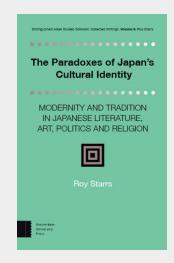
The Paradoxes of Japan's Cultural Identity

Modernity and Tradition in Japanese Literature, Art, Politics and Religion

Japan is widely regarded as having a unique culture and a strong national identity. Paradoxically, however, many basic elements of Japanese culture are not originally Japanese. Since the beginning of its history, Japan has been one of the world's major importers of foreign cultures. Its culture was thoroughly "hybrid" long before that word became fashionable in contemporary global studies. But this does not mean that Japan's culture lacks originality. The Japanese have always made strikingly original contributions, even improvements, to whatever they imported. Even more significantly, the "hybridity" of their culture produced ongoing tensions that served as a kind of creative dynamo for Japanese writers, artists, and intellectuals. This book explores the fundamental creative tension between the native and the foreign in many areas of Japanese culture, from politics and religion to art and literature — a tension also often interpreted as between tradition and modernity.



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