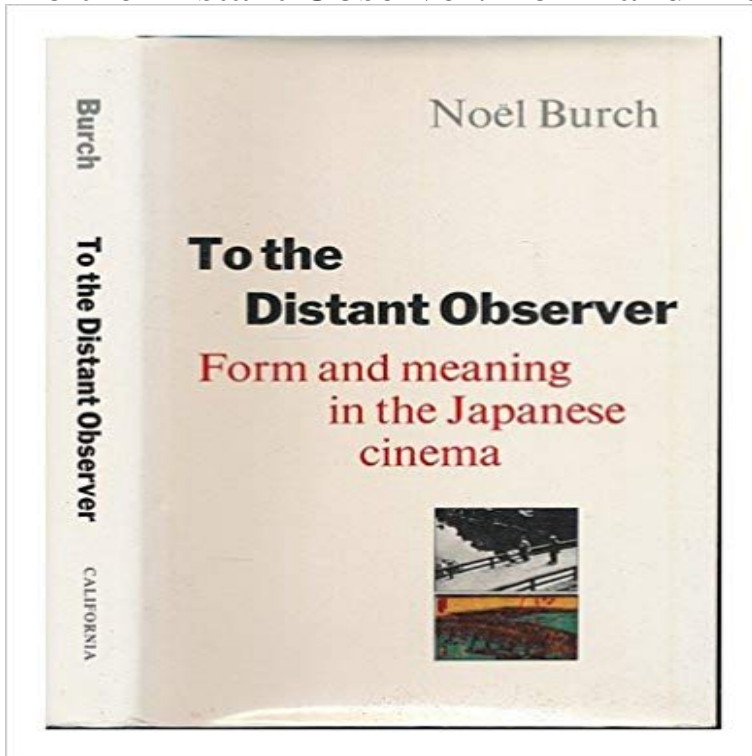


To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in Japanese Cinema



The cinema of Japan, at least until 1945, was the only national cinema to derive fundamentally from a non-European culture. Its films thus diverged in important respects from the standard Hollywood style of shooting and editing adopted by the industries of Europe and the US, as well as by colonized nations. In this unprecedented study, Noel Burch confronts the major modes of discourse of Japanese culture with the stylistic development of Japanese cinema, and contrasts the resulting modes of representation with those of the West. Contrary to previous opinion, Burch shows how the period 1896-1930 was not one of stagnation and underdevelopment but instead constituted a preparatory stage for the 1930-1945 golden age of Japanese cinema, during which Ozu, Mizoguchi, and other less well-known masters produced their most distinguished films. Burch also concludes that prewar militarism was relatively unimportant on the work of the thirties and he views the post-1945 period of democratization as one of regression in cinema, particularly in the works of Ozu and Mizoguchi. Treating many examples with the aid of frame enlargements, Burch illuminates previously unknown aspects of Japanese film history. And his dialectical analysis produces a new understanding of the elements of film structure.

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