



A Reader in Edo Period Travel

Herbert Plutschow

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Largely ignored hitherto by Western scholars, Plutschow's *Edo Period Travel* provides the first in-depth study of the subject which is centred on fifteen of the period's most notable travellers, some of whom are well known in other fields as intellectuals, artists, poets, folklorists and natural scientists, for example but rarely, if at all, as travellers. The first traveller put in the spotlight is the celebrated intellectual and botanist Kaibara Ekiken (1630-1714) and the last is the explorer of Ezo (now Hokkaido) and government official Matsuura Takeshiro (1818-88). Such was the thirst for knowledge in the Edo period that some travel accounts (estimated to number over 2000) became best-sellers in their day, not least for their voyeuristic appeal, including those of Kaibara Ekiken and Tachibana Nankei, which are included in this volume. This important research on how the Japanese discovered their own country and cultural identity has considerable interdisciplinary appeal. Of particular interest also is the author's discussion on the nature of this new travel writing and the self-centred observation and seeing that developed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, he calls the Japanese Enlightenment."

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