

they staged intraparty coups to oust the incumbent prime ministers in 2010 and 2013. In each of these cases, the result was electoral defeat. And while Japan's cabinet system may not be working like that of the UK, New Zealand or Australia, perhaps it can be conceived of as just another parliamentary democracy model, under which the country was able to recover from the ruins of war to become an affluent, safe, well-organized society.

Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan

KUNIAKI NEMOTO

THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION OF JAPANESE CAPITALISM. *Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies. Edited by Sébastien Lechevalier; translated by J.A.A. Stockwin. London; New York: Routledge, 2014. xxxv, 198 pp. (Figures.) US\$140.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-415-71766-3.*

This highly stimulating book takes up a wide range of core themes and debates in studies of Japanese capitalism, and of comparative political economy (CPE) more broadly. Sébastien Lechevalier's goal in the original French version of 2011 was to pull together and make accessible to a non-specialist audience the results of his research on Japanese and comparative capitalism, and J.A.A. Stockwin's admirably clear translation has made that effort available to an English-speaking audience. Lechevalier makes the case that Japanese capitalism has, since the early 1980s, gone through a "great transformation" (his use of this term seems not to have any Polanyian overtones), one so significant that the country's political economy must now be seen as fundamentally different from the "classic" Japanese model that prevailed in the decades after World War II. One of his core goals is to explore the central role of neo-liberal policies in instigating this transformation. He argues that such policies (which were put into place largely in the mid-1980s and between 1996 and 2006) have had significant negative consequences for Japan, most notably through their contribution to the disastrous economic bubble of the late 1980s and the ways in which they have dismantled Japan's classic system of political economy without putting a coherent new system in its place. Lechevalier thus finds that the "neo-liberal transition" has transformed Japanese capitalism, but that these changes have not added up to "convergence towards the liberal model" (21). The peculiarities of Japanese neo-liberalism mean that the country continues to occupy a distinctive place within the CPE literature.

The Great Transformation of Japanese Capitalism has an unusual structure. After an extended foreword by the great *régulation* school political economist Robert Boyer, the book is comprised of an introduction and a series of empirical chapters by Lechevalier (chapter 5 is co-authored with Arnaud Nanta). The one exception is chapter 1, in which University of British Columbia political scientist Yves Tiberghien seeks to periodize, explain and

evaluate Japan's structural reform process since the early 1980s. This inclusion of a single chapter by a different author as an integrated part of Lechevalier's argument works very well, and Tiberghien's contribution can profitably be read both as a stand-alone piece and as a component of the whole. The chapter (which was written in mid-2013) also extends the book's argument to the political implications of the 3/11 disaster and the return to power of Abe Shinzō in December 2012, with Tiberghien arguing that "Abenomics" should not be seen as driven by neo-liberal ideas. Lechevalier's chapters also allude to these events from time to time, and his extensive references to works published in 2012 suggest that they may have been updated somewhat from the 2011 French version (though his empirical coverage ends for the most part in 2010).

While Lechevalier's analysis has more moving parts than can be summarized in a short review, his introductory chapter does an excellent job of highlighting the core elements of his research and their implications for broader debates. At the heart of the book is a theoretical framework in which different capitalisms are distinguished and analyzed along three dimensions: the micro-level dimension of the nature of firms, and the macro-level dimensions of forms of co-ordination (both market and non-market) and of the social compromises that underpin and help to constitute particular capitalisms. Chapters 2–4 cover these three aspects of Japanese capitalism in turn, with each first outlining the "classic" Japanese system in the relevant area before exploring how and why it has been transformed since the early 1980s. Chapter 2 emphasizes above all the increasing heterogeneity of firm types in Japan, chapter 3 the decline of the old forms of co-ordination (including *keiretsu* networks and industrial policy) and the rise of new ones, and chapter 4 the rapid rise in socio-economic inequality (the development that Lechevalier sees as the "most visible" aspect of the "real rupture in contemporary Japanese capitalism" (86). Chapters 5 through 7 then take up three other central features of Japan's changing capitalism, the education and innovation systems and Japan's place in the global and regional political economies.

The Great Transformation of Japanese Capitalism covers a remarkable range of material in a relatively small number of pages. While the presentation is sometimes dense (though almost never difficult to follow) and readers with some background in Japanese political economy will get the most benefit from the book, Lechevalier succeeds admirably in giving an accessible, analytically driven account of the multifaceted restructuring of the Japanese political economy over the last three decades. The emphasis on brevity and accessibility detracts from the book's effectiveness, however, when arguments are presented without the detailed engagement with data required to make them stick. This is the case, for instance, in the coverage of statistics on inequality (92). In some instances, Lechevalier deals with this problem by providing citations to his own or other researchers' work on the topic at hand,

but in others key arguments come across as assertions. Chapters 2 through 4, too, are not organized as clearly as they might be around demonstrating the impact of neo-liberal reforms, specifically on firm diversity, forms of coordination, and the social compromise. Chapters 5 and 6 make this argument much more effectively with respect to the education and innovation systems. Overall, however, the book is an impressive achievement, and anyone with an interest in Japanese and comparative political economy will benefit from reading it.

Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada

DEREK HALL

JAPAN: The Paradox of Harmony. *By Keiko Hirata and Mark Warschauer.*
New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. viii, 295 pp. US\$32.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-300-18607-9.

Since Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* was published in 1946, many scholars have studied Japanese senses of self and patterns of behaviour with a holistic approach to Japanese culture. Every decade has seen important books published on the theme of Japanese cultural uniqueness, or *Nihonjinron*. *JAPAN: The Paradox of Harmony* follows in this line of works analyzing what *wa*, meaning harmony, is and its implications in Japanese society. Three decades ago, during Japan's economic burgeoning, books analyzing the concept of harmony as an element of Japanese cultural uniqueness also flourished. Many praised this Japanese uniqueness, stressing harmony as a driving force of the country's economic success, while others pointed to the same characteristic as a major source of the discrimination against out-groups, the inflexibility of the system, the overwhelming pressure of individual responsibility, and so on. The way in which this book analyzes Japanese society through the concept of harmony might not seem new at all for many people who pay attention to Japanese society and related research. What is new in this book is the broad range of current issues it analyzes, from recent territorial disputes with neighbouring countries to the popularity of K-pop culture and from the disaster of the earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011 to changing portraits of men and women, along with its engaging manner of incorporating anecdotal materials.

Arguing that the harmony that once led Japan to achieve its remarkable economic success and social solidarity in the postwar era might cause harm in the future, the authors present various cases to show the rigidity of the Japanese system and intensified conflicts in Japan. Chapters like "The Whistleblower" and "Meltdown," for instance, clearly reveal the authors' main point that strict hierarchy and excessive loyalty to superiors prevent the discussion of critical problems among the public and keep society from finding the most effective ways to fix the problems. Linking their discussion