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Bringing Whales Ashore: Oceans and the Environment of Early Modern Japan by

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Jacobina K. Arch, *Bringing Whales Ashore: Oceans and the Environment of Early Modern Japan*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018. 272 pp. ISBN: 978-0295743295, \$40.00.

Reviewed by W. Puck Brecher

Since the International Whaling Commission's 1986 moratorium on commercial whaling, special interests have advanced conflicting claims about the historical development of whaling in Japan. Given the ongoing controversy over Japan's exploitation of a moratorium loophole to continue whaling for "scientific" purposes, it is surprising that so few have attempted to rigorously historicize this poorly understood issue. Jacobina K. Arch's *Bringing Whales Ashore* not only fills this need, it responds directly to many of the ahistorical claims and oversights that continue to obfuscate the debate: What is the precise nature and scope of whaling in Japanese history? Was it sustainably practiced? Historically, what sort of relationship did the Japanese have with whales? Answers to such questions are not readily apparent to modern Japanese, Arch suggests, who tend to assume that whales were as culturally and economically marginal as they are today, and that whaling was as sustainably practiced as it is today. But the book's value extends further than its analysis of historical Japanese whaling: Its examination of early modern maritime history also fills a critical gap within the growing body of scholarship on Japan's environmental history.

Arch's aim of examining early modern maritime history as environmental history is evident from the first chapter: "A Whale's-eye View of Japan." This unexpected perspective considers the natural history of whales as subjects, rather than as objects, of human exploitation. With the unlikely goal of "reconstructing historical whales' lives near coastal Japan," (27) the chapter speculates on the species, populations, feeding behaviors, and seasonal migration routes of whales around Japan during the Tokugawa period. Defending the familiar argument that whales and whaling bore considerable cultural and economic importance before the sudden collapse of their populations in the mid-nineteenth century, the chapter finds that whales were "a powerful presence" (47) and that whaling was not the isolated, fringe industry it became in modern times.

This point is further explored in Chapter Two, which presents evidence that whaling and overfishing upset a delicate ecological balance. Here Arch excavates Tokugawa whaling practices, explaining how coastal operations caught, killed, and processed their quarry. The adoption of net

whaling in the late seventeenth century did more than hurt whale populations, ultimately jeopardizing the industry in some locales: It disrupted the marine ecosystem. Some species migrating north and south along both Japanese coasts learned to avoid local whalers, and in other cases, overfishing also caused whales to change their movements.

Chapter Three examines the environmental and economic history of marine products. In this impressively comprehensive reconstruction of the industry's economic challenges, players, and payouts, Arch refutes claims that early modern whaling was merely a subsistence activity that provided for local communities alone. It was a lucrative national industry that included a multitude of whale-based products, including agricultural commodities like pesticides and fertilizers. People became dependent on marine resources, Arch suggests, which became integral to the expansion and even the protoindustrialization of Japan's early modern economy.

The book's final two chapters turn to discussion of whales and whaling within early modern Japanese intellectual and religious history. Chapter Four discusses how various forms of print media disseminated information about whales, ultimately serving to "bring whales ashore figuratively" (110). Chapter Five examines the Buddhist memorials, commemorations, graves, death registers, and posthumous naming of whales through which the sacrificial animals achieved a near metaphysical parity with humans. But Arch rejects claims that such rituals represent any Japanese love of nature or affective connection to the animals. Rather, whalers used them to assuage their guilt and placate whales' angry spirits.

Richly documented with local primary sources, the book identifies various misunderstandings about whales and whaling, some propagated by proponents of the industry. One is the presumed continuities in not only the culture of whaling in Japan, but also in the nature of people's relationships with whales, whaling, and the natural environment. These alleged continuities discount important ruptures in whale populations, hunting practices, and maritime ecosystems. A second myth is that the Japanese practiced subsistence whaling that was localized, economically marginal, sustainable, and informed by a deep emotional connection to whales. Such claims falsely depict whaling as a benevolent cultural practice with minimal ecological effects. Arch rejects traditional whaling as ecologically benevolent, arguing that early modern whalers helped obliterate whale populations, thereby playing a significant role in eradicating their own industry.

