



# Idle Idol: The Japanese Mascot

*Edward Harrison, John Harrison*

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The Japanese have long been infatuated with the three-dimensional characters used to represent products, companies, civic organizations, towns and just about anything else you can imagine. *Idle Idol: The Japanese Mascot* examines this fascinating cultural history, documenting the evolution of the character statues that are ubiquitous throughout the country today.

The mascot trend began during the Edo period with the pot-bellied raccoon-dog Tanuki. These ceramic statues were first used as good luck charms (and they are still used as such today) but starting in the 19th century a noodle shop appropriated the character in an effort to create a link between Tanuki's fortuitous status and bowls of soup. It worked, and since then confectioners, pharmaceutical companies, television networks, food companies, police forces and fire departments have all created mascots.

The mascots represent a brand or a certain shop but they also exist as stand-alone characters that people adore. *Idle Idol's* photographs and written explanations vivify these unique mascots that are artful, audacious and wholly Japanese!

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