Richard J. Samuels
Leadership and Political Change in Japan:
The Case of the Second Rinchō

Susan Orpett Long
Becoming a Cucumber:
Culture, Nature, and the Good Death in Japan and the United States

William O. Gardner
Mongrel Modernism:
Hayashi Fumiko's Hōrōki and Mass Culture

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Volume 29
(Prices effective through June 30, 2003)

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Printed by Cadmus Professional Communications, Science Press Division.
undergraduates to senior scholars. As a resource on the place of women in society and the effectiveness of women’s movements in politics, Abortion Before Birth Control has much to offer specialists in gender study. Finally, in ways Norgren may or may not have anticipated, her book is a provocative investigation of the role of states in population control. For all the exhortations, hand-wringing, and downright dictatorial policymaking of Japan’s leaders, Japanese men and women seem to have pursued independent reproductive choices with a surprising degree of stubbornness, despite the constraints within which they have had to work.


Reviewed by
LEONARD J. SCHOPPA
University of Virginia

The politics of education have never been a central concern in scholarship on Japanese politics. Over the past three decades, there have been just seven book-length studies in English—a fraction of the number devoted to examining Japanese economic policy. And yet, together with defense policy, education policy was at the root of the ideological cleavage that defined the “1955 system.” In the 1950s, the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and Nikkōyō, the leading teachers’ union, fought pitched battles over a program innocuously titled the “teachers’ efficiency rating plan.” The JSP confronted the newly merged Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) over the issue in the Diet, while striking teachers faced off against the police and right-wing gangs. In the 1960s, students and teachers were at the vanguard of protests against the conservative establishment during the Security Treaty revision crisis and again during the tumultuous campus riots later in the decade.

At stake, according to the union and its sympathizers, were the hearts and minds of the next generation of Japanese citizens. If the government succeeded in gaining power over teachers and schools, nothing would stand in the way of it once again brainwashing the nation’s impressionable children, as it had before and during the disastrous Pacific War. Vowing “never to send our students to war again,” the teachers’ union sought to prevent this possibility by refusing to bow to central control. It insisted that schools be run by teachers instead of by principals, defied Ministry of Education (MOE) orders, and ran electoral campaigns against LDP politicians. The first five books about the politics of education in Japan all described and an-
alyzed this “camp conflict” that was at the heart of all debates over education in Japan.¹

Until the 1990s. In 1995, Nikkyōso chose to omit all references to the (national) flag and anthem from its policy document, admitting defeat in its long-running fight against the MOE campaign to force all schools to raise the flag and play the anthem at official school functions. By this time, the union had split over whether to continue its defiant challenge to the conservative establishment, with the bulk of membership choosing to follow a moderate Nikkyōso leadership that was ready to give up its past confrontational ways in exchange for a seat at the policymaking table. By 1996, with the LDP in a ruling coalition with the JSP, some branches of the union even went so far as to endorse LDP candidates. Though a confrontational rump of the union in the new organization Zenkyō continued to fight government initiatives, the days of “camp conflict” were clearly over.

Robert Aspinall’s book is the first volume in English or Japanese to examine this sudden and startling shift in the ideological terrain of Japanese politics.² The shift, he argues, has fundamentally transformed the way education policy is made in Japan. No longer defiant, union members now invite government officials to sit down at their study meetings to talk about educational problems like bullying and school refusal. The leader of the union recently served on the Council on Education, the leading government advisory council examining education policy issues. Though the union has not by any means been embraced by the MOE, Nikkyōso’s commitment to a strategy of involvement rather than defiance is now deeply rooted.

Aspinall’s book tells the story of how this dramatic change in orientation came about and gauges its impact, not just in the education domain but also on the broader union movement (the emergence of Rengō) and political system (the collapse of the 1955 system). Given the centrality of conflict over education policy under the 1955 system, his decision to focus on what happened to Nikkyōso during the 1990s as a way of gaining insights into these broader transformations is appropriate. Scholars and students interested in what has happened to the political system during the last decade will find the book well worth reading.


The main insight the book drives home is that the collapse of the 1955 system has had more to do with the transformation of the left than with the split of the LDP. In the first several years after the long-dominant party split in the summer of 1993, it seemed that the collapse of the 1955 system had been caused by the emergence of a new cleavage on the right—with most attention focused on an emerging cleavage between LDP supporters in “internationally exposed” sectors of the economy and those in protected, domestically oriented sectors. This social cleavage was the primary focus of T. J. Pempel’s 1998 book Regime Shift, as well as in articles by Frances Rosenbluth and other scholars.³ Though this cleavage may yet manifest itself as the Japanese party system continues to evolve, party realignment so far has seen most of the activity on the left end of the political spectrum. The JSP contracted sharply after some of its moderate leaders left in 1996, leaving it with fewer than 20 seats in the House. This collapse created room for the largest new party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which has taken more moderate positions on the ideological issues that used to define the 1955 system—including education.

