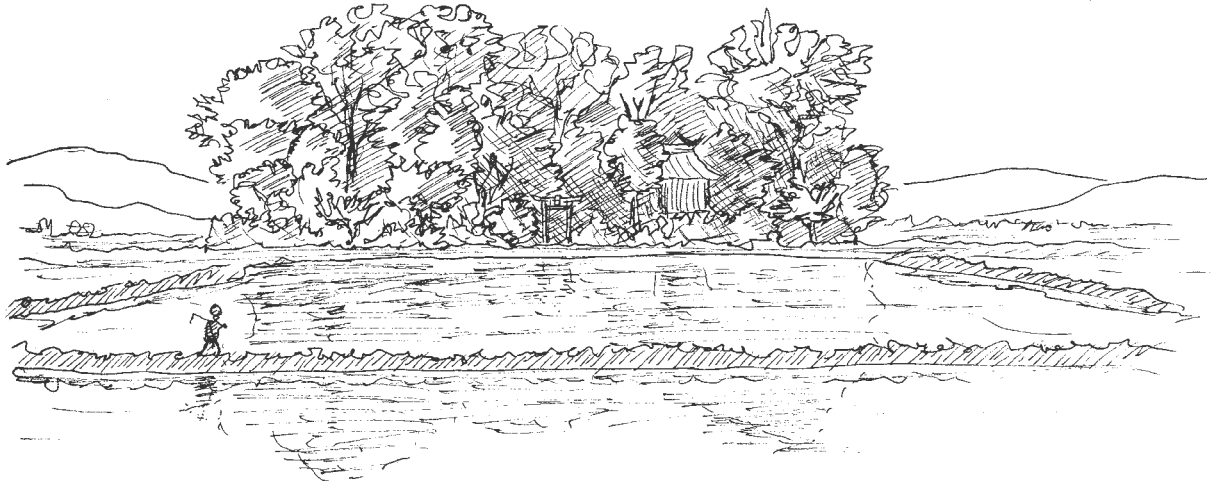




If Edo Could Do It...

"CHINJU no MORI"

Though the native lowland forests were cleared for cultivation long ago, irrevocably altering the ecosystem, remnants continue to thrive among the rice paddies in the form of the wooded grounds which have been preserved around shrines and temples.



Just Enough: Lessons in Living Green from Traditional Japan, by Azby Brown. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 232pp.

LET'S PICK UP Azby Brown's *Just Enough: Lessons in Living Green from Traditional Japan*. The oversized, almost-square, hardbound volume is a pleasure to hold. Inside the covers, the paper is rich and the ink a calming shade of green. As we flip the pages, we notice that the book is a combination of text, drawings, diagrams and handwritten notes. All this suggests that it is serious and practical, yet presented with an eye to beauty.

Examining the contents more closely, we see that they divide into three parts, each presenting a case study of life in Japan 200 years ago. The first is of a farming family in a rural village, the second a humble craftsman in the crowded downtown area of the capital city, and finally the reader is taken into the house and garden of a lowly samurai retainer in the high city.

We begin to read, and find that these studies are written in the present-tense style that I'm imitating now. This, together with the copious hand-drawn illustrations, gives a vivid impression of what it might actually have been like to live the lives

described. Each case study is followed by lengthy notes that highlight the principles of sustainability found in the lives, inviting us to apply them to ours.

Brown's thesis, explained in the introduction, is that 400 years ago, Japan had reached a population limit. Forests were overexploited and agriculture was in decline. Fast forward 200 years, however, and we find Japan, with a population more than double the earlier level, living in balance with its environment. What happened? Brown explains it as the result of technological advances, enlightened government policy made possible by widespread literacy, and, most of all, by the mentality of the people, forged in response to scarcity.

"This mentality drew on an understanding of the functioning and inherent

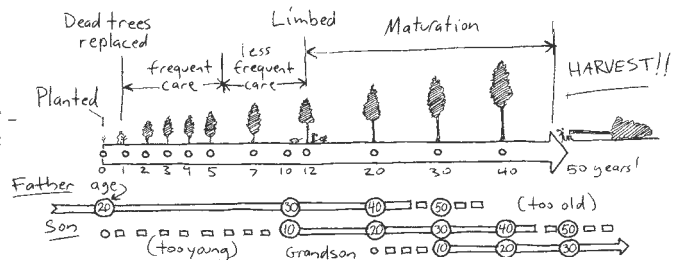
limits of natural systems. It encouraged humility, considered waste taboo, suggested cooperative solutions, and found meaning and satisfaction in a beautiful life in which the individual took just enough from the world and not more."

The purpose of the book is to give us a sense of that mentality as a guide to life. And perhaps to inspire us in our current ecological crisis with the idea that if they could do it, so can we.

The case studies are fictional recreations closely based on fact. While rich in detail, they don't attempt a balanced historical account. They are idealized, partial, and with a particular agenda: to describe life from the point of view of its sustainability. The result is eye-opening reading even for someone familiar with Japanese history be-

SILVICULTURE TIMELINE

Silviculture spans decades, and responsibility and knowledge are passed on from generation to generation.



cause, cleared of the clutter of conflict, the hard-scrabble of the daily grind, and the accidents of history, a clear harmony with the environment comes into focus. Resources are conserved, and building materials, clothes and tools are repaired and recycled until finally burned to ash that, together with treasured human waste, is used as fertilizer. Elements of such harmony can be found in any agricultural community, but Brown's account suggests that in Edo-era Japan, it reached a kind of zenith.

