



Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations: Historical Essays

Sadao Asada

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Ever since Commodore Perry sailed into Uruga Channel, relations between the United States and Japan have been characterized by culture shock. Now a distinguished Japanese historian critically analyzes contemporary thought, public opinion, and behavior in the two countries over the course of the twentieth century, offering a binational perspective on culture shock as it has affected their relations.

In these essays, Sadao Asada examines the historical interaction between these two countries from 1890 to 2006, focusing on naval strategy, transpacific racism, and the atomic bomb controversy. For each topic, he offers a rigorous analysis of both American and Japanese perceptions, showing how cultural relations and the interchange of ideas have been complex—and occasionally destructive.

Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations contains insightful essays on the influence of Alfred Mahan on the Japanese navy and on American images of Japan during the 1920s. Other essays consider the progressive breakdown of relations between the two countries and the origins of the Pacific War from the viewpoint of the Japanese navy, then tackle the ultimate shock of the atomic bomb and Japan's surrender, tracing changing perceptions of the decision to use the bomb on both sides of the Pacific over the course of sixty years. In discussing these subjects, Asada draws on Japanese sources largely inaccessible to Western scholars to provide a host of eye-opening insights for non-Japanese readers.

After studying in America for nine years and receiving degrees from both Carleton College and Yale University, Asada returned to Japan to face his own reverse culture shock. His insights raise important questions of why people on opposite sides of the Pacific see things differently and adapt their perceptions to different purposes. This book marks a major effort toward reconstructing and understanding the conflicted course of Japanese-American relations during the first half of the twentieth century.

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