

## Book Reviews 書評

**James L. McClain and Wakita Osamu, eds.**  
*Osaka: The Merchants' Capital of Early Modern Japan.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

Of the various forms of scholarly writing, the topical essay collection most expediently introduces a broad range of research topics and methods to a reading audience. Despite its occasional shortcomings it remains the most efficient way to "cover" large tracts of historical territory, as well as to engage new theories and methods. Despite the relatively prominent role essay collections have played in the writing of medieval Japanese history in English, until fairly recently, the genre has not exerted an especially great influence on the historiography of the early modern period. This situation may be changing somewhat with the appearance of *Osaka: The Merchants' Capital of Early Modern Japan*. *Osaka* follows on the heels of *Edo & Paris: Urban Life and the State in the Early Modern Era* (Cornell University Press, 1994). Together these volumes, diverse in subject matter and in methodology, have laid the foundation for the subfield of early modern Japanese urban history in English.

*Osaka* brings together Japanese and American specialists on early modern history and culture. All have previously published on topics related to, if not specifically within the field of urban history. In the editors' preface, James L. McClain and Wakita Osamu explain that they asked each contributor to address three central themes: the first was to give a sense of "the dynamics that resulted in Osaka's emergence as one of Japan's leading cities during the early modern period," the second was to "expand our understanding about the distinctive nature of Osaka's urban experience, especially in contrast to Edo and Kyoto," and the third was to "explore the contributions that Osaka's residents made to political, social, and economic developments across Japan." (p. xiii) Moreover, the editors intended the essays to be of interest to specialists as well as accessible to students new to the study of Japanese history. This is a tall order, but it is one the volume is, for the most part, able to fill.

The lead essay, co-written by editors McClain and Wakita, gives a broad survey of "Osaka Across the Ages." It is a solid introduction to the history of both region and city from the Jomon period through end of the Tokugawa period, and is accompanied by photographs, reproductions of artwork and, most helpfully, by several clearly drawn historical maps. McClain and Wakita set the tone for the essays that follow by seeking to show "what made Osaka Osaka." (p. 20) This is an implicitly comparative query, one whose task is to contest the characterization of the entire early modern period as the "Edo Period." (*ibid*) McClain, Wakita, and most of the contributors argue that Osaka's history was quite distinct from the histories of Edo and Kyoto, and by understanding its role in the larger scheme of early modern Japanese history, one can better appreciate the "richness and diversity of urban life." (p. 20) The various contributors undertake this task in quite different ways.

Wakita Haruko's essay on "medieval urbanism" in the Osaka region is a concise and provocative discussion of urban and economic growth between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. She shows convincingly that Osaka had deep roots as a commercial center well before the early modern period. The early development of ports, and subsequently of warehousing and transshipping activities led to a pattern of settlement she terms the "medieval urban community." (p. 30) These communities were characterized by "concentrated, nonfarming populations; the performance of economic activities that revolved around the distribution of commodities supplied by peasant and artisan producers; and a decline in the influence and power of the traditional proprietary lords...." (p.30) By this definition, she argues that while Kyoto, Nara, and Kamakura could be called medieval cities, "the new urbanism was associated particularly with *entrepôt* communities." (p. 31)

James McClain's essay on "Space, Power, Wealth, and Status in Seventeenth-Century Osaka" shows how new political and economic developments in the early modern period manifested themselves in the changing physical and social geography of Osaka. By reading the urban landscape, McClain argues that while the city was in the early seventeenth century a "city of samu-

rai and power," it became over time a city of "merchants and commerce," and one of "artisans and production," as the commoner population grew in size and power and spread throughout the city. He shows that while mid-seventeenth century maps of Osaka are dominated by the looming presence of Osaka Castle (and by metaphorical extension, the official/samurai presence), by the mid-eighteenth century, the castle is squeezed out toward the margins of the map and diminished in size. (p. 75-77) As in McClain's earlier essay on "power, space, and popular culture" in Edo (in *Edo & Paris*, pp. 105-131), one sees clearly how the Tokugawa policy of balancing control from above and autonomy from below affected settlement patterns and economic and cultural activity in the city. In other words, the reader gets a revealing picture of Osaka's distinctive historical geography.

