

TIPS FOR TRAVELERS

ADVICE FOR WAYFARERS
FROM LATE EDO TRAVEL LITERATURE

Tachibana Nankei, excerpt from *Tōyūki* (1795)
Kyokutei Bakin, aphorisms appended to *Kiryō manroku* (1813)
Yasumi Kageyama or Roan, excerpt from *Ryokō yōjin shū* (1810)

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Japanese literature
of the Edo period (1600-1868)
rendered into English
by his former students
of which this is
the second volume

INTRODUCTION

Conditions in early modern Japan favored the traveler as never before. Improved roads, dependable networks of communications and credit, facilities to expedite the traveler along the way, or to accommodate the wayfarer after a daily progress of many hours—all lessened some of the constant hardships of journeying. A rising standard of living enabled new segments of the

population to contemplate some release from the cycle of their labors, or venture on holiday in distant parts. Above all, tranquillity and relative security encouraged travel. Greater numbers than ever before thronged the roads: diamyō and their elaborate retinues, merchants, emissaries, entertainers, pilgrims of all degrees of piety. The conventional literary depiction of travel—a bitter and toilsome progress, only undertaken from dire necessity, or by those who had disengaged themselves from all attachment to worldly existence—no longer coincided with the realities of the road. By modern standards, to be sure, travel throughout the Tokugawa period was extremely laborious and slow; the traveler remained, as in centuries past, subject to the vagaries of the elements, the victim of often difficult terrain, and prey to constant uncertainty about the likelihood of safe return. Long waits at inspection points between domains, or within the shogun's own territory added to the tedium and anxiety of the briefest itineraries. Even these daunting obstacles, however, could not dampen the intrepid spirits of Tokugawa travelers. From the eighteenth century,

and certainly after 1800, purely recreational or touristic travel begins to make an appearance—a motivation difficult to imagine in earlier centuries.

A profusion of travel-related publications and manuscripts attests to renewed enthusiasm for the perennially absorbing theme of journeying. In addition to volumes of poetic travel diaries, reflective and dutifully melancholy in the classical mold, practical guidebooks to roads, provinces, cities, and pleasure districts depicted in more sanguine tones the realities of displacement, and inspired a yearning for new scenes among the yet sedentary. For those unable to travel, or who craved something of the flavor of travel without the attendant discomforts, lavishly illustrated “albums of famous places” (*meisho zue*) offered from the 1790s simple texts and spectacular bird's-eye panoramas of celebrated sites of current and historical interest. For those venturing onto the road for the first time, a host of vade mecum manuals—conveniently compact for greater portability—provided tips on the new art

of traveling, and the proper means of deriving maximum benefit from the experience.

The three passages translated here, all extracts from significantly larger titles, give some hint of the realities of travel in an age when displacement, though far from routine, was at least becoming a familiar component or ambition in increasing numbers of lives. Travel, in these passages, affords both pleasure and peril in roughly equal doses. Despite the varying perspectives of their authors, the common message is clear: caution and vigilance remain the key to any successful expedition.

Tachibana Nankei (1753-1805), the son of a physician to the Tōdō domain in Hisai, Ise province, almost certainly encountered during his childhood great numbers of Ise-bound pilgrims from all corners of Japan—glimpses of distant provinces that may have instilled in him a powerful curiosity about alien regions and their wonders.¹ After medical training in Kyoto, Nankei became a highly respected practitioner of tradi-

tional medicine, a specialist in the treatment of smallpox. More than his medical achievements, however, it is his wide-ranging journeys that impress us. A lengthy expedition to the West and Kyushu in 1782-1783 was followed by an equally lengthy circuit of the North in 1785-1786. These journeys and others Tachibana Nankei undertook in the spirit of *shugyō* or “discipline”—a term originally religious in connotation, and applicable to a wide range of exercises to mortify the body and emancipate the spirit through austerities. Of his journeying he writes:

The principal reason I undertook my journeys was to develop a close familiarity with the customs and climate of all provinces, and thereby ensure that my medical works should be free of error, and thus, of universal benefit to all invalids. By touring the provinces, one may observe large numbers of unusual diseases or uncommon contagions, and receive instruction in particularly efficacious treatments or medications; nor are

the personal benefits to be derived from the discipline of wandering (*shugyō man'yū*) in the interests of medicine at all inconsequential. One may, of course, acquire a knowledge by observation of polite arts and letters, as well as of military skills. But what is more, one may study the virtuous to make them one's examples, while every encounter with the mean and vicious may serve to inspire prudent reflection, whether one does not oneself suffer from a like disfigurement.²

It is difficult to suppress the feeling, though, that Nankei savored the novelty and oddities of the sites along his path at least as much as the sober intellectual and moral lessons he avows as his goals. No metropolitan prejudice clouded his vision; all artifacts of provincial life engaged his attention.

