

BOOK REVIEWS

Harald Fuess, *Divorce in Japan: Family, Gender, and the State - 1600-2000*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004. 226 pp. ISBN: 0-8047-4357-6 (hbk), \$48.

Reviewed by Bernice J. deGannes Scott

With the support of an extensive list of Japanese-language and Western-language historical and contemporary sources, Harald Fuess documents and analyzes four hundred years of the history of divorce (*rikon*) in Japan. The work spans 1600 to 2000, covering several significant periods in Japan's history including the Edo (1600-1868) and Meiji (1868-1912) eras and the American Occupation of 1944 to 1952. Fuess strictly adheres to the research perspectives of "Family, Gender, and the State," providing evidence throughout the text of the roles of these three entities in Japanese divorce history.

One of the most significant bits of information Fuess brings to us is the probability that "unknown to many, including most Japanese, is the fact that Japan traditionally had a high divorce rate until the turn of the twentieth century" (p. 1). From the Edo period through early Meiji Japan, we are told, the Japanese held a very casual attitude toward marriage. With court mediation not a requirement for divorce, and a society-at-large that did not regard a failed marriage as a "personal moral failure" (p. 98), divorce in Japan was easy, as was remarriage. Western observers criticized the Japanese, citing casual polygamy among the men, the simplicity of the divorce procedure, and the ease of remarriage as factors that contributed to the high rates of divorce, and they went as far as to propose Christianity as the answer to this dilemma (p. 141).

While some prominent Japanese intellectuals defended the norm, others criticized divorce as a national disgrace. The Meiji Civil Code of 1898 legislated the registration of marriages and divorce, and this development, together with the new attitude of the Japanese – namely, acceptance of the sanctity of marriage and the disgrace of divorce – precipitated a remarkable decline in the divorce rate. According to Fuess, this phenomenon "may have been one of history's greatest moments of instant social engineering" (p. 3).

Though not explicitly stated, I detect an East-West contest for moral superiority, which becomes deadlocked, as Japan's divorce rates gradually decline in the first four decades of the twentieth century and are on par with those of Europe by the post-World War II period (p. 144). Around 1963, divorce rates began to slowly creep upward, a trend that continued until 1983. From 1983 to 1988, the rates leveled off, suddenly shooting up in 1988 and reverting to the high rates of the Edo and early Meiji periods by 2002. An important difference between the high divorce rates of the early and contemporary periods was that while in the early period women were generally perceived as victims who were arbitrarily disposed of through divorce, in the contemporary era "husbands are being restructured out of marriage by their wives" (p. 165).

The book artfully presents the interconnectedness among the sub-themes of family, gender and the state. Also incorporated in the text, are the related issues of social class, urban-rural location, and region. For example, divorce generally cut across social classes, location and region; however, in the Edo and Meiji periods, divorce was most likely to take place among the lower classes, in rural areas, and in eastern Japan as opposed to the western part of the country (p. 60). Nevertheless, regional divorce rates converged as time progressed.

The New Civil Code of 1948 replaced the 1898 Meiji Civil Code during the American Occupation. The new code legislated equal rights for both spouses in divorce, retained consensual divorce laws, and placed marriage and divorce decisions firmly in the hands of the couple, effectively eliminating any role for the family. The family court system was also established during the American Occupation to provide a means of mediation beyond courts of law. As in the past, use of the legal system for divorce was marginal.

This work is well-researched, well-organized, comprehensive and interesting. A historical piece, it includes anecdotal information, yet it poses the hard questions, and is highly analytical and objective. In one particularly striking paragraph, Fuess is frank about the politicization of divorce in Japan, reporting on actions taken by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 1997 to rewrite history and reinvent tradition by rejecting "four new domestic science textbooks for high school students because they allegedly overemphasized rising divorce rates" (p. 6). Also of interest is the information regarding the right of women to initiate divorce under the consensual divorce legislation (p. 115).

Though not quite said, it is implied that as “access to wage labor by married women rose, making them financially more independent of their families and husbands” (p. 152), women sought to divorce their husbands, resulting in the observed increase in the divorce rates in the 1960s and beyond. This raises the question of the possible connection between divorce and the economic independence of Japanese women. Fuess documents that from 1955 on, the country’s high economic growth led to an accelerated demand for female labor (p. 155). This begs the response that women have traditionally contributed to the Japanese economy (household and national) through work – they labored on farms in the pre-industrial period; they outnumbered males in light industry, especially in textiles, in the Meiji Period; they replaced men in the heavy machinery and chemical industries during World War II; and they supported the post-World War II economic recovery. However, in spite of the 1946 Constitution that promoted gender equality, by 1975 gender discrimination was being openly practiced in the Japanese labor market.¹

Today, labor market discrimination against women still exists, and is manifested in low job status and gender stereotyping of men and women in the workplace as “warriors and flowers.”² Further, Japanese women are postponing marriage and childbearing, or are deciding to not marry at all in

¹ See, for example, Yoshio Higuchi, “Trends in Japanese Labour Markets,” in Mari Sako and Hiroki Sako, eds., *Japanese Labour and Management in Transition – Diversity, Flexibility and Participation* (London: Routledge, 1977); Kathleen S. Uno, “Women and Changes in the Household Division of Labour,” in Gail Lee Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 17-41; Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings Nolte, “The Meiji State’s Policy Toward Women, 1890-1910,” in Gail Lee Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 151-174; and The Center for the Advancement of Working Women (CAWW), “Working Women in Japan, 1868-1999” (Tokyo: CAWW Museum, 2003).

