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*Values, Identity, and Equality in Eighteenth- and
Nineteenth-Century Japan* ed. by Peter Nosco, James E.
Ketelaar, and Yasunori Kojima (review)

Federico Marcon

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and go directly to the Japanese people. How might we more closely judge such efforts? To say it another way: to what extent has Abe's message ridden socioeconomic fault lines, as Donald Trump's has in the United States, making some citizens more susceptible to government disinformation and demagoguery and others perhaps more critical of it? And what's up, by the way, with Japan's liberals? Are they offering a concerted defense of freedom of speech and, if so, what impact has it had on public opinion or political action?

In its broadest frame, *Press Freedom* encourages us to think about what the world starts to look like when we give up on the truth. We know it's possible, today, to bruise or even break democratic values without resorting to strong-arm tactics. Politicians and their surrogates can use the trick mirrors of social media and savvy public relations strategies to drown out, intimidate, and confuse. “[T]here is a case to be made,” Kingston writes, “that insidious methods are more effective because they are harder to trace, bamboozling the credulous while providing cover for apologists and thus impeding accountability” (p. 2). But the fundamentals don't change: the point of the exercise is to get power and hold it. In a 1973 interview, the philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt observed, “The moment the press is no longer free . . . then anything can happen.” When people are uninformed and flooded with lies, they “are deprived not only of their capacity to act, but also of their capacity to think and to judge. And with such a people you can then do what you please.”⁴

Japan has its share of smart, committed journalists, to be sure, but in Abe's war on the media they appear to have been supremely outmaneuvered and outgunned, and where that struggle goes from here could have consequences well beyond Japan.

Values, Identity, and Equality in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Japan. Edited by Peter Nosco, James E. Ketelaar, and Yasunori Kojima. Brill, Leiden, 2015. xiv, 376 pages. €121.00, cloth; €118.00, E-book.

Reviewed by
FEDERICO MARCON
Princeton University

The collection of essays that Peter Nosco, James Ketelaar, and Yasunori Kojima have assembled in this volume will disorient most, surprise many,

4. Hannah Arendt, *Thinking without a Banister: Essays in Understanding, 1953–1975*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2018), pp. 491–92.

and hopefully inspire a few. For what it's worth, the editors and authors can surely count me among those who read this volume with mounting excitement. The reason for my enthusiasm would be utterly uninteresting if it ensued from a personal quirk. Quite the contrary, the most exciting aspect of this project is how poorly it fits the recent trends in Japan studies. In a field that—except for a handful of exceptions (some outstanding, others enraging)—has eagerly embraced the injunctions of antitheory and has thus transformed the project of understanding the past “in its own terms” into a poor rendition of a Rankean “wie es eigentlich gewesen,” this volume explicitly abandons the temptation of antiquarianism and uncritical archival reproduction and boldly addresses very big questions: How can we understand “values,” “identity,” “equality,” and—absent from the title but the real thread linking all essays—“individualism,” as well as the constellations of concepts and practices these notions mobilized in early modern Japan?

In the introduction, editors Nosco and Ketelaar draw attention to the eclecticism of styles, approaches, and methods to avoid suspicion of imposing “any kind of interpretive orthodoxy on the contributors” (p. 1). As if to emphasize the heterogeneity of this anthology, the cover of the volume displays a painting by Itō Jakuchū which portrays seven cranes (*tsuru; Grus japonensis*) that, while standing close together, look in different directions. The result is a rich mosaic of micro reconstructions of decision making, expectations, modes of sociation (*Formen der Vergesellschaftung*), self-fashioning, and values.

This unaffordable volume in Brill’s Japanese Studies Library is the offspring of a symposium held in late August 2013 at the University of British Columbia (UBC) titled “Early Modern Japanese Values and Individuality.” The goal was not the development of a new manifesto or historiographical norm, but the creation of a space for experimenting and thinking about value, identity, equality, and individuality as they were “actually practiced” in Tokugawa Japan.

“Values in Practice” is the title of the first of the four parts into which the book is divided: Eiko Ikegami (who gave the keynote speech at the symposium), Anne Walthall, and W. Puck Brecher authored the essays in it. It is followed by “The Construction of Identity,” with essays by Peter Nosco, Gideon Fujiwara, and Gregory Smits. In part 3, James Ketelaar and Kojima Yasunori focus on “Erotic Emotionality and Parody.” Part 4 is dedicated to “Equality and Modernity,” with essays by M. William Steele, Dani Botzman, and Naoki Sakai. Isomae Jun’ichi’s essay closes the volume with a survey of “The Historiographical Issues” this collection aims to address. Each essay, distinct in style and method, deserves more careful attention than this review can offer.

