

Perspectives for the Global Community : A Study and Analysis of Contemporary Writing on Japan

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INTRODUCTION

"The actual people who live in Japan are not unlike the general run of English people; that is to say, they are extremely commonplace, and have nothing curious or extraordinary about them"
OSCAR WILDE

"The whole of Japan is under a curse the curse of a green snake" - MISHIMA YUKIO

"The most profound lesson the Japanese could learn is not to be like anyone else, but to be themselves - to live an authentic individuality" - NATSUME SOSEKI

"Japan is sinister, a swamp that sucks life from everything in it" - ENDO SHUSAKU

"Japan achieved pretty much the same results as Europe (i.e., social contract) but primarily due to the highly authoritarian culture. People just do what they're told. They have a very low standard of living, considering their wealth, but they work hard, just do it" - NOAM CHOMSKY

"The Mishima incident ought to remind Washington that there remains in Japan a tiny, yet virulent and potentially dangerous group whose goal is remilitarization" - ALVIN TOFFLER

"People see an old Japan of samurai and Zen gardens, a new Japan of gadgets and efficiency. Between the two, there is a blank where the Japanese live" - OE KENZABURO

"Bullying is a tool for forcing individuals to accept the logic of the group" - MIYAMOTO MASAO

"Here in this city we have a huge drifting vessel. Let us call it the S.S. Labyrinth. Somewhere there must be a bridge, an engine room. But where? No one knows. What remains? Certainly that our myths are lost- the good, full earth, the secure home" - ABE KOBO

As witnessed by the score of quotations presented above, there is no shortage of analytical writing on Japan as a country and as a culture. Most certainly, the economic success achieved by Japan resulted in a spate of works on its society and its people. The breadth of the writing on Japan is not restricted to economics, a topic that seemed to dominate a decade back. At that time, pundits appeared divided largely on whether to praise Japan for its surging economy and try to convey its secrets to the West, or lambaste it for its success at exporting and locking out the West. In the past ten years, a greater array of books in the West has appeared, a canon that seeks to externally internationalize Japan, a process which does not unfortunately seem to be occurring to a great enough extent from within the country.

Oe, in addition to his quote offered in the opening section of this paper, went on to say in his Nobel acceptance speech that *"while Japan is famous for Hondas, there is not much desire to understand the people who make all these Hondas. I don't know why. Perhaps we only imitate the West or are just silent in the face of European peoples"* This quotation focuses on the West's attitude toward Japan, which seems to tilt toward Charles de Gaulle's degrading dismissal that Japan consisted of *"no more than transistor salesmen"*, or the West's smug and dehumanizing term for Japan, "Japan Inc.", implying that Japan is little more than an enormous corporate entity. But Oe makes a salient point in that the silence of Japan continues; most of the works presented here, for "consumption" by the West and designed to heighten understanding of Japan on behalf of the Western reader, are written by non-Japanese. Many of these popular works, however, serve as the major source of insight and information on contemporary Japan. Japanese language book shelves flow with analytical texts ranging from the historical to Nihonjinron (theories of Japanese uniqueness). As Patrick McGuire of Showa Women's University put it, though, *"Isn't one of the reasons Westerners are so drawn to reflect on Japan because its people seem so incapable of reflecting and understanding themselves, aren't they the ultimate fog-walkers"*

Alex Kerr, author of *Lost Japan*, argues that Japan is culturally bereft, and that its history and traditional culture are being upheld largely by ambitious 外人 (*foreigner*) crusaders, such as himself. The Revisionists might be quick to agree, one would think; Chalmers Johnson writes that Japan pursues Western success and culture in a multiphase process, but somewhere along the line, retreats for Asian values, rendering it a land of lost identity. Kerr might be classified among the *Senshinkokubyo* Theorists (Advanced Nation Sickness), who seem to feel that Japan has suffered for its success (see the Mishima quote above). By their reckoning, consumer satisfaction and economic success have left Japan a dulled, ecologically battered state. In *The Price of Affluence* by Hidaka Rokuro, the reader is shown a Japan that let its war criminals off the hook and then proceeded to pursue aims set during the militarist days of its Co-Prosperty Sphere. This pursuit resulted in "Success", but left a blighted nation of aimless, stunned children and diseases hitherto unknown in simpler days.

The Japanese novelists included in the above array of quotations were cited largely because of their critical comments (also note that not one of them, save for Nobel Laureate Oe, is very contemporary). Japanese intellectuals, writers in particular, seem to have one point in common: they adopt the traits of the classical liberal. They are hard on their country because they seem to

share an ostensibly deep sense of love, of patriotism for Japan. The citing of such intellectuals is frequent by Western analysts when they debunk or debase Japan, perhaps because the Western analysts find solace in what they perceive to be outright condemnation. This might be one major source of misunderstanding between the West and Japan; Abe, Soseki, Tanizaki, et. al., come off looking like anti - Japan radicals. On the other hand, Western pundits' condemnation and heavy criticism of Japan might also represent envy over Japan's economic success, or anger at wildly egoistic commentary of Nihonjinron writers. But as sociologist Ebuchi Kazumi points out, the Japanese are not as uniform in their views of the world as those in the West might think: *"The North American model and the Asian model represent two different types of Japanese communities overseas, each with its own characteristics. The difference in lifestyle can be explained by the host country's history and geography, and variations in political, social, and economic conditions. At the same time, there are differences in the attitudes of Japanese towards societies in which they live, namely a yearning for (dokei) or an inferiority complex (rettokan) about Western culture, and a superiority complex (yuetsukan) about Asian culture."*

The outsider reading on Japan in English faces a vast array of "angles" and agendas. Some writers such as Gregory Clark dismiss the ballyhoo over Japan as unnecessary, claiming that Japan is so simple it mystifies: It is no more than a tribal model, with its male hunters/gatherers (i.e., workers) and a strong female - dominated family structure behind that. Other writers might insist that Japan is stuck in its Cold War role, that it needs to become a part of the global community, etc. While it may appear to be a land of heavy conformity, *bosozoku* (motorcycle gangs) roar on noisily and defiantly (others might point out that this defiance, too, is uniform). While it is supposedly an ecologically ravaged nation, 80% of its land is still forested, one of the highest percentages in the world (others would point out that it is a heavy importer of wood and an enormous clear cutting nation). Contradictions in reading on Japan abound, and pigeon-holing Japan proves difficult; it may be more complex, more puzzling than most give it credit for. In fact, the country is a complex web of contending, warring forces - a messy, rich composite of interests, pursuits, and thoughts - rather than a nation of Yamato - pure ethnic homogeneity and isolated singularity. It is, to put it in deconstructionist terms, as difficult to study as most advanced societies tend to be.

THE CHRYSANTHEMUM CLUB (Or Cold War Apologists, a title popular among the Revisionist camp)

The underlying motive for this school of writers was simple: The United States required a bulwark against the spread of communism, and Japan would serve this role with a whitewashed history and focus upon its current achievements. In exchange for its spiritual soul, it would have advantages leading to extended economic growth (an arrangement the United States could be given credit for). Edwin Reischauer's *Japan: The Story of a Nation* might well serve as its bible. *"The prolonged, complete peace of the Tokugawa period brought to Japan years of unprecedented prosperity and industrial production and trade grew rapidly"* Such a description, points out one analyst, is apt to sound more like the Soviet Union or Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. *"Japan's*

vigorous economic recovery (following the Second World War) was a sure sign of a disciplined society and efficient political system "The LDP and the Socialists (in 1980) moved further toward this middle ground themselves. What seemed to be taking place in Japan was the opposite of the political polarization that is the usual characteristic of most multiparty systems In other words, happiness through authoritarianism, indoctrination, and apolitical bliss. "On the surface, Japan gives all the appearances of a happy society and probably deserves this evaluation as much as any country Harmony prevails; in history, Japan adopts and renders these borrowed elements "uniquely Japanese". Reischauer criticized Nixon and Kissingers' interest in China as contrary to Japan's importance in the global balance (perhaps this implies a superpower balance?), when in fact, as an advisor for President Carter once said, "*President Nixon opened the door to China, and Japan walked in.*" Patrick Smith, a Revisionist, dismisses this period as "*a wedding of scholarship and Cold War ideology.* Any true scholar, he points out, was branded a Marxist. McGuire questions whether modern Japan was ever ideology - driven, suggesting that it was the consummate opportunist (e.g., Nakasone's Middle East shuttle diplomacy during the oil crisis might be indicative of this).

Ezra Vogel (like Reischauer, a Harvard man) produced two works of renown: *Japan's New Middle Class* (1963), and *Japan as No. 1*, a 1979 work extolling corporate America to look to Japan as a model of economic success. Disengaged parents, he argued in the former, appeared to get over the mutual interests of children. This bond helped to keep Japan in harmony and surging forward. With respect to Japan as No. 1, many in fields from management (Ouchi) to business (Fields) to education (White) portrayed Japan as a happy success story from which the West had a great deal to learn. Ronald Reagan flattered his hosts by describing Japan - U.S. relations during the height of the Cold War showdown as, "*the most important bilateral relationship in the world, bar none,*" a quotation apparently used quite often by former United States Ambassador Mike Mansfield. Others might explain this relationship in terms of a father - son "give me more allowance" arrangement. The hyper military growth undertaken by the Reagan regime required financing much as the proliferation of a child's model weapons collection requires greater parental financing.

