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Making Japanese Citizens: Civil Society and the Mythology of the Shimin in Postwar Japan

Simon Andrew Avenell

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Making Japanese Citizens is an expansive history of the activists, intellectuals, and movements that played a crucial role in shaping civil society and civic thought throughout the broad sweep of Japan's postwar period. Weaving his analysis around the concept of *shimin* (citizen), Simon Avenell traces the development of a new vision of citizenship based on political participation, self-reliance, popular nationalism, and commitment to daily life. He traces civic activism through six phases: the cultural associations of the 1940s and 1950s, the massive U.S.-Japan Security Treaty protests of 1960, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the antipollution and antidevelopment protests of the 1960s and 1970s, movements for local government reform and the rise of new civic groups from the mid-1970s. This rich portrayal of activists and their ideas illuminates questions of democracy, citizenship, and political participation both in contemporary Japan and in other industrialized nations more generally.

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