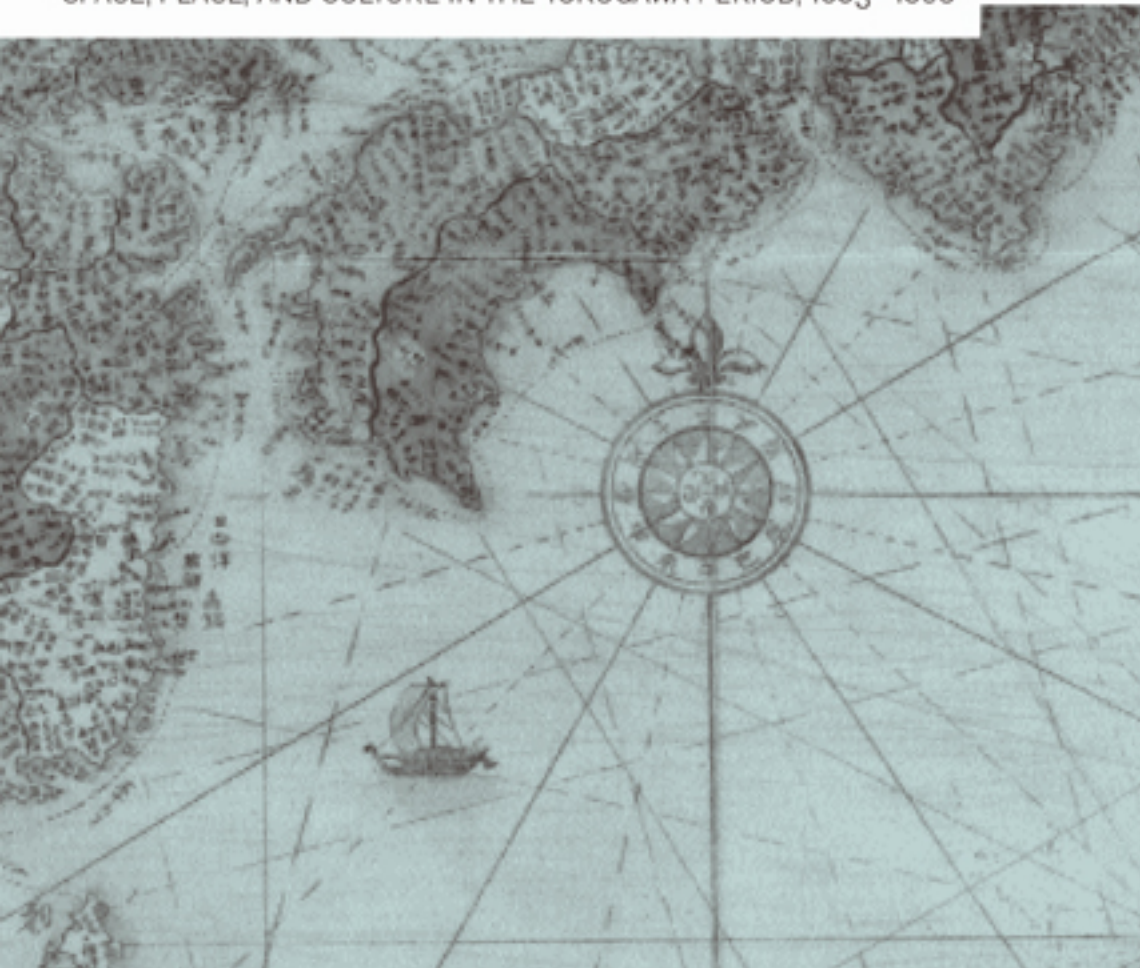




MARCIA YONEMOTO

# MAPPING EARLY MODERN JAPAN

SPACE, PLACE, AND CULTURE IN THE TOKUGAWA PERIOD, 1603–1868



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## Mapping Early Modern Japan

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*Space, Place, and Culture in the  
Tokugawa Period (1603–1868)*

Marcia Yonemoto

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*For my parents  
James Mitsuru Yonemoto  
and  
Mary Shoji Yonemoto*



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# Notes to the Reader

Throughout this book Japanese names have been rendered in Japanese style, family name first. Well-known literary figures and artists, however, are often referred to by their pseudonyms and not by their family names (e.g., Hiraga Gennai is “Gennai,” Ishikawa Ryūsen is “Ryūsen”). Edo-period authors often used several pseudonyms; in this case, alternate names are bracketed or given in the endnotes.

