

Power and Pork

A Japanese Political Life

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Power and Pork: a Japanese political life aims to tell the 'inside story' of a Japanese politician—Matsuoka Toshikatsu—one of the more controversial members of Japan's national Diet. Matsuoka belongs to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) as a representative of the Lower House constituency of Kumamoto No. 3, one of Japan's regional electorates. His behaviour has been the subject of much speculation and commentary in the media. The book details Matsuoka's political stratagems and policy activities as an archetypal 'traditional' politician representing farm and rural interests. As an old-style, old-guard LDP Diet member, Matsuoka is the kind of politician that former Prime Minister Koizumi targeted in his attempt to reform his own party and the policymaking process. Matsuoka's reversal of fortune under Prime Minister Abe with his appointment to the post of Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries raises questions about the durability of Koizumi's reforms.

The scope of the work is contemporary Japanese domestic politics, including electoral processes, *zoku* influence, pork barrelling and 'money politics' as exemplified by one of its key players. *Power and Pork* gives an account of how Matsuoka has catered to local, sectional and clientele interests in order to build and retain his political power base. One of the most important conclusions of the book is that individual ruling party backbenchers can exercise extraordinary influence over government policy in Japan.



E P R E S S

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