

Book Reviews

Japanese Society in Turmoil

John Nathan. *Japan Unbound: A Volatile Nation's Quest for Pride and Purpose*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. \$25.00 ISBN: 0-618-13894-3

Reviewed by Daniel A. Metraux

Immediately after my return from an eight day visit to Japan in late March 2004, I happened upon a long article in *The New York Times* (3/27/04, p. A4) featuring Hitomi Kanehara, a twenty-year-old author of a novel about her post-bubble generation. Her portrait of a radically changing society in Japan reflects what I learned from two dozen interviews with Japanese friends and colleagues over the course of my visit.

The *Times* article praised Kanehara for the portrait of young people in Japan since the 1990 collapse of Japan's "bubble economy" of the 1970s and 1980s. "It is a world of 'freeters,' young Japanese surviving on part-time jobs and unconcerned with their future; of unsentimental sex and a profound inability to communicate verbally; a world in which a killing is viewed with amorality. The institutions that built postwar Japan—the family, school and companies—are noticeable by their absence. In a nation known for its social cohesion, the characters have no interest in playing a role in society, but only in finding personal satisfaction among themselves. Unlike Japanese in, say, their 30s, the characters in the novel are not disillusioned at Japanese society, since they had few expectations to begin with. 'There are many people who don't expect anything from society,' Ms. Kanehara says. 'That's precisely why they are looking inward or to people closest to them. I never knew the bubble era, so my way of looking at things can't help being different. Since I was born, I've never experienced a time of prosperity. Without my being aware, its possible that my writing reflects the era.'"

The Japan that I observed ever so briefly in March 2004 after a four year absence is a society that is undergoing revolutionary changes in values and behavior in every sphere of life from education, popular culture to business and government. The result is a process that is

radically changing the Japanese cultural landscape making it a place vastly different from its traditional and even recent past.

This view of Japan is carefully chronicled in John Nathan's most recent work, *Japan Unbound: A Volatile Nation's Quest for Pride and Purpose*. Nathan, the Takashima Professor of Japanese Cultural Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara and author of highly praised books on Mishima Yukio and on Sony, explores many facets of contemporary Japanese society ranging from education, families, business, politics and foreign relations.

Nathan analyzes a nation experiencing dramatic change as Japan moves away from many of its traditional values towards a very uncertain future. A long and de-meaning recession has weakened the foundations of the traditional family system and has contributed to the rapid rise of divorce and increased physical abuse of children by their families. The recession has contributed to the weakening of the bond between Japan's corporations and their employees who are losing their right to employment for life. More and more Japanese are growing skeptical of their nation's over half-century dependant relationship with the United States and nationalistic and xenophobic books are climbing up the best-sellers list.

One matter that Nathan discusses brilliantly is traumatic breakdown of order and cohesion in Japan's primary and secondary schools and the increasingly rebellious nature of Japanese youth. He writes about riotous conditions in classrooms in a country once famous for respectful children. His best chapter depicts chaos of the classroom where teachers across the country have simply lost control of their students. Disruptive students rule the roost bringing intolerable disorder and physical attacks on other students as well as teachers and administrators.

Nathan writes: "Classroom breakdown is only part of a larger crisis of anger and withdrawal that has bewildered parents and educators...In the United States, suspension is a legal option; in Japan suspension and expulsion are taboo under any circumstances. Promotion is based on attendance only, and holding a student back is very rare. A high school student can graduate with failing grades if he has attended classes 50 percent of the time. A shibboleth of the new education policy is 'education of the heart.'" Nathan adds that since the Japanese economy

collapsed in 1990 and prospects for the future have been further compromised, students have lost their motivation for study and the nation's once highly vaunted achievement test scores have fallen below those of the US.

Nathan finds a similar crisis in Japan's homes: "Since the economy collapsed in 1990, the divorce rate has soared: many children live with single parents too harried by their own lives to look after them. Layoffs, unheard of in Japan until recently, have put breadwinners in a vise, and promoted anger, alcoholism, and domestic violence. Families in straitened circumstances convey disappointment about the value of education."

