

## From the Editor

### 編纂者のメッセージ

While computerized techniques for preparing publications like this ease the task considerably, glitches arise – always at the last minute. Such was the case with this issue, and I would be remiss if I did not extend special thanks to Satomi Kurosu and Janine Sawada for their responsiveness under pressure.

## Introduction to Essays on the State of the Field

### ©Philip C. Brown, Ohio State University

In April 2000, a group of early modern Japan specialists gathered at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio to discuss the state of the field in various disciplines that take that slice of Japanese history as the object of their study. After re-writing, soliciting comments and re-writing again, *Early Modern Japan* begins to publish the fruits of that conference in this issue. We will publish the essays and separate bibliographies for each field, and alternatively organized bibliographies will be placed on the EMJ web site at the following URL: <http://emjnet.history.ohio-state.edu/>.

Two participants were sought for each of five general fields along with one scholar to provide a kickoff and one to serve as overall respondent. Individuals were sought who, wherever the nature of the field permitted, were firmly anchored in the period that is widely considered to fall under the rubric of “early modern,” that is, the period from the late sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. Assembling a broad range of scholars was also an explicit objective: younger scholars as well as mid-career and older scholars; scholars from different parts of the United States as well as at least some scholars who were from outside the United States or people who had at least demonstrated an interest in exploring non-English, western-language materials through their scholar-ship. Where a particular methodological expertise such as

statistics was a significant part of a sub-field, someone who had mastered that methodology was sought as a participant. In general, the final composition of the workshop reflected this diversity. The fields designated and participants were:

Political and “diplomatic” history:

Philip Brown, Ohio State University

Brett Walker, Montana State University

Religion and thought:

Janine Sawada, University of Iowa

James McMullen, Oxford University

Literature and the performing arts:

Haruo Shirane, Columbia University

Lawrence Marceau, University of Delaware

Socio-Economic history:

Seljuk Esenbel, Bosphorus University (Turkey)

Satomi Kurosu, Reitaku University

Art History and archeology:

Patricia Gra-ham, University of Kansas

Sandy Kita, University of Maryland

Respondent:

Conrad Totman (Yale University)

(Our inaugural speaker was unable to attend due to illness.)

The organizer made no explicit demarcation of field boundaries, nor were authors prohibited from treating a work that might also be treated by someone working in a different field. Like their Chinese, Korean, South Asian and European counterparts, many of the figures in the world of early modern Japanese letters were polymaths, dipping into literary pursuits, governance and art as they pleased. Likewise, just as Karl Marx can not be treated simply as an economist or historian, or Max Weber as simply a political scientist or sociologist, many of these figures elude rigid classificatory schemes. What is true for individuals holds as well for many other subjects and artifacts from the era. Are travel diaries literature, art, or personal diaries and therefore treatable as sources for a social or economic historian? The answer, of course, is that they can be any of these. Are commoner protests (*ikki*) something that should be treated as political events or as sociological phenomenon? Once again, both approaches are reasonable. From the outset, the choice of what specific

topics to cover within their fields was left to each pair of scholars, with the assumption that classifications were general guidelines, not fixed, exclusive intellectual territories. This approach left the possibility of some overlap, with the same work being covered by two or more authors from somewhat different perspectives, but also meant that a few small areas of limited publication were inadvertently omitted in our first drafts and which we have tried to remedy in our final versions.

Once selected, each pair of scholars was asked to decide for themselves how to divide up responsibility for the materials in their field. For some fields, such as political history, which readily divided into fields focused on domestic concerns and those that dealt with foreign affairs and frontier history, the choice was straightforward. For other fields, like literature or socio-economic history, the decision of how to divide responsibility presented greater challenges. The principal organizer took the position that it was best to let specialists in the field work these issues out in ways that they thought appropriate to the existing structure of the field and in a manner with which they felt comfortable.

Likewise, no common format was prescribed for the essays; however, participants were given a common charge. Each was asked to prepare a draft essay on the state of their assigned field that summarized trends in topics of study, methods of analysis and theory. While participants were asked to set their work in a long-term historical context of development of their field, emphasis was to be placed on developments over the past twenty to thirty years. Essays were to assess the major accomplishments and problems as part of the effort to analyze the ways in which their field had changed in recent decades. While each and every book or article might not be specifically addressed in their text, a reasonably comprehensive bibliography was to be one result of their work. Finally, they were asked to identify lacunae and possible directions for future research. Essays were prepared for advance distribution and time at the conference focused on respondents' comments, corrections and additions to each essay and, most importantly, to discussion of common themes, trends and issues that crossed disciplinary boundaries.

