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Japan's rapid industrial development and economic growth in the decades after World War II brought dramatic environmental damage. Japan diverges from the typical story of industrial democracies, however, in the scale and speed with which it was able to reduce air and water pollution, despite the absence of national environmental lobbying groups. As local protest movements grew more vocal in the early 1970s (though they failed to coalesce into effective national lobbying organizations), the Japanese government moved, after some resistance, to regulate industrial pollution.

In *Environmental Politics in Japan*, Jeffrey Broadbent shows, through a detailed examination of the Japanese political process and its environmental policy outcomes, how social, cultural, and political-economic factors interacted to bring about environmental degradation and eventual partial restoration. Broadbent's case study of heavy-industry growth and environmental protest in rural Japan illustrates how pro-growth and pro-environment coalitions mobilized and struggled to affect government policy at all levels in Japan. His analysis explains why, in the face of that pressure, the Japanese government succeeded in reducing pollution, but failed at solving other important environmental problems, such as dense urbanization and industrial concentration. Drawing on his study, Broadbent presents the first integrated, empirical critique and reconstruction of leading theories on the state, protest movements, the political process, and environmental problems. In so doing, he reforms our understanding of Japanese society and the general relationship between society and the natural environment.

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Advance praise for *Environmental Politics in Japan*

“Bringing to bear an impressive array of social science theories, Jeffrey Broadbent gives us the most comprehensive work to date on how Japan, a densely populated country that was a ‘polluter’s paradise’ until the 1960s, achieved one of the world’s most dramatic environmental turnarounds. Political scientists, sociologists, and students of Japan will find a wealth of material here for puzzling over solutions to a central policy challenge at all levels of development in nations today: how to find the right mix between economic growth and environmental protection. The author shows how culture, protest, and elite politics intermeshed in Japan’s quest for its own answer.”

– Susan J. Pharr, *Harvard University*

“This is a first-class book that sets aright the misperception that Japanese politics and social protest cannot be understood from a synthesized class and political process viewpoint. It shows how class theory and resource mobilization arguments can be synthesized and that protest is an important source of political change in comparative context.”

– J. Craig Jenkins, *The Ohio State University*

“By bringing his own intense involvement in Japanese culture to bear skillfully and reflectively on issues of great general importance, Jeffrey Broadbent has served everyone who wants to know about environmental politics, the shaping of popular struggles by state structure, and the character of Japanese local life. He writes with analytical passion.”

– Charles Tilly, *Columbia University*

“Through his superb Japanese language ability and detailed field work, Jeffrey Broadbent has achieved the highest level of Japanese studies, on a par with Western sociologists such as Ronald P. Dore and Ezra Vogel. This book offers a stimulating comparative and theoretical analysis of political power in ACID (advanced, capitalist, industrialized democratic) societies including Japan.”

– Joji Watanuki, *Sofia University*

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# Environmental Politics in Japan

Networks of Power and Protest

**JEFFREY BROADBENT**

*University of Minnesota*



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*To my son and daughter, Eben and Leafye,  
and to all the other children  
and young people of the world,  
that they may teach us how to  
tread lightly on Mother Earth.*

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## *Preface*

All societies confront a mounting dilemma: how to continue economic growth or some other way of improving the quality of life, and yet minimize or reverse its negative effects on an already severely deteriorating environment. We depend on and aspire to the benefits of economic growth. And yet in pursuit of growth, we extract and exhaust resources and damage our natural environment. This damage extends to other species, and eventually to humans, as well as to the integrity of the global ecological system as a whole. Many natural scientific studies indicate that increasing environmental degradation is an objective fact; no amount of human denial can make it go away. This situation presents humanity with the Growth/Environment (GE) dilemma: If we grow jobs and profits, it seems, we further destroy the environment. But if we protect the environment, we slow down the economic growth that makes increasing profits and jobs possible, thereby threatening both. A middle way between these two extremes may exist, but it is proving hard to find.

