

Japan in English : **Recommended resources for reading and viewing**

- Part 1: General books on Japanese life and culture
- Part 2: Christian resources on Japan and Japanese culture
- Part 3: Culture shock, adjusting to life in Japan as a missionary

Part 1: General books on Japanese life and culture

"The Encyclopedia of Japanese Pop Culture" **Trumbull, CT: Weatherhill, 1997**

It is so important to have some knowledge of Japanese pop culture. The young people of Japan are always talking about SMAP, Komuro Tetsuya, Hayao Miyazaki, Chibi-Marukochan, Doraemon, etc. Even among adults, references to Sayuri Yoshinaga, Yuming, Mito Komon, etc. are not uncommon in casual conversation. It doesn't take long to realize that these are significant icons of Japanese pop culture.

Mark Schilling has written a very fun and readable book on the subject: "The Encyclopedia of Japanese Pop Culture" (Trumbull, CT: Weatherhill, 1997; 343 pages). The book was in its 4th printing in early 2004. As the title suggests, it is an "encyclopedia" with 68 entries of the most popular and enduring icons of Japanese pop culture. This resource will help missionaries understand more deeply the everyday "ordinariness" of Japanese culture.

The book is available from www.amazon.co.jp at 2395 yen (including shipping).

JTB book "The illustrated guide to Japan - Daily life and society"

「見てわかる日本—生活・社会論」

ISBN4-533-04850-1

¥1,000

JTB book "The illustrated guide to Japan –Culture and Tradition

「見てわかる日本—生活・伝統・文化編」

ISBN4-533-04523-5

¥1,000

Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation

By Michael Zielenziger

This is a fascinating and up-to-date book on Japan. Although the writer is not a Christian, he takes some time to discuss the different ways that Japan and Korea have developed and hypothesizes that Christian influence in Korea is one explanation for the difference.

The paragraph below is from a review of 'Shutting out the Sun' by Emily Parker in the Wall Street Journal, September 26th, 2006.

“The Japanese language has its fair share of colorful -- and revealing -- words. Hikikomori: a person so alienated from society that he literally never leaves his home. Futoko: a young person who refuses to go to school. *Parasaito*: a "parasite single" or young working adult, usually a woman, who prefers to live at home with her parents rather than marry or start an independent household.

Such personalities play a prominent role in Michael Zielenziger's "Shutting Out the Sun," a book that delves beneath Japan's glossy surface and uncovers a dreary world of hermits, suicides and dysfunctional families. At a moment when many in the Western media are trumpeting the Return of Japan -- citing economic revival and a more robust foreign policy -- Mr. Zielenziger, a former Tokyo-based journalist, claims that the nation and its young people appear to be "teetering on the edge of a nervous breakdown."

The book zooms in on Japan's hikikomori. Across Japan there are more than a million such recluses, the author claims, and 80% are male. Many are just ordinary young men and boys who can't find a place in Japan's rigid society. Unable to "latch onto the well-oiled conveyor belt that carries young boys from preschool through college, then deposits them

Mr. Zielenziger also ventures into the country's pressure-cooker office world, which includes workers who have had trouble adjusting to wrenching upheavals in Japanese corporate life, such as technological change and the threat of mergers and layoffs. In their own way, some women are also "turning away" from society. Hence the phenomenon of the parasaito, the woman who prefers living with her parents to venturing into marriage and motherhood.

There is no question that Japan has suffered from confusion and a loss of confidence since its asset-bubble burst. In the 1990s, even after the state-directed growth model proved obsolete, an entrepreneurial, individualistic culture failed to take root. "Shutting Out the Sun" offers a glimpse at an uneasy nation suspended between two worlds.”

Learning to Bow – inside the heart of Japan

By Bruce S Feiler 1991
ISBN 0-395-64726-6

“Learning to Bow” is a very readable and at times extremely funny account of Bruce’s one year as an English teacher in a public school in a small provincial town in Gunma. It is also full of fascinating insights into Japanese life in general and clearly a lot of research went into the book.

