

Introduction to Part 2

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The theme of our inquiry, “historiography and Japanese consciousness of values,” is not of concern only to historians. As we conceive it, all fields of scholarship on Japan and all historical periods of concentration are relevant. That scholars who specialize in disciplines other than history have many valuable things to say about this topic is demonstrated in the essays collected here in Part 2. The group of scholars who met at UCLA in January 2001 approached the problem from highly diverse points of view.

As we try to analyze the connections between the production of history (and historiography), on the one hand, and the consumption of history and the formation of identity and values, on the other, we need to be alert to the fact that every field of endeavor has its own historiography. The corpus of work (writing, in most instances, but not always or necessarily writing) in a field such as, say, literary criticism or art history or cinema studies can be regarded as materials for use in constructing a historical account of that field or of the period in which that corpus was produced. And whether articulated or not, the historical traditions within other scholarly disciplines and other fields of expression affect the way people in those disciplines and fields understand the past.

To provide a common thread to the presentations and discussions at UCLA, we agreed in advance that all the participants would focus on texts that they regarded as historically important. Our expectation was that this simple limitation would enable specialists in literature, language, philology, and philosophy to introduce texts and ideas from their own fields to historians and to each other. We thought we would be able to take off from those introductions to have interesting exchanges of views, and we were not disappointed.

Herbert Plutschow’s essay explores the relations between constructions of history and folk belief about *goryō* (spirits of people who died aggrieved, thought to be capable of bringing misfortune) in the Heian period. He concentrates especially on the treatment of Sugawara no Michizane in three “private” works of history written in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Suzuki Sadami traces the evolution of history as a genre of writing and shows that the business of publishing had an important impact on the development of the genre in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He argues that the present Japanese consciousness of history is based on publications that were intended to appeal to the general public between the late nineteenth century and the end of World War II.

Timothy Kern speculates about kyōgen and kyōgen performers and their role in society, maintaining that the masters of this comedic theatrical art served as mediators who were able to connect social and political forces and resolve tensions. Historical consciousness in the world of kyōgen has largely been formed by oral transmissions of the tradition within the three schools of kyōgen. Not only technique, but also the idea of mediation has been passed down over centuries to the current generation of performers.

Michael F. Marra surveys the history of two approaches to the study of classical Japanese literature that from the point of view of outsiders seem closely related, but that have developed parallel but contrasting methodologies. Scholars whose focus is on philology and scholars whose focus is philosophy coexist in the Japanese academy, but in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion. The historical consciousnesses formed within these “fields of contention” are divided from each other and cannot but contribute to divisions in the ways Japanese students of classical literature understand the history of the subject itself.

Mark Meli, in tracking the reification of the concept of *aware*, deals with several of the same modern Japanese scholars of literature and aesthetics that Professor Marra treats. He shows the process by which the feeling or simple exclamatory interjection (*aware*) that Motoori Norinaga had described as expressing “the full significance of the way of poetry” came to be widely accepted as the essence of all Japanese literature and indeed of the Japanese aesthetic sensibility

Kinugasa Masaaki gave a provocative talk in one of our sessions at UCLA on the invention of tradition in treatments of the history of Japanese literature and aesthetics, but regrettably he has chosen not to turn his Japanese original into an essay in English for inclusion in this volume.

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