

AVENELL



MAKING JAPANESE CITIZENS

五

# Making Japanese Citizens

*Civil Society and the Mythology of the  
Shimin in Postwar Japan*

Simon Andrew Avenell



甲

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS  
*Berkeley • Los Angeles • London*

University of California Press, one of the most distinguished university presses in the United States, enriches lives around the world by advancing scholarship in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Its activities are supported by the UC Press Foundation and by philanthropic contributions from individuals and institutions. For more information, visit [www.ucpress.edu](http://www.ucpress.edu).

Parts of chapter 1 appeared previously in "From the 'People' to the 'Citizen': Tsurumi Shunsuke and the Roots of Civic Mythology in Postwar Japan," in *positions: east asia cultures critique* 16, no. 3 (Winter 2008): 711–42. Copyright 2008, Duke University Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. Parts of chapter 5 appeared previously in "Civil Society and the New Civic Movements in Contemporary Japan: Convergence, Collaboration, and Transformation," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 247–83. Copyright 2009, Society for Japanese Studies. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

University of California Press  
Berkeley and Los Angeles, California

University of California Press, Ltd.  
London, England

© 2010 by The Regents of the University of California

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Avenell, Simon Andrew.

Making Japanese citizens : civil society and the mythology of the shimin in postwar Japan / Simon Andrew Avenell.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-520-26270-6 (cloth : alk. paper)—

ISBN 978-0-520-26271-3 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Citizenship—Japan. 2. Civil society—Japan.  
3. Political activists—Japan. 4. Japan—Politics  
and government—1945— I. Title.

JQ1681.A94 2010

323.60952—dc22

2010008308

Manufactured in the United States of America

19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This book is printed on Cascades Enviro 100, a 100% post consumer waste, recycled, de-inked fiber. FSC recycled certified and processed chlorine free. It is acid free, Ecologo certified, and manufactured by BioGas energy.

## **Making Japanese Citizens**

# Acknowledgments

First and foremost I thank my wife and family for their patience and encouragement as I researched and wrote the book. I am particularly grateful to my wife for supporting my move from the financial world to academia.

Many individuals have facilitated and enriched this research. M. William Steele sparked my interest in Japanese history and directed my attention to grassroots thought and activism while I was at the International Christian University. He also offered generous institutional support as I made numerous research trips back to Japan. Andrew Barshay and Irwin Scheiner were constant pillars of support from the very outset of the project. They provided both intellectual and financial sustenance during my years at the University of California, Berkeley; they read numerous drafts at the dissertation stage; and they generously critiqued various versions of this book. My ideas about Japan have been deeply shaped by both of them. Thanks to Thomas Havens, whose door at the East Asian Library at Berkeley was always open, and who spent countless hours discussing my project and providing advice. I am equally grateful to Steven Vogel and Nobuhiro Hiwatari for introducing me to the political science literature on Japan and to Setsuo Miyazawa for his guidance on the study of Japanese law. Steven Vogel, in particular, provided invaluable feedback on my work, especially with respect to issues of causality and the tension between institutional and ideational approaches. He also offered a thoughtful and extremely

valuable critique from a political science perspective. Thanks also to the late Reginald Zelnik, historian of Russia, and to Waldo Martin, historian of the African American experience. Elements of this book (especially chapters 2 and 3) would not have been possible without the knowledge I gained from them about Marxist thought and the civil rights movement, respectively. I am eternally grateful to Japanese sociologist Kurihara Akira, who spent countless Monday afternoons introducing me to theories and case studies on Japanese social movements and civic groups. Professor Kurihara also graciously facilitated meetings with many of the activists and intellectuals discussed in the book. Many thanks also to Fujibayashi Yasushi for guiding me through the wealth of movement newsletters at the Center for Education and Research in Cooperative Human Relations.

Thanks to Reed Malcolm at the University of California Press for his encouragement, support, and optimism from the outset and to Kalicia Pivrotto and Jacqueline Volin for patiently guiding me through the book production process. I am especially grateful to Robin Whitaker for her thoughtful, thorough, and wholly enlightening editing work on the book.

Robert Pekkanen provided unwavering encouragement and constructive critique as I researched and wrote the book. His openness to my approach and his faith in my potential intellectual contribution were constant sources of motivation. His meticulous comments on the penultimate draft, together with those of an anonymous reviewer for the UC Press, were nothing short of intellectual gold. Robert, more than any other, pushed me to clarify and articulate the central thesis of the book, which I hope I've done.

