

this manner, *Jiyū Gakkō* playfully reveals the confusion regarding post-war morals and ideas; freedom turns out to be a concept that is both difficult to define and perhaps even impossible to attain.

What is most striking about the characters in *Jiyū Gakkō* as they stumble through their individual quests for “freedom” is their raw humanity; Shishi portrays their idiosyncrasies and flaws with affection and sensitivity. As Lynne E. Riggs comments in the afterword to her translation, “Shishi captured the hearts of readers starved for light or humorous topics with writing that touches the comic lode in the serious stuff of history and the realities of ordinary people’s lives” (p. 251). The popular novel *Jiyū Gakkō* by Shishi Bunroku offers a light-hearted, refreshing perspective on what is generally portrayed in literature as an altogether dark period of history. Riggs’s translation of the novel, with its informative, thoughtful afterword providing a socio-historical context for both author and novel, is therefore a welcome addition to existing translations of post-war Japanese fiction.

Linda Flores

J. EDWARD KIDDER, JR.:

Himiko and Japan’s Elusive Chieftdom of Yamatai: Archaeology, History, and Mythology.

xiii, 401 pp. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007. \$65. ISBN 978 0 8248 3035 9.

This book is a very detailed analysis of the problems posed by the early Chinese accounts of protohistoric Japan. The main text considered is the *Wei zhi* (*Wei shu*), and the location of the “chieftdom” of Yamatai and its queen Himiko mentioned in this text is the main problem that Kidder attempts to resolve. Kidder has read almost everything on Yamatai and provides us with a rich and engaging portrait of life in Yayoi Japan.

What Chapter 11 here calls “The endless search for Yamatai” has been a major preoccupation of Japanese historiography for a very long time. This book shows just what a wealth of information we now have pertaining to this search. Seen on a global scale, the sheer detail of our knowledge of the archaeology of Yayoi Japan is nothing short of amazing. The diversity of Yayoi lifestyles that is known from the archaeology in turn shows how simplistic the *Wei zhi* account of Japan really is, and Kidder makes this very point with respect to burial styles (p. 95). The search for Yamatai will probably never be over to everyone’s satisfaction until someone finds a “Here be Yamatai” type of inscription. This book makes a convincing case for locating Yamatai in the Kinai region, but it makes no attempt to solve the broader theoretical questions related to state formation in Japan.

As well as its extensive discussion of the archaeological record, a major contribution of this volume is a much-awaited new translation of the *Wei zhi* passage dealing with Japan. This translation complements Tsunoda and Goodrich’s 1951 version and takes full account of the tremendous secondary literature that has grown up over the intervening half century. As Tsunoda and Goodrich’s translation has long been out of print, many libraries will want to obtain this book for the new translation.

Some readers of this book will already be familiar with its author’s distinctive approach to archaeology and style of writing. For those who are

not, it should be noted that Kidder avoids any explicit theoretical or comparative analysis and adopts a “common sense” approach to interpreting the past. The only reference to a scholar outside Japanese archaeology or the Yamatai debate that I could find here is a comment on the debate over Yayoi slavery that, “The disagreement was tinged with Marxist thinking” (p. 26). This suggests that Kidder is not a big fan of Marxist scholarship, but it is harder to determine his basic theoretical stance on sociopolitical change. Stylistically, this book is informal and so enthusiastic about its subject that the reader is often swept along by the narrative, although there are occasions where informality leads to imprecision – one example being the use of “tooth bashing” for ritual tooth ablation on p. 68. A dry humour often shows that the author is aware of debates over the political background to Japanese archaeology, even though this subject is not explicitly discussed. We are told that the annexation of Korea, for example, “opened new fields for Japanese archaeologists. What inhibitions had restrained their digging of Japanese tombs did not exist in Korea” (p. 29).

This book can best be described as a very long encyclopaedia entry on “Yamatai” and I believe that it will be widely used as such. Many readers will no doubt come away somewhat frustrated by the lack of theory in this volume, but there is equally no doubt that this is a major overview of a crucial period in Japan’s past and, as a result, this book should be in every serious library that tries to cover Japan. An excellent glossary and numerous illustrations further increase the value of the volume.

Mark J. Hudson

HILDI KANG (with a foreword by Gari Ledyard):

Family Lineage Records as a Resource for Korean History: A Case Study of Thirty-Nine Generations of the Sinch’ŏn Kang Family (720 A.D.–1955).

xv, 270 pp. Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007. ISBN 978 0 7734 5339 5.

By tracing her husband’s descent line over thirty-nine generations, Hildi Kang has given us an illuminating portrait of a “modest descent group”, the Sinch’ŏn Kang. She has reconstructed the history of her in-law family on the basis of genealogical records (*chokpo*) that, “sit[ting] on the shelf, unopened year after year”, intrigued her to find out more “about the people contained in the books” (p. ix). Through the years, Hildi Kang has carried out careful research on the history of Korea’s genealogical literature and with the help of secondary sources “provides the reader [with] a sweeping view of Korean history” (p. xi). A brief Foreword by Gari Ledyard and her own introduction lead the reader to an understanding of the nature of a Korean genealogy and its potential for historical purposes. Kang gives extensive background information on the history of the *chokpo* in general and on the Sinch’ŏn Kang genealogy in particular. She arranges the contents of the main chapters in a user-friendly way by first giving the *chokpo* text for each generation’s ancestor and adding comments and explanations of personal names, historical facts, and difficult terms. She has certainly not spared her energy to make each entry as meaningful as possible.