

## REVIEWS

**Akira Iriye.** *Japan and the Wider World: From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present.* London and New York: Longman, 1997. Pp. viii, 213. Paper, \$11.96; ISBN 0-582-21053-4.

Iriye's book is an expansion of two earlier works by this leading Japanese-American scholar previously published in Japan in the 1960s and early 1990s. It is an extremely readable survey of Japan's history and place in the world between the mid-nineteenth and end of the twentieth centuries. Beginning with the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and ending with the post-Cold War world, Iriye provides not only an historical account of the Japanese effort to move from isolation to a significant role in the modern world but, more importantly, an emphasis on how the Japanese viewed themselves during this period in the context of the nation, Pacific Basin, world, and even internal dynamics. In his opinion, each of these frameworks stimulated a number of images the Japanese used to develop foreign policy and thus form a "mental universe"--a means to identify and understand themselves and their role in an ever changing world.

Iriye's approach is the real strength of the work. He does not overwhelm the reader with a flood of personalities or data but at the same time provides a glimpse of the men who directed the affairs of state and just enough statistical information to compare Japan's development to the world at large over the two centuries. While the book does maintain a neat and comforting chronological flow, the reader is quickly drawn into its larger scope. Iriye opens most chapters with a general review of the world scene--United States, Europe, Asia, and at times Latin America--so that the reader is reminded of the images that Japan witnessed through its lens and from its vantage point in each particular era. That is to say, one can begin to appreciate the large number of competing external demands on the Japanese decision-making process. This is an extremely valuable technique, especially for persons taking a world history survey course. Used as a supplementary work for such a course, Iriye's book could facilitate the ability of the student or general reader to gain an appreciation for the whole range of political, diplomatic, economic, and military considerations that characterized periods such as the modernization and westernization in the late nineteenth century, the 1930s, World War II, the years of peaceful coexistence, or even the post-cold war world. Furthermore, the work offers a clear, narrative style, does not burden the reader with footnotes, and offers a helpful list of sources in English that relate to Japanese foreign affairs.

Iriye's conclusion is the most telling portion of the book. He contends that the Japanese have gained much from the world they joined in the nineteenth century. Japan benefited from the evolving interaction, particularly in the economic arena, on the world scene and found her niche through being passive rather than proactive. Yet, he is openly critical of Japan's reluctance to accept accountability. Indeed, Iriye finds fault with the Japanese attitude of traditionalism that he maintains has prevented the



country from accepting its past errors. Iriye believes that Japan in the future needs to develop a broader sense of historical perspective and not continue "to indulge in self-congratulatory parochialisms." Since Japan is indebted to the world for security and economic viability, Iriye holds that it is time for her to change and become a partner with other nations for "the preservation and consolidation of the world community."

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**Peter Burke.** *The Renaissance.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. vii, 77. Paper, \$10.95; ISBN 0-312-17230-3.

Peter Burke, a Fellow at Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge, has written an effective yet concise overview of the rise and fall of the Italian Renaissance. The text, which is only 77 pages, consists of five chapters: The Myth of the Renaissance; Italy: Revival and Innovation; The Renaissance Abroad; The Disintegration of the Renaissance; and Conclusion. The text closes with a comprehensive bibliography that is divided into fifteen significant subsections for the reader's benefit.

In chapter one, Burke discusses the many myths associated with the evolution of the Renaissance Era. The chapter emphasizes the emergence of "realism" as expressed principally in Italian art work. Chapter two focuses on Italian Renaissance writings such as Leonardo Bruni's *The History of the Florentine People*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Castiglione's *The Courtier*, and others. These works are discussed in context to the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, in exalting the importance of humanist culture and society. The chapter concludes with reference to many Italian artists and their manifestations of great Greek and Roman historical and mythological figures.

Chapter three, *The Renaissance Abroad*, explores the influence of Italian humanists in other European cultures, primarily England, France, and Poland. Burke's discussion of Don Quixote is particularly useful for the novice student of Renaissance history. Chapter four, *The Disintegration of the Renaissance*, presents a picture of struggle in sixteenth-century Italy with numerous pressures building in Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, in Tudor England, and French aggression in northern Italy. Chapter five, the *Conclusion*, provides a five-page review and brief definition of the Italian Renaissance, citing such writers as J. Burckhardt, describing the concept of "scholastic humanism and individualism."

*The Renaissance* is a well written but brief overview of the importance of the Italian Renaissance, primarily of the sixteenth century. However, the text would be somewhat limited for general use in the teaching of a broad-based college course in European Renaissance or world history. Due to the author's basic assumption that the reader has a foundation of knowledge of the Renaissance and pre-1500s Europe, the