

Early Modern Japan (Tokugawa Japan, Edo Japan)

Columbia Asia for Educators

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Talk Outline

- When, Where, and What is early modern Japan
- Major features of early modern Japan
- Biggest difficulties for teaching early modern Japan
- Significant works, themes, and concepts from early modern Japan
- Recent developments in knowledge about early modern Japan
- Major Works and (relatively) New Translations

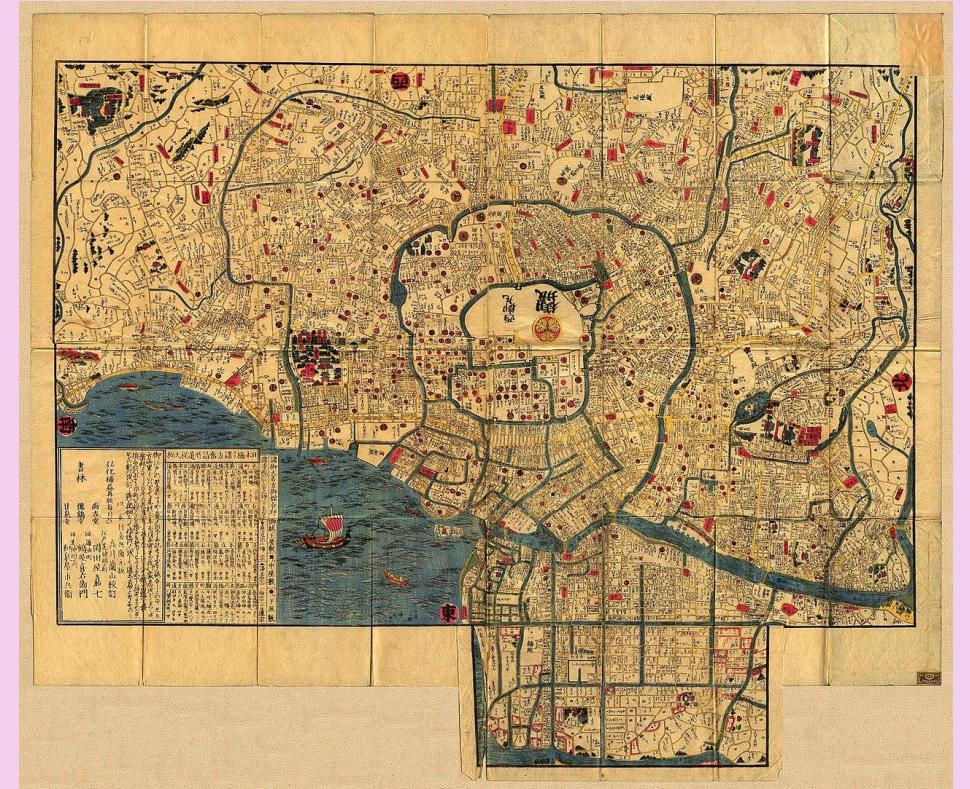
Japanese Historical Periods

- Tomb Period / Asuka Period (before 710 CE; no fixed capital)
- Classical Period (710-1185; capitals in Nara and Kyoto)
- Medieval Period (1185-1600; capitals in Kamakura and Kyoto)
- Edo or Early Modern or Tokugawa Period (1600-1868; capital in Edo/Tokyo)
- Modern Period (1868-present; capital in Tokyo)



Major Features of Early Modern Japan

- Urbanization
- Literacy and Media
- Domestic Travel
- World Knowledge and Goods
- Rich Extant Art and Cultural Products

