



Manufacturing Modern Japanese Literature: Publishing, Prizes, and the Ascription of Literary Value (Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, and Society)

Edward Mack

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Emphasizing how modes of book production, promotion, and consumption shape ideas of literary value, Edward Mack examines the role of Japan's publishing industry in defining modern Japanese literature. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, as cultural and economic power consolidated in Tokyo, the city's literary and publishing elites came to dominate the dissemination and preservation of Japanese literature. As Mack explains, they conferred cultural value on particular works by creating prizes and multivolume anthologies that signaled literary merit. One such anthology, the *Complete Works of Contemporary Japanese Literature* (published between 1926 and 1931), provided many readers with their first experience of selected texts designated as modern Japanese literature. The low price of one yen per volume allowed the series to reach hundreds of thousands of readers. An early prize for modern Japanese literature, the annual Akutagawa Prize, first awarded in 1935, became the country's highest-profile literary award. Mack chronicles the history of book production and consumption in Japan, showing how advances in technology, the expansion of a market for literary commodities, and the development of an extensive reading community enabled phenomena such as the *Complete Works of Contemporary Japanese Literature* and the Akutagawa Prize to manufacture the very concept of modern Japanese literature.

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