

First, a confession: like Aaron Herald Skabelund, I too was born in the Year of the Dog. What this means for our interest in the canine species is anyone's guess. What is certain is that the scholarly world's engagement with dogs and other animals has transformed the humanities from a human-centered enterprise to one necessarily also concerned with the non-human. At least three approaches to mapping the relationship between human and non-human animals have emerged. In philosophical terms, Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Derrida, and Eric Santner, among others, have been thinking *with* animals and *as* animals, struggling with the existential question of "us" and "them" and tracing the history of that porous divide. In environmental and economic terms, the conception of human societies as imbricated with non-human associates, from grazing herds to bacteria, has given rise to new understandings of power, including imperial expansion. In Alfred Crosby's work, for instance, European colonialism was shown to require the introduction not just of European people but also of the whole network of European animals, plants, insects, and microorganisms in order to dominate. This second approach highlights the dependence of economic and political systems on particular biota. Third, dogs and other animals have been treated as elements of ideological and material systems concerned with policing social hierarchies, pollution and purity, good and evil. Here the values of particular political orders emerge as part of the society's thinking about animals and about nature in general. Each of these three approaches has altered, in different ways, our understanding of human dominion.

Skabelund's study shies away from such broad philosophical, environmental, and ideological inquiries. His book provides instead a modest cultural history of the roles played by canines during Japan's encounter with imperialism both as the object of Western aggression and as an aggressor with colonies and continental aspirations of its own. As Skabelund explains, the basic story is this: a "modern mode of dog ownership" intent on developing breeds and keeping dogs as pets emerged by the mid-nineteenth century in Britain and spread with British imperialism throughout the world. At first, the canine residents in semi-colonized and colonized areas were denigrated as mongrels, curs, and "uncivilized" beasts much as were their human compatriots. To the extent that recognized breeds existed in colonial areas, they fell either into the category of diminutive lapdogs like the Japanese *chin* or into the category of massive breeds like the Afghan Hound or Rhodesian Ridgeback. In nineteenth-century Japan, as human and canine foreigners swaggered in, Meiji elites responded by acquiring a taste for "Western" dogs to mark upper-class status, but as Japan shook off the yoke of Western domination and became an imperial power in its own right, native breeds were defined and elevated.

The Akita, in particular, attracted the attention of Saitō Hirokichi, founder in the 1920s of the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Dog. Saitō threw himself into glorifying the Akita's "pure" bloodlines and

supposed qualities of bravery and loyalty, embodied most especially in Hachikō, an Akita who is said to have waited daily at Shibuya Station for his master who, having died suddenly at work, never returned. Skabelund convincingly links Hachikō to Japan's nationalistic fervor while suggesting that Hachikō's own greatest loyalty was not to his deceased master but to the chicken *yakitori* served by the station's eateries. In any case, in practice, the dog most often deployed by the Japanese military was not the Akita but the "German" shepherd. After Japan's defeat, dogs' wartime roles embodying national values, serving on battlefields, and being killed and even eaten by a starving human population were forgotten. With rising postwar affluence, the dog as consumer accessory re-emerged, suffering from the contradiction of being both a disposable market product and a beloved member of striving middle-class human families.

Skabelund wants us to see dogs, despite intensive breeding, training, and commodification, as defying complete human control and able, through their appearance in photographs and taxidermy, to "bark back" at historians. Although the book is richly illustrated in the service of this argument, the argument is not entirely convincing. As theorists of photography have long suggested, the intractable muteness even of human subjects in images is hard to translate into language, and Skabelund never explains exactly what the dogs in his pictures and taxidermic presentations might be telling him. In general, his story suggests that emerging modern nationalisms required jingoistic canine embodiment in such breeds as British bulldogs and Japanese Akitas, though the reasons behind this quirky imperative remain unexplored. Addressing canine culture does not appear to help us distinguish among political formations: the concepts of imperialism and fascism, for instance, are treated as near synonyms. In short, the addition of dogs may not sharpen our understanding of Japanese history, but this book's delightful anecdotes, absorbing illustrations, and rich description remind us of the complex, non-human dimensions of our histories. There is much in this volume to charm even those not born in the Year of the Dog.

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PATRICIA L. MACLACHLAN. *The People's Post Office: The History and Politics of the Japanese Postal System, 1871–2010*. (Harvard East Asian Monographs, number 338.) Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center. 2011. Pp. xx, 358. \$39.95.

