



PROJECT MUSE®

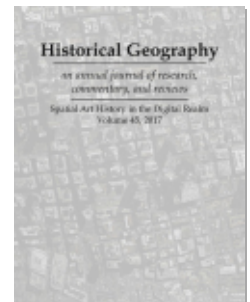
---

*Cartographic Japan: A History in Maps* eds. by Kären Wigen,  
Sugimoto Fumiko, and Cary Karacas (review)

Rex J. Rowley

Historical Geography, Volume 45, 2017, pp. 284-286 (Review)

Published by University of Nebraska Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/716057>

Given the traumatic context of Cambodia's recent history, the majority of the book concerns how Uk's subjects make sense of their lives so as to subsist. Sections such as "Behind the Rationale of Bomb Hunting" (p. 89), "Making the Dead Body Complete" (p. 113), and "The Mnemonic Functions of Sculpting" (p. 146), showcase Uk's seamless weaving of anthropological theory, historical analysis, and individual/cultural framing. I envied her smooth transitions through discussions of dense theory, reviews of related literature, and traditional anthropological fieldwork. Clearly written and well organized, the book is also a testament to the care that many people, in this case those at Cornell University Press, put into creating such a fine work.

Uk describes just how the Jorai reclaim their culture, indeed their very lives, from the bombs and ideologies of others. The Jorai reappropriate war-related objects, refashioning "items originally manufactured to cause death into objects endowed with new life" (p. 94). Imagine what it would take, for example, for a collective of people to create and then regularly use an everyday item, such as utensils or a plate, from such a deadly object. Recycling and reclaiming also involves "bomb hunters," those searching out bombs to sell as scrap metal. In some instances, such hunters die from what they are seeking. Dog tags from long dead foreign soldiers are also found and then given to young children by the Jorai "to protect [them] from malevolent spirits" (p. 97). The traditional beliefs and accounts of Jorai people, negotiating the past and the present, make for engaging writing. Importantly, however, Uk avoids the sentimental in favor of thick description, giving her ethnography value beyond simple testimonials.

Other practices not directly linked to daily survival again bridge traditional Jorai culture and those peoples' experiences. To give a few examples, weaving and sculpting allow their practitioners to further transmit aesthetic traditions, promoting memory. Rituals are employed and adjusted to help assure the dead avoid a "bad death," or one where the spirit of the deceased remains unsettled. Those maimed from war are gradually re-integrated into the village through their first living outside of it. The Jorai have, in unique and inspiring ways, adapted their beliefs and behaviors to retain connection to their ancestral heritage despite facing unimaginable trauma and grief.

Despite being somewhat specialized, Uk's work deserves a wide readership. We live in an era of sustained and brutal armed conflicts. These conflicts traumatically and disproportionately affect certain areas and peoples, while others elsewhere appear untouched. Good writing should touch you. Geopolitics affects everyone, but citizens of superpowers like the U.S. may not know that their country dropped a million tons of bombs on a developing nation. Those bombs still affect Cambodians. I am grateful to Uk for teaching me about the everyday effects of my nation's actions on people an ocean away.

Kurt Borchard  
University of Nebraska Kearney



*Cartographic Japan: A History in Maps.* KÄREN WIGEN, SUGIMOTO FUMIKO, and CARY KARACAS, editors. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. Pp. xi+269, color plates, diagrams, index. \$45.00 cloth. ISBN 9780226073057.

Maps are important primary documents for historical geographers and historians. Cartography provides a sense of place to accompany a sense of time for an event, a culture, or, perhaps, an entire era. Maps provide context to other historical documents, give a picture of the way a group of people looked at the world at a particular moment in time, and provide a visual

representation of spatial patterns and processes. Maps also help us to reconstruct, with hindsight and modern technology, the changes in space and place. *Cartographic Japan* is a visually stunning and historically detailed compilation that illustrates this inherent power in maps and mapping while telling the story of one country's history and place in the world.

The editors of *Cartographic Japan* have assembled 47 authors who use individual expertise in some facet of Japanese history and culture to explicate the story, context, and meaning of a particular set of cartographic resources. The book is made up of 58 short essays centered on one or two maps, each reproduced in high resolution and full color in a large format (8 1/2 x 11 inch pages). Most maps are of Japan and individual places therein. Others are conceptions of Japan from foreign cartographers, and some are by Japanese mapmakers illustrating territories it sought or conquered. Each chapter is instructive about a singular moment in Japanese history.

The book is divided into four sections. Parts I and II focus on cartography of early-modern Japan and the 250-year period of relative peace under the Tokugawa shogunate. Part III illustrates changes that came with the Meiji Restoration through maps indicative of the modernization, urbanization, industrialization, and imperialization of the Japanese archipelago. Part IV brings readers to the present, with a diverse set of maps exemplifying important moments in recent decades including World War II, natural disasters, and demographic change. The editors introduce each section, giving a coherent package to the collection through a recognition of themes surrounding an otherwise disparate set of maps. Editors Wigen, Sugimoto, and Karacas have done an excellent job in providing such a guide, and have organized the book in a way that, taken together, provides an excellent resource for students of Japanese history, map buffs, or those of us who consider ourselves, in the words of Wigen, "students of spatial history" (p. 188).

