

Making Japanese Citizens: Civil Society and the Mythology of the Shimin in Postwar Japan. By Simon Andrew Avenell. University of California Press, 2010. 376 pages. Hardcover \$60.00/£41.95; softcover \$24.95/£16.95.

GABRIELE VOGT
University of Hamburg

Chapter 5 of *Making Japanese Citizens* starts with this quote taken from a 2006 statement by the Deliberative Council on National Lifestyle: “Compared with back then (ten years ago) the meaning of the term *shimin* has changed. There is no need to get caught up in past complications” (p. 195). Avenell obviously thinks differently about this matter—and his book proves him right. If you seek to understand the foundations of the “state-society dynamic” in Japan (p. 224), there is indeed a need to get caught up in the story of the several shifts in meaning of the term *shimin* (citizen).

Avenell takes his readers back not only ten years, but a full sixty years on his journey of discovering the different notions of *shimin*, that is, ideas of how citizens can—and probably should—participate in public life. The book’s five main chapters introduce the evolution of Japan’s citizen-state relations. Working in chronological order, Avenell starts with the immediate postwar years in chapter 1 before devoting a chapter each to two decisive phases of citizen action in Japan: the Anpo struggle, when citizens took to the streets in protest against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, and protests against the Vietnam war carried out by the activist group Beheiren (Betonamu Ni Heiwa O! Shimin Rengo). In chapter 4, the focus turns to local activism in the mid-1970s, which was mainly centered on environmental issues. Finally, chapter 5 acquaints us with the more recent developments of citizen action in the 1980s and 1990s.

Given this structure, readers with a background in social movement research may expect Avenell to present a study along the lines of seemingly endless repetitions of the mobilization and demobilization phases of social movement activism. Most prominently, Sidney Tarrow’s concept of cycles of contention comes to mind.¹ Avenell, however, moves beyond this cyclical approach. He does so very skillfully, by repeatedly drawing our attention to the book’s core theme—the changing notion of citizenship. Avenell aims to explore “how the *shimin* idea and civic activism evolved from a stance of resolute antiestablishmentism in the late 1950s to symbols for self-responsible, noncontentious, participatory citizenship in the Japanese nation by the 1990s” (p. 6). This, indeed, is a historical puzzle that has not yet been tackled directly in social science research on Japan.

While Avenell claims that his study is based on three concepts of social movement theory, namely, “the theory of ideational *framing processes*, the related concept of *collective action frames*, and the notions of *movement intellectuals*” (p. 6; italics Avenell’s), for large parts of the analytical chapters he focuses solely on the role of public figures he describes as “movement intellectuals.” Using an impressive quantity of historic sources and recent academic studies—the overwhelming majority of which this book makes accessible in English for the first time—Avenell meticulously tracks down evidence for when and how particular intellectuals became key figures of *shimin* activism in Japan. While he is thorough in showing

¹ Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 141–60.

how these movement intellectuals framed certain core issues central to the groups they attempted to lead, he does not explain in equal depth how these core issues spread among the group members and how so-called collective action frames worked in practice to help some of these movements succeed in their goals.

I have one more point of critique before returning to my praises of the book. While Avenell's sharp focus on the *shimin* groups themselves surely allows for the most valuable insights into the various movements, it also adds some vulnerability to the study. On numerous occasions, the author acknowledges the importance of what social movement researchers call "political opportunity structure," yet at no point does he clarify the basic structures of Japan's political system. Nor does he provide information on modern Japanese history that would have helped in explaining so-called windows of opportunity for *shimin* activists. As I read, I wondered why Avenell did not find it important to fill in these gaps.

Nonetheless, *Making Japanese Citizens* is a very powerful book that integrates themes heretofore examined only separately. Past scholarship has included detailed studies on all of the historic phases covered in this book, on Japan's major postwar intellectuals and their political influence, and on historic and contemporary citizen action in Japan. This, however, is the first study to bring these three areas together, and for this alone it deserves appreciation. Moreover, Avenell's book indeed manages to solve the historic puzzle identified in the introduction, namely, how it was possible for the meaning of the term *shimin* to shift so fundamentally, from signifying political actors who engaged in fierce confrontation with the state and with private business to signifying those who cooperated closely with these very same entities. Avenell argues that "the *shimin* idea was a historical and synthetic construction: movement intellectuals and other advocates were constantly working on it, modulating it to fit the needs of the moment" (p. 256).

