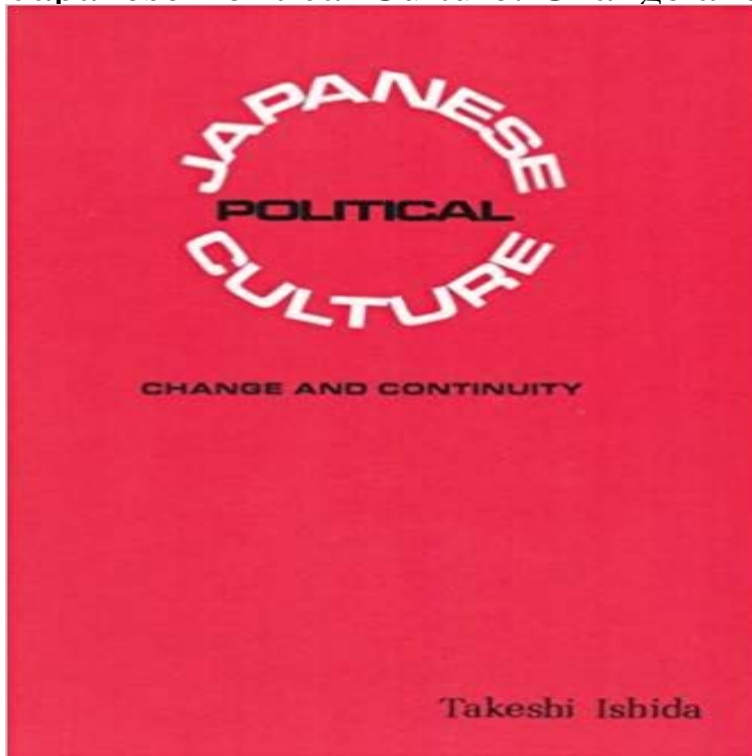


Japanese Political Culture: Change and Continuity



This volume provides a perceptive background to modern Japanese culture. Ishida attempts a balanced evaluation of modern Japan, seeking to explain why the basic characteristics of Japanese society permit two almost opposite assessments. He divides the development of modern Japan into two stages: first, the period starting from the Meiji Restoration (1868) up to the end of World War II; second, from the defeat of Japan in World War II up to the present. Ishida investigates the essential features of the modern Japanese value system and the social structure, which comprise both traditional and modern elements. He examines how Japanese society has adapted Western influences to suit its own needs—the real miracle of modern Japan. As the Japanese economy grows and Japan becomes an economic superpower, political self-confidence is also emerging. Ishida, however, remains critical of Japanese society, because he feels that Japan lacked the internal resources to change the political system from within until its defeat by the Allies forced it to introduce various reforms ordered by the occupation authorities. Despite the rapid changes taking place in Japanese society, certain attitudes, such as conformity and competition, are common to both the prewar and postwar periods. The final section is devoted to the field of peace research. Ishida presents differences of meaning in the concepts of peace in ancient Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Chinese, and Indian cultures in order to characterize the Japanese concept of peace, which, akin to the Chinese, emphasizes harmony rather than justice. He goes on to discuss Japan's images of Gandhi, which, according to the author, were projections of ultranationalist prejudice and missed the significance of his nonviolent direct action. Ishida emphasizes the importance of such nonviolent action as a means to carry out social change toward

the realization of justice.

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