A March 21 report in the *Yomiuri Weekly* notes that outbursts of rage are increasing common among young adults as well. Store clerks and hotel personnel are reporting raucous behavior by customers and guests, most often men in their 20s and early 30s, who turn nasty and even violent if they do not get their way. "From a sociological perspective, the condition is largely peculiar to the current generation of young adults. Their parents came of age in the immediate to mid-postwar years, a time of struggle and hard work. The elders thus coddled and overly protected their kids, not wanting them to experience their earlier hardscrabble existence. They thus spawned a generation of spoiled brats. And just as spoiled brats are known for their temper tantrums, today's generation of young adults has become known for its hair-trigger outburst of rage."

Nathan views a Japan which is trying to rediscover its true identity and to reconfirm its uniqueness. "Establishing an authentic sense of national self and purpose in the modern world required the merging of two disparate and often irreconcilable cultures, one native, inherent, grounded in history, the other founded on concepts such as individualism and intractably foreign. This exercise in cultural synthesis continues to tax and trouble the Japanese imagination."

Nathan's research consists mainly of exhaustive interviews with a wide range of Japanese from all walks of life including teachers, housewives, businessmen, company employees as well as celebrated politicians like Ishihara Shintaro and Tanaka Yasuo and authors like Oe Kenzaburo. The reader will be fascinated with the differing views of Japan held by Ishihara and

Oe. Ishihara's sense of renewed nationalism and yearning for tradition is contradicted by Oe who warns of the inherent danger of this nationalism:

“Our identity as Japanese has withered away. From the European and American vantage, we appear to be Japanese. But inside ourselves, who are we? What basis do we have for building our identity? In the past, we had awe and reverence for our fathers and our ancestors. This is still powerful in Korea and in China. But in Japan the family has come apart, and our sense of community has also disappeared. Now we have nothing but the reflection of ourselves we see in the eyes of the West. We are confused and lost. The response to that lostness is nationalism. People like Ishihara gather around them those who have no basis for identity and entice them with the power of the state. They tell us we are all the emperor's children. The state becomes a crutch for those who are no longer able to stand alone, like plastic implanted in a dysfunctional penis....But if we stand upright and alone and proceed straight ahead as individuals, relying on nothing outside ourselves, I believe we will each discover a basis for our identity as Japanese individuals within the multiplicity that is Asia. We will discover a credo. And I believe we will also discover the basis for a new morality.”

Oe and Ishihara were once literary friends, but their differing views have made them implacable enemies. Ishihara considers Oe to be a traitor to the state while Oe deems his rival to be a dangerous fascist, yet, as Nathan notes, both consider themselves to be moralists and both “are driven by a quest for the substantial sense of self that has eluded Japan since the earliest days of modernization.” When Nathan leaves Oe's residence, he meets Ishihara, now the powerful governor of Tokyo, walking alone down the street. He muses, “Leaving one and encountering the other in the space of a few minutes, I felt that I had traveled between the poles of the ambivalence that continues to be a troubling condition of contemporary Japanese life.”

Nathan is not entirely pessimistic about Japan's future. He notes, for example, the expanding relationship between Japan and China, not only in terms of trade, but also in cultural relationships and exchanges. Japan's economy is starting a noticeable revival and much of the nation's creative genius is as productive and proficient as ever. Nathan's

Japan is clearly a nation breaking away sharply from its past and trying desperately to find its own unique identity, but where it will go is anybody's guess.

One cannot ignore Japan, which still has the world's second largest economy. One must also understand what is going on in Japan today, and reading Nathan provides us with many helpful clues.

Andrew Marshall, *The Trouser People: A Story of Burma in the Shadow of the Empire*. Washington DC: Counter Point, 2002.

