

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-80942-9 - Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins
of Japanese Culture
Eiko Ikegami
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Bonds of Civility

Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture

In this path-breaking book, Eiko Ikegami uncovers a complex history of social life in which aesthetic images become central to Japan's cultural identities. Combining sociological insights on organizations with prodigious scholarship on cultural history, this book explores such wide-ranging topics as the central role of networks in performing arts, tea ceremony and *haiku*, the politics of *kimono* aesthetics, the rise of commercial publishing, the popularization of etiquette and manners, the vogue of androgyny in *kabuki* performance, and the rise of tacit modes of communication.

Eiko Ikegami is Professor of Sociology at the New School for Social Research. She is the author of *Taming of the Samurai*.

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“[This book] is as brilliant a description of the stratification of Japanese culture as *Bourdieu’s Distinction* is of French culture . . . Ikegami’s work opens up the social history of Japanese culture in the way that the past two generations of social historians from Elias to Darnton have done for European culture . . . This is as fine a work as we have for any part of the world on the long-term shaping of culture, and on the political consequences of cultural institutions.”

– Randall Collins, University of Pennsylvania

“In a world in which the social order was theoretically rigid, Ikegami demonstrates how people in medieval and early modern Japan carved out spheres through a variety of aesthetic associations to bring ‘beauty’ into their lives. Using sociological and anthropological tools and with the extraordinary training of a historian, Ikegami brings this world to life.”

– Joshua Fogel, University of California, Santa Barbara

“In this fascinating and illuminating study of the politics of civility in Japan, Eiko Ikegami discusses the way that politeness and politics are inseparable . . . [S]he shows persuasively that what in Western cultures is normally separated, like art and politics, has been, and is, closely interwoven in Japan. It is an amazing society that rises before her audience’s eyes, and, since Ikegami presents this astonishing story with enviable lucidity, her book is as accessible to the reader innocent in the ways of Japan as it is to the specialist.”

– Peter Gay, Yale University

“Eiko Ikegami has made excellent use of her sociological insights and her command over Japanese history to present a highly original interpretation of Japanese society. This is an important contribution in exploring the interrelations between culture and politics in one of the most intriguing civilizations in the world.”

– Amartya Sen, Harvard University

“Ikegami shows how the brilliant colorings of Japanese history were mobilized in and through what she calls ‘aesthetic publics,’ each reflecting a dynamic interplay among social networks that elicit, even as they shape, tacit cultural practices. She induces this highly original vision from a dazzling array of evidence across centuries. A fresh and powerful mode of network theorizing.”

– Harrison White, Columbia University

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Mark Granovetter, editor

The series Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences presents approaches that explain social behavior and institutions by reference to relations among such concrete entities as persons and organizations. This contrasts with at least four other popular strategies: (a) reductionist attempts to explain by a focus on individuals alone; (b) explanations stressing the causal primacy of such abstract concepts as ideas, values, mental harmonies, and cognitive maps (thus, “structuralism” on the Continent should be distinguished from structural analysis in the present sense); (c) technological and material determination; (d) explanation using “variables” as the main analytic concepts (as in the “structural equation” models that dominated much of the sociology of the 1970s), where structure is that connecting variables rather than actual social entities.

The social network approach is an important example of the strategy of structural analysis; the series also draws on social science theory and research that is not framed explicitly in network terms but stresses the importance of relations rather than the atomization of reduction or the determination of ideas, technology, or material conditions. Though the structural perspective has become extremely popular and influential in all the social sciences, it does not have a coherent identity, and no series yet pulls together such work under a single rubric. By bringing the achievements of structurally oriented scholars to a wider public, the Structural Analysis series hopes to encourage the use of this very fruitful approach.

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For my mother, Kiyoko Ikegami

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