All dates have been converted to the Gregorian calendar from the lunar calendar and *nengo* (era-name) system. To avoid using misleading Gregorian names of the months I have left months and days in their lunar calendar numberings, as in “the twelfth day of the eighth month of 1763.”

Commonly used Japanese terms (shogun, daimyo, Shinto) and place names (Kyoto, Tokyo, Kyushu) do not bear diacritical marks, nor are they italicized.

All translations from Japanese materials are the author’s, unless otherwise indicated.

The following are equivalents for Tokugawa-period weights and measures that appear in the book:

1 <i>sun</i>	3 cm.	1.2 inches
1 <i>bu</i>	3 mm.	0.12 inches
1 <i>shaku</i>	30 cm.	1 foot

1 <i>ken</i>	1.7 m.	5.5 feet
1 <i>ri</i>	3.9 km.	2.4 miles
1 <i>koku</i>	180.4 liters	47.7 gallons

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*Boulder, Colorado*

*May 2002*





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# Introduction

By the middle of the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), literate people had access to a vast and varied selection of maps and geographical writings. As a result, those with the means to borrow or buy printed media could readily conjure up images of and information about an entity called, alternately, “Japan” (Nihon), “Great Japan” (Dai Nihon), “our realm” (*honchō*), and “the entire country” (*zenkoku*).<sup>1</sup> They could also find maps, guidebooks, and travel accounts describing Japan’s cities and provinces, and the roads and sea routes that linked them together. They might even come across one of many depictions of the “myriad [foreign] countries.” But while such texts proliferated because of the growth of commercial publishing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, formal geography education was limited and the science of cartography remained poorly developed. And, like most people in the early modern world, the Japanese had no singular concept of “nation” or “state”; indeed, even highly educated people had very malleable notions of what it meant to call oneself “Japanese.”<sup>2</sup> The wide diffusion of various forms of spatial knowledge and representation in the absence of a definitive notion of geography or national identity is not as contradictory as it might seem. Rather, it is reflective of the flexible nature of geographic consciousness in the early modern period. In broadest terms this book, which examines the texts that shaped and spread geographic consciousness, examines the elusive processes by which people came to name, to

know, and to interpret the natural and human worlds in which they lived.

Since the act of naming is central to this study, one might properly begin by explaining or, as Clifford Geertz would have it, “unpacking” the three principal terms of the title *Mapping Early Modern Japan*. In the first instance, this book is a history of mapping as an idea; it is not a history of cartography. Until fairly recently, histories of cartography tended to create fixed and supposedly universally applicable categories (“world maps,” “national maps,” “road maps”) and to chart their technological development over time in all parts of the world in a linear fashion and on a timeline determined by the experience of the West. But as recent, more critically informed work by historians of cartography has argued persuasively, there is more to the history of cartography than a narrative of Western-centered progress, and more to mapping than maps alone.<sup>3</sup> This recent scholarship has shaped my approach, as I have attempted to write a history that comprehends not only officially and commercially produced maps, but also travel narratives and fiction on geographic and cartographic themes. As it is construed here, mapping is as much about the processes of perception and representation as it is about the material products of those acts.

A broad definition of mapping is particularly important in studying the early modern period, for as subsequent chapters show, writers and artists “mapped out” imaginary or discursive spaces just as mapmakers did actual places.<sup>4</sup> Both sources and theory thus conduce to a study that, rather than moving forward at the pace of progress, moves “out and about” to show the linkages between various spatializing practices and situates those practices in their historical contexts.

By defining mapping broadly, we might begin to perceive how a history of mapping is imbricated in the history of the early modern period. Indeed, scholars of early modern Japan recently have done groundbreaking work in proving, as Kären Wigen has put it, that “history ‘takes place’ in a spatial as well as a temporal dimension; by the same token, places are not merely geographically given, but historically constituted as well.”<sup>5</sup> More specifically, the present study contends that spatial and geographic discourses inhered in the political practices and cultural forms of the early modern period. In the realm of politics and institution building, for example, the Tokugawa shogunate from the earliest years of its rule put considerable resources into measuring and mapping “the realm” (*tenka*), meaning not only its own lands—which amounted to only about one-quarter of the total land in Japan—but the entire coun-

try. Between the early seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries, the shogunate repeatedly ordered daimyo to make maps and gather cadastral records of land under their control, and this information ultimately allowed the Tokugawa to assemble what was up to that time the most comprehensive store of spatial information ever compiled by a Japanese government.

