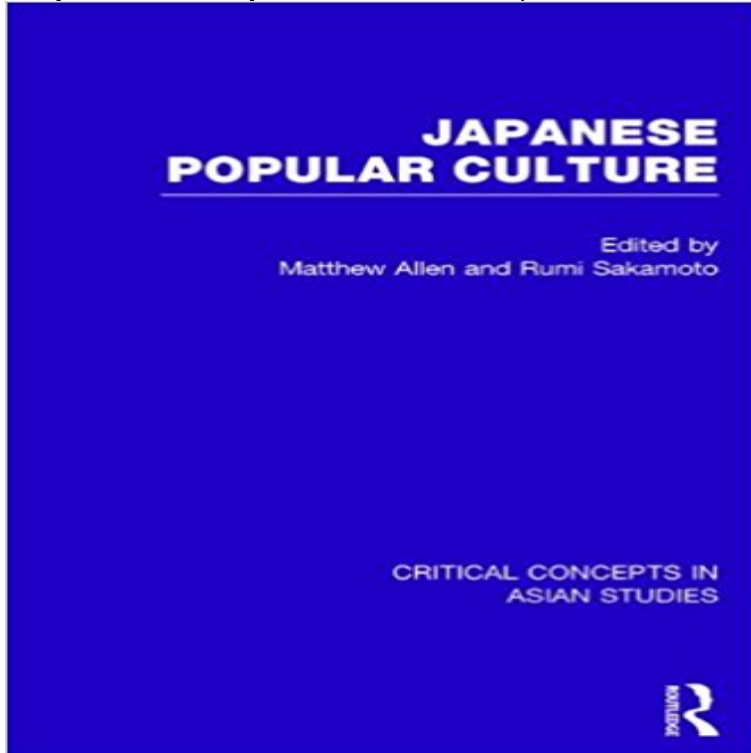


Japanese Popular Culture (Critical Concepts in Asian Studies)



Japanese popular culture has developed in many unexpected and fascinating ways. From contemporary pop cultures beginnings in the shadow of the Second World War and the earlier China campaign, Japan's sense of identity has been contested, challenged, reconsidered, restructured, and revived through multiple popular media. Pop culture, though, has always occupied a singular place in Japan's expression of selfhood and otherness, providing vicarious experiences of life within Japan. Today, Japanese popular culture's global influence is felt most keenly in movie culture, animation, television, the Internet, social media, music, fashion, and comics (manga), to name but a few fields and technologies. Indeed, visual culture, specifically television and movies, with a strong emphasis on animation (anime) and manga, led the first wave of Japanese pop-culture exports in the second half of the twentieth century. Since then, academic interest in these exports, both at home in Japan, and overseas, has developed rapidly. The second wave of Japanese popular culture followed the digitization of much of the global media: rapid communications, global connectedness, and the development of new media have provided platforms on which Japanese pop culture has been presented and critiqued, engaged, and transformed. More complex, more hybrid, and more sophisticated, the relationships between Japan and the rest of the world are often given voice through new readings and interpretations of the interconnected popular cultural world. The assembled articles in Volume I of this new Routledge collection of major works provide a comprehensive overview of the postwar history of Japanese popular culture. Topics include the emergence of popular culture as an academic field in Japan; the genesis of manga and anime; analyses of various cultural artefacts and phenomena, such as censorship and popular culture during the

postwar occupation; the 1970s origin of kawaii culture; and street fashion in the 1980s. Volumes II and III, meanwhile, focus on the twenty-first century. Over the last decade especially, the transnational presence of Japanese popular culture has accelerated, and with it scholarship on Japanese popular culture has grown in depth and diversity. The themes explored in these volumes include the role of digital technology in popular culture; esoteric cultural artefacts and activities, such as loli fashion, maid cafes, otaku culture, and traditional music reinvented as pop, as well as more conventionally popular products such as anime, TV drama, and shojo manga. Collectively, the volume demonstrates the complex and heterogeneous nature of the Japanese pop-culture landscape in the twenty-first century. The final volume in the collection addresses broader issues associated with Japanese popular culture and globalization. As Japan sought to boost its international soft power via a Cool Japan strategy, the academy began to pay serious attention to the political-economic implications of Japan's pop-culture exports. The soft-power rhetoric has become a significant marker of popular culture in Asia in particular, and Japan's influence regionally has been explored from a number of angles. Along with seminal pieces from Nye, Huat, and Iwabuchi, authors in the first section of Volume IV examine the rise of Japan's pop-culture industry, and investigate the socio-economic and political-economic implications of topics such as the Japan Brand, Cool Japan, and Cute Japan. In the second section, case studies of soft power are brought to the fore, and analyses of the implications for people and culture are developed. Collectively, the materials gathered in this volume demonstrate the highly mobile and complex nature of the globalization of Japanese popular culture.

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