Others who have provided invaluable assistance or intellectual input along the way include Daniel Aldrich, Timothy Amos, Mary Elizabeth Berry, Steve Blom, Luke Franks, Fujita Kazuyoshi, Curtis Anderson Gayle, Mary Alice Haddad, Harima Yasuo, Laura Hein, J. Victor Koschmann, Marilyn Lund, Vera Mackie, Gavan McCormack, Stuart Picken, Sue Pryn, Wesley Sasaki-Uemura, Naoko Shimazu, Patricia Sippel, Patricia Steinhoff, Takami Yūichi, Terada Takashi, Thang Leng Leng, Timothy Tsu, Tsujinaka Yutaka, Paul Waley, Watanabe Gen, Brad Williams, and Yoshikawa Yūichi.

I am indebted to the following institutions for assistance and support: the Center for Japanese Studies and the Department of History at UC Berkeley; the Institute of Asian Cultural Studies at the International Christian University, Japan; the Faculty of Law at the University of

Tokyo; the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology; the Toyota Foundation; the Hitachi Foundation; the Daiwa-Anglo Japanese Foundation; the Asian Research Institute (ARI) and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) at the National University of Singapore; and the National Consumer Affairs Center of Japan.

# Contents

List of Illustrations	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	i
1. Before the <i>Shimin</i> : The Dark Energy of the People	20
2. Mass Society, Anpo, and the Birth of the <i>Shimin</i>	62
3. Beheiren and the Asian <i>Shimin</i> : The Fate of Conscientious Civic Activism	106
4. Residents into Citizens: The Fate of Pragmatic Civic Activism	148
5. <i>Shimin</i> , New Civic Movements, and the Politics of Proposal	195
Conclusion: The <i>Shimin</i> Idea and Civil Society	239
Notes	259
Bibliography	309
Index	335

# Illustrations

## FIGURES

1. "Banana Boat" civic groups' areas of activity / 229
2. Program activities supported by the Toyota Foundation Citizens' Activities Grant, 1984-2003 / 232
3. Frequency of civil society terms' appearing in *Asahi Shimbun*, 1984-2007 / 246

## TABLE

Phases of civic activism in postwar Japan / 241

# Introduction

Here *citizen* does not mean the resident of an administrative unit such as prefecture, city, town, or village. Nor does it refer to a specific stratum such as the *petit bourgeoisie*. *Citizen* means a spontaneous type of human shaped by a “republican” spirit of freedom and equality. . . . Of course, citizenship is not a godlike existence. It is nothing more than we ordinary people with all our joy and anger.

—Matsushita Keiichi, 1971

## WHO IS A *SHIMIN*?

Who is a citizen and how is citizenship expressed? Is it all about qualification, or is citizenship just as much a performance—as much doing as it is being, to borrow from one of Japan’s great thinkers?<sup>1</sup> For Matsushita Keiichi, a local government reformer and author of the above observation, democratic citizenship certainly depends on the robustness of institutions, but he also saw citizenship in a performative way, as a creation of ordinary people engaging in the public sphere and making politics their own. Such performative citizenship was especially important for Matsushita and others because its supposed earlier absence—or, at least, incompleteness—explained for them much of what had gone wrong in Japanese history from the mid-nineteenth century onward. It was at once a commentary on failures of the past (both individual and national) and a prototype for a new national community to be fashioned by ordinary citizens in the present and beyond. In fact, so important was this concept of performative citizenship for reformers that they gave it a name: *shimin* (citizen)—a word that spoke to some of the central aspirations of the Japanese people as they refashioned their nation into a modern liberal democracy in the wake of war and national humiliation.

The historian Bronislaw Geremek, though he was speaking of citizenship in Poland and Czechoslovakia, succinctly captured the spirit of this *shimin* idea when he observed, the “magic of the word ‘citizen’ . . . came from the widespread sense that it referred less to one’s subordination to the state and its laws than to one’s membership in an authentic community, a community whose essence was summed up in the term ‘civil society.’”<sup>2</sup> This was very much the case for postwar Japanese activists and progressives: *shimin* encapsulated a vision of individual autonomy beyond the outright control of the state or the established left and within an idealized sphere of human activity they called civil society (*shimin shakai*). For them, as well as many others, *shimin* became one of the quintessential symbols of liberal democracy in postwar Japan, taking its place beside other powerful motifs such as peace (*heiwa*) and democracy (*minshushugi*).

