

- Teach elementary students with equal standard expectations; eliminate homogeneous grouping
- Increase class size and institute an emphasis on heterogeneous grouping where students must accept greater responsibility for their learning and social behavior.

You are probably saying, "What about American diversity. . . the sanctity of our Federal system which protects our fifty state education systems. . . our emphasis on the importance of individual differences. . . the value of teacher-student interaction? Surely, none of these reforms is appropriate for the United States?" The beauty of Benjamin's book lies not only with its insights concerning the functioning of Japanese culture. This study also compels the reader to seriously consider basic reforms of the American elementary educational system. n

Diana Wood

DIANA WOOD is currently the Associate Director of Asian Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. In addition to University responsibilities, her job includes K-12 outreach within the Pittsburgh region. Prior to this academic year, she taught at Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, where her courses included Japanese, Chinese, and Indian History as well as International Relations, Comparative Governments, and aspects of World History.

## An Empire of Schools

### *Japan's Universities and the Molding of a National Power Elite*

BY ROBERT CUTTS  
NEW YORK: M. E. SHARPE, 1997  
XV + 268 PAGES.

Education is the highest priority in all societies. It may be necessary to maintain a cutting edge in technology or to acquire the skills necessary to move out of the "third world." Students, educators, and parents are all concerned about the quality of the education provided and the opportunities that access to education brings. The American school system is regularly studied and numerous authors debate its strengths and weaknesses, citing ways to improve the level of learning and seeking models for building new programs. In this search for better education, the Japanese educational system has been touted as one of the most successful systems in the world, and it is even suggested as a model for other systems. In order to learn from the Japanese, it is necessary to understand how and why this system works, who benefits from it, and what its goals are.

Robert Cutts's book is an in-depth look at the development and function of the modern Japanese system from its source in the policies of the Meiji period to its role in modern Japanese society. He focuses on the apex of that system: Tōdai-Tokyo University. What does it mean to be a graduate of Tokyo University? What does it take to enter

A salute to the centennial of Philippine-American Relations (1898-1998)!

## The Filipino Americans

### From 1763 to the Present: Their History, Culture, and Traditions

By Veltisezar Bautista

1998. 256 pages, 8-1/2 x 11, 176 b&w photographs, for all ages, hardcover, \$24.95, ISBN 0-931613-14-0

A Review by Jim Zwick, Syracuse University, New York:

Written and published in commemoration of the centennials of 1896-1899, this oversized, thoroughly illustrated book designed for a general audience will serve both as a good introduction to its subject and as a volume you'll want to keep on a table for repeated browsing.

It covers much more than you would expect from a history of Filipino Americans. After an introductory overview, there are five historical chapters on the Spanish colonization, the Revolution, the Philippine-American War, the U.S. colonial rule, and the World War II Japanese occupation. These chapters dealing with controversial subjects that are too often glossed over in other studies provide a substantial historical grounding for understanding some of the issues confronting Filipino Americans today.

Bautista continues with discussions of the Manilamen who landed in what is now Louisiana during the Manila Galleon trade with Mexico, a useful summary of later waves of immigration, and chapters devoted to Filipino experiences in Hawaii, the Mainland U.S., and Alaska. The three closing chapters assess changes in the Filipino American experience over time, describing enduring cultural traits and interactions, and provide biographical sketches of numerous "notable Filipino Americans."

Where's what they say about *The Filipino Americans*:

"This is a great book (a must reading for all Fil-Ams). It looks like a time capsule with details."—Nestor Palugod Enriquez, Jersey City, New Jersey

"I admire the exhaustive and authoritative historical contents, the substance, style and layout of *The Filipino Americans*. It's fluid, easy to read, and above all very informative."—Philip Chua, M.D., cardiac surgeon, Munster, Indiana, and former president, Association of Philippine Physicians in America.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

the university, and how does that impact the meritocracy of Japanese education? The answers to these questions tell a lot about the role and function of education in Japan and the impact of politics upon education and society.