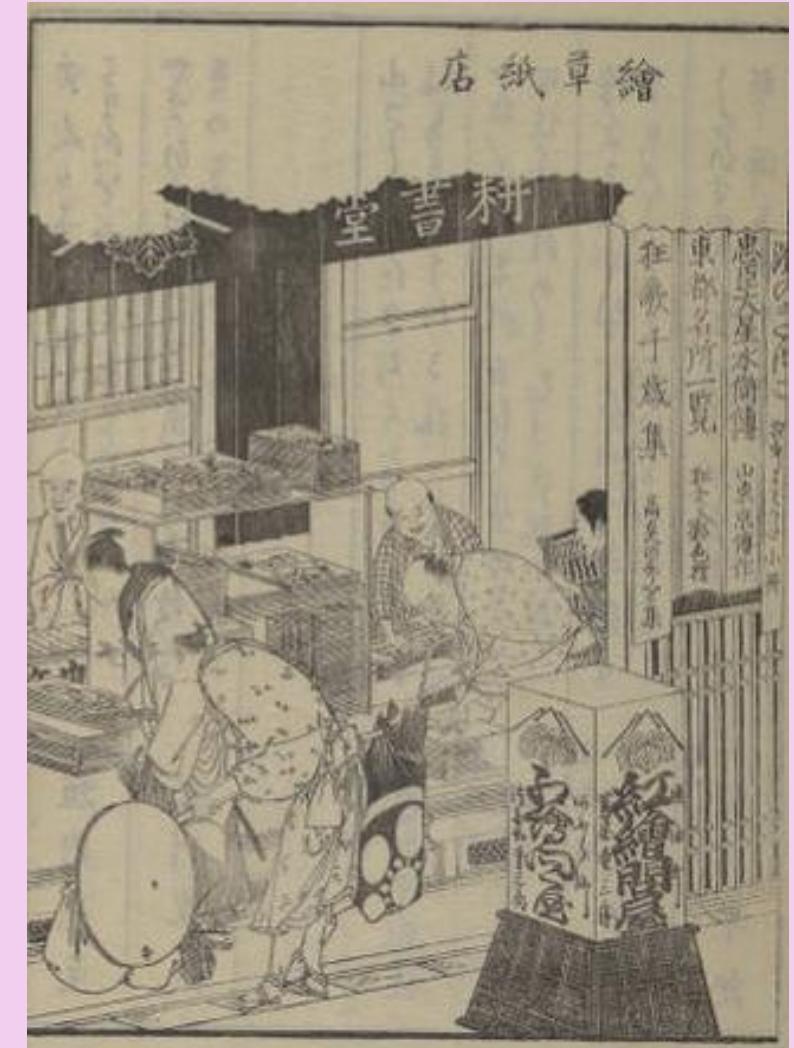


Map of Edo, 1840s
UT Library Online

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Hokusai, from *Ehon azuma asobi*
ca 1802, Met Digital Collection



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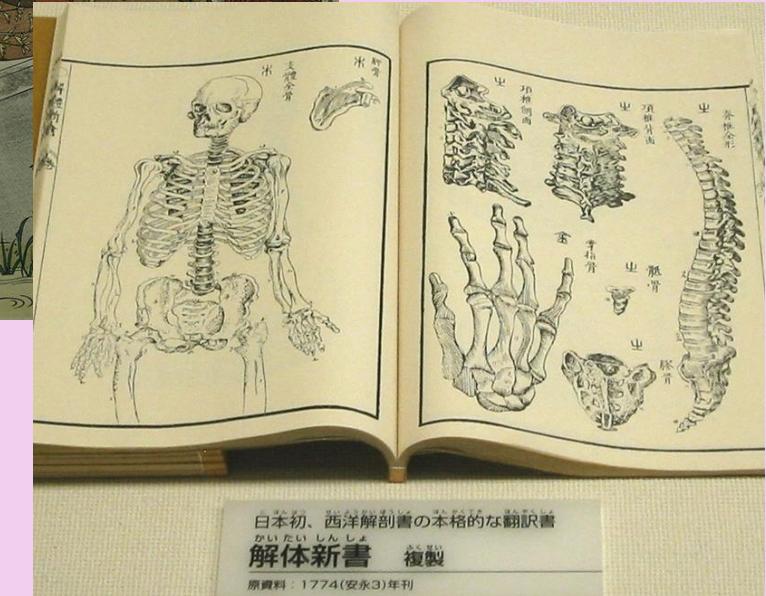
Book series “Famous Sights of the Tokaidō”
(*Tōkaidō meisho zue*)

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Suzuki Harunobu
ca 1750



Kaitai shinsho, 1774
Tokyo Science Museum

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Fukagawa Edo Museum

Problems Teaching Early Modern Japan

- Meaning of “Early Modern”
- Early Modern Japan as a Precursor to Modern Japan (Whig History)

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Early Modern Japan as an
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Early Modern Japan as Early
Modern Japan

Problems Teaching Early Modern Japan

- Meaning of “Early Modern”
- Feudal Comparison

Japan, with its purely feudal organization (*rein feudalen Organisation*) of landed property and its developed *petite culture*, gives a much truer picture of the European middle ages than our own history books, dictated as these are, for the most part, by bourgeois prejudices.

