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Edited by Donald Denoon, Mark Hudson, Gavan McCormack and Tessa Morris-Suzuki
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Introduction

GAVAN McCORMACK

Japan is conventionally seen as a monocultural society. Located at the eastern extremity of the Eurasian land-mass and separated from it by a sea that is wider and more dangerous than that which divides the British Isles from the same land-mass at its western extremity, it is apparently distinguished from the countries nearest to it both in its pre-modern institutions (often called 'feudal') and in its modern economic dynamism (sometimes called 'miraculous'). The proposition that Japan is unique and monocultural seems plausible.

Throughout Japanese history, prominent figures have insisted on the distinctness of Japanese identity, from the 'National Learning' (*Kokugakusha*) scholars in the eighteenth century with their stress on a pure and untrammeled (that is, non-Chinese) Japanese essence to late twentieth-century statements by Nakasone Yasuhiro (Prime Minister in the 1980s) that Japan is a homogeneous 'natural community' (as distinct from a Western-style 'nation formed by contract'), and the 'Yamato race' which he insisted had been living 'for at least two thousand years . . . hand in hand with no other, different ethnic groups present [in these islands]'.[1] The belief that Japan is a homogeneous, monoracial state is deep-rooted and, as Ivan Hall notes, has long been 'openly sanctioned by the intellectual establishment, public consensus, and government policy'.[2] Unlike other societies which are mixed (*o-majiri*), especially the United States with its 'many Blacks, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans', Japan is thought to be pure and homogeneous, and therefore to have had an easier time becoming an 'intelligent society'.[3]

In the modern (pre-1945) state, the ideology of Japanese homogeneity and superiority was encapsulated in what was described as *kokutai* (national polity), by which the Japanese people were seen as

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More information

a unique family state united around the emperor. Though discredited by defeat and the collapse of imperial Japan and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (but not of the imperial line nor of its myths), neither the Occupation nor the post-war Japanese liberal and progressive forces paid much attention to questions of identity. The former concentrated on eradicating militarism while shoring up the imperial institution, and the latter on analysing class while ignoring ethnicity and assuming that a strengthening of individualism and democracy would result from steadily increasing modernisation. The ethnic implications of the aboriginal inhabitants of Japan (the Ainu), or other groups such as the large Korean minority, were reduced to considerations of universal human rights. Deep-rooted assumptions about 'Japaneseness' therefore survived intact.[4]

From the 1980s two phenomena have proceeded on parallel tracks which show no sign of converging: internationalisation and the clarification of Japanese identity. *Kokusaika* – internationalisation – has been a Japanese national goal for over a decade. Trans-border flows of capital, goods, technology and people have reached new heights, and essays and books on *kokusaika* proliferate. For all of this inter-meshing with the outside world, the task of analysing 'Japaneseness', and how notions of it might be reconciled with a *kokusaika* world, remains both complex and sensitive. The stronger the belief in Japanese distinctiveness, the deeper became the concern at the consequences of 'internationalisation' as economic super-power status led to the opening, first of the economy and then of the society, and an influx of migrant workers.

This desire to clarify identity is the local manifestation of the worldwide phenomenon of identity politics. During the 1980s Japan's roots were increasingly traced back to the Jōmon hunting and gathering culture which lasted for about 10 000 years prior to the fourth century BC. Influential statements of the 'true' untrammeled Japanese identity in such terms have been uttered by prominent academics and by political figures such as Ozawa Ichirō, who revealed his romantic inclinations by declaring that Jōmon Japan was not only Japan's own true essence but also the solution to the problems of contemporary civilisation.[5]

In the 1980s the Nakasone government took renewed interest in the task of articulating Japanese 'culture' as an arm of diplomacy. The establishment in Kyoto in 1987 of the International Research Center for Japanese Culture, commonly known by its abbreviated Japanese title of 'Nichibunken', was one expression of this desire to clarify what 'Japaneseness' meant.[6] The founding of Nichibunken was surrounded by controversy, reminding many of the 1930s *kokutai meichō* (Clarifying

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the National Polity) movement and of the role played by the Kokumin Bunka Seishin Kenkyūjō (National Institute for Culture Spirit).[7] Debate swelled briefly to a climax in exchanges between the head of Nichibunken, Umehara Takeshi, and the Western scholar, Ian Buruma, in the pages of *Chūō Kōron* in 1987.[8] Various academic organisations took critical positions or expressed concern.[9] But that moment soon passed. Post-Nakasone, the work done in Kyoto seemed harmless enough, prominent foreign as well as Japanese scholars cooperated in Nichibunken programs, the budgets were generous, and the opportunities for research were welcome. The case against Nichibunken at its formation seemed stale, as dated as the Cold War. But the issues suddenly resurfaced around the time of the conference which gave rise to this book.

