

Recent Books on Sociology and Culture Studies - March/April 2012

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Contact Moments: The Politics of Intercultural Desire in Japanese Male-Queer Cultures /
Katsuhiko Suganuma
Hong Kong : Hong Kong University Press, 2012
232p.; 23cm.
9789888083718
Queer Asia
\$ 25.00
356gm.

This book sheds light on 'contact moments' between Japanese male-queer culture and that of the West in the postwar period, and critiques various contemporary examples of persistent Orientalism and nativism. Focusing on a range of Japanese as well as English male-queer materials including magazines, memoirs and cybertexts, Suganuma shows how the interactions of the two cultures affected the subject formation process of queer selves. The instances examined range from the hentai magazines of the 1950s and their depiction of men who had sex with foreign men (mostly American servicemen); the depiction of race in the magazine Barazoku; John Whittier Treat's memoir of his sabbatical in Japan and his depiction of his own Orientalism; the writings and strategies of OCCUR and Fushimi in the 1990s; and the GJN news site.

The author sees the depiction of and reaction to Japanese men who had sex with foreigners in the hentai magazines as part of a larger pattern of representation manifesting gender anxieties among Japanese men (both heterosexual and homosexual) who found themselves feminized by defeat in the war. He draws on Dyer's understanding of whiteness as a flexible default position in his discussion of Barazoku, but argues that in this case Japaneseness is the default position and whiteness is othered. In his final chapter, he argues for an understanding of the activities of GJN also as a space of mediation rather than simply as a wholesale importation of American or 'global gay' culture. Suganuma argues that the binaries of cross-cultural comparison (local/global, Japan/West, acts/identities, and us/them) can be generative and productive as well as repressive and reductive.
<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=139524>

Structure, Audience and Soft Power in East Asian Pop Culture /Chua Beng Huat
Hong Kong : Hong Kong University Press, 2012
200p.; 23cm.
9789888139040
TransAsia : Screen Cultures
\$ 25.00
315gm.

East Asian pop culture can be seen as an integrated cultural economy emerging from the rise of Japanese and Korean pop culture as an influential force in the distribution and reception networks of Chinese language pop culture embedded in the ethnic Chinese diaspora. Taking Singapore as a locus of pan-Asian Chineseness, Chua Beng Huat provides detailed analysis of the fragmented reception process of transcultural audiences and the processes of audiences' formation and exercise of consumer power and engagement with national politics.

In an era where exercise of military power is increasingly restrained, pop culture has become an important component of soft power diplomacy and transcultural collaborations in a region that is still haunted by colonization and violence. The author notes that the aspirations behind national governments' efforts to use popular culture is limited by the fragmented nature of audiences who respond differently to the same products; by the danger of backlash from other members of the importing country's population that do not consume the popular culture products in question; and by the efforts of the primary consuming country, the People's Republic of China to shape products through co-production strategies and other indirect modes of intervention.
<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=139525>

Phat Huy Vai Tro Cua Cac Ton Giao Viet Nam Trong Phong, Chong HIV Va AIDS = The Roles of Faith Based Organisations in Confronting HIV and AIDS in Vietnam
Hanoi : (s.n.), 2010
231p. ; 28cm.
Bilingual English & Vietnamese language
\$ 60.00/ HB
864 gm.
<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=139687>

>From Dar es Saalam to Bongoland : Urban Mutations in Tanzania / Bernard Calas;
Translated by Naomi Morgan
Dar es Salaam : Mkuki na Nyota Publishers Ltd., 2010
Ix, 404p.
9789987080946
\$ 45.00
620gm.

Today, for the Tanzanian, the town has become Bongoland, that is, a place where survival is a matter of cunning and intelligence (bongo means 'brain' in Kiswahili). Far from being an anecdote, this slide into toponymy records the mutations that affect the links that Tanzanians maintain with their principal city and the manner in which it represents them.
<http://www.marymartin.com/web?pid=126224>

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