² See Kiyoko Kamio Knapp, “Still Office Flowers – Japanese Women Betrayed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Law,” in Adrien Katherine Wing, ed., *Global Critical Race: Feminism – An International Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 409-423.

order to keep their freedom.³ Perhaps, the key factor in the decision to marry and divorce is personal freedom, which is being rightfully claimed by the modern Japanese woman.

In sum, this book can serve as a useful addition to the reading list of courses in sociology, women's studies, and history that focus on Japan. As one who teaches from an interdisciplinary perspective, I would list it as recommended reading for economics, as well.

Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003. 248 pp. ISBN: 0-8223-3206-X (hbk), \$24.95.

Reviewed by John Hickman

United States political history is punctuated by moments of intense drama which serve as the raw material for narrative explanations with near-term and long-term implications for the way that Americans understand their place in the world. This interesting and readable cultural history interrogates the multiple meanings of what has long been accepted as the most important such event: the December 7, 1941 surprise attack by the Japanese Imperial Fleet on the U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor and U.S. Army Air Corps base at Hickam Field. The first half of the text surveys the wartime and immediate post-war representations of Pearl Harbor. The second half of the text surveys representations of Pearl Harbor beginning with its 50-year anniversary in 1991 and continuing through the 1990s, interpretations which influenced representations of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

The familiar words of the book's title are from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's brief but electrifying speech to Congress delivered the day after the event. Rather than offer a justification for war against Japan to save China, civilization or democracy from militarist aggression, Roosevelt articulated a rationale for war which emphasized the treachery of the enemy. The author explains that this narrative theme was consistent with a long historical tradition of regenerative violence which had been used to

³ See Michael A. Lev, "Japanese Women Have More Freedom, and Fewer Children – Plunging Birthrate Changing Centuries of Male-Dominated Society," *Chicago Tribune* (April 1, 1998).

justify the Texas War of Independence, the military campaigns waged on the Great Plains before the closing of the frontier, and the Spanish-American War. Thus, rather than propose a pious Wilsonian crusade, Roosevelt asserted the necessity for a war fought to punish acts of deception and betrayal.

Roosevelt's message was made even simpler by deemphasizing the simultaneous attack on United States military forces in the Philippines, its strategically significant colony in the Eastern Pacific. Effective persuasion of groups requires simple messages, and the decision to focus public attention on an attack on sovereign American territory was less likely to alert public attention to the complexities of the geo-political interests of Great Powers. Roosevelt's references to the attack on the Philippines fell in a series of references to attacks on Malaya and Hong Kong – without mentioning that these were British possessions – and attacks on Guam, Wake Island and Midway Island. One need not fall prey to the presentist temptation of assuming that the American public of the 1940s was as ignorant of world geography as the contemporary American public to grasp the political calculation in this relative emphasis and deemphasis.

Some of the most interesting material in the book charts American popular and academic representations of national character and motivation during the Second World War and the post-war decades. Remembering Pearl Harbor as a treacherous surprise attack was the dominant theme throughout the war years, a theme consistently reinforced by representations of Japanese national character as compulsive, suspicious, and devious in popular publications such as *Time*, *Life* and *Reader's Digest* (p. 55).

The beginning of the Cold War was marked by the reconstruction of the popular image of Japan and the Japanese as “noble enemy-turned-worthy ally.” At the same moment, revisionist historians revived wartime conspiracist explanations for the conflict current among pre-war isolationist conservative Republicans. By implication, the United States should have accommodated rather than resisted Japanese territorial expansion in Manchuria and north China, a perspective made more appealing following the 1949 Communist victory in China. Although conspiracist narratives have never fallen entirely out of the favor among conservative intellectuals, they have never achieved dominance in mainstream American public opinion. Assigning ultimate responsibility for the war to the Roosevelt administration does not fit the uncritical military patriotism that surrounds most popular narratives of the event.