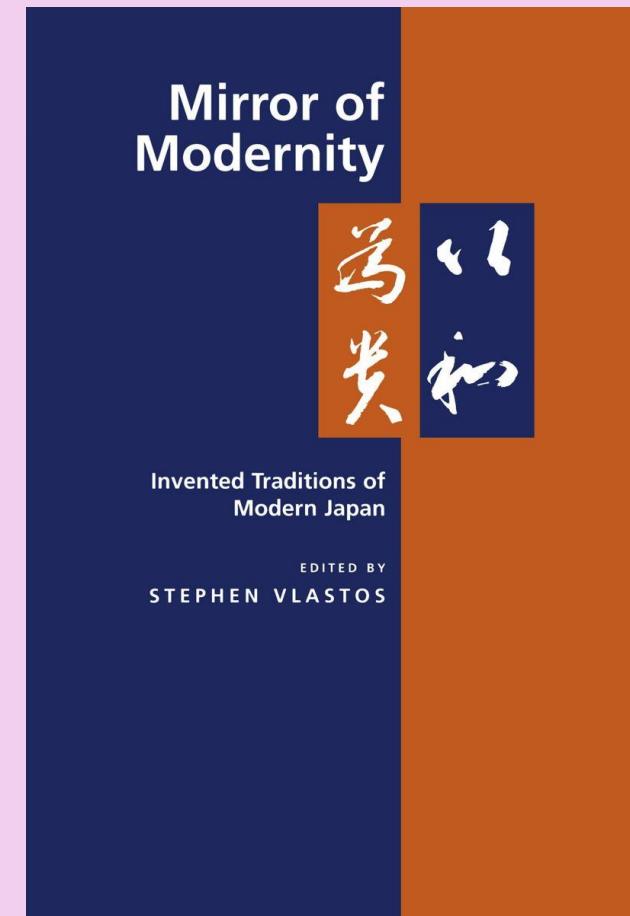
Karl Marx, *Capital*

Hall, John Whitney. “Feudalism in Japan: A Reassessment.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1962), 15-51

Friday, Karl. “The Futile Paradigm: In Quest of Feudalism in Early Medieval Japan.” *History Compass*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2010), 179-196.

Problems Teaching Early Modern Japan

- Meaning of “Early Modern”
- Feudal Comparison
- The Invention of Edo (Gluck 1998)



Works, Themes, and Concepts

- The Floating World
- Ihara Saikaku
- Chikamatsu Monzaemon (Puppet Theatre)
- Kabuki
- Ukiyo-e (Hokusai et al)
- Kusa zoshi
- Matsuo Bashō

