



Dogs and Demons: Tales From the Dark Side of Modern Japan

Alex Kerr

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The crises--and failures--of modernization in Japan, as seen up close by a resident expert

Japan is a nation in crisis, and the crisis goes far beyond its well-known economic plight. In *Dogs and Demons*, Alex Kerr chronicles the crisis on a broad scale, from the failure of Japan's banks and pension funds to the decline of its once magnificent modern cinema. The book takes up for the first time in the Western press subjects such as the nation's endangered environment--its seashores lined with concrete, its roads leading to nowhere in the mountains. It describes Japan's "monument frenzy," the destruction of old cities such as Kyoto and construction of drab new cities, and the attendant collapse of the tourist industry.

All these unhealthy developments are, Kerr argues, the devastating boomerang effect of an educational and bureaucratic system designed to produce manufactured goods--and little else. A mere upturn in economic growth will not quickly remedy these severe internal problems, which Kerr calls a "failure of modernism." He assails the foreign experts who, often dependent on Japanese government and business support, fail to address these issues. Meanwhile, what of the Japanese people themselves? Kerr, a resident of Japan for thirty-five years, writes of them with humor and passion, for "passion," he says, "is part of the story. Millions of Japanese feel as heartbroken at what is going on as I do. My Japanese friends tell me, 'Please write this--for us.'"

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