International academic scrutiny of the notion of 'Japaneseness' has been rare. Entitled 'Stirrup, Sail and Plough: continental and maritime influences on Japanese identity', the conference, hosted in Canberra in September 1993 by the Australian National University, was the first devoted to the theme of Japanese 'identity', its origins and transformation, through the focus on Japan's relations with neighbouring Asian and Pacific countries. Some fifty scholars, whose expertise ranged from biological anthropology to feminism to Japan's contemporary role in the world, came from Japan, Korea, South-east Asia, Europe and North America, while prominent Japan (and Asia-Pacific) scholars of the ANU and other Australian universities attended.

This book distils the fruits of that conference. It 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 pretence that Western European values are universal, the contributors incline towards post-modern cultural relativism rather than any sort of hegemonism, European or Japanese.

The book has five parts. The first examines the origins of 'the Japanese', with Katayama Kazumichi, John C. Maher and Simon Kaner tackling biological, linguistic and cultural diversity, and Clare Fawcett and Simon Kaner addressing the salience of scholarly work in contemporary debates on identity. The chapters in Part Two explore questions of minorities, especially the Ainu aboriginal peoples in Hokkaido to the north and the Okinawan people of the Ryūkyū Islands to the south. Part Three looks at cultural and political connections with Europe and with East and South-east Asia. It emphasises the early basis of equality and mutual respect that marked these connections and the

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slide that occurred, reaching a nadir in the war of 1931 to 1945, as Japan entrenched a modern sense of its own identity as superior and distinctive. The fourth part explores the ways in which a peculiar ideology of the family was constructed and came to be thought of as quintessentially Japanese. The final part addresses the tensions between diversity and homogeneity created by industrialisation and colonial expansion, and looks at the changing nature of cultural diversity in Japan in the era of 'internationalisation'.

The archaeological record is controversial. As the past is literally dug up, the political and ideological ramifications of archaeology become acutely sensitive. In no other country does so much public and media attention focus on excavations of ancient settlements. As Richard Pearson notes: 'Archaeology in Japan is high-tech, high profile, big business, and big budget'.[10] The transformation of the landscape by three decades of 'high-growth' development is matched by the transformation of historical understanding consequent upon discoveries unearthed in the process.[11]

As recently as the 1980s there was no real agreement on the population history of the islands. The last few years, however, have seen the emergence of a remarkable consensus, neatly summarised by Katayama's chapter (chapter 1). The comings and goings of peoples to, from, and across the archipelago over the past two millennia can be fairly well understood. It now seems clear that the Japanese population stems from several ancient and distinct waves of immigration. An early (but not necessarily the first) was that of a proto-Mongoloid people from somewhere in the South-east Asian or South China region who (by a route yet unclear) settled in the islands at some point in the Palaeolithic. The civilisation of hunters and gatherers that evolved has been given the name 'Jōmon' after the cord-marked pattern of their earthenware pottery.[12]

Unlike the first wave of immigrants, whose physical characteristics suggest close links with South-east Asia or South China, the second came from North-east Asia, most likely via the Korean peninsula. This migration continued for over a millennium through what are known as the Yayoi and Kofun periods (*ca.* 400 BC to AD 700), and by the latter (Kofun) period there seems to have been considerable mixing of indigenous and immigrant groups as far as southern Tohoku. About a million people left the continent in some 'boat people' saga whose causes are only dimly understood, to settle in the archipelago, until eventually the original Jōmon peoples were outnumbered, perhaps by as much as 10 to 1 (according to Hanihara Kazurō). The archipelago was profoundly transformed as a result. The migrants brought wet rice agriculture and bronze and iron technology.[13] They settled first in

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northern Kyushu and western Honshu, either merging with and absorbing the aboriginal Jōmon inhabitants or confining them to culturally distinctive formations in the 'peripheral' regions of Hokkaido and Northern Honshu (where they appeared thereafter as Ainu, Emishi, Ebisu) or South Kyushu and the Ryūkyū Islands (where they were known as Kumaso, Hayato, as well as Okinawan). By the seventh century, these North-east Asian immigrants and their descendants constituted between 70 and 90 per cent of the population of the islands (which might by then have amounted to five or six million people), and constructed a distinctive political and cultural order centring on the court which emerged in the Kinai region in the vicinity of present-day Osaka and Kyoto.[14]

