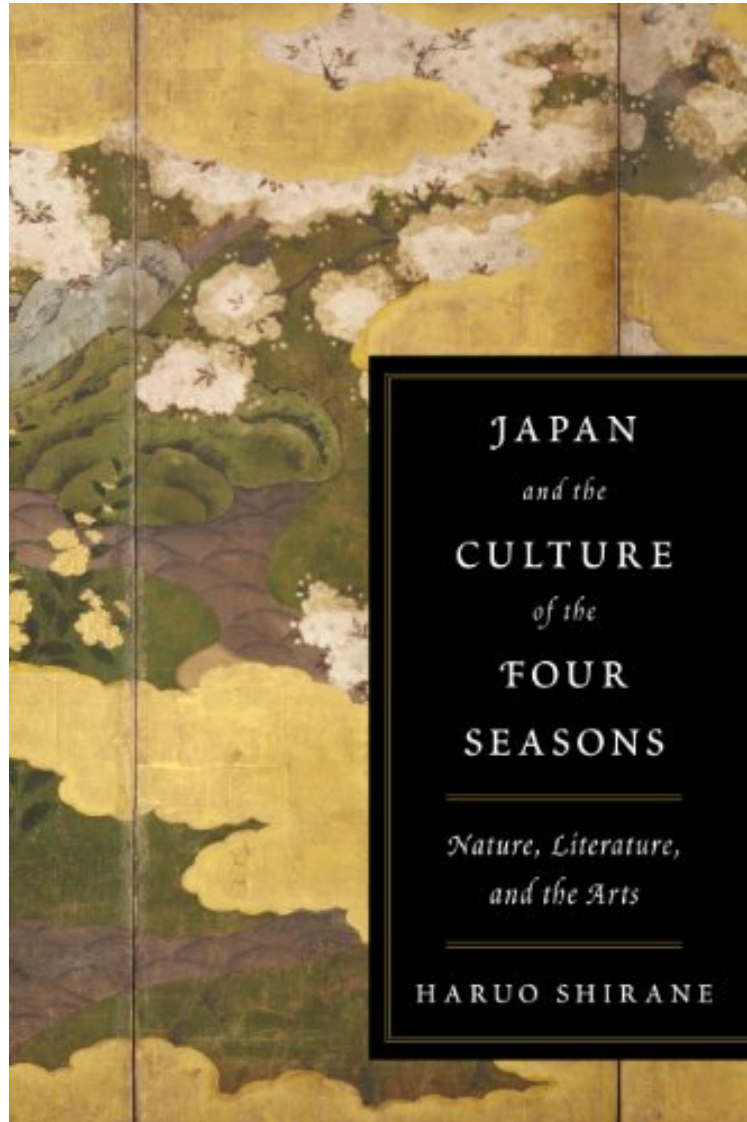


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Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts

Haruo Shirane

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Haruo Shirane : Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The finest study of Japan's sensitivity to seasonal changeBy Merrily BairdFor most Westerners, Japan today is viewed as a mecca of high technology, martial arts, video games, manga, culinary achievement, flower arranging, or fine art and design. But in taking a longer view, one that stretches back

well more than a thousand years, it can be argued that Japan's most enduringly important contribution is its exquisite sensitivity to the changing seasons. In previous publications, art historians, specialists in Japanese poetry, and devotees of kimono design, among others, have all touched on this subject. Never before, however, has such a formidably-talented academic as Haruo Shirane made available in English a rigorous study of the subject. And that study is his 2012 book "Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts." Shirane's chronological approach demonstrates how a focus on the seasons first developed in the poetry of the Nara (710-784) and Heian (794-1185) periods and thereafter permeated ever more aspects of life as Japan itself became more sophisticated, prosperous, and modern. Readers interested in further exploring how a seasonal sensitivity shapes the lens through which the Japanese view the world may wish to acquire some of the following books: Liza Dalby's "East Wind Melts the Ice," any book of haiku arranged by season, Ivan Morris's "The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan," and my own "Symbols of Japan: Thematic Motifs in Art and Design." For those wishing to experience the continuing influence of the four seasons in everyday life, even in today's urbanized hi-tech Japan, the following are particularly useful: bakery and sweet shops; tea ceremony venues; restaurants serving bento-box and kaiseki meals; flower shops; and stationery boutiques. 5 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Perfect view of understanding Japanese tea culture that became a root of Wabi-Sabi including screen painting. By CHA JAE WOO. This book gives you about the understanding of true root of Japanese culture. It comes from practical life of tea culture in terms of humble and sincere attitude of life. And it also shows the true Japanese culture from Muromachi era is better influenced to the ordinary people of Japan than in Edo period. 14 of 20 people found the following review helpful. A Primer, A Textbook for all current future students of Japanese Literature Culture. By William Ridgeway. Very disappointed that the beautiful color plates appear in grayscale in the Kindle edition, and that lack of proofreading of the converted file resulted in many typos, especially at the beginning of the book, which was annoying because they were so laughable: ckanoyu, kaski, skibakari, matsumuski, "(agi)" etc -Also many hyphenated words appearing mid-sentence, a common issue in converting a PDF to ebook, but easily correctable. Distracting. There is no question that this is an instant classic. It needs to look like a classic too.

