

*Tsukiji: The Fish Market at the Center of the World.* By Theodore C. Bestor. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2004. xxviii, 411 pages. \$60.00, cloth; \$24.95, paper.

*Reviewed by*  
ULF HANNERZ  
Stockholm University

Anthropological monographs do not usually include instructions for a tourist visitor to the field. The new book by Theodore Bestor, Harvard professor of anthropology and Japanese studies, does so, and this clearly says something about the particular qualities of Tsukiji, the famous Tokyo fish market, as a field site. Tsukiji does little purposively to attract tourists, but mostly it tolerates them, and they flock there to see the tuna and the several hundred other varieties of catches from near and far away and to try the absolutely fresh sushi. The practical instructions Bestor offers the tourist also allow a concrete sense of the everyday (preferably early morning) scene: watch out for carts! Backpacks, large handbags, and elaborate camera bags will get in other people's way and make it awkward for you to maneuver. Flash photography around the auctions is prohibited, because the flash can momentarily blind an auctioneer to the bidding! Wear long pants and solid shoes with good nonskid soles, not sandals or open-toed shoes. Puddles are everywhere!

All those points and more, however, are in an appendix to the volume. Like Tsukiji market itself, the book has a complex structure, and readers may be tempted to enter it at different points, depending on their interests. A study of Tsukiji surely has the potential of attracting a very diverse readership: scholars of Tokyo history and ethnography, researchers in comparative institutional economics, fans of Japanese cuisine, students of globalization or of occupational cultures, urban explorers. Bestor offers much for all of these, yet his engaging style of writing will probably also keep each of them from ever getting bored, even as the tour turns out to be comprehensive. The book is also well illustrated, by way of photographs, drawings, maps, and diagrams.

In its present location, the Tsukiji seafood market dates back to 1923, when its predecessor in Nihonbashi, with a history going back well into the Tokugawa period, was destroyed by the great Kanto earthquake and the fires that followed immediately after. Through Nihonbashi, the cultural traditions of Tsukiji are linked with the old *shitamachi*, plebeian, artisanal, and trading Tokyo. Yet the physical area, beginning only as the marshy lowlands of the Sumida River delta were filled in during preceding centuries, also has another history: at the outset of the Meiji era, Tsukiji became the site of the first foreign settlement in Tokyo, lasting for about a generation. One could

argue, consequently, that in its strands of history it has already combined the intensely local with the dramatically cosmopolitan which now meet in the Tsukiji seafood trade. While Japanese coastal waters contain some 2,000 species of fish and several hundred species of shellfish, most of which have also become part of Japanese cuisine, Bestor notes that a very large part of the goods sold at Tsukiji arrives, chilled or frozen, in Japan by way of Narita Airport, from just about everywhere in the world. And then through the institutional order of Tsukiji, it is divided, subdivided, and moved rapidly and expertly from the large-scale—and, in considerable part, long-distance—trade into the local commerce which finally brings it to the tables of Tokyo fishmongers, restaurateurs, and housewives.

Each day (except Sundays and assorted holidays) some 50,000 people are involved in buying and selling at Tsukiji. Obviously they are slotted, on both sides, into a highly differentiated and stratified structure. At the top, among the sellers in the local structure, are seven large auction houses, some of them linked to Japan's famous large business combines, the *keiretsu*; a few even now have histories going back to the old Nihonbashi market. Auctioneers work for them. Below them are the much more numerous intermediate wholesalers, who buy their merchandise at the daily auctions and resell it at their Tsukiji stalls to customers involved in retail business. But there are also licensed buyers, making purchases on behalf of large-scale users such as supermarket chains, hospitals, and commissaries. Alongside these buyers and sellers work various regulators, mostly on behalf of the Tokyo metropolitan government. Retail customers, on the other hand, are not allowed to shop in the central parts of Tsukiji market.

Bestor provides a clear and well-informed overview of this structure, but the main actors in his portrait of Tsukiji are the intermediate wholesalers, small and mostly family-based firms with multifaceted internal workings and external linkages. It is here that daily business is framed by family connections, feuds, personal ties, and histories of apprenticeship. Strategic alliances may be cemented through arranged marriages; old school ties and common home towns also become social capital. Again, it is here that *shitamachi* tradition is most evidently alive and well, and it is also from such understandings that much of the imagery of Tsukiji in Japanese popular media is drawn.