The core of the debate is the outcome of education and the society that it fosters. What exactly is the purpose of education? Is the fundamental role of education to develop independent, free-minded citizens or produce human resources to serve the state?" (p.2). Mr. Cutts contends that U.S. education has taken the former as its goal, whereas Japan has chosen the later. This issue permeates the text. If the goal of all education is the creation of independent minds and the preparation of individuals for an ever-changing and challenging world, then the Japanese system misses the mark. If, on the other hand, the purpose of education is to perpetuate a set of nationalistic political and cultural institutions, then the Japanese education system has succeeded splendidly.

This book is not only an analysis of the education system as the route to personal power, wealth and prestige in Japanese society, it is also a critique of the society that Japan has become since the end of World War II. Cutts's view is that "Japan is, in reality, far from a democracy, is (sic) a huge, ethnically paranoid, nationalist power proceeding inexorably along a course aimed at global self-aggrandizement" (p. 39). He contends that Japan is not a society made up of individuals, but a continuation of the preceding system controlled by the upper class. The Meiji era constitutional form of government which was modified by the American occupation did not produce a free society, only one that conformed sufficiently to the institutions of the West to maintain its political independence. "It was not real freedom; it was a survival technique. Democracy was adopted by the Japanese as a means of survival in an international struggle, in much the same way as modernization was adopted by the nation in Meiji days to survive" (p.29). Therefore, the critical scrutiny of Japanese economic and political operations by outsiders has little

effect on the way things are done in Japan. "Japan does not really think of itself as part of the world at all; thus is it little concerned with whether it truly is or is not a democracy" (p. 38). But for Cutts, this is a major concern as it determines what is part of the Japanese education system, both in terms of curriculum and methods of teaching, and determines who becomes successful.

As educational success is defined in terms of university entrance, then all education is geared toward preparing students for the entrance exams. To be successful in the exams and gain a position in the university, the student must not only know prodigious amounts of information tested on the entrance exams but also be the kind of person who will fit into the existing mold, not only of university life, but of that at the end of the educational highway, the job of his or her future.

According to Robert Cutts, "the Tōdai system culture which consists of group harmony, self-effacement, the avoidance at all costs of open differences with colleagues, the implicit recognition of the authority of seniority and personal loyalty to group leaders, full-scale internalization of the organization's ethics and value systems, and the ultimately nationalistic rationale for total victory of the company, the *keiretsu*, and the country, no matter what the cost—is the single dominating value system in institutional Japan" (p. 185). It is to produce this that Japanese education prepares its students so that they are what Japanese organizations want: "smart, proven team players rather than complex thinkers or independent individualists" (p. 64). The role of Japanese universities is not to develop intellectuals, as former Education Minister Michio Nagai is quoted as saying, ". . . The intellect is not developed in Japanese universities, it is worn down" (p. 72). Unlike in the United States, the role of the university is not cutting edge research and theoretical knowledge, but preparing individuals for government careers.

Cutts's narrative details the path to power and the continuity with the past. It is a clear exposition of provocative ideas. The book flows

*Continued on page 70*

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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smoothly and it is enjoyable to read. He has good supporting evidence for his ideas based on talks with those who teach and work within Japanese education and those who have risen high in Japanese society as a result of their success in the education system. He identifies the most important area of concern as accountability. "Body and soul, the Tokyo Imperial University was an institute founded on service to the state: to legitimate it, to perpetuate it, and to strengthen it" (p. 62).

