



Just Enough: Lessons in Living Green from Traditional Japan

Azby Brown

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Just Enough is a book of stories, depictions of vanished ways of life told from the point of view of a contemporary observer. The stories tell how people lived in Japan some two hundred years ago, during the late Edo Period, when traditional technology and culture were at the peak of development and realization, just before the country opened itself to the West and joined the ranks of the industrialized nations. They tell of people overcoming many of the identical problems that confront us today--issues of energy, water, materials, food and population--and forging a society that was conservation-minded, waste-free, well-housed, well-fed and economically robust.

From these stories, readers will gain insight into what it is like to live in a sustainable society, not so much in terms of specific technical approaches, but rather, in terms of how larger concerns can guide daily decisions and how social and environmental contexts shape our courses of action. These stories are intended to illustrate the environmentally-related problems that the people in both rural and urban areas faced, the conceptual frameworks in which they viewed these problems, and how they went about finding solutions. Included at the end of each section are a number of lessons in which the author elaborates on what Edo Period life has to offer us in the global battle to reverse environmental degradation. Topics covered include everything from transportation, interconnected systems, and waste reduction to the need for spiritual centers in the home.

Just Enough, more than anything else, is about a mentality that pervaded traditional Japanese society and which can serve as a beacon for our own efforts to achieve sustainability now.

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