

government system after Meiji and post-World War II reforms.

The author goes beyond most accounts of policy by linking institutional structure and actor-driven dynamics. These actor-driven dynamics however do not exist in a void but are embedded in party politics which is crucial in explaining the actions undertaken by the change agents. Opposition parties in France (and Britain) on the one hand and of Japan (and Italy) on the other were able to find an “adroit way to renew and elaborate their ideational weaponry” (120) and formulate an attractive and clear alternative to the government. The latter countries were not able to find the right strategy and remained marginal. In France the result was a sweeping victory of the opposition that replaced the long-term ruling party in government while in Japan the opposition was invited to form a coalition with the previously single ruling party.

This highly recommended book offers specific case studies but the implications of the approach and explanation go well beyond the importance for the mere cases of Japan and France in the dynamics of decentralization politics.

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**THE FAILURE OF CIVIL SOCIETY?: The Third Sector and the State in Contemporary Japan.** By *Akihiro Ogawa*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009. xiii, 271 pp. (Figures, tables, B&W photos.) US\$80.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-7914-9395-3.

Sadly, as with the 1995 earthquake in the Kobe region, the Higashi Nihon Daishinsai of March 11, 2011 that hit Northeastern Japan with a 9.0 quake, devastating tsunami, and far-reaching nuclear aftermath, reminds us that Japanese civil society will undoubtedly become the focus of expanded scholarship from many disciplinary perspectives.

As is well known, following the vast destruction of the Kobe earthquake in 1995 (the Hanshin Awaji Daishinsai) the Japanese government initially stood paralyzed. Into the void stepped volunteers, eventually numbering up to 1.3 million strong. Those volunteers simultaneously highlighted the ossifications of Japan’s central government agencies and demonstrated the potential for harnessing voluntary action. Popular accounts of volunteerism and the rebirth of civil society appeared almost phoenix-like from the rubble of the earthquake. To help the many ordinary Japanese confused by the then-burgeoning new vocabulary of the civil sector, Japan’s publishing industry quickly packed bookshops with paperbacks answering questions for the many citizens confused by the jargon.

The 1995 Kobe earthquake prompted extensive examination of the role of civil society in Japan, both in the popular media and in scholarly discourse.

Political scientists of Japan were the earliest to study the phenomenon broadly, to analyze how the Japanese state mobilized civic organizations to take on increasing demands for social services, and to understand the unprecedented ways legislation was swiftly put in place to empower nonprofit organizations. The perspectives of political scientists have contributed greatly to our understanding of how the Japanese state, in an age of economic decline and the rapid aging of its population, has employed the rhetoric of civil society to mobilize citizens to shoulder new responsibilities for social services previously deemed the responsibility of the state.

Akihiro Ogawa's *The Failure of Civil Society? The Third Sector and the State in Contemporary Japan*, 2010 winner of the Japan NPO Association Book Award, is a welcome addition to the still scant ethnographic literature on Japan's civil sector, providing an in-depth and multi-dimensional look at the ways civil society organizations have been reimagined, mobilized and constrained by the Japanese state and by its citizens. In addition to interviews with officials and documentary research, Ogawa's study makes use of participant observation to provide a well-textured ethnographic case study of the changing landscape of Japanese nonprofit organizations in the post-bubble era.

As Ogawa notes in *The Failure of Civil Society? The Third Sector and the State in Contemporary Japan*, much of the early scholarship has taken a top-down look at the role of the state in encouraging NPOs (nonprofit organizations) and volunteers, and in expediting legislation that expanded a legally recognized and mobilized nonprofit sector. However, examining civic action from such a high-altitude, macro perspective seldom reaches into the neighbourhoods and networks "traditionally" seen as the bounds of expected Japanese social reciprocity, which has often been the terrain of anthropologists and other qualitative social scientists.

The life-long learning centre that Ogawa studies is part old and part new, an organization that harnesses expected communities of citizens including local merchants, housewives and the growing cohorts of the retired, and marshals them into a "voluntary" organization that takes on social welfare responsibilities which extend and greatly expand upon the level of social participation expected of traditional Japanese social networks based on kinship, neighbourhood and corporate network.

Ogawa's ethnography is particularly effective when he is portraying the ways in which lower-level government agencies coerce residents into undertaking new responsibilities and in "volunteering" to provide locally needed services. Especially, his chapters "Invited by the State and Power" and "Contested Rationalities" include rich ethnographic passages that bring forth the voices of the bureaucrats, the local leaders who are being pressed into service, and the various members of the communities who are both participants in (willingly or reluctantly) and observers (self-interested and bemused) of the process.

Major anthropological studies of Japan have closely examined community, school groups, neighborhoods, voluntary groups (PTAs, citizens' groups, merchants' organizations), belief networks, companies and other communities of voluntary common interest. Akihiro Ogawa's book is an important contribution to the anthropological literature on civil society, with the goal not to argue about what civil society is but to discover what civil society does. In this compact volume Akihiro Ogawa has done much to suggest further productive avenues for much broader anthropological inquiry. Ogawa has done an admirable job of interrogating the domain between the top-down perspectives of the bureaucrats and the state and the grassroots gaze of the resident "volunteers."

Welcome additions to the anthropological literature on civil society in Japan would be more research that examines how notions of civil society have changed people's perspectives on the traditional domains of kinship, community and company. Especially it would be valuable to see the analysis of linguistic anthropologists concerning the changing rhetoric of social welfare and citizen responsibility, and perhaps even more into the politics and prospects for cross-cultural misinterpretation of apparently similar terms such as "the third sector," and in fact of the term "civil society" itself.

Mr. Ogawa's book contributes to the social science literature on Japan and will be of interest to anthropologists and other qualitative social scientists, to political scientists and other scholars who study civil society from a cross-cultural perspective. This book is especially valuable to the growing number of practitioners in the fields of nonprofit management, voluntary action and social entrepreneurship.

It is hoped that Mr. Ogawa's book, and the 2010 Japan NPO Research Association Book Award, will encourage much broader ethnographic study of the civic sphere in which anthropologists will bring the considerable tools of their discipline to study Japan's newly invigorated civil society.

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**WHALING IN JAPAN: Power, Politics, and Diplomacy.** *By Jun Morikawa.*  
*London: Hurst & Company, 2009. xii, 170 pp. (Tables, maps.) US\$45.00,*  
*cloth. ISBN 978-1-85065-983-9.*

Black-and-white photographs at maritime and whaling museums in Bedford, Nantucket, Cold Spring Harbor and Honolulu tell stories of tough men living hard and dangerous lives hunting these giant sea creatures in rough seas. Visitors would see huge boiling pots that were used to render oil from the blubber. Whale oil lighted homes and lubricated machines; spermaceti was used in fine wax candles that were said to burn bright and smokeless. Baleen, too, were in corsets and umbrellas for it is strong yet flexible.