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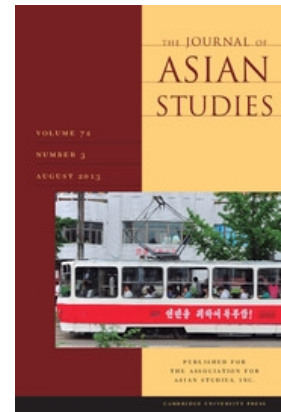
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***Coffee Life in Japan.* By Merry White. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. 222 pp. \ \$60.00 (cloth); \ \$24.95 (paper).**

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share of world population, including estimates of the illegal and underreported fishing that have been documented for Japan (p. 182).

In chapter 6, “Japanese Diet: Retrospect and Prospect,” the authors summarize trends in the Japanese diet in light of claims for greater food self-sufficiency in Japan. Apart from the fact that Japan represents 2 percent of the world’s population but consumes some 8 percent of its seafood annually, that Japan sources its foodstuffs from other countries should be less worrying than the extent to which its own groundwater is contaminated with nitrogen runoff from fertilizers.

Japan’s Dietary Transition and Its Impacts benefits from an extensive bibliography, and the authors, particularly Smil, reveal themselves to be talented photographers providing well-composed and clear images of foodstuffs, essential for a book of this sort. Drawing on quantitative data, Smil and Kobayashi offer many useful insights into the last century of the history of the Japanese diet. Their book might cause everyone who eats Japanese food, especially sushi, to think further about the multiple costs of procuring it, notwithstanding any potential health benefits.

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Coffee Life in Japan. By MERRY WHITE. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. 222 pp. \$60.00 (cloth); \$24.95 (paper).
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Japan is the land of tea but it is also the land of coffee. This is the surprising revelation of Merry White in her book, *Coffee Life in Japan*. The beverage’s first appearance dates to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Dutch and Portuguese traders introduced coffee to Japan (pp. 17, 94). In the 1880s, the first coffeehouse in Japan emerged, and coffee rapidly gained popularity after the turn of the twentieth century (p. 93). Japan is now the third largest coffee-importing nation after the United States and Germany (p. 19). White focuses on coffee as a commodity and on the café as the main location for coffee consumption. The book is divided into eight chapters, in which the author combines a social history of coffee in Japan with an ethnographic approach to the café as an urban space, and finally addresses the art of coffee making as connoisseurship. In the appendix, entitled “Visits to Cafés. An Unreliable Guide,” the author provides brief descriptions of cafés in Tokyo and Kyoto (pp. 173–77). The book is augmented by a number of photographs of cafés.

One of the strong points of this work is the description of the social function of the café in Japan. In her ethnographic analysis, White—herself a devoted café visitor—describes the café as a “third space” besides home and work (pp. 12, 127). In this context, White engages eloquently in an analysis of solitude in public. In a society where being alone is considered suspicious, the café offers a place to be “publicly private” (p. 27) and reveals an opportunity to be either alone or in company (p. 27). Visitors choose different types of cafés according to the occasion, such as the *anabateki*, which literally means “hole in the wall” and is “a café especially suited to being alone, private in public” (p. 163). In contrast, the *idobata kaigi* is a gathering place where visitors hope to find friends or “a community of like minds” (p. 163). Jazz *kissaten* prioritize

music over beverages (p. 60). Class also plays a role. Despite an initial description of the “relative classlessness” of the café, which “permitted and demonstrated social mobility” (p. 30), the author links the café to middle-class consumer patterns that symbolize emerging modernity. Class intersects with gender. Whereas the coffeehouses of the 1880s were frequented predominantly by men, coffeehouses of the 1920s welcomed women both as visitors and as makers of coffee (p. 28). The café on the Ginza is considered an acceptable place for a middle-class woman to be seen alone in public, whereas the café also offers a place for retreat for the businessman who has lost his job but does not tell his family about his failure and the danger of losing a comfortable, middle-class lifestyle.

A further merit of White’s book is the illumination of the historical relationship between Japan and Brazil with regards to coffee, which offers an augmenting approach to the topic of the Japanese Brazilian minority in contemporary Japan. Coffee arrived in Brazil in 1727 from Yemen (p. 97). Between 1908 and 1924, approximately 35,000 Japanese entered Brazil to work on coffee plantations (p. 99). Until 1941, the number of Japanese plantation workers who started their own farms increased. And it was Japanese Brazilians who brought back coffee to Japan, their homeland.

Coffee in Japan has been addressed previously,²³ but the novelty is that Merry White devoted an entire book to coffee in Japan. In contrast, much has been written about tea as Japan’s major beverage,²⁴ but coffee has become another major beverage for consumption and socializing in contemporary Japan, and the café fulfills a significant function of withdrawal in a society full of social pressures and expectations and with little room for privacy. Moreover, White shows how the art of making coffee is linked to *kodawari*, a sense of meticulous dedication and passion (pp. 66–70). Through applying *kodawari* to coffee making, it becomes obvious that the art of coffee making and coffee consumption has transformed into a distinctly Japanese habit.

The book lacks a closing remark and an analysis of the concept of class in the context of middle-class consumer patterns, both of which would have been helpful to summarize and clarify the different aspects of coffee in contemporary Japan. Furthermore, the book focuses on coffee life in urban Japan; one or two examples of coffee life in peripheral areas and cities such as Kobe, Sendai, and Morioka, which have vibrant café cultures, would have been insightful. However, despite these very minor flaws, White’s book is an excellent contribution to the study of beverages in Japan, which makes the book essential reading for students of cultural anthropology and Asian history.

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²³Elise Tipton, “The Café: Contested Space of Modernity in Interwar Japan,” in Elise Tipton and John Clark, eds., *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000), pp. 119–36.

²⁴Recent works on tea in Japan include: Morgan Pitelka, *Japanese Tea Culture: Art, History and Practice* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2007) and Kristin Surak, *Making Tea, Making Japan: Cultural Nationalism in Practice* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2012).