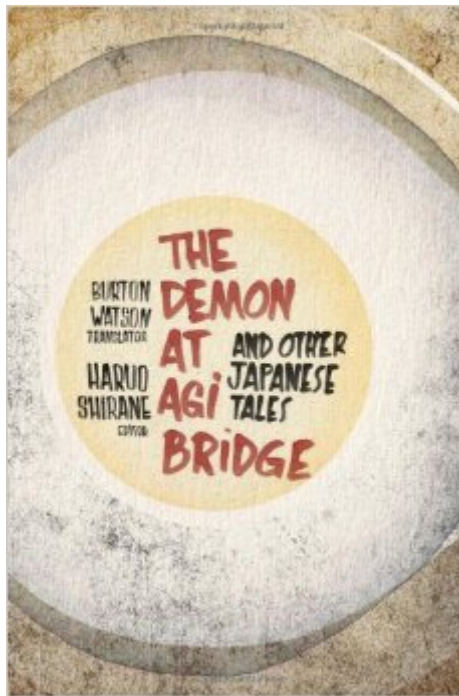


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The Demon At Agi Bridge And Other Japanese Tales (Translations From The Asian Classics)



Synopsis

Burton Watson and Haruo Shirane, renowned translators and scholars, introduce English-speaking readers to the vivid tradition of early and medieval Japanese anecdotal (setsuwa) literature. These orally narrated and written tales drew on both local folk tradition and continental sources. Taken from seven major anthologies of anecdotal literature compiled between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, these dramatic and often amusing stories open a major window onto the foundations of Japanese culture. Out of thousands of setsuwa, Shirane has selected thirty-eight of the most powerful and influential, each of which is briefly introduced. Recounting the exploits of warriors, farmers, priests, and aristocrats, and concerning topics as varied as poetry, violence, power, and sex, these tales reveal the creative origins of a range of literary and dramatic genres, from court tales and travel accounts to no drama and Kabuki. Watson's impeccable translations relay the wit, mystery, and Buddhist sensibility of these protean works, while Shirane's sophisticated analysis illuminates the meaning and context of their compact stories. Capped by an extensive bibliography, this collection fully immerses the reader in the thrilling world of secular and religious tales.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My rating: 4.5/5 When I came across this book on , it had me at : "The Demon at Agi Bridge," a fantastic story, and Haruo Shirane, a fantastic scholar. Being familiar with and an admirer of Shirane's writings on Basho and haiku, I could think of no better person to guide me through

setsuwa, Japanese anecdotal literature. *The Demon at Agi Bridge and Other Japanese Tales* includes thirty-eight moving and entertaining setsuwa from seven major anthologies compiled between the ninth to thirteenth centuries, selected by Shirane and translated by Burton Watson. With a brief, but informative introductions to the collection and each section, this book provides cultural and literary context for the reader unfamiliar with the history of Japanese literature. The setsuwa in this book cover tales from India, China, and Japan (from Buddhist and secular veins), and features characters from all social classes and professions. One of my biggest complaints about Royall Tyler's *Japanese Tales* has been the exclusion of India and China setsuwa. Tyler's intentions are reasonable, but I feel he failed to acknowledge how these tales have influence and are a part of Japan's setsuwa tradition. Of particular interest to me, Shirane has included several stories that feature prominent female characters, such as the woman in "The Woman of Pleasure at Eguchi" and the wife in "How a Poor Man Left His Wife and She Became the Wife of the Governor of Settsu," and several stories revolving around poetry, including the strong ending piece "The Deep Meaning Underlying the Way of Japanese Poetry." Each of setsuwa carries its weight and adds to the richness of the collection.

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