In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the author examines the various disputes emerging during and after the 1991 commemoration which muddied what would otherwise have been a simple narrative of successful post-war bilateral relations between the United States and Japan expressed through reconciliation among veterans of the war in the Pacific. Among these disputes were controversy about the content of the new film to be shown at the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial, renewed scholarly attention to Japanese war crimes in China prompted by the publication of Iris Chang's successful 1997 *Rape of Nanking*, demands for compensation from Japan by wartime sex slaves and Allied POWs, the 2001 collision and sinking of the training ship Ehime Maru by the U.S.S. Greeneville, and nostalgia in the United States for the seeming moral certainties of "The Good War" among both the wartime generation and baby boomers.

The author saves what is perhaps the best material for the penultimate and final chapters. In Chapter 9, she offers an amusing description of the attempt to resurrect conspiracist explanations of Pearl Harbor with tabloid style popular histories before proceeding to pillory the film *Pearl Harbor*. Sailing past the controversies identified in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 by avoiding most of the historical context, the 2001 blockbuster offered viewers a simple old fashioned love triangle and the kind of special effects spectacle that Hollywood so often delivers in the place of plausible plots and compelling dialogue.

In Chapter 10, the author explores the parallels between the narratives offered for the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Popular cultural understandings of Pearl Harbor were an inescapable element in interpreting September 11. "Whether endorsing, critiquing, or moralizing..." she observes, "...commentators seemed unable to escape writing about the September 11 attacks in the shadow of Pearl Harbor memories. As ever, the icon of Pearl Harbor provided rich rhetorical resources for experiencing and interpreting the present" (p. 178). Controversy about the World Trade Center memorial echoed the controversies about the new film at the U.S.S. Arizona and the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum. The suspicion surrounding Arab men following September 11, 2001 to an extent echoed the mass internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War. Concerns about intelligence failures and the attribution of political responsibility after September 11 mirror those after Pearl Harbor. "The ubiquity of the Pearl Harbor frame on September 11 shaped memories of both events" (p. 186).

Given the relevance of these parallels, this slim volume could be a valuable text for any undergraduate course on postwar American history or Asian Studies.

John Nathan, *Japan Unbound: A Volatile Nation's Quest for Pride and Purpose*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. v + 273 pp. ISBN: 0-618-13894-3 (hbk), \$25.

Reviewed by Don R. McCreary

John Nathan, the translator of several of Kenzaburo Oe's novels, and one of Yukio Mishima's, as well as the author of a biography on Mishima, has written an illuminating book on contemporary Japanese culture. At the time of writing this review in the spring of 2005, violent riots in China were ongoing, protesting the revisions of the Japanese high school history textbooks regarding the Nanking Massacre and other events surrounding World War II. For those readers who want to keep abreast of contemporary cultural trends, Nathan's book highlights the underlying cultural shift inside Japan that sustains and promotes the ongoing revision of Japan's role in World War II. The theme of this book is anomie or social alienation that Japanese perceive, which is narrowed to alienation from a national political identity. According to several interviewees in the book, this alienation, connected to lingering guilt about Japan's role in the war, is the root cause for many of Japan's social problems. One of the perceived problems within Japan is that the people have no sense of national self, which has been exacerbated by economic decline since 1991 that has heightened social problems. The reader will find much fresh material to bolster the concept of alienation in Japan, thanks to Nathan's fluency in Japanese, his political connections, his interviewing skills, and his keen ear for the language.

Alienation can be seen in the popular press, in interpretations of historical figures, and in contemporary political figures. In the introduction, we learn from "Voice of the People," the well known opinion column in *Asahi Shinbun*, that "something is missing from our full sense of being Japanese" (p. 20). The theme of Nathan's book then follows: "a central argument...of this book...is that much of current Japanese thinking and behavior is colored by an urgently felt need to regain first consciousness...by connecting, or reconnecting, to native culture...as it

resides as a memory in the imagination, before it was alloyed by ‘foreign’ elements in the process of modernization” (p. 21). Nathan explores the historical background behind the sense of national alienation and traces it to the notion of *Wakon-Yōsai*, “literally Japanese sensibility, Western knowledge,” (p. 8) which was promoted by the founder of Keio University, Yukichi Fukuzawa. Nathan states that “the tension between these two elements has never been resolved” (p. 8). Over 100 years after Fukuzawa, we learn that an emerging nationalism in popular culture is being promoted by Yoshinori Kobayashi, a popular cartoonist, who has written a number of “*arro-procs*” (arrogant proclamations) and by Shintaro Ishihara, the governor of Tokyo, who co-authored *The Japan That Can Say ‘No.’*

