

regime sought not to eliminate foreign trade but merely to control it to its advantage. To better understand Laver's interpretation, this reader would have valued more critical engagement with Toby and the work of other important scholars on seventeenth-century foreign relations cited in the monograph, for example, Arano Yasunori, Iwao Seiichi, and Robert Innes.³

In addition, Laver's main thesis—that the Tokugawa goal in foreign relations centered on counteracting the power of daimyo in the Kyushu region—deals with a fascinating aspect of foreign relations early in the Edo period that has not been comprehensively explored in English. Nonetheless Laver tells us little about how Kyushu domains themselves actually viewed and executed the 1635 edicts to help us determine how, as he asserts, Tokugawa leaders gained the upper hand in supervising foreign relations for the Japanese state. He instead provides discussions of events in and around Nagasaki, such the Dutch move from Hirado and the Shimabara Rebellion. We therefore learn much about these important events and relations with outside parties more generally, but do not gain a firm understanding of the interplay between the *bakufu* and Kyushu domains.

Overall this book offers an accessible overview of foreign relations in the first half of the seventeenth century and therefore would be useful in an undergraduate survey if a more reasonably priced paperback edition becomes available. But unfortunately it falls short in shedding new light on the course of foreign relations in the early Edo period.

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Women and Public Life in Early Meiji Japan: The Development of the Feminist Movement. By MARA PATESSIO. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2011. viii, 232 pp. \$65.00 (cloth); \$25.00 (paper).

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According to Mara Patessio, historians have focused inadequately on the thoughts and actions of late-nineteenth-century Japanese women. Thus she sets out to study “what women themselves thought” about their own social roles and conditions during the early Meiji period (p. 2). In so doing, she engages a number of compelling questions: How can we account for women's

³Robert Innes, “The Door Ajar: Japan's Foreign Trade in the Seventeenth Century,” unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1980; Iwao Seiichi, *Shuinsen bōekishi no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1958); Arano Yasunori, *Kinsei Nihon to Higashi Ajia* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1988).

increased participation in the public sphere by the early twentieth century? To what extent did early Meiji women prepare the way for the future activities of Taisho women? And how can studying “new female spaces” allow for a better understanding of “the full development of Meiji Civil society” (pp. 10–11)? Ultimately Patessio finds that women’s involvement in the formation of early Meiji Japan cannot be understood as separate from—or a subset of—the activities of mainstream (male) society.

As the title of her book suggests, a core objective of her work becomes the investigation of the “development of the feminist movement.” Frankly, I was skeptical at first as to her decision to routinely locate the origins of “Japanese feminism” in the Meiji period (as if women in Japan had never challenged the status quo before “the dawn” of “Westernization” and “enlightenment”). However, Patessio’s meticulous research and measured writing ultimately convinced me that her claims, insofar as she defines “feminism,” are legitimate and evenhanded. She is careful to distinguish Meiji women’s political activism, for instance, from that of Edo women who never challenged patriarchal institutions or customs. The few who struggled for a “public role,” she notes, were women who moved in circles that “were almost entirely male” (p. 8). By contrast, Meiji women’s actions were critically different from those of the past in that they gained momentum within a broad network of other like-minded women (pp. 8–9). Early Meiji women created a self-conscious “sisterhood” (pp. 160–67) that took advantage of new forms of print media, education, and travel opportunities in order to claim a stake in the nation’s future. Accordingly, they formed the basis for an incipient “women’s” or “feminist” movement by manifesting an “awareness of constraints placed on women” and subsequently making a “concerted active demand for a more equitable system” (p. 22). While their activities were undertaken locally (“it is clear that national political participation was beyond their reach”), there was a significant degree of interaction between various groups and associations nationwide (p. 169). Given this strength, she concludes, their work served as a critical “training grounds for women who wanted to obtain a public position—paving the way for a *national* women’s movement” (pp. 169–70, italics in original).

In keeping with most studies in English on feminism, Patessio focuses on a narrow time span: from 1868 to roughly 1890. Her research diverges from much recent scholarship, however, in that it forgoes the social constructionist approach that gender and women’s studies tends to emphasize. Instead, she opts for a “prosopographical approach,” a method that entails a collective study (or “collective biography”) on an established set of individuals’ lives in order “to deduce how society changes over time and how those changes are brought about” (p. 5). (Thus her twenty-year timeframe, she explains, allows for an examination of numerous women’s activities and networks.) She adopts this approach as most suitable not only for exploring a significant network of female activists, but also for determining the patterns by which numerous women expressed themselves and participated in public activities.

Patessio also builds insightfully on Benedict Anderson’s notion of “imagined communities,” which allows her to identify the formation of important new identities that were produced and disseminated in newspapers, books, and journals.

With the development of a new “print capitalism” (p. 19), she observes, many women began to see themselves as vital members of a Japanese community—as well as citizens of a new female society (*fujin shakai*) (pp. 157–60). Through extensive research on new educational opportunities for women (chapter 2), foreign female missionary communities (chapter 3), key women’s associations (chapter 4), and female political activities (chapter 5), her core chapters thus develop the case for a newfound female camaraderie and “active citizenship.”

While Patessio is certainly not the first to focus on Meiji women, her innovative approach expands the body of literature on Meiji women by complementing previous studies on intellectual and state discourses on “womanhood” and the individual responses of a few isolated women. She successfully contravenes prevailing arguments that most Meiji women were overwhelmingly powerless, especially in the face of new legislation that curtailed their legal, political, and social rights. Moreover, she achieves her goal of proving that the “individual remarkable women” whom scholars have presented thus far are but “representatives of larger social and political women’s movements” that have remained heretofore absent from the historical record (p. 3).

In sum, this book is largely affirmative, underscoring the agency of numerous women who were (privileged enough to be) connected with and inspired by other reform-minded women. In her own words, “despite all the restrictions placed on them . . . the extent of women’s involvement in politics was impressive . . . [even from] the very beginning of the Meiji period” (p. 171). Tailored for graduate students and experts on modern Japan, this book should also prove useful to scholars of religion and gender and women’s studies. Given its focus on (trans)national feminism and Christian missionary networks, it will certainly be an invaluable resource for future comparative work on global social movements and knowledge transfers in the late nineteenth century.

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Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State: The Politics of Beauty. By DŌSHIN SATŌ. Translated by HIROSHI NARA. Introduction by CHELSEA FOXWELL. Los Angeles, Calif.: The Getty Research Institute, 2011. vii, 365 pp. \$75.00 (cloth).

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Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State: The Politics of Beauty offers sustained analyses of seminal institutions and individuals that shaped the notion of “art” in the Meiji period (1868–1912 CE). This book consists of three major sections: (1) “The Politics of Modern Art: Institutions, Economics, and Art History”; (2) “The Language of Modern Art: Painting and Language”; and (3) “The