



Making a Moral Society: Ethics and the State in Meiji Japan (Hardback)

By Richard M. Reitan

University of Hawai i Press, United States, 2009. Hardback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. This innovative study of ethics in Meiji Japan (1868-1912) explores the intense struggle to define a common morality for the emerging nation-state. In the Social Darwinist atmosphere of the time, the Japanese state sought to quell uprisings and overcome social disruptions so as to produce national unity and defend its sovereignty against Western encroachment. Morality became a crucial means to attain these aims. Moral prescriptions for reordering the population came from all segments of society, including Buddhist, Christian, and Confucian apologists; literary figures and artists; advocates of natural rights; anarchists; and women defending nontraditional gender roles. Each envisioned a unity grounded in its own moral perspective. It was in this tumultuous atmosphere that the academic discipline of ethics (rinrigaku) emerged - not as a value-neutral, objective form of inquiry as its practitioners claimed, but a state-sponsored program with its own agenda. After examining the broad moral space of civilization , Richard Reitan turns to the dominant moral theories of early Meiji and the underlying epistemology that shaped and authorized them. He considers the fluidity of moral subjectivity (the constantly shifting nature of norms...



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