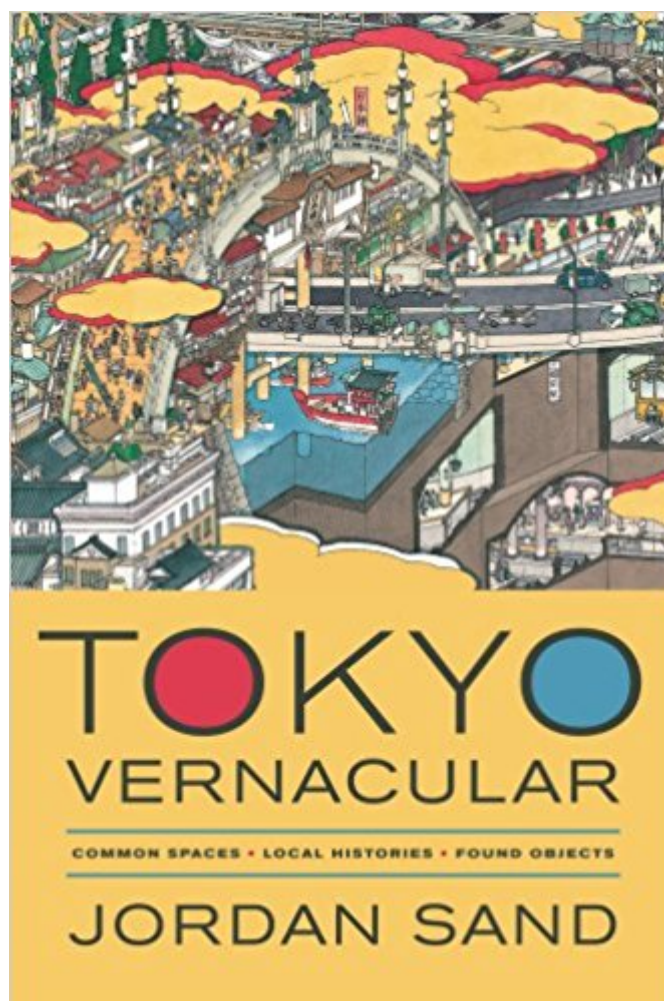


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Tokyo Vernacular: Common Spaces, Local Histories, Found Objects



Synopsis

Preserved buildings and historic districts, museums and reconstructions have become an important part of the landscape of cities around the world. Beginning in the 1970s, Tokyo participated in this trend. However, repeated destruction and rapid redevelopment left the city with little building stock of recognized historical value. Late twentieth-century Tokyo thus presents an illuminating case of the emergence of a new sense of history in the city's physical environment, since it required both a shift in perceptions of value and a search for history in the margins and interstices of a rapidly modernizing cityscape. Scholarship to date has tended to view historicism in the postindustrial context as either a genuine response to loss, or as a cynical commodification of the past. The historical process of Tokyo's historicization suggests other interpretations. Moving from the politics of the public square to the invention of neighborhood community, to oddities found and appropriated in the streets, to the consecration of everyday scenes and artifacts as heritage in museums, *Tokyo Vernacular* traces the rediscovery of the past—sometimes in unlikely forms—in a city with few traditional landmarks. Tokyo's rediscovered past was mobilized as part of a new politics of the everyday after the failure of mass politics in the 1960s. Rather than conceiving the city as national center and claiming public space as national citizens, the post-1960s generation came to value the local places and things that embodied the vernacular language of the city, and to seek what could be claimed as common property outside the spaces of corporate capitalism and the state.

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“Written with grace and acuity, Tokyo Vernacular offers valuable reflections on the meanings of community, citizenship, rights, property, history, and materiality for urbanites faced with the rapid transformations of Japan’s postindustrial consumer society.” (David R. Ambaras American Historical Review 2014-12-01) “[The book] fills an important gap in the English-language literature about Japanese heritage and preservation . . . a rich and ambitious work that achieves what it set out to do.” (Inge Daniels Pacific Affairs 2015-03-01) “Tokyo Vernacular has a fascinating and highly-convincing story to tell . . . a powerful historical narrative of the reconstitution of Tokyo’s spatial politics.” (Simon Avenell Journal of Historical Geography 2014-11-01) “Tokyo Vernacular . . . is a treasure trove of valuable information, insights, and perspectives on a vast topic and a work that merits reading several times over so that its nuances and subtleties can begin to sink in.” (Chester H. Liebs Buildings & Landscapes 21, no. 2 2014-10-01) “Sand has succeeded in producing a nuanced and historicized account of preservation in Tokyo and relating preservation to the politics of creating a usable urban past.” (Sally A. Hastings Journal of Japanese Studies 41, no. 1 2015-03-01)

“With precision and elegance, Jordan Sand examines some of Tokyo’s liminal spaces and objects, and in the process gives us not just a new urban history but a new political and intellectual history of Japan from the 1960’s to today. He maps abstract debates over citizenship, property, and memory onto physical places: the public square, the street, and the museum. Tokyo Vernacular is a stunning achievement.” #151; Julia Adeney Thomas, Department of History at University of Notre Dame
 “Tokyo Vernacular identifies an ordinary language of history and memory in late twentieth-century Tokyo. With great subtlety and sharp insights, Sand traces the turn to vernacular forms in the flux of the city’s everyday life, analyzing and historicizing it as part of a global concern with the ordinary in the era of consumer capitalism. The result is a set of brilliant and scholarly deep reflections on the roots of historical consciousness in urban and global history.” #151; Gyan Prakash, author of Mumbai Fables

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