The possibility that one set of specialists

might define the field with different chronological boundaries – extending further into Meiji, or beginning before Hideyoshi's rise to prominence – was directly entertained by the structure of the charge to participants. Although participants were chosen based on their work within the time frame of a rough, consensus definition of the period we typically treat as "early modern," the whole question of who defines the field and how it should be defined were explicitly introduced as fair game for discussion.

Our primary focus was on work done in Western languages, and primarily those works by people whose professional lives center in the North America and Western Europe. In general, translations of the work of Japanese scholars were omitted except when they played a seminal role in the development of an area of study. (Translations of Japanese works from the period were, of course, included among the scholarly works treated in the literature and performing arts papers and bibliographies.) From a practical point of view, the bulk of the scholarship discussed was English-language material, and overwhelmingly the product of US-based scholars.

In sum, no overall interpretive vision was imposed on participants. They were encouraged to present a personal perspective of the recent development of their areas of expertise as the vehicle through which to introduce major recent scholarship, its strengths and its possibilities. Nonetheless, certain common issues and threads became apparent in our discussions, and they will be presented in a future essay.

Satomi Kurosu's essay treats demographic and family history of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Of all fields, this is the one that has most consistently employed social science approaches and Kurosu's essay provides a good introduction to the sources and methods of a field that many consider technical but that is nonetheless fundamental to our understanding of the customs of the era and the economic circumstances of ordinary people – significant background for studies of farmer and townsmen unrest, shifts in government policy and the like.

The field of intellectual history has been one of the few areas of study in which there has been a recent effort to look at developments in the field. James McMullen's essay updates developments in

this sometimes explosive realm, calling for as much attention to careful translation as to theory. Benefiting from the presence of a recent major review of the field by Samuel Yamashita, he treats work published since then in depth.

Janine Sawada's review of the related field of religious studies draws attention to both the considerable accomplishments of studies of major religious figures and sects, and the limitations of approaches that fail to consider both the eclectic nature of religious leadership/scholarship of the day and the more popular issues of religious practice in daily life. She argues persuasively that in addition to extending our view beyond the great thinkers, we need to think of religious life and thought as broadly eclectic rather than as self-contained, hermetically isolated sects.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge the people and organizations that made this conference possible. The conference received extensive financial and office support from the East Asian Studies Program, Ohio State University, and especially from its director at the time, C.M. Chen, his successor, Bradley Richardson, and Amy Weir-Ganan and Owen Hagovsky. Ohio State University's College of Humanities, the Center for International Studies, the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, and the departments of East Asian Language and Literatures, History, and Art History all provided additional financial support.

## **Studies on Historical Demography and Family in Early Modern Japan<sup>1</sup>**

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Studies on historical demography and family in early modern Japan have dealt with the relationship between population and resources and the role of the family in mediating them. The research questions vary from the simple fact-finding of demographic and family behavior of commoners in early modern Japan to a more theoretical challenge: the roles of family and individual behavior on the Japanese economic development or how they contrast with behavior in other countries (e.g. pre-industrial Europe, developing countries). The field has advanced the understanding of the lives of ordinary people, not through institutional and governing structures but through the analyses of behavior and organization of individual men and women, married couples, and households.<sup>2</sup> This paper focuses on the development of the field since the postwar period and on works written in English, particularly those based on empirical observations. The overview of the field in the first section attempts to assess chronologically the development of the field by looking at significant achievements by period. The second section discusses merits and problems of sources and methods scholars have adopted in the field. The third section details some of the major issues and controversies that generated research which has increased our understanding of the commoner's lives in early

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<sup>1</sup> This is based on the paper I presented at the State of the Field of Early Modern Japanese Studies, Ohio State University, April 21-23, 2000. I am grateful to Saitō Osamu, Philip C. Brown, Hayami Akira, Kito Hiroshi and Hamano Kiyoshi for helpful suggestions, and Barry Keith for editorial comments.

<sup>2</sup> Hayami, Akira and Hiroshi Kito "Living Standards and Demography," Chapter 7 in Hayami Akira (ed.) *Social Economic History II*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Forthcoming.