MIYATA NOBORU 宮田 登 and TAKADA MAMORU 高田 衛, Editors. *Namazu-e: Shinsai to Nihon bunka* 鯰絵—震災と日本文化 [Namazu-e: Earthquakes and Japanese culture]. Tokyo: Ribun Shuppan, 1995. 369 pages. Numerous colored and b/w illustrations. Cloth ¥7,400; ISBN 4-947546-84-0. (In Japanese)

In 1855, near the end of the Tokugawa period (1600–1868), a disastrous earthquake shook the city of Edo, now known as Tokyo. In the course of a couple of months the city was flooded with more than three hundred kinds of *namazu-e* 鯰絵 (catfish prints), anonymously produced by woodblock print artists. In Japanese folk religion the *namazu* is a mythical monster fish that lives under or inside the land of Japan, supporting the land on its back. Although usually kept under control by the Kashima deity, who holds its head down with the *kanameishi* 要石 (keystone), it occasionally moves and thereby causes earthquakes. The overwhelming attention paid to the *namazu* as it appears in the prints has intrigued scholars of Japanese folklore for decades.

The present volume builds on the work of C. OUWEHAND, who, in his *Namazu-e and Their Themes* (1964), argued that the phenomenon of the *namazu-e* prints was a religious reaction to the catastrophe experienced by the urban masses in Edo in 1855. (We should remember that the Edo population had had to endure several other upheavals, such as Commodore Perry's arrival two years before and the ever-increasing economic inequality in their community.) Some of the *namazu-e* appear to blame the monster for causing the earthquake, while other prints depict it as a powerful but ambiguous figure, often male. According to Ouwehand the latter portrayed the *namazu* as equalizing the economic imbalance by destroying, through earthquakes, the wealth of the rich. Thus, he argued, the *namazu* of the woodblock prints probably symbolized destructive power both good and bad—the type of power the Edo population believed necessary for restoring the normality of their world (*yonaoshi* 世直し).

In 1995 Japan was struck by another earthquake, this one devastating Kobe and Awaji Island; more than five thousand people lost their lives. Takada Mamoru, one of the editors of *Namazu-e*, mentions in his epilogue that although work on the volume had been going on for two years, the project materialized quickly after the earthquake. Intended as a delayed response to Ouwehand's earlier study as well as a collection of analyses of the *namazu* in the broader contexts of cultural history, folk and fine arts, the science of seismology, and natural history, the book consists of five parts with essays by twenty-six authors.

Part 1 reinvestigates the social situations under which the *namazu-e* were produced. Miyata Noboru, a folklorist, examines the *namazu* as a folkloric image in the urban setting of Edo. According to Miyata, although many regions depicted *namazu* as "fish speaking like humans," Edo in particular seems to have been responsible for disseminating the image of *namazu* as connected with earthquakes. In this urban setting, he explains, *namazu* were transformed to symbols of the latent power of nature. Kitahara Itoko 北原糸子 investigates the Edo citizenry as aficionados of the mass media, in this case *kawaraban* 瓦版 (tile prints), which correspond to what we would now call extra editions of newspapers. Analyzing the history of these prints, she argues that since the latter half of the eighteenth century the warriors, merchants, and craftsmen transcended the boundaries of their respective social castes and came to share the same concerns and interests, thus forming the urban mass of Edo.

The authors represented in part 2 respond to Ouwehand's approach with images of *namazu* as they appeared in the prints related to the 1855 earthquake. Kitani Makoto 気谷 誠. points out that, in addition to the ambivalence noted by Ouwehand, the *namazu* occasionally showed a comic side as well. Analyzing a print of an anthropomorphized *namazu* apologizing

to the deities for causing the earthquake, Kitani argues that such representations made fun of the monstrous fish and thereby performed a psychotherapeutic function, helping the Edo people change their perspective on the nightmarish experience of the quake. Moreover, according to Kitani, the prints, with their depiction of the apologizing *namazu*, were believed to work as talismans against earthquakes.

Part 3 probes the scientific possibility of a relationship between *namazu* and earthquakes, since *namazu* are thought capable of sensing imminent earthquakes. Part 4 examines how *namazu* have appeared in Chinese mythology, German folklore, and Japanese art. Here we learn that *namazu* have long been subjects of Japanese art. Finally, part 5 presents a quite extensive list by Kato Mitsuo 加藤光男 of *namazu-e* in prints and other media, each entry including a picture, text, and short explanation. This list will, I believe, be a great help for further research on this genre.

This ambitious work provides the reader with important information to supplement Ouwehand's work, and indicates possibilities for further studies of visual representations in Japanese popular culture. For example, the authors of parts 1 and 2 are concerned with just who constituted the Edo population, not only as art producers but also as audience and consumers. They investigate the cultural attitudes shared by these people in their interpretation of such art. One cannot emphasize enough the importance of audience-studies in such investigations of popular culture.

Nevertheless, this ambitious work sets its own limits. In attempting to capture the *namazu* in its broader context by using an encyclopedic approach, the book can spare only a few pages for each author. The reviewer wished, for example, that there were more discussions of the kind Kitani, Kitahara, and Komatsu Kazuhiko 小松和彦 offer concerning the treatment of the *namazu-e* as a sort of "memory bank," the investigation of which can yield valuable information on the social conditions, folk beliefs, and various emotional reactions of the populace. They invite the reader to see the complexity and multivocality in the *namazu-e* as mirrors of people's reactions. These insightful studies, focusing on the Edo people as active contributors to art, will further supplement Ouwehand's symbolic and structuralist interpretation of the visual representations.

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Anyone who has ever been to Korea and attended a performance of the musical narrative known as *p'ansori* will probably never forget it. The art and vocal technique of singing *p'ansori* is unique and remarkable in that the music seems to come from the deepest soul of the singer and indeed from the deepest soul of Korea and her people.