Following a fascinating introduction (pp. 1-23) relating Nathan’s own experience with alienation as a *gaijin* in Japan in the 1960s, the outline of the book at first glance supports the theme of alienation. The first two chapters, “Monsters in the House: Japan’s Bewildered Children” (pp. 25-44) and “Family Crisis” (pp. 45-70) highlight social decay in Japan, including school dropouts, crime in schools, especially violence by junior high boys, followed by alienation at home, the ever increasing suicide rate, the breakdown of the traditional family structure, and the effect of the collapse of the bubble economy on individual families. The next two chapters, “Culture of Arithmetic” (pp. 71-98) and “The Entrepreneurs” (pp. 99-118) veer away from the theme to some degree by addressing the business world and focus on successful individuals that Nathan interviewed. In the first of these chapters on business, Nathan interviews the head of Nissan, Carlos Ghosn, and his CEO, Yoshikazu Hanawa. Much of the chapter concerns *ristora* (restructuring), a euphemism for layoffs in Japan. An executive placement agency, “Right Way Station,” and the description of its training practices for laid off executives demonstrate the difficulties that long term employees have joining a new company with its own distinct culture. In the chapter on entrepreneurs, Nathan interviews younger entrepreneurs who are self-reliant, very creative, and wildly successful. Nathan focuses on businessmen who have developed new ideas in the business world and have made a success of themselves despite the difficult economy. It is the least interesting chapter in this book because it highlights individuals, no doubt idiosyncratic mavericks, who are flourishing outside established routes for success, which departs somewhat from the theme of social alienation as a negative factor in the culture. “The Entrepreneurs” seems by comparison with the rest of the book to be appended to the other chapters in an attempt to be more even-handed. However, it must be said

that these successful businessmen point the way to a brighter economic future for segments of the economy, although it is still unclear if this would lessen the sense of national alienation connected to Japan's past.

The next two chapters return to the theme of alienation. In chapter five, "In Search of a Phantom" (pp. 119-138), Nathan describes and explains the work of the "demagogue cartoonist" Yoshinori Kobayashi and his *Arrogant-ism* (arrogance) *Proclamations*. Kobayashi has a revisionist ultra-conservative perspective on WWII. The title of the chapter is a reference to the phantom-like idea that Japan's entry in the war was a response to Western colonialism, leading to the liberation of the colonized peoples of Southeast Asia, with the resulting honor that accrues to Japanese war heroes. In Kobayashi's 1998 book, *A Theory of War*, the hero states: "The truth is the Great East Asian War is an epic poem that exposed the full range of our Japanese spirit... Let us express our thanks to those brave heroes who transcended themselves on our behalf" (p. 131). In Nathan's interview with Kobayashi, the cartoonist states, "since the U.S. occupation, we've been taught one lesson only: war guilt" (p. 134). As an instructive corollary, the German people are able to embrace their guilt and engage in dialogue regarding the wounds felt by their neighbors. Witness the positive reaction to the new holocaust memorial in Berlin honoring the victims at the hands of Germans. In Japan, the guilt regarding the past and its impact on their sense of national identity seems by comparison to be repressed, even rejected, thus prohibiting a similar memorial in Tokyo. Kobayashi intends to explore the militaristic past and revise the old messages so that, instead of creating guilt, they convey a sense of honor and righteous purpose in order to forge a new prideful identity in the twenty-first century. Kobayashi also explores the painful emotions still attached to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, using this trauma as a reason to dispel any war guilt. The cartoon protagonist in *A Theory of War* states, "Pride and confidence are functions of identity." In this chapter and the next, Nathan has done a service for the reader by translating key passages of this book-sized *manga* that promotes revisionist history and a new brand of nationalism.

The next chapter, "The New Nationalism II: Institutionalizing Tradition" (pp. 139-168), provides the background to the history textbook controversy between China and Japan over the depiction of events before and during World War II. Nathan explains the movement to end the "masochistic version of history" (p. 139) with before-and-after translations of the revisions made to history texts regarding two events, the Nanjing Incident (Nanking Massacre) and the comfort women attached to Japanese

army camps. Nathan quotes and translates a Tokyo University professor: “The truth is that comfort women were simply prostitutes...making Japan’s imperial army the exclusive object of outrage was tantamount to applying a double standard: When American soldiers occupied Sicily in 1943, they inherited...the comfort women who had been working there” (pp. 144-145). The effect of the controversy on multiple revisions in several different texts is also highlighted, resulting in the deletion of events such as biological experiments in Manchuria and “the scorched earth policy, known as kill all, burn all, loot all in Chinese texts” (p. 151). “The textbook controversy, the polemic and often hysterical debate about Nanking, and the political explosiveness of official visits to Yasukuni are manifestations of an ongoing tension between contrition about the war and abject apology on the one hand and the urgent need to look to the past for a source of pride and self certainty on the other...The neonationalists [argue] that it is the United States who owes Japan an official apology” (p. 156). Based on this analysis, Nathan seems to suggest that conservative opinion, in its endurance and resistance to change, is slowly having an impact on the nation at large, erasing or at the very least whitewashing the public knowledge about Japanese wartime actions.

