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Mapping Courtship and Kinship in Classical Japan: The Tale of Genji and Its Predecessors (Paperback)

By Doris G. Barga

University of Hawai i Press, United States, 2017. Paperback. Condition: New. Reprint. Language: English . Brand New Book. Literary critiques of Murasaki Shikibu s eleventh-century The Tale of Genji have often focused on the amorous adventures of its eponymous hero. In this paradigm-shifting analysis of the Genji and other mid-Heian literature, Doris G. Barga emphasizes the thematic importance of Japan s complex polygynous kinship system as the domain within which courtship occurs. Heian courtship, conducted mainly to form secondary marriages, was driven by power struggles of succession among lineages that focused on achieving the highest position possible at court. Thus interpreting courtship in light of genealogies is essential for comprehending the politics of interpersonal behavior in many of these texts. Barga focuses on the genealogical maze—the literal and figurative space through which several generations of men and women in the Genji moved. She demonstrates that courtship politics sought to control kinship by strengthening genealogical lines, while secret affairs and illicit offspring produced genealogical uncertainty that could be dealt with only by reconnecting dissociated lineages or ignoring or even terminating them. The work examines in detail the literary construction of a courtship practice known as kaimami, or looking through a gap...



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