Fish of the Seto Inland Sea – 3 generations of a Japanese family

By Pilgrim Ruri
HarperCollins Publishers ISBN 0-00-653133-4
Fiction based on fact

(Review from Amazon website) In this story of three generations of a Japanese family from

the 1870s to the aftermath of World War II, Ruri Pilgrim provides us with an insight into the customs of a little-known society, especially as they affect women. Pilgrim's account focuses on Haruko, a woman given in marriage to a man she meets for the first time at the wedding ceremony. Although Pilgrim's narrative takes place against a period of history that saw enormous changes in Japan, it is the small details that resonate here. Days later, Haruko fails to recognise her husband at the railway station as they head towards Manchuria, fleeing from the dangers of war. These details accumulate into a restrained but moving account of life on the run from the Chinese and Russian armies. When Toshie, a relative of Haruko, is forced to undertake a 100-mile trek with two infants in tow, Pilgrim relates her despair at their deaths with touching simplicity. Toshie holds her daughter's body and recalls "the touch of a little finger tracing trickles of sweat on her face ... She was so alive only yesterday". When Pilgrim recounts a saying that describes the fish of Seto Inland Sea as especially strong and resilient, she also pays tribute to its women. --Lilian Pizzichini

Synopsis

Ruri Pilgrim tells the story of her family from the 1870s to the 1950s. She begins with the formality and security of the arrangements of life for a Japanese middle-class family, living in a walled compound with their servants, following exactly the tradition inherited from their parents, with marriages arranged for the children, which continued up until World War II. By then her mother was married to an engineer and living in Japanese-occupied Manchuria. That period is marked by her mother's often funny, painful experiences of learning about the Chinese and Russians with whom she now lived with her growing family, and the war seen from her point of view. At the end of the war, the Japanese - women, children, everyone - had to escape, walking hundreds of miles to the coast. The family returned to a Tokyo where the society, the culture, the economy was entirely overturned. The Americans were everywhere, the Japanese were unemployed, and the ways of society that they had all known had vanished. And yet somehow Ruri's indomitable mother survived.

The Yamato Dynasty – the secret history of Japan’s imperial family

By Sterling and Peggy Seagrave
Corgi ISBN0-552-14709-5
UK 7.99 pounds
History but reads like a political thriller

(Review below is from www.prnewswire.co.uk/)

A controversial and authoritative history of the Japanese imperial family reveals for the first time their involvement in the looting of Asia during the Second World War. It also reveals America's collusion with Tokyo to keep this a secret while Japan claimed to be bankrupt and unable to pay reparations at the end of the war.

“In The Yamato Dynasty Sterling Seagrave, and his collaborator and wife, Peggy, offer the first collective biography of the Japanese imperial family, both men and women, covering

five generations since the Meiji Restoration in the nineteenth century.

Initially, their account was sympathetic, seeing the family as hostages of a corrupt regime that used the sacred to hide the profane. But they soon realised that they were onto something explosive - the secret story of how Hirohito's brothers, uncles and cousins masterminded the looting of Asia as Japan carried out its conquests.

It was always said that Prince Chichibu, eldest brother of Emperor Hirohito, spent the Pacific War as an invalid suffering from tuberculosis. But the truth, according to Japanese sources including members of his wartime retinue, was that he headed a secret programme called Golden Lily, hiding billions of dollars of stolen gold, platinum, silver and gemstones in underground vaults dug by POWs, burying the POWs alive along with hundreds of Japanese soldiers to guard the secret. The objective was that Tokyo could claim to be bankrupt should her military be defeated - unable to pay war reparations to its countless victims.

At the end of the war came the American occupation of Japan, under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur. America had long had a stake in Japan; huge loans and business investments dating from before the war now hung in the balance. MacArthur's intentions were simple: to protect American investment and to prevent Japan's fall into communism.

The Seagraves document for the first time that General MacArthur and a group of American financiers rescued Hirohito from prosecution for war crimes by forcing General Tojo and other Japanese officers to perjure themselves by claiming exclusive responsibility for the war.

"While researching the book, we came upon American tracks everywhere," says Seagrave. "While Washington was publicly insisting that postwar Japan really was bankrupt, we discovered that the OSS and CIA were opening up huge vaults of war loot in the Philippines, and secretly recovering billions of dollars in stolen gold bullion. Nobody was told about these recoveries. The loot was earmarked for secret anti-communist operations during the Cold War. What this means is that there is now incontrovertible evidence of collusion between American and Japan, while millions of war victims went without any form of compensation to this day."

Samurai William

By Giles Milton

Novel but based on historical fact

"Samurai William tells how, in 1598, William Adams, an English seaman of humble origin, sailed out of Rotterdam on a Danish ship en route to the East Indies. After 20 months at sea in which they survived a series of disasters, starvation and disease, Adams and a few remaining sailors floated into a harbour on the island of Kyushu in southwestern Japan. Though not the first Westerner to reach Japan--Portuguese traders and Jesuit monks from Spain had arrived about 60 years earlier--Adams was the first Englishman to arrive. The impact this one man would have on future relations between East and West is the subject of

this engrossing book.