This is not the book I expected, and it was nice to be surprised. Patricia Maclachlan's monograph is a well-written, argument-driven analysis of the interest group politics that drive Japan's modern state bureaucracy. Maclachlan has crafted an exquisite study of institutional politics as a means to further demonstrate the distinctive role played by commissioned postmasters in Japan's postwar electoral system; her book also under-

scores the ubiquity of the political systems driving modern postal networks. This is a timely analysis of the politics behind the building, and dismantling, of the state-run post office in Japan that also adds useful comparative context to the history of postal systems worldwide.

The history of the Japanese post office, which is not well developed in English-language scholarship, is particularly important in that the post has played a central role in the modernization of Japan since the Meiji era (1868–1912). Sheldon Garon's comparative history of postal savings systems, *Beyond Our Means: Why America Spends While the World Saves* (2012), is the definitive work on the how the post garnered the funds needed to industrialize Japan. Maclachlan has crafted a fascinating study of the commissioned postmasters who framed the house that Maejima Hisoka built.

Maejima founded the Japanese postal system in 1871 along lines similar to that of the British postal system, which was modernized under the Postage Act that took effect in 1840. In the first chapter, Maclachlan observes that the rapid and relatively uniform development of the modern Japanese postal system fostered a significantly different pathway than its British inspiration. She argues that the distinctive political role played by the commissioned postmasters is unique to Japan.

Although billed as a history of the postal service since its founding, the book primarily focuses on the post-World War II era, and its strength lies in Maclachlan's examination of the political power garnered by the commissioned postmasters association (*Zentoku*) from its re-constitution in 1953 to its political decline in the early 2000s. Indeed, Maclachlan's portrait of the fundraising and vote getting managed by *Zentoku* during the decades of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) rule identifies an important link in the web of vote-getting organizations that includes the agricultural cooperatives (*Nōkyō*) which turned out the rural vote for the LDP throughout the postwar period.

However, Maclachlan's analysis of the early postwar conflicts between *Zentoku* and the postal workers union *Zentei* underexamines the impact of the American-dominated Allied Occupation of Japan during the immediate postwar years. While Maclachlan is persuasive in her assertion that the Supreme Command for Allied Powers (SCAP) perceived the inner workings of the post office as a Japanese concern, SCAP was directly involved in the daily affairs of the militant labor federation that included *Zentei* as one of its most important members. Despite *Zentoku*'s dissolution by SCAP in 1950, the ability of commissioned postmasters to defend their interests in opposition to those of the postal workers' union was significantly bolstered when SCAP labor policy abruptly and decisively shifted against militant unions in 1948.

Maclachlan provides a useful comparative framework for the origins of post office operations in Japan and the United Kingdom, but her book is weakened by a paucity of comparative context regarding postal politics since the 1980s. Although the contemporary Jap-

anese Post Office is the result of its own historical trajectory, a postwar British influence seems likely in that the reforms championed by Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro, who was an exchange student in economics at University College London in the late 1960s, mirror the Hayekian economics that informed the Thatcher years and which underpin the postal privatization schemes introduced since. Indeed, the potential for comparison looms large in even the title of this book: "The People's Post Office" is the trademarked slogan of Post Office Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the public limited company Royal Mail Holdings of the United Kingdom.

I truly enjoyed this book as historicized political science, but I longed to know much more about the century of organizational change that predates the period of its particular focus. The first two chapters offer a useful survey of the post office's origins in comparative context, but Maclachlan has not fully developed what promises to be a fascinating historical topic. Her otherwise excellent contribution to the study of contemporary Japan sets the stage for works yet to be written.

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SABINE FRÜHSTÜCK and ANNE WALTHALL, editors. *Re-creating Japanese Men*. (Asia: Local Studies/Global Themes, number 20.) Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2011. Pp. ix, 347. Cloth \$65.00, paper \$26.95.

Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall's fine collection of essays further contributes to an already fruitful year of publications about gender and sexuality. Most recent works on these topics have privileged studies of femininity and female sexuality, making this anthology on Japanese men and masculinities particularly welcome. The thirteen essays in the volume, by historians and historically minded social scientists and cultural studies scholars, address ways in which masculinities intersect with other forms of identity, including age/generation, class, and occupation. Although the nexus of (human) ethnicity or nationality with masculinity is not specifically addressed, one essay analyzes the gendering of robots.

The editors' introductory chapter reminds readers that a historical study of masculinity in Japan is deeply imbricated with ideas of adulthood and manly responsibility. Thus, manhood has been performed as a social category in addition to being marked by the physical condition of bodily maturation that is most significant in the case of constructions of femininity. The "other" in the construction of masculinities, the editors note, was not always women; "man" could be defined in contrast to not-yet-mature boys or in contrast to men with different social roles, class status, or skills in using tools or objects. Unlike "modern" (i.e., late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century) masculinity, which took a fairly hegemonic form in Japan under state-sponsored policies of nation building through the school system,