In Uchida Kusuo's essay "Protest and the Tactics of Direct Remonstrance: Osaka's Merchants Make Their Voices Heard," the author highlights the dialectical relationship between shogunal authorities and Osaka commoners by showing how merchants forged new types of alliances and developed new forms of protest during the early modern period in order to contest the heavy-handed regulatory policies employed by the shogunate to regulate the prices of rice and other commodities. Merchants began petitioning city magistrates in Edo in 1733, and when they proved unresponsive, these peaceful tactics were followed by the first urban riots of the early modern period. The conflict spread to Osaka in 1735-36; as in Edo, the process began peacefully, with appeals making their way up through the urban chain of command. But as each round of protest was met with only partial concessions by officials, Osaka's merchants began to devise new tactics, which culminated in the unprecedented direct remonstrance to the city magistrates for postponement of payment for mandatory grain purchases. In the end, Uchida argues that although "the protest movement did not result in any major concessions on the part of the government," the merchants did not see this as defeat. "On the contrary, the unfolding of events almost seems to have given birth to a sense of self-satisfaction among the merchant estate...for having stood up against the arbitrary and, for

some, despotic expropriation of commoner wealth...." (p. 102) The tactic of direct remonstrance, then, forms just one example of the ways in which "pressure from below" transformed Osaka into the "people's city." (p. 103)

In the first of two essays on Osaka culture, C. Andrew Gerstle's "Takemoto Gidayu and the Individualistic Spirit of Osaka Theater," Gerstle shows how an "individualistic, self-reliant spirit" (p. 105) came to pervade Osaka *joruri* in the eighteenth century, and continues to characterize the modern *bunraku* puppet theater to this day. This is striking because it stands in contrast to the more familiar *iemoto* system of lineage- or community-based institutional organization that characterized *kabuki* and other traditional arts in Edo and Kyoto. Gerstle gives a brief history of *joruri*, and describes the important roles of two Osaka-based artists, Kaga no Jo and Takemoto Gidayu, in shaping and refining its practice. He shows how the particular views of Kaga no Jo and Gidayu, combined with the fiercely competitive atmosphere of the eighteenth-century Osaka theater to create a teaching and performing method that valued innovation and individuality over the formulation of a school-based style transmitted through a family or lineage.

Gary Leupp's essay, "The Five Men of Naniwa: Gang Violence and Popular Culture in Genroku Osaka" reveals a different aspect of Osaka, and by extension, early modern culture through representations of a gang of hoodlums who raised havoc on the streets of Osaka, committing robbery, assault, and murder at the turn of the eighteenth century. For the most part, the Five Men of Naniwa and their cohort targeted wealthy commoners. In 1701 the local police captured the men and they were executed the following summer. Rather than being disparaged for their crimes, after their deaths the five men "became transformed into protectors of ordinary people and the embodiment of the best and most noble aspirations and values espoused by the commoners of Osaka." (p. 126) This transformation was effected largely through song, drama, storytelling, and woodblock prints, and it was a phenomenon that was not limited to Osaka; Edo *kabuki* playwrights also dramatized the affair beginning in 1716. Leupp argues that commoner outlaws were lionized by the public because they tapped into "a

very conscious, if unfocused, class hatred." (p. 154)

Two essays in *Osaka* discuss early modern religion. Yoshida Nobuyuki's article discusses a brotherhood of mendicant monks in Osaka and their relationships to the local authorities (the Osaka city magistrates) and to the religious establishments with which they were affiliated (in this case, the monastery Daizoin on Mount Kurama north of Kyoto). The monks themselves quarreled over alms-gathering practices; in particular, they disagreed over whether or not to engage in the somewhat unorthodox tactics of dressing up as Buddhist or even Shinto deities, or as "spirits and apparitions," or of putting on street-corner performances in order to gather alms. To resolve these disputes, in 1672, Kurama authorities issued a "notification" (*oboe*), which the Osaka city magistrates then enforced. As a result, both church and secular officials compelled the brotherhood to organize and regulate itself, in an "amalgam of religious law and government-approved code of conduct." (p. 162) Yoshida points out both the similarities and differences in the organization of brethren in Osaka and in Edo, and relates them to the structural differences in the political and social organization of each city. (p. 165-66) Ultimately, Yoshida argues, rather than forging a separate and distinct identity, "the friars have passed into historical memory as just one among several groups that helped to create popular religion and fuse it with commoner culture during the early modern era." (p. 176)