In Edo itself, at the time the only city of a million people in the world, a crowded population is served by a system of underground wooden water pipes that gravity-feed "wells." Waste water sluices with wooden covers run down streets and alleys, there are shared toilets with night soil collection, and all is kept in good order by community self-policing. Serving a group uses less energy than individuals serving themselves: Every neighborhood has a public bath which doubles as a community center, and prepared food of great variety is hawked through the streets, establishing Edo's reputation as a "food city." Meanwhile in the calm of the high city, samurai morph from warriors to urban gardeners, and daimyo maintain their vast estates. Back in the countryside, to provide enough timber for urban use, forest management includes tree censuses and re-planting.

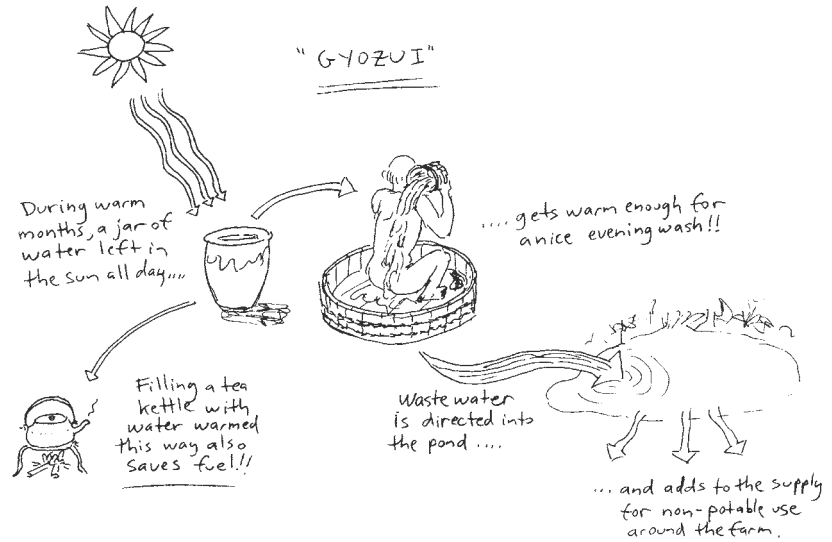
In the "learning from" sections that follow each case study, suggestions are made for applying the principles of sustainability found in Edo-era Japan to contemporary life. Many of these — city planning and water management, for example — are matters of public policy. Others, such as designing housing and household articles to be reusable and repairable, are at the entrepreneurial level. There isn't much for the ordinary person, unless they are building their own house, home schooling their kids, or running for public office. At the least, however, the lessons can guide us when we vote, whether at the ballot box or with our cash ("All of us must demand better designs"). Brown is creative in finding seemingly endless ideas for sensible living, only occasionally getting carried away in his enthusiasm ("See how many [kitchen implements] you can make yourself." "Look for opportunities to use dirt as a floor.").

This is a book that will fascinate anyone interested in Japan. Its careful descriptions take you inside the culture and sensitize you to it. For those living in or visiting the country, or enjoying its art, it will allow you to experience things on a deeper level. When you see such things as *engawa* porches, bamboo kitchen tools, bathhouses, *shotengai* shopping streets, and vistas of

gravity-fed rice paddies, you'll know that you are seeing living history. When you see — as I did this week in a Japanese period movie — people walking vast distances rather than using horses, night soil being sold for money, someone tripping on the worn cover of an urban wastewater sluice, and the community ritual of well cleaning,

you'll already be familiar with these things and so have a fuller appreciation and understanding.

Finally, as we close the book, we realize that its presentation mirrors both its content and intent. It's a solid volume. Straightforward. Beautiful. Nothing lavish. Just enough. —Julian Bamford



Science of Satoyama

SATOYAMA: The Traditional Landscape of Japan by K. Takeuchi et al.
Springer Press 2003

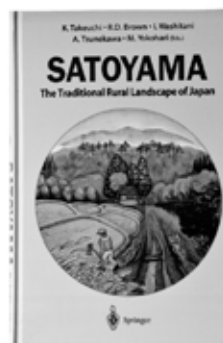
JAPAN'S TRADITIONAL RURAL LANDSCAPE, comprised of villages bordered by fields and tended woodlands, is known as "satoyama." A volume such as this one, although a bit on the dry side, can motivate the adventurous reader to further discover these rich socio-environmental cultures. Drawing on science and sociology, the authors state that deeply-held cultural patterns in the fabric of traditional life in the Japanese countryside have been disintegrating, and chronicle recent social movements to reverse this trend and save satoyama.

The facts presented in the text seem more those of a landscape architect concerned primarily with visual design than those which a forester, concerned with productivity and sustainability, would find most important. Poetic images of cherry blossoms, maple leaves and other symbols of the changing seasons in a natural environment, for example, are invoked throughout the text,

as are references to volunteer groups beautifying the landscape. Precise estimates of satoyama productivity, on the other hand, are few and far between, although the authors do make clear throughout the text that Japan once had healthy community-based "commons" that were jointly and sustainably administered by village elders.

Kazuhiro Takeuchi describes satoyama spaces evolving over 30 generations "as part of village culture throughout Japan," and even today satoyama are "estimated at 1/3 of the total forest land" of Japan. They remain under threat, however, and the book at hand lacks large-scale suggestions for future actions the government might take to preserve remaining satoyama, or better, to increase the amount of satoyama land. The closest it comes are anecdotes about past governmental and community-organized programs.

Various authors devote a good deal of attention to the "second wave satoyama" that appeared in the 1970's at urban-satoyama interfaces. They concentrate on social phenomena surrounding the reawakening of Japanese collective consciousness to the importance of well-managed rural environments and to the aesthetic beauty that has de-



fined Japanese culture. “Environmental activists, local PTA’s and city dwellers,” the authors note, “began actions in the early 70s to prompt local governments to support restoration projects and environmental laws; more recently, newly-formed NPO’s have joined with government agencies and local village elders to work on local restoration projects.”