Richard Falk writes lucidly about the mutual interests of Japan and the United States: During the Cold War, Japan and the Soviet Union played off of one another (one lacked economic clout, the other lacked political and cultural clout). Following the end of the "war", the United States offered leadership while Japan committed itself to sustaining a robust, expanding U.S. economy. The combination of forces, not unlike the Ron - Yasu lance and shield arrangement, hinted at a multisphered internationalization projecting into economics, culture, ideology, and politics. Along a spectrum, each had much to contribute, each had much to gain. (In fact, economists today insist that Japan needs the U.S. as a dumping ground for its goods, and the U.S. needs its "unsinkable aircraft carrier" in the Pacific.) However, the idea that the United States set up Japan in its image and set it forth on a similar road of constitutional democracy and free - market economics amounts to provincial thinking by American leaders, in Falk's view. To the contrary, Japan would have to be punished for its success, lest the "old" model collapse.

While the Chrysanthemum Club may have dominated Japan analysis during the postwar period, writers such as Chomsky pointed out somberly, "*Japan was considered able to produce knickknacks, but was not considered a serious threat. Largely due to the Korean and Vietnam wars, production was stimulated and huge profits made George Kennan realize that while the U.S. should continue to encourage Japan to industrialize, it should control its oil imports. This would allow the U.S. veto power in the event Japan were, "to get out of line."* As late as the 1970s, Japan still controlled just 10% of its own oil supplies.

It is clear from the bulk of this reading that Japan is needed, a necessary member of the Cold War structure given a lack of American success in both Korea and Vietnam. While former Prime Minister Nakasone likened Japan to an unsinkable destroyer ready to serve the United States, little discussion ever came about concerning the pardoned war criminals (Chomsky discusses those in Nazi Germany, such as General Richard Gehlen, while Hidaka Rokuro discusses the puzzling release on Christmas Eve, 1948, of most of Japan's war criminals, many of whom turn up in influential posts shortly following their pardoning... a prime minister among them!).

Perhaps Lee Kuan Yew, the retired Singaporean Prime Minister/Autocrat carried the torch best in recent times for the "club" in a *Time* description of Japan: "*It is a peaceful little country of happy people*" Gore Vidal, on the other hand, questioned the club's arrangement in a humorously rendered episode concerning a Japanese minister of trade who boasted that Japan would be No. 1 well into the 21st century, and that the United States would be its farm, Europe its boutique. The Soviet Union, it should be noted, did not figure into this paradigm, as it appeared to presume Japan's stewardship of the West, pitted against an eternal Cold War rival, namely the Soviet Union.

THE REVISIONISTS

The Revisionists appear to take credit for exposing the Chrysanthemum Club as frauds, and aim to treat Japan as an onion: to peel away the layers of lies, and show that Japan is nothing special. At times, one gets the sense that the Revisionists wish to punish Japan and shame it into accepting an alternative agenda... perhaps not the Cold War agenda, as this lot emerges later, but a new agenda.... A New World Order, an economic arrangement, perhaps?

Chalmers Johnson appears to informally captain the Revisionsists, taking up where Richard Falk leaves us at the conclusion of the Cold War. "*The Cold War is over and Japan has won.... In forcing (the Soviet Union) into imperial overstretch we became the world's largest debtor nation, and today Japan is financing that. And they may well turn out to be the financiers of Eastern Europe as well.*" Unlike Vidal, Johnson seems to actually fear becoming the farm and boutique. He goes on to point out that in 1993, for the first time, Japan had a bigger surplus with Asia (\$53.6 billion) than it did with the United States (\$50.3 billion), leading to the conclusion that trans - Asian trade had become more important than transpacific. Three conclusions are drawn: 1. Japan is preparing for the end of the special Japan - U.S. relationship. 2. China is starting to contest Japan's economic influence. 3. American foreign policy is in drift - mode; it fails to note that the shift in power has been from political to economic, and it runs the risk of bankrupting itself like its Cold War foe, the

Soviet Union.

Other Revisionists, such as Patrick Smith, encourage a new Constitution for Japan and an analysis of AMPO (the Japanese - American security treaty). The result of this school of thought starts to appear evident: The United States feels that it has been Japan's consumption sponge for too long, and that it wants Japan to finance its own military and compete on "equal" ground. In other words, an economic war, corporate America's ideological beachhead.

Ivan Hall points to a six - phase cycle in which Japan loses its identity. In Phase 1, Asia is identified by the West as backwards, and the West as advanced. This might describe the Meiji dilemma, it might lend credence to Ebuchi's earlier comment that Japan judges the East and West in relation to itself differently. In Phase 2, there is a commitment to emulating the West, and the departure from Asia causes nationalist fervor. This upholds Alvin Toffler's observation that a right - wing stronghold lies seething beneath the surface, ready to surge to power amidst societal chaos. In Phase 3, theories of uniqueness spring forth, prompted by the fear that Japan is losing its own identity. In Phase 4, Westerners start to agree that Japan is different, and that they need to be treated differently. In Phase 5, Japan turns to the East; it discusses an Asian restoration. In Phase 6, Japan discovers that Asia is cool toward them; Chinese demand apologies, South Koreans demand war reparations, Indonesians and Thais plead economic rape.... It is discovered that Japanese imperialism is no more wanted than was European, in Hall's opinion.

This cycle seems to attempt to encourage free - market practices. The Revisionists would like to see Japan opened to other Asian countries (through participation in ASEAN, for example) probably because they want the West to have access to this rich market. Perhaps to the dismay of Mishima (the green snake, the battered automobile carcasses piled high in *The Decay of the Angels*) and Abe Kobo (a Japan caught up in a web of trite daily routine), Japan is called on to up its consumption from 56% of its economy (note that it is 68% in the United States). In a small country like Japan, however, and for a people who do not seem to be elaborate consumers (after spending a great deal of time here, it is still hard to find a significant portion of the population that wishes to be truly wealthy), raising consumption might prove challenging.

Patrick Smith, in his work *Japan, A Reinterpretation*, identifies a Japan lost in *bitai*, a permanent state of longing. Japan suffers from a past concocted and reworked in Stalin - like fashion. The concepts of *omote/ura gai/nai*, zen/aetheism, all explain contradictions running deep in Japanese culture. The salaryman as a modern samurai is a corporate conundrum; the rice farmer as a symbol of traditional Japan is a modern invention designed to keep out imports and sustain agriculture. After World War II, the government sought to sustain the rice farmer by heavily subsidizing his work. At the corporate level, the *giri - on* relationship was adopted to extend authoritarian control in the workplace: Great benefits were extended so that the employee would feel a sense of duty and obligation, a situation that more closely approximates serfdom than employment. Certainly, Smith sees *karoshi* (death from overwork) as an inevitable end for "many" of these vassals.

Smith sees Japan as a confused nation of paradoxical trends: Westernizing while samuraizing (to use Smith's term), pursuing development under the banners of empty slogans such as

"*wakonyosa*" (Japanese spirit, Western things), seizing the ways of the West without an understanding of the basis, borrowing, yet giving the world little; wanting the emperor system, but keeping it as a hollow vessel.... Smith decries the fact that Japan seems to constantly want to rediscover the past, but does not want to live it. The nation, he writes, suffers a collective neurosis. He sees it as an image with no substance; for examples, he points to a painting hanging in a Japanese man's home in Brooklyn of a house empty of contents. Says the artist: "*Japan has become unlivable. Industrial and mass consumption, an imitation of America*" (Note the paradox here: The Japanese artist has, in effect, defected to America.)

Like decrying music in the East because it is atonal, Smith's approach seems ethnocentric at times: Modern literature is devoid of talent; film - making has been reduced to *yakuza*, furry animal, and salaryman movies. Today's youth know only Disneyland and pachinko, and certainly not literature. Abe and Oe may be internationally renowned, but in Japan, they are dinosaurs.

Astounding assertions abound in this book. For example, the Japanese are not a race. The *burakumin* are one of the few happy groups, as they have accepted their lot in life and are closely knit. The Koreans are hated. The U.S. military stays to be "a cap in the bottle", as one officer explains to him, meaning that the Americans stay to prevent the remilitarization of Japan. *Karoshi* help lines are besieged with calls. Hatoyama Kunio, as Minister of Education, was a crusader against mediocre education. And so on.

It is not simply that these questionable stances undermine the legitimacy of his work; the occasionally strange conclusions he reaches seem to have been drawn from limited exposure or knowledge. When he visits the *Jiyu no Mori* School, a rebel outpost of Western - like freedom, he is overcome when the school's orchestra bursts into Vivaldi's "Gloria", as if this were a triumph of Western creativity over the average, drab Japanese school. What Smith does not seem to realize is how commonplace it is for this to occur. In fact, it almost proves the opposite of what he intends to prove: *Jiyu no Mori* is getting its orchestra to completely master one or two great pieces for public image, a practice that seems relatively common at school music festivals. This appears to contradict its characterization as a rebel, not demonstrate it. In the realm of education, Smith seems extremely judgmental and occasionally inaccurate. "The Ministry of Education decides teaching methods," he criticizes, which is simply not true. They do outline the Courses of Study; they do authorize the textbook (both of these areas could have used more critical analysis, perhaps), but they do not dictate teaching approaches and methods. As McGuire points out, the Courses of Study and censoring of textbooks may predict certain teaching methods, but a tour of schools in Japan will prove that this is not an absolute truth (arguably, a great deal of uniformity does exist, though going into the reasons for this would be overly time - consuming and speculative). *Ijime* is not a peculiarly Japanese problem, and Smith should have balanced his presentation by citing the oft - mistaken notion that Japanese teenagers kill themselves more often than any other country's youth. *Juku*, he asserts, once played an important part in education, but today, they are largely big business. Here, he neglects to mention that conventional schooling still places strong emphasis on *kokoro* cooperation, egalitarianism, etc. He may not find these to be qualities that need exercising in school, but that is not his decision to make.