An early chapter that fundamentally offers a walking tour of the fish market describes its layout, evokes its sights and sounds, and allows a sense of its rhythms. You make your way through the narrow aisles, past the ever-shifting exhibits of the individual stalls: black tubs of live eels, crates of crabs packed in moist sawdust, rows of colorful fresh snapper perfectly matched in size, trays of golden fried fish cakes, squid still oozing black ink. This is when everything has arrived in place and before the merchandise is gone again to retailer customers. But the market begins to come alive in the

late evening, as the trucks roll in, from the fishing ports or from Narita. Then the auctioneers arrange the fish for display for the morning auctions. The buyers come to inspect the goods, and the auctions begin by 5 or 6 A.M. Mostly the buyers use hand signals to indicate their bids. Sometimes they have to break a tie with a quick round of a children's hand game, to avoid a drawn-out bidding contest. The intermediate wholesalers must then rush their acquired foodstuffs to their stalls, to prepare it and arrange it before their customers in turn start arriving in only an hour or so. By 1 or 1:30 P.M. they have come and gone, and the trading day at Tsukiji is just about over.

That, very briefly, is what goes into a night and a day. Elsewhere, Bestor also discusses what goes into the market year, and not least the particularly busy period in late December leading up to the New Year's holidays. Several aspects of the seafood calendar are covered in a chapter on Japanese food culture. This may be somewhat loosely connected to the focus on Tsukiji market as a localized structure, but it is certainly most illuminating to those readers who are not well acquainted with Japan, as it places this market in its wider cultural, and culinary, context. Bestor does not miss the opportunity here to relate his materials comparatively to other anthropological perspectives toward food, as developed for example by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Marshall Sahlins, Marvin Harris, and Sidney Mintz. But he also conveys a sense of the symbolism and aesthetics of food, of dependencies resulting from global imports, of changes in household practices that follow with new kitchen technology as well as the adoption of a car culture, and—if some such changes would seem to imply a certain cultural decline—of the recent gentrification of taste, the *gurume būmu* (gourmet boom).

The parts of the book that will draw the closest attention of specialists are those providing a detailed picture of market social and economic organization, especially among the intermediate wholesalers. Here the role of guilds and other interest groups is described. Kinship and marriage are shown to be essential to the functioning of firms, to their reproduction and to socialization, but also at times a source of tension and contradictory tendencies. The Tsukiji traders do not in every way form a social world of their own. Their family homes may by now be scattered over metropolitan Tokyo, and some family members may be drawn to other interests—to a career in engineering, for example, or to studying French literature. Lively person-centered and family-centered ethnography contributes further insights into the diversity of social arrangements in and around the market place, and the general theoretical point that this economy, sharply competitive and rationalized as it may be, is deeply embedded in social life is surely made most persuasively. One gets a sense, too, of the irritations that nowadays may come to the surface as young Japanese *furiitaa* (free-timers) hired to work part-time in the market show little commitment to their jobs, or when low-

skilled immigrant laborers from the Asian mainland show their faulty knowledge of both spoken Japanese and the body language of the market.

All in all, this book deserves a wide readership and will no doubt get it. Its careful listings of supplementary sources of information, such as videos and websites (including Bestor's own), contribute to making it particularly attractive for teaching. Returning now, finally, to instructions for potential visitors to Tsukiji: do not put it off for too long, if you want to see the market in the form portrayed in the book. As Tokyo keeps growing and renewing itself, and reaching into the sky, one could perhaps not expect that a mere fish market, even if it is Tsukiji, might be allowed to occupy such a centrally located piece of urban land in the long run. In ten years or so, its successor is supposed to be in operation on another, more distant site. Yet Bestor clearly expects that much in the institutions and practices of the most famous fish market in the world will prove resilient even after a move, and so that trip may also be worth making.

*Gift-Giving in Japan: Cash, Connections, Cosmologies.* By Katherine Rupp. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003. xiii, 235 pages. \$45.00, cloth; \$19.95, paper.

*Reviewed by*

HIKARU SUZUKI

Singapore Management University

*Gift-Giving in Japan: Cash, Connections, Cosmologies* is an outstanding book that painstakingly examines the tremendous variations of gift-giving norms in contemporary Japan. The author, Katherine Rupp, demonstrates the significance of anthropological fieldwork to untangle the complexity of gift-giving practices—an interrelated set of phenomena that cannot be formulated into a single economic model.

Major issues Rupp examines are:

Why do people give as much, as often, and in the particular ways that they do? Why do some people reject giving and receiving? How do attitudes toward and practices of giving relate to considerations of age, class, gender, geographic area, occupation, and religion? How have these practices changed over time? How have they been used for political ends? In what way can the study of gifts in Japan contribute to the broader field of gifts and exchange in anthropology? (p. 2)

Rupp examines these questions by carefully selecting informants who represent different ages, genders, occupations, neighborhoods, religions, and