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Asian Studies

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan, 1467-1680: Resilience and Renewal
by Lee Butler

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Source: *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (Nov., 2003), pp. 1239-1240

Published by: Association for Asian Studies

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3591787>

Accessed: 12-05-2020 00:00 UTC

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understand why the romantic vision so inspired Akiko in her poetry and prose. Romanticism framed as a problem to be solved rather than a growth to be experienced would help separate Akiko's aesthetic from the biography itself.

Such a detailed illustration of Akiko's youth and biographical preface to her first collected volume of poetry is a welcome addition to the relatively meager amount of writing in English on modern Japanese poets. Since Beichman focuses on the early years, we unfortunately hear little of Akiko's pacifist activities and contributions to the feminist movement. Still young as the book comes to its close, the Akiko portrayed therein remains a youthful, wide-eyed, and daring poet, while the intellectual Akiko, whom Beichman tantalizingly discusses in the preface to the book, eludes us. As her bibliography reveals, Beichman is likely one of the most knowledgeable scholars of Akiko's tanka and one would like to have heard more of Akiko the critic who found *Tangled Hair* to be a naïve work and one of which she personally was not enamored. Perhaps Beichman has a sequel in store.

This reviewer is grateful for the exegesis of a substantial number of Akiko's poems and autobiographical writings and the sensitivity in rendering Akiko's writing. Beichman has clearly paid close attention to the language of the poems and Japanese-language readers will welcome the inclusion of an appendix containing texts of the poems as they appeared in print initially or, when necessary, in secondary sources.

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Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan, 1467–1680: Resilience and Renewal. By LEE BUTLER. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002. 412 pp. \$39.50 (cloth).

The Japanese court retained political and cultural significance during the Warring States era (1467–1568) and the subsequent reunification of Japan. In a monograph sure to be of interest to specialists and students of medieval and early modern political, social, and cultural history, Lee Butler shows how the court adapted to the profound transformations of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. Butler is to be commended for straddling the medieval and early modern divide in Japanese history and for explaining how the court shaped enduring patterns of Japanese culture.

Butler's work provides a powerful counterargument to the notion that Japan from 1467 to 1568 consisted of independent warring states. In his first two chapters ("The Struggle to Survive" and "Normality and Its Pretenses"), he reveals that the court remained ceremonially significant in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as daimyō such as the Ōuchi, Oda, Uesugi, and Asakura provided funds for palace repairs, poetry anthologies, and varied ceremonies (pp. 63, 71, 84, 100). The court thereupon gained political power during the process of unification ("Court Society During Reunification" and "Unifiers and Aristocrats"). A lack of vision caused Ōgimachi and Go-Yōzei to fritter away these powers (p. 134), but, to be fair, these emperors perceived the late-sixteenth-century transformations more as a revitalization than as a political unification.

In his final four chapters ("The Crises of 1609," "Codifying the Court," "Of Persons and Structures," and "The Culture of a New Aristocracy"), Butler recounts the political eclipse of the court and its concurrent return to cultural preeminence as a broadly construed elite culture emerged in the seventeenth century. Courtiers became arbiters of taste who determined the boundaries of high culture (tea ceremony,

flower arranging, and the architecture of gardens, but not the new dancing of Kabuki). More importantly, they formulated the system of cultural transmission whereby particular skills, be it kickball (*kemari*) during the fifteenth century (p. 74) or flower arranging in the seventeenth century (pp. 212–17), became associated with particular noble houses.

Politically, however, the narrative is largely one of failure. Butler describes the court as having “overarching authority” but remaining politically weak (p. 58) and then argues that this authority hinged upon arts and ceremonies (p. 69), which helped the court “keep that past alive in the present” (p. 296). His account mostly takes the perspective of the regent families, traditionally the highest-ranking courtiers, who were eclipsed within the court during the fifteenth century (p. 67). The powers of the regents increased (p. 236), however, as they were brought back into a position of authority in the seventeenth century (p. 240).

Butler emphasizes the importance of court unity, or the lack thereof, and even asserts that disarray caused the court to lose “moral authority” (p. 135). Nevertheless, he recognizes that courtier interests were diverse (pp. 100, 103, 188–89), and that many felt “ambivalent about the imperial institution” (p. 63). Although Butler acknowledges the divide separating ambitious emperors and the administrative nobility, who dominated the earlier medieval court (p. 46), from the highest-ranking courtiers, who attempted to bind the court with precedent, the tension between these two factions deserves further research.

Control over religious institutions was of central importance to the court but is only rarely mentioned in this work. Butler describes how the court managed to appoint priests and imperial-commissioned temples in the sixteenth century (pp. 60–62), and how the Tokugawa government later stripped these powers from the court (pp. 230, 234). One wishes that he had explored the political role of high-ranking priests, whose offices could be equated with those of courtiers (see “Daikanki,” no. 1, *Biblia* no. 78 [April 1982: 87–109], p. 90), and had further examined how Buddhist and Shintō rituals legitimated the court.

Butler’s analysis of social changes and in particular the increasing power of imperial wives and mothers at the expense of women of the palace (*koto no naishi*) during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (pp. 240–43) proves compelling. His exploration of the court’s ideology or ideologies—he himself is not clear—is, however, distracting. For one claiming that “this book is not about the creation of an ideology, and neither the word nor the concept plays a prominent role in the pages that follow” (p. 4), twenty-three references to the term in the first three pages of the conclusion (pp. 287–89) seems excessive. But I quibble. Butler has written an important monograph on the late medieval and early modern Japanese court. Those interested in the creation of patterns of Japanese culture and the political survival of the court will find this account to be essential reading.

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Children of the Japanese State: The Changing Role of Child Protection Institutions in Contemporary Japan. By ROGER GOODMAN. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 248 pp. \$80.00 (cloth); \$32.00 (paper).

To understand the social values in a society, it is instructive to examine the treatment of its most powerless citizens. In 1991 anthropologist Roger Goodman