The success of his two principal travel narratives, *Tōyūki* (A journey through the East) and *Saiyūki* (A journey through the West), pub-

lished in 1795, led Nankei to generate sequel installments in 1797 and 1798. Manuscript copies, which incorporated passages less flattering to administrators, more graphic in the depiction of rural misery, also enjoyed a wide circulation. Nankei's lively straightforward style, an eye for colorful detail, and the exotic character of his destinations, far from the beaten path, enhanced the appeal of his travel albums, which became among the most commercially successful examples of contemporary travel literature.

The passage presented here, from *Tōyūki*, describes an attempted crossing to Sado. The voyage over the Sea of Japan, difficult in any season, was especially hazardous in winter and early spring, when winter monsoon gales and storms were common. Though no longer the fabled land of riches it had been during the "gold rush" of the early seventeenth century, the entire island of Sado remained firmly under shogunal watch and jurisdiction. Severe famine had wracked the island in 1756 and 1783; discontent over taxation and maladministration had culminated in violent peasant

uprisings in 1750 and 1767-68. Irregular traffic or navigation to this somewhat sensitive destination may have been a risky business, regardless of climatic or marine conditions. While it is possible Nankei is manipulating the details of his ill-fated journey for literary effect, there are overtones throughout the passage of dark motives and criminal intent in the crew of the “very small boat” Nankei selects for a night sail.

In contrast to Nankei’s choice of far-flung destinations and untried routes, Kyokutei Bakin (1767-1848), still a novice author of *gesaku* fiction at the time, picked perhaps the most familiar route of all, the Tōkaidō Road between Edo and Kyoto, as the itinerary for his three-month foray out of Edo in the summer of 1802. The Tōkaidō Road, well developed and in sections as populous as any city street, offered the wayfarer all the enticements of a grand adventure with minimal risk or discomfort. Bakin’s motives for this journey to the Kansai region are not clear. To establish Western intellectual or literary contacts may have been a dominant incentive. Also important, though, were

Bakin’s desire to study, with an author’s penetrating gaze, modern and historical artifacts along the highway; his passion to seek out Chinese and Japanese bibliographic rarities; and an urge to escape, for a brief space, an already miserable domestic situation. The two publications to result from the journey, *Saritsu udan* (Rainy-day chats in rain gear, 1804) and [*Mizunoe-inu*] *Kiryō manroku* (Random notes from my journey [in a *mizunoe-inu* year], 1813), are predominantly *zuihitsu* miscellanies, collections of brief essays on persons and artifacts, and do not dwell on the personal features of travel. At times, however, one shares through them something of Bakin’s daily experiences on the road. The collection of brief advice or aphorisms appended to *Kiryō manroku* offers completely frank advice for travelers—much of it, clearly, lessons learned in the hard school of experience.

Yasumi Kageyama or Roan, the author of the third excerpt presented here, remains a shadowy figure. Between 1810 and 1828, he published a number of medical essays, several

manuals of advice on health and longevity, and a commentary on a seventeenth-century collection of biographies of recluses; one of his works appeared in Kyoto. It is possible that Roan was a physician who took Nankei's advice or principles to heart, and struck out on journeys of edifying rigor into the provinces. His *Ryokō yōjin shū* (Essential precautions for travel, 1810), perhaps the first distillation of his practical experience, aims to be the complete, all-inclusive handbook for the seasoned or first-time traveler. In addition to celestial data (times of sunrise and sunset, clues to weather prognostication) and terrestrial information (post stations along all major highways, principal barriers and checkpoints, Kannon temple circuits, a list of 292 hot spring resorts) of great utility, Roan includes helpful preventative and curative counsel on almost every possible affliction the traveler might encounter. In neat, orderly sections, *Ryokō yōjin shū* offers advice on how to repel foxes, badgers, boars and wolves; how to ward off fleas at an inn; enumerates proven remedies for leg cramps, tumbles off horseback, hot spring scalding, bouts of seasickness, and

palanquin-induced nausea. Essential medicines to keep on hand at all times, as well as special medications to stock for warm or cold climates, also receive consideration. The social and psychological, as distinct from the physiological side of travel appears in a set of twenty-two "instructive poems" (*kyōkun no uta*).³ Though nominally in thirty-one-syllable *tanka* form, the poems rarely rise to the level of doggerel. The advice the mnemonic poems contain, however, often has a timeless resonance that makes one inclined to look on stylistic imperfection with a generous spirit.