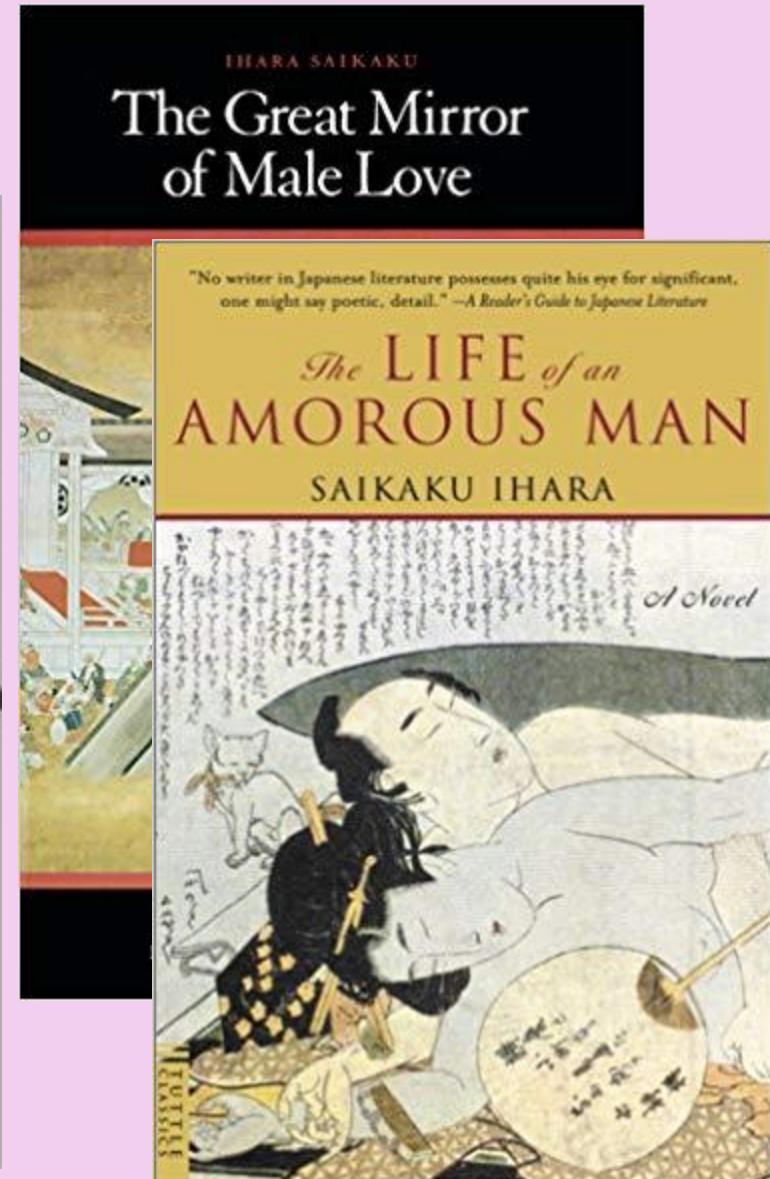
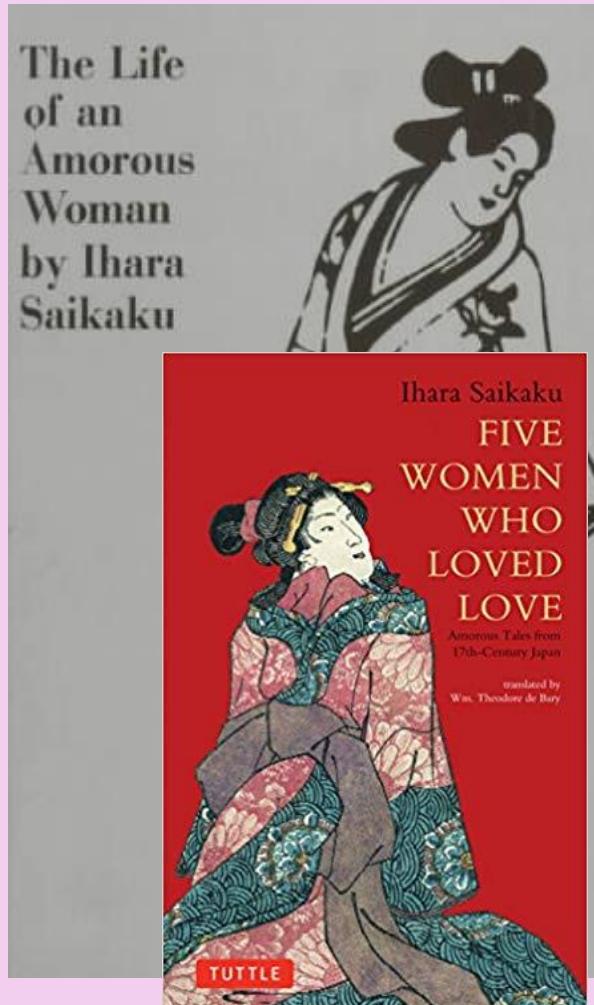
“Living only for the moment, turning our full attention to the pleasures of the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms, and the maple leaves; singing songs, drinking wine, diverting ourselves in just floating, floating;...this is what we call the floating world.”

Asai Ryōi

Ukiyo monogatari, ca 1661

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Self-portrait

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Utagawa Toyokuni III
ca 1858
Waseda University Library

