

**Donald Denoon, Mark Hudson, Gavan McCormack, Tessa Morris-Suzuki, eds..**

*Multicultural Japan: Paleolithic to Postmodern.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. viii + 296 pp. \$54.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-55067-3.



**Reviewed by** Jennifer M. Callans

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This volume, a must-read for all Japan specialists, is a collection of articles which were originally presented in September, 1993, at Australian National University (Canberra), at a conference entitled "Stirrup, Sail, and Plough: Continental and Maritime Influences on Japanese Identity" (p. 3). The conference attracted a broad range of scholars, ranging from biological anthropologists to historians, and this diversity is preserved in the book. Of the sixteen chapters, over half were written by Japanese historians and social critics, ensuring that the volume is not biased toward the views of non-Japanese scholars.

The book is divided into an Introduction, written by McCormack, and five Parts: "Archaeology and Identity," "Centre and Periphery," "Contact with the Outside," "The Japanese Family," and "Culture and Ideology." McCormack's Introduction skillfully develops the theme of the volume while providing an overview of each chapter. The premise of the book is clear from the title: while Japan has usually been called a monocultural society, evidence reaching back to prehistoric times contradicts this assumption of homogeneity, providing instead an image of a multicultural society,

albeit one that commonly denies any possibility of diversity. While it is not new to state that Japan is not as monocultural as has generally been believed, it is new to take such a wide-ranging and decisive look at these assumptions. McCormack writes that the book challenges the conventional approach by arguing that Japan has long been "multicultural," and that what is distinctive is the success with which that diversity has been cloaked by the ideology of "uniqueness" and "monoculturalism." While sympathetic to the Japanese attempt to resist Western cultural hegemonism and the pretense that Western European values are universal, the contributors incline towards post-modern cultural relativism rather than any sort of hegemonism, European or Japanese (p. 3).

As is generally case with edited volumes, the chapters collected here are somewhat uneven in every respect. Some are narrowly focused on issues which would seem to only concern Japan; others take a broader view and are applicable to human cultural processes more generally. Some are thoroughly end-noted, with a wide variety of reference materials in English, Japanese, and oth-

er languages; others are more personal reflections with few or no references. The differences are not always such as to undermine the contributions; rather, the volume succeeds in providing a variety of viewpoints in numerous styles, all of which contribute to the central thesis, that Japan is now and always has been a multicultural society.

One particularly strong chapter, "North Kyushu Creole: A Language-Contact Model for the Origins of Japanese" (Part One, Chapter Two), is also among the more challenging, in that it discusses the linguistic origins of Japanese while assuming that most readers will be generally familiar with the terms necessary to the argument. Having only a very weak background in linguistics, I had no idea what distinction John C. Maher was highlighting in his usage of the terms *pidgin* and *creole*, which are not defined until near the end of the chapter, on page 40. That said, however, Maher's contribution provides a convincing argument for the multicultural origins of a language which is so important to contemporary arguments of Japanese uniqueness.

Other chapters in Part One provide a physical anthropologist's view of Japan's population history (Chapter One, "The Japanese as an Asia-Pacific Population," by Katayama Kazumichi); a discussion of the variety of different life-ways that existed in the prehistoric archipelago and how this relates to constructions of Japanese ethnicity (Chapter Three, "Beyond Ethnicity and Emergence in Japanese Archaeology," by Simon Kaner); and an overview of the practice and politics of Japanese archaeology, and its relationship to notions of monoculturalism (Chapter Four, "Archaeology and Japanese Identity," by Clare Fawcett).

Tessa Morris-Suzuki's contribution (Part Two, Chapter Five, "Descent into the Past: The Frontier in the Construction of Japanese Identity") takes as its starting point an article by Immanuel Wallerstein, in which he recommends taking a new look at our notions of time and space in history. In applying Wallerstein's argument to the case of

Japan, she is at once adding a tool to our kit for Japanese Studies and advancing theory more generally. As she writes, "our decision whether to consign difference to the dimension of space or the dimension of time has profound implications for the way in which we see the whole world" (p. 82). She proceeds to demonstrate how this may be the case in Japanese conceptions of the Ainu and the Roykoyans. First, these two peoples were conceived of as "barbarians" on the periphery (p. 83), that is, in a separate, but adjunct, space. Later, the Ainu and Roykoyans became representatives of "ancient" traditions, emissaries from another time. Morris-Suzuki's article is an important examination of these machinations of difference and exclusion.

Following her chapter, Richard Pearson (Chapter Six, "The Place of Okinawa in Japanese Historical Identity") presents an archaeological overview of the development of Okinawan culture, while Hanazaki Khei (Chapter Seven, "Ainu Moshir and Yaponesia: Ainu and Okinawan Identities in Contemporary Japan") discusses contemporary Ainu and Okinawan identities.

