

Trading Places —How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead

By Clyde V. Prestowitz, Jr.
Published by Basic Books, Inc.
1988, New York
365 pages; \$19.95

The United States is like an old lion. It may be growing old and losing its teeth, but it can still be dangerous. This is the view of a Japanese Embassy official in Washington as recorded by Clyde Prestowitz, a counselor for Japan affairs to the U.S. commerce secretary in the early 1980s. In his book *Trading Places—How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead*, Prestowitz offers an insider's view of the troubled trade relations between the two economic giants.

According to his candid and sometimes amusing account, U.S. trade negotiators are handicapped by the fact that 80% of the talks between the two sides take place in Tokyo, "partly because the Japanese know the value of the home field and partly because U.S. negotiators tend to equate movement with progress."

"In time," he says, "I became convinced that one reason we tended to do poorly in negotiations was that we were always half asleep."

Another problem facing U.S. trade delegations is that they usually have considerably less backup than their Japanese counterparts. In a typical session a U.S. delegation of less than a dozen officials with one assistant each would be confronted by a room filled with 150 Japanese officials. The Americans would joke about the size of the Japanese delegation. "But the laugh was really on us. Those backup officials would one day be sitting at the negotiating table. Now they were learning, and as they learned, they kept their principals supplied with every possible statistic and bit of information."

"The Japanese were always amazed at our lack of data and analysis," he adds.

Prestowitz's comments make for compulsive reading in this time of seemingly endless trade disputes. Negotiations, he says, in many ways resemble a ritual. "Although Japanese officials professed de-

votion to free trade and open markets, their style was to give as little as possible at the very last possible minute and then only under maximum pressure."

Most U.S. requests are received as though they strike at the power of the mandarins in the Japanese bureaucracy, he says, calling this the "black ships" mentality. He says the Japanese press always casts its bureaucrats in the role of defending the sacred islands from invasion, and trade is seen as a game in which for one side to win, the other has to lose.

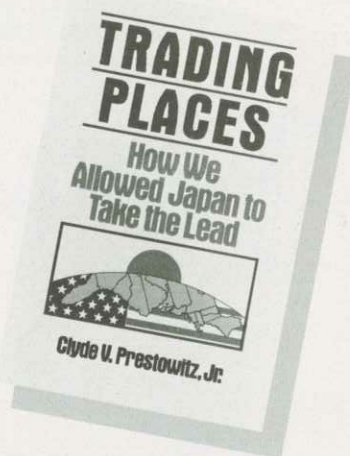
He also has some harsh words for his own side. The U.S. State Department knows nothing of industry and little of economics, and believes these issues are secondary to political and military concerns, he says, adding, "State thinks trade problems are mostly the fault of the United States and particularly of lazy U.S. businessmen. It often works with the Japanese to 'control the crazies' in the U.S. government."

A large percentage of people at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo know little of Japan, according to Prestowitz, and there is great emphasis on positive reports. Officers who write cables at all critical of Japan often have difficulty getting them cleared by superiors, and those who are constantly critical find themselves assigned elsewhere. Neither the ambassador nor most of his staff see penetration of the Japanese market as an important matter.

Meanwhile, the strength of the Agriculture Department causes U.S. negotiators to overemphasize farm issues, he says in a comment that takes on added interest in view of the never-ending dispute over trade in items such as beef, oranges, rice and a host of other agricultural products.

Of all the agencies in Washington, the CIA had the clearest and most comprehensive view of Japan, but its reports were largely ignored, he says.

His prescription for improving U.S.-Ja-



pan relations and correcting the trade imbalance includes the familiar call for a mixture of free trade and managed trade. But he goes a step further by suggesting that negotiations should be for more specific results, such as minimum market share, rather than simply the pursuit of open markets. Prestowitz's book will be an eye-opener for those just starting to study U.S.-Japan relations, and for those such as myself who make studying U.S.-Japan relations a line of work, it is a "must" read.

Ken Katayama

*The Americas Division
Overseas Research Department
Japan External Trade Organization*

Outside Tokyo

Oze: Exploring Nature's Treasures

Though it is surprisingly unknown to many foreign residents, Oze is familiar to most Japanese as a repository of nature's finest treasures. More than 140 species of flora—a quarter of which are indigenous to Oze—attract over half a million visitors every year.

With its boundaries defined as a sector of Nikko National Park, Oze straddles large corners of Gunma and Fukushima Prefectures while overlapping a nick of Niigata Prefecture as well. Mt. Hiuchi—the highest mountain in Tohoku (Northeastern Honshu)—soars on the east end of the park and Mt. Shibutsu stands tall on the west end.

Oze Lake (Oze-numa) is nestled below the southern slopes of Mt. Hiuchi. An inrush of streams from surrounding mountains feeds the lake, which spills over into the marshland below.

