

Book Reviews

SHIGERU NAKAYAMA, *Science, technology and society in postwar Japan*, Japanese Studies Series, London and New York, Kegan Paul International, 1991, pp. xv, 259, £45.00 (0-7103-0428-5).

Shigeru Nakayama's new book is a welcome addition to the literature available in English on Japanese science and technology. As the title suggests, the writer, a distinguished historian of science, has set himself a broad agenda. It is perhaps not surprising that it is necessarily broad and sweeping in its portrayal of the dynamics of the relationship between science, technology and its social and historical context.

The book examines the mechanisms of Japan's promotion of science and technology by viewing Japanese society in terms of four sectors, which can be described as academic, public, private and citizen. These have often engaged each other on policy issues. The book throws light on their respective points of conflict and mutual agreement.

It is in this setting that Nakayama examines fundamental issues such as the tension between democracy and technocracy in science; the structural changes Japanese universities underwent in the postwar period; and the promotion of academic science which has accompanied Japan's growth. One factor which has served to constrain university-based science is the close relationship between high economic growth and privatized science. Nakayama outlines this and the toll it has had on society. Citizen movements have been one of the manifestations of the pent-up frustration with the closed nature of private science, and its lack of response to the concerns of the welfare of the Japanese people.

In the later chapters of the book, Nakayama focuses on the micro-electronics revolution, and the impact Japan's strength in semiconductors has had on the US-Japan relationship. The threat of techno-nationalism is an all too real possibility, as is the scenario that the centre of science might shift in due course to Japan. The author reassures us, however, that America's willingness to absorb the young talent of other nations will mean that the more homogeneous Japan will be constrained by its lack of human resources.

Science, technology and society in postwar Japan draws on a large body of research and writings which Nakayama has produced over the last decade. This work has remained, unfortunately, in the Japanese language. Two prime examples are: *Kagaku to shakai no gendai shi* (*A modern history of science and society*, Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1981) and *Shimin no tame no kagakuron* (*Science studies for the people*, Tokyo, Shakai Hyōron Sha, 1984).

Although various issues are clearly explained in a narrative fashion, the actors in the power-play remain curiously anonymous. This is undoubtedly one of the occupational hazards of contemporary history, particularly in Japan, where human relationships are such that writing on people still alive is extremely awkward. This omission tends, consciously or not, to reinforce the perception of a country of institutions, populated by faceless workers who conveniently fit into four sectors. This problem aside, the book is a highly accessible exposition of the author's informed opinion of Japan's postwar development, particularly strong in its sections on education and its pivotal importance to Japan's future.

Nakayama draws a great deal on his personal observation and assessment of science and technology, as well as his own experience of Japanese scientist movements. As is apparent from his other publications, Nakayama's concern for the Japanese people caught up in the push for science and technology comes to the fore in his writing. Intermingled with historical insight, it provides a pot-pourri of ways of interpreting Japan's development from a decidedly Marxist point of view.

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MARYINEZ LYONS, *The colonial disease: a social history of sleeping sickness in northern Zaire, 1900-1940*, Cambridge History of Medicine, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. xvi, 335, illus., £50.00, \$79.95 (0-521-40350-2).

This book joins a growing literature on the history of the encounter between Western medicine and Africans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Not only does Lyons tell the story of the new field of tropical medicine and its researchers' headlong pursuit of the "secret" of sleeping sickness in the early years of this century, but she also addresses an inextricably linked and essential part of Zaireian history.