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Masako Shibata. *Japan and Germany under the U.S. Occupation: A Comparative Analysis of Post-War Education Reform.* Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005. xviii + 212 pp. $70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7391-1149-9.

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Welcome to the Occupation

In these days of "regime change" in Iraq and Afghanistan, a fresh look at the postwar occupations of Japan and Germany seems to be in order. While the specific circumstances of the late 1940s and the first years of the new millennium are quite different, there are likely to be general lessons to be taken from previous occupation experiences. For those who wish to examine America's first sustained experience at playing global policeman, a reasonably substantial body of literature treats the postwar occupation of Germany, and a somewhat less rich scholarship exists in English on the occupation of Japan. Unfortunately, very few studies compare the two. As its title suggests, Shibata's study adds a new book to this last group.

The book is part of Lexington Books' Studies in Modern Japan series, a distinguished collection of publications on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Japan. As a prolific scholar of the history of Japanese education, series editor Edward Beauchamp must have been especially interested in Shibata's work; other experts in the history of education in Germany or Japan, or of the postwar occupation of Japan and Germany, will also have high hopes for the book. The volume is indeed fascinating and insightful, but also immensely frustrating. Its importance, briefly stated, lies in its thesis, while its frustration lies in its form. To give the bad news first: the book appears to have been written in English, as no translator is credited, but its curious style distracts from its substantial research and conclusions. The book ought to have been edited more actively to do Shibata's ideas full justice. The text reads like a doctoral dissertation; it includes a fair amount of undigested archival information and the author's focus on explaining her argument leads her to omit or brush over information that, had it been included, would have made the book more accessible to a wider audience. But because the author's project is relevant and thought-provoking, the book's substance deserves more attention than its stylistic deficiencies. I hope that serious readers will overlook its more superficial flaws and consider the value of Shibata's arguments.

The subject of the book is the outcome of education reforms that American military governments attempted to promulgate in the former Axis nations during the late 1940s. American authorities considered reform of public education from grade school to university level to be one of the most important facets of the "democratization" of Germany and Japan, because they believed that these countries' turns toward authoritarianism stemmed largely from habits of mind inculcated in citizens from their earliest years. Shibata's explanation of the impetus for education reform and democratization in general is brief and perfunctory; a fuller discussion of this background, while not essential to her thesis, would have added greatly to the overall quality of the book.

The author begins by pointing out that German and Japanese education reform efforts had very different results. In Japan, reforms were embraced enthusiastically, while in Germany, they were by and large rejected, and the traditional education system maintained. As to why

this was so, Shibata's thesis is deceptively simple: different outcomes were a result of the differing values of those German and Japanese elites responsible for carrying out reforms. The author argues that Japanese elites beginning in the Meiji period had developed an interest in and admiration for certain American ideas and a corresponding ambivalence toward Japanese values and traditions in education. Germans, in contrast, continued to have great faith in their own system. They considered their culture superior to that of the Americans and rejected attempts by occupation authorities to impose American ideas on their system.

The most intriguing part of this thesis is Shibata's assertion that the differing reception of American ideas stems from "the way in which elites were formed in the university within the process of state formation in Japan and Germany in the nineteenth century" (p. 7). Although both states were trying to catch up to the leading western nations in the nineteenth century, they used their education systems differently in pursuing this goal. Japanese leaders of the Meiji period fostered an ultra-nationalistic state ideology at the elementary school level, on the one hand, and a belief in modern western learning at the university level, on the other. So Japanese elites simultaneously espoused nationalistic ideals and admired western ideas–an ambivalence that made them more receptive to American reform efforts later on. German elites, in comparison, inherited a strong notion of German identity that existed well before Germany became a state, and the German education system (especially the universities) fostered the development of a cohesive and self-confident educated elite that resisted American attempts at reforming the system that had produced it.

There is always the danger in comparative work that the author's real area of expertise will emerge in well-considered and confident discussion while the area being compared remains in the shadows. Experts on German history will find that Shibata has not avoided this danger entirely. She has conducted sound research in both Japanese and German archives, but it is quite evident that her field is Japanese, not German history. The analysis of German state formation and identity is fine as far as it goes, but is culled mostly from well-known secondary sources, and parallels to Japanese state formation are at times somewhat forced. Another question that might occur to non-experts in the history of Japanese education is the extent to which Japanese education was really reformed; the layperson's impression of Japan's present system is that it is still very different from the American one. One wonders, but does not learn from this book, exactly what the Japanese system was like before it was "fixed."

In spite of its weaknesses, however, this book is significant. Shibata's focus on the receptors of American influence is an insight that should be incorporated into all scholarly research on the postwar occupations of Germany and Japan, as well as other military occupations past and present. Too often, students of the American postwar occupation and continuing military influence in allied nations during the Cold War overemphasize the actions of the American occupiers in analyzing the success or failure of American programs. Criticism is often leveled at American occupiers for their disorganization, muddled leadership or lack of language skills and "cultural awareness." Shibata's point goes further, to suggest that a deep and profound historical understanding of a culture, one perhaps not truly available to those involved in projects like democratization and education reform, is necessary to explain the outcome of such projects. We are seeing today in America's attempts to reform society in Iraq and Afghanistan the violent rejection of those attempts by certain segments of society, and we may believe we understand certain obvious religious and cultural tensions. But Shibata's work suggests we take a closer look at the historical development of social groups and classes, state formation and attitudes toward identity before we go about reforming other nations in our own image.

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