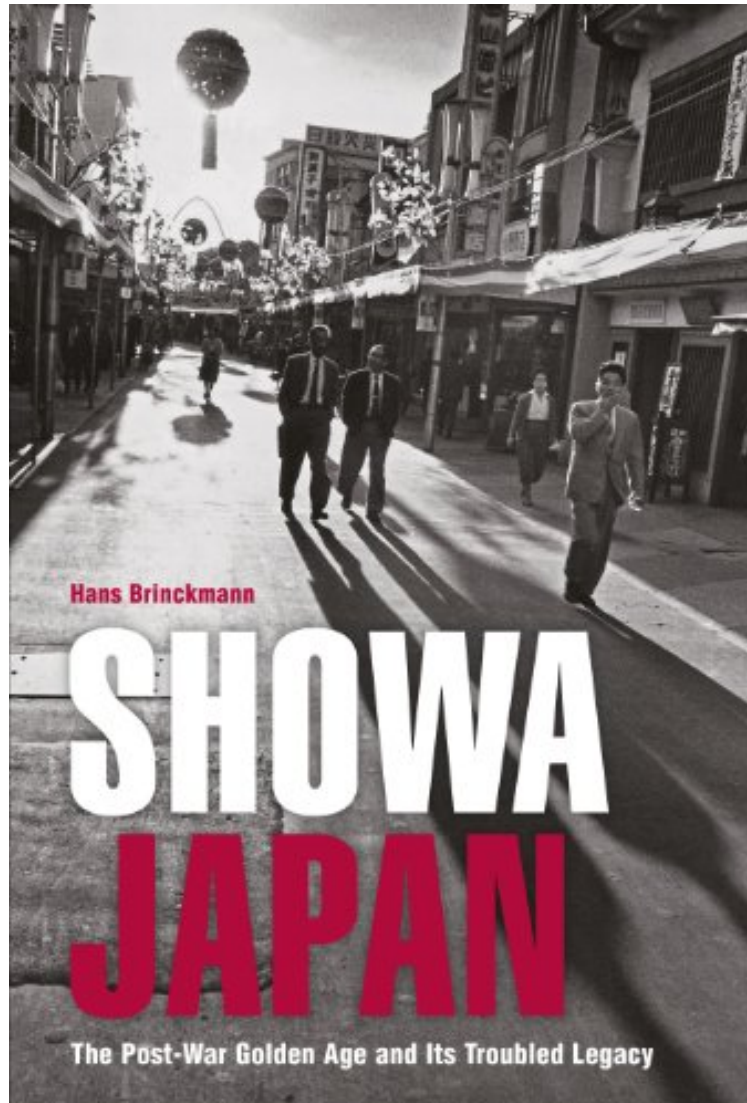


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Showa Japan: The Post-War Golden Age and Its Troubled Legacy

Hans Brinckmann

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Hans Brinckmann : Showa Japan: The Post-War Golden Age and Its Troubled Legacy before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Showa Japan: The Post-War Golden Age and Its Troubled Legacy:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Diary of a Banker in Japan By T. Velasquez First off, this book isn't really a "history" as such. It reads more of a personal travelogue or journal of observations by Hans Brinckmann. I suppose that's what history really is but there is no real analysis or drawing from numerous sources, mostly opinions of one gentleman's life in Japan over a period of fifty years or more. The Showa period usually comes to mean the period of Japanese history between the end of the Second World War and 1986 when the economic bubble collapsed. The