Reviewed by Khin Oo

The Trouser People: A Story of Burma in the Shadow of the Empire is a captivating travelogue on Burma by Andrew Marshall. Marshall carefully relates his own experiences in Burma, filled with excitements and thrilling adventures. He was inspired to write this book on Burma by Sir George Scott's diaries at the British Library in London. After reading diaries of the unsung Victorian adventurer who helped establish British colonial rule in Burma, he decided to investigate what has changed and what has remained untouched in Burma in little over a century. Marshall was curious whether the ferocious wild Wa headhunters still existed in Burma. He also wanted to know whether the witch doctors of the Pa-O still recommended tying your grandmother's hairs around one's neck as a cure of insanity. Throughout the book, Marshall recalls Scott's experience in Burma to be compared to his very own, which allows readers to compare modern Burma with Burma in the late nineteenth century.

In the prologue, Marshall relates, "In a hundred years, Burma is no longer a British colony, but a military dictatorship – one of the world's most brutal and enduring."¹ The military's disastrous rule had led a prosperous, fledging democracy into misery and pain."² Shortly after his arrival to Burma, he got the first taste of modern dictatorship when his car was chased by the Military Intelligence after visiting a politically significant place in Rangoon.

When Scott first arrived Burma in 1870s to be a teacher at St. John's College in Rangoon, he realized that Burma was on its way to becoming the busiest rice port in the world. He was fascinated by the magnificent Shawdagon Pagoda,³ which he remarked as "Majestic, impregnated with the worship of countless centuries, the great golden stupa rises high into the serene and thrilling blue with an infinite grandeur impossible to put into words." He introduced soccer in Burma and the first organized football match was played at St. John's College in 1879.

¹ Page 8.

² Page 10.

³ Shwedagon Pagoda is the most sacred and revered temple in Burma. It is believed to be built 2,500 years ago by King Okkalapa. It is also believed that eight genuine Sandaw (Hair of Head) of Buddha were kept in this pagoda.

During King Thibaw era, Scott happened to be in Mandalay⁴ in the early 1880s. Therefore, he had an opportunity to witness an ancient royal dynasty as it descended into chaos. Scott carefully recorded the mismanagement of the Thibaw administration as well as atrocities by the incompetent King Thibaw⁵ and his ruthless wife Supayalat in their attempt to stay in power. It was rather appalling to learn their brutal torture methods in exterminating all potential rivals as well as punishing those who displeased them. Interestingly, these facts are little known in Burma. Reading this section reminds me of how unfortunate Burma has been for well over a century, despite a stint when it had a democratic government⁶ (roughly 1948-1962). The citizens were badly exploited and consequently suffered through monarchy (1878-1885), British colonialism (1885-1942), Japanese fascism (1942-1945) and military totalitarianism (1962-Present).

Marshall goes on comparing Mandalay in 1880 with Mandalay today. He talks about how Mandalay is now being manipulated by Wa and Kokang heroin traffickers and how local people have been driven out of the city. He writes:

“Traditionally, Mandalay was a cradle of art and culture, and its genteel inhabitants were said to speak the most refined form of Burmese. All this had changed in recent years. Mandalay had become a boom town, fuelled by the mercantile spirit of hundreds of thousands of immigrants from China – almost half the city’s million or so inhabitants were now Chinese – and by a massive influx of drug money from wealthy Wa and Kokang heroin traffickers.”

(pp. 46-47)

After meeting with Tawpaya – King Thibaw’s grandson in Maymyo, Marshall’s next adventure was to visit Shan state – the state bordering China, Laos and Thailand. Marshall explains in detail about how Shan state used to be divided into thirty different states, each with a hereditary ruler called a saopha. The British exercised the classic divide-and-rule model in Burma. While Burma Proper was under direct British rule, the saophas in Shan state were

⁴ Mandalay is the second capital of Burma.

⁵ When British annexed Burma in 1885, King Thibaw was forced to exile to India along with Queen Supayalat. He never saw Burma again. He died at the age of fifty-eight of heart attack. The Queen returned to Rangoon in 1916.

⁶ Under the democratic government led by U Nu, Burma was blooming into a country of prosperity. However, it was not completely free from civil turbulence. One significant example is that the ongoing civil war between the government and ethnic insurgents broke out during that period.

allowed to continue to run their own states on one condition that all natural resources of their states belonged to the Crown. Some saophas were hated as authoritarian rulers exploiting their own people, but some were recognized for their good will projects aiming towards their region's development. Such saophas as Sao Kawng Kiao Intaleng, the fifty-third saopha of Kentung, raised taxes so that they could lead extravagant lives building huge palaces and having many wives.

