

In This Issue

Japan and China are each represented by a pair of articles in this issue.

KÄREN WIGEN explores the importance of Japan's internal geography for understanding the Tokugawa period. She suggests that during the last two decades historians—almost in spite of themselves—have developed a spatially oriented framework for understanding the uneven economic and social development that occurred during the two and one-half centuries from 1603 to 1868. She illustrates this theme through a discussion of the unofficial system of packhorse trading, along both *official and unofficial roads, through the central mountainous regions of Honshu* in the eighteenth century.

MIRIAM SILVERBERG investigates the study of popular culture in Japan during the 1920s and 1930s. She discusses the work of Kon Wajirō (1888–1973) and Gonda Yasunosuke (1887–1951), both of whom recorded the changes in Japanese urban life in a style she defines as ethnography. She shows how each approached the study of popular culture and analyzed it through different insights into class and cultural identities. She finds that both men rejected the idea that Japan's popular culture was becoming “Americanized,” thereby setting themselves apart from the prevailing binary cultural comparisons that categorized differences in terms of self and other, Japanese and foreign. Instead, they looked into the new emerging pastimes, styles, and mores produced by burgeoning capitalism and commoditization, and found the construction historically conscious culture constituted in the *practices of Japanese urban daily life*. Their response, she concludes, represented a more complete acceptance of modernity in early Taishō Japan.

In our first article on China, JOANNA F. HANDLIN SMITH describes the passion among the late Ming-period elite in the Kiangnan region for the creation of private pleasure gardens. She shows how these garden owners came to enjoy special social influence and power through their private displays of wealth and good taste. Her conclusion is that such endeavors heightened intra-elite solidarity. Thus, she shows how the elite of the early seventeenth century had thrown over the Confucian virtue of frugality and lessened the centuries-old emphasis on lineage-centered expenditures in favor of the conspicuous consumption that furthered the sense of shared values within wealthy and educated circles.

In our final article, PAUL COHEN, in reviewing the historiography of the Boxer uprising (1899–1900), sees Chinese historians and intellectuals creating three different myths from the history of the Boxers. First, after 1915 in the New Culture days, the Boxers were cast as superstitious, ignorant peasants whose blind anti-foreignism rejected the truth that China must modernize. Second, in the 1920s, the Boxers became transformed into a nativist movement founded on righteous anti-imperialism and healthy patriotism, while the Boxers' previously undesirable qualities were largely overlooked. Finally, during the Cultural Revolution period (1966–1976), the historical Boxers were completely displaced by the Communist Party's mythic creation of aroused rural men and women whom all good Chinese were supposed to emulate in the continuing fight against foreign and domestic enemies. Cohen concludes these various conceptions of the Boxers show what a strong hold popular myths come to have over our conceptions of the past, and he suggests it is most difficult to recover history from their grasp.