

It is the focus on Bantu cultures that makes this an unusual book. From Holloway's introduction to the various essays which explore the Bantu roots in American culture (Thompson, Mulira, and Hall are outstanding here) it is clear that a reexamination of the degree to which Bantu cultures are represented in the African American "mix" is long overdue. Holloway's book is a welcome step in a very important direction.

— Harriet Ottenheimer  
Kansas State University

**Sheila K. Johnson. *The Japanese Through American Eyes.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) x, 191 pp., \$22.50.**

For those interested in relations between Japan and the United States, this book is timely. It traces American stereotypes and attitudes about Japan from World War II to the later 1980s. The author, an anthropologist who has lived in that nation, uses examples of popular American culture—books, magazines, films and public opinion poll results—to trace attitudinal shifts in the U.S. She effectively uses illustrations and cartoons from magazines and newspapers—*New Yorker*, *Time*, *Playboy*, and the *New York Times*—to indicate how American opinions have ranged over this period.

The book is divided into nine chapters: the Legacy of the War; the Legacy of Hiroshima; the Legacy of the Occupation; the Sexual Nexus; the Cultural Nexus; Of Shoguns and Ninjas; the Business Nexus. The final chapter deals with the Dilemma of Japanese Americans.

Dealing with the "kernel of truth" approach to racial stereotypes, the author observes that certain themes have shaped American thinking about Japan during the past half century, described in the first eight chapters. A number of articles in magazines and books written by such authors as John Hersey, Elizabeth Gray Vining, William Manchester, John Marquand, James Michener, Norman Cousins, Lafcadio Hearn, Ruth Benedict, John Embree and others are cited. She even draws from Ian Fleming's *You Only Live Twice* (made into a James Bond movie). Lists of Japanese-U.S. trade figures from 1952 to 1987 and a chart showing growth of American visitors to Japan (6,600 in 1951 to nearly 500,000 in 1986) are revealing.

Her thesis is that American popular culture has served to reinforce our shifting stereotypes, and how these images have ranged from a "Madame Butterfly" image to a "cruel, sneaky, unfeeling samurai warrior image." The current stereotype involves admiration and frustration regarding Japanese products, a far cry from an earlier image that Japanese products were "inferior copycats" of American ones. Americans, she observes, historically have had ambivalent feelings about the Japanese—and the Chinese. At one time the Chinese were our allies during World War II, and the Japanese were cruel. Then Americans felt guilty about dropping the nuclear

bomb. Next, during the Korean War, the Chinese were the “bad guys,” and the Japanese became our friends. Now they are economic competitors in a type of trade war.

When she discusses why many American men marry Japanese women, the author cites various authors explaining such behavior. However, she fails to point out that the alleged allure of Japanese women could also be said of females from China, Vietnam, Thailand, Korea and the Philippines. Japan is not the only Asian nation which “exports” brides for American and other Western males.

Sheila Johnson correctly notes that Americans have tended to confuse or possibly deliberately transfer feelings, attitudes, perceptions, and images from Japanese to Chinese and back to Japanese. She needs to state that this transferring could also be applied to other Asians such as Koreans, Vietnamese or the Filipinos with whom we also fought wars.

This book has many good points and her arguments are well supported with evidence from American popular culture. The book has its limitations, however. One shortcoming is that when she discusses stereotypes of Japan, she limits her sources to popular media. She fails to mention other possible socializing agents such as the influences of parents, teachers, churches, friends, employers and so on which can have an impact on us. This would be an admittedly difficult task, but still there are other influences in American culture.

Since World War II, Americans have regarded the Japanese as “warlike and cruel,” charming and artistic as well as business oriented and clever. “We have been hostile, remorseful, condescending, admiring, wary, irritated and baffled in the face of Japanese culture,” she writes. We cannot dismiss these stereotypes; however, Americans need to develop a “more stereoscopic vision” of Japan and not rely on a one-dimensional stereotype.

The author notes that there are currently several areas of future conflict and misunderstanding vis-à-vis Japan: economic and trade relations, and the issue of mutual security, both thorny problems. Another possible contentious issue deals with Japan’s feeling of race and racial superiority based on its ethnic homogeneity. Japan fails to understand and appreciate the racial mix in the U.S., as evidenced from statements from Japanese public officials.

There is yet another problem area the author does not mention: How the Japanese in general perceive Americans. She notes that earlier portions of this book were translated and published in Japan in 1986. But that does not tell us how the Japanese in general tend to stereotype Americans, beyond referring to our racial problems. Both nations are still capable of misunderstandings, and, as she correctly notes, stereotypes can shape international events.

— Donald L. Guimary  
San Jose State University