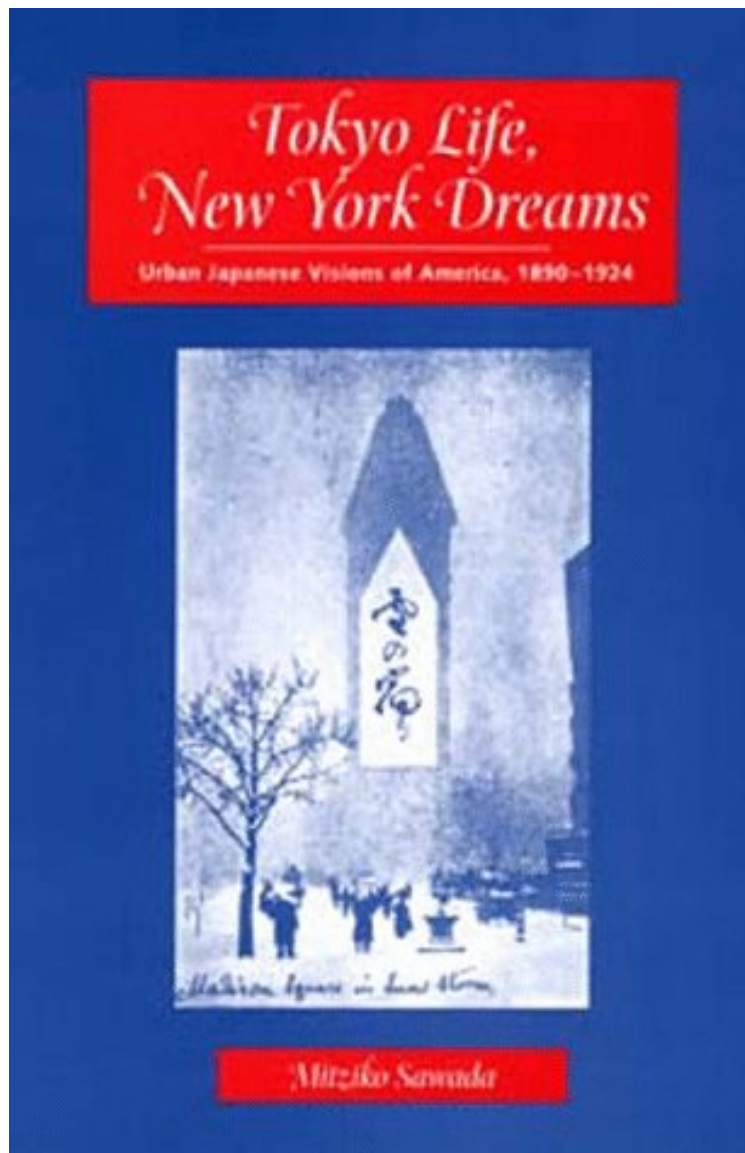


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Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America, 1890-1924

Mitziko Sawada

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Mitziko Sawada : Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America, 1890-1924 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America, 1890-1924:

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obsession with New York turning to the reality of servitude. By Customer" Mitziko Sawada's transnational, cross-cultural migrant study reminds us how important a carefully researched historical analysis can be in generating new lines of thinking. This ground-breaking book offers many provocative insights and sensitive thumbnail portraits of a pioneer generation of hi-imin (elite non-immigrants or non-laborer visitors such as students, professionals, and merchants) Japanese men who came to New York City during the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. By focusing on these striving Meiji-era Tokyojin (people from Tokyo) males smitten with tobei netsu (crossing-to-America fever), Sawada has made a significant contribution to bridging East Asian and Asian American history. At the same time, she has written a history resonant with post-1965 middle-class migrants. "In this history, New York City is the imagined masculinized destination of personal, cultural, and political economic desire. Using a variety of Japanese language sources, especially success literature, novels, magazines, and guidebooks, Sawada contextualizes this New York fever within the Meiji patriarchal transformation of rural social relations into the Tokyo-centered, corporate hierarchies devoted to capitalist competition. New York became the romanticized promised land of various male escapes -- from limited educational access, individual conformity to the family and state, social inequities, strained gender roles, ad infinitum. The actual experience of living and working in New York City, of course, proved to be a rude awakening. Most men ended up working as servants, found little time to study, and encountered racism. Those who stayed constituted the beginnings of a small but important Japanese New Yorker community." John Kuo Wei Tchen; *Journal of Asian American Studies* 1.3 (1998) 311-315

Tokyo Life, New York Dreams is a bicultural study focusing on Japanese immigrants in New York and the ideas they had about what they would find there. It is one of the first works to consider Japanese immigration to the East Coast, where immigrants were of a different class and social background from the laborers who came to the West Coast and Hawaii. Beginning with a portrait of immigrants' lives in New York City, Mitziko Sawada returns to Tokyo to examine the pre-immigration experience in depth, using rich sources of popular Japanese literature to trace the origins of immigrant perceptions of the U.S. Along with discussions of economics and politics in Tokyo, Sawada explores the prevalent images, ideologies, social myths, and attitudes of late Meiji and Early Taisho Japan. Her lively narrative draws on guide books, magazines, success literature, and popular novels to illuminate the formation of ideas about work, class, gender relations, and freedom in American society. This study analyzes the Japanese construction of a mythic America, perceived as a homogeneous and exotic "other."

About the Author Mitziko Sawada is Dean of Multicultural Affairs and Visiting Associate Professor of History at Hampshire College.