Works, Themes, and Concepts

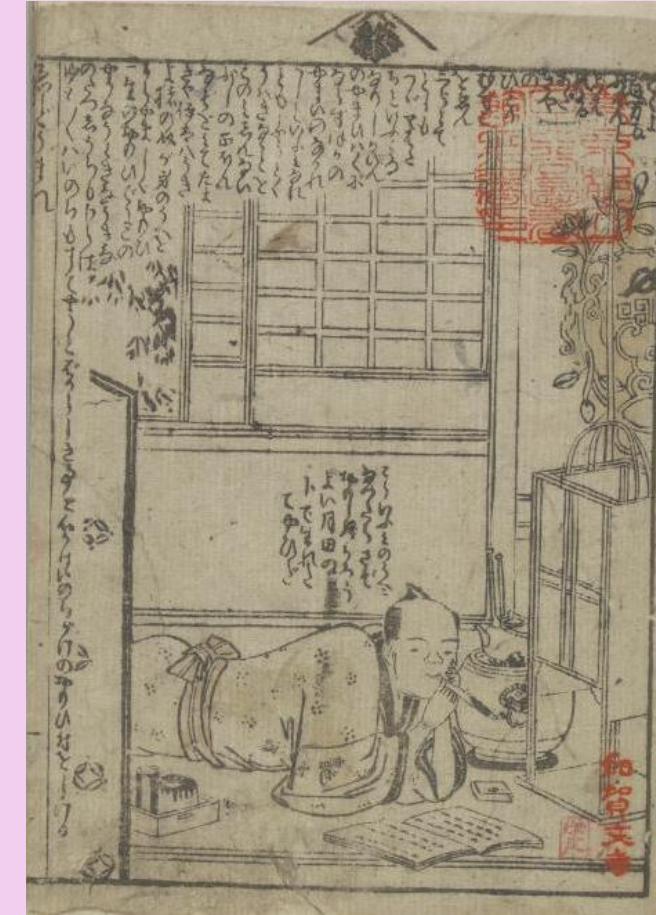
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Katsushika Hokusai
ca 1830-32
Met Digital Collection

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Santō Kyōden
Edo umare uwakino kabayaki
1785

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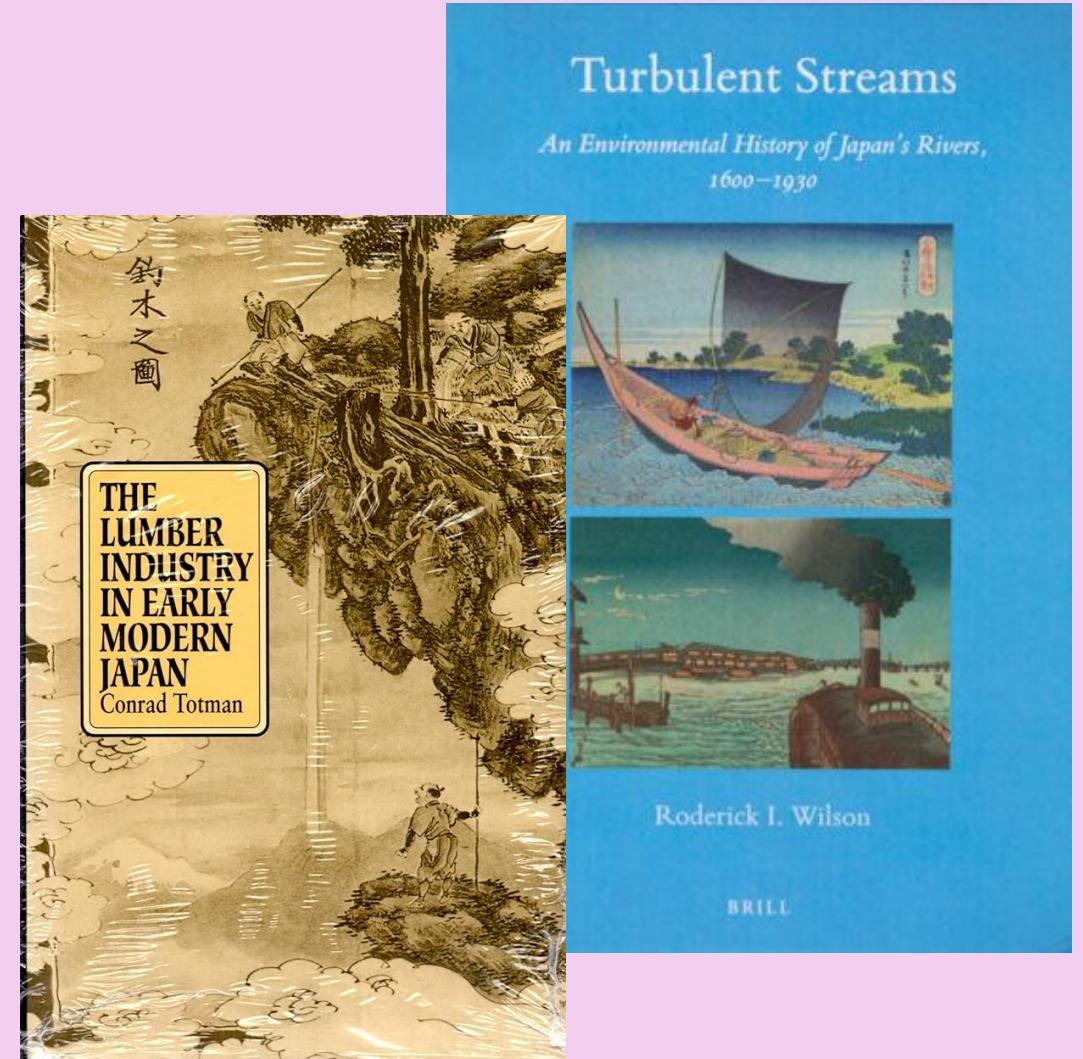
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Bashō (left) and Sōra (Right)
Morikawa Kyoriku
1693
Tenri University Library