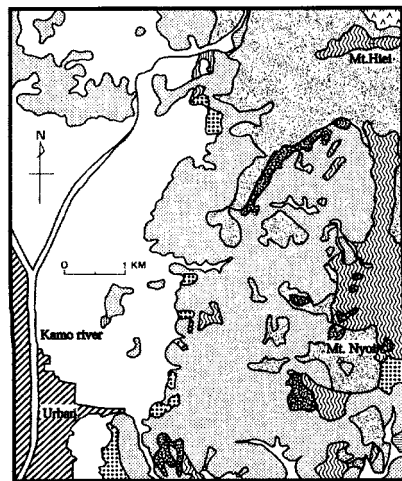
Some small-scale success stories are highlighted in the book, all brought about by the efforts of educational institutions and government researchers. The modern satoyama movement in Japan seeks to connect environmental education and social networking, to focus volunteerism on helping to revitalize degraded forests, and to encourage the creation of park-like areas near cities where people can become part of the social movement to save the environment. Human beings, the current satoyama movement acknowledges, are central to the picture; it is essential for restoration work to involve the communities in which it is to take place.

This book may inspire environmental groups both locally and worldwide to analyze forestry conservation in new ways. Viewing them through the lens of current conservation practices one might reject the traditional Japanese forestry model: Japanese forests are clearly not as healthy as they should be. However, some international experts are embracing the concepts put forth in the Japanese government’s Autonomous Environmental Planning Law of 1999, which urges local authorities to “go back to the basics and re-examine how to appropriately manage and use the woodland and agricultural lands, while improving the health of local economies and minimizing impacts on the natural environments.” These principles reverse nationally-administered agricultural programs that focused on field crops without taking into consideration the wider satoyama watershed component. If implemented, not only in Japan, but in other countries, these principles would help to minimize destructive human activities and provide a means to stimulate rural economies.

Late in the book the authors describe some potential ways to recharge rural economies by fostering local micro-industries. These would be modeled on components of traditional local satoyama economies that were sustainable for centuries. The book’s intention, though, is not to suggest individual satoyama designs. Rather, used as a broad guide to policy, it aims to establish an atmosphere conducive to change in long-held political attitudes regarding forestry practices.

One way the authors approach the crucial issue of the cost of maintaining a neatly coppiced forest is to link the green har-

vest with rural energy independence. Methane digesters, co-generation power plants and other technologies are discussed as potential generators of revenue. “Japan’s satoyama forests are estimated to contain 6,300,000,000 cubic meters of forest biomass,” the authors note, “enough to provide 6,000,000 households with power.” In the book’s last chapter the authors cite a report from the Forest Bio-mass Research Association (APAST) that focuses on average yearly harvest capacities. These figures bring the economic potential into clearer focus: “1000 tons of yearly harvest capacity . . . (or 15 forested hectares) would provide 500 households with elec-



■■■■ Pinus woodland (Tall) □□□□ Pinus woodland (Short)
 ▨▨▨▨ Deciduous Quercus woodland (Short) □ Coppiece (Short)
 ▨▨▨▨ Cryptomeria japonica (Tall) □ Dwarf bush
 ▨▨▨▨ Grassland ▨▨▨▨ Barren land

FOREST IN KYOTO DURING THE MEIJI PERIOD
Satoyama: The Traditional Landscape of Japan

tricity and modern cogeneration furnaces would collect enough energy for local home heating equal to 450kW.” Further, “one long-term sustainable feature shows local production can eliminate 1300t of CO₂ emissions and the importation of 450kL of heavy oil while providing 10-12 local part-time jobs.” The potential of satoyama to save rural areas is tremendous.

One comes away from the reading with questions:

- What is the future of agriculture in Japan without innovative forest practices?
- How will Japan’s past and future policy toward satoyama influence the preservation of watersheds worldwide?
- How can local watershed preservation, biodiversity and cereal production be seen as more interrelated, and as such, deserving of special government support?

—Karl Bareis

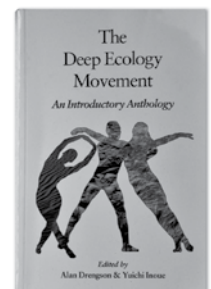
Basics of Deep Ecology

The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology, edited by Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995, 293 pp.

FIFTEEN YEARS after its publication this comprehensive anthology still provides one of the best introductions to the deep ecology movement. Whereas “shallow” ecology sees nature primarily in terms of the resources it provides for humans and believes that a high-growth, consumer-oriented society can be made more “environmentally friendly” through technological innovation and the reform of existing political-economic structures, deep ecology regards nature as having value in itself, apart from any value it may have for humans, and aims, as the editors write in the introduction, “to achieve a fundamental ecological transformation of our socio-cultural systems, collective actions, and lifestyles” (p. xix).

The term *deep ecology* was coined in 1973 by the Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess. Section I of the book includes four papers by Naess, outlining the main tenets of deep ecology and explicating Naess’s own specific approach to ecological philosophy, which he labels “Ecosophy T.” Starting from the premise that the ability of individuals to fully realize their own potential is dependent upon the self-realization of all living beings, Naess suggests that diverse and complex natural environments can best be preserved through the creation of decentralized, autonomous communities, which exploit neither humans nor nature.