During the early postwar activism of 1945–1955, the term *shimin* was not yet in wide circulation. Emphasizing the value of individual wartime memories, philosophers such as Tsurumi Shunsuke and his sociologist sister Tsurumi Kazuko aimed at creating spaces in which people could mobilize their "long-repressed consciousness" (p. 45); after all, "the people—as a synthesis of the nation and daily life—were the most qualified to resist the state" (p. 22). The cultural circle movement was central during this period in infusing people's daily lives with a restored notion of the (ethnic) nation, while deliberately setting people's lives apart from the concept of state. This, however, resulted in what movement leaders identified as people's inability "to see the link between the problems of daily life and the wider political, economic, and social structure" (p. 53).

It was only during the years of the Anpo struggle, in particular with the citizens' protest against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in the summer of 1960, that the concept of *shimin* as performative citizenship was born. While the Anpo struggle itself was a "grand defeat for the progressive camp" (p. 63), the movement nevertheless enduringly shaped citizen action in Japan. It brought about two divergent streams of civic activism, one being "a conscientious reaction to so-called conservative domination" (p. 65), which would become a central source of motivation in the next phase of civic activism in Japan, the Beheiren movement. The second stream was "a more mannered, strategic, and pragmatic response" to conservative domination (p. 65), which would later trigger and shape, for example, consumer movements and action groups for reforming local governments. Pointing to the ideas of Matsushita Keiichi, Katō Hidetoshi, and Maruyama Masao, Avenell introduces the understanding of the concept *shimin* as being prosaically rooted "in mass society" (p. 87); in other words, he argues, citizens draw a substantial amount of motivation for civic action from "concerns for

a secure and affluent daily life” (p. 87). Others, however, such as Ishida Takeshi and Fukuda Kanichi, “identified in the Anpo struggle a large-scale civic ethos (*shiminshugi*)” as the starting point of a political consciousness of democratic values (p. 88).

Avenell’s outstanding chapter on Beheiren focuses on the first of these two streams, namely, ways in which the Anpo struggle reinforced anticonservatism. In early 1965, Tsurumi Shunsuke and Takabatake Michitoshi “hatched the idea of an antiwar movement” and “handpicked the movement’s intellectual leader, the novelist and social critic Oda Makoto” (p. 107). Avenell goes beyond the simple narrative of Beheiren as a pacifist citizen’s movement opposing the Vietnam war and clarifies how “Beheiren’s leaders championed an Asian *shimin* who questioned the very foundation of Japan’s autonomy and affluence and longed for a spiritual return to the East” (p. 109). The Beheiren movement forced Japanese citizens to rethink their postwar victim narrative and to critically address their role in once again perpetrating aggression against an Asian nation—this time by logistically supporting the U.S. military in Vietnam. Beheiren secretary general Yoshikawa Yūichi even argued that if Japan was serious about opposing acts of imperialism (such as the Vietnam war), it would need to take on domestic issues as well and fight “ethnic and racial discrimination within Japan” (p. 136); it was he who introduced the term of *shiminteki kenri* (civil rights) into the *shimin* discourse. Arguing from the standpoint of humanism, Beheiren activists eventually found themselves fraternizing with other ethnic and racial groups suffering—as they framed it—from American imperialism; this included all nonwhite communities in the United States as well.

The mid-1960s to mid-1970s saw what “is generally understood as the high point of citizen protest in postwar Japan,” a decade of “antipollution and antidevelopment movements” (p. 149). Here was the second stream of activism born of the Anpo struggle, the model of pragmatic civic action. Avenell distinguishes between two discourses—on self-help and on participation. He identifies three approaches (class, localist, and civic) within the discourse on self-help, of which the localist approach is probably the most famous. Prominent activists such as Ui Jun energetically campaigned against environmental pollution in local communities and stressed the importance of residents’ “making decisions about their own living environment—and not relying on officials” (p. 170). The discourse on participation largely focuses on initiatives by elected representatives to engage with citizens, impressively pursued, for example, by Tokyo governor Minobe Ryōkichi. Most importantly, this decade witnessed the birth of “a vision of the new citizen, or *shin-shimin*, transcendent of protest and located within a communitarian civil society of symbiosis, self-help, and full-scale marketization” (p. 194).

