



# **EARLY MODERN JAPAN**

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The Early Modern Japan Network maintains a web site at <http://emjnet.history.ohio-state.edu/>.

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**From the Editor****編集者のメッセージ**

In addition to our regular articles and reviews, this issue of EMJ introduces a new feature we hope to publish regularly: a summary of the round-table discussion held at our meeting in conjunction with the Association for Asian Studies Annual meeting. The theme of last spring's discussion was Literati and Society in Early Modern Japan "Literati and Society in Early Modern Japan." Our next discussion will focus on "Blood in Early Modern Japanese Culture." If readers would like to organize future panels, please contact Philip Brown at Department of History, 230 West 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Columbus OH 43210 or at [brown.113@osu.edu](mailto:brown.113@osu.edu).

**Early Modern Japanese Art History--An Overview of the State of the Field<sup>1</sup>**

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**Chronological Parameters**

In general, scholars from various disciplines

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use the term "Early Modern" or *kinsei*, to refer to the period encompassed by the Momoyama and Edo political periods (1568-1868).<sup>2</sup> However, traditionally, art historians in the West have not considered the art of these periods together. Instead of attempting to identify broad, unifying artistic concerns for a wide variety of Early Modern arts, most scholars have constructed histories of particular types of Japanese arts, according to media, thematic cohesiveness (for example, the *chanoyu* tea ceremony), and/or artistic lineages. This methodology follows traditional approaches to the discipline of Japanese art history as practiced by art historians in Japan, where such separate studies of the art of their culture remain the norm. Thus, scholars tend to construct histories of their particular specializations, noting significant junctures at which the arts they study exhibit marked departures from creations of earlier times.<sup>3</sup> Conveniently, for many arts, these points of departure took place nearly simultaneously—during the last decade of the 1690s and first decade of the 1700s. For example, in the field of architecture, during these two decades occurred the maturation of three significant type of architecture: castles, tea rooms, and *shoin* style residences. Similar junctures also occurred at this time in the fields of ceramics, with the spread of glazed, high-fired wares to urban commoners,<sup>4</sup> and painting, with the maturation of ateliers for training students and perpetuating lineages. In printmaking, the year 1608 marked the first production of illustrated secular books (the *Sagabon* editions of classical literature). The above examples point out a consensus of sorts for date of the

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<sup>2</sup> These dates encompass the period of time Conrad Totman emphasizes in his book, *Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). However, although Totman covers both the Momoyama and Edo periods in his book, he does not clearly articulate exactly when this "early modern" era begins, although he implies that it emerges after 1590, in a "largely nonviolent phase of political manipulation and management..." 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> This issue was discussed at the *Expanding Edo Art* workshop sponsored by the Donald Keene Center at Columbia University, February 20, 1999. See the *Expanding Edo Art: Final Report* online at: <http://www.cc.Columbia.edu/~hds2/expanding.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Richard Wilson for supplying this information.