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Review of the book *Imposing peace and prosperity: Australia, social justice and labour reform in occupied Japan* by C. De Matos

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Imposing Peace & Prosperity: Australia, Social Justice and Labour Reform in Occupied Japan. By Christine De Mateos (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), pp ix + 427. Thirteen Photographs. Three Appendices. AUD\$39.95.

Christine de Mateos finds little evidence of an Australia imprint on Occupation policy on Japan. If anything, Australia's policy legacy on post-war Japan was "negligible" (p. 151): its proposals for structural reform were "neglected" (p. 147); its practical policy inputs "arbitrary" (p. 74); and its engagement in Occupation control machinery a mere "preten[ce] to Allied cooperation and policy contributions" (p. 74). This hardly is a promising basis for a book-length inquiry into Australia's involvement in "imposing peace and prosperity in Occupied Japan".

But, for de Mateos, at least Australia *tried*. Despite the US's near-monopolistic grip on Occupation policy, Australia moved numerous amendments to the US draft on Occupation Policy (pp. 71-76). It drafted its own peace treaty. It even organised a Canberra Conference to garner support for it from non-US Allied partners (ch. 5). This record of *effort* — as opposed to *achievement* — is important because it shatters three enduring myths in the historiography of the Occupation. The first is that Australia was mostly, if not exclusively, preoccupied with retribution. The second is that the Occupation revolution drew on a single Western democratic experience to redesign Japan's post-war political, economic and social systems. The third is that Japanese modernity and liberalisation followed naturally from Occupation reforms. By contrast, de Mateos demonstrates that the Australian agenda for a defeated Japan had a strong social justice component, particularly labour market reforms to install a strong, independent and politically involved union movement. This pro-union vision was in marked contrast to more conservative ideological position of the US to promote 'economic democracy' and "keep Japanese labour *out* of politics" (p. 69). If Australia had succeeded in implementing its own vision for Japan — and, de Mateos argues, this was a real possibility — a very different Japan might have emerged from the Occupation.

de Mateos adopts a chronological narrative to illustrate these themes. Chapters 3 and 4 follow the early years of Australian involvement in Occupied Japan. Chapter 5 turns the focus to Canberra in the ensuing years. Chapters 6 and 7 trace developments in the final years of the Chifley government. Although a chronology can overshadow theme elaboration, de Mateos largely makes this method work. First, she employs a large range of primary source documents — treaties, personal papers, official communications and committee minutes — to provide a fully-developed sketch of the main players in Occupation policy-making. Her profile of Evatt is particularly satisfying, demonstrating powerfully how his professional experiences and personal attitudes helped shape the Australian agenda (pp. 14-32). Second, she book-ends the chronology with two helpful introductory chapters — orienting the reader to the themes of her study — and a meaty conclusion that reinforces these themes and explains their resolution.

Less successful, however, is her account of the Japanese labour movement, the primary subject of Australia's social justice vision. Partly, this is because de Mateos does not

have the same level of engagement with the primary materials for this part of the story. But more importantly, the Japanese labour movement, as the site of Australia-US conflict in Occupation policy-making, provides a *setting* for the narrative, not an *event* within it. Interspersing it within the substantive chronological chapters was jarring and clumsy. It deserved separate treatment in a contextual chapter.

Despite these minor criticisms, *Imposing Peace & Prosperity: Australia, Social Justice and Labour Reform in Occupied Japan* is a fine piece of scholarship. As de Mateos concludes, a lack of international clout and internal policy incoherence may have rendered Australia's social justice vision for post-surrender Japan a "path unfulfilled" (p. 9). But it shows that Australia had a unique normative contribution to make to world affairs.

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