

ficulty for the non-Chinese reader arises from the fact that *My City* is very much a work written for a local audience, familiar with Hong Kong scenes and developments, and appreciative of the author's fondness for punning and word-play in the local Cantonese dialect. The translator's judicious annotations go a long way towards clarifying what might otherwise be a number of puzzling references, but this is clearly the sort of novel that poses challenges for both translator and reader.

That said, there is a universality in many of the episodes and sentiments narrated in the book, and both poignancy and humor in the author's language. Particularly memorable are Xi Xi's comparisons between writing and carpentry, and her subtle reflections on the means and meaning of communicating with fellow human beings. And, as a sample paragraph illustrates, Eva Hung's competent translation allows the essential beauty of Xi Xi's writing to shine through:

It is a fine, sunny day; the sun has been shining brilliantly since early morning. The sun shines on the yellow and white stripes of a toy horse floating in the swimming pool inside the high walls. The sun shines on a soft drink bottle on a pile of rubble facing the pavilion on the Peak. The sun shines on the tail of an aeroplane by the side of a cloud shaped like a lamb. On fine, sunny days, these are the things the sun loves to do. When the flowers travel down on the lift, the sun also shines on the cellophane wrapping around the flowers, and the silver-white ribbon, tied in a bow, shoots out arrows of light which pierce many eyes. After a while, the arrows are used up, the petals have fallen into the shadow, and of course the smiles on the flowers have nowhere to stay (p. 6).

As a work for the classroom, *My City* would be most suitable for college use. It could be employed—most profitably in conjunction with a suitable textbook—in several ways. As a book by a Hong Kong writer, writing about her own city, the work could generate fruitful discussions on the impact of colonialism on a locality, particularly on the local mentality, and on the formation of local consciousness and identity. In a literature class, the work could serve as an example of colonial literature, or alternatively, of the worldwide influence of the literary approach of magic realism. In a class on China, *My City*, with its many references to things Western as part of everyday life and language, could be used to illustrate the differences between the people and city of Hong Kong and those of mainland China. It could also aid in discussions about Hong Kong's role in China's political history and in its economic development.

Most of all, the book can be recommended simply for the innate pleasure afforded when one encounters a worthy piece of literature made available for the first time to an English-speaking audience. ■

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The Japanese Discovery of America

A Brief History with Documents

Peter Duus, ed.

THE BEDFORD SERIES IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
BOSTON AND NEW YORK: BEDFORD BOOKS, 1997
XII, 226 PAGES, GLOSSARY
CHRONOLOGY OF JAPAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE WEST
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY,
INDEX, 1 MAP, 7 ILLUSTRATIONS

Use of documents in college (and to a lesser extent, high school social studies programs) has not been much in vogue in non-American classes. The audience outside of the large survey classes is small enough so few publishers make an effort, and even when some collections of documents are available, my impression is that they are underutilized. This is, I think, especially the case in courses like Japanese history survey classes. Indeed, there are really only two collections aimed at undergraduates: Ryusaku Tsunoda's *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, which was published first in the late 1950s as part of a larger enterprise under the guidance of Theodore de Bary, and David J. Lu's *Japan: A Documentary History*, a substantial revision of its 1974 predecessor. The former tends to stress intellectual and religio-philosophical developments; the latter gives a stronger weighting to elements of social history.

The present volume is distinguished from document collections designed to cover large stretches of time as in a survey course; Duus focuses instead on the four decades from 1840 to 1880, that singular era when Japan was once again forced into contact with the West. Japan's security was threatened, but nervousness about the foreign seafarers challenged more than that. It challenged Japanese cultural identity and self-image. Underlying both security and cultural concerns was the fundamental problem of how to fathom these barbarians at the gate. How could one make sense of these mysterious occidentals?

This focus is certainly worth pursuing and promises to be engaging for students. Duus has organized his collection of almost fifty documents into eight sections: "The Policy of Isolation," "American Views of Japan," "Japanese Reports about America," "The Arrival of the Americans," "The Opening of Trade," "The Bakufu Mission of 1860," "The Iwakura Mission of 1871," and "America as 'Civilization.'"

Japanese illustrations from the mid-nineteenth century are included as "documents" as well as the expected text materials. Unfortunately, all illustrations are in black and white. These six items are drawn from publications designed to appeal to the curiosity of the general public.