Though Arch is no fan of contemporary pro-whaling interests she is careful to avoid side-taking. Some of her conclusions even affirm certain pro-whaling positions. Her discussion of whale memorials, for example, finds that whales were a treasured component of Japan's cultural heritage. She also concludes that globalization has caused modern Japanese to forget their close cultural, economic, and spiritual connection to their maritime environment, an argument that again echoes pro-whaling rhetoric.

Bringing Whales Ashore is authoritative, well-crafted, but occasionally redundant, especially in its concluding chapter. At times it is also needlessly insistent about the uniqueness and importance of whaling in early modern Japan, claiming, for example, that "there was no clear dividing line between the ocean's inhabitants and the land's," (22) and "no other subject seems to have drawn quite so many different perspectives together as whales" (118). The author's point is that whales were keystone creatures in Tokugawa thought, economics, and culture, not the marginal creatures they are today. Such generalizing assertions are unnecessary, for the topic holds interest without them. And, if it is true that the whaling industry "was one of the largest and most interconnected specialized fisheries" and played "a major role in the Tokugawa economy," (77) the reader wonders why it has not figured more prominently in standard economic histories. One concludes that whales and whaling were indispensable to the Tokugawa economy and culture in specific contexts only.

In sum, Arch's fascinating study is more than an interdisciplinary maritime history. In addition to the issues already mentioned, it uses whales to reflect on broader aspects of early modern Japan: e.g., the development of communication and information networks; changing conceptualizations of the maritime environment; Buddhist and Shinto perspectives on meat-eating; and how Japanese people's gradual familiarity and connection to whales yielded an attraction to Western natural history that ultimately displaced faith in Chinese medical theory. Whales and whaling, here, wed the historical to the contemporary, enhancing knowledge of Japanese history while historicizing contemporary controversies, including the invented tradition of Japanese as nature-loving people spiritually connected to their natural world.

Emily T. Metzgar, *The JET Program and the U.S. – Japan Relationship: Goodwill Goldmine*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017. 199 pp. ISBN 978-1-4985-2603-6, \$90.00.

Reviewed by Gabriela Izaguirre

Founded in 1987, the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program is a grassroots movement that promotes internationalization through English language instruction in Japan's elementary, middle, and high schools. Over 60,000 participants have lived and worked in Japan, which has produced "a generation of willing interpreters and receivers." Although the JET Program is frequently criticized for its English Language education, or lack thereof, "the remarkable success it has had in public diplomacy program[s]" is considered its most important contribution (63–64).

In *The JET Program and the U.S. – Japan Relationship: Goodwill Goldmine*, Emily T. Metzgar argues that the JET Program is regarded, studied, and criticized for its efforts to improve English language education in Japan, and that this regard often clouds the results of improved opinions of Japan by young, college-educated people from around the world. Moreover, she argues that the cynicism of current participants and alumni often showcases the program as well-meaning but misguided in its efforts for foreign language education (8). Following the book's introduction, Metzgar discusses the theory-based framework of public diplomacy through public relations. By using the so-called Excellence Theory, Metzgar argues that the JET Program's public relations makes the organization successful and that public relations should be included as "a conscious part of organizational strategy" (23).

Metzgar also discusses Relationship Management Theory, which emphasizes mutuality. She also cites that "public diplomacy exposes foreign publics to a wide range of views among member[s] of the sponsoring country's population, not just the host government" (24). Nevertheless, as noted in various instances, the Japanese government has faltered with maintaining relations with alumni throughout the 30 years of the program's existence.

The third chapter shifts from a theory-based analysis and discusses the Japanese expertise in soft power. Through the lingering bitterness of World War II, Japan's passive approach to public diplomacy via soft power has established global cooperation and collaboration. Metzgar references the

appeal of traditional arts, such as *kabuki*, *ikebana*, and the tea ceremony. However, the “Cool Japan” movement, which has been in the forefront of the country’s soft power efforts in recent years, resulted in the increase of the public diplomacy budget by \$470 million. Furthermore, Metzgar mentions other organizations and resources, such as Japan House, the Japan Foundation, the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test, NHK World, and the Abe Fellowship Program. U.S.–Japan relations is also a source of soft power since Japan targets the United States in its diplomatic efforts. The push for soft power via the 2020 Olympics has also led to an increase in JET Program participants (64).