Naess is careful to point out, however, that Ecosophy T is but one route to a deep ecological perspective, which can be arrived at from a variety of philosophical and religious traditions (Naess lists Buddhism, Christianity, and Spinoza as examples). What needs to be agreed on, in Naess’s view, are not ultimate premises or specific strategies for implementing them, but rather a platform of basic principles, which themselves are open to debate and revision. The book includes two such platforms (the original by Naess and George Sessions, and a revised version by David Rothenberg), both of which emphasize the intrinsic value of nature and the objective of meeting human



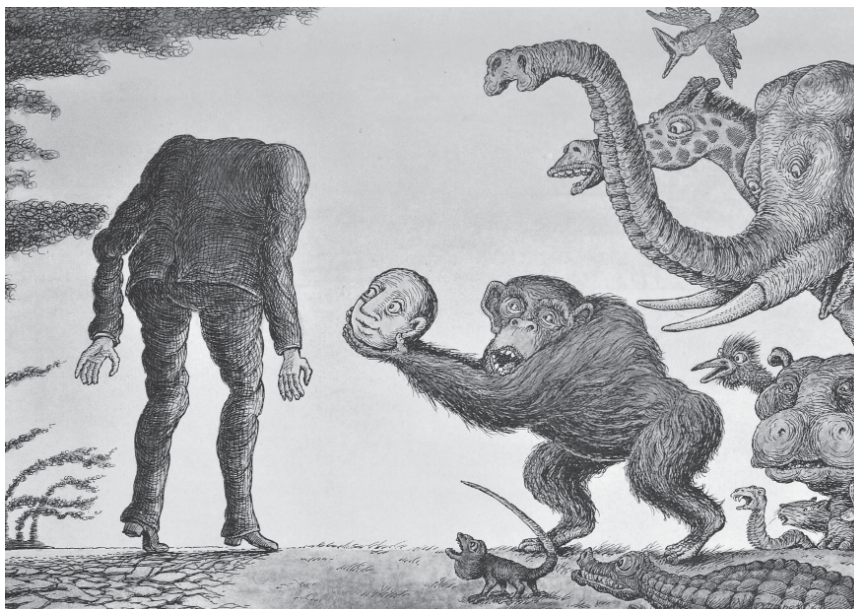
needs in ways which are genuinely ecological.

The second section of the book provides an elaboration of deep ecology from a variety of perspectives. Included here is an essay by Gary Snyder, which links deep ecology to the bioregional program of creating “ecosystem cultures” based on local self-sufficiency rather than “biosphere cultures” that plunder resources around the globe for the benefit of a wealthy minority (see page 64); and an article by Alan Drengson, which advocates a paradigm shift away from the idea that humans can technologically master nature for their own ends towards the goal of creating more symbiotic societies which provide for a high quality of life within limits set by nature.

Naess’s concept of self-realization is expanded on in essays by Bill Devall, who suggests that self-realization can best occur in the context of local bioregional communities; Warwick Fox, who develops a “transpersonal” perspective in which humans can identify themselves not only with others whom they have personal relationships with but also with the world as a whole; and Freya Mathews, who argues for a relational view of humans and nature based on the fact that the two are mutually interconnected.

Part III explores several “major topics” relevant to deep ecology, including an essay on the place of ritual in the deep ecology movement by Dolores LaChapelle; a description of the “Council of All Beings” by Pat Fleming and Joanna Macy; and two articles on consciousness-raising, by Gary Snyder and John Rodman. Essays on the relationship between deep ecology and ecofeminism by Michael E. Zimmerman and Patsy Hallen make a clear connection between the domination of humans over nature and the domination of men over women. Andrew McLaughlin’s concluding chapter goes even further by arguing that domination in all its forms — classism, imperialism, racism, and sexism — must be overcome to achieve a truly ecological society.

Although deep ecology is sometimes accused by both social ecologists and ecological Marxists of emphasizing changes in personal lifestyles and values at the expense of articulating a coherent political alternative to capitalism, in fact McLaughlin, much like Drengson, sketches out a paradigm which goes beyond the industrialism of both capitalism and classic Marxism. McLaughlin seeks to preserve the progressive movement’s emphasis on the full and equal development of each individual human while simultaneously maximizing non-human flourishing. As agents of change McLaughlin places some hope in direct action groups such as Earth First!,



VLADIMIR KAZANOVSKY, “WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO DEVELOP OUR PLANET?” THE 9TH KYOTO INTERNATIONAL CARTOON EXHIBITION

Sea Shepherd, and Greenpeace, many of which have been inspired by deep ecology, and also in the growing global Green political movement.

For readers who want to delve even deeper into deep ecology, an extensive bibliography is provided at the end of the book. For a good general introduction, however, the book itself is an excellent place to start.

—Richard Evanoff

Biodiversity & Human Health

Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity. Edited by Eric Chivian and Aaron Bernstein. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 568 pp., \$34.95 (cloth).

“An object seen in isolation from the whole is not the real thing.”

—Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One-Straw Revolution*

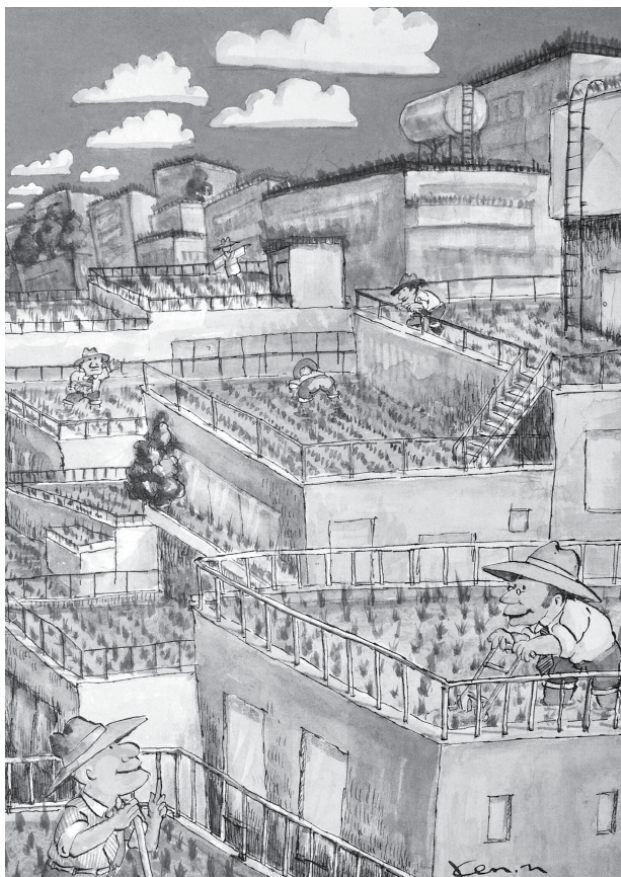
LIFE ON EARTH is undergoing a sixth great extinction, a massive and rapid loss of species biodiversity. The previous five, ranging chronologically from 440 million to 66 million years ago, were most likely due to volcanism or meteorite strikes. The mass extinction we are living through is the first one to have as a cause human agency, and it is to human agency that we must address the effort to stop and, where possible, to remedy the staggering destruction of the environment which engendered and nourishes us.

