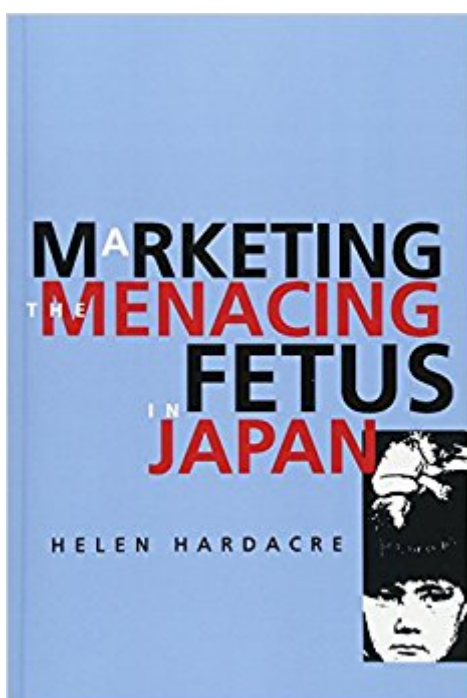


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Marketing The Menacing Fetus In Japan (Twentieth Century Japan: The Emergence Of A World Power)



Synopsis

Helen Hardacre provides new insights into the spiritual and cultural dimensions of abortion debates around the world in this careful examination of *mizuko kuyo*—a Japanese religious ritual for aborted fetuses. Popularized during the 1970s, when religious entrepreneurs published frightening accounts of fetal wrath and spirit attacks, *mizuko kuyo* offers ritual atonement for women who, sometimes decades previously, chose to have abortions. As she explores the complex issues that surround this practice, Hardacre takes into account the history of Japanese attitudes toward abortion, the development of abortion rituals, the marketing of religion, and the nature of power relations in intercourse, contraception, and abortion. Although abortion in Japan is accepted and legal and was commonly used as birth control in the early postwar period, entrepreneurs used images from fetal photography to mount a surprisingly successful tabloid campaign to promote *mizuko kuyo*. Enthusiastically adopted by some religionists as an economic strategy, it was soundly rejected by others on doctrinal, humanistic, and feminist grounds. In four field studies in different parts of the country, Helen Hardacre observed contemporary examples of *mizuko kuyo* as it is practiced in Buddhism, Shinto, and the new religions. She also analyzed historical texts and contemporary personal accounts of abortion by women and their male partners and conducted interviews with practitioners to explore how a commercialized ritual form like *mizuko kuyo* can be marketed through popular culture and manipulated by the same forces at work in the selling of any commodity. Her conclusions reflect upon the deep current of misogyny and sexism running through these rites and through fetocentric discourse in general.

Book Information

Series: Twentieth Century Japan: The Emergence of a World Power (Book 7)

Paperback: 332 pages

Publisher: University of California Press (March 10, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0520216547

ISBN-13: 978-0520216549

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.8 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.5 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #805,824 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #172 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Women's Studies > Abortion & Birth Control](#) #307 in [Books > History >](#)

World > Religious > Buddhism #825 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Eastern > Buddhism > Rituals & Practice

Customer Reviews

"Hardacre uses personal narratives and regional case studies to demonstrate the highly contested nature of "mizuko kuyo. . . . By examining earlier rituals surrounding reproduction, the author shows that "mizuko kuyo . . . is not a 'natural' Japanese response to abortion, but rather a contemporary, commercialized phenomenon."--Carol C. Chin, "Journal of Women's History

"A remarkably original contribution to the anthropology of reproduction, *Marketing the Menacing Fetus in Japan* provides broad and deep insights into the culture of sexuality and gender in Japan. Framing the issues historically, as well as anthropologically, Hardacre artfully blends a wide variety of sources, from the demographic to participant observation, from surveys to rich life histories. The book is a major contribution to feminist studies of abortion, and its impact is likely to equal that of Faye Ginsburg's justly famous book, *Contested Lives*."#151;David I. Kertzer, author of *Sacrificed for Honor: Italian Infant Abandonment and the Politics of Reproductive Control*

Anyone interested in family planning in Japan should read this book! Not only does it do a fantastic job of explaining the Japanese mindset regarding abortion (since abortion rates in Japan are extremely high from an American point of view), but it is also an in-depth look at the new anti-abortion movement in Japan which has become a multi-million dollar industry in Japan that survives by creating and then feeding off of post-abortion guilt. This is a great academic read, but it is also interesting from a cultural perspective.

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