



**Takeshi Matsuda.** *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. Plates. xx + 372 pp. \$60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8047-0040-5.

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## Cultural Policy and U.S.-Japan Relations

Despite the Bush Administration's frequent references to the Japan model in the run up to the 2003 invasion, the recent occupation of Iraq was dramatically different from the American-led occupation of Japan. In his new book on early postwar U.S.-Japan relations, Takeshi Matsuda, professor of foreign studies at Osaka University, argues that America's approach in Japan was distinct because of its emphasis on cultural diplomacy. As Matsuda explains, "the occupation of Japan was a democratic experiment supported by U.S. soft power, as well as hard power" (p. 2). Although this period in U.S.-Japan relations has been the subject of many previous studies, this new addition aims to redress the overemphasis on security and economic issues in the bilateral relationship by focusing on the neglected realm of cultural relations. It will be of interest to scholars interested in cultural diplomacy, as well as students of U.S. foreign policy and postwar Japan.

This book is dedicated to examining the sometimes unintended results of American soft power in postwar Japan. The first half discusses American objectives in its cultural relations during the early occupation, reverse course, and peace treaty negotiations, with emphasis on the role of John D. Rockefeller III. The second half deals with the impact of American soft power on academics and institutions in Tokyo and Kyoto. The work ends with a critical assessment of the "shallow" democracy left in Japan by American occupiers. The book also includes appendixes on the Tokyo and Kyoto seminars in American studies and an interesting literature review on U.S.-Japanese relations.

Americans used cultural diplomacy as a force for the democratization of Japan in the immediate aftermath of war. Later, this tact of policy became more important as the occupation of Japan became linked to a growing Cold War. As Matsuda explains, "occupied Japan was a crucial battleground in the cultural cold war" (p.

4). By supporting liberal and Western elements, U.S. officials hoped to solidify the U.S.-Japanese relationship and check Communist and leftist influence. Matsuda stresses that America's "generous" occupation policy toward Japan was driven by its global interests and rivalry with the Soviet Union. Americans sought to secure a strong long-term relationship by establishing academic links and exchanges between the countries. This project, headed by Rockefeller, ensured that American influence in Japan would last long beyond the occupation.

The book raises interesting questions about the nature of U.S. policy toward Japan and Japan's response to that policy. Drawing on a wide range of primary and secondary literature in English and Japanese, Matsuda is in a unique position to analyze both American intentions and the effects of American policy on Japan. His research highlights the surprising fact that American officials were aware that their use of soft power could be interpreted as "cultural imperialism," and took pains to ensure that postwar U.S.-Japan cultural relations would be "a two way street." Academic exchanges, for example, were structured to bring American nationals to Japan as well as Japanese nationals to America. Although American culture was more influential in Japan than was Japanese culture in America, Matsuda points out that the Japanese were not passive recipients of American tutelage. Rather, he argues, groups of Japanese selected and rejected bits of the American model through their own "filtering mechanisms" (p. 6).

Unfortunately, this book does not take a clear position on U.S.-Japan cultural relations. On the one hand, American officials were careful to create a bilateral cultural relationship with Japan, and the Japanese selectively responded to American cultural diplomacy. On the other hand, Matsuda is highly critical of American cultural policy and its impact on postwar Japan. He argues that the legacy of American occupation was "permanent

dependency and 'subordinate independence' in [Japan's] relationship with the United States" (p. 2). Matsuda believes that American patronage of intellectuals and politicians in Japan created a "postwar Japanese elite [who] were pathetically weak before authority and lamentably deficient in independence in thought and behaviour" (p. 248). The corrosive effect of American cultural diplomacy entrenched "shallow" democracy in Japan and inbred academic cliques. A more focused argument would have better connected the book's sections and made the

volume a more satisfying whole.

Matsuda uses his language skills and experience in Japan's American studies field to bring new insight to postwar U.S.-Japan relations. This work convincingly argues that cultural policy played an important role in the early postwar period. *Soft Power and Its Perils* raises interesting new questions and demonstrates that cultural relations has the potential to be a fruitful area for new research on U.S.-Japan relations.

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