As Katayama notes, relatively pure Jōmon characteristics were preserved only in the Ainu communities in the far north. Skeletal, dental and genetic anthropology, and the analysis of the genetic evidence of the different origins of animals closely connected with human habitation, such as dogs and mice, make clear that the modern Japanese are primarily descended from continental immigrants who arrived in the Yayoi and Kofun periods.[15] The idea of a uniquely pure link between the modern Japanese and the ancient civilisation of the Jōmon period cannot be sustained. The Japanese are, like all other modern peoples, a 'mixed race'.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that this two-stage model of the peopling of Japan has resolved all controversy. At least three problems persist. They concern the very large question of the social relations between Jōmon and Yayoi peoples and the scale of Yayoi immigration; the Pacific relations of the early settlers; and the evolution of their language.

On the first matter, Hanihara, who estimated as many as one million Yayoi-Kofun immigrants, though winning some support from other anthropologists, has been criticised by archaeologists, who believe the rate of immigration was much lower.[16] So far as the second matter is concerned, Katayama notes that skeletal remains of the prehistoric Jōmon and their Ainu decendants closely resemble samples of prehistoric Polynesians and even some Micronesians, which leads him to advance the hypothesis that the Jōmon people may have been ancestral to the Polynesians. That view is supported by the American anthropologist, Loring Brace,[17] but it would seem to contradict much of the linguistic and archaeological evidence for the early Austronesian expansions.[18] An alternative explanation of the physical similarities between Jōmon and Polynesian populations would be a common origin somewhere in South China or South-east Asia.

Two linguistic models seek to account for the historical linguistics of

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early Japan: one is elaborated in the Maher chapter (chapter 2) and known as the creole model, and the other may be described as a language replacement scenario.[19] Both models view the early agricultural Yayoi period as crucial. Maher supports with linguistic evidence his proposal that extensive trading and other activities in western Japan led to a Yayoi pidgin which eventually stabilised as a creole and became the Japanese language. Hudson's alternative view, based on a comparative cultural perspective, is that the rapid expansion of rice farming through the Japanese islands during the Yayoi is more likely to have led to the replacement of Jōmon languages than to substantial mixing.

Controversy also continues over the relationship between scholarly work on Japan's ancient history and contemporary debates on identity. Pearson comments that, despite its scientific and analytical methods, archaeology has continued to serve as 'an important part of Japanese national historical nativistic discourse', and indeed that the entire discipline in Japan is coloured by pressures 'to elucidate the history of the Japanese rather than to learn about human behavior in general'.[20] Even in the 1990s the long hand of control over the past is exercised in the form of a ban enforced by the Imperial Household Agency over any excavation of 158 major tomb sites thought to contain the remains of imperial ancestors, one purpose of which is to limit the risk of 'embarrassing' archaeological discoveries, particularly any which might throw light on the origins of the imperial family.

In this volume, Fawcett and Kaner explore the politics of archaeology. Fawcett (chapter 4) analyses the role of post-war Japanese governments in using the Asuka region and its history to shape the expression of Japanese identity. While Japanese archaeologists have usually opposed such blatant ideological uses of the past, in a discussion of the Morishōji site in Osaka, Fawcett demonstrates how archaeologists, while in principle opposed to ideological manipulation of their work, are caught in complex webs which may lead them to lend some support, perhaps even unconsciously, to such views, particularly by simplifying the archaeological record in order to make the past more accessible. Fawcett raises issues of history and education that go far beyond the particularities of the Japanese case.

Japan's peripheries, where recognisable Jōmon elements remained longest, and which were last incorporated in the Japanese state, constitute nice studies in the struggle between the ideology of 'Japaneseness' and the reality of difference. The adaptive, historical and evolutionary processes of the development of ancient Ainu and Okinawan societies are slowly coming to light. The relationship of these

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processes to the formation of a sense of identity in those regions and the complex relationship between that and a broader 'Japanese' identity is still being negotiated.

