

Richard Bowring and Peter Kornicki (Ed)

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Japan

Cambridge University Press, 1993 ISBN 0-521-40352-9, 400 pages, £29.95

In the June 1994 issue of this magazine, we presented Kodansha's Japan — *An Illustrated Encyclopedia* as a very useful reference to those who are interested in Japan. It is an ideal guide to both traditional and modern Japan, but at 2,000 pages and ¥ 32,000 yen (US\$320), it may be out of reach of individual readers.

By contrast, the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Japan is more compact and more reasonably priced, offering better access. The authors are mostly from British universities and museums, but there are also authors from US, Australian, Austrian, Canadian, German, Venezuelan and Japanese universities.

Whereas Kodansha's Illustrated Encyclopedia takes a "micropedia" approach with 12,000 entries, the Cambridge Encyclopedia is a "macropedia", composed of eight parts (Geography,

History, Language and Literature, Thought and Religion, Arts and Crafts, Society, Politics, and Economy). Each part is divided into several chapters. The whole is carefully organised and well balanced to give readers a good general view of the "land of the rising sun", with fairly detailed description by selected (mostly English-speaking) Japanologists. The book is well illustrated with colour photographs and figures, and the detailed index assures easy reference.

However, there are a few mistakes in the six pages covering transport and communications. For example, according to the Encyclopedia, the first railway service in Japan started "in 1975" and JNR was privatised "in 1985", but the correct dates are "1875" and "1872", respectively. Similarly, the Encyclopedia states that shinkansen expansion

was delayed by the huge deficits incurred by JNR "since 1975" and for other reasons, but JNR's deficits started in 1964, the opening year of the first shinkansen. There is another inaccuracy concerning the current modal competition in the domestic freight market; the book overestimates the impact of the Seikan Tunnel and Seto Bridges which linked the main islands of Japan in 1988, and underestimates the role of coastal shipping which, together with road haulage, still enjoys a lion's share of nearly 50% (8% according to the book) of the freight market in terms of tonne-kilometre.

Although this Encyclopedia is beautifully produced and good enough for general readers wanting an overall view of Japan, it requires selective reading by those who really want more detail. ■

[T. SUGA]

岡 並木 (Namiki OKA)

江戸・パリ・ロンドン — 比較都市論の旅

論創社 1994 ISBN 4-8460-0020-6, 340 pages, ¥ 3,090

(Namiki OKA, *Edo, Paris, London — A Comparative Study*, Ronsosha Ltd. 1994)

At the beginning of this book, the author, who is one of the best writers on transport and urban development issues, poses a question about the popular idea that there are no deliberately built cities in Japan and that Japan is backward in road and sewer systems. He admits the faults and imperfections of the country's modern town planning, which started in the late 19th century, and reevaluates the wisdom of early town planners in the Edo era. Edo was the old name for Tokyo where Ieyasu Tokugawa formed a government (the Tokugawa Shogunate) in 1603. Mr Oka admires the wisdom of Ieyasu Tokugawa as a town planner, explaining how carefully he built Edo. Quoting the writings of a few Europeans who visited Japan in the Edo era, the author demonstrates the town planning of Ieyasu Tokugawa. Among the first visitors was a Spanish Governor of the Philip-

ines whose Mexico-bound ship was wrecked on the Japanese coast in 1609 and who admired the townscape of Edo compared with Spanish cities. A German medical doctor who came to Japan on a Dutch merchant vessel in 1691 also wrote about the well-built streets of Edo and the well-maintained trunk roads linking the capital and regions.

The author also draws attention to the fact that despite the dense population there were a lot fewer victims of epidemics in Edo compared to major European cities. According to Mr Oka, this was mainly due to the higher public hygiene achieved by separating ordinary waste from night soil, which was recycled to suburban farming.

In Edo, there used to be quite a number of sloping streets called Fujimizaka and Shiomi-zaka, the former meaning a slope with a view of Mt Fuji and the latter meaning a slope

overlooking Tokyo Bay. Mr Oka describes vividly how the builders of Edo achieved harmony between urban life and the environment.

Mr Oka also turns his attention to the young and ambitious leaders in modern Japan, who studied abroad and were keen to catch up with European and American living standards. They failed to evaluate the wisdom of their pre-modern ancestors, making modern Tokyo a chaotic city. Mr Oka concludes that modern Japan has made too much haste.

The second half of this book is devoted to examination of the amenities of various cities, based on the author's visits to different parts of the world. The book as whole is very stimulating for both transport and urban planning specialists and general readers, but it is a pity that it is only available in Japanese. ■

[T. SUGA]