Another particularly memorable chapter covers Russian POWs’ time in Matsuyama, whose generous treatment (recreational facilities, freedom of movement, cultural sensitivity towards non-Russian minorities), to the bafflement of Japanese diehards but the benefit of the local economy, seems more like a holiday camp. WW II veterans of Japanese incarceration will raise an eyebrow on reading of Russian complaints over the food. Of course there were diplomatic imperatives behind what the author terms “*humanitarian nationalism*”, Japan at pains to display to the outside world behaviour towards the vanquished befitting a civilised nation.

Other chapters describe how the government (anxious to spare the Exchequer) left commemoration of the war dead and succour to bereaved families largely to local elites; the posthumous “*deification*” of naval officer Hirose - centrally inspired but lasting well beyond the war thanks to popular renderings in song, and on screen and stage; and consciousness of the war in its

aftermath - today, seemingly greater in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the scene of the protracted peace negotiations, whose centenary was celebrated in 2005, than in the combatant countries.

Though manifestly the fruits of scholarship, this readable book is for the layman as well as historian. While it assumes a broad knowledge of the war, it provides enough background for non cognoscenti to fill in the gaps. With 35 evocative photographs and 2 maps, it is rich in detail – from socialising across the front line during a New Year's Eve truce, to schoolboys misbehaving on outings to see Russian prisoners, soldiers' preoccupations (women, letters from home, food) and the treatment of the (much fewer) Japanese prisoners in Russia.



Contested Governance In Japan: Sites and Issues edited by Glenn D Hook

**Sheffield Centre for Japanese
Studies, Routledge Curzon
Series, Abingdon, 2005 288
pages, Paperback, £29.99
ISBN: 978-0415364980**

Review by Roger Buckley

Getting rid of the nation-state never actually happens. The authors of this collection of papers prepared for a 2001 Anglo-Japanese meeting have their misgivings over state sovereignty but several admit that the beast keeps reappearing in different guises. The state may indeed be diminished by global forces, yet paradoxically it pops up again as the hidden funder, the quiet organizer and the sometime friend of institutions that wish to challenge traditional power centres at home and abroad.

The thorny methodological issues are tackled first by Professors Hook and Dobson in the expectation that this will provide the context for the more specific chapters on Japanese approaches to gabanansu [ガバナンス]. Both authors wish to discover what might be the specifically Japanese characteristics of the phenomenon, examining governance at the international, national, regional and small-group levels.

Different authors in this most useful collection of essays take different approaches. Hook suggests that governance in Japan can be viewed as a process where state power frequently overrides that of the individual, though he notes that the market and society may well be offering greater challenges to the conventional view of an all-dominant central authority. Dobson acknowledges the "definitional fuzziness" of both governance and globalization and goes on to caution against "the

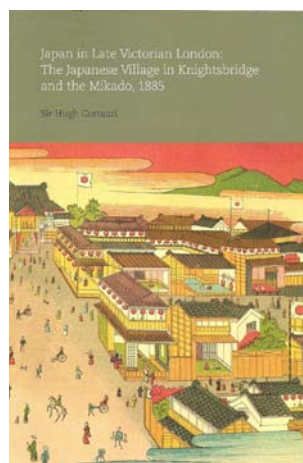
lingering importance of traditional sovereign state actors and we need to regard the appearance of new actors with suspicion."

Challenging the Japanese state through widening policy debates and the decision-making process is shown to be no easy matter. The obstacles are high and frequent for those outside the iron triangle hoping to penetrate the bureaucratic arena.

We are told by Philip Cerny that major exporters have "grown steadily more independent" of officialdom because firms can raise their own capital, yet Japanese corporations and the financial sector still look instinctively to the state when times get hard. An approach too that Europeans and North American banks and car manufacturers have most certainly been following during the present global recession, leading commentators to suggest that the West is reverting to its own versions of Japan's industrial policy. Neo-liberalism and globalization are hardly the flavours of the month in the summer of 2009 as the G-8 and G-20 club members attempt to hold back protectionism and beggar-my-neighbour competitive devaluations.

Most essays in this collection refer to events of the late 1990s with a few touching on the early days of the Koizumi administration. The result of course is a slight datedness with prime ministers and, perhaps more importantly, officials coming and going in the interim but anyone interested in how Japan has been tackling its homeless issue or requiring data on corruption or family policy is in for a feast. Recommended for those searching for both information and insights.

Next Issue:



Japan in Late Victorian London: The Japanese Native Village in Knightsbridge and The Mikado, 1885

In the next issue of the Japan Society Review we will be looking at Sir Hugh Cortazzi's latest book, *Japan in Late Victorian London: The Japanese Native Village in Knightsbridge and The Mikado, 1885*.

For those who would like to buy a copy of the book, you can do so by writing to The Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures (SISJAC) at the address below, enclosing a cheque for £5.

The Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts & Cultures, 64 The Close, Norwich, NR1 4DH, United Kingdom.