Aspinall’s study of Nikkyōso’s self-examination, struggle, and split during the 1990s provides insights into why the broader progressive movement, including the JSP and confrontational unionism, collapsed during the decade. Though its collapse was in part the result of the end of the cold war, the usual explanation, Aspinall points to the deeper roots of the transformation, which he argues began in the 1980s before the cold war ended. Nikkyōso was simply tired after four decades of struggle. It was steadily losing members and realized it lost members most rapidly when it took confrontational stands. It was proud of its role in blocking the government’s most blatant attempts to impose central control, but it was frustrated that its outsider status left it watching from the sidelines as policymakers debated what to do about problems such as school bullying and school refusal.

Similar frustrations, he suggests, contributed to the collapse of the JSP. The main difference was that Nikkyōso realized earlier that its confrontational strategy was no longer working, shifting course around 1989 when the union leader signaled his new approach by attending a fund-raising party for LDP member Nishio Takao, one of the party’s leading figures involved in education policy. In contrast, the JSP was still engaging in anachronistic cow-walking protests against the overseas deployment of self-defense forces on peace-keeping missions in 1992 and did not give up its most cher-
ished ideological positions until its leader, Murayama Tomiichi, became prime minister in 1994 in a coalition with the LDP. Aspinall blames its more complete collapse on this delay.

Another interesting insight into the broader implications of the left's collapse comes in Aspinall's analysis of how Nikkō's new moderation has affected the conservative camp. Now that the teachers' union can no longer be depicted as a threat to the nation's children, he argues, the Ministry of Education is much more exposed to criticism from other conservatives, especially the business community and conservative politicians (p. 188). They have consequently stepped up attacks on the failures of the system to promote creativity and diversity in students, pushing for six-year secondary schools and privatized universities. In the process, they have left the MOE struggling to retain its control of the system. In the same way, the collapse of the JSP and the emergence of the more moderate Democrats as the leading opposition have exacerbated conflicts on the right, leaving "reformist" conservatives like Koizumi freer to criticize opponents within his own party and in the bureaucracy when they seek to block his initiatives. When the LDP does split again, the realignment that takes place will owe a great deal to the earlier transformation of the left that is the focus of this book.

While the book is valuable for these insights, I found its frequent digressions into the "theoretical implications" of the Nikkō story distracting. Rather than advance a single overarching thesis, Aspinall uses the Nikkō case to "test" several distinct strands of theorizing about Japanese politics, Japanese policymaking, and union movements. Chapter three tests Thomas Rohen's theory about educational conflict in Japan at the school, prefectural, and national levels; chapter four asks what modifications need to be made to the "Schoppa model" of Japanese educational policymaking after Nikkō changed its strategy; chapter six examines how Nikkō's behavior conforms with the expectations of theories that have been advanced to explain the behavior of unions and teachers' unions in other nations and in Japan; and chapter seven asks what the case tells us about theories of "patterned pluralism." The author is to be applauded for his interest in theory-building, but the disjointed forays into several distinct strands of theory make the book somewhat repetitive. Readers will be frustrated too that Aspinall ends the book with a despairing note about the inevitably contingent nature of efforts to theorize about politics where, he concludes, theories merely provide "snap-shots of reality that must be immediately modified when events move on" (p. 191). If this is his view, why make such an effort in this book to build theory?

This complaint aside, the book remains well worth reading. The field's preoccupation with the long-dominant LDP and economic policy makes a book like this that focuses on the left and education policy a refreshing read.


Reviewed by
AKIKO HASHIMOTO
University of Pittsburgh

In today's shifting demographic landscape, Japan faces a population dynamic different from a generation ago. The steady decline in the fertility rate has reduced the size of the child population, and, at the same time, the continued rise in life expectancy has created a burgeoning pool of elderly people. The cumulative effect of these trends is that the total number of Japanese over age 65 now exceeds that of children under age 14 for the first time. As in other societies facing a similar predicament, this demographic shift has attracted the attention of many scholars concerned with its socioeconomic, political, and cultural consequences, from social security and health care, to filial piety and family support systems, social services, institutionalization, and retirement.

