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Synopsis Books:

Alternate attendance (sankin ktai) was one of the central institutions of Edo-period (1603-1868) Japan and one of the most unusual examples of a system of enforced elite mobility in world history. It required the daimyo to divide their time between their domains and the city of Edo, where they waited upon the Tokugawa shogun. Based on a prodigious amount of research in both published and archival primary sources, *Tour of Duty* renders alternate attendance as a lived experience, for not only the daimyo but also the samurai retainers who accompanied them. Beyond exploring the nature of travel to and from the capital as well as the period of enforced bachelorhood there, Constantine Vaporis elucidates--for the first time--the significance of alternate attendance as an engine of cultural, intellectual, material, and technological exchange. Vaporis argues against the view that cultural change simply emanated from the center (Edo) and reveals more complex patterns of cultural circulation and production taking place between the domains and Edo and among distant parts of Japan. What is generally known as "Edo culture" in fact incorporated elements from the localities. He begins by detailing the nature of the trip to and from the capital for one particular large-scale domain, Tosa, and its men and goes on to analyze the political and cultural meanings of the processions of the daimyo and their extensive entourages up and down the highways. Later chapters are concerned with the physical and social environment experienced by the daimyo's retainers in Edo. Finally, Vaporis examines retainers as carriers of culture, both in a literal and a figurative sense. In doing so, he reveals the significance of travel for retainers and their identity as consumers and producers of culture, thus proposing a multivalent model of cultural change.

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