

The book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of recent Japanese politics. In particular, Curtis demonstrates how the realignment of the 1990s (my term, not his) has changed institutional arrangements in the government and political parties.

As a textbook, *The Logic of Japanese Politics* is not a comprehensive survey of Japanese politics, such as Richardson and Flanagan's dated but excellent *Politics in Japan*,² or Curtis's own *The Japanese Way of Politics*.³ The focus in this volume is almost exclusively on political elites, especially party leaders. The voters get mention, but political movements outside the Diet are hardly even peripheral. For those who prefer to teach more broadly about Japanese politics, or who find that their students require a general overview of postwar politics, using a text such as J. A. A. Stockwin's *Governing Japan*⁴ in conjunction with the book under review here is worth considering.

This book is accessible to a wide audience. Undergraduates will like Curtis's grasp of the details of political events; he has interviewed all of the key political players of the last decade, while instructors will find that enduring issues of political science are addressed. Curtis's treatment of political reform in 1994, for example, could provide an excellent starting point for a comparative discussion of the real-world impacts of changing electoral rules. The book is a must-read for graduate students, and academics will find much useful synthesis and insight. ■

NOTES

1. See, for example, Stephen Reed, *Making Common Sense of Japan*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993.
2. Bradley Richardson and Scott Flanagan, *Politics in Japan*. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, and Co., 1984.
3. Gerald Curtis, *The Japanese Way of Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
4. J. A. A. Stockwin, *Governing Japan: Divided Politics in a Major Economy*, 3rd ed. London: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.

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Japan's Minorities

The Illusion of Homogeneity

Michael Weiner, editor

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272 PAGES

This is an important collection of essays that examines, as the subtitle promises, Japan's illusion of homogeneity. It does so by balanced and thorough examinations of Japan's minorities, as promised in the title. It appears at a time when minority issues in Japan have (finally) gained increased coverage: in the Korean experience in wartime, highlighted in the fifty-year celebrations and the public statements of former comfort women; in the increased visibility of immigrant populations; in the continuing legal and public battles in Okinawa, in a few examples. The chapters are both broad and deep, providing historical overviews and contemporary statistical context. They discuss the Ainu, Burakumin, resident Koreans, the Chinese community, Okinawans, and Nikkeijin (second and third generation ethnic Japanese born outside of Japan). These chapters are bracketed by essays that question the conceptual and theoretical issues raised by the discussions. They complement each other to yield a volume that will be effective in a range of teaching situations.

The stated goals of this volume are three, and these goals are realized nicely. One, "to critically evaluate both the historical construction and contemporary manifestation of a 'racialized' Japanese identity"; two, to provide historical analysis of the creation and rise of the minority populations within Japan; and three, to discuss the contemporary minority experience in Japan. Commenting on the need for this volume, Weiner points up the "substantial literature which covers the economic, political and institutional aspects" of Japan's history. Until these essays, there was little thorough introduction to the changing situation for these minority groups. The volume's essays ostensibly focus on the formative years in these groups' histories, between 1868 and 1945. Nonetheless, when the essayists move on to discuss the contemporary situation of these groups we have a discussion that incorporates the most recent events and the contemporary situation (xii).

The plethora of numbers and sometimes textbook presentation would be nothing but dry if such information was available elsewhere in English; because it is not, they serve as the only thorough presentation of these topics. This is one of the volume's great strengths; it is both introductory while substantive. It fills a void in contemporary studies of Japan. This also increases its pedagogic value. The chapters alone or

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the book as a whole are appropriate for upper-undergraduate or graduate classes. They will provide starting points for discussion in a classroom. Equally important, they are full of the information and analysis that gives instructors from other areas of study—those teaching great swathes of world geography or history—the information necessary to efficiently construct accurate and substantive lectures.

Even so, the essays are not mere encyclopedia entries. Further, the entire volume is complemented by Michael Weiner's lucid writing in essays that sharpen the ideological and theoretical issues that frame any debate on these groups. The essays then provide important material for broader discussions of minority voice, of national identity and cultural politics, and issues of ethnic and individual identity formation. Especially as I think of this in the context of a North American student population, they are the cogent reminders that discussions about minorities are not necessarily discussions about race. This book provides important challenges to the assumptions about "race" and "color" differentiation. Because race and color are not the primary discriminators with these groups, it prompts the wider discussion about minority issues and the construction of discrimination in our home cultures. We are reminded that "other populations . . . have been signified as distinct and inferior 'races' without reference to color stigmata. Indeed . . . the construction of 'Otherness' can be projected on to either real or imagined populations" (xi). That all groups, like all communities and all nations, are imagined, opens up wider possibilities for intellectual inquiry.

As is also noted throughout this work, the imagination of one's own community and nation requires the imagination of another, inferior, community. This discussion is the education lever: a point of discussion to turn the students' gaze onto their own communities and thereby to better see the one under discussion in the classroom. This is to underscore the point that most discussions of race, not to mention ethnicity, are country-specific. The pedagogic, as well as conceptual value of this volume is to provide the tools to get beyond this hindrance, this bounded perspective.

In this, as well, is the strength and the authoritative voice in these essays. Many are updated versions of earlier papers. One only wishes that the suggestions for related reading material had been appended to all the chapters, not just a few of them. Particularly with the educational purpose in mind, a page of related material goes far for the individual coming at this material obliquely, or, indeed, from an entirely different angle. Nonetheless, these essays represent a concise and cogent introduction to compelling contemporary issues, and inviting discussion on race, ethnicity, and nation by a focus on what is for most of our audiences, an "other" nation. ■

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