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Yukiko Koshiro. *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U.S. Occupation of Japan.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. 304 pp. $29.50 (paper), ISBN 978-0-231-11349-6; $83.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-11348-9.

Yukiko Koshiro. *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U.S Occupation of Japan.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. 304 pp.

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An old sea chanty which many of my generation sang in our childhood asked, "What shall we do with the drunken sailor?" On reading Prof. Koshiro's *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U. S. Occupation of Japan*, one wants once more to burst into song. This time, however, one might hold forth with "What shall we do with the didactic politically correct aspiring academic?"

As a Japan specialist trained half a century before Prof. Koshiro and also as a participant in the Allied Occupation of Japan (see my *Amerika no Nippon Gannen 1945-1946* (Tokyo: Otsuki Shoten, 1986) which, incidentally Prof. Koshiro did not utilize), I found this book distressing in many respects. Most egregious to me is the attempt to write history without a historical perspective. Perhaps in this instance the problem has been exacerbated by Prof. Koshiro's book being, in fact, her Ph.D. dissertation which had to satisfy, I suppose, a committee steeped in contemporary academe's seeming preoccupation with guilt and with an apparent obsession to compensate for the "sins," real or imagined, of previous generations. Indeed, the book Prof. Koshiro gives us is still a dissertation, for despite its title we get a great deal of superfluous material ranging from Matthew Perry to Theodore Roosevelt to the U.S.-Japan trade friction of today. Moreover, so much of what Prof. Koshiro writes is subjective and speculative that it is difficult for the reader to focus on the specific period cf the Occupation, 1945-1952.

Specifically one needs to ask Prof. Koshiro to support numerous suppositions which she propounds in her writing:

"The force of race, or racism, during the Occupation and afterward can not be overestimated." (p.7)

"Except for the early period in the Occupation, the two nations managed to agree upon the same rule and the same game of race through subtle, indirect and even nonverbal communication." (p.16)

"Thus, SCAP launched the Occupation of Japan with no accurate racial policy, depending on symbolic gestures to convey necessary messages on the issue of race." (p.21)

"The subject of race submerged into a subconscious level, never marking its presence in the vivid memory of the two peoples." (p.49)

Obviously I lack the sophistication which Prof. Koshiro assumes the reader will have to be able to share her seemingly remarkably subtle insights. What she has done, quite cleverly I believe, is to discern racism where it, in fact, may or may not exist and then attribute to it everything and anything in U.S.-Japanese interactions before, during and after the Occupation. In my view to write history in this way is not only incomplete but misleading.

What is missing from this work is an in-depth understanding of the Occupation itself, of its truly grandiose intentions, of its quasi-evangelical desire to "democratize" the Japanese, of its remarkable and diverse leadership and personnel, and of its somewhat surprising relative success. Without any apparent sense of the foregoing, Prof. Koshiro's "racism" becomes a didactic, repetitive monotone which seems intended to turn both Americans and Japanese into embarrassed, hapless victims of its corrosiveness.

Since this book has only "Notes" and no formal bibliography, it is difficult to identify all of the sources Prof. Koshiro may have consulted. However, I found very few references to interviews or to the several conferences on the Occupation held at the MacArthur Memorial in Norfolk, Virginia. For example, in the former instance one would have imagined that Prof. Koshiro might well have gained valuable opinions from former Occupationaire Beate Sirota Gordon whose memoir *The Only Woman*

in the Room appeared in 1997 and who lives within walking distance of Columbia University, where Prof. Koshiro wrote her dissertation.

While reading this book, it occurred to me that one could perhaps arbitrarily apply the Koshiro "analysis" to the Occupation of Germany. Accordingly, despite the fact that obviously Americans and Germans in 1945 were both predominantly white, again without a close examination of the historical context, could I not employ the same "subtleties" of Prof. Koshiro and discern an analogous "racism" in U.S.-German relations? Would I not then be able similarly to unburden myself of guilt feelings toward the Germans? The problem which I perceive in such an exercise is that in neither case, i.e., Japanese or German, would I really be making a carefully researched, specifically supported contribution to the body of historical knowledge. However, I might, I admit, feel a lot better!

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