One of the highly respected saophas was Sao Kya Seng who was married to a distinguished Austrian woman called Inge Sargent.⁷ The princely couple was highly applauded for their unwavering efforts to implement democratic principles in the region and raise the living standards of their people while showing great affection for their people. In 1959, 34 Shan Saophas formerly surrendered their feudal powers and Shan States were transformed into Shan State. When the military government took over in 1962, many Shan leaders were detained. Sao Kya Seng too was detained and soon killed, but the regime still refuses to confirm his death.

Marshall vigorously visited several Shan towns and villages that were mentioned in Scott's diaries such as Kalaw, Inlay and Taunggyi. He took great interest in Burma's hill people, especially exotic Padaung⁸ women also known as "giraffe women" or "long-necks" for the heavy brass rings they wear around their necks. Despite the heavy brass rings, Kayan women do all the hard work such as plowing the fields, fetching water and carrying heavy goods to market. While in Yawnghwe, Marshall visited the "long-neck village" run by Hupin Hotel. He was so distressed to learn that these Kayan women were not allowed to leave the compound because people in charge did not want tourists to see them for free. He strongly questioned the existence of this "long-neck" village, which he termed "the Victorian freak show" or "human zoo."

Marshall afterwards set off to visit such areas as Ho Pong and the green valley of Nam Zarng where people were being forced to relocate or killed with their homes set on fire by the

⁷ This book also features a book review (chapter four) on "My Life as a Shan Princess" by Inge Sargent followed by a personal interview with her.

⁸ Padaung people like to call themselves "Kayan" and assert that Padaung is what Burmese call them. Therefore, they will be addressed as Kayan from this point. A Padaung girl usually dons her first ring between the age of eight and ten. Roughly speaking, the ring is as thick as an adult's little finger. More rings are added each year until the girl reaches adolescence. It is recorded that a group of Kayan women visited England in the 1930s as a part of the famous Bertram Mills Circus and they were very well received.

military. These people are victims of an ongoing half-a-century-civil-war between Burmese groups and ethnic freedom fighters. Shans are trapped between Burmese troops and insurgency groups because they are forced to support both parties or killed. As a result of the regime's operation called *four cuts*,⁹ Shan people live in constant fear with their villages being torched, women being raped (to death in many cases), villagers being drafted as army porters, tortured and killed. Marshall correctly compares the regime's infamous tactics to those of the British during the pacification of Upper Burma.

With great enthusiasm to retrace the most exciting as well as dangerous years of Scott's career in Burma, Marshall decided to travel to Kentung or Kyaing Tong - the capital of Golden Triangle and Mongla – one the most important drug-running centers in Burma. Though it was an insignificant village during Scott's time, Mongla has now been transformed into a big city with casinos and night clubs because of Lin Mingxian – a former Shan-Chinese warlord who served as a field commander in the Communist Party of Burma. Rather than contending with him, the regime decided to cut a deal in the name of “peace.” Mingxian agreed to make regular “contributions” to high-ranking Burmese officers and he was granted full autonomy in the Mongla region as well as lucrative business concessions in gold, gems and opium. This “peace” agreement earned Burma the reputation as the world's largest opium producer.¹⁰ The US State Department has identified Mingxian as a key player in the heroin and methamphetamine trade. In Mongla, an easy access to drugs and many warehouses are primary sources of critically pervasive HIV in the region.

Marshall stopped at the drug museum in Mongla to see the world's most ironic things; Buddy photos of General Khin Nyunt and Mingxian and pictures of Mingxian¹¹ presenting a gift to a man identified as J. Dennis Hastert- whom Marshall assumed as Illinois Congressman Hastert. He states:

Could this be Denny Hastert, Illinois congressman and Speaker of the US House of Representatives? Yes, it could: Hastert visited Burma with a delegation of

⁹ The regime initiated this campaign to cut off supplies of food, funds, intelligence and recruits to the Shan State army.