Spatiality inflected political thought as well; in the late seventeenth century Confucian scholars like Kaibara Ekiken (1630–1714) began to articulate the notion that a model for political order might be found in the natural and physical world. For Ekiken and his followers, travel, direct observation, and recording of one's findings were the ways to discern that order. Intellectuals like Ekiken utilized forms of mapping to identify and maintain the class, status, and gender distinctions that defined early modern politics and society.<sup>6</sup>

But in contrast to the ways in which modern cartography and geography promote the understanding of sameness that characterizes the nation-state, in the early modern period the plural practices of mapping functioned as a means of discerning, categorizing, and preserving difference.<sup>7</sup> As Tessa Morris-Suzuki argues, the early modern definition of difference itself had a distinctly spatial inflection, for in the manner of the “civilized vs. barbaric” (*ka-i*) view of the world originally devised in imperial China, physical distance from the putative center determined the relative level of civilization of all places and peoples. Unlike their modern counterparts, early modern rulers not only tolerated difference, they emphasized it as a marker of the subordinate status of marginal people on the geographic peripheries such as the Ainu in Ezo and the people of the Ryūkyū Islands.<sup>8</sup> Nor was this “logic of difference,” as Morris-Suzuki calls it, limited to the political center; as Herman Ooms's work on Tokugawa “village practice” shows, class, status, legal, ethnic, and gender differences structured fields of power in rural areas as well.<sup>9</sup>

And yet, although these forms of mapping established durable epistemological categories and lasting cartographic images, as we shall see, neither the shogunate, its officials, nor intellectuals monopolized the control of map images or spatial information. The shogunate depended upon the cooperation of daimyo and local officials to map Japan, and its struggles to enforce compliance with its orders reveal both the strengths and the limitations of the regime's “parcellized sovereignty.”<sup>10</sup> The mix of authority and autonomy inherent in the early modern system of governance manifested itself in spatial politics at other levels of the political and cultural hierarchy as well. For in spite of the energy invested in ad-

ministrative mapmaking, neither the shogunate nor daimyo regarded most cartographic information as confidential, and in at least one notable case, the shogunate allowed its official maps of Edo to be adapted, reproduced, and published by the commercial press.<sup>11</sup> The free flow of geographic information had the unintended effect of leaving the discursive field of mapping open to the innovations and interpretations of non-elites. Ultimately, then, it was not the shogunal government or local officials but artists, writers, mapmakers, and their commercial publishers who were most effective at spreading the texts and images of mapping to the public.

The commercial and public nature of early modern mapping compels a focus on the development of publishing and of “print culture,” the social world encompassing and engaging the public dissemination of words and images. Both were functions of the growth of the economy and increases in commoner education and literacy in the seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup> A distinctly early modern phenomenon, the culture of print encouraged the spread of an unprecedentedly vast store of knowledge, geographical and otherwise, to a reading public of diverse class and regional origin. Most of the maps and geographical writings analyzed in this study were printed by publishers in the major cities of Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka and sold, often in considerable volume. In mapping’s transformation from official to popular discourse—the latter defined here as texts published in and for the commercial marketplace—mapping took on new and unanticipated meanings as the visual and textual culture of mapping inspired a vivid geographic imagination.<sup>13</sup>

Printed maps and comic fiction on geographical themes provided an alternative and sometimes critical perspective on the substance and structure of the very political and cultural norms that, in their official guises, maps helped construct. Among the norms constructed (and deconstructed) in maps and other geographical texts was that of Japan as a territorially and culturally integrated entity. For in many ways, both more and less obvious, the history of early modern mapping is also a history of the changing representations of Japan itself. In general terms, the appellation “Japan” has a long (and contentious) history, as do the various spatial entities to which that name has been applied.<sup>14</sup> In the early modern period, Japan was depicted in many ways, visual and narrative, and for many purposes. Although the combined efforts of official and commercial mapmakers resulted in the establishment of a geographical model in which the three main islands of Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku comprised the country, these boundaries were by no means hard and

fast. The northernmost island of Ezo appeared and then disappeared from shogunal and printed maps according to political necessity and cartographic or artistic exigency. Travel accounts, gazetteers, and encyclopedias, for their part, struggled to establish neat categories in which to place Japan and its many “others,” but even these narratives’ declarative prose betrays considerable ambiguity and uncertainty about who and what belonged within the domestic sphere. The result is that “Japan” was at the same time both a thoroughly mapped and narrated space *and* a profoundly elusive and impressionistic amalgamation of places and peoples. The perceived porousness of geographic and cultural boundaries gave room for discursive play with the categories of “insider” and “outsider.” As the chapters on the satirical uses of maps and geographies in early modern fiction show, in the hands of the sharp-witted writer the amorphousness of boundaries lent itself readily to the identification and manipulation of forms of exoticized otherness within the domestic sphere.

