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## *The State and Labor in Modern Japan*, by Sheldon Garon

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attention to key policy-making documents, Beasley shows how security and economic interests interacted to propel Japan onto a trajectory of continuous outward expansion.

Japan pushed its spheres of interest in China more rapidly and successfully than the other Great Powers under the treaty-port system. But that success soon soured relations with the two powers Japan wanted as friends: England and the United States. When the Chinese nationalists struck a mortal blow against the treaty-port system in 1928–29, the Great Powers were willing to dismantle that system; Japan could ill afford to do so because its economy and security depended so greatly on its spheres of influence in China, particularly Manchuria.

Therefore, when the two power factions within the Japanese bureaucracy had to deal with a world economic crisis in 1929–30 as well as the new crisis in China, it was not surprising that more adventurous factions in the military took action that led Japan to use force to seal Manchuria off from China. From then on the forces set in motion merely gathered speed, soon pushing Japan on a course of increasingly reckless action, eventually producing the conceptual basis for a Pan-Asian empire under Japanese rule: the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Beasley has written the best overview of how Japan built its empire. Future historians will naturally want to explore more insightfully how the two power structures within Japan's bureaucracy were organized and operated. Equally important, we need to understand how and why Japan's leaders perceived Asia and the world of the Great Powers as they did. Beasley's study provides the appropriate basis for that future research.

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*The State and Labor in Modern Japan.* By SHELDON GARON. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1987. xvi, 326 pp. \$35.00.

In this book Sheldon Garon studies the Japanese state's response to the rise of industrial labor. This is not another evaluation of how proletarian agitators or weak union organizers caved in to or suffered from heavy-handed police thugs. Rather, it is a careful, nuanced examination of the long debate over the place of labor in modern society and the changing contours of labor policy. Ultimately, this is a work of political history in which labor becomes the window for reexamining modern Japan's political evolution.

Garon argues that social and labor policy "emerged within the confines of industrial policy" (p. 19). Social and labor legislation was first considered primarily a means of achieving economic objectives by mobilizing the power of the state to enhance productivity. He rejects the notion that social policy emerged because an enlightened bureaucracy sought to curb the abuses of capitalism and businessmen. Indeed, the enforcement of the Factory Law, Garon says, was delayed as much by "officials who thought like businessmen as by businessmen themselves" (p. 23).

World War I and the years immediately following brought organized labor to prominence and gave new visibility to the labor problem. A new generation of "social bureaucrats" primarily based in the Home Ministry took the lead in redirecting labor policy away from the stark political economism of the nineteenth century. The "new men" (*shinjin*) recognized that the state's interests went well beyond unrestrained growth. The social bureaucrats sought the "incorporation" of labor groups to give them an institutional voice in the social policy process. This effort, Garon argues,

rested on the assumption that unions, rather than being destructive forces, represented legitimate institutional structures that if cultivated properly could provide a more orderly framework for conflict resolution. This assumption, he says, also lay beneath the social reformism of the Kenseikai-Minseitō. In contrast to the conventional wisdom holding that Japan's political parties lacked fundamental ideological distinctiveness, Garon seeks to show that there existed a rather well-defined split between the "progressive" Kenseikai-Minseitō and the "conservative" Seiyūkai, a split revealed most clearly by the parties' approach to social and labor policy.

The Minseitō and the Home Ministry's social bureaucrats represented the core of a "progressive alliance" (p. 149) that led labor policy formation during the 1920s. The centerpiece of their agenda was a labor union bill. But Minseitō reforms, Garon argues, were voted down because of "their boldness, not their insufficiency" (p. 185). Reform efforts energized conservative opponents whose cause was aided by international economic collapse. The failure to pass union legislation, the onset of world depression, and the Manchurian Incident together brought "the death of liberal social policy" (p. 184) and the quest for a "statist solution" to the continuing problem of labor.

The failure of the progressive agenda and the push for national mobilization led to a growing state interest in controlling both management and labor. Obsessed with the rational allocation of manpower in an effort to increase productivity, state leaders pushed a corporatist program to reorganize interest groups into functioning patriotic association. In so doing they "did not so much incorporate, as obliterate, the collective labor interest" (p. 224). With Japan's defeat in 1945, however, the social bureaucrats reverted to their earlier progressive social agenda. The final chapter discusses this "transwar continuity" (p. 292, n. 3) of ideas about Japanese labor policy. The social bureaucrats' earlier notions of social policy and sound unionism became the basis for postwar approaches to labor issues.