The second essay on popular religion concerns the worship of Inari in Osaka. Nakagawa Sugane uses the case of Inari to provide a clearer view of the problems besetting forms of "popular" religion in early modern Osaka. The worship of Inari, which reached "explosive" proportions by the nineteenth century, had its roots in the decline of community Shinto shrines, whose maintenance had become difficult and costly for many neighborhoods and villages. Shrines thus initiated the worship of popular deities like Benzaiten, the Seven Gods of Good Fortune (*shichi fukujin*), and Inari specifically to increase the number of worshippers and thus broaden the shrine's base of support. This move had the effect of also diversifying forms of worship, as "mountain ascetics, sorcerers, seers, clairvoyants, and all manner of

other folk religionists also were busy communicating with Inari on behalf of grateful clients." (p. 192) As the trend toward increased Inari worship spread from Osaka to surrounding areas, the shogunate began to worry that such popular beliefs might lead to the emergence of "peculiar heterodoxies" and ultimately, to social unrest, and officials began to crack down on prominent Inari sects and to regulate folk religion in general. These regulations had the effect of stifling Inari worship, but, as Nakagawa concludes, in an unusually strident tone, Inari still "constitute[s] a means, however modest, for ordinary people to defy modern rationalism as it tries to crush underfoot the feelings of reverence toward nature, and to resist an omnipotent state that so often seems bent on destroying happiness in this life." (p. 212)

In Tetsuo Najita's essay "Ambiguous Encounters: Ogata Koan and International Studies in Late Tokugawa Osaka," the author shows clearly that Koan, a leading scholar of so-called *rangaku*, or "Dutch studies" fused his "Western" learning with Tokugawa Confucian thought. Koan did so in practice, by requiring his students to study both Dutch and Confucian thought at his academy in Osaka, the Tekijuku, and in theory, for he understood Dutch studies, especially medicine, to be a form of "ethical action" (insofar as its goal was to save lives) of the sort advocated by Tokugawa Confucian thinkers like Kaibara Ekiken. The roots of this thinking lay in the concept that human knowledge was fundamentally incomplete, but that individuals were obligated to do their utmost to learn how to sustain life: "What the theory allowed was that the Dutch knew more about certain things. And while that knowledge was worth mastering, it, too, was relative, an epistemological presupposition that would persist into the early industrial era." (p. 223) The precision and economy with which Najita explicates a quite complex set of ideas is difficult to reproduce here; the essay fully succeeds in, as the author puts it, "forsaking [the] dualities" that have marked early modern intellectual history: Ogata and Fukuzawa Yukichi, Osaka and Edo, past and future. (p. 216-223) One comes to understand each component in the duality by understanding its "other." Of all the essays in the book, Najita's perhaps addresses the concept of Osaka's dis-

tinctiveness most effectively by illuminating its (more precisely, its intellectuals') connections with other places and ideas.

In the penultimate essay in the collection, Murata Michihito provides a "geography of governance in central Japan" (p. 245) by looking at Osaka's role in regional governance. Arguing that commoners have often been ignored in studies of governance in the Kansai area (though he does not really explain why), Murata focuses on the roles of the *yokiki*, later known as *yotashi*, Osaka's "merchant delegates" who assisted shogunal officials at various levels with governing tasks. As in Edo and other cities, commoners in Osaka assumed a variety of governing tasks; their duties tended to expand over time, and become increasingly integrated into the official administrative system. The *yokiki/yotashi* were no exception. Murata argues that they played a part in the "complex geography" of power in the Kansai area.

The concluding essay is an afterword of sorts by Wakita Osamu, and combines a recapitulation of Osaka's early modern development with a brief synthesis of each of the preceding essays' contributions to understanding Osaka's early modern urbanism (as opposed to its medieval urbanism, as conceived by Wakita Haruko). What were these characteristics? We might note first trends related to political, social, and economic growth and change in the urban context: increasing merchant self-governance; expanding merchant presence in the city, both vertically (up into the lower rungs of political administration) and horizontally (across the physical space of the city itself); continuous merchant protest against stifling shogunal policies; persistent class conflict, not only between merchants and samurai, but within the merchant class itself. At the same time there were cultural and intellectual movements that flourished or foundered (or both) in the context of Osaka itself: the growth, regulation, and/or suppression of popular religious movements; the development of distinctive styles in Osaka performing and literary arts; the differing intellectual currents joining and separating the city's academies, schools, and individual thinkers.

Throughout the volume, one hears quite clearly the voices of common people, and one grasps immediately the importance of commoner

initiative, energy, and acumen in making Osaka the city it was (and, to a certain degree, remains). In addition to the historical voices, however, are the historians' voices, and they add a murmuring chorus of catchphrases to which the reader is meant to hook the information gleaned from the essays: Osaka is the "merchants' city," the "merchants' capital," the "people's city," or the "country's kitchen." Almost every essay resorts to one or several of these phrases, in great part because they are apt descriptions. For the novice student (to whom the volume is in part addressed), such reiteration might prove helpful, but to "advanced specialists in [Japan's] urban history," (p. xiii) for whom the volume is also intended, these already-familiar catchphrases emphasizing Osaka's merchant-centered identity begin to raise more questions than they answer. This is not to say the volume fails to convince the reader that Osaka was in fact the "merchants' city"; on the contrary, the research gathered here is impressive and persuasive in its both breadth and depth. The smoothness of the narrative, however, whets the reader's appetite for further discussion of merchants themselves. For example, one wants to know more about divisions within the merchant class (hinted at in Leupp's essay); about the nature and organization of labor; about material culture and lifestyle; about gender relations within the merchant class.