The editors have achieved their goals in making accessible a set of maps largely unknown to English-speaking audiences whilst telling the history of the island nation and illustrating the state of Japanese cartographic research today. Each chapter is written by expert scholars in their subfield, who, in most cases, have written in much greater depth (in scholarly monographs, academic articles, etc.) on the topics they present here. But, their essays are written in a way that engages the reader in an approachable style, while providing references and suggested reading for those who desire to dig deeper. In this way the authors and editors have contributed to an effort that will please a wide range of lay audiences and academics alike. For historical geographers, this is an important volume, both in its contributions to our understanding of Japanese cartography in the particular, but also in the broader importance of using cartography as a research tool. It is noteworthy that in the very small pool of American geographers dedicated to a study of Japan, two of them are editors of this book and are among the only six authors in the volume who claim a home in our discipline (most authors are historians). Such leadership within historical geography is a significant contribution of this book.

Geographers will find an appealing diversity of beautiful maps at the center of each chapter. In some chapters, I spent more time staring at the details of the maps than with the text that explained them. In others, I was left wanting more detail and finer resolution. Shortcomings of the book, in fact, derive from the unavoidable losses in resolution and appearance that come with reproducing maps—many that are, in reality, much larger than a page, a drafting table, or even an entire room—in a printed volume. I appreciated several chapters where the author provided a "zoomed-in" portion of a map to show some additional detail and to help tell the story of the essay. Additionally, I struggled with some annotations added by authors pointing out symbols, patterns, or Japanese words explained in the text. While a necessary technique to understand the broader message behind the map, some markings may distract the reader from seeing the map in its original form. I liked the approach in one chapter about Edo's (Tokyo) internal structure,

its peripheral connections, social structure, and context in international relations in its early development as a city (chapter 16, pp. 75-77). The focus of the chapter is reproduced without annotation on the first page of the essay and then a second copy is included in another figure with markings to orient the reader. A further subset of that same map is used by another author in the next chapter to focus in on segregation within the Tokugawa-era capital (pp. 78-80). The reader thereby has a chance to focus on the whole map as an artifact and piece of art and then can appreciate, through the authors' interpretations and annotations, its broader meanings during this time in history.

*Cartographic Japan* is a book that remains true to its subtitle as "a history in maps." It adds perspective to many Japan history books already in print, using geography to illuminate time and place, culture and history. I was initially skeptical of a collection with such a range of authors from a variety of disciplines, realizing the tricky task the editors faced in organizing a compilation that hangs together as a purposeful contribution to the literature. I quickly recognized, however, that almost every chapter, each a separate essay about cartography that is often wholly different from the others, goes beyond a simple analysis of a map or set of maps revealing a window through which readers can see a distinct moment in Japanese history or characteristic of Japanese culture: A set of propaganda maps pointedly illustrates how Japan saw itself within Asia at the height of its imperial push (chapter 43); a painting of a surveying expedition and an early Japanese-drawn world map shows the longstanding Dutch influence in the country (chapter 6); a set of maps detailing the destruction of Tokyo following a great earthquake in 1923 symbolizes the importance of city management along with spatial analysis in the Meiji era (chapters 34 and 35). In short, the spatial histories compiled in this book, taken as a whole, tell a story with maps that provide depth to moments that might be familiar to those who know Japanese history, but do so with a poignant and powerful particularity.

Rex J. Rowley  
Illinois State University



*Great Plains Indians*. DAVID J. WISHART. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. Pp. 147, maps, illustrations, charts, index. \$14.95 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8032-6962-0.

*Great Plains Indians* is the first volume in a new series sponsored by the University of Nebraska Center for Great Plains Studies and published by the University of Nebraska Press. This series, "Discover the Great Plains," highlights broad Great Plains topics and themes in crisp, reader-friendly monographs authored by leading Great Plains scholars. Other books in the series examine Great Plains bison, geology, literature, weather, politics, and birds. The Center for Great Plains Studies wisely recruited David Wishart to write this survey of Great Plains native peoples. He is an expert on the Plains Indians, has taught historical geography at the University of Nebraska for more than forty years, and has numerous publications with a Great Plains Indians focus. This reviewer and Plains scholars such as Pekka Hamalainen and Akim Reinhardt had the pleasure of taking Wishart's research seminar on the Plains Indians while in graduate school at the University of Nebraska. Much of what appears in this volume grew out of discussions in that delightful course and Wishart's book on the dispossession of Nebraska's Indians, *An Unspeakable Sadness* (University of Nebraska Press, 1997). In this slim volume Wishart traces more than 13,000 years of human occupation of the Great Plains. He emphasizes themes such as adaptation, innovation, persistence, geographical and cultural dispossession, and hope for the future. The book is divided into four chapters that are temporally and geographically broad in scope but specific in the use of