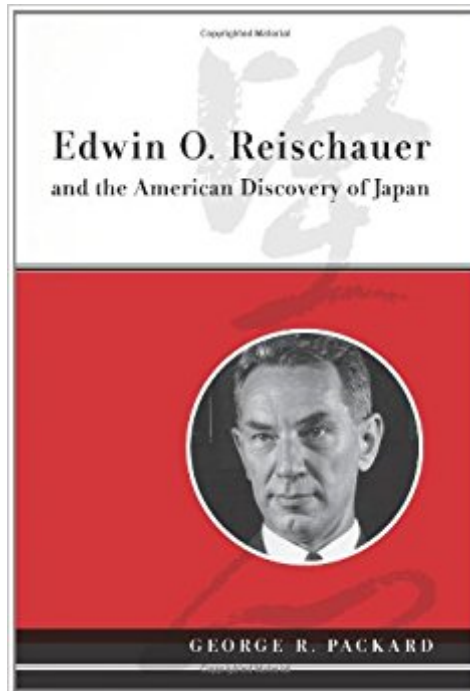




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Edwin O. Reischauer And The American Discovery Of Japan



Synopsis

In 1961, President Kennedy named Edwin O. Reischauer the U.S. Ambassador to Japan. Already deeply intimate with the country, Reischauer hoped to establish a more equal partnership with Japan, which had long been maligned in the American imagination. Reischauer pushed his fellow citizens to abandon caricature and stereotype and recognize Japan as a peace-loving democracy. Though his efforts were often condemned for being "too soft," the immensity of his influence (and the truth of his arguments) can be felt today. Having worked as Reischauer's special assistant in Tokyo, George R. Packard writes the definitive and first biography of this rare, charismatic talent. Reischauer reset the balance between two powerful nations. During World War II, he analyzed intelligence and trained American codebreakers in Japanese. He helped steer Japan toward democracy and then wrote its definitive English-language history. Reischauer's scholarship supplied the foundations for future East Asian disciplines, and his prescient research foretold America's missteps with China and involvement in Vietnam. At the time of his death in 1990, Reischauer warned the U.S. against adopting an attitude toward Asia that was too narrow and self-centered. India, Pakistan, and North Korea are now nuclear powers, and Reischauer's political brilliance has become more necessary and trenchant than ever.

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Customer Reviews

Insightful. (Jeff Kingston Japan Times) This reliable, intimate story of one of the great American citizens of the twentieth century is a joy to read. (Harvard Square Library Review) A lively account, written with panache, that excels in describing Reischauer's foreign policy ideas and his conflicted

views of the Vietnam War. (Tom Havens Journal of Asian Studies) This full-length biography does a commendable job of delving further into this outstanding Japan hand's time and career.... Lucidly written.... Recommended. (Choice)

George R. Packard, president of the United States-Japan Foundation, is the former dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, where he founded Johns Hopkins's Foreign Policy Institute, The SAIS Review, the Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies, and the Hopkins-Nanjing Center in China. He has been a military intelligence officer, Foreign Service Officer, journalist, scholar, educator, and author. He lives with his wife Lavinia in Washington, D.C.

Interesting in sights into the famed professor/diplomat and into the perspectives that missionary children brought to their "discovery" of Japan

Prof. Reischauer and his Harvard colleague John K. Fairbank essentially invented the field of East Asian studies in American universities. When they wrote the first text and started the first course (known to Harvard undergrads as "Rice Paddies"), E. Asia was a financial, political, and cultural backwater, known to Americans mainly for rickshaws and raw fish. But Reischauer in particular could see the coming Asian miracle, and devoted his life to educating Americans about this unknown part of the world. Packard, accurately, refers to E. Asia as "the dark side of the moon" in the years when Reischauer was launching his career. So this book has great stories to tell: the emergence of East Asia as a global powerhouse, the emergence of E. Asian studies as crucial and controversial academic field in the West, and Prof. Reischauer's central role during the key decades of transformation. The power of anti-Communism as a political force in the US after World War II makes a recurring sub-plot to the main narrative. Reischauer continually got in trouble for advocating serious negotiation with mainland China and for his opposition to a war in Vietnam. The author worked for Reischauer and is well-versed on all the political and academic controversies of the time. The result is a fascinating book about a key moment in contemporary world history, and a key player at the heart of a major shift in American foreign policy.

"Edwin O. Reischauer and the American Discovery of Japan" is on the ROROTOKO list of cutting-edge intellectual nonfiction. Professor Packard's book interview ran here as the cover feature on October 13, 2010.

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