The GE dilemma plagues most societies – highly industrialized or just developing. We are all caught on the horns of this dilemma, as time will make increasingly apparent. How can we resolve it? How can we garner the benefits of growth without paying its environmental costs? Technological optimists think new technology will fix it for us. But if not, we need to find some way to fine tune our global societal productive and eliminative systems to fit within the limits of “Spaceship Earth,” while still providing for the crew members. The solution to this problem may require new arrangements and agreements among all concerned, and draw on the work of social scientists.

The GE dilemma promises no simple solution. It is an issue fraught with tension, passion, and conflict, a human product, to be sure, but a very complex one, not easily changed in direction and effect. To understand the forces in society that have created, and can therefore change, this dilemma, we have to study closely how it has come about. We need to consider both its genesis and its exodus, the conditions of its appearance and its transformation. To do this, we

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need to use detailed studies of cases of pollution reduction and other environmental successes to improve our general understanding and our ability to model and theorize the subject. Even very limited success stories may help us learn how to better coexist with our planetary ecology.

With this aim in mind, I chose to study Japan. Japan promised to be a particularly useful case for addressing all of these questions because of the intensity of its GE dilemma. Within one small and – from the natural resource point of view – unlikely country in the decades after World War Two, Japan produced an unexpected series of so-called “miracles” and debacles: the economic miracle, the pollution debacle, the pollution miracle, and the urban debacle. Suffice it to note here that in both directions – miraculous and tragic – Japan far outperformed its U.S. and European counterparts. The miracles were not the product of saintly visitation, nor were the debacles attributable to the devil. They resulted from a great deal of hard work and disciplined social organization that sometimes sacrificed too much.

While modern Japan’s political and economic institutions closely resemble (and often came from) Western models, its culture and social relations have deep East Asian roots. It would be reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the sociocultural differences between Japan and the other advanced capitalist industrial democratic (ACID) societies, which all have Anglo-European roots, may have had a great deal to do with the unexpected rapid-fire sequence of Japan’s miracles and debacles. Some scholars readily resort to sociocultural explanations, while others reject them vigorously. Perhaps the better task is to see how, to arrive at a satisfactory explanation of these issues, we have to mix and merge sociocultural and political-economic factors.

Questions such as these set the stage for my research project. In the late 1970s, I was reading about these issues behind the white marble facade of William James Hall at Harvard University. To me, as a graduate student in sociology, Japan’s miracles and debacles posed many puzzling questions about conventional explanations of macro-societal behavior. Had some cultural ethic or belief, I wondered, first propelled the national government or business elites into environmentally destructive forms of growth, and then led them to graciously bequeath the pollution miracle to the people? Marx would not have agreed with such an explanation, but Weber or Durkheim might have. Or had it been a contest of opposed material interests, the government or business elites pursuing glory or wealth, and the victimized citizens finally forcing the elites into redressing the accumulated pollution problems – through elections or the pressure of protest movements? What did Japan’s pollution debacles and miracles imply about how policies change, about the relationship between state and

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society, in the ACID societies? So ran my thesis-seeking cogitations while in the ivory tower of academia.

My own driving interests in this topic started much earlier, though. Having come from a working-class and Quaker background, I participated vigorously in the events and movements of the 1960s. Bemused by these conflicts, in the late 1960s, I sought the contemplative retreat of a Buddhist monastery. In the middle of California's Ventana Primitive Area at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, I practiced *zazen* (sitting meditation) under the guidance of Zen Master Suzuki Shunryu. Without realizing it, I also imbibed values central to Japanese culture. After a year or so of meditating, building rock walls, and hiking the wilderness, I emerged with a new sense of direction – pursuit of an undergraduate major in Buddhist Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. This program led to the study of Japanese at the International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan (1971–1972). Upon my return to UC, Robert Bellah showed me an intellectual discipline able to explain how culture and political-economy interact – the Weberian project within the discipline of sociology. My curiosity piqued, I used an M.A. degree in Regional Studies-East Asia at Harvard University to segue into Harvard's Ph.D. program in sociology. The subject of environmental movements and politics in Japan posed interesting questions about the interaction of culture and political-economy, eventuating in my research and this book.

