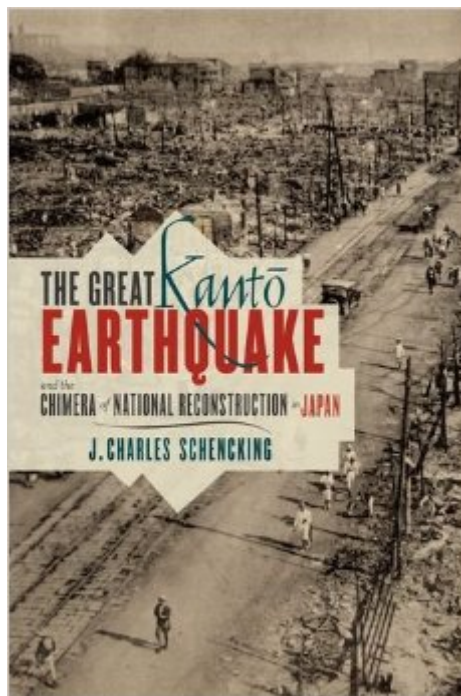


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The Great Kanto Earthquake And The Chimera Of National Reconstruction In Japan (Contemporary Asia In The World)



Synopsis

In September 1923, a magnitude 7.9 earthquake devastated eastern Japan, killing more than 120,000 people and leaving two million homeless. Using a rich array of source material, J. Charles Schencking tells for the first time the graphic tale of Tokyo's destruction and rebirth. In emotive prose, he documents how the citizens of Tokyo experienced this unprecedented calamity and explores the ways in which it rattled people's deep-seated anxieties about modernity. While explaining how and why the disaster compelled people to reflect on Japanese society, he also examines how reconstruction encouraged the capital's inhabitants to entertain new types of urbanism as they rebuilt their world. Some residents hoped that a grandiose metropolis, reflecting new values, would rise from the ashes of disaster-ravaged Tokyo. Many, however, desired a quick return of the city they once called home. Opportunistic elites advocated innovative state infrastructure to better manage the daily lives of Tokyo residents. Others focused on rejuvenating society—morally, economically, and spiritually—to combat the perceived degeneration of Japan. Schencking explores the inspiration behind these dreams and the extent to which they were realized. He investigates why Japanese citizens from all walks of life responded to overtures for renewal with varying degrees of acceptance, ambivalence, and resistance. His research not only sheds light on Japan's experience with and interpretation of the earthquake but challenges widespread assumptions that disasters unite stricken societies, creating a "blank slate" for radical transformation. National reconstruction in the wake of the Great Kanto Earthquake, Schencking demonstrates, proved to be illusive.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fruits of ten years of research. We'll wait long for a next book like this. Grounded and detailed. Disaster Anthropology will benefit a lot from this book. Maybe the best book in political and social history of 20th century Japan. Excellent!

lots of detail, would have like more human interest stories, background was interesting but it seemed more like a recitation of facts.

The first four chapters are a narrative about the 1923 Tokyo Earthquake and its immediate aftermath. The balance of the book discusses in great depth the plans for a great restoration of the city and the political factors - regional politics - bureaucratic in fighting that produced a much less grand but none-the-less substantial reform of the city. This is a good scholarly book, VERY WELL sourced from both primary and secondary works.

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