For the reasons I have tried to explain above, I see the history of mapping early modern Japan as an investigation of texts, cultural practices, and intellectual processes. To put it in more general theoretical terms: as Henri Lefebvre contends, no space that is subject to human apprehension simply exists; space is always and in all places the result of productive processes.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, my methodological task at hand is not to define early modern mapping in putatively objective or absolute terms (did maps and travel accounts show places as they really *were?*), but to try to understand what purposes mapping served, for whom, and how. To borrow the words of the geographer David Turnbull, the goal here is to “recognize that all maps, indeed all representations, can be related to experience and that instead of rating them in terms of accuracy or scientificity, we should consider only their ‘workability’—how successful they are in achieving the aim for which they were drawn—and what is their range of application.”<sup>16</sup>

In the following chapters, I show how mapping “worked” at two transitional historical moments, and in three principal genres of text. The first of the temporal transitions dates from the mid- to late seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century. During this time map-makers and travel writers began to produce new articulations of spatial order, and to disseminate them through the commercial press. The detailed depiction of Japan and its cities in both administrative and commercially published maps (chapter 1), the development of a new type of travel writing based on direct observation (chapter 2), and the prolifer-

ation of Chinese-style encyclopedias containing information about the outside world (chapter 4) all work to categorize—though never to erase—cultural difference through the imposition of spatial frameworks of order.

The second mode of mapping dates from the mid-eighteenth through the early nineteenth century. In this period, writers of travel accounts began to embellish their descriptions of the landscape in order to conjure up for the reader visions of unknown places and exotic customs in Japan's hinterlands (chapter 3). Writers of illustrated comic fiction went one step further, taking the spatial frameworks and categories established in maps and travel accounts and putting them to decidedly playful uses. Fictive accounts of foreign travel and satirical mappings of the pleasure quarters (chapters 4 and 5) parody or otherwise subvert received spatial knowledge by applying "serious" mapping tropes to seemingly frivolous subject matter. Unlike their predecessors, they are documents of *disorder*. Despite the seeming irrelevance of mid-eighteenth-century fiction, however, it had a critical edge, for it revealed spaces, places, and subcultures that were often kept hidden in official, or officious, forms of mapping. Texts like Hiraga Gennai's faux travel account *Fūryū Shidōken den* (The tale of dashing Shidōken, 1767) and satirical takes on encyclopedic knowledge such as Akatsuki Kanenari's *Akan sanzai zue* (The insatiable illustrated three assets, 1821–50) were works of elaborate parody that showed the topsy-turvy erotic underworld that existed within the apparently orderly realm. These texts represent what I call an "antipolitics of pleasure," which celebrated frivolity at a time when Japan was facing serious challenges on both domestic and international fronts in the form of diplomatic entanglements with Russia and popular uprisings in urban and rural areas.

By the turn of the nineteenth century mapping in Japan had begun to diverge from the Western models of geography and cartography. But by this point both images and narrative descriptions of Japan had become commonplace and conventionalized. When the Tokugawa shogunate set out to compile a representative list of maps and geographical writings in 1821, it accumulated more than nine hundred titles, the majority of which were commercially printed and published.<sup>17</sup> Even as the science of cartography gained in importance, and accuracy in mapmaking became increasingly prized, the multivalent cultural practices that comprised mapping continued. Imaginative and satirical maps, as well as printed versions of older, technically "flawed" maps, were produced and reproduced well into the late nineteenth century. Early modern mapping

thus constituted a vernacular language that continued to be employed even as geography and cartography became the standardized spatial discourses of modern Japan.<sup>18</sup> Although late nineteenth-century geographers and historians placed early modern Japan at a precise developmental stage—a stage of incomplete modernization, civilization, and empire—the persistence of mapping is one indication of the overstatement inherent in the modern rhetoric of progress. Far from being a stunted pseudo- or proto-scientific practice, mapping allowed for and even encouraged the endless arrangement and rearrangement of multiple spatial, cultural, and political identities whose protean nature reflected the possibilities as well as the limitations of being Japanese in the early modern period. The subsequent chapters focus on texts that captured, at distinct historical moments, those identities and show how they changed, through space and over time.



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