While much of the history presented in *Japan: A Reinterpretation* is sound, the interpreting is questionable. The conclusion is familiar, with little new offered: 1. Japan needs a new Constitution, a move that will free Japan from its neurosis. 2. The Security Treaty needs scrapping. The Americans, he claims, will not sacrifice lives to protect the land of Walkman units, while Japan stands on the sidelines, making money. Additionally, terms like *bubei*, *kenbei*, *hanbei* (derogatory terms used to describe the United States) coming into more frequent use signals subtle Japanese dissatisfaction with its former Cold War ally.

Chomsky once speculated that corporate America needed a collaborating class to drag its agenda forward. It would seem that Smith, a journalist, is pushing ahead an agenda very much suited to the West's business community, an agenda that will leave Japan looking a little bit more like "us" in the end. In a sense, the Revisionist writing almost appears paradoxically propagandistic; the ideology (i.e., Chrysanthemum Club ideology) that once suited the Japan - U.S. relationship now needs re - writing; it has come to be viewed as a rogue school of thought, a simplistic, inaccurate set of empty truths. The Revisionist camp (if you think hard about it, doesn't Revisionist set forth images of alteration?), on the other hand, seems to be working to establish a new "correct" version of the events of the past.

This does not mean that their pursuits are completely in error; their revisions often reflect what has changed or challenge past misrepresentations. George Hicks attacks what appear to be non - issues in Japan, and brings them to the fore. In his work, *Japan's War Memories: Amnesia or Concealment?*, he raises some excellent issues. (Note that Patrick Smith, in a book review appearing in *The Nation*, referred to this as an "important little book"). Indeed, it seems clear that the Ministry of Education whitewashed references to Unit 731 or the Nanjing Incident* (avoiding use of words such as *hisanna* (tragic), a term which would certainly be used to describe the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima). Manchuria is presented in an elementary school text as an "incident" (*jihen*), while the Soviet Union "invaded" (*semeru*) Japan. In fact, he treats the topic of textbook "screening" in great depth. His documentation of war events and atrocities is extensive, and attempts at litigation were numerous by his reckoning. He starts with the 1972 South Korean demands for back pay for work done during the Japanese occupation at an insufficient wage and moves up into the 1990s and Comfort Women. He contests a popular Japanese revisionist A,B,C,D theory (concocted and kept alive mainly by the Ministry of Education) to justify Japanese imperialism (Donald Richie suggests that the fairy tale *Momotaro* helps to achieve a mindset of "proper imperialism". In other words, if the *oni* need to be thrown out for the sake of those who occupy the land, then imperial ventures offer some benefit). Hicks does not attempt to accuse all Japanese people and associate them with the likes of Unit 731 or the Nanjing Massacre (or Rape of Nanjing); he merely suggests that Japan's politicians and bureaucrats behave more like their Western counterparts by admitting and publicly discussing the imperial, colonial, wartime past without omitting the brutality and the tragedies wrought on others. The reader has to wonder which is better: The likes of Ishida Shintaro dismissing the Nanjing Massacre as Chinese fabrication and the Ministry of Education suggesting that Japan helped Southeast Asian countries achieve independence through their heroic A, B, C, D plan, or the

United States' failure to admit its role in bringing Pol Pot to power and in helping Indonesia to overrun defenseless East Timor.

Still, Hicks does history a service. He defines the categories of war criminals for us, and then explains how so few were convicted, including an illuminating section on an Indian judge's "sympathetic" views and the possibility that they were anti-colonial. Hicks very apolitically - and rightfully - identifies the positive work of Japan's Communist Party, an entity so vilified or ignored in most works (e.g., opposing relations with China based on the cruelty of the Cultural Revolution; Red Flag's efforts to publish World War II atrocities, particularly on the nebulous Unit 731; efforts to properly investigate the Emperor and his involvement in the Second World War). He questions whether the "Yoshida School" governments (i.e., bureaucratic blocks), the Diet, and the Ministry of Education were not unified in keeping war atrocities and information out of texts, and unlike most recent historians, he juxtaposes differences in treatment of the war with Germany.

It is difficult to cover all that this remarkable book contains. Japan's rightists like to levy the criticism that Hicks does not read Japanese. It is interesting to note, however, that unlike van Wolferen (who likes to cite anecdotes in which he is cracking jokes with waitresses as evidence of his proficiency in Japanese) he admits to using several Japanese researchers as his eyes and ears, so to speak. As for the presentation and style of writing, one could scarcely berate Mr. Hicks: In this dense but brief book, he packs in an amazing amount of little known history, and does it with incredible impartiality. One wishes, however, that he would cite with greater frequency the romanized Japanese for such entities as Red Flag (*Akahata*) or for many of the institutions to which he refers.

Hicks follows this with another short, but dense book about the plight of the Koreans, *Japan's Hidden Apartheid*. While his book may have been dubbed sensationalist a decade earlier, it reads much like a history of an oppressed people, of the long fight encountered by people first abducted and enslaved, and then stripped of their nationality (1952). Their identity slowly vanishes as Japan refuses to separate ethnicity and nationality, but by 1984, a "pro-choice" option is given to the Koreans on nationality (note that by this point, 80% had married with ethnic Japanese, diluting the pureness of their minority status). Hicks traces the improvements granted the Koreans from 1965 (the Japan - ROK Normalization Treaty) to 1979 (Japan's ratification of the International Covenant on Human Rights) to present day (the abolition of fingerprinting, which had begun on the South Manchuria railroad to track Chinese indentured labor). Hicks presses on to point out that Koreans are reluctant to unveil their identities (note that since 1940, when they were required to take Japanese names, their identities could be effectively concealed). This fear is based in reprisal that threatens to take place either in the workplace (case of Arai Shoji, known in Korean as Pak Chong-sok, against Hitachi) or in society at large. Often portrayed as associated with pinball and *yakuza*, the Koreans interviewed by Hicks seem to consider "lying low" safer than "being exposed" to the prejudice that prevails. (Note that Hicks also goes on to make a case for the *burakumin* maintaining anonymity, contrary to Smith's depiction of a cohesive, content minority.)

J. Samuel Walker makes a similar pitch for the truth in his illuminating revisit of the atomic bomb processes in *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against*

Japan. Essentially, he explores the historical assertion that Truman and his staff elaborated carefully over options, and after much deliberation, selected the atomic route. Walker comes away with ample evidence to the contrary, that Truman had made up his mind to use the weapons were they to come into existence. (This should not, however, come as a total shock. The president of a prestigious university in Tokyo once confided to this writer that he had been a member of the team working on atomic weapons during WWII in Japan, and that in the event of success, they were prepared to deploy the weapons at once, without hesitation.)

Such authors and their writings are occasionally referred to in articles as Revisionists. In fact, they should be separated from the Revisionist camp, as for the most part, the likes of Hicks are digging deeper into matters that seldom came to surface while authors such as Walker seem to be clarifying issues of the past. Hicks attacks issues of xenophobia and prejudice, those which seem to scare Japanese academics who remember all too well how “peaceful” rightists treated the Mayor of Nagasaki when he postulated investigation into the Emperor’s role in World War II. This differs from a reinterpretation of entire issues, such as the virtually Orwellian flips pulled from the Chrysanthemum (e.g., the education system is perfect, it supports the industrial development of Japan) to the Revisionists (e.g., the education system is not good, it is dehumanizing and authoritarian). Does this not seem similar to criticizing the Soviet Union for its authoritarian power structure (i.e., power concentrated in the Politburo) and praising Singapore for its authoritarian power structure (i.e., good discipline, nice caning)?

THE SOCIALIST MODEL

There are writers who seem to like presenting Japan as the sole functioning model of socialism, whether it be described as cronyism or a mixture of capitalism and socialist control. (Note that I am assuming that many in the West equate socialism/communism with those forms of political/economic control employed in the former Soviet Union, Mao’s China, Ceausescu’s Romania, etc.) Murray Sayles makes an interesting argument to this effect; the bureaucrats in Tokyo closely resemble the Soviet *nomenklatura* and a certain sense of “ethno - economics” prevails. This model, once praised under such labels as Theory Z by the Chrysanthemum Club, is now being debunked as little more than extended nationalistic nepotism. He launches his argument in a recent article with this paragraph: *“Families are ruled by love not markets Preference for costly local products over cheaper imports? Don’t break Granny’s rice bowl. Only token strikes? Families don’t strike against kin. The rejection of foreign capital Don’t sell the family business to strangers The exclusion of immigrants and foreign guest worker? Outsiders shouldn’t enjoy what Japanese have slaved to build The equitable distribution of income Families share Deals with labor unions that have consistently kept wage raises below increases in productivity We’re all Japanese here not bosses and workers, and inflation will hurt the whole Japanese family The legendary work ethic Don’t let the family down Self - policed quality control A defect harms every Japanese And so on”*

Sayles goes on to explain current woes through this “ethno - economics”, or familyism. For

example insolvent banks have been propped up with taxpayers' money like an ill - spending brother, which in turn led to the bursting bubble and the current contraction. Sayles' argument then extends to the social realm: Japan's birthrate will be its stake through the heart. Japan's arch - rival, China, is where Japan was decades ago: 26% of its population is under 15 and just seven percent is over 65. He argues that Japan needs to modernize its society, not its rickety financial system or modern industries. Young people do not earn enough to start families early. Young brides do not want to be tyrannized by mothers - in - law, nor are they interested in marrying into families with a business (in earlier times, the eldest son was responsible for carrying on the business; now, the only child, in many cases, will be expected to do so). At present, Japan is awash in cash, but it is doing nothing with it. Old people hoard it in postal accounts; the country is hostage to American prosperity. Hence, the yen will inch up, production will have to move increasingly off - shore, there will be more belt - tightening at home.... all in the name of survival. Taxes will increase to pay ever - rising government debt (run up by the family's big party, the LDP) and more will be needed to shore up failed systems.