Further questions arise from the emphasis on merchant activity as a cornerstone of Osaka's "distinctive" urban identity. As noted at the beginning of this review, highlighting Osaka's distinctiveness contributions to the larger society, polity, and economy was part of the agenda set before the contributors. But in the absence of relevant comparisons, what does it *mean* to say that early modern Osaka was politically, economically, or culturally distinctive? *Osaka's* predecessor, *Edo & Paris*, contained within it an inherent tension because the comparison between the two cities was overt, as was the thematic approach (the relationship between urban life and the state). The comparative angle made the Edo essays stand out in greater relief, their arguments honed against the European opposite number. This is a tension *Osaka* lacks. The absence of consistent comparisons to other cities is perhaps the result of a more or less explicit desire to de-

throne Edo as the representative early modern Japanese city. But there are several instances in which a comparison to Edo would have been helpful. For example, why did popular riots fail to break out in Osaka, as they did in Edo in the 1730s? Similarly, why was gang violence more prevalent in Edo? Can these phenomena be explained by the weaker presence of the samurai class in Osaka? Another question might address the comparative spatial dynamics of the two cities: how did their differences in physical geography influence urban geographies of power?

*Osaka* fills a significant gap in the historical literature, and readers and scholars should be grateful for the wealth of information and interpretation this volume provides. At the same time one detects a tendency to fill the historiographical gap with "pure" Osaka--that is, to downplay the many and important connections that tied Osaka to its environs, and to other major and minor cities in Japan via trade, travel, and information networks. It could be argued that one distinctive feature of early modern Japan was its connectedness; the emergence of shared political, economic, and cultural practices is surely one of its defining characteristics, and Osaka was, as Tetsuo Najita points out, an international city. Osaka was also an early modern city, marked by the interconnection and cross-pollination that defined the era, in Japan as elsewhere. In contrast to this image, with a few exceptions, *Osaka's* Osaka seems to float in a void. Osaka was certainly a center of merchant power, but merchants all over Japan became increasingly powerful, organized, and autonomous during the early modern period. To what degree, then, is merchant power an "Osaka" trend versus an "early modern" trend? More explicitly comparative analysis would allow the reader to judge for him/herself, and would make this useful and informative volume more provocative and open-ended.

Marcia Yonemoto  
Department of History  
University of Colorado,  
Boulder

Gerald A. Figal, *Civilization and Monsters : Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan.* Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1999.

This is a fascinating and remarkably readable book, effectively describing how the various figures and narratives of the supernatural were dealt with during Japan's rapid modernization.

Have you seen a ghost today? Never encountered *tengu* in your life? Seemingly our enlightened modernity has succeeded in expelling the supernatural monsters and ghosts out of the real, and thus, out of the historical. Then, why should a modern historian be concerned with mythical monsters and superstitious spirits? Isn't it the very task of a historian to de-mythologize our understanding of mysterious events? Shouldn't the modern historian tell us that the *kamikaze* wasn't a divine intervention at all, but merely an incidental meteorological phenomenon? Doesn't modernity dictate to us to convince my Japanese granny that there is no divine spirit living in that weather-beaten stone statue of a fox?

Figal, as a historian, is of course concerned about this fundamental desire of modern history to expel ghosts from its territory. Yet, he finds the tenacious presence and vicissitudes of the supernatural within various Japanese modern discourses a key to understanding better, historically to wit, the formation of Japanese modernity itself. Figal points out three major discursive operations with regard to the mysterious (*fushigi*) in Meiji. One is the rationalization of the mysterious, driven by the scientific will to demystify all supernatural phenomena. The second is the incipient development of folk studies spearheaded by Yanagita Kunio as well as the extraordinary, intellectual jack-of-all-trades Minakata Kumagusu. The third is the political reorganization of regional "spirits" into a centralized, nationalized "Japanese Spirit."

If this book were overtly focused on the political aspect implicit in the last issue stated above, it would have been a rather predictable, ideologically driven study. I admire this work for not being pontifical or accusatory in tone even when it discusses some clearly political issues. In fact, it seems to me that Figal is at pains to be fair to all the main figures in his narrative. Instead of narrating another one-dimensional political tragedy of Japan's empire, Figal delineates a complex web of diverse discourses surrounding the super-