As my activist background betrays, I approach the subject with deep concerns about environmental deterioration. But I also want a middle-class standard of living. In other words, I embody the GE dilemma. I am therefore sympathetic to both sides of it – pro-growth and pro-environment. Furthermore, I am a social scientist, which means I try to keep my personal values from biasing my analysis. In this book, I pursue an objective understanding of causality based on the analysis of accurate information. I hope that this research can contribute to our collective consideration of these important issues, whatever our individual interests.

To reduce bias, I have adopted a narrative style of presentation, punctuated by occasional interpretation. The narrative relies on quotations from actors on all sides of the issues as well as on statistical and other data. My own gloss and interpretation come mainly in the conclusion section of each chapter. I hope that this level of detail and the distinction between actors' and author's voices will lead readers to form their own conclusions, and to argue with mine if they wish.

I was fortunate to secure funding for the project with a Fulbright Fellowship. Taking my family with me to the field, I moved to the neighborhood of Takeshita in Oita prefecture, Japan, about five miles downwind from a big new industrial

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complex, and on the coast slated for another industrial complex. Oita prefecture was a good place to study the GE dilemma and Japan's response to it. In the post-war years, Oita had grown in tandem with Japan, and had suffered much of the same joyful prosperity and sorrowful pollution. After about fifteen months in Takeshita, we moved to the mountain farming village of Obasama, a few miles inland from Oita City, for another fifteen months.

In 1978, when I moved to Oita, an active struggle between the pro-growth and the pro-environment forces was still underway. I had hoped to finish my research in Oita and move on to another, contrasting site for the second half of our stay. Instead, we ended up staying in Oita for a total of two and a half years (1978–1981). The complexity and subtlety of life and politics there drew me in deeper and deeper. Even two and a half years proved too short a time. On my return to Cambridge, I hoped to finish the thesis in six months, but it took an extra year. Soon after graduation, I received a three-year post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan, and confidently predicted the book would be finished by the end of the first year. Here I am, however, fourteen years later, typing the final version. Reality is messy.

I have designed the book in a narrative but modular fashion. The reader interested in a particular theoretical issue can turn directly to the relevant chapter. Chapter 1 sets up the basic questions of the study, the reasons for the mini-“pollution miracle” that took place inside Japan's more well-known economic miracles and pollution debacles. Chapter 2 reviews rural Oita prefecture's chase for prosperity through industrialization and its somewhat disappointing outcomes, within the theory of regional industrial growth. Chapter 3 analyzes the effect of Japan's wave of pollution protest, which peaked in the early 1970s, on the 1970 “Pollution Diet” and the fourteen strict pollution control laws it passed. Chapters 4 and 5 delve into the mobilization of protests against pollution in Oita prefecture – a local example of this national wave of protest – and uses these cases to think about the general theory of movement mobilization. Chapter 6 turns to the issue of local social control and patron-client political machines, a widespread phenomenon strongly evident in Japan. Chapter 7 examines questions about the dynamics of struggle between protest movements and the local authorities. In this case, the movements exacted a significant compromise, that the local government would meet Three Conditions – consensus, harmony, and an environmental impact assessment – before building more industry. Chapters 8 and 9 trace the problem of implementation – how local government met these conditions in letter but not in spirit. Chapter 9 also puts Japan's environmental politics in international perspective. The concluding Chapter 10 summarizes the findings and discusses their significance for broader theoretical questions about the causes and cures of environmental problems.