This book is a history of the activists, intellectuals, politicians, bureaucrats, and advocates who invoked and deployed the *shimin* idea and the civic movements and public programs in which it found form. I have two aims. First, by retracing key movements of the postwar era I want to show how ideas have affected civic activism and, more broadly, the development of civil society in the country. Leading activists and their ideas, I will argue, helped shape both the mechanics of civic activism and the meanings participants and others attributed to it. Second, I want to use the *shimin* idea and its manifestations in civic movements to scrutinize the motivations and aspirations fueling grassroots activism and progressive politics throughout the period. As I discuss below, a case can be made for understanding postwar civic movements as a Japanese variety of the new social movements (NSMs) prevalent in many advanced industrial nations. I will argue, however, that the NSM approach often obscures more than it explains and that, to truly comprehend the historical significance of postwar civic activism in Japan, we need to move beyond one-dimensional progressive master narratives and carefully unearth the multifaceted, complex, and sometimes troubling motivations underlying it. Put simply, I am interested in both *how* ideas have mattered and *what* those ideas have symbolized and meant for activists and others—especially the *shimin* idea.

Consider first the *how* of the *shimin* idea. Scholarship to date has given us many important insights into the shaping influence of political and economic institutions on these spheres of activity, and indeed, this work confirms such influence.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, each of the case studies I present shows how activists used the *shimin* idea and its related con-

cepts to legitimize, encourage, facilitate, or otherwise make action possible.<sup>4</sup> A relatively obscure term for much of modern Japanese history, it was fashioned in the postwar era by activists, intellectuals, and others into a kind of master frame or paradigm for social action and was employed to mobilize, shape, and legitimize a stunning diversity of grassroots civic movements and public policy initiatives.<sup>5</sup> Within civic movements the *shimin* idea informed patterns of decision making, membership, and participation by endorsing nonhierarchical, ideologically plural, small-scale, voluntary mobilizations. On an individual level, the *shimin* idea legitimized spontaneous political action, encouraged autonomy and self-reliance, and promoted active engagement in the public sphere. As an idea, *shimin* proposed a new relationship between individual and state; it made possible a progressive reimagination of the nation; it legitimized the defense of private interest against corporate and political interference; and, most important of all, it infused individual and social action with significance far beyond the specific issues at stake, linking them to an ideal—if protean—vision of a new civil society for a new Japan.

More concretely, I intend to show how the *shimin* idea has fueled and invigorated key civic movements in Japan since the mid-1950s. In the struggle against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty of 1959–60 (Anpo *tōsō*, the Anpo struggle), activists set the *shimin* idea in motion, using it to mobilize citizens into street protests and, thereafter, into a plethora of local initiatives. In the anti-Vietnam War movement from 1965, the *shimin* idea inspired a broad-based grassroots protest movement, supporting the movement leaders' antistate, anti-U.S. ideology and their belief in Pan-Asian liberationism. In antipollution and antidevelopment protests of the same era, activists used the *shimin* idea to justify regional autonomy and a strategy of localism, while in progressive local governments it informed policies encouraging citizen participation. And, after a period of intense contention between the state and civic groups, beginning in the mid-1970s a new generation of activists and civil society advocates used the *shimin* idea to fashion a communitarian vision of civil society based on collaboration and so-called constructive activism.

In the hands of activists, intellectuals, and other advocates, I argue, the *shimin* idea was rendered into a mythology—what I call the mythology of the *shimin*—not because it was imaginary or somehow fictitious (although it was a plastic idea), but because of what it represented and the kind of action it made possible in the present. As Claude Lévi-Strauss has explained, mythmaking is very much like bricolage,

because it “takes to pieces and reconstruct[s] sets of events (on a psychological, socio-historical or technical plane) and use[s] them as so many indestructible pieces for structural patterns in which they serve alternatively as ends or means.”<sup>6</sup> The French syndicalist Georges Sorel similarly suggested that the value of myth is not so much “whether it will actually form part of the history of the future” but whether it has the capacity to move people now.<sup>7</sup> For Sorel myth contained the “strongest inclinations of a people, of a party or of a class,” and it gave “an aspect of complete reality to the hopes of immediate action upon which the reform of the will is founded.”<sup>8</sup> The key here, it seems to me, is the way leading activists actively constructed the mythology of the *shimin* around ideas of spontaneous action, individual autonomy, and democracy, and, more important, how their use of this mythology inspired and mobilized participants in public actions with a stamp of authenticity. To borrow an idea from the philosopher-activist Tsurumi Shunsuke, the appellation *shimin* became a kind of “talisman” for activism of all kinds during the postwar era.<sup>9</sup> Mobilizing this symbolism—invoking the mythology—gave groups legitimacy, because it connected them directly to everything that postwar Japan and its citizenry were supposed to, or could potentially, be. So powerful did the *shimin* idea become that simply invoking the term became, in the words of the *shimin* critic Saeki Keishi, a display of the “magnitude” of a person’s “political consciousness,” almost as though the *shimin* identity imparted a kind of “magical power” (*majutsuteki na chikara*) on those who adopted it.<sup>10</sup>

