

**Laura Hein, *Reasonable Men, Powerful Words: Political Culture and Expertise in Twentieth-Century Japan*
Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004**

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This book is a collective biography of the Ōuchi group, Ōuchi Hyōe (1888–1980), and his five students, Arisawa Hiromi, Ōmori Yoshitarō, Wakimura Yoshitarō, Takahashi Masao, and Minobe Ryōkichi. They were prominent public intellectuals and leading economists of the time, who played leading roles in shaping public opinions and economic policy in postwar Japan (except for Ōmori, who died in 1940). Hein's book is a readable biography of these remarkable men, a well-written history of social science, and a very sophisticated piece of Japanese studies. The book is, however, much more. It is about historical memory and relations between expertise and democracy. The book is, therefore, highly relevant to STS scholars. Since the reviewer is a nonspecialist of the subject matter, this review focuses on aspects of this book that seem interesting and useful to STS scholars.

Because of the Ōuchi group's Marxist convictions and their opposition to the war, the presurrender Japanese government jailed all of them. Their experience with presurrender irrationality, which, for example, assumed that Yamato spirit would somehow overcome resource shortages, convinced these economists that science was the best defense against fascism and the true basis for democracy.

Japan's defeat completely discredited the old ruling elite. In the near political vacuum that resulted and with an alliance with the US occupation officials, many of whom were New Deal technocrats, those intellectuals had within their reach prominent public positions. