



## Handbook of Japanese Popular Culture

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discipline in which cultural background of the investigator colors the perceptions of Other and affects the analysis of the data? If the answer is anywhere closer to the latter than the former, how is Moon's background manifested in this study? What can we learn about Japan that we have not known because anthropologists working in that country have been virtually all Japanese or Western? Moon's study is completely silent on this score.

Hopefully in the future, as she reworks the data over or as she conducts further research in Japan, Moon will take in her Korean-ness as a factor in her social and cultural analysis of Japan; she will thus reveal cultural assumptions we have not been able to discern because of the Western and Japanese 'cultural spectacles' that we have been wearing. Korean cultural spectacles no doubt will have their own blind spots, but they should help expose blind spots based on Western or Japanese culture.

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*Handbook of Japanese Popular Culture*. Edited by Richard Gid Powers & Katō Hidetoshi. Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1989. 368 pages. \$59.95.

THIS collection of eleven bibliographic essays on diverse aspects of contemporary popular Japanese culture is intended to introduce primary collections, reference works, and secondary literature, especially English-language sources. As such, it should prove to be a useful initial resource for students and scholars. To the extent that the essays are also intended as commentaries on their subjects, the results are at best mixed.

Keiko McDonald and Linda Fujie are the most successful in combining historical sketch, informed comment, and guide to references. McDonald provides a detailed ninety-year survey of 'popular film', which has largely been ignored by Japanese critics and unseen by foreign audiences. Fujie discusses the broad range of *kayōkyoku*, or 'popular music', beyond the typical focus on the *kawaiiko-chan*, those cute human puppets known for what they most lack, *talento*. Most of the other contributions offer less fulsome commentary. Several are on the order of middling entries in the *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*. These include Muneo Jay Yoshikawa on *manzai* and *rakugo*; Yoshida Kazuo on mystery literature; and Bruce Stronach's broadcasting history of Japanese television.

Byron Earhart has a very complete bibliographical essay on the New Religions, which adds marginally to his several excellent book-length bibliographies. John Lent surveys Japanese comics, but is less successful perhaps because we already have Frederick Schodt's helpful *Manga! Manga!* Several of the assignments are simply unmanageable. Theodore Bestor wrestles admirably with the most unwieldy of the topical mandates—urban 'lifestyles and popular culture'. William May has the equally problematic subject of 'sports', but does get in some well-placed criticism of the samurai-baseball school of sports interpretation.

Finally, Elizabeth Hull and Mark Siegal open promisingly with some interesting issues on the nature of science fiction as a genre and its relation to technological development, but they quickly come to dwell on details of Japanese fandom. Renato Pirota's chapter on 'popular architecture' is too brief to be of use, but the puzzling

title does hint at larger problems of conceptualization not squarely faced by the *Handbook* project. Every topic in the book is labeled 'popular', but this is more a matter of editorial consistency than substantive coherence. At the outset, Katō Hideo alludes to the hoary debates about *taishū*, *minshū*, *poppyuraa*, *masu*, and *chūryū*. But these are dismissed as definitional issues and glossed in the rather quaint contrast of highbrow/lowbrow.

Indeed, helpful as the *Handbook* is, I am still troubled by the essays' lack of theoretical depth. They generally take a descriptive approach to their task—typologizing and chronologizing. Too often the analysis is on the order of Tada Michitarō's explanation of the Osaka origins of *manzai* and the Tokyo origins of *rakugo*, which he locates in the divergent styles of the two cities: Osaka, the city of culinary hodgepodge, vs Edo, the world of the divided *makunouchi bentō*! This kind of pop-talk does for cultural history what national character studies have done for psychological anthropology—which is to say, very little good.

This need not be so. Critical studies of the commercial media, class lifestyles, and contemporary entertainments exist for many other industrial societies. A litany of serious scholarship would include Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies in Britain; de Certeau, Barthes, and Bourdieu in France; Janice Radway, David Marc, and many others in the U.S.; and the Frankfurt School and later analysts in Germany. A number of specialists (including David Bordwell, Marilyn Ivy, and Brian Moeran) have made a start, but we will have to do a lot more 'reconsidering' of Japanese popular culture than Katō offers in an appallingly simplistic conclusion (pp. 301–18). He claims that the surplus energy pressurized by the national isolation policy of the Tokugawas was channeled into popular culture production. This created an egalitarian society in spite of official hierarchy, and constitutes a 'continuous tradition' with the present. The last words of the book belong to Katō, and they are all too familiar and hardly reassuring: 'In conclusion, Japanese popular culture is unique, and its research methodology requires that special consideration be given this singularity' (p. 316).

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*Japan: World Bibliographical Series, Volume 103.* By Frank Joseph Shulman.  
Clio Press, Oxford & Santa Barbara, 1989. xix+873 pages. £89.95;  
\$132.00; ¥32,400.

JAPAN without Hearn, Aston, Chamberlain, and Papinot? Alas, being venerable is no longer a guarantee of being venerated. Old staples make way for new fare that enlarges, if not always enriches, the corpus of knowledge. Here is a guide to sources about Japan that testifies to the maturation of japanology.

Compiled by an experienced professional bibliographer of Western materials on Asia, *Japan* contains about 1,900 English-language books in 1,615 annotated entries. The text is divided into sections on geography, travel, archaeology, history, biography, demography, minorities, overseas Japanese, language, religion, philosophy, society, psychology, medicine, politics, foreign relations, military, law, economy, agriculture, business, energy, finance, industry, international trade, management, en-