From here it is only a short step to our contemporary understanding of the concept of *shimin*. Following the rise of the *shimin shakai* (civil society) and the emergence of *shimin* as *seikatsusha*—inhabitants of daily life, as Avenell translates it, that is, as conscious consumers and as amateur politicians on a local level—the mature *shin-shimin* of the twenty-first century are free of any fundamental fear of cooperating with either state or market actors. Confrontation has to a large extent been replaced by cooperation, despite a lingering tendency to critically assess the downside of this interdependence. In retrospect, the 1990s can thus be classified as “an absolute transformation in the sphere of civic thought and activism” (p. 253).

In the end, Avenell contributes an important piece to the historic puzzle of how and why the character of *shimin* activism in Japan has changed so profoundly during the past six decades. His persuasive argument is that so-called movement intellectuals deliberately and

continuously reframed the understanding of *shimin*. Did they do so in response to changing political opportunity structures or dramatic events? Or out of a desire to alter normative insights into how civic participation should proceed? One wonders and is inspired to ponder these questions. This thought-provoking book presents carefully conducted research and will be valuable both to historians and to students of social movements and local politics in Japan.

The Other Women's Lib: Gender and Body in Japanese Women's Fiction. By Julia C. Bullock. University of Hawai'i Press, 2010. 216 pages. Hardcover \$49.00; softcover \$25.00.

JOAN E. ERICSON
Colorado College

What a difference a decade makes. I made this same remark in a book review seven years ago, when I was better at math.¹ The sentiment references the sea change that followed the 1993 Rutgers conference on Japanese women writers—from which emerged *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* (eds. Paul Schalow and Janet Walker, 1996)—and catalyzed a bookshelf of studies in English on gendered dynamics in Japanese literature. Add nearly another decade, with the extension of this gender focus, conceived broadly to encompass studies of sexuality and history, more generally, and we have witnessed the formation of a kind of critical mass in Japanese studies that puts gender and feminist perspectives at the center of our contemporary scholarship. That has pluses and minuses.

“What a difference a decade makes” is also the closing observation of Julia Bullock in *The Other Women's Lib: Gender and the Body in Japanese Women's Fiction*. Here Bullock is celebrating the “imaginative subversions of gender norms” (p. 167) that were possible in the early seventies, during the heady high water of the Japanese Women's Lib (*ūman ribu*) movement, in contrast to the rigidly confining gender conventions of the sixties. But the heart of Bullock's study is an impressive display of feminist criticism of the fiction from the sixties and early seventies of three women writers—Kono Taeko (1926–), Takahashi Takako (1932–), and Kurahashi Yumiko (1935–2005)—who opened up a space for reimagining a realm of female subjectivity prior to the arrival of second-wave feminism and, in particular, prefigured the discourse of Japan's Women's Lib.

Bullock makes a strong case for a critically self-aware feminist analysis of works by Kono, Takahashi, and Kurahashi. Their style was sharp and their stories often disturbing, in striking contrast to the conventions for popular women writers of the previous generation, who had been categorized as *joryū sakka* (women writers) of *joryū bungaku* (women's literature). Each author has had some of her stories translated into English, but only two of the dozen works that receive sustained scrutiny by Bullock are available in full for English readers (Kono's “Bone Meat” and “Toddler-Hunting,” both translated by Lucy North). Bullock provides extended translations of passages that support her argument, illustrating how these

¹ Review of *The Father-Daughter Plot: Japanese Literary Women and the Law of the Father*, ed. Rebecca L. Copeland and Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen (University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), *Japanese Language and Literature*, 38:1 (April 2004), pp. 111–22.