The earliest document, an excerpt from an anti-Christian tract, comes from the seventeenth century. Work by Japanese students of "Dutch Learning," Confucianism, a xenophobic scholar, an early

BOOK REVIEWS

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nineteenth-century expulsion edict, and reports by and about repatriated Japanese castaways set the stage for documents that deal with the actual opening of Japan and Japan's response. About a dozen of the documents in this and the later section of the book come from the pretty standard list of "suspects": officials like Ii Naosuke, Tokugawa Nariaki, Hotta Masayoshi, or leading reformers like Fukuzawa Yukichi.

Although emphasizing the Japanese perspective, there are a number of items from American authors, including actors in the "opening" of Japan, American observers of the two major Japanese missions to the United States, and the American press. About one-fourth of the documents present an American perspective.

On balance, Duus has selected from a broad array of perspectives, and he includes a number of items in English translation for the first time. In a slender volume like this no editor can be comprehensive, and there are lacunae. While a couple of documents raise the issue of coastal defense, they do so in the context of political advocacy. There are no documents that present the ground-level efforts to strengthen coastal defenses in the 1850s to 1870s. Efforts by diverse political authorities—Shōgun, daimyō, and the early Meiji government—were implemented in rural communities removed from the immediate coastline and proximity to treaty ports. (I have in mind here materials indexed in manuscript collections for Iwate village and other communities inland from the coast of southern-central Echigo, modern Niigata prefecture.) Such mobilization was more significant in communicating to commoners a nation-wide sense of danger and urgency than the urban-oriented publication of broadsheets. I wonder as well about the absence of any reaction to military attacks by Europeans as Japanese thought about how to respond to Americans. Instructors preparing to use this book may want to look at additional materials to flesh out their own understanding of such issues.

Duus's introduction to the era, "Part I: The Japanese Discovery of America," does attempt to be more comprehensive. It is well written and filled with useful background that will help student and instructor alike. It does seem to me that Duus struggles to incorporate recent scholarship on the seventeenth century reactions of Japan to the West. While seeming to accept Ronald Toby's criticism of past scholarship as Eurocentric (*State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu*) and noting that Japan continued to trade with its Asian neighbors ("The anti-Christian policies of the bakufu were not intended to cut Japan completely off from the rest of the world," p. 5), Duus nonetheless repeatedly refers to pre-Perry Japanese foreign policy as "isolation," losing the nuance of a policy based on anti-Christian missionary intent.

The introduction raises a number of useful issues for students to think about. In particular, I like the efforts to give information on the scope of experience of particular observers and the limits of

their perspectives. Discussion of the views of observers whose work is not included in the collection of documents may also have some utility, helping students to think about the degree to which the documentary material is representative of specific segments of official and public reaction to the arrival of Americans and their European brethren.

Nonetheless, I wonder if this introduction, like the introductions to sections, chapters, and individual documents in Tsunoda and Lu, doesn't go so far as to interfere with one of the principle benefits (from my perspective) of using documentary collections: to give students a chance to "discover" history on their own, to develop their own ability to think critically about documentary evidence, its limitations, its uses, and to struggle with the problems of creating a thoughtful narrative and well-reasoned analysis. In the case of Tsunoda and Lu, the introductions effectively tell students what they will find in the document. In my experience in teaching both at high school and college levels, students tend to read introductions and not the documents.

Duus's introduction to the whole collection frequently links his analysis to specific translated documents that follow. The introductions to individual documents suffer less from this problem than I think is the case with Tsunoda and Lu. Nonetheless, since one of Duus's purposes is clearly that "these documents . . . remind readers of how difficult it is to comprehend a totally unfamiliar culture" (vii), and since that message does come through quite clearly in the documents, I wonder if the effort to incorporate the documents' main points in the general introduction limits the ability of students to "discover" on their own.

This is a very useful book, and Duus has moved beyond the standard scope of previous conceptions of what collections of Japanese documents have been. I have expressed some caveats above, but I intend to try this book in our department's gateway course for history majors, which focuses on elements of historical method. While I may not have students read the introduction, the subject of early American contact with Japan and the "curious" nature of the documents will appeal, I think, even to students with no particular background in Japanese history. ■

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