After landing, Adams spent some time in prison and was nearly executed before he made an unlikely ally in Tokugawa Ieyasu, a powerful feudal lord who would later become shogun of Japan. Intrigued by the outside world and impressed with the sailor's navigational abilities, Ieyasu commissioned Adams to oversee the construction of some ships to be used for both trade and exploration. In time, Adams mastered the language and complex social customs of Japan, began teaching the shogun about geometry and mathematics and served as a translator and political counsellor to Ieyasu. For his service, he was awarded great wealth, land holdings and even a lordship, making him the first foreigner ever to be honoured as a samurai. When news of his high standing reached England, a small crew of Englishmen were sent to Japan to use Adams's political connections to open trade between the two countries.

Giles Milton does a masterful job of covering Adams's remarkable life. His narrative moves along briskly as he recounts harrowing sea adventures, fascinating details about Japanese culture and the attempts of various countries, including Holland, Portugal, Spain and England, to gain a foothold in Japan to exploit the rich trade possibilities. Samurai William is an impressive achievement and a thoroughly entertaining read.” --Shawn Carkonen, Amazon.com

Part 2: Christian resources on Japan and Japanese culture

"Living Abroad in Japan" by Ruthy Kanagy

ISBN: 1-56691-672-0

ISSN: 1548-6478

Order through amazon.co.jp for 1,640 yen

Ruthy is a MK (TCK) who was born in Tokyo, graduated from CAJ (Christian Academy) and has lived in a number of places in Japan, including Hokkaido. This book gives a good overall introduction to Japan, including:

History, government and economy

People and culture

Language and education

Health

Employment

Finance

Communications

Travel and Transportation

Housing considerations

And a brief overview of the "Prime Living Locations" in Japan

Konnichi wa Kiwi

by Warren Payne (OMF)

© OMF International Japanese Language Center
Japan in English: Recommended reading and viewing

This is by former OMFer to Japan and current OMF National Director for New Zealand – Warren Payne. The book covers his story in seven chapters. Each chapter has a theme and a reflection. There is a chapter on Warren and Doreen’s time in Aomori and one section, in another chapter, on the gift to OMF of the land and Chapel of Adoration.

**Chasing the Cherry Blossom:
A Cycling Challenge in Search of the Spiritual Heart of Japan**

by Lowell Sheppard
Lion Hudson Plc (20 April 2001)

“As trees burst into bloom, news reports daily keep us up to date with the front as it moves north across the country. Delicate pink-white cherry blossom goes to the heart of the Japanese, representing life ‘in all its ephemeral beauty’ according to a tourist leaflet. It is photographed, gazed at, oh-ed and ah-ed over, but as important as anything else, it becomes host to the first picnic of the season. Noisy crowds settle themselves on big blue tarpaulins drinking, eating, living it up under a ceiling of blossom.

Lowell Sheppard decided to cycle the length of the country in Spring 2000 ‘chasing the cherry blossom.’ He reckoned that a bike would take him at the same pace as the cherry front and so embarked on a 7 week, 2000 mile journey. And this book is the result. ‘Chasing the Cherry Blossom – a spiritual journey though Japan’. Sheppard is Canadian but worked in the UK for 13 years as head of Youth for Christ before moving to Japan where his wife had grown up in a missionary family.

We quickly get caught up in his journey, observing and learning as we go. It is as much pilgrimage as travelogue and we become pilgrims too. We start in the far south where Christianity first entered the country back in the mid-16th century and where 26 Christians were subsequently crucified in a wave of persecution 50 years later. We meet what he calls ‘secular pilgrims’ in air-conditioned buses or taxis doing whistle stop tours of the 88-temple pilgrimage in Shikoku. We..... Well I’ll leave you to find out for yourselves what else happens, what else we see, who we meet. We *feel* the country as we go. We join him in his dislike of trucks and tunnels. We chase the blossom front, sometimes ahead, sometimes behind. And in the process we consider Japan, her history, her geography, her religions, her society. It is an easy introduction to a complex country and people.