Tessa Morris-Suzuki (chapter 5) addresses the relations between the Japanese state and the people of the frontier who, until the late eighteenth century, were generally represented as part of Japan's 'barbarian periphery', foreign countries which paid tribute to Japan. Only as Japan became incorporated into the modern world order of nation states was the relationship reconsidered. When Okinawa and Hokkaido were absorbed within the Japanese state in the late nineteenth century their inhabitants, despite being redefined as 'Japanese citizens', nevertheless remained *different* in ways which disturbed official constructions of national uniformity. Ultimately they were redefined as different in terms of time rather than space: as 'backward' rather than foreign. But this process was not without risk, for it might imply that they represented a 'purer' or more 'pristine' expression of 'essential' 'Japaneseness'. Japanese debates about terms such as 'race' (*jinshu*) and '*Volk*' (*minzoku*) therefore focus on these peoples.

Pearson (chapter 6) outlines the development of Okinawan culture as revealed by archaeological research. The Ryūkyū Islands occupy a unique position in the cultural history of East Asia through their spatial location, human adaptation to their environment, processes of interaction with the surrounding regions, and internal social evolution. An exchange network linked the Ryūkyūs and the North Kyushu plain in the early to mid Yayoi period, but the region remained beyond the fringes of the Yamato state of the fifth to eighth centuries, and from 1429 to 1609 constituted a flourishing city state, influenced much more by trade with China than by any contact with Japan, and also trading widely throughout East Asia.

The desire to flesh out the record of the Ryūkyūan past, and to forge from archaeological and literary records a distinctive Okinawan or Ryūkyūan identity has strengthened since the islands were returned from American administration to Japanese rule in 1972. From such a perspective, Japanese 'identity politics' looks quite different from how it appears in Tokyo. Not surprisingly, the Ryūkyūan perspective is sceptical about the pretensions of any monolithic 'Japaneseness'. Increasingly, the Ryūkyūan orientation turns again to the south and the west as well as north, and the independent and cosmopolitan experience of the fifteenth- to seventeenth-century Chūzan kingdom, when Okinawa served as 'a culturally distinct, and peaceful, bridge to the world',[21] gives some insight into what a decentralised, internationally-oriented Japan might aspire to create in the late twentieth century.

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Turning to Japan's northern periphery, Hanazaki Kōhei (chapter 7) recounts the attempts to assimilate the Ainu peoples of Hokkaido following their defeat in an uprising in 1788, and the deculturing policies designed to assimilate them into the lower ranks of Japanese society. Cultural revival began, tentatively in 1912 and more vigorously from 1945, leading to a series of Ainu language schools and cultural events, and cultural reassertion began to fuel a sustained effort to achieve cultural (and implicitly political) recognition.

Perceptions of Japan and 'Japaneseness' in the early modern world from European and South-east Asian perspectives are discussed by Derek Massarella (chapter 8) and Ishii Yoneo (chapter 9). The Europeans who came to Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were very different from those who followed in the nineteenth century, when European hegemony came to be taken for granted. The notion of European superiority, or 'orientalism', formed no part of the baggage of Europeans in the early modern period. There were no stock images of the 'Orient' nor expectations of stagnation or backwardness to prejudice their judgment, and they were deeply impressed by the civilisation that they encountered. Respect for Japan remained relatively unscathed even in the 1850s. While they respected and were fascinated by Japan, however, European observers did not see it as unique: nor did the Japanese they encountered give voice to any such thought.

A key element of Japan's present identity is the assumption that in the sixteenth century the country was 'open' to foreigners and foreign influence, but thereafter, save for the Dutch and Chinese in Nagasaki and the Japanese presence in the Ryūkyū kingdom and Korea, it was 'closed' under the *sakoku* (closed country) policy and able to enjoy a 'pax Tokugawa'. The long isolation which ensued is supposed to have allowed Japan to achieve so high a level of proto-industrialisation that by the mid-nineteenth century it had achieved the pre-conditions for indigenous industrialisation, with or without the 'opening' by the US navy.

The idea of an open/closed rhythm to Japanese history is too contrived, too conducive to notions of the pure native Japanese tradition as opposed to various defiling, foreign influences, and too much an echo of cyclical models of Asian history to be taken seriously. Even in relation to the late sixteenth century there are fundamental problems. First, it implies that before the later sixteenth century Japan was 'closed'. Secondly, from the 1630s, although the authorities in Edo certainly restricted and sought to control such trade and contacts with the outside world that they permitted, in terms of trade, international relations or cross-cultural control and influence Japan did not cut itself

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off from the rest of the world. A true *sakoku* policy only emerged after 1793. Thirdly, it is 'Japanocentric', ignoring similar phenomena in China and Korea, and making Japan's 'isolation' appear unique.