In chapters seven and eight, Nathan highlights the careers of two politicians, Ishihara Shintarō, the Governor of Tokyo, and Tanaka Yasuo, the governor of Nagano Prefecture. In “Shintarō Ishihara: The Sun King” (pp. 169-202) and “Yasuo Tanaka: The Trickster” (pp. 203-230), he interviews these political figures to reveal something of their characters, their struggles with the entrenched bureaucracies, and their views of the future of Japan. The nationalistic sentiments of Ishihara, bordering on fascism, are connected by Nathan to the loss of cultural identity. The populist sentiments of Tanaka, clearly based on materialism and even hedonism, are connected by Nathan to the reaction by the voters in Nagano, based on their feelings of disenfranchisement by the stifling bureaucracy and out-of-touch traditional politicians. In these chapters, it seemed that Nathan relied too much on rehashing old political and economic news, although it must be noted that he translated passages of learned monthly journals such as *Bungei Shunju* to flesh out his perspective, and he also included a section on Mishima’s work and explained its effect on Ishihara’s attitude.

In the epilogue (pp. 231-253), Nathan describes the shift away from American culture among Japanese youth. We note some excellent examples of *schadenfreude* (taking pleasure in the pain of others) including

Beat Takeshi's insulting TV shows. A variation of "This is Your Life," the "Takeshi Comedy Ultra Quiz Show," and "What's Wrong with Japan," a show featuring foreign residents in Japan. Takeshi's brand of xenophobic sadism comes to the fore on this show featuring *gaijin* in Japan and their sundry complaints about Japan accompanied by Takeshi's mocking of their foreign accents, "intended to make a laughingstock of foreigners in general" (p. 242). In this final chapter, Nathan returns to the *arro-procs* comic books by Kobayashi and the blustering of Ishihara, such as "referring to the United States as 'the second Mongol Empire'" (p. 243). The author also returns to the two novelists, Oe and Mishima, whose work he has translated. The final section reprises the theme of alienation in this book in the words of Oe: "Our identity as Japanese has withered away. From the European and American vantage, we appear to be Japanese. But inside ourselves, who are we?... We are confused and lost. The response to that lostness is nationalism. People like Ishihara gather around them those who have no basis for identity and entice them with the power of the state... The state becomes a crutch for those who are no longer able to stand alone...." (pp. 250-251). The reader then sees the anxiety of those who would prefer that nationalism be kept in check.

This very accessible and worthwhile explanation of the *zeitgeist* of twenty first century Japan is well worth the reader's time. Its explanations of contemporary alienation and its attendant neo-nationalism are well informed by Nathan's readings and interpretations of popular adult *manga*, books, scholarly monthlies, and the Japanese press, and his insightful interviews of leading political and cultural figures.

Lu Yan, *Re-Understanding Japan: Chinese Perspectives, 1895-1945*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004. xiii + 339 pp. ISBN: 0-8248-2730-9 (hbk), \$52.

Reviewed by Yuki Takatori

Throughout the month of April 2005, angry Chinese citizens, in response to Prime Minister Koizumi's declaration that he would continue his annual visits to Yasukuni Shrine, took to the streets of Beijing and Shanghai and hurled rocks at Japanese consulates and private businesses. Nine months earlier, the shocking raw footage of the pandemonium at a soccer stadium in Chongqing, where Japanese supporters, shielded by

security guards from outraged Chinese fans, quietly rooted for their home team, had dominated prime time news coverage. The near riot against his fellow citizens at a Chinese sports arena prompted Ishihara Shintarō, the ultra right-wing governor of Tokyo, to call for the boycott of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In the wake of the anti-Japan demonstrations and the tit-for-tat calls for retaliation, many cultural exchange events and sightseeing tours have been cancelled, and business talks have come to a standstill. It is perhaps fortuitous that *Re-Understanding Japan*, by Lu Yan, a professor of history at the University of New Hampshire, should be published in this time of crisis in the Sino-Japanese relationship, for readers on both sides of this inter-Asian row could profit from knowing of the enthusiasm and receptive cast of mind of four Chinese men who crossed the East China Sea nearly a century ago to learn from Japan's success in modernizing rapidly without discarding its distinctive national identity, and to "bridge the best of two worlds in the shortest possible time so that China would not perish" (p. 20).

Japan's stunning victories over China in 1895 and Russia in 1905 recast the Japanese, in the estimation of many Chinese, from eastern barbarians into the "cardinal force" that would lead China to a "social, political, and cultural reconstruction" (p. 3). Soon, many a student rushed to study in Japan; among them were Jiang Baili, Zhou Zuoren, Dai Jitao, and Guo Moruo. Although their career paths seldom crossed, the four men, keenly aware of China's structural weaknesses, were united in their resolve to rejuvenate their beloved homeland. All of them mastered Japanese quickly and, freed from China's institutional restraints and their noisy, distracting relatives, absorbed everything useful in their new environment, like trees transplanted into more fertile soil. All of them met Japanese women who would later become their mates, legal or otherwise.

