

Recent Books on Japan – Nov 2019

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Cinema Studies

Cinema is a Cat: A Cat Lover's Introduction to Film Studies / Daisuke Miyao
Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2019

x, 190p.; 98 b&w illustrations.

Includes Index; Bibliographical references

9780824879709

1. Cats in motion pictures.
2. Motion pictures.
3. Cinematography.

\$ 24.99 / PB

316gm.

Watching movies every night at home with his cats, film scholar and cat lover Daisuke Miyao noticed how frequently cats turned up on screen. They made brief appearances (think of Mafia boss Marlon Brando gently stroking a cat in a scene from *The Godfather*); their looks provided inspiration to film creators (*Avatar*); they even held major roles (*The Lion King*). In *Cinema Is a Cat*, Miyao uses the fascinating relationship between cats and cinema to offer a uniquely appealing introduction to film studies.

Cats are representational subjects in the nine films explored in this book, and each chapter juxtaposes a feline characteristic—their love of dark places, their “star” quality—with discussion of the theories and histories of cinema. The opening chapters explore three basic elements of the language of cinema: framing, lighting, and editing. Subsequent chapters examine the contexts in which films are made, exhibited, and viewed. Miyao covers the major theoretical and methodological concepts of film studies—auteurism, realism, genre, feminist film theory, stardom, national cinema, and modernity theory—exploring fundamental questions. Who is the author of a film? How does a film connect to reality? What connections does one film have to other films? Who is represented in a film and how? How is a film viewed differently by people of different cultural and social backgrounds? How is a film located in history? His focus on the innate qualities of cats—acting like prima donnas, born of

mixed blood, devoted to the chase—offers a memorable and appealing approach to the study of film.

How to read audio-visual materials aesthetically and culturally is of limitless value in a world where we are constantly surrounded by moving images—television, video, YouTube, streaming, GPS, and virtual reality. *Cinema Is a Cat* offers an accessible, user-friendly approach that will deepen viewers' appreciation of movies, from Hollywood classics like *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *To Catch a Thief*, to Japanese period dramas like *Samurai Cat*. The book will be attractive to a wide audience of students and scholars, movie devotees, and cat lovers.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=667419>

History

Kingdom of the Sick : A History of Leprosy and Japan / Susan L. Burns
Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2019

viii, 336p. ; 18 b&w illustrations

Includes Index ; Bibliography

9780824879013

1. Leprosy – Japan – History – 20th century.
2. Leprosy – Patients – Japan – History – 20th century.
3. Leprosy – Government policy – Japan – History – 20th century.

\$ 68.00 / HB

596gm.

In this groundbreaking work, Susan L. Burns examines the history of leprosy in Japan from medieval times until the present. At the center of *Kingdom of the Sick* is the rise of Japan's system of national leprosy sanitarium, which today continue to house more than 1,500 former patients, many of whom have spent five or more decades within them.

Burns argues that long before the modern Japanese government began to define a policy toward leprosy, the disease was already profoundly marked by ethical and political concerns and associated with sin, pollution, heredity, and outcast status. Beginning in the 1870s, new anxieties about race and civilization that emanated from a variety of civic actors, including journalists, doctors, patent medicine producers, and Christian missionaries transformed leprosy into a national issue. After 1900, a clamor of voices called for the quarantine of all sufferers of the disease, and in the decades that followed bureaucrats, politicians, physicians, journalists, local communities, and leprosy sufferers themselves grappled with the place of the biologically vulnerable within the body politic. At stake in this “citizenship project” were still evolving conceptions of individual rights, government responsibility for social welfare, and the delicate balance between care and control.

Refusing to treat leprosy patients as simply victims of state power, Burns recovers their voices in the debates that surrounded the most controversial aspects of sanitarium policy, including the use of sterilization, segregation, and the continuation of confinement long after leprosy had become a curable disease. Richly documented with both visual and textual sources and interweaving medical, political, social, and cultural history, *Kingdom of the Sick* tells an important story for readers interested in Japan, the history of medicine and public health, social welfare, gender and sexuality, and human rights.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=667420>

Defamiliarizing Japan's Asia-Pacific War / (Eds) W. Puck Brecher & Michael W. Myers

Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2019

viii, 236p. ; 8 b&w illustrations

Includes Index

9780824879679

1. World War, 1939-1945 – Japan – Historiography.
2. World War, 1939-1945 - Japan – Public opinion.
3. Public opinion – Japan.