The marsh, called Oze-ga-hara, sprawls across the floor of a huge basin encompassed by mountains of the 2,000-meter class. A 6-kilometer wooden path makes a beeline between the base



of Mt. Hiuchi on one end of the marsh and Mt. Shibutsu on the other. Pits in the floor of the basin speckle the marsh with small ponds, many of which contain *ukijima* (floating islands).

From ancient times, local people have held sacred the mountains and inner recesses of Oze and considered them as the holy of holies of their village shrines. Both on top Mt. Hiuchi and in the villages below, homage is paid to Hiuchi Daigongen—a great Buddha who transformed himself into a Shinto god. This god is none other than Mt. Hiuchi itself. *Hiuchi* means “to strike a flame,” and legend has it that the mountain spirit appeared as an old man who taught people how to use flint to make fire.

When droughts hit, the villagers would go up to Oze Lake and pray for rain. Even today, it is said that the spirit of a cow which died near the lake inhabits it. Since this cow hates other cows and is known to brew up storms at the mere mention of the word *ushi* (cow), its utterance is taboo in the lake vicinity.

Preservation fight

Images appearing in the snow melting off the slopes of mountains around the villages have long provided a natural timetable for planting and other agricultural processes. In early July, what looks like a pair of blacksmith’s shears appears in the residual snow on Mt. Hiuchi. Mysterious patterns are also said to appear on the slopes of Mt. Shibutsu, whose name—written “no greater Buddha” or, in earlier writings, “four Buddhas”—creates an imagery of its own.

Oze’s modern history starts in the Meiji period and centers around its inhabitation and conservation. The pivotal figure between Oze’s ancient traditions and the modern era was Chozo Hirano, Oze’s first resident. At 19, Chozo blazed a trail up Mt. Hiuchi, after which he constructed a shrine for worshipping the mountain

gods and huts to house pilgrims on the shore of Oze Lake. Problems with the village people forced Chozo to leave Oze for some years. After returning, he attempted to eke a living out of raising fish and later foxes. He moved his hut across the lake—to the place where Chozo-goya (Chozo Lodge) stands today—and, in time, enough fishermen and hikers came to the area to make running the lodge an occupation in itself.

Exquisite season

Then from late Meiji, a series of struggles began—and would continue over the next half century—to protect Oze’s nature reserves against the encroachments of industry and government. First was a plan to build a dam for supplying electricity to Tokyo. It entailed harnessing the flow of water between Oze Lake and the marsh, flooding the marsh basin by erecting an 80-meter dam above Sanjo Falls, and digging a tunnel under Mt. Shibutsu to supply hydroelectric power to generators on the Tokyo side of the mountain. Not long after this scheme was put to rest, work started on another to dam off Oze Lake and tunnel under Sampei Pass. Then work began on a road between Gunma and Fukushima Prefectures that was to cross into Oze over Sampei Pass, run along the shore of Oze Lake, and cross out over Numayama Pass.

There is not enough space to detail the relentless efforts made by three generations of the Hirano family, other local residents and many concerned people throughout the country to protect Oze from commercial exploitation. Suffice it to say that these people not only saved Oze from ruin, but they also formed the vanguard of the conservation movement in Japan.

There is no more exquisite season than the present to behold the beauties of nature so valiantly preserved. Bamboo

grasses covering the mountain passes and meadow grasses sweeping the landscape below have been rejuvenated by seasonal rains still falling in early July. Cool breezes send ripples across color-washed grasslands. Clusters of raindrop-spangled irises appear to form purple pools lapping against banks of green grasses. Snowy heron and cotton sedges, as they are called in Japan, grow in fluffy white patches in the meadows.

Other plants bear Japanese names reminiscent of an earlier era when pilgrims, instead of hikers, ventured into nature’s mountain sanctuaries. Among those in season now are the *renga-tsutsuji* (lotus-blossom azalea), *gyoja-ninniku* (pilgrim garlic) and *zazen-so* (mediation plant, or skunk cabbage in English).

Toward the middle of the month, the rainy season gives way to sunnier skies. Reflecting the summer mood, a golden lily, called Nikko sedge, springs up like grass throughout the marsh. Floating lilies in scattered ponds also burst into bloom. Everywhere, the bush warbler lets out a shrill cry to keep other birds—over a hundred species of which fly into Oze—out of his territory in the brush.

Finding tranquility

Besides summer, Oze has two other popular—and needless to say crowded—seasons. One is when the *mizubasho* (plantain lily) blooms in late May and early June. This Asian plant resembles a water arum (or calla lily) and is found in such exotic places as Kamchatka and Tibet. In Oze, these large white leaves wrapped around pillars of yellow flowers create a striking scene as they emerge through the dark soil of freshly thawed fields and between withered reeds that have been flattened under winter snow. They are also seen sprouting up from the shallow borders around the lake and along the streams meandering through the meadows. The other season comes in late September and runs through mid-October when the flaming yellows and reds of autumn foliage ignite the valleys and mountainsides into a blaze of color.

