By pointing to the importance of these trade associations Tilton offers a substantial revision of the developmental state view of Japan. The state is not directly micro-managing firm behavior in these industrial sectors. Yet there is sector-specific governance — carried out by industrial trade associations which seem to have a heretofore unappreciated degree of autonomy and initiative in setting policy for its members and customers. Nevertheless, Tilton does not dismiss the developmental state view of Japan. Instead he points out that these trade associations depend on both the tacit and overt cooperation of the state for success in achieving their objectives, and that the state views these associations as agents helping the state to implement policy over time.

While differences in state and trade association interests are identifiable, measuring the relative importance of the private sector and the state in the governance of the Japanese economy remains difficult. For example, in the case of the basic materials industries, state policy during the period studied was to maintain a full-set industrial policy — meaning that Japan was to maintain production potential in all major industrial sectors. Viewed in this light, trade associations were acting not only in self-interest, but also as agents of the national interest. Tilton’s contribution is to argue persuasively that uncompetitive market behavior is a norm in the Japanese economy, and that Japan’s trade associations play a key role in maintaining resistance to imports and the persistence of higher domestic Japanese price levels.

Pomona College
Claremont, California, U.S.A.

DAVID ARASE


Given the fashionable reference to construction in the title, one might open this book anticipating some kind of encounter between the study of Japan and the anti-essentialist critiques of gender and sexual identity currently being posed by feminism and queer theory. As a primary site where Japan’s otherness to western modernity is constructed, the ambiguous and rich territory of Tokugawa Japan would enable a study that cuts both ways, offering not only an opportunity for theoretical scrutiny of claims about Japan, but also a chance to criticize and articulate the claims of a theoretical discourse apt to assume the universality of social relations in the industrial west. However, when the author makes the surprising announcement on page two that undertaking a study of the “construction of homosexuality” in Japan “has not, however, obliged me to engage the huge literature on homosexuality produced by historians of other eras and societies, to say nothing of work by scholars in such fields as psychology, anthropology, sociology, and literature,” one finds that this study will rather insulate itself from these questions. Male Colors has undeniable strengths, assembling an impressive array of primary source materials from ancient times to the Tokugawa period, including literature, erotic prints, monastic and commercial records, miscellaneous personal documents, and accounts by both Japanese and European travelers, and handling these in a frank and engaging way. However, the delineation of its project as a positivist historical
account begs basic questions of representation and interpretation, and ensures that this book can only gesture at the kinds of questions animating queer theory and Japan studies today.

The five chapters of Male Colors construct a historical narrative of the formation of a tradition of homosexuality through the transition of nanshoku or male love from the heterogeneous spaces of the monastery and military camp of pre-Tokugawa Japan to the urbanized, commercialized spaces of the Tokugawa period. Chapter One begins by charting a broad range of references to male love in pre-Tokugawa Japan, and the very sparseness and ambiguity of the early historical record makes vivid by contrast the emergence after the 12th century of a rich and explicit nanshoku literature centered in Buddhist monastic culture, and later samurai culture. The formation of these elite, status-conscious, all-male institutions is taken by the author as a major determining factor in the subsequent shape of homosexuality in Japan. The second and third chapters, in an argument that seems persuasive and important, sketch the transformation of this sequestered and highly social tradition of male love into a product through the commodification of nanshoku in the teahouses, theaters and other sites of licensed prostitution in the urbanizing, commercialized social space of the Tokugawa period. Chapters Four and Five seek to articulate the object by discussing attitudes to nanshoku in the society at large and the relation of nanshoku to gender, but seem largely repetitive in content and method.

This historical narrative is quite persuasive in its general outline, but questionable inferences and weak generalizations abound. Broad cultural factors such as “Confucian notions” are adduced at a level of generality where they lose any explanatory power. More specific assertions are again left at the level of common sense, such as the claim, stressed again and again in relation to monastic and military nanshoku and in subsequent chapters with the citation of statistics on male/female ratios in Edo (p. 62), that, “(I)ong periods in isolation in all-male environments encourage homosexual behavior” (p. 47, see also pp. 22, 28, and 56). While on the one hand entirely plausible, there are obvious problems with this argument, particularly the status of heterosexuality here, and whether the behavior of 14th century monks and military men can in any way be understood as “homosexual.” This reliance on common-sense as an analytical link ends up vitiating Male Colors on several levels. In order to ground his study in the methods of a positivist history the author makes an important delimitation of his object in the introduction, where he states that he will “apprehend homosexuality... as behavior” (p. 5, italics in original), specifically as “role-structured anal sex” (p. 9). This is not an accidental choice, as it is meant to bracket the discourse of modern homosexuality and furnish the objective fact required for positivist inquiry (people either were or weren’t having anal sex at a given time and place, there is no third possibility). However it is clear that there is a tension at work here each time the author mentions “homosexual behavior” (pp. 28, 47), as given the above definition this term should be redundant. This drags the question back to one of representation. Even granted the positivist methodology, there is a basic problem in handling historical sources, which include biographical materials, popular literature and reproducible prints. Instead of raising the positivist question of whether these descriptions point to a state of affairs in reality, it is rather simply assumed that they did. The discussion of an 18th century erotic print, for example, while acknowledging the role of fantasy production, concludes that it “surely represents contemporary reality” (p. 188). This example differs from countless others only in its directness. The first point is that it is