“Value” is a term that in English has a large semantic capacity: in its axiological usage, it aims to classify things according to their perceived or

objective goodness—in a moral, social, aesthetic, and political sense; but in its looser sense, it refers to the stakes around which society organizes itself hierarchically or according to principles of inclusion/exclusion. In this last sense, “[v]alues are ubiquitous and fluid,” Ikegami tells us. Rather than in thinkers’ speculations, it is in people’s practices that they can be better understood: “[t]he question for historians, then, is how to capture revealing moments of enactment in order to describe the values, sentiments, and emotions of Tokugawa people *as they are practiced*” (p. 31). Eiko Ikegami’s opening contribution sets up the questions all these essays are called to pursue, but it reads rather as a manifesto of the sociologist’s contribution to our understanding of Tokugawa society. Indeed, her presentation of the “*lived dynamics* of Tokugawa people’s moral and cultural life” evokes her studies on the honorific culture of the samurai and the horizontal sociability of cultural circles. As a summa of Ikegami’s life work, this chapter offers a portrayal of Tokugawa society regulated by heuristic schemata that, rather than being retrieved from within the conceptual constellations of Tokugawa discourses and practices, are regulated by “universals” (“value,” “honor,” “individuality”) that seem to be taken as ubiquitous in human experience. It is therefore not surprising that, as in her other works, Ikegami searches in the “free spaces” (echoing Amino Yoshihiko’s *muen*) of Tokugawa Japan for instantiations of value-in-action, and she finds them in “the rise of large-scale markets and of pervasive urbanity that brought about new lifestyles and values” (p. 45). It is in the “free space” of the Tokugawa marketplace, which cut through domains, provinces, and local cultures, that Ikegami imagines the aesthetic (and moral) values of upper classes “trickling-down” to other segments of society (p. 46).

If Ikegami imposes the heuristic model over the archival traces of Tokugawa past, Anne Walthall and W. Puck Brecher mobilize an opposite strategy and start from the specific to advance generalizable hypotheses: Walthall focuses on the struggle of Hirata Atsutane’s younger (read “dominated”) grandson Kaneya for family inheritance and succession in order to reconstruct the dynamics of expectations and ritual reproduction within Tokugawa households. Brecher, in one of the most memorable essays of the collection, analyzes with philological precision and theoretical sophistication what he calls the “ethics of child disobedience,” and persuasively demonstrates how child disobedience was “an omnipresent social issue during the Edo period” and “identifies it as a prominent trope in print culture” (p. 103). In contrast to Ikegami’s universals, Brecher opposes a precise mapping of the conceptual apparatus behind mischief and pranks in order to show the “pressures and contradictions” of the ritualized ethics of becoming adult: disobedience, a “counternarrative to the rigid moralism” of Confucian education, was a learned norm in which the dialectic of subjectivization and disciplinization played out.

Peter Nosco opens the second part of the collection with a conceptually sophisticated essay on the construction of identity as a double mechanism in which collective identification (national origin) and individual formation constituted each other. Nosco claims that the Tokugawa period saw two distinct phases in the “co-emergence of collective and individual identity” (p. 115): the first he identifies at the end of the Genroku era, around 1710, the second around 1810, at the apex of the Bunka-Bunsei era. The first is characterized by a “well-established and essentially organic understanding of society in which virtually everyone belongs to a household and had an assigned place” and by widespread “consensus regarding what comprises *Japan*.” By the nineteenth century, however, a tendency toward “inchoate pluralism and social atomism” boosted the formation of “multiple collective identities” and “radical individuality,” both of which eroded the social values of the previous centuries of Pax Tokugawa (p. 115). Nosco argues for this paradigmatic shift based on the analysis of what we should call philosophical texts. A triangulation of these intellectual and cultural practices with a reconstruction of the changes in the sociological composition of cultural production would have strengthened the argument of this fine essay even more.

Addressing identity building on a micro level, from both an intellectual and sociological standpoint, Gideon Fujiwara’s essay (chapter 6) offers a snapshot of how the momentous events of 1868 affected “active observers” among the commoners through the example of Tsuruya Ariyo and the community of followers of Hirata Atsutane that he led in Hirosaki. Also beautifully multilayered is Gregory Smits’s analysis (chapter 7) of the annexation and Japanization of the residents of the Ryūkyū Islands, happening at the same time the construction/invention of a national identity was under way in “mainland” Japan. Isomae Jun’ichi, in his historiographical epilogue, reminds us that this double notion of construction/invention sounds the same in Japanese as *sōzō*, which is semantically distinguished by the two logographical compounds of 創造 and 想像. The Japanification of Ryūkyū, Smits argues, was far from smooth, involving economic, social, political, and cultural transformations that affected both the Ryūkyūs and the mainland. The essay is a sophisticated reminder of how the two processes of nation and empire building were mutually implemented, rather than just taking place in parallel, over the long nineteenth century.