Sayles makes an interesting argument, but seems to fail to take into account an important impetus for Japan's current woes: What once looked like a solid future (the late 1980s and investment in Asia, what with the Asian century creeping up on the world) has suddenly turned into a series of mismanaged loans, as if the Revisionists had rewritten history to show the surging Japanese economy of the late 1980s (of which everyone was so afraid... Rockefeller Center, Hollywood studios, etc.) to have been a reckless plunge into speculative blackness. Also, while bank failures may stand at a staggering \$614 billion, the postal banking system holds \$3 trillion, and the account surplus for Japan is estimated at about \$150 billion. There is, then, the most important variable: While aging Japan may be inward - looking victims of an antiquated system, this does not mean that they have not prepared for society's graying, or that they are entirely incapable of transforming their institutions to meet future needs. In fact, what Sayles identifies as a key weakness - its "familyism" - may turn out to be its saving grace in the event of sacrifice/mobilization.

Japan may be socialist in appearance, but it is difficult to dismiss its population's commitment to common goals, its ability to sacrifice for groups, and its lack of spending on military bulk, one "competitive" expense that may have helped drive other "socialist" experiments out of existence.

THE *SENSHINKOKUBYO* THEORISTS

The Price of Affluence is one work which reflects this school's largely outwardly liberal attitude toward society and its development: As a result of its success, Japan has produced a dulled, non - vibrant, consumer - oriented society. With priorities set on the development of a thriving, culturally rich society, these theorists see Japan - particularly the Ikeda/Sato years of Income Doubling - as having damaged Japan heavily.

The Price of Affluence sets out by lambasting Japan for allowing many of its war criminals (on whom they blame Japan's World War II "follies" and ventures) to escape justice. Interestingly, the

offenders are listed by name, in roster form; Sasakawa Ryoichi is among the culprits (whom many will remember as a strong contributor to/supporter of the current JET Programme). Even in the early 1980s, the aging professor characterizes his students as passive, disinterested in anything other than the acquisition of material goods. He points to dominance of the media, lack of constructive debate on issues, and the emergence of diseases such as Minamata as signs of the over-indulgence of Japan during the postwar years. The absence of a true democratic process, or participation in such a process, ranks high as one of the prices paid. The thoughts of historians such as Kato Shuiichi apply here: the Kenpeitai (Japan's military era police), one of the country's most feared groups in this century, have been replaced, he suggests, *"by the advertising agencies, the only difference being that they are 100 times more powerful and sinister than were the Kenpeitai. They are everywhere"*

Less direct in his lament of a vanishing Japan is the dean of foreign scholars Donald Richie in *The Inland Sea*. It is a must read travelogue, since it serves such a multitude of purposes for those curious about Japan. The book opens with a comparison of the Inland Sea to the Aegean, a metaphoric analogy in which the placid water is peppered with small islands. Its beauty lies not in staggering mountains rising from the sea, but rather from a sweeping vista of low lying mounds, a horizontal panorama. He criticizes Kobe as a sad testament to the future, a totem to the bulldozer. The port is littered with refuse, the city has too many people, the country has too much money. He sees big city Japan as development-plagued, as having followed the United States and acquired the same ills. Richie's image of Japan is reminiscent of Mishima speaking through Honda in *The Decay of the Angel* *"The Daigo District was a clutter of all the dreary details of new construction to be seen throughout Japan: raw building materials and blue tiled roofs, television towers and power lines, Coca-Cola advertisements and drive-in snack bars. Among heaps of rubble below cliffs, where wild daisies stabbed at the sky, were automobile dumps, blue and yellow and black, the cars piled precariously one on the other"* This is vintage Mishima, a picture of a Japan culturally colonized by the Americans, victims of imperialism.

But Richie's travels across the Inland Sea exposes a more upbeat side to the author: A traditional Japan exists, but modern society threatens to extinguish that, too. While he decries the spread of popular consumer products to distant corners of the 瀬戸内海 (one wonders how Richie would react to modern-day "conveniences" such as the fax, the diffusion of Oreo cookies, and what have you), he offers a thorough examination of backwater Japan and its dying customs. For example, he explains abstract concepts such as time, which he says for the West is like a river, down its unchanging course we float; in the East, the river is a symbol for our earthly run, an *ukiya* for life rather than for time. He presents interesting rationale for why Shinto shrines lie in high places, and how appearance becomes reality in Japan, a criticism "outsiders" often level against the country. The Japanese, he explains, have fought a great war between aspirations and actuality, and the conclusion is that only in appearances do they find reality, an observation not unlike one made by Oe earlier. The Japanese prepare themselves for the worst, a tendency which explains why they are a happy people (as opposed to strongman Lee Kuan Yew's observation that the "Japanese have achieved prosperity and become a happy nation." Richie might argue that they have lost their

happiness, a simple and child-like 素直 state, through prosperity).

Foreigners can succeed in Japan, particularly because so few demands are placed upon them. He alludes to a realization that frustrates many writers and visitors to Japan from Henry Scott Stokes ("for the first time, I was totally lost, I was in over my head") to Patrick Smith ("Cold War Japan was the unhappiest, most contorted country I ever covered as a correspondent."): They are outsiders who do not fit into society. Richie's solution seems so simple: Do not try to fit in. Learn the language, fit into your role, and you will somehow find a place. He finds Lafcadio Hearn's writings to be less about trying to find the soul of Japan, and more about Hearn trying to find his own soul. Japan, he asserts, is like an onion (the concept is not unlike that adopted by the Revisionists): Peel away the layers, and you will find no core. If the appearance, which has become the reality, does not suit the Japanese, they will change, much as they tear down buildings and heave up new ones. But back to foreigners and their place here: Richie sees the 外人 as going through the following phases: 1. Japan is wonderful, people are great. 2. Japan is a prison. 3. Both honeymoon and divorce over, he settles for a mistress. This is similar to Alex Kerr in *Lost Japan*, who juxtaposes the foreigners living in China (vibrant, caught up in the swirl of events) with those living in Japan (leading largely sedate, passive lives, yet somehow content with its absence of big, earth-shattering pleasures).

Richie catches one islander fabricating folklore, just one example of a common criticism leveled against the Japanese: The past is constantly under reconstruction. He also unveils inconsistencies used to explain certain phenomena: "*There are no plazas because we have no time to stroll*" "*We have no outdoor cafes; who has time to sit around drinking coffee?*" "*Trains shut down early because we are early risers*" These conveniently portray the Japanese as assiduous, while Richie points out that taxi lines after midnight (in Tokyo's bustling nighttime play areas) are lengthy, and that housewives often spend hours in coffee shops. However, there is an image that Japan would like projected of itself, he argues, and claims that such justification serves as a defensive reaction. He also points to a statue of Takamine Hideko on one island. The famous actress is immortalized in bronze for her portrayal of a local teacher; the actual teacher, however, goes unremembered while the actress who played her will forever stand before the public.

When it comes to borrowing, the Japanese have been selective, iconoclastic importers of things foreign. Their coffee shops feature esoteric music, and film idols such as Audrey Hepburn are household names (while in the United States, she would most likely dwell in the shadow of a better known Hepburn, Katherine).

In summing up his views on Japan, Richie breaks it down into a society of metaphoric cats-cautious, fatalistic people unable to take responsibility, and completely restrained and insulated by their ways and relationships. Again, this provides great latitude and freedom to the outsider. But he makes perhaps his most salient point when he observes that a Japanese may go native in the United States or in Paris, but it is impossible that a Parisian or a New Yorker could go native in Japan. This does not mean that they would not be accepted; it would be in a role that they would have to consent to accept in this role-oriented society.

Off of the Internet, one picks up pieces such as *The Tokyo Nice Life* an offshoot, perhaps, of

McKenzie Wark's book entitled *Virtual Geography: Living With Global Media Events* Wark's article reflects much of current opinion from within the expatriate community. Tokyo is strangely familiar because it is made in the image of capital (as in wealth, assets). For example, English is splashed all over signs and billboards not because Japan is imitating the West, but rather, because the image that springs forward is catchy. Signs and billboards, advertisements, promise departure from the daily routine of life. They address the individual consumer, they promise friendship. Since everything has been mown down for the sake of capital, lost virtues, lost experiences are promised to be returned. Hyper resorts, hyper vacations also promise maximum use of capital, a utopian end. The nice life lies beyond a horizon, beyond drab, gray Tokyo. A product lures the unsuspecting, the global culture of commodification has Tokyo in its grips, the result of deluding us with non-existent images of utopian nature and other-worldness.

It is difficult to refute Wark's bleak depiction of the advertising industry, but if population growth and increasingly scarce resources result in increasingly "virtual reality", would Tokyo not be at the fore, by his logic? Also, it is safe to say that not everybody has been hypnotized by the commodity culture exported largely from America. Take away the car, the Western features, the accessories, and one finds that a long-established culture lies beyond the veneer of Western-appearing Japan (much like the photograph that appeared in major newspapers some years ago [following a G-7 powwow] of Prime Minister Kaifu in a cowboy hat). In his book *The Lady and the Monk* Pico Iyer suggests that many Westerners come to Japan hoping to find an old, exotic culture, and by the time they have settled, they end up wishing that the Japanese would be more like the West - a point well made.