There is a tendency, perhaps predominantly Western and modern, to view humans as somehow outside nature. This is a dangerous illusion, owing mostly to ignorance of the ecosystem services we critical-

ly depend on, and of the role biodiversity plays in creating and maintaining ecosystems. We are familiar with simple images of linear food chains, but to understand better the relatedness of all life, we need to situate these chains within four-dimensional networks of relationships in real locations with fertile histories and — today — increasingly sterile futures. It is never a single species that is lost, but an entire world of interactions and actors who keep in balance a slice of the biosphere. Lost once, it is, in its unique genetic and ecological identity, lost forever.

Of the mass of recent popular material detailing our environmental crisis, none is more attractive than the large, richly illustrated tome, *Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity*, edited by Eric Chivian and Aaron Bernstein, and authored by a host of life scientists and biomedical researchers. The stress is placed on the material benefits human health reaps from preserved biodiversity: the innumerable examples of natural pharmacopoeia and other organism-derived compounds used in medicine, and how undamaged ecosystems stem human infectious diseases, ensure the quality of our food and water, and regulate climate. The major factors leading to biodiversity loss — habitat destruction, overkill, introduction of exotic animals and disease vectors, chemical and genetic pollution — are repeatedly explicated and explored through examples (terrestrial, freshwater and marine) drawn from domains ranging from agriculture to medicine.

The concluding chapter offers suggestions for individual action in conservation. The authors don’t dwell much on the cultural and spiritual effects of the impoverishment of the environment, but rightly



COMAE KEN, "WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO DEVELOP OUR PLANET?" THE 9TH KYOTO INTERNATIONAL CARTOON EXHIBITION

point out that human health encompasses mental well-being as much as the physical. Nature sustains us bodily, but also feeds our need for beauty, an instinct as inborn as that for eating; we are prone to feel acutely an affinity for it, a manifestation of a trait Edward O. Wilson calls "biophilia."

Tragically, as species die off and habitats disappear daily, we aren't even aware of everything we are losing. Our efforts to catalogue and explore all living organisms lag behind their destruction. Books such as *Sustaining Life* help us understand at least the variety and the potential present in nature, as well as showcasing some of the crisis hotspots that demand urgent intervention. Neither this knowledge nor acting upon it is something we can afford to forgo. —Sanya Samac

This World, This Earth

Earth Pilgrim: Conversations with Satish Kumar by Satish Kumar. UK: Green Books, 144 pp. \$19.95

LAST SUMMER, I packed up my things, put them on a boat, and closed out my 15 years in Japan. Before leaving the country, my wife and I spent a few weeks walking the ancient Kumano Kodo

pilgrimage route from our home in Kyoto to its terminus in Wakayama Prefecture. This served as a practice run for an even longer walk: Shikoku's eighty-eight temple circuit. These ten weeks on foot were a wonderful way to honor the country that had long been my second home.

Arriving once again in the "real world," I found an email from the editors of *Kyoto Journal* asking me to review Satish Kumar's latest book, *Earth Pilgrim*. I was expected to review it, of course, as a fellow pilgrim. Yet my mere thousand miles or so hadn't even approached the distances logged by Kumar. In 1962, inspired by Bertrand Russell and further encouraged by Vinoba Bhave, he and E. P. Menon set out from India to walk over 8000 miles to what were then the four capitals of the nuclear world — Moscow, Paris, London, and Washington — in order to present packets of "peace tea." Later, at age 50, he undertook a 2000-mile pilgrimage to Britain's holiest sites.

Early in *Earth Pilgrim* Kumar mentions the Buddhist idea that Form is Emptiness, and Emptiness is Form. "For me, matter represents the form, and emptiness represents the spirit. [...] They are two aspects of the same reality." In this manner, *Earth Pilgrim* feels somewhat like a sequel to his autobiographical *No Destination*, with the former focused on the outward shape of his pilgrimages, of a life lived: his life. This latter volume reflects less on the form than on

the spirit of those walks.

Kumar captures this spirit from the opening lines: "Life itself is a pilgrimage. To be a pilgrim is to be on the move, physically, mentally, metaphorically. Life is a pilgrimage because life is not static. Life has no ultimate objective. Life is to be lived in every moment." It is the perpetual mindset of a pilgrim. One of the greatest joys of my own walk was to awaken daily not knowing where we'd sleep that night. How wonderful it would be to always live this that way, foregoing the usual planning and scheming, and simply leaving ourselves open to whatever the world offers.

