

Review

Ian Nish, *The Japanese in War and Peace, 1942–48: Selected Documents from a Translator's In-tray*, Folkestone, Kent, Global Oriental, 2011, pp. xv+454, ISBN 978-1-905246-87-8.

Ian Nish and Mark Allen (eds.), *War, Conflict and Security in Japan and Asia-Pacific, 1941–52: The Writings of Louis Allen*, Folkestone, Kent, Global Oriental, 2011, pp. xxxviii+379, ISBN 978-1-906876-21-0.

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The Second World War had important byproducts in the shape of prominent scholars who were deeply versed in history, culture and society of former enemy states as the result of learning enemy languages for military purposes during the war. Ian Nish and Louis Allen are typical examples of British scholars of Japan with this background. In 2011, two books giving personal histories of these two historians were published consecutively by Global Oriental. These two books are of different character, but show the same sort of intellectual trajectory emanating from their experiences in the mid-1940s.

Nish's book is composed of two parts. Of the total number of pages, the four-fifth are devoted to nine appendices, most of which are materials collected by the author during his stay in Japan as a member of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) between 1946 and 1948. In the main text preceding those appendices Nish gives a detailed explanation of these appendices and then describes his experiences in the BCOF. Allen's book is a collection of his articles and papers and includes a brief introduction by Nish, who is one of the editors of this volume, and an autobiographical essay by Allen, who passed away in 1991. Two tributes to him, one by Sukehiro Hirakawa and the other by Allen's son, are added as appendices. In the case of Nish, the counterpart of this book has already been published by the same publisher in two volumes as a part of the series of collected writings of modern Western scholars of Japan.

As is well known, Nish is a leading historian of Anglo-Japanese relations and his meticulously researched books on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance – *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894–1907*, and *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908–23* – have long been considered as the most authoritative works on this subject. He has also written extensively about various aspects of international history relating to Japan and Britain. As for Allen, he is famous in Japan as an author of a detailed history of the Burma campaign, *Burma: The Longest War 1941–1945*, but this volume clearly demonstrates that his research interest in

the history of the Asia-Pacific war covered many other aspects. Considering the fact that Allen lectured on French literature at Durham University, his achievement in historical studies is very impressive.

Nish was mobilized in Edinburgh, and after being taught Japanese in India and working in Singapore as an interpreter-translator he was sent to Japan as a junior officer of the BCOF in October 1946. His main task in Japan was to translate newspaper articles and documents, but he was also engaged in various other activities. Nish's recollections about his experience in the BCOF have been published before,¹ but the book under review carries the most detailed description of his activities. For example, he served as an election observer in the north-eastern part of Hiroshima at the time of the 1947 general election. He was left with the impression that there was 'a new sense of responsibility on the part of local people' (n 65, hereafter the quotation from Nish's book is shown with the letter 'n' and page number and that from Allen's with the letter 'a' and page number). In the summer of 1947, he was posted to Shikoku and transferred from Zentsuji to Matsuyama and finally to Uwajima. He felt that 'to be posted away from it [the BCOF headquarter] was a liberation' (n 59) and was glad that he 'was able to get closer to the Japanese people and the problems of their daily living' (n 60). In this way, Nish enjoyed his stay in Japan and left Japan in the summer of 1948 with a very positive image of Japan and its people.

Allen was mobilized when he was a student of Manchester University in 1942 and was sent to the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London to study Japanese. In 1944, he was attached to the Indian Army in Delhi and began work on the translation of documents captured from the Japanese. Then he joined a translation section in Burma and continued his work there after the Japanese surrendered. He interrogated Japanese, including members of the Burma kempei-tai (military police). In the autobiographical essay, Allen confessed: 'I must admit that when entering the cages containing him [a member of the kempei-tai] and his companions I felt for the first time, in the presence of surrendered Japanese, a sense of risk and unease' (a xxxi). During this period in Burma, he started to collect materials about the Burma campaign, which resulted in his aforementioned major work. Later he moved to Singapore and at Changi, where British and Australian prisoners of war had received bad treatment in the prisoners-of-war camp, he was engaged in the interrogation of surrendered Japanese, including Iwaichi Fujiwara who was the key figure in a famous Japanese intelligence organization, the F Kikan. There Allen collaborated with Hugh Cortazzi, who became British ambassador to Japan in the 1980s, and, like Nish and Allen, made much scholarly contribution to Japanese studies in Britain. In 1946, Allen went back to Manchester University and after a sojourn at Sorbonne embarked on his teaching career at Durham University in 1948.

