

failure and its analysis of the new problems, a few critical remarks may be permitted:

1. The villages in the village survey (chapters 3-6) illustrate the dwarf-size of peasant holdings and the level of cash-income and at the same time the paramount task of integrating these peasant masses into a commodity economy and a paying social security system, financed by the producers and beneficiaries themselves. But it seems delusive and it offers a false resemblance of precision, if the data are calculated with two digits behind the comma.
2. In several instances, low crop yields and low incomes are explained by "physical and mental incapacity" (p. 38 and 87). Is that the real cause?
3. Chicken producing "approximately 550 eggs in one year" (p. 62) were probably reared and kept in China's Potemkin village.
4. Peasants losing fertile land – that happens frequently. But will the land really be used for a railway-line to Japan (p. 101)?
5. "The highest village per capita income was thirty times that of the poorest." (p. 139). Is that realistic?

In spite of these few critical remarks the book is very valuable reading for rural and development sociologists and for sinologists. It includes 90 tables, an index and a report about the methods of field research in China.

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ALBRECHT ROTHACHER, *The Japanese Power Elite*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1993. 336 pages, £ 40.00. ISBN 0-333-58463-5.

*The Japanese Power Elite* reveals a great deal about Japan's governmental and business leadership in a very un-Japanese way. That is to say, Rothacher is refreshingly candid, forceful and blunt in his critical examination of Japan's movers and shakers. This book, the author's fourth dealing with Japan, is the welcome product of Rothacher's considerable academic talent, as well as his practical experiences as a first secretary to the then European Community delegation in Tokyo from 1987 to 1991.

To Rothacher, there is little inscrutability in understanding Japan's small core of true power holders and little so-called "emptiness" at its center. He argues that "Japan's power structure is not substantially different from other western capitalist democracies." Rich with statistical analyses skillfully blended with historical examples and personal anecdotes,

*The Japanese Power Elite* explains the political, bureaucratic and business triumvirate responsible for Japan's decision-making.

Highly recommended is the book's section on the Japanese bureaucracy, especially its discussion of the elite ministries responsible for so much of Japan's economic policy making (including the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the personalities and personnel systems which so faithfully guide them. The author's intellectual candor and good humor prevail throughout the text; for example, ill-fated former prime minister Sosuke Uno is "a man without enemies and a man without friends" while in summarizing Japan's socioeconomic ethos, the author succinctly concludes that "the country ... rather resembles a uniformed, almost fully functionalised work camp."

Successful politics, like good comedy, relies on keen timing. In this sense, Rothacher has been betrayed by his own inadvertent misreading of Japan's electoral tea leaves. In the author's definition, "three major groups – the leading representatives of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the senior bureaucrats of the major ministries and the business executives of the giant *keiretsu* companies ... form a closely related and cohesive power elite." Shortly after this book's publication, the LDP was jolted from its near monopolistic hold on power and the short-lived administration of Morihiro Hosokawa came to power. Although the LDP staged a mini-comeback by ousting Hosokawa and joining in a new coalition government, the price the party had to pay was accepting veteran Socialist Tomiichi Murayama as Prime Minister. From this perspective, the author's emphasis on the LDP power elite might seem too strong or overtaken by events. But patience is a Japanese virtue and the LDP might once again return to dominate completely the corridors of power at Nagatacho for another "half an eternity."

*The Japanese Power Elite* makes an important contribution to our understanding of Nippon's political-economic structure and will be enjoyed by the Japanese specialist as well as the general reader. Combining scholarship with diplomatic insights, Rothacher writes masterfully about the lifestyles, interconnections and value systems of the contemporary *daimyos* and modern-day mandarins who rule Japan.

John D. Woodward