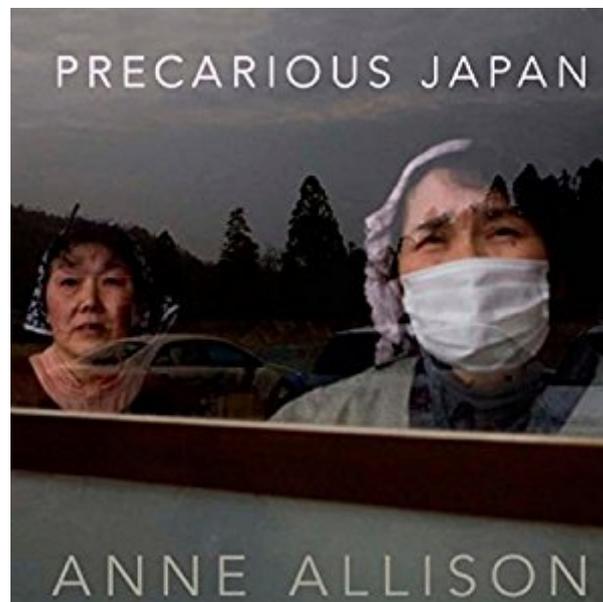


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# Precarious Japan



## Synopsis

In an era of irregular labor, nagging recession, nuclear contamination, and a shrinking population, Japan is facing precarious times. How the Japanese experience insecurity in their daily and social lives is the subject of *Precarious Japan*. Tacking between the structural conditions of socioeconomic life and the ways people are making do, or not, Anne Allison chronicles the loss of home affecting many Japanese, not only in the literal sense but also in the figurative sense of not belonging. Until the collapse of Japan's economic bubble in 1991, lifelong employment and a secure income were within reach of most Japanese men, enabling them to maintain their families in a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. Now, as fewer and fewer people are able to find full-time work, hope turns to hopelessness and security gives way to a pervasive unease. Yet some Japanese are getting by, partly by reconceiving notions of home, family, and togetherness.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 11 hours and 17 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: University Press Audiobooks

Audible.com Release Date: June 19, 2014

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00L4LSIG2

Best Sellers Rank: #261 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Asia #1837 in Books > History > Asia > Japan #2775 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Social Science

## Customer Reviews

If we include Japanese sources, there is such an extensive literature on Japan's economy and society that the bilingual observer is often at a loss. She can make this literature accessible to non-Japanese readers by translating, summarizing, contextualizing. Or she can collect her own primary data especially in the field of ethnography, where the main insights are supposed to originate from fieldwork. Anne Allison's book does both, but in an unsatisfactory manner. Its topic "precarity and precariousness" doesn't lend itself easily to fieldwork. How do you observe a feeling, a mood, a sentiment, or a lack thereof? How do you assess the way "as Allison defines her topic" "relations with others" of care, belonging, recognition "are showing strain but also, in a

few instances, getting reimagined and restitched in innovative new ways"? Having had limited time to conduct fieldwork, Allison had to rely on other people's observations: activists, commentators, social workers, or critics. But she fails to give proper credit to these domestic observers of precariousnessâ and in particular to build a theory informed by local categories and debates. Instead, she imports the latest fads in social critique and peppers them with Japanese terms to add local flavor, without engaging Japanese thought seriously. How do you observe precariousness? The answer, for anyone living in Japan, is pretty straightforward: open a newspaper, and you will read many accounts of life at the edge.

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