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Gavan McCormack. *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence.* New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2001. xliii + 298 pp. $100.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7656-0767-6; $38.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7656-0768-3.

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The Influence of Affluence in Japan

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With the appointment in October 2002 of what English-language newspapers hail as a new economy czar in Japan, the recent publication of this revised book is worth the attention of scholars. The author suggests remedies to the monetary woes of Japan. At the end of each chapter he hopes and plans for the resurgence of the beauty of Japan as he first knew it decades ago in the 1960s.

Gavan McCormack analyzes the threats to Japan in three parts headed "Political Economy," "Identity," and "Memory." The scope of the book is historical, as the foreword points out, rather than social. The purpose is constructive criticism. The wide-ranging content has been translated in the first edition of the 1990s into Korean, Chinese, and Japanese.

McCormack says his purpose is writing about possible futures for Japan as an economic superpower in the emerging world order, and about the possible futures of the world with Japan as a model of the problems of industrialization. He is professor of Japanese History in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University.

The reliance on Japanese sources, materials, and experience is intended to portray to an international community the debate within Japan on contentious issues. Optimism about change prevails, the author states, because common sense will succeed in struggling against demeaning institutions. Examples of demeaning institutions include the pathology of the construction state, the contradictions of the leisure state, and the inappropriately planned farm state.

Part 1 explains the powerful effects of the *Doken Kokka*, or construction state, which the author compares to the military-industrial complex "sucking in the country's wealth, consuming it inefficiently, growing like a cancer, and bequeathing both fiscal crisis and environmental devastation" (p. 43).

The author writes with appropriate historical detail as he follows the introduction of the bulldozer into Japan in the 1950s to the damming of almost every river by 1994. The head of the hydrological section at Japan's Geological Survey is quoted on political expedience: "The construction companies, politicians, and elite bureaucrats–all three elements are conspiring to stuff Japan with dams" (p. 48).

The revision of the book took place during the 1995 earthquake in Kobe, an event the author uses to strengthen his argument for Japan's growing awareness of its excesses.

In one of his categories of indictment of the excesses of Japan, the author criticizes what he terms "the leisure state" and its 1987 [Resort] Law. He focuses on golf in narrow, mountainous Japan where he says the passion for the game seems ill-suited to the terrain and an international reaction against it consequently developed.

Next, the author focuses on agriculture and the attempts to mold it into something different than what Japan had known for centuries. McCormack chides efforts to re-structure agrarian culture.

Part 2 and Part 3 grapple with national, regional, and international placement of the country as "an anomalous state" (p. 162).

McCormack puts into Japanese perspective the recent theory of the clash of cultures by quoting the Kobe University political scientist Iokibe Mokoto who "feared that talk of a clash of civilizations might prove a self-fulfilling prophecy" (p. 170).

The biggest national dilemma of Japan is familiar to the international community as "the peace state," a term McCormack employs as a chapter title. The author typically quotes a Japanese source in arguing for change: "It is time, as one of the most influential voices of the age (Ozawa Ichiro) puts it, for Japan to become a normal country" (p. 189).

The author provides considerable detail about the history of the peace state debate in Japan: the leaders, the media, the changing perspective on which view is the conservative view.

The last third of the book is about the national memory of the War "before the post-war and the Cold War" (p. 225). McCormack brings up legal principles he says are not well-appreciated, most importantly complicity after the fact for the comfort women, "the largest-scale state-sponsored rape in history.... The complicity between the Japanese authorities who organized the trafficking and abuse of the women on the one hand and the Allied authorities on the other is an aspect of the comfort women issue to which attention is rarely drawn" (p. 247).

The author writes passionately, draws on Japanese sources, and covers a lot of recent history as well as speculating about the future. If some of his sentences are too long, they are worthy of your time as a historian or scholar of the problems of modern industrial civilization.

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