While the early modern East Asian world preserved a facade of hierarchical decorum based on the centrality and superiority of imperial China, it actually practised a vibrant, horizontal, multicultural order in which relationships were founded on mutual respect, commercial sense and intellectual curiosity. The Japan–Korea relationship was one between entities which even in the fifteenth century were not 'discrete',[22] and which, after the tragic violence of the late sixeenth-century invasions of Korea, slowly resumed as between virtual equals.[23]

If Hokkaido and Okinawa constitute internal benchmarks of Japanese identity, Korea, China and South-east Asia all represent facets of the Japanese struggle to achieve an outward-looking, non-Western sense of identity that would combine 'Japaneseness', 'Asian-ness', and universal human values. In this book, the failure of such attempts is analysed through a focus on South-east Asia (Gotō Ken'ichi, chapter 10 and Utsumi Aiko, chapter 11) and Manchukuo (Gavan McCormack, chapter 16).

Japan launched its Asian war beneath slogans of 'co-existence and co-prosperity, respect for autonomy and independence, and the abolition of racial discrimination', but under the veneer of these universal values lay a Japanese belief in the 'low cultural level' of the natives, and in practice, relations between Japan and the worlds it was supposedly liberating fell far short of the ideals. Official constructions of modern Japanese identity were always fraught with tensions, which became increasingly evident in the years leading up to the Pacific War. Government policy since the Meiji Restoration had been founded upon emulation of the western great powers. Its aim was the transformation of Japan into an industrialised, militarily powerful nation with its own colonial empire to rival those of Britain and France. As conflict with the west grew, however, Japan's leaders revised the earlier strategy of 'leaving Asia and joining Europe' (*datsu-A nyū-O*), proposing instead to rejoin Asia on whose behalf it would lead a crusade against 'western imperialism'.

The unresolved contradictions of coloniser–liberator became ever more apparent as the war progressed. Gotō's chapter vividly illustrates the ironies of Japan's position by examining the role of Indonesia in the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Entangled by long-held views of South-east Asia as a 'barbarian' realm, pragmatic desires to exploit the resources of the region, and a Pan-Asian rhetoric which defined Japan as the 'liberator' of Asia, the Japanese military were

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unable either to treat Indonesia as an equal or entirely to suppress nationalist demands for independence.

Japan's colonial role raised fundamental questions about the definition of the word 'Japanese'. Japan's self-proclaimed mission as 'liberator of Asia' sat uncomfortably with its role as colonial ruler in Korea. The Japanese government tried to blur this contradiction by defining its status in Korea, not as imperialist, but as 'elder brother' nurturing the development of 'younger brother'. This imagery was supported by assimilationist policies imposed on the Koreans, who were enlisted in the Japanese armed forces and enrolled in the family registration system (*koseki*), albeit in a special category which marked them as 'overseas residents'. But the people who were 'Japanese' when it came to military service suddenly ceased to be 'Japanese' after the post-war peace settlement, and were thus deprived of their entitlement to Japanese war and disability pensions. In a final irony, as Utsumi points out, Korean recruits to the Japanese military were deemed by the Allies to be liable for prosecution for war crimes, on the basis of 'Japanese nationality' of which they had since been stripped. So the paradoxes of war created human tragedies whose consequences continue to colour Japan's relations with the Asian region to the present day.[24]

The more complex, 'multicultural' image of Japan presented in this book involves not only awareness of ethnic diversity, but also consciousness of the diverse and changing nature of social institutions like the family. One of the key institutions in the assumption of an eternal, trans-historical, unique 'Japaneseness' has been the idea that the Japanese household both concentrates that essence and ensures its reproduction. Nakane Chie's classic study *Japanese Society* described the *ie*, or hierarchical stem family, as providing the model on which Japanese social relationships were based.[25] Just as the *ie* was a vertical structure in which relations between parent and child were stronger than relations between siblings, so the corporation, the university and even the state itself were vertical structures where the links between superior and inferior mattered more than links between equals. The loyalty which individuals felt towards their family, Nakane argued, was extended to the corporation and to the state. So a timeless and unchanging *ie* became the cornerstone of the vision of Japan as a homogeneous and unique society.

Ueno Chizuko (chapter 12) and Nishikawa Yūko (chapter 13) address these issues. Ueno shows that the *ie* was an ideal type created and propagated in the Meiji period to serve political ends. Ueno's point, widely accepted by Japanese scholars, remains controversial among diehard upholders of uniqueness. As Ueno observes, the

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