One last work in this category seems to serve as fodder for the Revisionists. Pumped as a surprise hit, the back cover of *Speed Tribes* by Karl Taro Greenfeld features the praise of *Time*'s Pico Iyer (see the Immersionist section of this paper). Unlike Henry Scott Stokes' bleak cityscape of uniform-looking corporate soldiers, Greenfeld has exposed a seemingly enormous underclass in Tokyo not entirely unlike the bizarre swarms of drugged up wasted in Kurosawa's *Tengoku to Jigoku* (and funnily enough, that swarm was heavily peppered with Westerners). The book is predictable, depressing, and leaves Greenfeld looking a bit like an ethnocentric Western bully (even if he has a Japanese mother, according to the biographical notes in the back of the book). The work seems to portend the fall of Japan (the Revisionists must have loved this) initiated and perhaps expedited by its massive underclass of hidden losers.

Perhaps most disarming about this book is its campy style accompanied by a glaring lack of analysis and depth, though in all fairness, he presents his work as a reporter. This reporting, however, takes on a dubious tone at times. *Yakuza* speak like New Jersey gangsters, as Greenfeld peppers transcribed dialogue with liberal amounts of slang and vulgarity. It is difficult to discern whether he wishes to convey a certain mood or to approximate a parallel tone in English, or whether he has gotten carried away with liberties taken in reporting dialogue. Note that since he could not have followed or shadowed these interviewees so extensively, the reader has no alternative but to cast doubt upon some (much?) of the very private dialogue and inner thoughts, such as when a motorcycle gang leader, trapped on a beach solo, contemplates escape (explained

through inner dialogue). Furthermore, his voice is virtually a consistent third person omniscient, effective in fiction, but as this work is remarkably classified as current events, does this not make it a work of documentary?

Greenfeld finds a woman in her early 20s who frequents discos by night, engages in haphazard sex, and leads a drab "good girl" existence by day. He finds a young motorcycle thief drop - out who is caught, incarcerated, and reeducated, thus destroying his dreams of being a DJ and leaving him to follow in the footsteps of his father, as a sushi chef. He follows the lonely activities of an *otaku*, a motorcycle gang member, and a drug pusher. The girl mentioned above debates having a handsome Aussie lover as a spouse against her Japanese boyfriend, and capriciously chooses the latter after thinking of Australia as a country with "sheep and some kind of coral reef". (Is the reader to assume that attractive, vapid women with less than perfect knowledge of geography exist solely in Japan?) He exposes that enormous lot of drug addicts through Choco Bon, a porn star about whom he provides plenty of graphic detail concerning physical characteristics. In another episode, the police are viewed as nothing more than corrupt collaborators with thugs and mobsters. Another dialogue has a supposed bright young product of the education system shrugging and hypothesizing that he will be a judge with the World Court in Geneva (the writer points out that it is in the Netherlands, seeming to insinuate that a Tokyo University student could not be very intelligent to make such a simple error.... this reader guesses.)

The book aims to shock, though ironically, the only people likely to be shocked by the existence of a societal lower stratum are those who have not come into contact with that stratum in Japan or anywhere else. Perhaps Greenfeld, who admits that he has a hostess girlfriend and frequents the hip clubs of Roppongi, is tasting the excitement of a fast - paced life from which he had likely been sheltered. His work offers some redeeming qualities: A good history of Ueno Park, reporting on the rigors of examination hell and how it affects the individual, the unveiling of sources of greed in the music and porn industries. However, while sifting for the interesting sociology, one must wade through mocking comments against Iranians, absurd statements (e.g., when you hit puberty, the 'burbs will suffocate you), and wild claims, such as the cover's promise of "*Days and Nights With Japan's Next Generation*" (in fact, much of what he covers is the natural greed, torpor, and fate for many of the world's present-day adults). Japan, like all countries in the world, has a struggling class of underprivileged and wayward people. It would be insightful to read works that examine these groups with some sense of compassion, unlike Greenfeld whose writing abounds with complacent musings such as a comment he makes concerning an interviewee's future: "*If Japan has a future.*" One gets the feeling that if Japan's future includes economic uncertainty, Greenfeld will be long gone.

Many subscribing to the *Senshinkokubyō* School of thought feel that Japan has already become too much like the West. Most seem to worry about the direction in which Japan is heading, while others almost seem to hope that the "sickness" becomes terminal, or accelerates to death for their own bizarre benefit. But as many of the *Senshinkokubyō* theorists (Hidaka, Richie) lament the disappearance of old ways and the seemingly blind, crass adoption of Western commercialism, one can only imagine the Japanese response to this plight (having expected the worst): 仕方がない.

Some argue that this fatalistic view toward life will actually help Japan deal with hardships in the future, not leave them merely surrendering to them.

THE IMMERSIONISTS

This is a difficult category to define, for it is comprised not exclusively of those who claim to have “gone native”, but it includes those who consider themselves not to have roles, essentially, but to belong in Japan as a part of the country. This includes the “departed elite”, those who align themselves with Japanese whom they consider to belong in a like socio - economic class. In other words, these people would be more comfortable in an upper - middle class neighborhood in Hiroo than they would be in middle class New York or London. In a sense, they identify not so much with Japan or the Japanese, but with the country’s success. There is a strange association drawn that could be described as follows: *Japan is successful, and I get along well here, therefore, I am successful*

Alex Kerr could fit into either sub - category, or perhaps even find himself occasionally slotted with the Advanced Nation Sickness group with his work *Lost Japan*. As a boy, he professes an immediate affinity for Japan, where, “*People were always friendly to an American boy asking directions in Japanese*” This is scarcely uncommon, as children seem to be doted over in their extreme youth, Caucasian children even more so, given their unique status and a *rettokan* with the West, which often manifests itself in the repulsive veneration of celebrities/standouts. Throughout the book, Kerr makes constant reference to his education and background, as well as to his linguistic prowess. For example, the book, asserts the preface, was written by him in Japanese, but as he was unable to translate his own writing back into his native tongue, he had it done for him. It is almost as if he is saying that he can write more easily in Japanese (the Devil’s tongue, claimed St. Francis Xavier), but that he has become too Japanized to be able to work in his native tongue. To the reader, this seems either an unclear explanation, or simply obnoxious posturing. It does not seem that he is modestly admitting his lack of competence at writing in English.

Japan, he points out, has enjoyed thirty years of unprecedented growth after rising out of the rubble of WWII (unlike the Revisionists, he gives no credit to external wars for this prodigious economic boom). He talks about wishing to live in a castle as a boy, and then purchasing a home in the Iya Valley in Shikoku as a university student, the culmination of a lifelong dream.

While this all sounds very ideal, the reader gets a bizarre sense of the ephemeral or of a mobility reserved exclusively for privileged classes. He does buy the house, he does patch it up, but shortly thereafter, he sells it and leaves. He decries the fact that Japanese have allowed *kaya* (thatched roofing) to lapse into obscurity. He asserts that a lack of demand killed this tradition, and not the other way around, has it put on his house, proudly shows it off as a testimony to the ways of yore, and then... leaves. He closes the episode by terming the disappearance of *kaya* “*a blow to the Japanese heart*” (while Richie postulated that Japan had no soul, since the onion skins reveal nothing at the center, Kerr concedes that the people have a heart). The reader gets the

feeling that since he did the country - house - rustic - thing, it is time to move on.

Japanese worship (in his words) foreign art, covet it for its value (pointing to the Yasuda Insurance Company purchase of a van Gogh painting) while they shun their own traditional art and allow it to lapse into obscurity. Japan does not take a post WWII dive, in his opinion; this comes centuries earlier with the close of the Heian era, which tempered Japan with fine art and detail. The ensuing samurai period brought Zen, Noh, and Kabuki to the culture, but there was a deeper stratum. It was during this period that the exterior came to be valued over the interior, a point that lends historical depth to the Revisionists' assertion that much of Japan is *omote/ura*

Like the liberal novelists and their tendency to criticize their nation for its lack of worldliness, Kerr suggests that the Japanese have an acute identity problem. They should be living amidst the fields in traditional houses without phosphorescent lighting, should be appreciating their indigenous art/calligraphy, and should be out of the cities. It is a vertical society in which reliance is used to bond human relationships. The individual came to an end with the Kamakura shogunate. Due to the literary process, the scale of memory for history is 50 years for young people, 130 years with literature. This almost seems to imply that while Japan is highly literate in terms of official definitions, its inability to tap into its literature or history would in essence render it somewhat illiterate through its own complicated doing. Comic books and pop magazines would have to serve as primary sources for this lost generation whose language was taken away (to juxtapose Iceland, for example, whose source of cultural pride stems largely from a language unchanged since the 11th century).

He compares and contrasts Japan with China. China attracts the restless, adventurous expatriate, while Japan harbors the scholarly and safety - seeking. With its emphasis on process and discipline, Japan is not a nation of philosophers or thinkers, and *Nihonjinron*, theories on uniqueness, are defense mechanisms to cloak insecurity. China, on the other hand, has no such "Chinese uniqueness" theories, largely because the country remains "full of life", in constant turmoil. China, in turn, gave much to Japan culturally, while all Japan gave in return was the folding fan, a staggering accusation, if you think about it, coming from one who castigates an entire nation's youth for not knowing its own culture. (By this reckoning, could you blame young Japanese for being passive and listless if all they had to look back upon in their cultural past was a fan?) And while the Chinese are given to constant discussion and debate, the Japanese accept university to be a four - year vacation from an otherwise dull life of regimentation, thereafter graduating to constant *pachinko* (an industry emblematic of Japan's cultural crisis, in Kerr's opinion).