Jiang, the author of *The Japanese: A Foreigner's Analysis*, graduated first in his class from the infantry department of Japan's Army Officers Academy, an achievement which reveals the openness of Japan at that time. [Imagine the likelihood today of the National Defense Academy (*Bōei Daigakukō*), which still accepts foreign students, conferring upon one of them its highest honor.] Convinced that only military power could save China from foreign domination, he set out, as the first president of the first military school in modern Chinese history, the Baoding Military Academy, to transform the traditionally despised profession of soldiery into a well-regarded one. Dai, a journalist turned Guomintang member, and later a translator for and trusted secretary to Sun Yat-sen, became an advocate of

Sun's cause, putting a unique Confucian spin on his political theories. It was Dai who made possible a peaceful transition of Guomintang leadership to Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) after Sun's death. Zhou, a scholar of Chinese literature and the author of *Re-Understanding Japan*, an essay from which the title of this book was taken, was a fluent reader of Classical Greek and translator of various Western authors, such as Henryk Sienkiewicz, Edgar Allan Poe, Guy de Maupassant, and Anton Chekhov. An equally prolific writer, and a co-founder of China's Creation Society, Guo had originally come to Japan to become a medical doctor, but never abandoned his passion for literature and history; his academic achievements cover a wide spectrum, from a study of the oldest writing on oracle bones to a translation of Goethe. Through their writings, these four men helped to deepen their understanding and to eliminate the contempt for Japan, much of it founded on clichés and stereotypes common among their countrymen.

The years they spent in Japan shaped and gave impetus to their careers, but they also had to live with their host country's irrational hatred and scorn for the Chinese, as exemplified by the Japanese government's infamous "Twenty One Demands" (which prompted the rise of patriotic feeling among Chinese of all classes in the May Fourth Movement), and demonstrated by the harsh discrimination and unkind words, looks, and deeds they were subject to in their daily encounters with ordinary people. Their outrage at this shabby treatment was expressed with particular bitterness (and with an echo of Disraeli's famous response to the Irish nationalist, Daniel O'Connell, concerning the former's Jewish identity) in the following passage by Guo:

Japanese, Japanese! You ungrateful Japanese! What does our China owe to you to despise us so?... Ah, do you understand the origin of these words "Shi-na"? When it was the time of the "Chin" Dynasty, you were... still living on coconuts in the South Sea!... Ah, you arrogant Japanese!... Do repent! Do repent!

But, it was to be more than racism that would push them, over the years, far from their initial pro-Japanese stance – a series of events on the continent, starting with the annexation of Korea, and continuing through the Manchurian Incident and July 7th (Marco Polo Bridge) Incident ineluctably led to an eight-year long war with Japan. Underestimating China's nationalism, and ever striving to augment its false sense of power and

control over what it thought was a second-class nation incapable of uniting itself, Japan kept pursuing the chimera of bringing China to its knees with one final blow. Thus, disappointed and saddened by Japan's sinister side, the four men felt their ambivalence toward their "second home" gradually evolve into a position unmistakably anti-Japanese in its sentiments. Though Jiang did not live to witness Japanese imperialism stymied by the soldiers he had instructed, having died of a heart attack not long after shots were fired near the Marco Polo Bridge, Guo and Dai were able to stand up against their adopted country as a Communist and a Guomintang member, respectively. Zhou became a minister of Japan's puppet government led by Wang Jingwei, as a result of which he was given that most disgraceful appellation, *hanjian* (traitor).

Lu makes occasional references to Japanese military leaders of the era, several quite notorious, but, unlike some Chinese writers who have employed inflammatory language to refer to these generals, she describes them in terms that are completely free of malice or vindictive bias. Perhaps it is this disinclination to portray unnecessarily the Japanese in a bad light that keeps her from mentioning the family feud between Zhou's spendthrift wife, Habuto Nobuko, and his brother, Lu Xun, the father of modern Chinese literature, which contributed, more than their ideological differences, to the brothers' estrangement.

Lu is possessed of so adept a narrative style and has such a riveting story to tell that I would not hesitate to call *Re-Understanding Japan* a page-turner, in the best sense of the term. [Though I must confess that, in my first reading of the book, so immersed was I in the lives of the subjects that I slowed at times, reluctant to see their stories end.] Even those readers who have only a rudimentary knowledge of the modern history of East Asia will find the going easier than they might expect, particularly since the author has helpfully outlined key concepts as well as pivotal events and their actors (although she errs in her inclusion of Itō Hirobumi, the resident-general of Korea, among those who fell to the bullets of extreme militarists, for he was gunned down by a Korean nationalist) (p. 231). Furthermore, many students of Asian studies will find much that is of value in Lu's examination of the ideas put forth by Zhou and the others. For instance, Zhou's criticism of Confucian theory could furnish an interesting point of view to classroom discussions on ancient Chinese philosophers (pp. 233-239), and although Guo's linguistic speculations regarding a possible connection between the Japanese and the Cantonese languages on the basis of "their characteristic labial sounds" (of which Lu only discusses /m/, to

the exclusion of other labials such as /p b f/), are utterly unconvincing, they do not detract at all significantly from his otherwise scholarly, and often insightful, remarks on Japanese culture (p. 191).