\$ 68.00 / HB

496gm.

This wide-ranging collection seeks to reassess conventional understanding of Japan's Asia-Pacific War by defamiliarizing and expanding the rhetorical narrative. Its nine chapters, diverse in theme and method, are united in their goal to recover a measured historicity about the conflict by either introducing new areas of knowledge or reinterpreting existing ones. Collectively, they cast doubt on the war as familiar and recognizable, compelling readers to view it with fresh eyes.

Following an introduction that problematizes timeworn narratives about a “unified Japan” and its “illegal war” or “race war,” early chapters on the destruction of Japan's diplomatic records and government interest in an egalitarian health care policy before, during, and after the war oblige us to question selective histories and moral judgments about wartime Japan. The discussion then turns to artistic/cultural production and self-determination, specifically to Osaka *rakugo* performers who used comedy to contend with state oppression and to the role of women in creating care packages for

soldiers abroad. Other chapters cast doubt on well-trod stereotypes (Japan's lack of pragmatism in its diplomatic relations with neutral nations and its irrational and fatalistic military leadership) and examine resistance to the war by a prominent Japanese Christian intellectual. The volume concludes with two nuanced responses to race in wartime Japan, one maintaining the importance of racial categories while recognizing the "performance of Japaneseness," the other observing that communities often reflected official government policies through nationality rather than race. Contrasting findings like these underscore the need to ask new questions and fill old gaps in our understanding of a historical event that, after more than seventy years, remains as provocative and divisive as ever.

Defamiliarizing Japan's Asia-Pacific War will find a ready audience among World War II historians as well as specialists in war and society, social history, and the growing fields of material culture and civic history.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=667422>

A Bowl for a Coin: A Commodity History of Japanese Tea / William Wayne Farris

Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2019

xiv, 228p. ; 14 b&w illustrations

Includes Index ; Bibliography

9780824876609

1. Tea – Japan – History.
2. Tea trade – Japan – History.

\$ 68.00 / HB

500gm.

A Bowl for a Coin is the first book in any language to describe and analyze the history of all Japanese teas from the plant's introduction to the archipelago around 750 to the present day. To understand the triumph of the tea plant in Japan, William Wayne Farris begins with its cultivation and goes on to describe the myriad ways in which the herb was processed into a palatable beverage, ultimately resulting in the wide variety of teas we enjoy today. Along the way, he traces in fascinating detail the shift in tea's status from exotic gift item from China, tied to Heian (794–1185) court ritual and medicinal uses, to

tax and commodity for exchange in the 1350s, to its complete nativization in Edo (1603–1868) art and literature and its eventual place on the table of every Japanese household.

Farris maintains that the increasing sophistication of Japanese agriculture after 1350 is exemplified by tea farming, which became so advanced that Meiji (1868–1912) entrepreneurs were able to export significant amounts of Japanese tea to Euro-American markets. This in turn provided the much-needed foreign capital necessary to help secure Japan a place among the world's industrialized nations. Tea also had a hand in initiating Japan's "industrious revolution": From 1400, tea was being drunk in larger quantities by commoners as well as elites, and the stimulating, habit-forming beverage made it possible for laborers to apply handicraft skills in a meticulous, efficient, and prolonged manner. In addition to aiding in the protoindustrialization of Japan by 1800, tea had by that time become a central commodity in the formation of a burgeoning consumer society. The demand-pull of tea consumption necessitated even greater production into the postwar period—and this despite challenges posed to the industry by consumers' growing taste for coffee.

A Bowl for a Coin makes a convincing case for how tea—an age-old drink that continues to adapt itself to changing tastes in Japan and the world—can serve as a broad lens through which to view the development of Japanese society over many centuries.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=667423>

Religion

Agents of World Renewal: The Rise of Yonaoshi Gods in Japan / Takashi Miura

Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2019

x, 236p.

Includes Index; Bibliography

9780824880378

1. God, Japanese.

2. Japan – Religious life and customs.
\$ 68.00 / HB
502gm.

This volume examines a category of Japanese divinities that centered on the concept of “world renewal” (*yonaoshi*). In the latter half of the Tokugawa period (1603–1867), a number of entities, both natural and supernatural, came to be worshipped as “gods of world renewal.” These included disgruntled peasants who demanded their local governments repeal unfair taxation, government bureaucrats who implemented special fiscal measures to help the poor, and a giant subterranean catfish believed to cause earthquakes to punish the hoarding rich. In the modern period, *yonaoshi* gods took on more explicitly anti-authoritarian characteristics. During a major uprising in Saitama Prefecture in 1884, a *yonaoshi* god was invoked to deny the legitimacy of the Meiji regime, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the new religion Ōmoto predicted an apocalyptic end of the world presided over by a messianic *yonaoshi* god.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=667424>

Religion – Buddhism

Shinra Myojin and Buddhist Networks of the East Asian “Mediterranean” /
Sujung Kim

Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2020

xii, 182p. ; 10 b&w illustrations, 2 maps.

