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Gerald Groemer. *The Land We Saw, the Times We Knew: An Anthology of Zuihitsu Writing from Early Modern Japan.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2018. 376 pp. $68.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8248-7444-5.

Reviewed by Michael Lee

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"I have chronicled the world's ways and manners as they have come to mind. Trends and fashions are found in both town and country but they soon melt away without a trace. They are as transitory as soap bubbles" (p. 221). So begins "A Dustheap of Discourses" (***Chirizuka-dan***), the sixth text in Groemer's present anthology of seven translated ***zuihitsu*** writings from the Edo period. Written by physician Ogawa Akimichi in 1814, "A Dustheap of Discourses" is the longest text as well as the broadest in scope: while it contains medical knowledge such as common cures and dietary advice, it also grants equal importance to such diverse topics as political gossip, anecdotes, tofu vendors, the amount of pomade to put in one's hair, the production of sugar, where to find nun-prostitutes, which fishes are avoided by the samurai class, and the etymology behind certain street names in Edo. In this way, this text perhaps most closely follows the literal meaning of ***zuihitsu***: "to follow the writing brush" (p. 1).

The other six texts in this collection follow a similarly tangential pattern, if less eclectic in their subjects. They contain short paragraphs that follow a general theme, though digressions are frequent and very much part of the genre. The stated aims of each text differ: the Ogawa's aforementioned text, for example, was written for wider publication; in contrast, "A Record of Seven Offered Treasures," by samurai-monk Kōzai Raizan, is a series of personal advices to his daughters that discusses which skills are advantageous to acquire (equestrianship, archery, cuisine, the etiquette of the Ogawasara school) and which are useless (***nō*** drama, board games, gambling). Given the highly idiosyncratic nature of these accounts, Groemer's translation impressively conveys the personalities of the writers, from the sardonic poet Kimuro Bōun, whose "Kyoto Observed" (***Mita kyō monogatari***) is littered with puns and literary references, to the self-repressive Miura Jōshin, who inevitably juxtaposes his detailed descriptions of pleasure quarters and beautiful actresses with Buddhist admonishments against lust and temptation in his "Tales That Come to Mind" (***Sozoro monogatari***).

As Groemer suggests, three of the texts in the collection—"Idle Talk of Nagasaki" (***Nagasaki kanwa***), "Kyoto Observed," and "The Breezes of Osaka" (***Naniwa no kaze***)—blur the line between ***zuihitsu*** and ***kenbun-ki*** (translatable as "travelogue"), and they are similar in that they describe local customs such as food, dialects, practices, and festivals. Speaking from the perspective of Japan's premodern encounters with foreigners, the information contained in the Nagasaki text on the community of Chinese traders in the city is particularly valuable, as there has been relatively little liter-

ature on this topic available in English, and this present translation could be used as the foundation for further studies in Sino-Japanese trade relations or the social history of Nagasaki.

Several consistent topics can be observed across the different texts, despite the range of authorship and theme. Chief among them are the descriptions of emerging forms of popular arts, such as ***haikai***, ***jōruri***, ***shamisen*** music, ***sarugaku***, and pleasure districts. Attitudes towards them differ, but none are as dramatic and bitter as that found in Confucian scholar Dazai Shundai's "Monologue" (***Dokugo***): "it is inconceivable that any music of any age or culture, whether in China or Japan, should have been as indecent as that of the ***shamisen*** and ***joruri***" (p. 159). Lamenting the moral and cultural degeneracy of his time in comparison to the past golden ages in China and Japan, Shundai's text is the most obviously influenced by Chinese intellectual trends, though its currents can also be detected in other texts as well.

Behind these sentiments, of course, is the wider background of the Edo period: a time of stability leading to the prominence of the merchant middle class and consequently new forms of popular culture. This theme of transition is a common thread tying together all of these texts: Kōzai Raizan, born in 1640 and a mere generation after the tumultuous Sengoku period, complains, for example, that "things are no longer what they were in the past. In today's world samurai turn into [lowly] foot soldiers (***ashigaru***), and foot soldiers turn into samurai. Daimyo mimic the ways of men of lesser status, and townspeople emulate the ways of samurai" (p. 107). Almost two hundred years later, Kusumi Suketoshi echoes the sentiment in "The Breezes of Osaka": "In accordance with local ways, everyone pursues only financial gain; simple and austere manners have been entirely lost. Even samurai who have grown up here are stained by these ways. They exhibit little shame regarding such matters and display no sense of austerity" (p. 300). This tension between past and present, as experienced by these writers, highlights the sense of change during the Edo period—a process as transitory as soap bubbles, to borrow Ogawa Akimichi's phrase.

Groemer has generously annotated the mass of literary references in the texts, as well as provided brief bibliographic information on most of the individuals mentioned. Detailed as they are, some do seem somewhat redundant, and it is unclear whether these notes were intended for the general reader (who would likely be uninterested in many of the finer points) or the academic (who would likely be already aware). In addition, at times these annotations clutter up the main text, and the information may have been better served by several well-placed footnotes. While Groemer's translation is consistent, a few choices do raise eyebrows (such as zither for ***koto***), but in such cases the original Japanese has generally been retained in parentheses. Although a short introduction prefaces each text discussing biographical and bibliographical details, more information on both would have been welcome, particularly on the publication histories of the texts at hand, which would be useful in assessing their contemporary perceptions and receptions.

Minor nitpicks aside, the anthology is formidable, and those interested in the social history of the Edo period will find it to be of particular value. There is sufficient information on culture, music, fashion, and food across the texts to use the volume as the basis for several essays, although the sheer wealth of information included means it will be useful for scholars from a range of disciplines.

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