



Riding the Black Ship: Japan and Tokyo Disneyland

Review Author[s]:
William W. Kelly

The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 59, No. 2 (May, 2000), 441-442.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0021-9118%28200005%2959%3A2%3C441%3ARTBSJA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-0>

The Journal of Asian Studies is currently published by Association for Asian Studies.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/afas.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Japanese state are laid out in chapter 5. Pelletier carefully reviews the theoretical contributions of the Japanese school of political geography. Chapter 6 focuses on the strategic islands of Miyake and Okinawa as two examples of geopolitical superinsularity. Chapter 7 deals with maritime border disputes and pays close attention to place names and cartographic toponymy in its analysis. In chapter 8, the author concludes that superinsularity has not been studied as we would have expected from a maritime society that has developed long-distance trade. Distant islands have been perceived as an obstacle to the conceptualization of Japanese insularity as the source of a unique nation state.

This book is based on an exhaustive use of numerous sources in Japanese and a careful analysis of the vocabulary and concepts related to islands and insular communities. Geopolitical discourse on insularity has elaborated a theory of island country that assumes that Japan is a unique state peopled by a unique race. Pelletier successfully challenges this type of determinism. His maps are relevant, beautiful, and clear. The index is well conceived but the bibliography is indicative rather than exhaustive. The interested reader will have to comb through footnotes for references. Given the high quality of *La japonésie*, the reader may be surprised by occasional mistakes in Chinese transcriptions. Despite these minor quibbles, this fundamental book is going to change our perception of Japan.

PHILIPPE FORÊT
University of Oklahoma

Riding the Black Ship: Japan and Tokyo Disneyland. By AVIAD E. RAZ.
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. xi, 240 pp.

From its opening in 1983, Tokyo Disneyland (TDL) has been wildly popular and profitable. In both revenues and visitors, it equals the combined totals of all other leisure parks in Japan. In fact, even after Japan's decade-long economic recession, TDL remains the most successful theme park in the world. How are we to interpret this American fantasy castle rising incongruously on the reclaimed land of Tokyo Bay? Is TDL and the Disney corporate complex behind it an ominous "black ship" of American cultural imperialism, forcing open the leisure ports of Japan and captivating its mass audience? Or has it too been tempered and tamed by the local ownership and the Japanese visitors, skillfully "re-made in Japan," in Joseph Tobin's phrase?

This is the question that animates Raz's fascinating study, and he argues decidedly and persuasively for the latter position. TDL, he finds, is less an exact replica of an American original than a subtle and strategic appropriation of that original. This view puts Raz in the company of many other recent students of Japanese mass culture and the terms of its participation in global flows of fashion, fast foods, advertising, popular music, and a host of other products, styles, and practices. Among these, what is especially valuable in Raz's study is not only the sheer dominance of Disney and TDL in the Japanese political economy of leisure but also the strident claims of all involved in this spectacle that it is indeed pure Disney, unadulterated by local tastes and agendas. It is a strong test of whether the global flows of late modernity overwhelm local patterns or are themselves diverted to and by local interests.

Raz spent a year, in 1995–96, visiting Tokyo Disneyland by himself and on tours, interviewing visitors and employees, organizing and meeting with a focus group, and analyzing company manuals and guidebooks. As others have discovered, the Disney

“iron cage of fun” is not an easily accessible research site, but Raz seems to have been both resourceful and responsible in his extended fieldwork.

Raz organized his inquiry along three dimensions of TDL: the front stage experience of visiting TDL, its concessions, rides, and shows; the backstage production of that spectacle by the large “cast” of workers; and the “offstage” talk about the TDL experience by visitors, Disney fans, and scholars. These are also, he notes, the three emphases of the growing scholarship on the global Disney presence, which he reviews and uses judiciously in situating his own arguments. The three perspectives of his fieldwork then form the expository framework of his book.

A casual visitor sees little to distinguish the American, French, and Japanese Disney parks. Exact replication is indeed Disney’s central claim, but in part 1, Raz analyzes three popular TDL sites to demonstrate the several strategies of recontextualization by which TDL domesticates the Disney spectacle.

TDL is a “smile factory,” offering a predictably cheery, cute, and wholesome entertainment experience, and part 2 considers how TDL motivates and manages the workers who produce those constant smiles. Work at Disney has always baffled scholars because despite the low pay and tight supervision, its parks have consistently attracted a seemingly pliant, able, and affable workforce. TDL is also remarkable because fully 10,000 of its 12,000 employees are part-timers. Most companies ignore training and socializing their part-timers, but TDL expends great effort on mobilizing, socializing, and controlling its workforce.

The key for Raz is in the employee manuals, which laid out detailed guidelines for appearance and conduct—“manual labor” in a double sense! And at the heart of this training is emotion management, which Raz takes up in chapter 4. This was for me the richest and most provocative section of the book. Raz turns to Arlie Hochschild’s influential thesis about the commercialization of emotion, by which “emotion work” becomes public (the Disney smile is part of the product offered), feeling rules are made explicit (codified and taught to employees), and social exchanges between customer and worker (or visitors and cast, in Disney Talk) are narrowly channeled and tightly scripted. Service codes are feeling rules.

Raz argues that TDL cast members recognized the demands upon them but were not much bothered by having to subjugate their own emotions and to play a Disney person. He attributes this to a Japanese predisposition to accept front/back distinctions; it was all form and no feeling. Those who complained (usually the restaurant workers) wanted a redefinition of their jobs, not their persons.

The final part 3 considers Disney discourse—or rather, how different categories of visitors talk about their (often multiple) TDL experiences and how Disney and TDL is treated within cultural studies. He has a particularly useful discussion of how children, OLs, and middle-age visitors have cohort-specific ways of consuming TDL and Disney merchandise. This is a further dimension of his broader case for “globalization,” a neologism he borrows to characterize effectively the several processes of active appropriation and modification that he finds in each of these worlds of Disney.

WILLIAM W. KELLY
Yale University

Fictions of Femininity: Literary Inventions of Gender in Japanese Court Women’s Memoirs. By EDITH SARRA. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. xiii, 328 pp. \$55.00.