I should also add that, although Lu gives Jiang's *The Japanese: A Foreigner's Analysis* the attention it is due, devoting a section of a chapter to it, she fails to mention one significant aspect of this masterpiece predating Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* by five years. It was the very first work to note, on the basis of the author's first-hand experiences and observations, the contradictory, dual nature of the Japanese mind, and, in that sense, it deserves at least the same recognition as Benedict's piece as a classic work on Japanese culture, a culture whose values have remained unaltered through the changes of the postwar period (pp. 210-214).

Surely, it is not too much to hope that Japanese intellectuals (and Chinese, as well) who encounter this book will be so enlightened by it that they will help build the foundations for a more peaceful and more vibrant Sino-Japanese relationship. As of 2000, Japan was hosting over 25,000 students from China. *Re-Understanding Japan* sends a strong message that Japan must not disappoint them, again, and that they, in turn, need to cultivate forbearance to avoid being disappointed.

Martha Chaiklin, *Cultural Commerce and Dutch Commercial Culture: The Influence of European Material Culture on Japan, 1700-1850*. Studies in Overseas History 5. Leiden: CNWS, 2003. 276 pp. ISBN: 90-5789-086-0 (pbk), £30.

Reviewed by Laura Nenzi

In *Cultural Commerce and Dutch Commercial Culture*, Martha Chaiklin sets out to evaluate the diffusion and impact of European material culture on early modern Japan by looking at specific objects and at the trajectories they took once imported by the Dutch onto Japanese soil. Such objects include clocks, scientific instruments, glassware, and firearms. For the sake of conciseness, Chaiklin chooses not to discuss other equally relevant imports such as textiles (p. 2), "maps and globes, jackscrews, musical instruments, candles and chandeliers, rugs, and jewelry" (p. 177).

Her sources include the voluminous trade records of the Dutch East India Company (VOC, see p. 211 for a detailed breakdown) and on the

Japanese side, criminal records, memoirs of foreign envoys and traders in Japan as well as Japanese eyewitnesses, Edo period literature, archaeological findings, and the material objects themselves.

Thanks to this book we find out that while in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe the love for things Eastern swept across artistic and cultural circles (think of *Chinoiserie* and *Japonisme*), a similar curiosity for Western oddities was brewing in Japan. Chaiklin contends that not only did such curiosity exist, but also that “many Western things were completely acculturated, absorbed, and internalized, losing any connection with their foreign roots” (p. 5). Attention to and desire for foreign (European) merchandise was at an all time high in the Edo period, and the repercussions of commercial exchanges between Dutch traders and government officials reached far beyond the foreign entrepôt of Nagasaki and the circles of officialdom, all the way to the world of commoners.

After a brief introduction (Chapter 1), *Cultural Commerce and Dutch Commercial Culture* moves on to explain how the exchanges occurred along legal but also extra-legal avenues: theft, smuggling, and the spontaneous offering of gifts between foreign guests and Japanese hosts are the centerpieces of Chapters 2 and 3. In her analysis of presents, in particular, Chaiklin accurately details the differences between official gifts and informal/personal ones, and does not fail to take into account the all important issues of reciprocity and obligation. As she argues, personal gifts carried a particular significance because “far more people came into contact with them in a way that increased awareness about European objects,” thus generating a cycle of demand and supply (p. 48).

Such a cycle is the focus of Chapter 4, where Chaiklin presents a gallery of government officials (from the shogun at the top to the interpreters at the lower levels) who sent in requests for gifts. The scope and variety of their requests – from ostriches to fire engines, from bottled caimans to rosemary bushes – reveals the extent to which the representatives of officialdom strove to acquire technology and oddities from the outside world. In the second half of the chapter, Chaiklin moves on to exploring the “far-reaching cultural effects” of imported foreign goods (p. 64). It is not always easy to make a convincing case for the direct influence of one on the other, as she herself admits, “but there is a great deal of circumstance” (p. 45). Such is the case for the fire engine, one of the examples provided: while Chaiklin cannot offer unquestionable evidence for its serving as a model for the Japanese *ryūdosui* pump, she suggests that the Japanese had “motive, opportunity, and technical ability” (p. 66) to

create one on the basis of the other. The reader will ultimately have to decide whether this type of circumstantial evidence is sufficient, but to Chaiklin's credit she is very careful not to overstate her case. Never does she claim that imported foreign goods revolutionized life in the floating world – rather, “the influence was more subtle” (p. 49).

