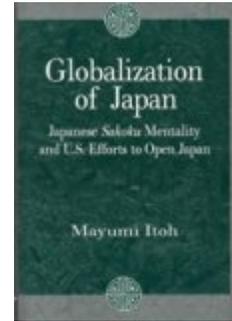


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Mayumi Itoh. *Globalization of Japan : Japanese Sakoku mentality and U. S. efforts to open Japan*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. 224 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-312-17708-9.

Reviewed by Sandra Katzman (Interac Co., Ltd)
Published on H-US-Japan (February, 1999)



Opening the Island

Japan is ten years into its third *kaikoku*, or open door policy, in modern history.

This book is well-organized into two parts: "The Japanese *Sakoku* Mentality" and "Japan's *Sakoku* Policy: Case Studies." Although its subject includes breaking news, such as the rice tariffs, the book has a feeling of completion. The author, Mayumi Itoh, has successfully set the subject in history, looking backward and looking forward. Itoh is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Itoh argues that although globalization is a national policy of Japan, mental habits preclude its success. She sets the globalization as the third in a series of outward expansions, each one precipitated by the United States. The style of writing is scholarly and easy to understand.

Itoh uses and explains Japanese words for seclusion, opening, and globalization. These terms help the book with its Japanese perspective. The Japanese words are not always word-for-word translations, and Itoh places them in Roman letter italics throughout the book: in the subtitle, chapter titles, and body of the text. She involves the reader in the Japanese mentality through these phrases without requiring Japanese or Chinese scripts. Some of the most important words are

Kokusaika: internationalization
Gaijin: outsider, foreigner
Kaikoku: open-door policy
Saikoku: secluded nation
Gaiatsu: external pressure

Part I has five chapters: Historical Background, the *Sakoku* Mentality and Japanese Perceptions of *Kokusaika*,

Japanese Perceptions of the United States, Japanese Perceptions of Asia, and Japanese Perceptions of ASEAN and Japan's Economic Diplomacy.

Part II has five chapters: Japan's Immigration and Foreign Labor Policies, Okinawa and the *Sakoku* Mentality, *Kome Kaikoku*: Japan's Rice Market Liberalization, The Japanese Constitution and the Military *Kokusaikoken*, and Japan and the United Nations: Peacekeeping Operations and Permanent Security Council Seat.

In addition, the conclusion is titled Prospects for Japan's *Kokusaika*.

Supporting material includes figures and tables throughout the book. For example, extensive use is made of public opinion polls about Japanese perceptions of China, ASEAN countries, South Korean, and the United States. Some of the statistics are from the Prime Minister's office. Some are from Japanese daily newspapers, journals, and associations. There is a table of *Gaijin* Baseball Players in Japan's Major Leagues. There is a table of Japanese Politicians' Denial of Japan's Acts of Aggression in Asia.

Parts of the book were previously published in various journals, including the Regents of the University of California's *Asian Survey*, and the Foreign Policy Research Council's *Orbis*.

This book is a subtle and thorough scholarly work. For example, Itoh debunks by public opinion polls widespread over-generalizations. She also examines why politicians deny history.

You will gain ideas about why the price of rice is so high in Japan, and why the Japanese haven't changed the Peace Constitution of the Occupation era after World War II. You will learn intricate histories about each of these important aspects of modern Japan.

Here are some selected quotes from the book to pique your curiosity:

"The deeper the Japanese inferiority complex grew toward the West, the stronger the superiority complex grew toward Asia" (p. 87).

"...the Japanese had revered China as the Rome and Greece of the Orient because Chinese elites had defined their country as a civilization, rather than as a military power or economic system, and had not conquered its tributary nations...In contrast, Japanese ignored the rest of the Asian nations, because they did not flourish as a great civilization" (p. 93).

"In essence, ASEAN elites are still haunted by past experiences with Japan's army, and have yet to forgive Japan completely" (p. 104).

"Previous Japanese nationality law stipulated that only newborns whose fathers were Japanese could acquire Japanese nationality...With pressure from foreign male residents who married Japanese women and their lawyers, the Ministry of Justice revised the law in 1989" (p. 109).

"The government should respond to the public calls for labor *kaikoku* (opening a country), an integral part of Japan's *kokusaika*. Yet in reality, labor *sakoku* exists not only in unskilled labor but in professional work as well" (pp. 112-13).

"Although each [baseball] team is free to rotate the *gaijin* players on their roster, only two of the three registered *gaijin* players are eligible to play at any given time" (p. 116).

"Okinawa is not suited for a manufacturing industry for two reasons" (p. 130).

"*Kome kaikoku* (opening of the rice market) became the second landmark of the third *kaikoku*" (p. 133).

"...Japan cannot produce anything unless the supply of oil is secured. The food self-sufficiency policy misses the point" (p. 140).

"...[postwar pacifism in Japan, one of the attributes of the *sakoku* mentality] has been a major obstacle to expanding Japan's role in the maintenance of international peace and security..." (p. 147)

"A constitutional revision requires not only two-thirds of both houses of Japan's Parliament, but also the majority of the people (Article 96)" (p. 149).

"Considering the political and psychological taboos imposed by Article 9 [the pacifist definition of Japan], the change in Japanese perceptions of constitutional revision is significant" (p. 150).

"It is high time for Japan and Germany to become permanent SC [Security Council of the United Nations] members and wield global leadership commensurate with their economic and political standings" (p. 176).

"Although Japan is only slowly and reluctantly moving toward internationalization, its Asian neighbors, notably South Korea and Taiwan, have undertaken globalization in earnest" (p. 177).

"...the tide of Japan's *kokusaika* is irreversible" (p. 182).

"The United States should also cooperate with the press, both at home and abroad, and launch massive publicity campaigns for Japan's labor *kaikoku* in particular and overall *kokusaika* in general" (p. 183).

"As of August 1997, it seems unlikely that Japan will become a major political rival of the United States in the foreseeable future" (p. 184).

The selections only faintly suggest the depth with which Itoh tackles this subject of such immediacy.

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Citation: Sandra Katzman. Review of Itoh, Mayumi, *Globalization of Japan : Japanese Sakoku mentality and U. S.*

efforts to open Japan. H-US-Japan, H-Net Reviews. February, 1999.

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