From the Editors' Desk  

Editorial Offices Move

Book Reviews

Everyday Things in Permodern Japan: Two Views

Modernization Theory Redux?  By Anne Walthall

A Book for Believers?  By Lee Butler

Art of Edo Japan:  The Artist and the City 1615-1868
Making Edo Art Understandable  Reviewed by Patricia J. Graham

Archive Science and Modern Society (記録史料学と現代)
Book Notice  by Philip Brown
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Subscribers wishing to review books are encouraged to specify their interests on the subscriber information form.
Editorial Offices Move

At its inception Early Modern Japan began as an informal newsletter, edited, prepared and published at the Department of History, Ohio State University. Shortly after its inception, Oboegaki (as it was then known) moved to the editorship of Mark Ravina of the Department of History, Emory University. For the past several years Mark has shepherded Early Modern Japan, editing, formatting, soliciting contributions, handling mailings, subscriptions, and all of the miscellaneous chores associated with getting any publication out. Although later joined by Lawrence Marceau as Book Review Editor, Mark has born the brunt of the work. We are sure we are not alone in expressing our gratitude for the time and effort that Mark has put into developing Early Modern Japan during this time.

Mark has, however, decided to turn his attention to new projects and consequently, the editorial offices and responsibilities for Early Modern Japan have returned to Ohio State University. Chief editorial responsibilities now rest with Philip C. Brown. Lawrence Marceau continues as Book Review Editor.

Hard copy submissions of article manuscripts (scholarly essays, research notes, discussions of pedagogical issues, reports of general interest on professional issues and the like) should be sent to:

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Everyday Things in Premodern Japan: Two Views

Susan B. Hanley, Everything Things in Premodern Japan: The Hidden Legacy of Material Culture
Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, Ltd., 1997, xiv plus 213 pages. $35.00

Editor’s Note: Customary practice dictates that an academic journal devote only one review for each book received. That has also been the practice here at EMJ, however, we decided to include the two reviews that follow because we felt the differences in perspective that they offered would be of interest to our readers. We would be very interested in readers’ reactions to this exploratory effort and we would be open to suggestions for other books that you feel might merit similar treatment.

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Modernization Theory Redux?

Anne Walthall, University of California, Irvine

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Japanese people enjoyed a level of physical well being comparable to Europe and the United States, or so argues Susan Hanley. Furthermore, this proposition holds whether the comparison is with these societies at similar stages of development or at the same point in time. Measured in terms of life expectancy (which is quantifiable) and comfort (a value judgment) rather than per capita income, physical well-being comprises such issues as quality of housing, bedding and clothing, sanitation, diet, and nutrition. Indeed, Japan did so well in these areas that it saw no need to make substantive changes in order to industrialize. This stability in terms of material culture is at least as important in explaining Japan’s industrialization as the economic and commercial developments already so carefully analyzed by a number of historians.

With these claims, Hanley stakes out a field that, while already widely exploited in studies of the west, has been little explored in the case of Japan, especially in western languages, with the exception of her own work. Even though she draws considerably on what she has done before, her article in The Cambridge History of Japan has been largely reshaped, her essay on sanitation has been expanded, her demographic study has been condensed, and her discussion of the continuity in material culture across the nineteenth century has