



## **Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture (Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences)**

*By Eiko Ikegami*

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### **Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture (Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences) By Eiko Ikegami**

In this path breaking book, Eiko Ikegami uncovers a complex history of social life in which aesthetic images became central to Japan's cultural identities. The people of premodern Japan built on earlier aesthetic traditions in part for their own sake, but also to find space for self-expression in the increasingly rigid and tightly controlled Tokugawa political system. In so doing, they incorporated the world of the beautiful within their social life which led to new modes of civility. They explored horizontal and voluntary ways of associating while immersing themselves in aesthetic group activities. Combining sociological insights in organizations with prodigious scholarship on cultural history, this book explores such wide-ranging topics as networks of performing arts, tea ceremony and haiku, the politics of kimono aesthetics, the rise of commercial publishing, the popularization of etiquette and manners, the vogue for androgyny in kabuki performance, and the rise of tacit modes of communication.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"This book is as brilliant a description of the stratification of Japanese culture as Bourdieu's Distinction is of French culture. Ikegami's work opens up the social history of Japanese culture in the way that the past two generations of social historians from Elias to Darnton have done for European culture. This is as fine a work as we have for any part of the world on the long-term shaping of culture, and on the political consequences of cultural institutions."

-Randall Collins, University of Pennsylvania

"In this fascinating and illuminating study of the politics of civility in Japan, Eiko Ikegami discusses the way that politeness and politics are inseparable. She shows persuasively that what in Western cultures is normally separated, like art and politics, has been, and is, closely interwoven in Japan. It is an amazing society that rises before her audience's eyes, and, since Ikegami presents this astonishing story with enviable lucidity, her book is as accessible to the reader innocent in the ways of Japan as it is to the specialist."

-Peter Gay, Yale University

"In a world in which the social order was theoretically rigid, Ikegami demonstrates how people in medieval and early modern Japan carved out spheres through a variety of aesthetic associations to bring 'beauty' into their lives. Using sociological and anthropological tools and with the extraordinary training of a historian, Ikegami brings this world to life."

-Joshua Fogel, University of California, Santa Barbara

"Eiko Ikegami has made excellent use of her sociological insights and her command over Japanese history to present a highly original interpretation of Japanese society. This is an important contribution in exploring the interrelations between culture and politics in one of the most intriguing civilizations in the world."

-Amartya Sen, Harvard University

"Ikegami shows how the brilliant colorings of Japanese history were mobilized in and through what she calls 'aesthetic publics', each reflecting a dynamic interplay among social networks that elicit, even as they shape, tacit cultural practices. She induces this highly original vision from a dazzling array of evidence across centuries. A fresh and powerful mode of network theorizing."

-Harrison White, Columbia University

"Reading Ikegami is like taking a trip through time. across social classes and beyond the boundaries of nations. One returns convinced that art and politics, aesthetics and economics, the rational and the sensual are so deeply interwoven that we should reconsider not only our notions of pre-modern Japan but also our notions of contemporary social life-in Japan and in 'the rest' as well."

-Christena Turner, Science

"...this book makes a marvelous addition to a list of recent monographs on early modern Japan that collectively revolutionize our understanding of the politics of culture under Tokugawa rule."

-Morgan Pitelka, Occidental College

"Ikegami's analysis of the medieval roots of [horizontal social networks in Tokugawa Japan], their connections with the growing market economy, their role in fostering the beginnings of a self-conscious

national identity among Japanese and the rise of mass media is clear and insightful. The discussion of the various art forms as social practice is similarly excellent. Scholars of Japan will find much of value in this book."

-Gregory Smits, Pennsylvania State University, Journal of Social History

"Its theoretical sweep, historical focus, imaginative use of evidence and penetrating analyses make Bonds of Civility a treasure trove for sociologists of every persuasion."

-Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, Columbia University, Social Forces

#### About the Author

Eiko Ikegami was born and raised in Tokyo, Japan. After receiving a university education in Japanese classical literature in Japan, she became a business journalist in Tokyo at the Nikkei, the Japan Economic Journal. In 1983, on a Fulbright program, she came to the United States for her graduate studies in sociology, at Harvard University, where she received her PhD in 1989. She held a number of fellowships and grants including Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. In 2002, she was elected as Chair of the Section of Comparative and Historical Sociology at the American Sociological Association. She is the author of Taming of the Samurai.

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