

From the Editors' Desk

編集者から

Back Issues and Publication Schedule:

When *Early Modern Japan* resumed publication last year, two issues arose that we did not fully anticipate. The first was a large number of requests for back issues. As editors we were very pleased with the level of interest in *EMJ* that these requests revealed. At the moment, however, we have very few copies of back issues left. Other than file copies, most are completely gone. To ameliorate this situation, we plan to place earlier issues of *Oboegaki* (*EMJ*'s predecessor) and *EMJ* on our web site in the near future. Please check:

<http://emjnet.history.ohio-state.edu/>.

On a different note, we found that a number of subscribers (especially libraries) were confused by our use of a new volume number. Where, they wondered, was Volume VI, Number 2? The answer was that VI:2 was never published. We also made a decision that for the moment, we would publish only one issue per year, but that all subscribers would continue to get two issues for their standard subscription. However, in addition to this misunderstanding, we found that our record-keeping software was also geared to subscriptions based on a two-issue volume. Consequently, in order to minimize our potential confusion over when subscriptions expire, we have numbered our last issue Volume VII:2 and this issue Volume VIII:1.

The editors would very much like to publish on a semi-annual basis. That, however, depends on the volume of suitable material that is submitted to us. *EMJ* provides a flexible forum in which to publish a variety of professionally oriented material that goes beyond standard scholarly articles and book reviews. Two examples appear in this issue: The review of early modern Japanese women's history that begins in the next column, and the commentary on the NHK historical drama of the *Akō rōnin*. We encourage readers to submit manuscripts on current developments in the field in Japan, teaching and pedagogy, notices of books of interest, exhibitions and other fare that does not typically fall within the scope of other professional journals in the field. Editors'

e-mail and postal address are noted on the inside of the front cover of the journal.

The Study of Women in Early Modern Japan: An Introduction with Bibliography

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As a field, the English-language study of women in Japanese history is barely ten years old. This despite early attempts to trace the history of women in Japan, one by Mary R. Beard, *The Force of Women in Japanese History* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1953) that includes a chapter on the Tokugawa period (pp. 94-140) and the other by Joyce Ackroyd, "Women in Feudal Japan" in *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 3rd series vol. 7 (1959). Following a hiatus of over twenty years, a few books and articles began to appear, heralded by Edwin McClellan, *Woman in the Crested Kimono: The Life of Shibue Io and Her Family Drawn from Mori Ogai's 'Shibue Chusai'* (Yale University Press, 1985) and two special editions of the *Journal of Family History* in 1983 and 1986 containing articles on family composition drawn largely from demographic research. The first books on nineteenth century women such as *A Daughter of the Samurai* by Etsu Inagaki Sugimoto (Doubleday Doran and Company, 1934) and *Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life* by Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto (Stanford University Press, 1984) dealt almost entirely with life in the Meiji period. In these cases the focus was on individual women and the vicissitudes they had to overcome.

The 1990s has seen women's history go in a number of directions. Drawing on the work of Japanese scholars, several historians have suggested that relations between family members in peasant households showed a strong degree of interdependence between husband and wife and considerable flexibility in assigning gender roles. (For examples in English from the Japanese side, see Ueno Chizuko, "Genesis of the Urban Housewife," *Japan Quarterly* (April-June 1987): 130-142 and Fumie Kumagai, "Modernization

and the Family in Japan" *Journal of Social History* 11.4 (1986):371-382.) One leader in the field, Laurel Cornell, published "Peasant Women and Divorce in Preindustrial Japan" in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 15.4 (1990): 710-732 that demonstrated how early modern patterns of divorce differed from their modern counterparts. On the other hand, Kate Wildman Nakai's translation of *Women of Mito* reminds us that samurai household continued to practice sex segregation. In more recent years, other scholars have gone beyond issues of family composition to examine women writers and painters, medical practices, and sexuality. One recent trend has been the appearance of more work by Japanese scholars translated into English.

The following list is as comprehensive as possible, although I have omitted articles dealing with household size, household composition and the debate over infanticide. If I have inadvertently overlooked any articles, please inform me and the Early Modern Japan listserve. This is a field in which much of the most interesting recent work has been presented as conference papers rather than appearing in print. I urge my colleagues to remedy this situation at the same time reminding readers that the backlog of unpublished work makes any attempt to survey the field outdated as soon as it appears.

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The End of History? Sunday Night on NHK B.M. Bodart-Bailey

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When I was asked to write a short piece about the reaction of people within my environment here at Kobe University to the year-long *rekishi taiga drama* 歴史大河ドラマ, as NHK's Sunday night history extravaganza is known, I met with unexpected difficulties. Very few of the people I come into contact with have actually seen it.

This took me by surprise. After all, it is Japan National Television's (NHK) largest and most expensive production, running a full year every Sunday night at peak viewing time. The title and theme were well publicized in advance, and so were the actors selected for the various roles. The location for shooting frequently turns into a highly popular tourist site. When the subject was Nobunaga some years back, the 500,000th tourist to visit the set made the evening news. But the massive stone walls that Nobunaga erected to support the splendor of Azuchi Castle at Lake Biwa were virtually deserted when I visited them around that time. And no doubt this will remain so, unless those who want to erect a replica of the