

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



John Van Sant, Peter Mauch, Yoneyuki Sugita. *Historical Dictionary of United States-Japanese Relations*. Historical Dictionaries of U.S. Diplomacy Series. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007. Illustrations, maps. 344 pp. \$99.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8108-5608-0.

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## U.S.-Japan Relations

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Leafing through this volume I came across this entry, which bears quoting in its entirety:

“A BROADWAY PAGEANT. Also known as ‘The Errand-Bearers,’ this is a poem written by Walt Whitman to commemorate the Shogun’s Embassy to the United States in 1860. On 16 June 1860, Whitman watched the parade on New York City’s Broadway Avenue featuring the Japanese officials and wrote a poem shortly afterward. The poem begins with this stanza:

Over sea, hither from Nippon [Nippon]. Courteous, the Princes of Asia, swart-cheek’d princes First-comers, guests, two-sworded princes, Lesson-giving princes, leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed, impassive This day they ride through Manhattan....

The lengthy, free-verse poem expounds on the glories not only of Japan, but of all of Asia. Originally published in the *New York Times* on 27 June 1860, the poem later appeared in editions of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*“ (p. 29).

I was immediately struck by the appropriateness of this as an opening entry given that it illustrates one of the earliest points of contact between Americans and Japanese in their 150-year relationship. It also foreshadows the depth and breadth of this dictionary, which encompasses both state-to-state and people-to-people interactions. The compilers of this volume, John Van Sant, Peter Mauch, and Yoneyuki Sugita have drawn on a wide range of sources, listed in the useful sixteen-page bibliography, to produce this wealth of information on a variety of subject areas.

The importance of the U.S.-Japanese relationship is underlined in the expansive introduction, a *tour d’horizon*

of U.S.-Japanese relations that reads very much like a history of modern Japanese diplomacy as well as a survey of American policy toward East Asia. In addition, the introduction includes references to an array of castaways, immigrants, missionaries, educators, officials, and grassroots organizations, many of which are explained in greater detail in the dictionary proper, whose contribution to U.S.-Japanese relations transcended the formalities of traditional diplomacy. Furthermore, the dictionary also includes a detailed twenty-four page chronology that begins with the establishment of the Tokugawa Bakufu in 1600 and goes right up to early 2006.

However, the main value of this publication is to be derived from the rich and comprehensive 243-page body of the dictionary. The entries are written in clear and succinct prose, many of which point the reader in the direction of other related head words that are presented in bold type. They run the gamut of a variety of different aspects of U.S.-Japanese relations with entries on diplomats, policymakers, and military leaders (some of whom were all three), such as Yamagata Aritomo, Kato Tomasaburo, Tojo Hideki, Douglas MacArthur, Yamamoto Isoroku, Matsuoka Yosuke, Nomura Kichisaburo, Joseph Grew, Henry Stimson, Cordell Hull, Togo Shigenori, Yoshida Shigeru, Edwin Reischauer, Sato Eisaku, and Mike Mansfield; missionaries and pioneers in education, including William Smith Clark, Yamakawa Sutematsu, and Mary Eddy Kidder; and a plethora of intergovernmental bodies, bilateral agreements, and popular organizations in addition to entries on the *Gannenmono*, Japan’s constitution, immigration, Voluntary Export Restraint, Dejima, and the “Special Legislation Calling for Assistance in the Rebuilding of Iraq.”

Particularly important are the entries on events, doctrines, negotiations, and debates that have served as defining characteristics or turning points in the relation-

ship, including the Taft-Katsura Agreement, the Washington and London naval conferences, the failed negotiations of 1941, the postwar peace and security treaties, the Yoshida Doctrine, the reversion of Okinawa, the nonnuclear principles, the “Japan is Different Argument,” and the ongoing debate about the atomic bombings of 1945.

I would have liked to have seen an entry on U. Alexis Johnson given his immense contribution to U.S.-Japanese relations over a long career with the U.S. State Department. This included his appointment as ambassador to Japan (1966-69) and undersecretary of state for political affairs (1969-73). In both positions, he played a crucial role in developing U.S.-Japanese relations particularly in regard to the reversion of Okinawa to Japan. Johnson’s contribution, and that of his Japanese counterparts—Aichi Kiichi, Wakaizumi Kei, and Togo Fumihiko—is at least as important as Okawara Yoshio’s (Japan’s ambassador to the United States, 1980-85) who is cited in the dictionary. Indeed a list of U.S. ambassadors to Tokyo and Japanese foreign ministers and ambassadors to Washington would have rounded out the already helpful lists of Japanese prime ministers and American presidents and secretaries of state. Nevertheless, I recognize

that the compilers were no doubt forced to make difficult choices in order to find an appropriate balance between the complete and the unwieldy.

A few minor criticisms and errata; the maps and photographs that appear at the front of the book are small and unclear and are therefore rendered somewhat superfluous, and it is unfortunate that Japanese-language works were not included in the excellent bibliography or as part of a guide to further reading. The entry on Guido Verbeck lists him as one of the first missionaries in Japan; however, his arrival was predated by Francis Xavier’s some three centuries before in 1549. Edmund Muskie’s tenure as secretary of state ended in January 1981, with his replacement by Alexander Haig and the inauguration of Ronald Reagan as president, and not the following July as stated in the appendix listing American presidents and secretaries of state. Nevertheless, these are minor points and should not detract from what is a practical and welcome resource for those studying U.S.-Japanese relations and an important reference work that should definitely be held by institutions with programs in Asian and American studies.

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