One key indicator that draws attention consistently in this scholarship on Japan has been the gradual decline in the proportion of intergenerational co-residence and the related concerns over its financial, instrumental, and emotional implications. In this literature, it has been common to pose this question of changing household composition in the modernization paradigm, where the shift away from coreidence represents a demise of "tradition," resulting in an apparent alienation and estrangement of the family. Leng Leng Thang's book, Generations in Touch: Linking the Old and Young in a Tokyo Neighborhood, situates her inquiry squarely in this paradigm and explores the possibilities of reengaging the now distant generations, especially small children and the elderly.

Generations in Touch is an ethnographic study of an age-integrated facility in Tokyo that brings together the old and young generations within a single institutional setting. Established in 1987 with state funding, the facility, Kotoen, houses a nursing home for 50 elderly residents and a day nursery for 80 children in Edogawa ward. The book chronicles everyday life in this unusual facility, focused especially around the activities shared by the children and the elderly. The reader is introduced to daily activities such as morning exercises, greetings, and childcare, and scheduled events such as birthday celebrations, seasonal festivals, graduation ceremonies, and even memorial services for deceased residents. Along the way, the book explores its main theme of reengagement from the viewpoints of different participants, especially the elderly residents and administrators, but also parents, community observers, and young children. These descriptions together il-
illustrate how the social programs foster and engineer intergenerational relationships in this institutional setting.

The book comprises eight chapters. Chapter one poses the question of reengagement between generations and sets the inquiry about alternate-generation relationships in the context of the changing social environment. Chapter two introduces the reader to the Kotoen facility situated in the shi-tamachi part of Tokyo and identifies the residents, most of whom are low-income elderly and more than half of whom are over age 80. Chapter three describes daily life at Kotoen and its scheduled activities, clubs, and events. Beyond such events, elderly volunteers are also involved in childcare at the nursery such as dressing the children when they wake up from naps.

Chapter four focuses on the two main ideals that Kotoen attempts to promote: daiakozoku and fueal. Daiakozoku is the romanticized cultural ideal of the large extended family, the “dream family” where multiple generations live together in harmony and sympathy. Fueal, on the other hand, refers to the ideal of warm caring encounters between people “in touch.” In contrast to these ideals, Thang shows that intergenerational interactions at Kotoen are actually carefully prescribed within clearly set parameters that restrict close individual relationships. In this sense, the elders are “event grandparents,” engaged in a collective form of grandparenting without much personal involvement, while projecting the ideal of the Big Family at the same time. In chapters five and six, Thang explores this gap between the ideal and practice by examining in detail how the facility portrays itself to the outside community, at an Elder’s Day Fair open to the community and in a television documentary about Kotoen. Thang seeks to explain this apparent contradiction in terms of the culturally dominant collective orientation and the sense of obligation the elderly feel as welfare recipients. Chapter seven explores individual perceptions of a few elderly residents who talk about their mixed responses to the intergenerational activities. Some like the activities, others do not, but all seem to agree that fewer of them would be desirable. Finally, chapter eight summarizes the “ironies” of prescribing spontaneous warm encounters and programming a happy Big Family, and speculates about the future of intergenerational engagement in a prefuturistic culture. This last chapter also offers a useful survey and summary of four types of intergenerational programs found in Japan today.

The book is at its best illuminating the successes and failures of the institution to meet its idealized goals. The reader will appreciate the revelation of some painful gaps between those ideals and reality. Thang’s insightful allusions to the sense of performance, going through the motions, or managed intimacy in the simulated fictive family are some of the most interesting parts of the ethnography. While those observations point to the limits of bonding by state intervention, Thang’s survey also shows that children who experienced the intergenerational program were likely to espouse fewer negative stereotypes of the elderly and gain realistic ideas about aging.

The book also offers a clear and up-to-date description of the range of social services and programs available for the elderly in Japan, aptly deciphering the maze of eligibilities and successive legislative revisions, and is illustrated by interviews with administrators, inside and outside Kotoen. Less clear and up-to-date is the discussion of changes in family and household composition over time, for which the author did not use standard references such as Miura Fumio’s annual statistical compilation.

Generations in Touch answers many important questions about new possibilities of social bonds and relationships outside the family in postindustrial Japan and also raises more questions. I wonder whether the premise of reengagement—the notion that there was much engagement in the past that has now been lost—is itself constitutive of the idealized cultural construct of the traditional family. It suggests an empirical question about the history of extended family relationships: how much could alternate generations have actually engaged with one another in prewar and premodern Japan, when grandparents had far shorter life expectancies and children of second, third, and fourth sons predominantly lived with no grandparents? If multigeneration households were not as prevalent then as we might imagine, it would seem that the good-old-days discourse, found also in Western literature dealing with this subject, may not apply straightforwardly to the Japanese family.

