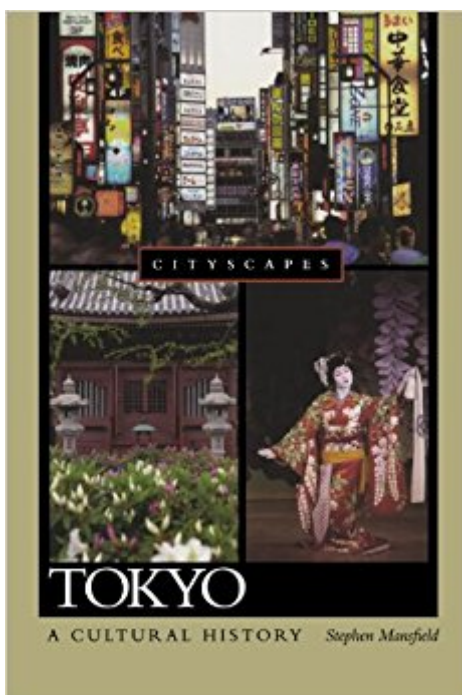


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Tokyo A Cultural History (Cityscapes)



Synopsis

Tokyo seems like an ultra modern--even postmodern--city, with its inventive skyscrapers and digitized surfaces. But it is also a city where past, present, and future coexist--where backstreets both inspire science fiction and host wooden temples, fox shrines, and Buddhist statues that evoke past ages. In this addition to Oxford's Cityscapes series, Stephen Mansfield explores a city rich in diversity, tracing its evolution from the founding of its massive stone citadel, when it was known as Edo, through the rise of a merchant class who transformed the town into a center for art, to the emergence of modern Tokyo. Mansfield traces a city of print masters, Kabuki theater, novelists and great architecture, which has overcome many disasters, from the 1923 earthquake through the fire-bombings of World War II to the 1995 subway gas attacks.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Stephen Mansfield is a resident of Tokyo and the author of Tokyo: Eyewitness Travel Guide.

Tokyo: A Cultural History (2009) by Stephen Mansfield is a fascinating look at one of the most interesting cities in the world. Mansfield uses a variety of sources to chart the history of the world's biggest city. These sources range from obscure foreign travelers like Isabella Bird to more established critics and historians like Ian Buruma, Donald Richie, Edward Seidensticker to famous Japanese literary figures like Junichiro Tanizaki, Kafu Nagai, Yasunari Kawabata, Yukio Mishima and famous foreign literary figures who have written about, traveled through or lived in the great city

like Angela Carter, David Mitchell, William Gibson and more. The topics range from woodblock art to tattoos, architecture, geisha, city parks, poetry, and natural disasters. It seems much of the city's history was concentrated in shitamachi, the low city, where the pleasure quarters of Yoshiwara resided for so many years before being shut down in the 60s for the Olympics to the former entertainment district of Asakusa. I plan to read a Nagai book based on the descriptions of his writings in this volume. There was a section in Chapter Six about Kiyosumi-teien that inspired a visit there. And I was inspired by Chapter Seven's "Upheaval and Millenarian Beliefs" to search out Shohei Imamura's film version of the events of the Ejanaike movement where delirious mobs paraded Shinto images through the streets shouting quasi-religious slogans indulging in bouts of eating and drunkenness, wearing costumes, cross-dressing and openly having sex in alleyways. The discussion of the city carries on up to present day Tokyo. It has inspired me to search out other books on the subject like Donald Riche's Tokyo Megacity and Edward Seidensticker's two books Low City, High City and Tokyo Rising.

Outstanding in the tradition of Seidensticker.

This is an extremely compact history that includes everything from geology, earthquakes & fire, to printmaking, poetry & geopolitics--and everything in between. Beautifully written, fast-paced and deep. this book is a joy to read (& makes a great gift).

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