

From the Editor:**編集者のメッセージ**

This issue of *Early Modern Japan: An Interdisciplinary Journal* presents essays on a broad array of subjects. We begin with Roger Thomas's exploration of the role of sound in thinking of poets and Nativists in the eighteenth century. In contrast to the classical Mediterranean world and ancient China, Japanese interest in the sound of poetry came quite late. Nonetheless, Thomas argues that the early modern efforts at developing a systematic understanding of sound in poetry was so closely tied to the Nativist world view that it did not effectively survive the Restoration transition.

EMJ has a long-standing interest in proposals for thematically linked essays and with this issue we publish one more project of this sort. Three articles focus on daily lives of Tokugawa era samurai. Coordinated and introduced by Morgan Pitelka, the essays by Eric Rath, Constantine Vaporis and Laura Nenzi take up food, banquets, and consumption habits on the one hand, and attitudes toward Japan's increasing contact with international visitors in the mid-nineteenth century. I hope that our readers will take inspiration from this effort and submit other thematically-links sets of papers in the near future.

We conclude with Peipei Qiu's study of Bashō and Nampo and Wilburn Hansen's exploration of Chinese herbal medicine in the Nativist tradition.

As always, we welcome submission of individual scholarly articles, but in addition, we are also interested in translations, discussions of teaching and other professionally oriented materials that do not normally appear in scholarly journals.

EMJNet at the AAS. The Early Modern Japan Network was first formed to support the presence of panels and papers on early modern Japan at the Association for Asian Studies. To that end, we act as sponsors for panel proposals submitted to the AAS Annual Meeting Program Committee as well as sponsoring our own meeting in conjunction with the AAS Annual Meeting. People interested in having EMJNet support for proposals submitted to the AAS or proposing panels at the EMJnet meeting held in conjunction with the AAS should contact Philip Brown (brown.113@osu.edu) early

in the process of developing the panel proposal. For our own meeting we have typically sponsored one or two panels, but we have been able to get time for as many as four. This year's presentations focus on new media and coverage of earthquake disasters (see below for a full description and abstracts). Hope to see many of you there!

Philip Brown

“Natural Disaster, Media and Modernization: New Media and Two Kanto Earthquakes”

Mark the Date!

Once again the Early Modern Japan Network will present an independent panel session in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies.

Panel details are noted below. PLEASE MAKE A NOTE OF THE DATE, TIME AND PLACE. Like all "meetings in conjunction" this panel will not be listed in the formal AAS Program (announcements listing the panel will be available at registration).

The Early Modern Japan Network is a subcommittee of the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies. To promote the field of Early Modern Japanese Studies it sponsors panel proposals for the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, holds its own independent panel sessions in conjunction with the Association, and publishes an refereed journal, *Early Modern Japan: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. For further information on any of these activities, contact Philip Brown brown.113@osu.edu.

See you in Chicago!

Phil Brown

Natural Disaster, Media and Modernization: New Media and Two Kanto Earthquakes

Date: Thursday, March 26, 2009

Room: Colorado

Time: 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Earthquakes have long been an impetus for cul-

tural production in Japan. Emperor Shomu, for example, ordered the construction of Kokubunji and the Great Buddha of Todaiji immediately after he toured the area between Nara and the Naniwa Shrine following a major earthquake in the fourth month of 734. From the late Tokugawa Period onward, the presence of mass media complicated and magnified the social impact of earthquakes and other disasters. Exaggerated accounts of destruction in the popular press, for example, amplified the psychological impact of a relatively modest earthquake that shook Kyoto in 1830. The 1855 Ansei Edo Earthquake produced a vast quantity of broadside prints, journalistic documentary accounts, works of fiction, diaries, poems, and didactic tales. Many of these works sought to define the disaster, explain its significance, and to posit connections between the human and natural worlds. Some of these works commented on politics and society in ways that prompted bakufu attempts to control popular readings of the earthquake.

The papers in this panel examine popular media portrayals of the Ansei Edo Earthquake, with comparative perspective from the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake. The basic pressing question in each earthquake was similar: What is the significance of this event? These three papers examine ways of answering this question from the standpoint of the bakufu, popular writers, and film.

ABSTRACTS

Hidemi SHIGA (Department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia), "A Time to Ban? A Study of Ansei Edo Earthquake Yomiuri and the Response of the Tokugawa Government"

Soon after a huge earthquake struck Edo (now Tokyo) on the second day of the tenth month of the second year of Ansei (November 11, 1855 in the western calendar), large numbers of yomiuri (a type of print-block newspaper) were published despite government regulations forbidding their release. Survivors of the earthquake disaster received the yomiuri as useful disaster reports and as media to share and communicate their feelings of anger and sadness for their losses. Aware of the illegal publications on the earthquake, the Tokugawa

government did not take action—in the form of banning the publications and destroying the print blocks—for two months. The government could have taken action earlier if their intent was to control the illegal actions of the publishers. In this paper, using the Ansei Edo earthquake yomiuri, I explore the reasons for the delayed response of the Tokugawa government and the issues that they could not tolerate.

Gregory SMITS, (Department of History, Pennsylvania State University), "Authentic Lessons from Ansei Edo Earthquake"

The opening sentences of the 1856 Ansei Kenmonroku explain that "Amidst the emotions of joy and anger, sorrow and elation, people's thinking is apt to become disordered and they lose their ordinary states of mind. By constantly being thoughtful and aware, even at times of extreme danger or ill fortune, we will be able to act without forgetting our social obligations. Thus we present here exemplary tales that even women and children will be able to understand." What follows are 17 episodes, ten of which are morality tales and 7 explanations of natural phenomena. Published the same year, the Ansei Kenmonshi discusses 30 episodes, 24 of which are human interest tales. The Kenmonshi seeks to create a sense of on-the-scene reality among readers and claims to have been compiled within three days following the main shock. This paper examines representations of the 1855 Ansei Edo Earthquake in popular literature and strategies for imparting meaning and a longer-term significance to the event.

Alex BATES, (East Asian Studies, Dickinson College), "Melodrama and Authenticity in Post Quake Cinema"

Melodrama is an apt genre for disaster narratives: the suffering is spectacular, the cause external and the pathos palpable. Melodramatic elements often appear in the texts that dealt with the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, and especially in the fiction films. About ten fictional films were made with the earthquake as a major plot event by the end of 1923, though none have survived the eighty-five years since. Though these films have been summarily dismissed by critic Hazumi Tsu-

neo as "uniformly bad," their interest lies not in the quality of the filming (no longer ascertainable), but in the way they were tied to other discourses of the disaster.

In this paper I examine the earthquake melodrama, *Facing Death* (*Shi ni menshite*) through reviews, stills, stories, and plot summaries. These external paratexts show how this film, like others, was tied to the "true" melodramatic stories that were circulating at the time. This connection is deployed to lend an aura of authenticity to the film, an authenticity that is reinforced by stories about the actors' actual earthquake experiences in contemporary fan magazines. *Facing Death* shows how an attempt by a studio to assert a real connection to the disaster to differentiate itself from the others, resulting in what was advertised by contemporary critic Itami Saburo as not just a film, but "a living memory of the quake."

Discussant:

Gerald FIGAL, Vanderbilt University