Long famed for his philosophy — "Only Connect" — Kumar points out that the words "economics" and "ecology" share the same Greek root, *oikos*, which means "home." He goes on to claim that home is not a mere structure but is instead a place defined by relationships. Going on pilgrimage shows us our relationship to the world, something we intuit rather than are taught. "When I am walking I have time — I am going slowly. And when I am going slowly, then I am looking around [...] I am connected to the entire universe." (I myself can attest to this slowing of time: how meditative it is to experience the world at four kilometers an hour.) The awareness of this connection is what distinguishes the pilgrim from the tourist. While the latter relates to the world in a more materialistic way, the pilgrim instead seeks commitment to a life lived now.

From this insight, grows the remainder of the book: Kumar's views on education and economics, nonviolence and simplicity. These are methods, activities, and ways of being that allow us to experience the world fully, for the highest spiritual life is not outside the world, but of it. "I'm an Earth pilgrim," Kumar writes. "My concern is not the other world but this world, this earth. When I live and act in the spirit of a pilgrim, then whatever I do is transformed into being part of the pilgrim's journey. I am not seeking heaven, or salvation, or some kind of idealized next life: I am seeking a deep commitment to life in the here and now, upon this Earth, in this world."

Written in interview style, the book is punctuated by quotations from fellow seekers, both Eastern and Western. Also present are the three people who most inspired him to undertake a life of pilgrimage: his mother, Vinoba Bhave, and Mahatma Gandhi. All three, he claims, were pilgrims of love. And although one of his earlier books is titled, *No Destination*, Kumar now admits that his true destination is the city of love. With *Earth Pilgrim*, he invites the reader to join him there.

—Ted Taylor

Country Lives

The Forgotten Japanese: Encounters with Rural Life and Folklore. Miyamoto Tsuneichi, translated by Jeffrey S. Irish; Stone Bridge Press 2010 hardback, 315pp.

THE JAPANESE ETHNOLOGIST Miyamoto Tsuneichi (1907-1981) walked more than 100,000 miles, mainly during the 1940s and 50s, gathering reminiscences of rural life from village elders. Their stories go back to Meiji times, yet Jeffrey Irish's down-to-earth translation (excerpted in KJ #63, "Chasing Folk-songs") brings individual voices to life, recreating a pre-industrialized Japan that we could otherwise scarcely imagine.

Reading this book brings us face to face with the unromanticized reality of what it means to be dependent on the natural world, and reveals the physical effort and perseverance that was taken for granted in those days. These small local communities were, however, strikingly non-parochial — a surprising number of people, including young women, used to travel, on walking pilgrimages or as itinerant farm laborers in harvest seasons.

An active farmer himself during part of the 50s, Miyamoto assessed the villages he visited for evidence of successful practices that had evolved in response to local characteristics:

The individual components of life here had not been influenced by Western learning or thought, and showed few signs of samurai Confucian morals either. Rather, they appeared to have come from a way of thinking that preceded these things. The importance placed on ties between individuals — within families and the village as a whole — and a commitment not to betray unseen gods are what gave order to these people's lives.

Miyamoto's deep respect for the enlightened village headmen and schoolteachers he met, people who made extraordinary efforts to improve regional economies and villagers' lives, is evident throughout. Miyamoto, too, as a government-appointed advisor, contributed a great deal, advising local communities to concentrate on local *meibutsu* specialties. He was also fascinated by traditions such as local-level decision-making through democratic village meetings, and the "mediating grandmothers" who gave unobtrusive support to younger village women.

It would be difficult to find a translator better qualified than Jeffrey Irish to under-

take this project. An ethnologist by training (grad school, Harvard), he has written three books in Japanese. *Island Life* (also published in English) describes his experiences working as a fisherman on an island off Kyushu; *Sasuraibito kara no tayori* (*Letters from a Wanderer*) is a collection of essays about life in a rural mountain village; *Senzen no Kagoshima: Satoyama no Hareta Hi* — *Kurashi no Gacho* is a collaboration with an elderly Japanese self-trained artist recapturing scenes from village life (and satoyama) in prewar Kagoshima. Irish was a major contributor to KJ's *Inaka* double-issue (Japanese Countryside, #37), and is currently the head of his village, Tsuchikure, a community of 24 people whose average age is 77, responsible for their general welfare ...and organizing monthly village meetings. —Ken Rodgers

tinyurl.com/riches-of-simplicity

tinyurl.com/managing-decline

Rich Lives

A Different Kind of Luxury: Japanese Lessons in Simple Living and Inner Abundance by Andy Couturier. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 316pp., \$19.95 (paper).

IN THE MIDDLE of my unacceptably busy teaching-supervision-administration-service semester, this beautiful book by essayist, poet, and writer Andy Couturier landed on my desk. Having been warned that this was not the sort of academic tome I am usually asked to consider, I was not sure what to expect.

The cover — with pictures from the Japanese countryside and photos of some of the people whose lives it examines — was aesthetically pleasing and inviting. Inside one finds the stories of eleven Japanese who have chosen lives radically outside the mainstream. Couturier explores how these individuals and couples made their choices, and how they actually live their lives.

"This book is not a blueprint for achieving 'the good life,' nor is it a how-to book," the author cautions. Indeed, it could not be: no two paths pursued by these visionaries are the same. Seeking to live the good life, it seems, is a very personal journey. Each of the lives examined is an experiment, ongoing and alive.

During my years in Japan, I met people living in the countryside who were en-

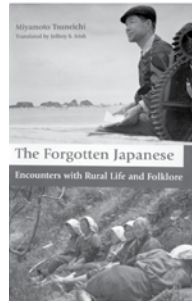
gaged in non-mainstream work. Thinking about them, and thinking about the people Couturier talks with, I saw that, for all their differences, there is common ground among them. They all share, for example, an uncompromising insistence on having time in one's life, whether to make food, be with children, do art work, play, love, travel, meditate, study, see friends, be involved in community activism, or just to live at a reasonable pace. All seem dedicated to living lives not defined by getting and spending; to building deeper connections to land and nature; to taking food seriously by growing and preparing their own; to engaging in creative labor; and to being good citizens, connected with and active in their communities.