¹⁰ Under the military regime, it is estimated that 60 percent of all private investment in Rangoon was drug-related.

¹¹ Ironically, Mingxian was the chairman of the Mongla Action Committee on Narcotics.

Republican Congressmen in 1996, ostensibly to inspect drug-eradication methods. The delegation was wined and dined by the generals before visiting Lin Mingxian in Mongla. It was unclear what Hastert achieved by meeting Mingxian, beyond providing a priceless photo opportunity for a known heroin trafficker anxious to whitewash his recent past and recast himself as an anti-drugs tsar.(p.218)

While Marshall arrived Wa hills, he learned that the Wa were not headhunters anymore. However, he claims that the modern reincarnation is just as frightening, by which he means the United Wa State Army, one of the world's largest drug-trafficking organizations. Like Mingxian, the UWSA was too invited by the Burmese government to reinvest its drug profits in legitimate businesses. According to Marshall, it seems to have an enduring and strong relationship with the regime because he witnessed pictures of their Wa leader General PaoYuqiang with General Khin Nyunt – standing side by side and smirking.

Towards the end of the book, Marshall presents a succinct comparative summary of Burma in a century period as follows:

Scott once called Burma “a sort of recess, a blind alley, a back reach.” It is description that still rings true a century later. The same country which, in the heady years after independence, was tipped to become one of South-East Asia's success stories is today a recluse in a region of breakneck change. The 1962 military coup plunged Burma into an isolation not known since King Thibaw's time, and transformed a fledgling democracy rich in natural resources into a land of poverty and fear. The generals who run the country still rage against the evils of colonialism, yet they share at least one thing with the imperialist of old: a blind conviction that they alone know what is best for the country. Most people living in Burma today have never known true peace or true freedom. (p. 289)

Marshall goes one step further and speculates how Scott might have reacted to what is happening in modern Burma: How would he react to a government that spends over half of its budget on defense while malnutrition rates among the under-threes compare with those of Burundi and Sudan? Or to the military generals, who bogusly present themselves as enemies of narcotics trade, are selling their country to ethnic-Chinese drug lords? He writes, “Scott would react as the rest of the world does: with anger and with horror.”

Marshall has made a significant contribution to Burma through writing this book. *The Trouser People: A Story of Burma in the Shadow of the Empire* is a most thought-provoking

book portraying Burma under monarchy as well as colonialism through Scott's diaries, and depicting all the contemporary issues of modern Burma through Marshall's own exhilarating adventures.

Win Naing Oo. *Hidden Records of Atrocities in Burma's Prisons*. Thailand: AAPP, 2002.

Reviewed by Khin Oo

[*Note*: The book reviewed here is written in Burmese. The title was translated into English by the reviewer]

Win Naing Oo's new book, *Hidden Records of Atrocities in Burma's Prisons*, published in Burmese, is essentially a personal memoir of the author's days in infamous Insein Prison where he was once held as a political prisoner. He has carefully portrayed the atrocities of the Burmese military regime in prisons imposed upon political prisoners. His book gives one insights into the military rule in Burma and the hypocrisy being developed by the ruling junta in the international community.

Win Naing Oo's book is very valuable and important to Burma's history in many ways since it reveals the hidden records of atrocities and the institution of torture operated by the current ruling military regime. It is moving, inspiring, sad, provocative, and laudable to realize the ill-treatment and physical and mental torture that these peace loving people are going through while fighting for democracy.

The very fact that the author himself went through these unpleasant experiences makes this book very unique and valuable. He was a university student and a student activist in 1988 when people were calling for an end to 26 years of military one-party rule. He went underground when the current military regime took over and resumed his political work. He was arrested in 1990 and sentenced to 3 year imprisonment. He has recalled his experience on the day he was arrested as follows:

It was midnight when the Military Intelligence Personnel came to take me without warrant. I was handcuffed at the back, hooded, and beaten while the gun was pointed at me in their car. When we got to the Military Interrogation Center, I was thrown into a room while kept handcuffed and hooded. I had a premonition that my passion for freedom would be tested. One hour later, I learned that a group of people rushed in and began to reprimand me for what I had done, kick me with their military boots, and beat me right in my face. The blood was coming down from my nose and eyes. Upon my repudiation to surrender, they continued to try to extract information out of me by using such torture methods as unsystematic beatings, near suffocation, electric shocks. It was so painful that I wish I lost my consciousness. I was most disturbed by the deep and loud

cries of my friends from other rooms resulting from various torture methods. I was deprived of food and water during four days of interrogation.