Elegant representations of nature, explicitly the four seasons, fill a wide range of Japanese genres and media; from poetry and screen painting to tea ceremony, flower arrangement, and annual observances. Haruo Shirane shows, for the first time, how, when, and why this occurred and explicates the richly encoded social, religious, and political meanings these representations embodied. Refuting the long held belief that this phenomenon reflects agrarian origins, this book demonstrates how elegant representations of the four seasons first emerged in an urban environment among nobility in the eighth century. They became highly codified and then spread to different social classes, eventually settling in popular culture and the pleasure quarters. Shirane accounts for all types of manifestations: textual (poetry, chronicles, tales), cultivated (gardens, flower arrangement), material (kimonos, screens), performative (noh drama, festivals), and gastronomic (tea ceremony, food rituals). He reveals how this kind of "secondary nature," which flourished in Japan's urban architecture and gardens, frequently fostered a sense of harmony with the natural world; just at the point at which it was receding. Eventually, alternative representations of nature derived from farm villages and elsewhere began to intersect with these elegant representations in the capital, creating a complex web of competing associations. Anyone with an interest in Japanese visual arts, literature, cultural history, and social customs will relish this book, which illuminates the deeper meaning behind Japanese aesthetics and artifacts. Shirane explicates nature's complex codification, especially the use of images, the seasons to which they were attached, and the changes in cultural associations across history, genre, and community. His fascinating research shows these seasons to be as much a cultural construction as a reflection of the physical world.

Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons provides a compelling account of how Japan has appropriated, interpreted, and valued nature over the centuries. Haruo Shirane's wide-ranging study tracks the culture of nature in Japan and especially the central role of waka in constructing a vision of nature that influenced all the arts. In its breadth, depth, and accessibility, his book is of great value not only to scholars and students of Japan but also to anyone interested in the intersections of art and nature. (Andrew M. Watsky, Princeton University) A tour de force. Haruo Shirane synthesizes the long and complicated encoding of flora, fauna, toponyms, and annual events of the Japanese landscape and calendar, untangling their synchronic connections and their historical development from the eighth to the nineteenth centuries, from the small cuckoo (hototogisu) as a harbinger of summer in the Kokinshu to the lovemaking of cats as a topic for comic haikai verse in the Edo period. Shirane's book is essential for anyone interested in virtually any genre of the traditional Japanese arts: poetry, costume, painting, noh theater, architecture, tea ceremony, flower arranging? or even Japanese sweets (wagashi)! (Joshua Mostow, University of British Columbia) 'Sensitivity to nature' is one of those commonplaces about Japanese tradition that, because of its all-too-easy association with cultural nationalism, tends to set many people's teeth on edge. This engaging and impressive study provides a welcome antidote. Drawing from literary, visual, historical, and religious sources, Haruo Shirane cuts through the cliché; to uncover multiple, evolving, and sometimes surprising dimensions of the Japanese relationship with nature from

early times to the present. (Kate Wildman Nakai, professor emerita, Sophia University)A comprehensive view of the subject, replete with fascinating detail, and full scholarly apparatus. (David Burleigh Japan Times)As accessible as it is erudite, this volume will appeal to those with interest in any aspect of the arts...Highly recommended. (Choice)A vital contribution to our understanding of the literature, art, and daily practices of Japan over the centuries. (Elizabeth Oyler Monumenta Nipponica)Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons... enables us, for the first time in English, to gain a comprehensive, systematic, and authoritatively scholarly view on how very pervasive this seasons culture is and has been since the Nara and Heian periods. (Japan)Shirane is a reliable guide and reading this book will enrich one's understanding of almost any Japanese artifact. (Journal of Japanese Studies)About the AuthorHaruo Shirane is Shincho Professor of Japanese Literature and Culture at Columbia University. He is the author and editor of numerous books on Japanese literature, including, most recently, *The Demon at Agi Bridge and Other Japanese Tales*; *Envisioning The Tale of Genji: Media, Gender, and Cultural Production*; *Traditional Japanese Literature: An Anthology, Beginnings to 1600*; *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology, 1600ndash;1900*; *Classical Japanese: A Grammar*; and *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Basho*.