In the fourth chapter, Metzgar details the history of the JET Program and its establishment by various Japanese ministries: the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), and a pseudo-governmental agency, the Council of Local Authorities of International Relations (CLAIR). Through outreach to the nineteen alumni associations throughout the United States, Metzgar gathered data from 572 JET alumni in order to gain insight into their untapped population. In the results, she noted that 86% of the respondents were Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) and over 42% stayed for at least two years.

An interesting observation was that most alumni had international interest before participating in the JET Program and more than half had studied Japanese before applying. Additionally, more than half completed a graduate or professional degree after their stay in Japan. As a result, more than 94% of respondents stated that the participation in the program had been valuable and over 85% reported, that the experience was life changing. Nevertheless, only 59% reported that the experience had any relevance to their professional careers, with another 25% stating that the experience generated full-time employment after the program. Therefore, the JET Program has little or no direct relevance to future careers. Metzgar also gathered data on individual experiences, which showed that the frustrations of teaching English did not dampen the participant’s interest in the country or their enthusiasm for Japan (93). The study also showed that 95 percent of alumni believe that it is important to correct misconceptions and stereotypes about Japan or its people. Moreover, when explaining Japan, the participants do not view it with “rose-colored glasses” (94).

Chapter 6 discussed the development of the nineteen chapters of the JET Alumni Association (JETAA) across the United States. Most chapters

are near consulates or the Japanese Embassy located in Washington D.C., but other American cities without a consulate or Japanese presence have also established JETAA chapters. These chapters volunteer at local events, raise money for causes, such as the Tohoku Crisis, and participate in send-off and welcome-back receptions for new recruits and alumni. Nevertheless, Metzgar highlights that the alumni eventually begin to dwindle from the JETAA community due to family or career obligations, and that CLAIR and MOFA acknowledged that it has not put forth effort in maintaining contact with alumni after their return home. Moreover, the individual alumni associations do not keep records of the alumni once they fade from the JETAA community. Metzgar emphasizes that with “more than 60,000 alumni over its three-decade history...little information is available about where alumni are today, how they feel about Japan and what effect they think their participation in JET had on their lives overall” (114). Metzgar claims that “Japan has been unable to secure what is...the greatest potential benefit generated by [a] large-scale program: ongoing relationship with an extended community of college educated professionals” (123).

In *The JET Program and the U.S. – Japan Relationship: Goodwill Goldmine*, Emily T. Metzgar highlights the JET Program as an important tool for public diplomacy through public relations and encourages the Japanese government to research ways to utilize its growing alumni community. As alumni of the JET Program (Okinawa; 2013–2015) and a member of the JETAA in Florida, I identify with the results and conclusions of the data analysis and submitting this book review serves to display my support, interest, and enthusiasm in Japan.

Yoneyuki Sugita, *Japan's Shifting Status in the World and the Development of Japan's Medical Insurance Systems*. Singapore: Springer, 2019. 247 pp. ISBN: 978-981-13-1659-3. €84.16.

Reviewed by Carmen E. Schmidt

Professor Yoneyuki Sugita's book on the development of the Japanese health insurance system makes a unique contribution to the field of medical sociology because it considers Japan's changing status in international society in formulating policies within the health insurance system. Previous studies have focused on the politics of interest groups, particularly the role of government or elites in general, without considering the influence of the international environment on public policy.

Stakeholder policy is an indisputable factor in explaining how important legal institutions and systems have emerged. Negotiations between bureaucrats and large interest groups, such as the Japan Medical Association, continue to have a major impact on public policy. Studies of the political decision-making process have shown the influence of interest groups. In the many government advisory councils where the political interests of politicians, bureaucracy and interest groups are coordinated differently, big businesses and large professional associations play the most important role in deciding public policy. However, although specific interest groups act based on their own rational judgments, they are constrained by their external environment.

The role of the government and elites in the decision-making process is also discussed. Japan's health policy has traditionally been aimed at ensuring equality and has emphasized the expansion of insurance rather than promoting the quality of treatment. The scientists are, however, undecided about the role of the government. To what extent can we speak of the continuity of pre-war politics, and to what extent is it a product of the expansion of the social security system to include liberal democratic ideals? This book attempts to answer this question by analyzing primary documents on the role of the Japanese government in the development of Japan's health insurance system.