Kerr himself enjoys sipping sake and exercising calligraphy (as the masters did, he points out). He collects scrolls and indigenous art work, largely in a crusade to get young people thinking about how they neglect their own culture. The education system cultivates Japanese to be prepared for mediocrity, a criticism which strikes the reader as paradoxical, since he condemns the American system for emphasizing "special" qualities. He still goes on to make the stunning assertion that while Westerners are interesting as humans, their cultures are limited in depth (this reader wonders how a Russian or Austrian would react to such a hypothesis). Japanese, on the

other hand, are restricted and limited by society as humans, but have great cultural depth (after giving China nothing but a fan?).

It is hard to dispel the hunch that Kerr never broke away from the special status accorded him during his childhood days in Japan. He has discovered many of Japan's beautiful cultural traits and resurrects them in his daily life; however, he seems to suggest that all Japanese should be doing this. This is in essence the greatest paradox in Kerr's work; like James Heisig, the academic, who suggested in a lecture in 1995 that Japanese "were tourists, not travellers" (meaning that Japanese should travel as he does, on foot, on horseback, in truly intriguing cultural spots.... Does it not occur to Heisig that, in actuality, were everybody to follow his advice, the commodification of these modes of travel and research would render them trite, and a tour package at the Hilton in Maui would become the exception?). What does not seem to sink in with Kerr is that he lives a very **special** existence, he has been privy to a very privileged upbringing; to preach it as ordinary, commonplace living attainable by all comes off as either mocking or totally absent - minded. One of the most absurd sections in the book covers Kerr's work experience in Tokyo as a high - flying representative for a large American real estate developer. He lambastes Tokyo for its filthy air, then runs for the bullet train on Friday to retreat to his rural home on the outskirts of **Kyoto**... he can't wait, he writes, as he arrives at Kyoto Station and transfers to his **car**. He sees no problem with shuttling back and forth across large distances, an obviously anti - environmental practice, yet he boldly decries Tokyo for its polluted state. Other statements such as the following leave the reader wondering: "There are only eight TV channels here. Burma will soon have more." How are the young Japanese supposed to go out and learn about their lost culture if they have dozens and dozens of TV channels competing for their attention (were they privy to easy money via a privileged lifestyle that enabled them to have comparatively more free time than the average prol, this might in fact be feasible, if not a virtual Owenite dream).

Here in essence lies the problem with *Lost Japan*. Kerr's finer points and better observations get lost in his book as a result of his frequent references to his education at Oxford, his achievements, and his overall lifestyle, which strikes one as ostensibly hypocritical. He points out the irony that foreigners (whom he bills "conversionists") who study aspects of traditional Japanese are actually upholding the culture; without them, he insinuates, Japan and its traditional arts would vanish in a flurry of cheesy theme parks and pachinko parlors. Japan's leaders in architecture, fashion, and film are dying out, and there is nobody standing behind them to take their places (but there is the vanguard of the culture, the expatriate conversionists who keep the Japanese culture just shy of extinction).

It is in this battered depiction of a grimly empty, culturally bereft Japan that Kerr closes with a puzzling conclusion: "*At this moment of disappearance, Japanese culture is experiencing its greatest flowering*" A cheesy Dutch theme park could not prove much less real than savoring Beaujolais and Camembert amidst a Heian period - like home in the country. It is of course impossible to imagine that all Japanese could do this; it is equally apocryphal that many would wish to do so.

This does not end the parade of self - aggrandizing cultural ambassadors. *Learning to Bow*, a seemingly insightful insider's guide to the education system, offers loads of advanced praise on its

jacket cover: *"A delightfully written introduction to Japan and its middle schools. Bruce Feiler helps us to understand the everyday patterns that lie behind the curious dynamics of contemporary Japan's global impact. A rich, vivid, and entertaining account"* This is attributed to Thomas Rohlen, scholar and author of *Japan's High Schools*. James Fallows calls the book, *"hilarious and revealing"*, while Robert Elegant calls the work, *"a charming and incisive close-up of the most important part of the Japanese miracle - the making of a Japanese"*

Firstly, if the most important part of the Japanese miracle is its *schooling* then this anecdotal diary would not stand up to any of the scholarly works on contemporary education in Japan (Passin, Duke, White, for example). Elegant's comment is, in fact, quite remarkable considering it comes from a country that does not even want to consider education a national issue. What is more, a program director from Vermont said in 1993 that Mr. Feiler had, *"been sweating, worrying that somebody would beat him to this"* There was novelty: Be the first to get out an "insider's look at the schools", which the JET Programme (Japan and Exchange Programme) obviously afforded Feiler.

It is difficult to pinpoint the most annoying feature about this "work". It is not only the eclectic array of quotations heading each chapter designed to give the book an "academic" image. The reader is treated to sources from Shakespeare to the Bible to Ovid to Mori Arinori. It is hard not to get the feeling that this all-star list is designed to instill in the reader the idea that Mr. Feiler is well educated. It is yet more difficult not to imagine that an anthology of quotations was used to buoy the chapters after they had been written.

It is not only the sloppy presentation. For example, sometimes the Japanese names are cited family name first, sometimes not; with the quotations themselves, he is inconsistent, reflecting not sloppy editing, but poor writing, for how could one expect an American editor to know which of two Japanese names comes first? There is Daisaku Ikeda, Etsu Sugimoto, Mori Arinori, Yamabe Akihito. This is as bad as following quotations with "Emily Post, Shakespeare William, William Blake, Steinbeck John". It is not only the transliteration of the Japanese, in which basic words like *がまん* appear romanized as *gamman*, or the *ぶらくみん* as *burakunin*, or *がんばって* which appears as *gambate* (errors akin to writing "hello" as "helo", "Caucasian" as "Taucasian", and "good luck" as "god look"). It is not only Mr. Feiler's constant reminders that he is speaking Japanese, as if to assure us that he is able to comprehend and report on complex issues. Ironically, his botching of simple Japanese transliteration leads the long-term resident to wonder whether he has more than a rudimentary, phrase-like command of the language, which, given his extensive reporting, questions the accuracy of the book's entire contents.

It is not only the hyperbole that occurs in some of his highly apocryphal reporting: *"Hiroshi-san, don't smile when you look toward the frohita"* teacher scolds a student during bowing practice. A Japanese teacher would not affix the honorary title *"san"* (equivalent of Mr./Ms./Mrs.) to a first name. Secondly, a teacher would not refer to a young male student in this way; *kun* would be the appropriate title given a younger male. Again, to the Japan hand, this seems about as likely as reading that an American teacher scolded his second grade elementary school student by saying, "Go to the principal's office, Mr. Joe!" Or another example from the text: He describes one of his

fondest memories as, "*The sight of over six hundred mothers in silk kimonos and a half - dozen fathers in black tuxedos sitting expressionless in tiny metal chairs, with their feet inside pink and yellow slippers dangling just above the floor*" Firstly, not all of the guests are mothers and fathers, a rather silly conclusion to draw from a gathering of over six hundred adults; secondly, at no graduation ceremony (and I have attended well over twenty) were parents all dressed in *kimono*/tuxedos. It is unfathomable that some would not have been clad in formal attire or everyday dresses (for the females), and it is absolutely out of the question that all males, even if there were just six, would have all come in tuxedos (suits, definitely). Or that all of the kimono were made of silk. It is the misrepresentation or hyperbole on points as such that give a knowledgeable reader reason to take offense. Or, perhaps, given the pressures of the market place, Mr. Feiler was pandering to stereotype and sacrificing accuracy?

In the "story", Feiler is an underutilized AET (Assistant English Teacher) in a junior high school in Tochigi Prefecture. His Japanese teachers bungle lessons, but when he introduces his American class/American style of teaching, he brings out the individuality in colorless students who are otherwise rallied into little more than good citizenship. "I was the first foreigner they had seen," he writes about one class. Were this the diary of a missionary in the 16th century or Commodore Perry, perhaps; the likelihood of this being the case in the 1980s is low. He does not appear to have trained as a teacher, but there are frequent reminders that he spent time at Yale and Cambridge, big names that might help readers excuse his lack of legitimate education credentials.

The book does present some useful background information on the contemporary debate over use of the flag and the playing of the national anthem. His reporting on a class discussion on fighting, and his observations on students and some of the rules are often on target. His section on Meiji period education, and its concept of institutional belonging, are also insightful to some degree, though he somewhat incorrectly cites Mr. Mori as the first minister of education and an advocate of state over individual. This quotation (source not provided) from Mr. Mori could prove incredibly misleading given his actual background and support for the individual.

The reader gets the feeling that had Mr. Feiler simply had this published as the notes and memoirs of a foreigner sent to help out some English teachers, as an anecdotal work, it could have been enjoyable and maybe even insightful at times. The threat with this work is that people will mistake it as a legitimate scholarly work on education in Japan, and pass up far more illuminating and insightful works because they are less catchy, less marketed to the average book buyer. They might mistake his passing, anecdotal observations on such issues as *ijime* (bullying) or the teaching of such subjects as history and language for academic analysis, which would lead to a rather incomplete understanding or even misrepresentation.

In his recommended reading list at the end of the book, he has suggested *Society and Education in Japan* by Herbert Passim as insightful reading material. The correct name of the author, however, is Passin. An "n", not an "m". What might appear to be a small error is again an enormous oversight to this reader, and casts doubts on the authenticity of the remainder of the work.

Pico Iyer, the celebrated essayist for the likes of *Time*, also managed to leap on the Japan - hot sales bandwagon and launch a book entitled *The Lady and the Monk: Four Seasons in Kyoto*. Conde Nast Traveler pays respect to Iyer on his cover: "*Gets as deep into the Japanese soul as a perceptive foreigner can. With his snatches of Japanese literature and religious thought, and his easy, intelligent comparisons to the brilliance and foibles of our own heritage, he leads us into the cheerful land of the rising sun and finds there, instead, a strange and haunting island. A love story unique in the annals of travel writing*" Firstly, it is hard for me to believe that Pico Iyer got anywhere near the soul, especially in four seasons. After all, he was here a year (or four seasons) and spent the bulk of it befriending a Japanese housewife, then convincing her that her husband was not well suited to her. By the end of the work, he has convinced her to pursue her own happiness; liberty and freedom prevail, just as they did in the glory days of Hollywood. At one point in Australia, Sachiko (the wife) puts down a group of Japanese tourists, a scene that must have had James Heisig smiling and convinced the bulk of the campy foreign readership that Iyer had saved another "native" from the pot, so to speak.

