

Book Review by Lee-Jay Cho: *Random Views of Asia from the Mid-Pacific* by William E. Sharp

I very much enjoyed reading *Random Views of Asia* by William E. Sharp (recently released by Savant Books, 271 pages). This book is a comprehensive collection of more than 50 of Bill Sharp's news columns, essays, and short pieces written during the last decade. It is largely about China, but includes Japan and Korea and extends to South Asia, India, Pakistan, Central Asia and Russia. It is written in the context of the US from the perspective of Hawaii, geographically in the middle of the Pacific.

As the title says, the views are random. And yet, they are stitched together to provide a broad, meaningful picture with pertinent information and knowledge about economic, political and social changes and their dynamics in Northeast Asia. This approach will be useful to general readers, of course, and even to the experts.

The writing is in a lucid manner, which will make lay readers feel comfortable. The book is an easy read, like reading a newspaper, and is thus especially recommended for the younger generation interested in Asia. It will be especially informative for any readers whose knowledge about Asia is slight or nearly non-existent.

The range of topics included by the author is basic for anyone who wants to begin to study and understand Asia in general, and Northeast Asia in particular. The individual topics are like case studies: information is presented in bits and pieces that are easy to grasp and digest. Readers who are already familiar with Asian affairs will find the opinions and insights useful, too.

The pieces could have been sequenced in a more consistent chronological order, which could have made it easier to understand the dynamic political and economic changes in the principal countries under examination. But this is a minor criticism of a book that is well written and highly recommended.