According to Win Naing Oo, tortures are institutionalized in interrogation centers and prisons in Burma. They are practiced by the Military Intelligence Personnel, prison guards and police. They use various physical torture methods to extract information, instill fear in anyone critical of the government, break down the identity of a strong man or woman and destroy their souls.

Win Naing Oo was subsequently sentenced to a 3-year imprisonment without any proper trial. His 3- year experience in Insein prison was filled with harshness, resentment and bitterness. According to the author, an extremely poor diet is served and there are no qualified doctors, proper medical care and sanitation in prisons despite the UN Geneva Convention. On top of all, the prison doctors intentionally use the same needle to have prisoners of conscience being exposed to HIV and other transmitted diseases. Skin diseases, tuberculosis and other diseases are very common. Anyone who complains is punished severely to deter future complaints of the mismanagement. Overcrowding is one of the many issues and over one hundred people are assigned to stay in one tiny room where no sheet or blanket is provided. Prisoners of conscience are not allowed to read and write or even have a writing paper or pen. Moreover, they are not allowed to meet their family on a regular basis. In some cases, families do not know where they are being kept.

Win Naing Oo recalls and explains many forms of severe physical punishments that he went through in Insein Prison. One of punishment is when prisoners are forced to maintain difficult positions for prolonged periods, known as “pone san.” They are severely beaten when they fail or if the prison wardens find faults in their positions. This is essentially one of the ways they use to instill fear in political prisoners who are critical of government and to destroy their souls. Another form of punishment is “taik peik,” where prisoners are held in a solitary confinement in shackles with little light or ventilation for many months. Some prisoners, both men and women, lose their minds or commit suicide as a result. Many others suffer from insomnia, nightmares, and severe depression after experiencing torture. Several died in custody. Many political prisoners are sent to labor camps breaking stones or constructing roads in

shackles while being exposed to life threatening diseases. Most of those sent to these camps die from overwork, exhaustion, ill treatment, lack of food and medical care.

The author discloses widespread corruption and acts of homosexuality inflicted by male criminals who are allowed to harass political prisoners in Burma's prisons. Buddhist monks who have gone against the military government are imprisoned, denied an access to wear robes, and are obliged to stay in overcrowded rooms. Moreover, these respectable monks are tortured, dishonored, sent to labor camps and die from exhaustion and ill treatment. Sadly, women political prisoners are brutally tortured, kept in solitary confinement, and repeatedly raped by the prison police.

James L. Huffman, *A Yankee in Meiji Japan: The Crusading Journalist Edward H. House*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003. Isbn: 0-7425-2620-8.

Reviewed by Daniel A. Metraux

A small group of Western teachers and advisors played a critical role in Japan's rapid modernization during the Meiji era (1868-1912). They assisted in the development of modern industrial, educational and political systems and of a formidable military. Some of these Westerners also introduced Japan to their native lands through their books, articles and public lectures and acted as a critical bridge between Japan and the West.

Scholars have written a considerable number of monographs that have rescued many of these persons from obscurity. I have read many of these works, but am most impressed with James L. Huffman's 2003 biography of American journalist Edward H. House (1836-1901). Huffman labored for over three decades tracking down every scrap of information available in the United States and Japan to reconstruct the life of House. The result is a magnificent biography that reveals both the strengths as well as the foibles of one of the outstanding foreigners in Meiji Japan.

