



## From the Editor: Issue on Government and Private Concerns

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I have been using this picture of a stamp that says “rejected” for over ten years now. I considered it a bit of editorial humor. All academics go through rejection, sometimes for the stupidest reasons. We all have stories. We work in a competitive business and not everyone can win every race. There are no participation ribbons for academics. It was meant to be funny because we are a nice journal and are never mean or unreasonable in our rejections. But maybe it isn’t funny? Is it triggering? Time for a change? You are welcome to send a letter to the journal expressing your opinion. If you think we should use another image, what should it be? You can find our email under the [About menu](#) on the homepage or through the hyperlink.

I focused on the little rejection stamp picture because in regards to this issue, I thought I should apply it to myself. Often, I, justifiably I might add, blame the authors for the delay in putting out issues. Or even more justifiably, the technology behind its production. The software sometimes seems possessed by the spirit of a demonic toddler who is absolutely determined to avoid putting the issue to bed. But some of the delays for this issue are my fault. I don’t have any valid excuses. Just a general lack of stomach for the inevitable frustrations of editing that I only began to enumerate above. Contrary to the god-like persona editors tend to cultivate, we are in fact as fallible as any sports referee. I sincerely apologize to our authors and our readers for my failures. The picture of the *hansei zaru* is intended to show my self-reflection. As a sidenote, I made it with AI – in this case Microsoft Designer. It is only my second time so I am obviously no AI design maven, but I could not find any good free images and freehand, the actual monkey could have done a better job. In a show of cyber-eurocentrism, I could not get it to put “反省” into the design. It would only reproduce some made-up characters. I was going to crop them out, but I left them in so you can see what American AI generates when you show it Japanese characters. Just for fun, I also show my first AI attempt, which I made for a conference presentation PowerPoint coversheet background. (I think I used OpenAI for this but don’t remember. I thought it would be a one-off.) These seem to be innocuous uses of AI for things that I would not have ever paid a professional for, but I can sympathize with the dilemma of graphic artists. But back to the purpose of the monkey. The complete saying is 反省だけなら、猿でもできる (If it is just reflection, even a monkey can do it), and in that spirit, I promise to turn regret into action. So, send in your contributions without hesitation, and I guarantee you will have our usual prompt and cheerful response and timely(ish) publication.



反省

*Hanseizaru by AI . Martha Chaiklin*



Presentation cover  
background by Al. Martha  
Chaiklin

On the other hand, even my shortcomings could not prevent this from becoming an excellent issue. Thus, I didn't call it the *hansei* issue, naming being a requirement of our fractious software. We have two very different but equally fine articles. They both examine attempts to expand Japan's export opportunities, albeit in different parts of the world, in different time periods, with different kinds of agents and different mechanisms. It is this contrast that make them useful counterpoints. Mark Ericson examines the under-studied relationship between the last gasp of the Tokugawa shogunate and the French government and their failed attempts to establish a mutually profitable consociation. Oshima Hisayuki and Simon Bytheway consider the production and export of electrodes based on a series of papers that were seized by the Australian government during

World War II, showing some of the same cultural frictions and failures as in Ericson's article. As Tom Learmouth's research note makes clear, getting access to these resources in ordinary circumstances can be quite difficult and thus, these scholars have been able to elucidate an almost unexamined aspect of business. Tom Learmouth plainly demonstrates to those who have not done research on Japanese companies, why, for all their flaws, *shashi* are essential resources for looking at Japanese companies. He seems a persistent sort and we wish him success in his attempt to break down the barriers around actual company archives. Our other research note is a company history of SORA by the president of that company, Arai Atsuo. This forward-looking company seeks to combine business and art in an idealist future of co-existence. This type of business rarely produces a company history.

You may notice a shrinkage in the number of book reviews. This is not an additional editorial issue, but, sadly, a reflection of the state of the field. Based on my perusal of the book exhibits at the Association of Asian Studies meetings for the last two years, the number of books about Japan has decreased significantly, and the number of books that fit into the purview of this journal is just that much smaller. If I overlooked your book, or you have one forthcoming, let me know.



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