

Traditional Japanese Arts and Culture

An Illustrated Sourcebook

EDITED BY STEPHEN ADDISS, GERALD GROEMER, AND J. THOMAS RIMER

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REVIEWED BY JEFFREY A. DYM

For those interested in primary documents pertaining to Japanese culture, history, and philosophy, the Tsunoda Ryusaku, William Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (1958) has been the standard sourcebook for nearly fifty years. Though it touches upon some aspects of Japanese aesthetics, space was limited. In *Traditional Japanese Arts and Culture*, Stephen Addiss, Gerald Groemer, and J. Thomas Rimer have created a complimentary collection of primary documents “about Japanese artistic and cultural traditions” (xii). The writings are not examples of Japanese prose, poetry, or theater, but rather are contemporary commentaries, treatises, and musings on the numerous artistic traditions found in Japan prior to the Meiji Restoration of 1868. The breadth of practices covered is impressive. Everything—from architecture, *kagura*, Buddhism, Shinto, court music, folk music, sculpture, *waka*, *tanka*, *renga*, *haikai*, *haiku*, all forms of prose, painting, calligraphy, gardens, shamans, puppetry, Buddhist chants, *dengaku*, *sarugaku*, *nō*, *kyōgen*, the tea ceremony, woodblock prints, kabuki, flower arranging, to food and drink, as well as cultural concepts, such as *mujō*, *aware*, *yūgen*, and *wabi*—is discussed.

The book is divided into four chapters—Early Japan, Courtly Japan, Samurai Japan, and Merchant Japan. Each artistic tradition is clearly marked and the editors set up each piece with their own brief historical introduction and commentary about the passage, author, or cultural tradition. Citations to source material in English and Japanese are located after each passage. Sixty-four exquisitely sharp plates of pottery, paintings, sculptures, gardens, textiles, and architecture complement the quoted passages. By gathering together previously untranslated material, as well as hard to find translated material, the editors have produced a book that would make an excellent compendium to accompany any pre-modern Japanese history, art, theater, or culture course, as well as any comparative studies course. The range of topics covered would also benefit secondary school educators who are looking for insight into Japanese cultural traditions. The suggested further reading list in English, broken down by topic, as well as a Japanese, Chinese, and Western Languages bibliography and detailed index, make this monograph a valuable reference tool. ■

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