This book is recommended reading for school administrators and teachers in the K-12 schools, and for undergraduate college classes on Japan. It can also be used in the high school classroom for a comparison of educational systems and an understanding of the lives of students in different school systems and their view of their place in future society. ■

Barbara Mori

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## The Broken Bridge

### Fiction from Expatriates in Literary Japan

SUZANNE KAMATA, ED., INTRODUCTION BY DONALD RICHIE  
BERKELEY: STONE BRIDGE PRESS, 1997

As the subtitle proclaims, *The Broken Bridge* is a collection of writing by resident foreigners in Japan. The thirty-six stories in this lively and eclectic collection, which range from several-page vignettes to stories of some twenty pages, span the first fifty years of the postwar period—1945 to 1995—although the great majority are of recent vintage. In his excellent introduction, Donald Richie, who surely deserves the title of uncrowned monarch of Japan's expat community, notes that the collection is "not definitive." This ought to go without saying, for with the single exception of the Pacific War years, Westerners—both long-term residents and all manner of tourists—have been a fixed feature of the Japanese landscape since the 1850s. Their accumulated impressions, memoirs, travel sketches, and reminiscences constitute a noteworthy subgenre of Japanological narrative.

What immediately distinguishes the collection under review is that it consists of fictional narratives, rather than the more standard autobiographical fare of those who recount their Japan experiences. The fictionality here, though, is often rather thinly veiled, which is certainly understandable in such an anthology. And in view of the blurring of "fact" and "fiction" that distinguishes so much modern

Japanese writing, it is not surprising that *The Broken Bridge* would provide moments when the story at hand felt like a Japanese work in English translation!

In any event, we have here something for everyone: the sexy, the sentimental, the satiric, the postmodern. If anything, the volume both confirms and confounds the enduring stereotype of Japan as remote and impenetrable. The thirty-six authors (a number traditionally associated with sets of Japanese poems, prints, etc.) do indeed represent a gamut of expat experience and expression. Readers with more than a casual acquaintanceship with Japan will sense an immediate camaraderie with the collective voice of fellow outsiders for whom Japan represents the ultimate Other. But the volume deserves a wider audience than the implied readership of savvy and/or jaded *gaijin*. With few exceptions, these stories are interesting, entertaining, and instructive.

The collective authorship is a mix of nationalities—British, Australian, Canadian, but predominantly American. The gender balance is tipped in the male direction. Some of the authors are names familiar to Japanologists, but most are not. Some are gifted writers; others rather less so. The appended biographical notes reveal, as one might expect, a mix of resumes: teachers, journalists, poets, Zen adepts, vagabonds. Some are permanent residents, some have returned regularly for extended stays, others have been there and come home, or gone elsewhere. Very few Asian surnames are represented, and not one that is Japanese. In other words, the volume does not incorporate the *Nikkeijin* experience; i.e., writing by individuals of Japanese ancestry. They will require their own anthology. In any event, the stories' protagonists are for the most part *gaijin*, but even the collection's Japanese protagonists themselves figure as outsiders—for instance, the *yakuza* wannabe of Alex Shishin's "Shades" (214–22).

With its free play of styles and narrative gambits, *The Broken Bridge* offers up variations on the theme of otherness and reveals rich possibilities for expressing the outsidership that confronts famously "insiderish" Japan. Some of the stories form thematic clusters, the most prominent of which concerns mixed marriage and its attendant complexities and crises. The protagonist of Daniel Rosenblum's "The Podiatrist" (273–80), for instance, plies her trade while husband Koji remains away on international business. In "Summer Insects" (102–06), David Burleigh presents a series of Kawabata-like exchanges between Kenji and his foreigner wife, and Holly Thompson's "Bloodlines" (285–93) concerns Akiko, disowned by her father for marrying Carl and thus polluting the family line.

Yet another cluster explores insider-outsider relations via the traditional arts. For example, in "The Circuit" (205–13), Michael Fessler details a biographer's quest for O. J. Kendall, enigmatic haiku poet and (as it turns out) industrial spy. As its title suggests, "Enlightenment With Tea" (177–81), by Kate the Slops (!), utilizes tea ceremony as the occasion for her protagonist's musing on identity and otherness, and "Season's Greetings" (321–27) by Joseph LePenta presents generational conflict in the confrontation between a traditionalist ikebana master and his son, who chafes against the arid conventionalism of the Nakamichi School.

In line with my own predilection for the comic, I especially enjoyed pieces such as James Kirkup's "The Bonsai Master" (77–81), a send-up of traditionalism in which the aging protagonist is taken to