There is much in this book to commend. Garon's treatment of the sizable corps of progressive bureaucratic reformers during the 1920s is the most detailed and thoughtful discussion of the origins, ideas, and political activities of these men we have yet seen. By analyzing the role of the political parties in the labor policy process he provides a more complete, well-rounded picture of the dynamics of twentieth-century social and economic policy-making. And Garon's frequent and often arresting comparative discussion is an important reminder of the constant cross-fertilization that characterizes thinking on social and labor policy.

On this latter point he demonstrates that social legislation in the 1920s drew on European legal codes, patterns of state control in the 1930s were consciously modeled on Nazi labor programs, and labor legislation in the postwar period was based on U.S. legislation. Thus, Japanese social and labor policy did not simply parallel Western patterns, according to Garon; the precise forms they took were heavily influenced by those patterns. Yet, influence is occasionally conflated with causation. At one point Garon observes that "much of what we now consider the uniquely 'Japanese employment system' . . . was influenced in part by American employers' experiments with the anti-union 'American Plan' and 'welfare capitalism' during the 1920s" (p. 171). His argument is based on businessmen's use of American examples to bolster their opposition to union legislation in 1930-31. This situation describes in fact what is a rather familiar pattern: the use of foreign examples as ammunition to support preexisting positions. I do not minimize Garon's insights about foreign influence, but he overstates its role.

*The State and Labor in Modern Japan* is an important and challenging book. It raises our level of understanding of modern Japanese society and politics. Its analyses

will not convince everyone. But Sheldon Garon's work is essential reading for all who are interested in modern Japan and how it developed.

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*Understanding Japanese Society.* By JOY HENDRY. New York: Croom Helm. 218 pp. \$25.00 (cloth); \$9.95 (paper).

On some books the jacket blurb amounts to a fable of contents. On Joy Hendry's new book the jacket announces "a comprehensive introduction to all aspects of Japanese society and culture." "Comprehensive introduction" may be sales hype for the European trade. Trans-Atlantic colleagues tell me that over there an instructor would not resort to having students read that lower form of scholarly scripture North Americans know as a textbook.

To American eyes, however, this one looks like a textbook. It has a dozen chapters that skim standard topics such as family, socialization, schooling, careers, and life cycle. It originated, as textbooks often do, in a set of lecture notes. And it reads like a textbook, the way some of us talk when determined to mention every precious point in the outline before the bell rings.

Comprehensive, no. Joy Hendry herself admits to being cursory, shucking details to gain breadth of coverage. Given the pressure to be brief the book is reliable enough factually: there are only a few trivial glitches. But the narrative is left at the level of generic Japaneseness; every so often one craves a brand-name capsule of behavior in which people act in real time.

The author has done good homework. She comments in passing on many recent field studies, some by Americans but most by younger European scholars whose work is only beginning to appear in print. So the book is particularly helpful as a sampler of current research on Japanese society in its splendored heterogeneity.

Empirically up-to-date, the book is conceptually fusty. Its approach is Anglican social physics of the A. R. Radcliffe-Brown variety. Society is reduced to social relations, which in turn reduce to "principles of classification." Nakane Chie sketched the general idea already in *Japanese Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970). For both authors the essential Japanese principles are hierarchy and belongingness, although Hendry also takes up principles of equality and reciprocity (Nakane often is faulted for finessing these).

Two cheers, then: accurate but bland, concise but cool. Hendry says her goal is to "evaporate the inscrutability" of Japanese life, but she performs the procedure at Strangelovean distance. As she depicts them, most Japanese lead lives of quiet desperation as they adhere to their principles. You would not guess that Japanese also are heirs to a great tradition of fantasy, burlesque, and unprincipled flummery. Up the flue with inscrutability went the wine of empathy.

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*The World of Natsume Soseki.* Edited by TAKEHISA IJIMA and JAMES M. VARDAMAN, JR. Tokyo: Kinseido, 1987. iv, 321 pp.

This book promises a great deal both to hard-core Sōseki fanciers and to new readers of perhaps the greatest modern Japanese writer. A number of important West-