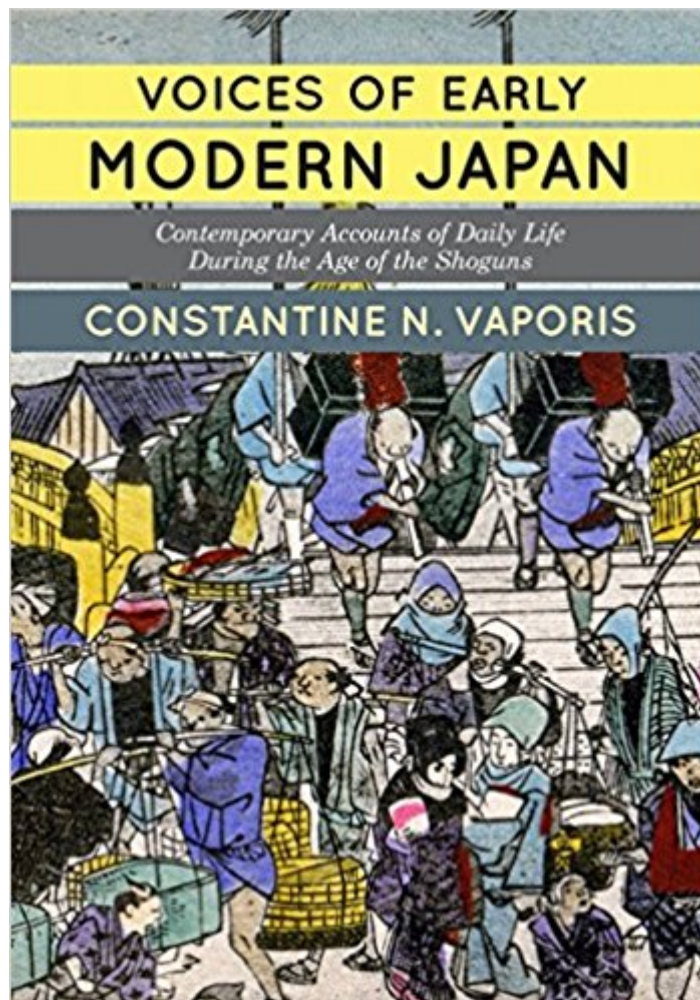




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# Voices Of Early Modern Japan: Contemporary Accounts Of Daily Life During The Age Of The Shoguns



## Synopsis

Winner of the 2013 Franklin R. Buchanan Prize for Curricular Materials awarded by the Association for Asian Studies and the Committee for Teaching About Asia (CTA) *Voices of Early Modern Japan* offers an accessible and well-balanced view of an extraordinary period in Japanese history, ranging from the unification of the warring states under Tokugawa Ieyasu in the early seventeenth century through the overthrow of the shogunate just prior to the opening of Japan by the West in the mid-nineteenth century. Through a close examination of primary sources from "The Great Peace," this fascinating volume offers fresh insights into the Tokugawa era--its political institutions, rigid class hierarchy, artistic and material culture, religious life, and more. Sources from all levels of Japanese society, from government documents and household records to personal correspondence and diaries, are carefully translated and examined in light of the latest scholarship. Constantine Nomikos Vaporis ably demonstrates how historians use primary documents and what can be uncovered from the words of ordinary people who lived centuries earlier. With robust reader resources and comprehensive coverage, *Voices of Early Modern Japan* is the perfect addition for students and interested readers seeking a fuller understanding of the Tokugawa period. For updates on web materials mentioned in the book, supplemental materials, and to contact the author, please visit [voicesofearlymodernjapan.com](http://voicesofearlymodernjapan.com)

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## Customer Reviews

"The best source reader yet produced in this field"; Vaporis' bold choice of sources accurately represents the broadness and plurality of Tokugawa society. His commentaries and explanations

are written from the perspective of the latest historiography. The wide range of historical sources presentedâ |makes this book far superior to *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, and should ensure that it replaces it as the standard source book for the undergraduate teaching of pre-1868 Japanese history."#151;Dr. Kiri Paramore, Leiden University"Filled with unusual and heretofore little known documents that bring us close to the lived experience of 17th through early 19th centuries Japan, this volume deserves to be widely used in the classroom to provide students with glimpses of another world."#151;Anne Walthall, University of California, Irvine"Constantine Nomikos Vaporis'â |is one of the top five historians of the Tokugawa period writing in the Western world, whose special expertise in social history is evident. But, the work is extremely well-balanced; it equally covers the period's political, economic, cultural, intellectual, and diplomatic dimensions as well. Moreover, it masterfully conveys how historians use primary documents and why this skill is important for uncovering the texture of life in a society remote from us in time and space. Vaporis does all of this in accessibly clear, plain language. As such, his book belongs not only on the reference shelves of public libraries, but also should be required reading in university-level introductory surveys of early-modern Japanese history. Even seasoned specialists in the field will find gems of new information here and there within the book's covers."#151;Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, York University

Constantine Nomikos Vaporis is professor of history and founding director of the Asian Studies program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Vaporis is the author of *Breaking Barriers: Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan*; *Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan*; and *Nihonjin to sankin kÅ'tai* [The Japanese and Alternate Attendance].

Having read Vaporis' *Tour of Duty* and *Travel & the State*, I was expecting this to be college level, if not postgrad level. The introduction explains the difference between primary and secondary documents, which Americans tend to learn before 6th grade... All the weird 'For Dummies'-like trappings are very condescending (though from the beginning, the text selections themselves are excellent.)After about chapter 3, most of these problems vanish. Most importantly, the citations/recommended reading becomes largely peer-reviewed journals. Essentially, after chapter 3, the book becomes a standard Vaporis gem, a real rip-rollicker, formatted oddly. I guess a particularly lazy editor wanted to market it to middle schools, but stopped 3 chapters in (?). Definitely worth a buy, but if you get to a passage that makes you roll your eyes, don't feel bad to

skip a page or 2.

It's about time...a book of documents on just the Edo period! I used this book in a college-level class on the Tokugawa shogunate, and it was a huge success. The students appreciated the manageable length of the excerpts as well as the guiding questions provided by Dr. Vaporis; I especially valued the amount of social and cultural history material included in the volume as well as the flexibility the book allows. Some days I would use one or two of the documents to supplement the textbook while on others we would spend the entire period comparing three or four of the excerpts. I would definitely use it again (even if it were still only available in hardcover), but I am thrilled that is now available in paper!

Contrary to most popular English-language works on the Edo period - or the Tokugawa period - this work focuses more on the lives the people below the uppermost ruling elite. Rather than reading history as it was recorded by Japan's rulers, this book aims to construct a contemporary account of what living in the realm of the Shogun was like during this period. A recommended read for undergraduate students interested in the social, religious and economic history of Tokugawa Japan at the grassroots level.

Early modern Japan is not a remote reality but the origin of so much that has become so familiar to global culture. Whether you're accessing anime or Japanese cuisine or even the aesthetics of a Kurosawa film, you are engaging the world of Tokugawa Japan. This book is the ONLY compilation of documents translated into English that gives the student a broad sense of what that era was all about. I can say from experience it works well in the college classroom. The short readings are well-chosen, the surrounding commentary, definitions, questions for discussion and suggestions for further reading helpful. The price tag is of course determined by the press, and the state of the global economy, Critiques based on that issue aren't relevant to the assessment of the work itself, which is impressive, I recommend for undergraduate upper-level seminars.

Had to get it for class, it's worthless as a textbook. Price is ridiculous. Might as well be burning my money.

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