Part 3 appears to be structurally and thematically distinct from the other sections: it is the only one with only two essays, both of which address a similar topic: eroticism. These two essays try to analyze the social and intellectual processes of individuation and subjectivization in early modern Japan. James Ketelaar’s is an exquisitely self-reflexive meditation on how to write a history “without recourse to documents.” Specifically, he asks how a historian who wants to fulfill the epistemological requirements of modern historiography can write a history of overlearned cognitive habits such as

emotions—and even more specifically, erotic emotions—as they existed in a nonmodern temporality (i.e., in a past that is conceived of as not “merely a precursor to a modern eventuality”). Interpreting a vast array of sources for suggestions and semblances of emotional *habitus*, Ketelaar’s essay is one of my favorites in the collection. In the following chapter, Kojima Yasunori offers a more conventionally structured but no less rich catalogue of the early modern culture of parody, the most common and important trope of Tokugawa literature.

“Equality and Modernity,” the fourth part of the volume, links the Tokugawa period with the modernization process of Meiji Japan. “Equality,” as Naoki Sakai reminds us, is imbricated with modernity (and individual subjectivization) and in an antagonistic relationship to the Confucian ethical tradition. As if to bridge parts 3 and 4, M. William Steele focuses on Mantei Ōga’s polemic parody of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s famous *Gakumon no susume* (An encouragement of learning). In his *Gakumon no suzume* (The sparrows of learning), Mantei imagines a hot debate on modernization and equality between Western and Eastern sparrows. Against Fukuzawa’s injunction to embrace Enlightenment rationality, Mantei argues, in an essay that could be read at the same time as conservative and revolutionary, that commoners were not “passive bystanders to the great issues of the day,” but Tokugawa Japan was in fact “a society filled with eccentric and creative individuals, fully capable of original thinking and fully aware of their right to criticize” (p. 259). Like Steele’s essay similarly aiming to bring back to life the experience of an epoch from the perspective of the humblest (reminiscent, that is, of Fukaya Katsumi’s scholarship on “status society”), Dani Botsman reconstructs the life experience of Ōe Taku, presiding judge in the “human trafficking” trial in 1872 involving the *María Luz*, to show how notions of “equality” pervaded the transformative decades of the 1860s and 1870s. Thematically, if not methodologically, following on from these two essays, Naoki Sakai offers a masterful intellectual reading of John Stuart Mill’s liberalism and how his idea of “equality of rights” (in antagonism to “equality of conditions”) pervaded the political writing of Fukuzawa Yukichi and his critique of Confucianism as “incompatible with the new mode of individual identification necessary for the installation of the nation state” (p. 294). In the most conceptually sophisticated essay of the collection, Sakai creates an interpretive model of Japanese modernization in which the key ideas discussed in the UBC symposium are brought together and put in dialogue with each other. Sakai acknowledges that the notion of “equality” acquired regulative effects in Japanese society only after the political modernization of the Meiji period. However, in order to understand the process whereby the notion acquired legitimacy and political currency, “equality” should be studied in conjunction with the development of the two concepts of “individuality” and “national community” that preceded it. “It is important to

note that,” writes Sakai, “in terms of identificatory *poiesis* or manufacture of the self, these different categories—nationality, ethnicity, and race—are homologous” (p. 317). Sakai’s questions are both historical and current, since an analogous social imaginary of the nation-state still regulates the unequal treatment of immigrants all around the world.

Isomae Jun’ichi’s concluding essay situates the study of Tokugawa society in the long historiographical tradition that began with the works of Tsuda Sōkichi and Ishimoda Shō. It traces the changing scope and meanings of historical analysis from an “orientation towards historical origin” of modern phenomena to the successive reconfigurations of *kinsei* in the modern Japanese imaginary. Tokugawa Japan, Isomae believes, has not ceased to offer interpretive possibilities to today’s historians, insofar as we do not retreat into a blind anticonceptualism but engage scholars of other fields, periods, and geographical specialization: “through this kind of investigation into early modern society,” he concludes, “it becomes possible to seize the opportunity of discovering a number of holes . . . that run through modern societies and the possibility of overturning some modern inequalities.”

The methodological eclecticism and thematic variety of this collection of essays promise to give visibility to this volume; its experimentalism is indeed an appropriate strategy to encourage young scholars to engage with “big questions” in the current predicament of theoretical inertia. The collection would have benefited from a thorough investigation of the conceptual apparatus circulating in Tokugawa Japan, as well as from a reconstruction of the sociological conditions that made possible these new ideas. I ardently hope the book finds a wide readership among undergraduate and graduate students worldwide, as I am sure it will inspire new investigations and new theoretical reflections. The Nietzschean untimeliness of this project is a plea to young scholars to never shy away from big questions.

Yokohama and the Silk Trade: How Eastern Japan Became the Primary Economic Region of Japan, 1843–1893. By Yasuhiro Makimura. Lexington Books, Lanham MD, 2017. xx, 255 pages. \$105.00, cloth; \$99.50, E-book.

Reviewed by
CATHERINE L. PHIPPS
University of Memphis

The history of Japan’s nineteenth-century opening has long been told in a familiar way. Hinging on the 1853 arrival of U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry and his black ships, the plot leads to a crossroads where the Japanese have to decide between engaging in Western-style diplomacy and trade or