Like Feiler, Iyer manages to slip his Oxford background into the text for no ostensible reason other than to assure us that he is not just any old 外人; he is legitimate. (It is never clear, however, whether he merely lived there, or completed his schooling.) In fact, many of the foreigners he encounters/portrays in his book are ruffians and louts, and he, perhaps as a first year Japan honeymooner, shrewdly chooses to side with the delicate, deep Japanese culture. A sad saying attributed to Bertrand Russell about bartering and friendships comes to mind here: the reader gets the hunch that the woman whom Iyer depicts as one whose intelligence was going unnoticed appears to be one of the many in Japan who hope to find a "conversation partner", a phenomenon which might not be evident to newcomer Iyer. Iyer depicts Japan as the America of the 50s (as if he were quoting a *Time* expose on the good old days), with its nuclear family, golfing husband, and gadgets in the house. Strangely, this is the 50s I recall Hollywood projecting.

The young are apolitical and innocent because Japan has constructed a friction - free, orderly society. Iyer, being the perceptive foreigner that he is, quickly diagnoses Sachiko's trouble as an uncaring doctor husband whose big sin was "*hesitating before answering when asked to choose between allegiance to his mother or wife*" Naturally, without an understanding of the Japanese family structure, caring for the aged, or the responsibilities taken on by the eldest son, this might be viewed as little more than the narcissistic dilemma of a Nabokov character or a snippet of a summary from a kooky Harold Pinter play.

Choice dialogues occur: "*Japanese need change heart*" Sachiko says, more able to see her country's limits. Iyer responds, "*But then the whole system, which has become the most successful in the world, must change*" It is difficult for a long - term resident who has lived in more than one country to accept this assessment of Japan as "the most successful" without extensive justification to prove it.

By the end of the book, though, Sachiko is able to stare in horror at Japanese businessmen in Korea, clad in golf attire, staring out into space, picking their teeth, accompanied by their young Korean girlfriends. Iyer reports with delight that she claims she wants to vomit in her air -

sickness bag at seeing Japanese paraphernalia and materialism. "*I don't want to see Japanese!*" she exclaims, embarrassed.

Like Alex Kerr, Iyer seems to think himself the model foreigner abroad, well read, well - adapted, able to iconoclastically guide the Japanese to the "right" way of doing things (or at least flow with their *ukiyo* of success). Perhaps Iyer's biggest contribution to cross - cultural relations comes with his metaphoric quote of baseball star Ben Oglivie: "*Criticizing the Japanese game is like going into someone's home and criticizing the way he's arranged the furniture. It's his house, and that's the way he likes it. It's not for the guest to start changing things around*" "It took a ball player to teach civility," concludes Iyer. Iyer seems likely to criticize the Japanese for taking their group tours, but he would probably be more careful to assess his audience before doing it. Hence, the essence of the true professional, of one able to identify a target audience and then target the material right at *it*.

THE PSYCHOANALYTICAL THEORISTS

In *The Straightjacket Society* long - term overseas resident Masao Miyamoto seeks to paint present day Japan in Orwellian terms. He asserts that although there is no Big Brother figure, the country is yet more sinister given its vague totalitarian structure, likely a reference to Karel van Wolferen's work, *The Enigma of Japanese Power* in particular. (Recall that van Wolferen postulated a Japan in which the people undergo "*a program of character - moulding that helps ensure predictable behavior*". This neatly packaged depiction of an automaton - like nation then serves to explain millions of soldiers fanned out across Asia during World War II, or millions sacrificing their youth and well - being for the economic bottom line.)

A psychologist, Miyamoto studies Japan using vocabulary applied to mentally disturbed patients. The effect was alarming; in 1994, the book was a hit in English, and Miyamoto subsequently lost his post at the Ministry of Health and Welfare (the actual reasons for his dismissal may never be known; both sides seem to have valid points on the issue).

It should be noted that the book was first published in Japanese. It has a decidedly different look. Spruced up visually with cartoons, it has an almost comic look to it, while the English version sports a sternly academic veneer. Largely framed within the Ministry (again, anecdotal), Miyamoto depicts Japan as a childish country in which debate never occurs. The ability to use logic is therefore never honed. The political process is a farce, run largely by bureaucrats who make up questions for politicians which they in turn answer themselves. The deputy directors, competing with one another for promotions, go out of their way to trip one another up, an observation that leaves Japan's ministries looking more like settings for slapstick comedies.

In addition to this vindictive, cliquish behavior, a tribal attitude toward groupism is adopted, and strategies are used for keeping members "in line". Bullying, he asserts, is essential to this process. The institutional workplace functions due to mass brainwashing. He is told that it does not matter how well he performs in his position; to the contrary, he should go out of his way to avoid causing trouble. This subservience to 和 (harmony) and the extent to which members of an

in stitution worry about causing the unit embarrassment enforces allegiance. Rather than enrich the lives of its members, the members are to sacrifice - sacrifice from which Japan Inc's success was made possible. This sacrifice, asserts Dr. Miyamoto, with its emphasis on success, comes out of self - love, not self - sacrifice, and is therefore strongly rooted in narcissism.

As envy abounds, one must be careful not to be conspicuous. Although independence fosters individual ability, Miyamoto claims that dependence and groupism tie up the individual, they restrict the worker.

Certainly there is some truth to what Dr. Miyamoto writes. Yet at the same time, some of his examples are melodramatic and suspect. He seems to go out of his way to ruffle feathers; at a karaoke outing, he compares his being forced to sing to KGB torture, and later compares his ostracism to the Nazi treatment of the Jews in WW II. Both seem overly dramatic and hyperbolic.

Also, while Miyamoto finds the group's working on menial tasks pointless, he may also fail to recognize a Confucian effort to humble those within for the sake of group character (a tactic employed in Yoshikawa Eiji's classic, *Musashi*, by a Buddhist priest to teach humility to an arrogant, talented swordsman). In other words, Miyamoto may be applying his situation and interpreting it in terms of Western psychological parameters.

His applications (i.e., to his own place of employment) are also somewhat limited, and should be viewed as a restriction on wider meaning. While finally the analytical work of a popular Japanese writer makes it to market, many Japanese are quick to dismiss him as an outsider, as one who lived abroad too long. Opponents often admonish that he does not count.

THE REALISTS

It is difficult to find works that do not advance a preconceived set of ideas, or an agenda. The early 1990s saw several such works appear; one quite equanimical tome is entitled, *Nippon: New Superpower* (William Horsley and Roger Buckley). It focuses on postwar Japan to present day, yet it covers present - day Japan - its problems, its triumphs - in remarkably unbiased language. The title, in fact, would appear to set it among the Chrysanthemum Club; to the contrary, upon reflection, it appears less than flattering. Japan, as a superpower, also attracted woes and concerns it could have avoided had it not risen to the economic heights that it achieved earlier in the decade.

The book is surprisingly frank. The United States, following the end of the war, set up a framework which other allies staunchly opposed, simply because it seemed to favor Japan, an enemy, unjustly. The virtually neurotic corporate American fear of communism and its wish to keep Japan as a bulwark (plus Yoshida Shigeru's clever tactics in playing off of this fear to achieve difficult ends) helped Japan restore its feudal model. Using MacArthur to fight communism (e.g., by banning union strikes, by censoring newspapers such as *Akahata*) and getting him to pardon war criminals, many of whom were restored to their prewar positions of authority, the Occupation - organized government was broken down bit by bit. An interesting interview with Mei Ju - ao, a Chinese judge for the Toyko War Crimes Trial, reveals that, "*The American Occupation was cheated and double - crossed. The old - time financiers, politicians, bureaucrats all came back*

The prewar *zaibatsu* was replaced with the *keiretsu* a far more complex and insulated system, which provided lifetime employment within those large firms included in its web in exchange for loyalty and devotion. This system, while criticized by outsiders as xenophobic and exclusionist, also became a much admired and studied model for other nations in the 1970s and 1980s.

Rather than dwell on the negative, the book points to the remarkable growth achieved in the 1960s as a stunning achievement, even if it did have many negative side effects. The book also provides an in - depth look at the achievements of the likes of Masaru Ibuka, who studied clunky American transistors, then had them miniaturized for Japanese radios (against the admonitions of the American industrialists). The result: The transistor radio flooded the world. Rather than, however, portray this as an example of Japanese copying, market flooding, and dumping, the authors suggest Sony and Ibuka were ingenious for creating and capturing an entire market.

MITI, rather than play the sinister shady background role it is given in Karel van Wolferen's *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (a book that did stunningly better than this one largely because of its timing; it was released just about when the "bubble" burst, and in looking for conspiracy theories, *The Enigma* was ready and waiting) has no secret agenda; MITI simply maintained a role that was unchanged since Meiji times: Catch up to the West. Van Wolferen, on the other hand, has MITI molding, joining, and in other ways shaping industrial sectors to make them collectively fit for optimal performance, sort of like an enormous economic war room with the freedom to launch cartels at will.