The histories of these eleven individuals, quite different from the traditional cram-school-university-big corporation path so common in Japan, overlap in significant ways. Almost all of them, for example, have traveled extensively. In particular, the passages to India and Nepal many of them have made seem to have been significant; they met yogis there, or Buddhist teachers, shared meals with locals, ran out of money and worked odd jobs, or simply found, in their travels, the luxury of time for reflection, and such reflection is key. In most cases it seems that their decisions to change their lives were the product of long, slow, thought rather than sudden enlightenment. This leisurely consideration also leads them to a concern with the present. As Watanabe Atsuko — farmer-painter-mother-cook-activist-traveler-educator — explains, "I am alive today, making an experiment, trying to find the best way to live now, in the present day."

My eleven-year old daughter asked me one evening, as she saw I was holding this book when I gave her a goodnight kiss, "Mommy, why are you taking so long to read that book?" "The author," I replied, "took fifteen years to write the book. It would not be fair to read it quickly." Couturier's style — he is a poet — militates toward this sort of slow reading. His prose conveys far more than what is contained in the words. So much to be savored is left unsaid.

The book, for me, was a pleasure, but also a confrontation. After reading it, the words of Watanabe Gufu stayed with me:

It's important to me to be someone who has time... There's a term we have in Japanese, *furyu*: the characters are 'wind' and 'flow.' Someone with *furyu* has time to write haiku, or can appreciate flowers, and they have space in their emotions to look at the moon or the stars. They're not too busy working or making money.



Those people who don't have *furyu* are not full people.

I am one of those not-full people, and as such, this book made a strong impression on me. It taught me that the good life is possible, attainable not by "opting-out," but by "opting-in" to a growing worldwide movement founded on peace, ecology, simplicity, and non-materialism. The feelings of luxury and inner abundance contained in this book are infectious. Having read it, I feel more ready to opt in.

—Jennifer Chan

In the Jade Garden

The Japanese Tea Garden

By Marc Peter Keane.

Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 284pp.

AS THE MEIJI ERA ART CRITIC Okakura Kakuzo says in his classic *Book of Tea*, "Teaism is a cult founded on the adoration of the beautiful among the sordid facts of everyday existence." On a similar note of willing disassociation, Japanese garden authority Marc P. Keane writes, "To walk the length of a *roji* (tea garden) is the spiritual complement of a journey from town to the deep recesses of a mountain where stands a hermit's hut." In both instances, the journey down the green, powdery corridor of the tea garden is understood to be transformative.

The Chinese, who first provisioned the Japanese with the plant, characterized green tea as liquid jade. My own initiation into a greater appreciation of tea came not in my native England, where packets of anemic Brooke Bond tea bags did service for most people, but many years later in China's Yunnan Province. There, in the courtyard teahouses of Lijiang and Dali, tea drinking became a rarified pleasure as one sampled Tibetan, eucalyptus, hay, liquorice, chrysanthemum, and the acerbic, woody taste of Snow Tea. Elevating plain sampling to ritual pleasure, was an elaborate Three Courses tea set, consisting of bitter tea made with Mao Jin Spring Tea, a second course with thin slices of local cheese and black tea with honey and walnuts, followed by a "return tea taste" course, consisting of dry, fragrant tea mixed with prickly ash.

Keane, who is extraordinarily well-grounded in the history, institutions, arts and aesthetic priorities of China, explores the customs and state of mind requisite for the higher appreciation of tea in the Middle Kingdom and acknowledges Japan's historic debt, but is at pains to point out that the Japanese achievement was not simply to refine the consumption of tea, but to cre-

ate a distinctive tea environment. The tea garden and teahouse were places where a specific and particular social ecology existed, where etiquette, aesthetics, and a multitude of other graces deemed necessary for a person to be truly urbane, could be acquired.

Keane's book, like the process by which a novice enters the tea world, is an initiation into finer things. The writer possesses the uncommon ability to situate the reader in the *roji*, to recreate the spirit and texture of either a contemporary or a four-hundred-year old garden, and does so with the skill of a master cultural navigator.

Arguably, of all types of Japanese garden, it is the *roji* that is the least understood. Compared to the grand gardens of the Edo period, the tea garden is small, but at the same time subtly enlarged through an entire cosmology of elements, symbolism and themes. It is this enhanced world that Keane explores. The author reminds us that to understand one art you must be learned in others. It may, for example, be initially difficult to grasp the idea that, "the fundamen-



tal pillar of tea was, and is, Zen Buddhism," but this fact illustrates the inter-connectedness of Japanese practices and art forms. With its philosophical and Buddhist accretions, the veneration of tea can become almost a cultural *séance*, an esoteric practice baffling to the layman.

Keane helps by explaining the social, religious and martial background, realms the relevance of which may not always be apparent to the casual tea garden visitor. Placing the practice of tea into the complex perspective of class, wealth and accomplishment, he notes a degree of contrived humility in creating a modest tea garden—an extremely costly undertaking. The *soan chashitsu*, the rustic-style teahouse is a purely aesthetic contrivance: constructing one is beyond the means of all but the wealthiest. The tea world is full of such exquisite oxymorons.

Keane traces the development of ostentatious tea ceremony events from more chaste and muted affairs that allowed for a permissibly brief social leveling. Looking at tea and gardens from original perspectives,

he ponders the tea aesthetics of three very different masters: Rikyu, Oribe and Enshu. He examines their respective tastes and ideas by analyzing the type of ceramic bowls they favored.

