

Chinese Vernacular Novels in Edo Japan: Some Contemporary Implications
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In an attempt to provide historical contextualization that might offer insights into the potential impact of present-day cultural flows in East Asia, this paper examines one aspect of cultural traffic flowing from China to Japan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although nowadays Japan is a major cultural exporter in this region, the focus here is on its historical role as an importer of Chinese vernacular literature, which in both China and Japan stood in sharp distinction to the classical canon. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as polysystem theory (Even-Zohar 1990) and Heilbron's theory of book translations as an international cultural system (1999), the paper suggests some ways in which Japan's experiences as a cultural importer in early modern times might inform our understanding of transnational cultural flows in East Asia today.