I also wonder about the premise that those engagements were inherently desirable. Given what we know about domestic conflicts and tensions in multigenerational households past and present, and the patriarchal values and interests nested in the stem family, it may be reasonable to suppose that responses to any “distancing” would have been varied. This implies that we need to be able to account for the increasing number of elderly parents and grown children who prefer not to live together, and that, for some people, the preference for an age-segregated lifestyle is real. Here, Thang’s study might shed light on the longstanding gerontological concerns that age-segregated and age-integrated communities may promote well-being differently. Another relevant question the study raises is the impact of social class on social choices. As Thang argues, welfare status pressures the elderly residents to conform to institutional norms, and one wonders whether the outcome would be quite the same if they were given a chance to live elsewhere.

2. Irving Rostow, Socialization to Old Age (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974)
Unfortunately, the book contains a large number of typos and errors. Many are in transliterations of Japanese names and subjects, and some are in citations of Japanese- and English-language references. Although some typos are inevitable in any book-length publication, and each one of them is small, the cumulative effect is inevitably distracting. This is unfortunate because careful editing and reference checks could have reduced them considerably. A few examples are the following, with the correct words in parentheses: yōgo rōin hōmu (yōgo rōin hōmu, p. 20); chōkai (chōnaikai, p. 92, p. 102); Sekan tunnel, Sekan ferry (Seikan tunnel, Seikan ferry, p. 93); Kowada Masako-san (Owada Masako-san, p. 94); setaikan kōryū (sedaikan kōryū, p. 181); Issei undō (hitokoe undō, p. 182); Nijūseiki (Nijūseiki, p. 201).

Despite these questions and distractions, however, there is no doubt that Thang’s work is a welcome addition to the English-language literature on the Japanese elderly living in communal and institutional settings by Bethel and by Kinoshita and Kiefer. The concerns of intergenerational dynamics that Thang skillfully presents should be of interest to any scholar of aging, family relations, social and community services, and the nature of social bonds in contemporary society.


Reviewed by
JAMES E. ROBERSON
Oxford Brooks University

Over the past several years, the continuing Heisei recession has brought concerns about Japan’s financial stability and economic future and about the restructuring of the work force especially among large corporations onto center stage in the headlines, conversations, and concerns of mainstream Japan. These events and concerns are in part marked by their actual or discursive contradiction of assumptions and ideals about the certainty of employment in Japan lauded, legitimized, and (presumably) practiced in the preceding periods of prosperity. In Men of Uncertainty, Tom Gill makes an important contribution to Western ethnography of the Japanese working class and day laborers showing that stability and certainty of employment have not been accorded to or enjoyed (or sometimes even desired) by all Japanese workers, either in the best and certainly not in the worst of times.

Gill’s ethnography joins the recent work by Edward Fowler and Carolyn Stevens in describing day laborers and the yoseba urban labor markets where these men have historically (been) gathered to look for work through formal labor exchanges and informal negotiations. Gill estimates there are now some 80,000 day laborers making use of yoseba in obtaining work. The three largest yosebas—Kamagasaki in Osaka, San’ya in Tokyo, and Kotobuki in Yokohama—are also associated with doya-gai districts of cheap lodgings catering (primarily) to day laborers. Gill provides useful descriptions and comparisons of Kamagasaki, San’ya, and other smaller yosebas elsewhere in Japan (see chapter four), but the focus of the book is on Kotobuki in Yokohama (described in chapter three). Gill’s ethnographic material comes primarily from 22 months of fieldwork conducted from May 1993 to March 1995 (p. 7). This has been supplemented and updated by extensive reading of the Japanese- and English-language literature and by use of updated statistical material.

As suggested by the subtitle to the book, Gill aims to describe “the social organization of day laborers in contemporary Japan,” a rather large project that is both the book’s strength and, if such it can be called, its weakness. Unlike Fowler, who spent longer periods doing day laboring work and staying in doya, mostly out of San’ya, and unlike Stevens, whose fieldwork is based on her affiliation with Kotobuki volunteer groups, Gill is less able to provide detailed “insider” portrayals of experientially based participation. On the other hand, Gill’s book is based not just on 22 months of fieldwork but on some 15 years of interest in and research on day laborers and his observational field of view is thus deep and wide, cast with a socially and historically comparative, critical, and organizationally acute eye.

A number of important themes run through Gill’s description of yoseba and day laborers. As have others, Gill argues that marginality is the fundamental condition of yoseba life (p. 147) and he shows throughout the book that this marginality operates on a number of levels and in tension with cen-