Chapter 5 continues the discussion opened in Chapter 4 and looks at the role of the marketplace (in and outside Nagasaki) in the circulation of foreign items. Chaiklin follows the distribution of goods along the major trade networks, taking the reader to the markets of Osaka, Kyoto, and Edo, and offering a peek of the activities of foreign goods traders. Again, she is faced with the challenge and inherent limits of sources, as very few documents “itemize the specifics of what each wholesaler carried” (p. 78). One resulting problem is that it is not always possible to distinguish between European and other foreign merchandise (especially from China). What Chaiklin is able to assess, however, is that European goods did not come cheap: among the common folks, only the wealthy merchants could, and did, collect such Western oddities. The general populace was nevertheless aware of their existence thanks to the promotional effects of printed literature.

In Chapter 6, the focus narrows to clocks and watches (and, by extension, musical boxes and astronomical instruments) as case studies for technological transfer. Chaiklin contextualizes her discussion by providing first and foremost a review of traditional Japanese timekeeping methods. The core of her argument here is that “the first clocks produced by the Japanese were based on clocks imported by the Dutch” (p. 90) – she doubts there was any previous relevant influence on the part of the Jesuits. She provides a number of examples of technological imitation and adaptation, and even indicates how some of this technology touched the general population. Clock and watch ownership became increasingly ubiquitous (p. 103), and few among the townspeople were unfamiliar with automata (*karakuri ningyō*), an offspring of clockwork technology frequently displayed at fairs and festivals.

Yet another case study for technological and cultural hybridization is that of glassmaking, discussed in Chapter 7. While glassmaking technology already existed in Japan, Chaiklin contends that the encounter with the Dutch inspired the Japanese “to find better ways to make glass” (p. 116). Not only scientific interest but also a taste for exotica prompted the Japanese at all social levels to acquire bottles, thermometers, and mirrors. Of all the imports Chaiklin deals with, telescopes and eyeglasses were

possibly the most widespread and well known, as attested, among other things, by their numerous appearances in popular woodblock prints and works of fiction (pp. 133, 136). The interested reader may also want to consult Timon Screech's *The Lens Within the Heart*, which deals with many of the same topics: glassmaking and lenses, automata and mechanics. The two books in fact complement each other very well.

In Chapter 8, Chaiklin discusses firearms. Though the Dutch were not the ones who introduced them to Japan first, she still credits them for bringing in new types of weapons (p. 156), for teaching the Japanese how to fill bombs, use artillery, and cast cannons (pp. 159, 163), and possibly even for introducing fireworks to Japan (p. 168).

In her conclusion (Chapter 9), Chaiklin warns us not to limit our understanding of Japan's interest in things European to the quest for exotica of "Hollandophiles" and "eccentric crackpots" (p. 176). While the point is well taken, the issue of reception and awareness remains a hard one to tackle. The voices cited here are more often than not those of government officials (Matsudaira Sadanobu and Arai Hakuseki among others), of *rangakusha* and intellectuals (Shiba Kōkan), or of commercial authors (Ihara Saikaku, Shikitei Sanba, Jippensha Ikku) interested in things Western. How the ordinary Saburō or Goemon on the street acquired, processed, and retained knowledge about foreign glassmaking, clockworking, or cannon casting is much harder to assess. Martha Chaiklin ought to be commended not only for trying to include the entire social spectrum but also for trying, whenever possible, to give a voice to Saburō and Goemon.

Another risk Chaiklin takes with this book is that some readers may see her arguments as Eurocentric: Japan lay dormant until the spark of Western technology fueled technological advances and cultural changes. I do not believe that is her intention, but the line she walks is, at times, a fine one.

Historiographically, *Cultural Commerce and Dutch Commercial Culture* contributes to the vast body of literature on the "East-West" encounter in the early modern period and on the extent of international relations on the part of Japan in what has often been (and sometimes still is) referred to as the era of the "closed country" (*sakoku*). Two decades ago, Ronald P. Toby's seminal monograph (*State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu*. Stanford University Press, 1984) dispelled once and for all the myth according to which Tokugawa Japan shut its doors and rejected any contact with the

outside world. Toby's monograph is not cited in this work, and Chaiklin, while admitting that Edo period Japan was far from closed (pp. 3-4, 6), also uses the controversial term *sakoku* (pp. 21, 75, 107, 125, 138, 154, 156). In the end, however, this book still makes a great case for the door being plenty open, and does so through the angle of commercial culture.

Scholars interested in the diplomatic history of Japan, in East/West relations, in the history of technology, and in material culture will find *Cultural Commerce and Dutch Commercial Culture* useful and fascinating. Many of the anecdotes and examples cited therein lend themselves to inclusion in lectures for undergraduate classes as well, as they effectively and poignantly make a case for curiosity toward the exotic Other in the early modern period.

