Collective Decision Making in Rural Japan.

Review Author[s]:
William W. Kelly

The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Nov., 1985), 154-155.

Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0021-9118%28198511%2945%3A1%3C154%3ACDMIRJ%3E2.0.CO%3B2-E

The Journal of Asian Studies is currently published by Association for Asian Studies.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at http://www.jstor.org/journals/afas.html.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

http://www.jstor.org/
Mon Jul 12 13:12:06 2004

us hope that other scholars will now join in the discussion and that LaFleur will remain at the forefront of their numbers.

THOMAS HARPER
Australian National University

Collective Decision Making in Rural Japan. By ROBERT C. MARSHALL. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Center for Japanese Studies, 1984. xiii, 178 pp. Figures, Tables, Notes, Bibliography. $7 (paper).

In the last decade, the "group model" of Japanese social behavior has been much maligned—indeed, some believe, thoroughly discredited. Recent scholarship still finds that model in need of reformulation, but also suggests much of this criticism has been misdirected. Robert C. Marshall's work is an example of such new studies. Although I am uneasy about his claims that exchange theory not only represents but also explains hamlet decision making, I regard his book as a provocative and welcome attempt to rethink rigorously a pervasive social fact of the Japanese countryside—the strength of commitment to a local social group, the hamlet, that is not always defined by administrative fiat or even residential contiguity.

In the opening chapter, Marshall establishes his basic argument: decision making in rural Japan is consensual, but the reasons for this phenomenon lie in the emergent properties of the decision-making process itself and not in ingrained cultural predispositions. Typically, the hamlet serves as a frame for "productive exchange" among its member households through "mutual investment," and this conceptualization of the hamlet can account for both cooperation and competition and unanimity and division. Marshall proceeds to explicate the theoretical underpinnings of this view of the hamlet by drawing on several concepts of social exchange: the paradox of price, that is, recognition that agreement on a rate of exchange does not itself ensure satisfactory completion of the exchange; the principle of contingent loss—a guard against reneging or deceiving by denying an offending party the right to participate in future exchanges; and the mechanism of mutual investment—a requirement that everyone commit some resource to an enterprise as a further guard against deception and as a way of rendering the exchange productive. He uses these concepts to generate nine specific hypotheses about the course of collective decision making: for example, that overt advocacy will be less likely than overt opposition, that hamlet households will not allow positions and outcomes in one decision to influence subsequent issues, and that member households will remain committed to consensus over time whether or not a particular decision is divided or unanimous.

The core of the book is a test of these hypotheses in seven cases of decision making culled from the author's three years of residence in Nohara, a hamlet located in a side valley of the Nobi Plain in central Japan. Nohara is one of six hamlets that together now form one of several wards of a small city. These six hamlets are not territorially discrete, but Nohara's thirty-five member households have been relatively stable over time because, Marshall argues, they continue to be willing to transact with one another. Given his cases, these current transactions are now primarily debates about whether and how to purchase certain items for general hamlet benefit and use. The cases Marshall analyzes include, for example, the disagreements of the hamlet's baseball team over jointly purchasing special equipment and the debates of hamlet residents about buying a rice polisher, a fire pump, and items for the assembly hall. Other analyses concern hamlet arrangements for access to city water and a neighboring hamlet's attempts to

make its *obon* dance an occasion for demonstrating hamlet exclusivity. Marshall was a careful observer, a persistent questioner, and, when his own well-intentioned efforts to offer English classes stirred up controversy, a fieldworker honest enough to add that event to his set of decision-making cases.

Marshall finds that his hypotheses are largely sustained by the seven cases, and, in his final two chapters, he assays the general significance of such a "mutual investment" model of collective decision making. Because everyone must contribute to the process to benefit, and everyone who contributes does benefit at least minimally, the process encourages production and stable commitment over time. It also puts a premium on information gathering and wide participation and consultation, qualities of decision making that others have observed in large organizations in contemporary Japan and that Marshall would trace to the experience and analytical features of hamlet decision making.

I confess to bringing to this book some prior suspicions about the utility of the social exchange theory on which it rests. Here as elsewhere, stress on the negotiating aspects of transaction slights the meaningful process by which issues become relevant issues and items become valued resources for transaction. A sole concern with decision making and a model that insists that the form of decision making emerges from the exchange process itself offer only a limited perspective on the changing relations among Nohara households. Given his extended fieldwork, it would be valuable if Marshall were to complement this study with a fuller ethnography of the valley. This study would contribute both to our appreciation of the hamlet as one arena of interaction among several and to our understanding of the cultural and institutional contexts which frame the decisions and exchanges that Marshall has so rigorously modeled.

WILLIAM W. KELLY
Yale University

Iconography of the Tale of Genji: Genji Monogatari Ekotoba. By MIYEKO MURASE. New York: John Weatherhill, 1984. xi, 353 pp. Reference Material, Notes, Selected Bibliography, Indexes, Color Plates. $65.

The Tale of Genji has inspired more visual art than any other work of Japanese literature. It was probably first illustrated in Murasaki Shikibu's lifetime, and has since spawned paintings in all possible formats, not to mention designs in textiles, ceramics, and lacquerware. Given the large cast of characters in the novel and the preponderance of indoor settings, it is often difficult to identify a scene in an illustration. The task is made somewhat simpler because over the centuries a standard artistic repertoire evolved. Still, one needs a prodigious memory to hold this repertoire in mind, and there are countless exceptional works or series of paintings.

In response to a need for "a guidebook of *Genji* paintings" and their textual sources, Miyeko Murase offers a translation of *Genji monogatari ekotoba*. A late-sixteenth-century manuscript in the collection of Osaka Women's University, the *Genji monogatari ekotoba* consists of dry descriptions of over 280 scenes from the tale, each followed by a few lines from the text of the novel. In marked divergence from the opinion of Japanese literature scholars, Murase believes that the *Genji monogatari ekotoba* is a painting manual, and that it may have been written by an artist of the Tosa School. In particular, she argues that Tosa Mitsunori (1583–1638) is a likely candidate, as his paintings purportedly have the closest correspondence to the manual directives. To demonstrate this point, *Iconography* is illustrated with 230 *Genji* paintings, using Mitsunori's work