Rather than fixate on the tea master Sen Rikyu, as many writers have done, the author profiles the lives of several figures pivotal in the formulation of tea and garden styles, such as Takeno Joo, Imai Sokyu and Tanaka Soeki. It is interesting to learn that many of these masters, far from being the forest hermits and recluses we might like them to have been, were often men of the world. Sen Rikyu himself was a trader, successful in, among other things, the arms procurement business.

The extremely detailed text will require your full attention. The author's collective entries on the function and place of the *chozubachi* (water laver), for example, are longer than the entire texts of some tea garden books. We learn of physical forms that are more symbolic than utilitarian, such as the *chiri-ana*, a hole for placing garbage. More likely to contain a picturesque assem-

blage of leaves, broken twigs and bamboo than actual trash, it has traditionally stood for the "dust of the heart," that should be left behind before entering the tea room.

Keane steers us through the difficult nomenclature of tea aesthetics, the fine-tuning of taste, connoisseurship, and the appreciation of beauty. Along the way, there is discovery and gratifying recognition. No one has ever been able to tell me the name in Japanese of the circular pedestal stones supporting wooden columns in Buddhist temples that are used to lend an air of antiquity and spirituality to certain gardens. Now I know they go by the name *garan-seki*, and that the correct term for stepping-stones with a disk shape carved into their tops, is *niwa-garan*. And the hitherto untranslated *nezumi-mochi* in my own garden, I now know to be called a "Japanese privet." Thus, the book succeeds as lexicon and treatise, glossary and tractate.

Impeccably written, erudite without being burdensomely intellectual, what sets Keane's beautifully measured and considered prose style apart from other garden

writers is the carefully created mood of his text, which aspires at times to verbalized contemplation. It is the first book of this depth and scope to appear in English, and is likely to remain the standard work on the subject for a very long time to come.

— Stephen Mansfield

Rejecting Common Wisdom

The One Straw Revolution:
An Introduction to Natural Farming by Masanobu Fukuoka. Translated by Larry Korn. New York: New York Review Books, 200 pp., \$15.95.

AS A RECENT REFUGEE from the big city to a small farm in the Japanese countryside, I was thrilled to finally read a copy of Masanobu Fukuoka's *One Straw Revolution*, recently re-released by New York Review Books. As is to be expected of a thirty-year-old classic, the ideas and methods it contains are no longer new — yet they are still groundbreaking. *One Straw* is every bit as powerful as when Frances Moore Lappé first read it in 1978. In the introduction to this edition she writes “[*The One Straw Revolution*] swept across the West; it spoke directly to many... an empowering testament to one person's courage to reject the common wisdom....”

It is easy to see that this book was part of a revolution. Wendell Berry's preface likens Fukuoka to Sir Albert Howard, “the founder of the science of organic agriculture in the West,” and Michael Pollan credits the book as being “one of the founding documents of the alternative food movement.”

In the first portion of the book Fukuoka gives an autobiographical account of how he, a scientist and customs inspector, fell asleep under a tree and, upon awakening, saw a heron, a vision which sparked a life-changing epiphany that “in this world there is nothing at all.” “I felt,” he writes, “that I understood nothing.” Fukuoka quit his job and returned to his family's farm in the countryside.

The concept of “nothingness” later manifests itself in his “do-nothing” farm philosophy. Instead of asking “how about trying this” or “how about trying that,” he watches carefully how the plants and creatures of the land behaved when left alone, and asks, “How about *not* doing this? How about *not* doing that?” *Not* weeding, *not* adding fertilizer, prepared compost, or pesticides, *not* tilling the fields. The method Fukuoka adopted flies in the face of everything modern agricultural science promotes.

He goes on to describe his success but

also some of his failures, and what he learned from them, including some practical tips that may be of benefit to farmers and back-yard gardeners; at the very least, Fukuoka's hints will guide one's google searches for environment-specific information. Ideas like letting weeds grow and viewing them as “green fertilizer”, growing rice in dry fields, and broadcasting rice seeds in dried mud pellets, will give any full-, half-, or even semi-part-time weekend farmer plenty to ponder as she lies in bed at night planning what changes to make the following season.

Fukuoka works usefully illustrative anecdotes from his experience into his thoughts on topics and concepts that are now, thirty years later, commonplace to any informed environmentalist. He dedicates an entire section to the joys, culture, and meaning of food and diet, before forcing readers to examine their own eating habits. He dictates no prescriptions, but gives instead goals for which to aim.

Many of Fukuoka's concepts are now staples of sustainability literature, but getting his perspective on them is worth the read, as is the final portion of the book in which he turns philosopher. Using parable-like tales about the role of agriculture and the cycle of life Fukuoka had me thinking about things in ways I thought I had left behind years ago, when “real life complexity” tempered my youthful idealism. He credits Einstein with “disturbing the peace” because the theory of relativity “caused people to think that the world is complex beyond all possible understanding,” and I am grateful to Fukuoka for disturbing my peace.

I read this book twice, and readily admit that I did not find what I was looking for the first time. Most of the methods he uses for natural farming seemed impractical in the region and climate where I farm, and since I do not have a secluded mountain field as he apparently did, I feel I have to tend to weeds as a matter of courtesy to neighboring farmers and fields.

On the second read, however, I had an epiphany of my own. Since moving here, I have compromised my original dream of doing just what Fukuoka did, and also my original philosophy, which was undoubtedly indirectly influenced by his writings. Why, I began to wonder, do I let my neighbors dictate how I tend my own field? The second time I read through *One Straw Revolution*, I recognized, with Frances Moore Lappé, “an empowering testament to one person's courage to reject the common wisdom...” and was inspired.

—Kevin Cameron

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