I begin, then, by showing how the *shimin* idea became important—so magical—for postwar activists and progressives and, more significantly, how it made civic action and social change possible. Following that, I use the *shimin* idea in a more broadly historiographical way to rethink the historical *meanings* of civic activism and thought in the postwar period; in other words, *what* has the *shimin* idea symbolized and meant? I suggest that in activist discourse and scholarship alike, the *shimin* idea, its politics, and its movements have been all too easily slotted into a master narrative of progressive civic movements versus a powerful bureaucracy, a reactionary conservative government, and a rapacious corporate sector.

As I mentioned above, some have explained *shimin* movements as a kind of Japanese permutation of the so-called new social movements prominent in many industrialized nations in the post-1960s decades.<sup>11</sup> According to the theorist Claus Offe, these NSMs are distinguished by

their commitment to individual “autonomy” and “identity,” their organizational “decentralization,” “self-government,” and “self-help,” and their “opposition to manipulation, control, dependence, bureaucratization, [and] regulation.”<sup>12</sup> Alberto Melucci points to the NSMs’ critical perspective, which resists “the intrusion of the state and market into social life, reclaiming the individual’s identity, and the right to determine his or her private and affective life, against the omnipresent and comprehensive manipulation of the system.”<sup>13</sup> I am quite sympathetic to the NSM characterization of *shimin* movements in Japan, especially the emphasis this perspective gives to identity and autonomous action as independent variables in contemporary social activism.

Nevertheless, in this study I purposely step away from both the “*shimin* versus establishment” master narrative and the NSM paradigm, not because I disagree, but because I want to explore historical aspects of the *shimin* idea not adequately captured by such approaches.<sup>14</sup> As John Hoffman notes, though “the new social movements [from the 1960s] can be presented as a way of developing citizenship capacity and responsibility,” their focus on activism beyond the state as evident in the thought of Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci is “curiously conservative,”<sup>15</sup> because it essentially forgoes the all-important task of making “real inroads” into the actual locus of power: the state.<sup>16</sup> Derek Heater articulates a similar concern with the imagination of citizenship in a “civil society” rather than citizenship in a state. Reflecting on developments in the United Kingdom since the 1980s, he notes how “paradoxically, both Right and Left, discarding and despairing of conventional citizenship respectively, turned to civil society. Thatcherites preached the virtues of ‘active citizenship,’ interpreted as membership of school governing bodies or neighborhood watch schemes,” while the young leftists “turned Green, forming and joining groups to challenge the immobility and insensitivity of politicians and bureaucrats.” As Heater notes, supporters of civil society “have even celebrated it as a means of beneficially depoliticizing citizenship.”<sup>17</sup>

I am particularly interested in how the *shimin* idea has been utilized as a discursive tool for articulations of nationalism, parochial localism, consumerism, and communitarianism. I want to draw attention to the often-troubling connections between the *shimin* idea and deeply racialized notions of ethnic nationalism, as well as the ways both state and nonstate actors have mobilized the idea in recent years to propagate a communitarian, marketized, and largely apolitical vision of civil society. Thus, while acknowledging the significance of the *shimin* idea and

postwar civic mobilizations within broader global trends since the 1960s, I also focus my attention on the more direct historical context in which they emerged: the aftermath of war, the manifestations of leftist nationalism, and the transformations wrought by economic growth and affluence. One of the central historical puzzles I explore is 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. As others have shown, generational changes, new social issues, and institutional pressures all played a role in pushing activism this way, but here I will show how activists and their ideas about the nation, community, and daily life deeply shaped this process.<sup>18</sup>

Put simply, to appreciate the impact of activists' ideas we need to look at all the ideas they have used and not only those that fit into predetermined progressive or conservative master narratives. It is not that the "*shimin* versus establishment" or NSM paradigms are wrong but, to paraphrase Roland Barthes, that they tend to smooth out the complexity of postwar civic thought and activism, affording them "the simplicity of essences." The reality, of course, is an extremely complicated field of thought and action.<sup>19</sup> Incorporating this complexity provides a new—if sometimes troubling—perspective on the way grassroots actors and their advocates have expressed agency in Japan's postwar era.