It’s written for a secular audience – you could imagine it on any bookstall alongside other travel books. The content is geared to a present day nomadic pilgrim. His Christian commitment comes through but not overtly and he takes time to consider how it can be set against Japan’s religions. He has interesting things to say about redemptive theology, about our attitude to Buddhist and Shinto practice. You won’t agree with it all. But it will give you food for thought.

Is it well written? I wasn’t sure as I started but did get pulled into the journey. Is it worth reading? Definitely. If you want a gentle, broad introduction to Japan.”
(Review by Mary Alexander)

Lady Gracia: A Samurai Wife's Love, Strife and Faith

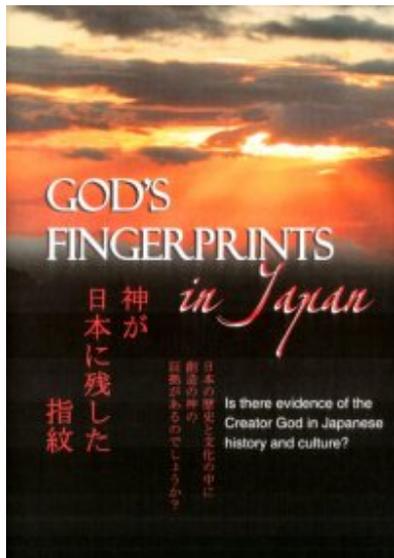
By Ayako Miura

The review states: "This is the English translation of a historical novel first published in 1975 by Ayako Miura, Japan's foremost Christian novelist. Its subject, Gracia Hosokawa, (1563-1600) was one of the Christian heroes of Japan..."

The Lady Hosokawa Gracia was born a samurai, trained in Buddhist scriptures, and was a devout Christian convert. "She is blessed with great intelligence and wisdom," the Jesuit Father Frois wrote of his Japanese convert, Gracia. Frois and his fellow Christians considered Gracia and the other samurai women they converted as the crown jewels of their mission in medieval Japan. A few years after Frois penned these notes, however, foreign missionaries were expelled from the land and Gracia herself had died, a victim of the shifting tides of war in a strife-torn land.

This book is listed on Amazon but unfortunately was out of stock in March 2008.

God's Fingerprints In Japan (DVD) 1 and 2



Is there evidence of the Creator God in Japanese history and culture?

Is there a connection between the Tea ceremony and Communion?

Is it contradictory to be Japanese and a Follower of Jesus?

Find out in this groundbreaking documentary.

The film, "God's Fingerprints in Japan," is in DVD format that can be played on computers and DVD players in the United States and Japan. It contains English, Japanese, English with Japanese subtitles, and Japanese with English subtitles versions.

This DVD and its companion no 2 can also be ordered at <http://www.alohakeakua.org/> for free (donations appreciated). The writers say "the main purpose of God's Fingerprints in Japan is to let people of Japanese ancestry everywhere know that God loves them.... This video suggests to the Japanese people that the Creator God is not a foreign God but a Japanese God, and that being a believer in Jesus and being Japanese are not contradictory."

Not everyone agrees with the premise of the DVDs but they are beautifully produced, thought provoking and well worth viewing.

Part 3: Culture shock, adjusting to life in Japan as a missionary

Cross-Cultural Connections 'Stepping out and fitting in around the world.'

By Duane H. Elmer Intersity Press ISBN 0-8308-2309-3

This was recommended by John Mehn at the 2003 Church Planter's Institute as essential reading for all short termers and new missionaries to Japan. It is written from the perspective of Americans going as Christian workers overseas but has much that can be applied to those of us working in Japan.

Section 1 is basic especially if you have studied this kind of thing at Bible college or seminary. But there is useful material to apply to oneself in later sections. In Section 2, 'Dealing with the New and Different,' for example, is a table in which you can examine your expectations versus the reality in your new culture. Suggestions are made on how to manage unmet expectations. A later chapter has a 'cultural adjustment map' or, in other words, the stages you go through in cultural adjustment. Section 3 deals with attitudes and skills necessary for adjustment, openness (how to be approachable), acceptance (how to be positive), trust (how to build strong relationships) etc. Section 4 identifies 8 areas where cultural differences can be found- e.g., time and event, task and relationship, individualism and collectiveness etc.

The main attraction of this book is that it is highly readable with helpful anecdotes and practical illustrations, has short chapters and discussion questions at the end of each chapter. We may know the theory but being made to apply it to our experience after arriving in Japan will sharpen our self-awareness and hopefully help us to look more objectively and receptively at our adopted culture.