Recent Developments in Early Modern Japanese Historiography

- Environmental History
- Public and Private Lives
 - Sexuality and Gender Studies
 - Women's History
- Japan's Global Early Modern
 - Book History; Circulation of Ideas
 - Imported Goods



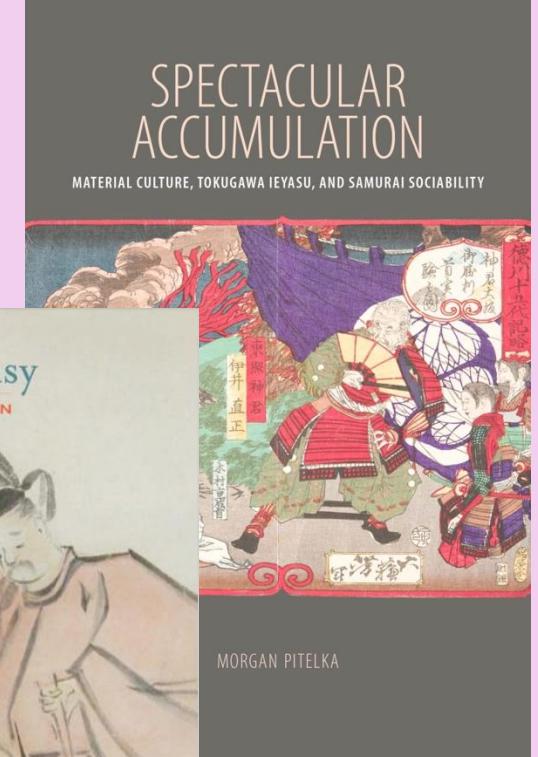
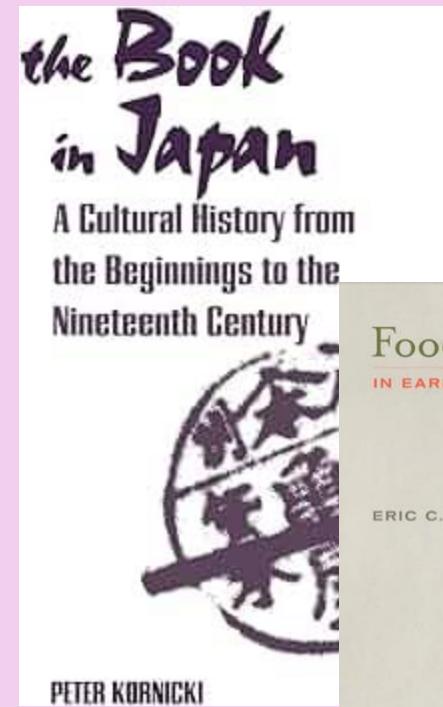
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 - Women's History
- Material Culture
 - Books, Food, Antiquarians, etc.



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Major Works and (relatively) New Translations

- Chambers, Anthony, trans. (2007). *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*. Columbia University Press
- Walley, Glynne, trans. (2019). *Eight Dogs, or Hakkenden: Part One—An Ill-Considered Jest*. Cornell East Asia Series.
- Shirane, Haruo, ed. (2002). *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology, 1600–1900*. Columbia University Press.
- Brandon, James, et al., ed. (2002-2003). *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vols. 1-4. University of Hawai'i Press.
- Vaporis, Constantine, trans. (2012). *Voices of Early Modern Japan: Contemporary Accounts of Daily Life during the Age of the Shoguns*. Routledge.
- Jones, Sumie, ed. (2013). *An Edo Anthology: Literature from Japan's Mega-City, 1750-1850*. University of Hawai'i Press.