Japanese remember this time with nostalgia (most of it rose-colored) just as people in the United States might remember their famous decade, be it the 1950s, 60s, 70s, or 80s. (People are even starting to mist over nostalgic over the 1990s! Boy am I old!). Mr Brinkmann's main aim is to compare the truths and rose-colored remembrances of this mythical Showa era with modern Japan and its modern ills. In short... This is a good book. The writing is readable and concise. The book is impeccably organized. Mr. Brinkmann has sorted out what he wants to say and how he's going to say it. And most of all, the book is incredibly interesting. In fact, it's hard to really review the book. Every chapter is like an encapsulated topic all by itself and I found myself putting the book down at the end of every chapter (even in the middle) to digest what I had just read. I found myself either nodding in agreement or disagreeing vehemently at something Mr. Brinkmann had written. It's that good of a book, you want to go find the author and debate him because his writing gets your mind going that much. As for observations and conclusions, Mr. Brinkmann is definitely a fan of Japan. He's an old school Japanophile who fell in love with the country after moving there in the early 1950s to work in a bank. However, even though he loves his second country, he is also capable of very harsh and very cutting observations of things that he feels the Japanese must do better at. There are some downsides to the book for me. Mr. Brinkmann ended up as a very wealthy and powerful banker. He moved in international circles and was on important international banking bodies. As such, his focus tends to be on the elite, the monied, and the powerful. On more than a few occasions I found his writing elitist as he gives little to no consideration to the poor or lower middle classes of Japan. He waxes long about moving in wealthy elite circles in Japan and how the topic of the book effected them. These are things that travelers to Japan or people trying to interface with regular everyday people in Japan will find no help at all in trying to understand the Japanese. Also, Brinkmann is an older gentleman and seems ill equipped to understand modern trends and activities. For instance, he literally has a picture of a Japanese cosplayer in his photo section with a caption saying this provides an example of "infantile fashions." It seems anything new and "wierd" in modern Japan is a symptom of the underlying problems that Brinkmann finds with Japan... rather how every older generation in every country sees the activities of the young and says "this proves they are not right, damaged and heading for hell in a handbasket." Brinkmann also frequently launches into long-winded and complex economical discussions with strange terminology which is not defined. I suppose this is only to be expected as he spent all his life as a successful banker, but it leaves the uninitiated wondering what the discussion was about. One also wonders just how good he understood his Japanese hosts even after all those years. The book is full of grey call out boxes which seem to contain diary entries from Mr. Brinkmann's own diary. In one, he marvels in recoiled horror from a grandmother who really seemed to be trying to give her grandchild to him. Reading the dialogue of the scene though, one wonders of some elderly Japanese woman was just having some fun with the easily fuddled and confused foreigner. But my quibbles aside, this is really worth a read to all those interested in Japan. Brinkmann's conclusions about Japan are interesting as well as the thought processes that got him there. The haughtiness of his attitude is bearable and he is sympathetic with Japan, fully appreciating their points of view on such sticky issues as the World War II legacy and treatment of foreigners in Japan. I'm sure, like me, you'll nod in agreement half the time, and want to throw the book against the wall screaming "idiot!" the other half the time. And that's a good book that can do that, I think!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Showa Era By EdM. The golden age of Japan. The era of 1926-1989 is the reign of the Emperor Hirohito, although the author wisely forgoes the early years and starts the narrative after the war. As stated in the notes the author has lived in the country for nearly three decades and has seen tremendous changes in the nation and society. From the reconstruction of the late 1940's through the building of a new Japan in the fifties and sixties, and from the heydays of the 70's and 80's where at times it seemed that Japan would use it's economic power to accomplish what military arms could not, to the economic "bubble burst" of 1989, the author deftly writes about his own insights and societies highs and lows during this time. The nineties (post-Showa) also has a section and how the "lost decade" has affected segments of society. The Japanese during the eighties felt they were on top of the economic global ladder and if the nation can enact reforms (first edition written 2008) then Japan could one day reclaim it's vision of being number one. Reading this in mid-2014, one can hope that the current "Abenomics" plan succeeds in the goal of economic revitalization.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Showing Showa Japan By Samuel Leiter Hans Brinckmann's book on Japan during late Showa (1945-1989), is a really good, clear-eyed, down-to-earth, thoroughly accessible look at the period. It is composed of 33 brief chapters on a wide range of pertinent topics, and is especially good at depicting the underlying reasons for Japan's evolving political, economic, and social problems during the postwar years. There is also considerable discussion of the Heisei period (1989-), which the author views through the prism of the preceding era. The book benefits from the many years Brinckmann, a Dutchman, spent in Japan working for a Dutch bank, dating back to 1950 when he was a mere teenager. Brinckmann's tone is always friendly and immediate and his insights consistently have the ring of truth. The Dutch have a long history of explaining Japan to the West, and Brinckmann continues that tradition with distinction.

Japan's momentous Showa era began in 1926, when Emperor Hirohito ascended the throne, and ended with his death in 1989. This was a tumultuous period in modern Japanese history; a time of great disaster and tremendous triumph for Japan. This book focuses on the post-war period in Japan when the nation stood at the zenith of her

economic power. Today, the term Showa is shorthand for a glamorous period in which, all too briefly, Japan was the richest nation on earth and the envy of the developed world. A growing nostalgia for this period is now memorialized in Japan in a national holiday. It was an era of stratospheric growth which saw Japan's transition from an isolated, impoverished nation to a peaceful one holding an exalted position as the world's second largest economy. But what is the true meaning of the Showa era, and what is its legacy for the Japanese today? In *Showa Japan*, Hans Brinckmann provides a clear-eyed exploration of the Showa period as it really was— not just a time of wondrous change but of wild excesses that would eventually come crashing down with the bursting of Japan's economic bubble— exactly as occurred in the rest of the world, but almost 20 years earlier! From the heights of extravagance to the lean years that followed, Brinckmann, a long-time resident of Japan, examines the impact of the Showa era and its aftermath on every aspect of Japanese society. Featuring dozens of period photographs, interviews, and a wealth of factual information and personal reflections, this book provides an in-depth portrait of a Japan that once was— as well as a blueprint for one that might still be, if only the lessons of the past could be learned.

"A work of eminently readable journalism, but also of scholarly scope, an engaging mix of analysis and memoir." —*Japan Times* "[A] quirky assemblage of 34 extremely brief chapters that are each vignettes on a variety of topics, from the changing style of Japanese eateries to the author's belief in the failure of Japan's media to play their proper watchdog function." —*CHOICE* "Overall the author had a detailed explanation of effects from Japan golden age (Showa Era) while also expressing his feelings towards the changes of the nation environment, culture, politics and economy. It is full of bitter and sweet about the Showa Era..." —*Goodreads* About the Author Hans Brinckmann, born in The Hague in 1932, joined a Dutch bank at age 17 for their Far Eastern management training program. The following year he was assigned to Singapore, and four months later to Japan, where he would stay for the next 24 years. After completing a career that took him to the Caribbean, Holland, and New York— interrupted by a two-year interlude in England devoted to writing— he quit banking for good in 1988, and now lives in Tokyo and London. He is the author of *The Magatama Doodle: One Man's Affair with Japan, 1950-2004* and *Noon Elusive*, a collection of short stories. He can also be found at www.habri.co.uk and, in Japanese, at <http://habri.jp>. Ysbrand Rogge lived in Japan from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s, working for the same bank as Brinckmann. He left banking in 1960 to devote himself to photography and documentary filmmaking, subsequently producing several films on Japanese subjects, some of which were shown on Dutch television. NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) used footage from his work in a 2005 Showa documentary. He is a prolific writer on subjects ranging from Islam and parapsychology to collecting vintage film apparatus.