Each of these seasons is well worth mingling in the crowds to see, but a greater degree of tranquility, if desired, can be

found before, after and between them. Every year, the park opens for the Golden Week series of national holidays at the end of April and pretty much closes down by early November. However, in the pre-*mizubasho* season the valley floors are still blanketed with snow.

Due to the distance to be covered and the remoteness of the park, plans to visit Oze should include a night of lodging. There are 17 lodges scattered throughout the area. Since Oze is a big place, it is best to obtain a detailed map and plan which passes will be covered, what trails will be walked and a place to stay, all in advance.

It should be borne in mind that Oze is a place for walking; lodging is a necessary evil. This becomes self-evident when one finds that the standard sleeping space allocation is two tatami mats for every three people. However, enjoyable hours can be spent in after-dinner conversations with fellow lodgers. Everybody is up early to get the most out of the second day of hiking. A lot can be seen on a well-planned weekend trip.

Though there are several ways to go by train, by far the most efficient way to get there and back is on one of the many bus tours leaving Tokyo and Yokohama every

Friday night. I often use Tobu Travel's "Flower Tour," because it allows me to choose the places I will be let off and picked up and to make a lodging reservation. (For information, call their Yaesu office at 03-272-1420.)

You never know when someone of little faith is going to say *ushi* near Oze Lake, so be sure to take an umbrella, rain gear and a fresh change of clothes whenever going to Oze.

Lincoln Bell
Translator

Table Talk

Miyako-zushi Honten

It was about 10 years ago that the traditional Japanese delicacy known as sushi won global recognition.

Perhaps it is coincidental, but around the same time, the average life expectancy of the Japanese became the highest in the world, a development attributed by many to a regular diet of fish and rice. Sushi, slices of raw fish and shellfish placed on balls of slightly vinegared rice, is now gaining popularity among people of other countries.

The number of sushi shops in Tokyo is probably equaled only by the number of *soba* (buckwheat noodle) and *ramen* (Chinese noodle) shops. They are unique, however, for retaining their traditional pricing system, a practice which stems from the fact that there are two ways to place orders in a sushi shop.

One way is to order *nigiri*, hand-rolled sushi balls, served on a wooden tray, asking by name for the desired number of slices of tuna, bonito, squid, sea bream, flatfish, cooked conger eel, *tekkamaki* (slices of tunny rolled in rice and wrapped in dried seaweed), or whatever else the customer may fancy. For this the charge

is clearly indicated. The customer can also order *sake*, beer or *shochu* liquor, the prices of which are also fixed. For about ¥3,000 (\$24) one can enjoy a large tray of top quality *nigiri*. A lower-quality one might run to only ¥1,500 (\$12), with another \$12-\$15 for the drinks.

There is another way to order, however. This is to sit at the counter of a sushi bar facing the chef and order *sashimi* (slices of raw fish without the rice) to keep your *sake* company. You cannot find a better way to enjoy *sake*. But woe betide the man who orders his bonito, yellow jack, flatfish and sea bream with carefree abandon. For this kind of order there is no price list, and the charge is determined at the whim of the proprietor. At an expensive Ginza shop, the charge could come to ¥30,000 (\$240) per head, and even in earthier downtown shops a charge of ¥10,000 (\$80) is common.

The euphoria induced by rice wine can rarely survive a glance at the bill. No wonder some people from other lands complain about irrational Japanese customs!

Forewarned is forearmed. Now that I have told you of the pitfalls, allow me to tell you about the marvelous sushi shop "Miyako-zushi Honten," which was introduced to me by my respected friend Dr. Herbert Passin, professor emeritus of Columbia University.

Miyako-zushi Honten, located near Ryogoku-bashi bridge in the Yanagibashi area of Tokyo was established more than a century ago in 1866. Its present owner,

Sukehiro Kato, is the fifth-generation proprietor. He is a convivial host, with the lively temperament of the true *edokko*, native of Tokyo. For five generations, the owners of this shop have made it a rule to visit the Tsukiji fish market each morning before dawn to lay in fresh ingredients. That's why the sushi is fresh and unexcelled. The quality of the shop's clientele reflects that of the materials. And most comforting of all, one can sit at the counter and leave everything to the owner, eat one's fill washed down with generous helpings of *sake*, and the bill will still come within ¥8,000 (\$64) per head. Now that is how to enjoy sushi without a bad aftertaste. After a few days away, one cannot resist going back.

Miyako-zushi Honten at Yanagibashi is not to be confused with the shop of the same name in Asakusa.

(Yoshimichi Hori, editor-in-chief)

Address: 1-10-12 Yanagibashi, Taito-ku, Tokyo

Tel: (03) 851-7494

Business hours: 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
5 p.m.-9:30 p.m.

Closed on Sundays and national holidays.