Includes Index ; Bibliography

9780824877996

1. Shinra Myojin (Buddhist deity).
2. Buddhism – Japan – History – 1185-1600.
3. Buddhism – Korea – History.

\$ 68.00 / HB

424gm.

This ambitious work offers a transnational account of the deity Shinra Myōjin, the “god of Silla” worshipped in medieval Japanese Buddhism from the eleventh to sixteenth centuries. Sujung Kim challenges the long-held understanding of Shinra Myōjin as a protective deity of the Tendai Jimon school, showing how its worship emerged and developed in the complex networks of the East Asian “Mediterranean”—a “quality” rather than a physical space defined by Kim as the primary conduit for cross-cultural influence in a region that includes the Yellow Sea, the Sea of Japan (East Sea), the East China Sea, and neighboring coastal areas. While focusing on the transcultural worship of the deity, Kim engages the different maritime arrangements in which Shinra Myōjin circulated: first, the network of Korean immigrants, Chinese merchants, and Japanese Buddhist monks in China’s Shandong peninsula and Japan’s Ōmi Province; and second, that of gods found in the East Asian Mediterranean. Both of these networks became nodal points of exchange of both goods and gods. Kim’s examination of temple chronicles, literary writings, and iconography reveals Shinra Myōjin’s evolution from a seafaring god to a multifaceted one whose roles included the god of pestilence and of poetry, the insurer of painless childbirth, and the protector of performing arts.

Shinra Myōjin and Buddhist Networks of the East Asian “Mediterranean” is not only the first monograph in any language on the Tendai Jimon school in Japanese Buddhism, but also the first book-length study in English to examine Korean connections in medieval Japanese religion. Unlike other recent studies on individual Buddhist deities, it foregrounds the need to approach them within a broader East Asian context. By shifting the paradigm from a land-centered vision to a sea-centered one, the work underlines the importance of a transcultural and interdisciplinary approach to the study of Buddhist deities.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=667425>

Guardians of the Buddha's Home : Domestic Religion in Contemporary Jodo
Shinshu / Jessica Starling (Series Ed) Mark M. Rowe
Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2019
xi, 316p. ; 7 b&w illustrations

Includes Index

9781137537515

Contemporary Buddhism Series

1. Shin (Sect) – Japan – Customs and practices – Case studies.
2. Women in Buddhism – Japan – Case studies.
3. Buddhist women – Religious life – Japan – Case studies.

\$ 62.00 / HB

550gm.

In *Guardians of the Buddha's Home*, Jessica Starling draws on nearly three years of ethnographic research to provide a comprehensive view of Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land) temple life with temple wives (known as *bōmori*, or temple guardians) at its center. Throughout, she focuses on “domestic religion,” a mode of doing religion centering on more informal religious expression that has received scant attention in the scholarly literature. The Buddhist temple wife’s movement back and forth between the main hall and the “back stage” of the kitchen and family residence highlights the way religious meaning cannot be confined to canonical texts or to the area of the temple prescribed for formal worship. Starling argues that attaining Buddhist faith (*shinjin*) is just as likely to occur in response to a simple act of hospitality, a sense of community experienced at an informal temple gathering, or an aesthetic affinity with the temple space that has been carefully maintained by the *bōmori* as it is from hearing the words of a Pure Land sutra intoned by a professional priest. For temple wives, the spiritual practice of *button hōsha* (repayment of the debt owed to the Buddha for one’s salvation) finds expression through the conscientious stewardship of temple donations, caring for the Buddha’s home and opening it to lay followers, raising the temple’s children, and propagating the teachings in the domestic sphere. Engaging with what religious scholars have called the “turn to affect,” Starling’s work investigates in personal detail how religious dispositions are formed in individual practitioners. The answer, not surprisingly, has as much to do with intimate relationships and quotidian practices as with formal liturgies or scripted sermons.

<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=667426>