Another important issue that scholars have discussed is the role of the Second World War, namely the question of continuity or discontinuity in Japanese politics. This debate is a hot topic not only within medical sociology, more precisely the Japanese insurance program, but also in politics and sociology in general. On the one hand, the surrender of Japan in

World War II and the subsequent occupation by the Allies in the form of U.S. troops meant a radical democratic change from pre-war ultranationalism in Japanese politics as well as the radical reorganization of politics and society. On the other hand, elite studies have pointed to more continuity than changes in the Japanese political sphere. The same discussion is taking place in medical sociology with no end to date. However, the author attempts to overcome these approaches and discussions by introducing a new perspective – by looking at the international influence on national politics – rather than focusing on the relationship between national politics and national influences.

As far as methodology is concerned, it should be noted that the study is based on a detailed empirical analysis of the primary (official) documents and thus empirically based facts. The author focuses on the symbiotic relationship between Japan's changing status in the world and the development of the Japanese health insurance program. As can be seen from the debate on continuity and discontinuity, the Second World War marks a turning point in Japanese history. By analyzing major turning points and notable policies about the isolation of and participation in international society, the author clearly shows the link between Japan's international status and main policy outcomes.

Altogether, the author identifies four important turning points and associated political changes: First, the 1920s marked the first time in modern Japanese history that Japan was integrated into international society as a member of the Western-led world. During this period, the first health care system was established as part of the government's modernization efforts. Second, the late 1930s marked the next turning point when Japan became increasingly isolated from international society following its aggression against China and Manchuria. Domestically, the liberal state was replaced by a strongly centralized state. During this, the revision of the health care system in 1942 changed it considerably. Under rigid central planning, the medical system was expanded to maintain social peace. The third turning point was at the end of the Second World War when Japan was still isolated from the international community but under the auspices of the United States. This time, a more idealistic health insurance system was created. Fourthly, after the introduction of the Dodge Line in 1948, Japan returned to the international community. Within the framework of a balanced budgetary policy, the result was a departure from an idealistic social security policy.

In contrast to other scientists, the author shows that the embedding in the international environment had a significant influence on the concrete shaping of public policy. The most significant finding is that there is a symbiotic relationship between Japan's changing international environment and the development of the health insurance program. It also questions the importance of the Second World War as an essential turning point in addition to the debate about continuity and discontinuity, one of the bigger arguments put forward so far.

Since health insurance is only one of many policy fields, the future investigation of the path dependency of historical milestone with regard to the isolation of or participation in international society, and certain policies may prove to be an interesting field of investigation in policy field analysis. Thus, this book not only offers the reader a new perspective on the shaping of the health insurance policy in Japan, but also provides the scholar with a new historical framework for analysis. While considering the debate on the Japanese Constitution, Article 9, known as the "peace article," renounces war and prohibits Japan from maintaining an army as designed by the U.S. occupying forces. This framework can prove to be a fruitful instrument. For example, its application would suggest that the "idealistic" nature of the constitution adopted on May 3, 1947 should be linked to Japan's position in the international community. It could also be used to analyze its historical dimension, the "previous constitutions," and the current debate on the abolition of Article 9.

The Meiji Constitution of 1878, therefore, could be interpreted as a part of Japan's modernization efforts and the pressure of the Western world on Japan to become a fully accepted member among the modern countries. Following that, the *Kokutai no hongi* or the Cardinal Principles of Japanese National Entity in 1937, would be a transition from the liberal to the ultra-nationalist state in the wake of Japan's increasing isolation through its aggression against China and Manchuria. Given this short attempt of analysis, the application of this model to the development of other national policies could lead to new perspectives on the study of the formation of national decision-making processes.

Today, it is noted that globalization and international dependence play a decisive role in the shaping of national politics. Most scholars hereby point to the limitation of national decisions on public policies in the second modernity, as it can be seen in the member states of the European Union. Sugita shows, however, that domestic policy issues have never been exclusive of a domestic nature and that relations with the outside world

have always been of the utmost importance in shaping national public policy.

Overall, this book is an important contribution to the field of public policy and good governance as well as international relations and history. It will appeal to scholars and students in the fields of comparative public policy and governance, history, international relations, medical and health sociology, and Japanese studies. As evidenced in many universities, the sociology of medicine and health has gained importance in the social sciences and related disciplines with newly founded study modules and graduate courses underlying the significance of research in this field.