

*Japan—An Illustrated Encyclopedia*

Kodansha, Ltd., 1993 ISBN 4-06-205938-X, 1924 pages, ¥ 32,000

Those wanting to know about transportation in Japan in detail may be interested in Japanese geography and history. While transport technology and techniques for managing and operating transport facilities seem to be common to all nations, transport facilities like railways, which are deeply rooted in a country, often reflect the country's culture and have quite different features from other countries.

Japan has long been a mysterious country to people who do not understand Japanese, because there are only a few helpful books in other languages on Japanese geography, history and culture. Many people in Japan and overseas, have been concerned about this shortage of information on Japan. Fortunately, through their efforts in recent years, excellent guidebooks and academic books on Japan have been published in various languages including English.

Kodansha Ltd., is one of the oldest and largest publishers in Japan. The company, which was well-known only for its popular literary magazines and comic books, started putting a great deal of effort into publication

of academic books and English books in the 1960s. In 1983, it published the nine-volume *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* which was the first encyclopedia on Japan written in English and the predecessor of *JAPAN—An Illustrated Encyclopedia* reviewed here.

*Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* was published after 10 years of preparation under the guidance of two highly-regarded scholars, Dr. Edwin Reischauer and Shigeto Tsuru, and the direct supervision of Gen Itasaka who was teaching Japanese literature at Harvard University at the time. However, it was too big and expensive for individual readers to buy and keep at home, although it still continues to be a valuable reference book for students of Japan.

*JAPAN—An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, published last autumn, is a revised edition of *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*. Many prestigious scholars from Japan, the USA and Europe, including the late Dr. Reischauer, took part in the compilation of this compact one-volume encyclopedia. The price of ¥32,000 (about US\$300) may seem

on the high side, but is not outrageous for such a full-color encyclopedia of rich substance.

A Japanese translation is provided for each of the 12,000 English entry words, and the index at the back of the encyclopedia is in both English and Japanese. Detailed explanations are given of both Japanese traditions such as flower arrangement (ikebana), Mt. Fuji (fujisan), geisha, judo, kabuki, sukiyaki, sumo and the tea ceremony (chanoyu), and Japanese modern politics, economics, industry, science and technology. Many entries related to transportation are also covered, and items such as airports, railways, shinkansen and transport are explained in a simple and easy-to-understand manner with illustrations. An atlas of Japan with an index and a chronology of Japanese history at the back should be of particular interest to overseas readers.

The encyclopedia is recommended as a very good and useful book indispensable to those who are interested in Japan, as well as to Japanese who find themselves engaged in discussions on Japan with non-Japanese. ■

[T. Suga]

*JAPAN ALMANAC 1994*

Asahi Shimbun, ISBN 4-02-219594-0, 324 pages, ¥ 1,600

and

*JAPAN Economic Almanac 1994*

Nihon Keizai Shimbun Inc., ISBN 4-532-67504-9, 248 pages, ¥ 9,800

*JAPAN—An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, reviewed above, is voluminous at nearly 2,000 pages and comes at a substantial price. Some readers may want to get more detailed information on the Japanese modern economy and industry from a more compact and lower-price book.

These two almanacs were edited by two major Japanese newspaper publishers and will satisfy the needs of such readers. The former, *JAPAN ALMANAC 1994*, was written by the staff writers of Asahi Shimbun which is well-known for its liberal comments and is generally acknowledged to represent Japan's progressives. The latter, *Japan Economic Almanac 1994*, was written by the staff writers of the *Nikkei Weekly*, an English weekly newspaper published by the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun Inc.*, Japan's biggest business newspaper comparable to the *Financial Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*. Incidentally, the word "Nikkei", which is

widely known as an index of Japanese stock prices similar to the Dow Jones and FTSE, is the abbreviation for "Nihon Keizai Shimbun".

*Japan Economic Almanac 1994* explains the current status of the Japanese economy and business in detail with many statistical tables and figures. Information on the structure of the Japanese government and major political parties, and lists of ministers, key bureaucrats and major business organizations and associations at the back make it a very convenient book for overseas readers who want to do business in Japan or who are interested in the Japanese economy.

However, coverage of transportation falls short, only touching on air transport and ignoring railway, road and marine transport.

By contrast, although *JAPAN ALMANAC 1994* does not provide detailed explanations of the Japanese economy and business on a par with the *Japan Economic Al-*

*manac 1994*, it does cover a wider range of subjects including geography, climate, population, foreign affairs, national defense, consumer life, housing, environmental issues, lifestyles and the mass media. At the back, there is an abbreviated chronology of Japanese and world history, historical trends in population and major economic indices, and the complete English text of the sometimes controversial pacifist Japanese constitution. Since the text, tables and figures are in both Japanese and English, it is quite useful for foreigners studying Japanese and Japanese studying English.

Six pages devoted to transportation in Japan contain basic statistics on domestic passenger and freight markets, railway, road, marine and air transport. This almanac ranks first in this regard. ■

[T. Suga]