

NISHIYAMA MATSUNOSUKE. *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600–1868*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. viii + 309 pages. Maps, illustrations, glossary, references, index. Cloth US\$49.00; ISBN 0-8248-1736-2. Paper US\$21.95; ISBN 0-8248-1850-4.

This is an important book packed with fascinating information about daily life and popular culture in Edo period Japan. Students of the popular performing arts will be especially rewarded. Nishiyama Matsunosuke, now in his 80s, is a pioneer in the field of Japanese social history. In the 1930s, when he first began to publish, he was chided for his enthusiasm for the “vulgar” and the popular. Now in the 1990s, his concern to chronicle everyday life seems remarkably fresh and in tune with postmodern trends of scholarship.

The book is divided into three parts. The first section deals with the history of Edo and introduces readers to the spirit of resistance of the *edokko* (the Edo townspeople) as well as to the aesthetics of Edo culture, especially the strength of character, the allure, and the urbanity that was described by the term *iki*. The second part notes the spread of Edo culture throughout Japan and concentrates on the role played by itinerants, touring theater troupes, and pilgrims. The third section consists of a selection of essays reflecting Nishiyama's expertise in the field of popular theater, music, and vaudeville.

Readers of *Asian Folklore Studies* will be especially interested in chapter 5, “Edo Temples and Shrines.” The chapter introduces us to Saito Gesshin, a ward representative and author of a 26-volume guide to Edo, the *Edo meisho zue* (Illustrations of Famous Sites in Edo), published in 1834–36. Gesshin kept a diary between the 1840s and the 1870s, providing fascinating detail on the daily life activities of one man who lived through the restoration years. Nishiyama has combed the diary for entries that deal with visits to temples and shrines and other religious activities. He puts them in day-by-day, month-by-month order and thus is able to present a composite view of the religious activity of commoners in Edo.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Nishiyama's scholarship is his appraisal of the *iemoto* system as a revolutionary change in the methods of cultural transmission during the Edo period. Contrary to contemporary views of the *iemoto* system as a remnant of a feudal past, Nishiyama sees it as part of a popular strategy, developed in the mid-eighteenth century to transcend the rigid official bonds of rank and status. In other words, the *iemoto* system created a sense of liberation and freedom in Edo popular culture. By taking an assumed name (*gimei*), commoners were able to step out of their social class and enter a cultural world in which social rank was of little concern (204). For Nishiyama, the *iemoto* system thus engendered a spirit of resistance, which he saw at the core of Edo period cultural creativity.

On the one hand, Nishiyama is the master of the anecdote. His style is to tell stories and pique the imagination of his readers with curious information. We are given fascinating details on the development of publishing in Edo, of popular entertainers in Edo, of traveling troupes of actors and dancers, of religious ceremonies and pilgrimages, and of the origins of *soba* and sushi shops. In his afterword Nishiyama reminds us that the study of Edo period culture is as fertile as ever—we need only to dust off documents and artifacts neglected by most scholars. His own passion for the past few years has been to examine the work of Edo period tea masters, especially the production of beautiful bamboo tea ladles (*chashaku*). To this end not only has Nishiyama made a painstaking investigation of thousands of outstanding examples of tea ladles, but has carved five thousand such ladles himself. Here we have the scholar as connoisseur.

On the other hand, Nishiyama does have powerful insight into the nature of historical change during the Edo period. His heroes are the Edo commoners, who, around the middle of the eighteenth century, replaced the warrior elite as the creative force in Edo culture.

Instead of martial arts (*bunpei*), Nishiyama chose to emphasize the arts of leisure (*yūgei*). Instead of looking at the artistic and scholarly achievements of the elite, he focused on acrobats, storytellers, mimes, dancers, and conjurers. Nishiyama contested the oft-repeated notion that Edo period Japan was in a state of decline and decadence by the time of the coming of Perry's black ships. Instead it is precisely this period, the early nineteenth century, when Edo culture had reached its fullest flower.

Instead of the manufacture of iron and the introduction of the factory system, Nishiyama is concerned with the development of hybrid morning glories. It is a nostalgic view of the past, but an important reminder that the samurai class with its economic failings is only one of many narratives that can be told about the Edo period. According to Nishiyama,

The development of hybrid morning glories was just one element of a refined and broadly based culture in which a high premium was placed on handmade articles. This culture included *ukiyo-e* woodcuts, flyers and chapbooks, the kabuki, storytelling, clothing, gardening, and much else. That this culture has often been labeled "decadent" merely reflects bias or sloppy and myopic research methods. Decadence can of course be found here; but the creative urge of the common citizenry of this era was nothing if not sound and healthy. (18–19)

Much credit for the success of this book must go to the translator and editor, Gerald Groemer, who currently teaches at Yamanashi University. Not only is the subject matter difficult, but Nishiyama's academic style does not easily translate into English academic prose. The original is littered with repetition and connections between sentences or paragraphs are rough. Moreover, Nishiyama rarely comes to a synthetic conclusion; as Groemer puts it, "these chapters simply stop when Nishiyama has run out of things to say" (3). Finally, documentation in the original was often lacking. Thus, in preparing the English text, Groemer, with the author's permission and cooperation, has rewritten, and sometimes changed sentence and paragraph order. While not adding anything new, he has added summaries of the main points at the end of several of the chapters. And he has added valuable notes. As Groemer himself admits, his work is more of an adaptation than a translation, but readers will be grateful for his efforts. Indeed, the notes, glossary of terms, bibliography of sources in Japanese and English, and index may make the English version of Nishiyama's essays far more accessible and useful than the Japanese originals.

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TURNBULL, STEPHEN. *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan: A Study of Their Development, Beliefs, and Rituals to the Present Day*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon (Japan Library), 1998. xii + 296 pages. Maps, figures, illustrations, appendices, bibliography, Japanese character list, index. Cloth £40.00; ISBN 1-873410-70-0.

The past decade has witnessed a burgeoning interest in Japan's Kakure Kirishitan ("hidden" Christians) on the part of scholars in Europe, Japan, and the United States. It is also a timely