

FOREWORD

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Sir John Pilcher was Britain's ambassador to Japan from 1967 to 1972. He arrived in the aftermath of the successful Tokyo Olympic Games (1964) when Japan demonstrated to the world her capacity for revival. He left a few months after President Nixon's visit to China (February 1972) when Japan was loosening the strings which had bound her to the United States since the war's end.

He was appointed to the Japan Consular Service in 1936 as an accomplished linguist in European languages. He was sent for training in the Japanese language to Kyoto with which he had a life-long love affair. A surprising early posting was to Tsingtao, China [Qingdao] where he had to mediate between British interests and local Japanese officials.

Pilcher returned to East Asian affairs in 1951 when he was appointed head of the Japan and Pacific Department. It was the time when the first Japanese ambassador had to be appointed to Britain following the signing of the peace treaty. Pilcher was determined that there should be a smooth transition and took a firm line that, in spite of protests, *agreement* should not be withheld because diplomats of the war period were merely carrying out the instructions of their government.

Posted to Japan as ambassador in October 1967, he brought to the post a natural sympathy for the country and a deep knowledge of its culture and religion. His task was to bridge the gap between the awkwardness of the post-war years and the rapprochement desired by both sides in order to foster (and improve) trade relations. In retirement he continued his activities for Anglo-Japanese relations through his chairmanship of the Japan Society. One of his last assignments was when he was invited as guest of honour to the conference of the European Association of Japanese Studies held at the University of Durham in 1988.

We welcome the appearance of this volume. Readers will find a comprehensive blend of official and unofficial papers. Those with the hallmark Pilcher style contain his interpretations of a society in flux and his cultural and spiritual insights. But the volume also contains accounts of the

commercial problems of the time collated by Sir Hugh Cortazzi who was himself responsible for handling them. All in all, the five years of Pilcher's embassy appear in retrospect to have been a bridge passage between two distinct phases in Anglo-Japanese relations.