As was mentioned above, the main parts of these two books differ. Nish's book carries nine appendices, of which three can be regarded as central items. The first item is the extracts of *The School Weekly*, an English teaching material. The character of this magazine can easily be detected at a glance. The first issue contained in this book is that of 8 July 1940 and starts with an

¹ Ian Nish, 'Britain and the Occupation of Japan . . . Some Personal Recollections', *Proceedings of the British Association for Japanese Studies*, 4 (1979); Nish, 'Early Experiences in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan', *Proceedings of the Japan Society*, 128 (1996).

article composed of a headline and only one sentence: 'Monroe Doctrine in East Asia. Japan has proclaimed a "Monroe Doctrine", rejecting other Powers' interference in East Asia'. The last issue carries the date of 12 July 1943 and its top article is the announcement of Subhas Chandra Bose's arrival in Tokyo. The second main item is *Great East Asia War Graphic II*, which was published in 1942 in Osaka and gave an illustrated account of the war waged by Japan during the period up to early June of that year. Many articles and photo-captions in this war graphic were written both in Japanese and in English and were obviously meant for English education. The third item is the special number of *Nippon Times Weekly*, an English magazine, of 16 September 1943, which was devoted to 'science and technology in wartime Japan'. In the introductory section, Nish surmises that this special number was primarily for Japanese readers in the professional classes, since it set out Japan's aspirations and sought to justify the country's large expenditure on scientific research (n 19). Overall these items display a somewhat neglected aspect of wartime Japan, in which English was utilized, and Nish's aim to shed light on this by reproducing materials he collected in his young days has largely been achieved.

The main part of Allen's book contains as many as 24 articles written by him. These are divided into three parts: the Asia-Pacific War, Japanese military intelligence and national security and post-war conflicts in Burma, Malaya and Indochina. Though many of them are taken from published sources, some are papers from academic meetings and some are unpublished typescripts. One of these unpublished typescripts is titled 'The Second World War in Asia: an Overview'. The editor notes that this is a seminar paper and as such is not of the completed form for publication. It is true that this paper is not complete, but it is an overview written with vigour. For example, the section dealing with works of fiction relating to the war displays his historical and literary insight nurtured as a specialist of French literature.

Among all the articles the current reviewer is most interested in those concerning Japanese intelligence. As his wartime career shows, he was familiar with various aspects of Japanese intelligence directly, and utilized this experience effectively in researching and writing about that subject. The article with the title 'Japanese Intelligence Systems', which was published in *Journal of Contemporary History* in 1987, is an early and succinct overview of this important aspect of Japanese warfare, which came to be studied intensely only recently. Allen's own experience of interrogating Japanese intelligence officers in Singapore can also be detected in the background of the articles titled 'Fujiwara and Suzuki: The Lawrence of Arabia Syndrome' and 'The Nakano School' (the Japanese intelligence training establishment at Nakano, Tokyo). Allen's dexterity can be detected in the former article, in which Iwaichi Fujiwara and Keiji Suzuki, the head of the Minami Kikan (another intelligence organization) are compared with Lawrence of Arabia, and Allen makes some interesting points. For example, it is pointed out that Suzuki allowed his empathy with the native people to go much further than Fujiwara, and just like Lawrence tried to transform his identity, change his name, and used sacral elements such as oaths and blood brotherhood (a 270).

Both books amply demonstrate that the authors continued to watch Japan and Japanese history with warm, though critical, eyes. They devoted themselves in researching about Japan and at the same time made much effort to maintain and improve Anglo-Japanese relations, the aftermath of whose abyss they witnessed. It is well known that Nish has been and is an ideal host to many Japanese scholars who want to undertake research in London. And as is shown in an article in a recent book about history and reconciliation, which has been edited by Fumitaka Kurosawa and Nish, Allen tried very hard to bring about reconciliation between former British

prisoners of war and former Japanese soldiers in Burma.² Allen's book under review contains an article about prisoners of war ('To be a Prisoner: The River Kwai and Beyond') in which he cast a critical eye towards the tendency in western writings of viewing wartime Japan in a racist way.

According to Kurosawa, the editor of the above-mentioned book about history and reconciliation, the starting point of that book was Nish's remark about historians' role for reconciliation at an Anglo-Japanese conference: 'Historians should resist politicization, sensationalization and fragmentation of history, and historians should continue to ponder how they can contribute to reconciliation without being self-complacent'. The books under review are good testimonies to the background of two British scholars who persistently treaded such a path of historians.

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² Phillida Purvis, 'Kioku, rekishi, wakai ... Louis Allen to Nichi-ei wakai (Memory, History and Reconciliation ... Louis Allen and Anglo-Japanese Reconciliation)', in Fumitaka Kurosawa and Ian Nish (eds.), *Rekishi to wakai* (History and Reconciliation), Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2011.