House left his native Boston in 1858 to become a reporter for the *Tribune* in New York. He quickly became one of the star journalists on what was then the most influential newspaper in the United States. Choice assignments included coverage of John Brown's trial and execution in 1859 and Japan's first diplomatic mission to the United States in 1860. House's fame as a rising journalist brought him into contact with a number of public and literary figures including Mark Twain with whom he developed a long-lasting and deep friendship (the Twain friendship finally broke down in a very ugly public quarrel late in House's life). He also enjoyed good friendships with Walt Whitman, Artemus Ward and other luminaries.

During the 1860s House developed a fascination for Asia, so much so that he contributed short stories featuring Asian topics to American magazines. He yearned to visit the East and finally persuaded the *Tribune* to send him to Japan as America's first regular correspondent there. House became an avid student of Japanese history and culture and, unlike some of his Western contemporaries, portrayed Japan as a most progressive and civilized nation struggling to

maintain its dignity and independence against unwarranted encroachments by Western imperialists. House's regular dispatches, which were first carried back by ship and then telegraphed from California to New York, conveyed this very favorable image of Japan to his American readers. House soon gained the reputation as one of the leading journalists reporting on Japan in the early Meiji era.

House soon made numerous contacts with leading Japanese officials, who were impressed with his fair reporting and willingness to listen to the Japanese version of events. There were several English-language newspapers in the Tokyo-Yokohama region run by foreigners that expressed a *gaijin* view of life in the 1870s, but no foreign outlet for Japanese views. Members of the Japanese government therefore determined to open their own English-language paper in 1877, *The Tokio Times*, with House as its editor. For the next three years until the paper's demise House argued persuasively for such issues as Japan's need for tariff autonomy and eventual acceptance as an equal among nations. James Huffman suggests that House's editorial work clearly presented Japan's own worldview to the West in a highly coherent manner and helped advance Japan's endeavor to win her place among the nations.

Concerning the contributions that House made, Huffman notes:

House mattered for the contributions he made, and he mattered for the issues his life illustrated. The former is easier to describe, though arguably less important. As a young member of Horace Greeley's stable of brilliant *New York Tribune* writers, he helped to shape U.S. images of the zealot John Brown and introduced the first Japanese visitors (1860) to U.S. readers; he also played a pivotal role in sending Mark Twain's national career into orbit.... During his early years in Tokyo, he was among the most important of what one scholar has labeled the "teachers of the American public," helping his fellow countrymen form positive views of Japan with articles that challenged the strange-inferior-Oriental narrative. In this regard, Japan's early image as an advocate of justice resulted in part from his accounts of the *Maria Luz* episode, and his book on Japan's 1874 expedition to Taiwan still shapes the standard narrative of that episode. Within Japan itself, House was a pioneer in the development of orchestral music and sent his students off into a stunning array of public posts. And in his most important role, as crusader, he more than anyone else induced [the U.S.] Congress to return the Shimo-noseki indemnity to Japan and articulated, like no other writer in English, the case against the unequal treaties. Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu

called House the “one who laid the groundwork” for treaty revision, “the one we should call the grand old champion.” (pp. 270-71)

House’s work did much to promote America’s and the West’s largely very favorable image from the 1870s through the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. His writing as an apologist for Japanese imperialism in the late 1800s also had a role in smoothing the West’s reaction to Japanese expansionism at that time.

House had a genuine concern for the welfare of the needy and the lives of women in Japan. During the late 1870s and early 1880s he opened, taught in and managed the Hausu Gakko (House School) that offered training in math, reading, writing and sewing under the instruction of himself and a Japanese instructor. The school was praised by observers for its innovations and principles and for its help to over three dozen needy girls, some of whom later rose to positions of prominence in Japanese society.

Huffman gives us an in-depth view of House’s personal life—his very painful fight with gout that landed him in a wheel-chair given to him by the powerful political leader Okuma Shigenobu—and his deep relationship with a young woman, Aoki Koto, whom he adopted as his daughter when as a girl she was on the verge of suicide.

Huffman’s work also gives us a very vivid portrait of life in Japan in the late 19th century. Huffman has drawn upon House’s voluminous writings and on hundreds of letters between House and major figures in both the United States and Japan. The book is brilliantly researched and written in a clear lively manner. It would be ideal for use in a course on modern Japan.