#### THEORIZING IDEAS: MOVEMENT INTELLECTUALS AND THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE *SHIMIN*

I will use three concepts from social movement theory to guide my historical approach throughout the study: the theory of ideational *framing processes*, the related concept of *collective action frames*, and the notion of *movement intellectuals*. As Sheri Berman notes, "How an idea rises to political prominence does not necessarily reveal anything about how it might entrench itself as a durable factor in political life." To understand this we need to study not only how ideas change but also how they persist: how they become embedded in "organizations, patterns of discourse, and collective identities," outlasting the "original conditions that gave rise to them."<sup>20</sup> Berman's observation neatly encapsulates my approach herein. I am arguing that intellectuals, activists, and civil society advocates played a key role in articulating a civic mythology summed up in the *shimin* idea. This mythology not only

expressed the innermost aspirations of those who propagated it but, more significantly, had the power to motivate participation as well as shape behavior within a wide range of civic initiatives throughout the postwar era.

I see the mythology of the *shimin* as akin to the collective action frames and cognitive framing processes conceptualized by social movement theorists such as David Snow and Robert Benford.<sup>21</sup> Summarizing such approaches, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald note that, while structural factors can tell us much about the conditions under which social movements mobilize and operate, they cannot adequately explain the decisions that social movement actors make. Political opportunities and material resources afford only a "certain structural potential for action," and "mediating between opportunity, organization, and action are the shared meanings people bring to their situation. At a minimum people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem. Lacking either one or both of these perspectives, it is highly unlikely that people will mobilize."<sup>22</sup> Crucial for scholars working in this theoretical perspective, then, is the core of ideas produced, debated, contested, and put into practice by movement participants—in other words, the collective action frames. Snow and Benford define such ideational framing processes as "an active processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process. It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement organizations and activists. And it is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretive frames that not only differ from existing ones but may also challenge them. The resultant products of this framing activity are referred to as 'collective action frames.'"<sup>23</sup> Snow and Benford see "collective action frames" as "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization (SMO)." They "render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action."<sup>24</sup> The mythology of the *shimin*, I argue, evolved and has functioned similarly in civic movements throughout the postwar period.

Of course, ideas do not spontaneously materialize; they must be articulated by people or collectivities. Snow and Benford, for example, point to "movement actors" who are "actively engaged in the produc-

tion and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers.” The “productive work” of these actors, they explain, “may involve the amplification and extension of extant meanings, the transformation of old meanings, and the generation of new meanings.”<sup>25</sup> Modifying Antonio Gramsci’s notion of “organic intellectuals,” sociologists Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison identify a group they call “movement intellectuals.” As they explain, “Many, if not all, social movements initially emerge on the basis of some kind of intellectual activity, usually, but not always, carried out by ‘established’ intellectuals. Intellectuals as social critics often play a crucial role in articulating the concerns of emergent forms of protest, putting them into broader frameworks, giving specific protest actions a deeper meaning or significance.”<sup>26</sup> For Eyerman and Jamison movement intellectuals provide “a larger framework of meaning in which individual and collective actions can be understood.”<sup>27</sup> Such individuals assist in the “construction of the Other, the opposition, against which the movement is protesting and struggling.”<sup>28</sup> Michiel Baud and Rosanne Rutten concretize this definition by suggesting three central characteristics of movement intellectuals. First, they must be “acknowledged as producers of meaning and as representatives of collective interests by a popular group or local society.” Second, they must “possess the explicit ambition to transform society and to put into practice their recipes for change.” In other words, they “combine reflexive activity with cultural and political activism.” And third, they involve a motley crew, including “traditional intellectuals” educated in formal institutions as well as “members of the popular classes and persons who gained their knowledge outside the realm of formal education.”<sup>29</sup>

Movement intellectuals are a crucial element in this study. They support my argument that human agency and personality (i.e., the personal history and identity of distinct individuals) have been important in the development of collective action and civil society in postwar Japan. As I show throughout the study, movement intellectuals—university professors, writers, journalists, former socialist or communist party members, former student radicals, local government reformers, environmental activists, grassroots entrepreneurs, and corporate philanthropists—actively used ideas to mobilize participants. Though they by no means had a monopoly on the imagination of the *shimin* idea, their pronouncements were the most audible, consistent, coherent, and influential of all these proponents. Movement intellectuals’ conceptu-