Horsley and Buckley identify an iron triangle (conservative politicians, big business, and career bureaucrats) that helped achieve an extraordinary amount of control that was more structural. Perhaps Horsley and Buckley found the answer that van Wolferen and Abe had been seeking; rather than seek out those at the helm, those at the bridge, they contest that power was more amoebic among, to cite Saito Eijiro of Keidanren, "the Japanese who work together like a family". At the heart of this family were the keiretsu companies, the strong brother, whose integrated manufacturing system accounted for a staggering 1/4 of the entire economy.

Perhaps as important to the high growth rate, however, was the willing participation of the consumer (whom Chomsky claimed earlier voluntarily hooked itself onto a short leash) by saving a great deal of income and consuming little. The book says that Japan kept the domestic market controlled through collusion, and this *kept* foreigners out. Again, unlike van Wolferen, the authors suggest that the government did not actively attempt to keep out the West, but merely rolled with a process that had proven effective in minimizing entry.

The text is also extraordinary in its coverage of political leaders. The struggle to replace Prime Minister Nakasone is covered in great detail, and the book is fair in identifying Miyazawa Kiichi's "asset doubling plan" as an ingenious play on the "income doubling plan" of Ikeda Hayato two decades earlier. It is also fair in pointing out that Miyazawa never achieved the political base needed to enable him to carry out such a grand scheme that might have proven effective today had it been carried out. Sayles would probably agree with this, as he condemned the country for recoiling into a Soviet - like state of economic policy lethargy.

The book also rightfully cites widespread government corruption as having shaken faith in the

“democratic” process. The text also takes on Japan’s sacred institution, the Imperial Household, pointing out that anthropological evidence on the emperors’ true origins could easily be settled were the Imperial Household to permit excavation of the Imperial tombs. The *daijosai* is also discussed, clearly revealing that the public has difficulty accepting the use of public funds for what many see to be dubious pseudo - ideological practices. Horsely and Buckley reinforce what Richie wrote earlier about Japan’s ongoing practice of reforming history: Eighth century scholars invented about one thousand years of history to include fourteen emperors.

Like the Revisionists, but not as direct, the authors suggest a seriously jeopardized Imperial tradition. But rather than criticize the current emperor as simply a celebrity who competes with TV talents for media space (Smith), the authors suggest a poor show at Hirohito’s funeral plus fading public support for the institution as evidence that modern times may require a future change.

Like Kerr, who constantly derides *pachinko* as the ultimate sign of a blighted Japan, the authors are not surprised that the nation did succumb to the mindless pastime given the exorbitant cost of such hobbies as golf and the inability of the work force to take holidays. It is viewed more like a drug, like a duped state of escape into which the overworked slip. In some odd way, their neutral tone suggests that while they would never support *pachinko* as a pastime, they recognize that it has somehow found a niche.

The final part of the text is also upbeat. The Japanese are slowly giving up their pretense of uniqueness, social stability is still paramount (over individual rights), Japan has loads of money (to which it is rightfully entitled, insist the authors, considering that the country worked hard to get it), it has the longest life expectancy in the world, and it has achieved its dream of an East Asia Co - Prosperity Sphere *without* the use of its troops. Contrary to Sayles’ grim conclusion that Japan is inflexible, unable to break out of its mold, and graying while it stashes all of its money in paranoid fashion under the *futon*, the authors seem to be upbeat monetarists who claim that despite the aging of Japan, it will remain powerful in 2020 because of the power of money. Despite all of the power lines that Kerr sees marring its landscape, despite its silly English slogans and advertising bombardment, its leaders have included in their conclusion a time - tested formula (employed since Meiji) for success: effort, learning, respect.

CONCLUSION

It is easy to see how the average outsider develops negative images of Japan. The Revisionists might be correct in stating that Japan could not develop democratically because the United States installed thugs following the war. Bruce Feiler might be correct in asserting that the Japanese long for American culture (Richard Falk did point out that the American way is not always a reflection of advertising slogans, but perhaps does correspond to the actual desires held by some people, particularly urban young). Yet Feiler also points out that Japan’s education system fails to produce citizens of the world. Is the reader to assume through this statement that Americans **are** citizens of the world? Consuming at a recklessly disproportionate rate to their population, keeping

an enormous military - industrial industry secretly subsidized (e.g., look at former U.S. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich's district, Cobb County, for a dizzying glance into true corruption of priorities),etc.? Can all of the Japanese retreat to the countryside and collect art, as Alex Kerr implies, and start scrapping their savings and children's *juku* tuition for thatched roofs?

Quite correctly, much of Japan's development from Meiji on has been the result of catching up and maintaining pace with the West. Sacrifice for the state has been confined not solely to the economic realm, but to other spheres. Patrick Smith resurrects a valid argument when he suggests the Japanese write a new Constitution and start providing for their own defense. Similarly, Sayles may be correct in asserting that unless Japan raises young workers' salaries and increases the number of youth, the country is doomed to having its senior citizens hold cash whose value will be gnawed away by inflation. For non - Japanese who have been in Japan for longer than a decade, it is easy to remember a Japan (little different from today's Japan) that was feared by the world, whose Imperial Palace was worth more than Canada, whose encroachment on the American economy and whose Western art purchases appeared more threatening than competitive. This Japan lent heavily to the rest of Asia (completing its dreams of a Co - Prosperity Sphere, according to Horsley and Buckley), seemingly securing its future as an economic power. After all, we were repeatedly assured that the 21st century would be "the Asian century" (did some not even go as far as to dub it the "Asian millennium"). Today's hindsight brings a different view: Japan lent recklessly, it invested unwisely... Japan's education, once thought to be the secret behind the economic miracle, is often identified as the reason Japan lacks the flexibility to alter its course. The situation, the conditions, did not change; the stage in history, the point of view, did.

Perhaps the *Senshinkokubyō* theorists are right in their ostensible position that the young need to sacrifice more, rediscover their identity, and polish their image in the wake of internationalization—in other words, acquire the skills to become more global while bolstering appreciation for that which has been in place. Follow the Meiji route: Borrow, but be cautious in adopting, and modify to fit what is in place.

It might be the Psychoanalytical Theorists such as Dr. Miyamoto who have the right diagnosis: By breaking down the groupism, minimizing the bullying, the mass structural delusions within which Japan functions, in a straightjacket, essentially, will topple. A perverse sense of harmony exists, a harmony grounded in sameness, tantamount to narcissism. Once this narcissism is shed, Japan will surge forward to embrace the world community.

Tribal theorists such as Gregory Clark might be correct in assuming that Japan is a simple place whose fall was bound to come, much like the eventual defeat of an Indian tribe whose extinction was certain to occur given obstinacy to change in a rapidly changing world. Hence, the concept of sameness: Uniforms are the same, bento are made the same way, people conform to a vast series of strict codes, the nail that sticks up gets hammered down to keep society collective. Or unique. Or socialist. Or masochistic. Or..... Japanese?

In reading on Japan, the outsider has to keep an open mind, has to remember that Japan is merely a country of people who do their best to meet the challenges of daily life. Certainly, many Japanese will insist that Japan was totally isolated prior to the arrival of Commodore Perry's ships,

although it is common knowledge that a trade monopoly with the Dutch left them in constant contact with the outside world. At the same time, many Americans may argue that Jefferson was a model of great ideals while others will see him as an ambivalent, cruel slaveholder. In the spirit of deconstructionalism, it is up to the individual to take in a wide array of viewpoints and judgements, then come to assess (though I would warn any scholar or interested reader on Japan to come and interact, observe). To cite Twain, travel is fatal to bigotry.

Alexander Dubcek pressed forward in 1968 with reforms in Czechoslovakia, promising to deliver "socialism with a human face". In a sense, the barrage of books on Japan coupled with the increased travel of both its people abroad and outsiders to Japan have helped to project a Japan with a human face. The mysterious, secluded island of transistor salesmen suspect to the likes of Hamilton, Shaw, Wilde, de Gaulle, has, along with much of the Soviet Bloc and Russia, received far more attention in the foreign language press over the past decade, a very welcome launch pad to greater understanding. It is hoped that greater external internationalization (in the words of Sugiyama Yasushi) will occur in the future, and that even more works on the Japanese, perhaps for the Japanese, perhaps for the outside world, but certainly *by* the Japanese, will appear.

One seldom reads accounts of the first American in Japan, whose adventures are rarely related. It might strike the reader as ironic that Ronald MacDonald (not to be confused with the clown - costumed mascot of America's culinary beacon) was imprisoned five years prior to the arrival of Commodore Perry's black ships and forced to teach English, since the Japanese could find no other useful role for him. This demonstrates an early focus on utility and roles for even guests in this society.

Little is mentioned of the whaling expeditions that resulted in contact during this period of strict isolation (late 1700s to Perry). The Ii Naosuke affair receives little contemporary mention, even if he is a heroic and tragic figure in the effort to stem a growing public contempt for opening to barbarians. Is there no parallel between this mindset of 1860 and the *yuetsukan* (superiority complex) of today?

The first Japanese delegation was fascinated with American (read, barbarian) maps and trinkets, but the literature of America held no interest for them. There is potentially much to be gained from linking the past with the present, though it so seldom is done in contemporary writing. Much of what transpired in the past helps to explain the cultural base upon which modern society was founded. While the anecdotes and observations of contemporary non - Japanese writers are important, history and background to help the reader understand these situations and conditions is needed. Otherwise, the reader is at the mercy of the marketplace, where there is high risk that *Learning to Bow* will represent education and *Speed Tribes* sociological cross - section.

But above all, Japan itself has to contribute more significantly to the bulk of foreign language material on this country. Non - Japanese writers abound, and like the Dutch of the isolation period, they appear to have a monopoly on what the rest of the world sees concerning Japan. The world needs to read more *about* Japan *by* Japan.

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