Two chapters in Part Three examine Japan during the war. Got Ken's contribution (Chapter Ten, "Indonesia under the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere") provides an excellent summary of Japan's self-image at the time, illustrating it with a detailed summary of the relationship between Japan and Indonesia. His analysis, that "Japanese consciousness of South-east Asia, of the whole Asia-Pacific region, and of modern history, needs to be severely re-examined" (p. 172), while harsh, is justified. Got's chapter is followed by Utsumi Aiko on "Japanese Army Internment Policies for Enemy Civilians During the Asia-Pacific War" (Chapter Eleven). While focusing on Japan's internment centers for enemy civilians, and severely criticizing Japan's notions of "human rights," she makes a broader theoretical contribution in her conceptualization of the relationship between "victims" and "aggressors" in wartime. Her thor-

oughly-referenced chapter is both clear and far-reaching, considering the relationship between internees and the Japanese from every angle.

Part Three also contains Derek Massarella (Chapter Eight, "Some Reflections on Identity Formation in East Asia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" on interactions between Europe in Japan well before contemporary notions of "Europe" and "Japan" were established; and Ishii Yoneo (Chapter Nine, "Siam and Japan in Pre-Modern Times: A Note on Mutual Images," discussing the multiplicity of perceptions of the Other.

Part Four consists of two noteworthy contributions that examine the Japanese family. Ueno Chizuko (Chapter Twelve, "Modern Patriarchy and the Formation of the Japanese Nation State") argues that the *ie*, or traditional Japanese family formation, was actually an invention of the Meiji Era government. Ueno's discussion succeeds in dismantling arguments about Japanese identity which are based on this family formation, while at the same time providing evidence of the variety of family forms that were common before the Meiji Era and which were considered as possibilities for modernizing Japan. Her discussion is followed by Nishikawa Yoko on "The Modern Japanese Family System: Unique or Universal?" (Chapter Thirteen). Nishikawa Yoko states that "all nation states are family states, with the modern family as their basic unit. It is for this reason that modern Japan was forced to invent its own traditions of family state, centred around the imperial family" (p. 224). Nishikawa Yoko supports her argument with an historical examination of Japanese models of the family and the houses and other buildings which have contained them.

The volume ends with three important chapters that make up Part Five. Chapter Fourteen is a somewhat idiosyncratic look, by Amino Yoshihiko, at "Emperor, Rice, and Commoners," in which Amino considers the recent relinking of "rice" with the Emperor, and therefore with "Japan."

Amino's piece is speculative, but solid nonetheless, and a refreshing view of the imagery that surrounds the Japanese Emperor. This is followed by Nishikawa Nagao on "Two Interpretations of Japanese Culture" (Chapter Fifteen), in which he suggests that, "as the concept of nation begins to unravel, the concept of culture in the sense of national culture should also be questioned" (p. 247). Drawing on author Sakaguchi Ango's *Personal View of Japanese Culture*, Nishikawa Nagao proposes a new cultural model which does not have a relationship with the concept of the "nation."

The final chapter (Chapter Sixteen, "Kokusai-ka: Impediments in Japan's Deep Structure") is written, as was the Introduction, by Gavan McCormack, and it provides an excellent endnote for this volume. In discussing *kokusai-ka*, or internationalization, McCormack argues that Australia's recent reconstruction of itself as a multicultural state provides a model by which Japan can do the same, leading to a new, flourishing "Japan" which would embrace diversity.

One shortcoming of the book, but one that is instructive, is the fact that several important recent works which have made similar points are not cited by contributors. For example, Gail Bernstein's edited volume (*Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, University of California Press, 1991) demonstrates, in part, that the Meiji Era government's promotion of the Good Wife, Wise Mother was one aspect of an "invented tradition" regarding the role of Japanese women, a point which echoes Ueno's piece of the Japanese family system. Similarly, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's work on the symbolism of rice in Japan (*Rice as Self: Japanese Identities Through Time*, Princeton University Press, 1993) supports Amino's chapter. I say this is an instructive shortcoming because it points, I think, to the divide between contemporary scholarship written in English and that written in Japanese. It is unfortunately often the case that, when writing in English, scholars fail to cite many references in other languages. The opposite also holds

true at times, leading to something of a gap between those who study Japan from the point of view of outsiders, and those who are themselves Japanese. In another, equally important, way, however, this volume helps to narrow this scholarly gap, by the inclusion of many chapters by Japanese scholars, some of which were translated especially for this publication. This is a boon in making more accessible contemporary work done in Japan.

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