

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910780378703321
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Titolo	Reconfiguring modernity [[electronic resource]] : concepts of nature in Japanese political ideology // Julia Adeney Thomas
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Berkeley, Calif., : University of California Press, c2002
ISBN	1-282-35638-0 0-520-92684-6 9786612356384 1-59734-854-6
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (257 p.)
Collana	Twentieth-century Japan ; ; 12
Disciplina	304.2/0952
Soggetti	Nature - Effect of human beings on - Japan Japan Politics and government 1868-1912
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- Preface -- Acknowledgments -- Note on Transliteration -- 1. Introduction: The Trouble with Nature -- 2. The Topographical Imagination of Tokugawa Politics -- 3. Early Meiji's Contentious Natures -- 4. Kat Hiroyuki: Turning Nature into Time -- 5. Baba Tatsui: Natural Laws and Willful Natures -- 6. Ueki Emori: Singing the Body Electric -- 7. The Acculturation of Japanese Nature -- 8. Ultrnational Nature: Dead Time and Dead Space -- 9. Conclusion: Natural Freedom -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	Julia Adeney Thomas turns the concept of nature into a powerful analytical lens through which to view Japanese modernity, bringing the study of both Japanese history and political modernity to a new level of clarity. She shows that nature necessarily functions as a political concept and that changing ideas of nature's political authority were central during Japan's transformation from a semi feudal world to an industrializing colonial empire. In political documents from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century, nature was redefined, moving from the universal, spatial concept of the Tokugawa period, through temporal, social Darwinian ideas of inevitable progress and competitive struggle, to a celebration of Japan as a nation uniquely in harmony with

nature. The so-called traditional "Japanese love of nature" masks modern state power. Thomas's theoretically sophisticated study rejects the supposition that modernity is the ideological antithesis of nature, overcoming the determinism of the physical environment through technology and liberating denatured subjects from the chains of biology and tradition. In making "nature" available as a critical term for political analysis, this book yields new insights into prewar Japan's failure to achieve liberal democracy, as well as an alternative means of understanding modernity and the position of non-Western nations within it.