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My research efforts were only possible through gracious and patient help and guidance from many teachers, mentors, citizens of Japan, and financial and educational institutions. Robert Bellah, Theda Skocpol, George Homans, Schmucl Eisenstadt, Jeffrey Paige, and Charles Tilly provided me with basic, if divergent, theoretical coordinates. Ezra Vogel, the chair of my Ph.D. thesis committee, as well as Robert Bellah, George DeVos, Tsurumi Kazuko, John Pelzel, Watanuki Joji, John Campbell, Ejima Shusaku, and Robert Cole guided me in East Asian studies. Colleagues such as Kabashima Ikuo, Michael Reich, David Riesman, and Edwin O. Reischauer provided important introductions to key people in Japan. The late Professor Matsubara Haruo generously hosted my affiliation with Tokyo University and provided much valuable guidance. The following people provided very helpful comments on parts or the whole of drafts of the book or related papers: Charles Tilly, Martin King Whyte, Jeffrey Paige, Michael Schwartz, Jeylan Mortimer, Ron Aminzade, Ezra Vogel, Robert Bellah, Margaret McKean, Allan Schnaiberg, Riley Dunlap, Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, David Knoke, Joe Galasckiewicz, Harvey Molotch, Karen Feinberg, Gretchen Priest, David Hall, Uygur Ozesmi. I deeply thank them all for their generous instruction, advice, help, and encouragement. The remaining flaws in the work are entirely of my own making.

In addition, I owe profound gratitude to the many residents of Japan – in Oita, Tokyo, and other places – who let me into their lives, educated me about their values, society, and politics, and enlightened me on its hopes and struggles over growth and the environment. Chief among them are Governor Hiramatsu Morihiko, Mayor Sato Masumi, Fujii Norihisa, Inao Toru, Rep. Sato Bunsei, Hoshino Shinyasu, and the Nakaya Kentaro family. Many others in Oita and throughout Japan contributed in innumerable ways. I apologize to them for the time I took from their busy lives, and thank them profoundly for their many kindnesses.

Also, I wish to thank my (then) wife Gretchen Priest and our two children, Eben and Leafye, for their part in the field work. Gretchen and the kids opened my eyes to aspects of Japan that I never would have seen otherwise. Gretchen made friends with local people and joined in their activities in ways I never would have. For instance, she borrowed empty rice fields and planted rice the old way, by hand, growing and harvesting enough rice to feed our family. She also studied the traditional Shinto festival dances performed in our village, and joined in cultural activities and environmental activism at a local Buddhist temple. These activities opened opportunities for participation in community life.

Eben and Leafye sat on the laps of our neighbors and landlords, the Iizukas and later the Abes, watching television and eating snacks. The kids were aged



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one and three when we arrived in Japan. They were blond moptops whom the neighbors in Takeshita and Obasama treasured, with their typical affection for children. Within a year, they came to consider Japanese their native language. We entered them into the Hibari kindergarten, where they became increasingly fluent. Even when home from kindergarten, they played and conversed with each other in Japanese, not English. On our return to the United States after those years, when Gretchen ushered Leafye into the crowded Los Angeles airport, five-year old Leafye exclaimed in surprise, “Mama, they’re all foreigners (*gaijin bakkashi desu*)!”

I also wish to thank my present wife, Jeylan Mortimer, for the steady emotional support and help in so many other ways that really made the completion of this book possible. Several times, over my recent years with Jeylan, I despaired of ever telling a coherent story and drawing a reasonable theoretical conclusion out of my mass of field experiences and notes. She stood by me with great patience and firm encouragement, and really was the spiritual midwife of this book’s birth.

This research would have been impossible without the generous financial support of the Fulbright Predoctoral Fellowship (1978–80) and the Japan Institute of Harvard University (1980–81). I completed follow-up interviews while on another research project in Japan from 1988 to 1990, supported by the JUSEC (Japan-U.S. Exchange Commission) Fulbright, the Fulbright-Hays Fellowship, and the National Science Foundation. To all these sources of institutional support and their officers and staff, I extend my heartfelt gratitude and my hope that the product proves worthy of the investment.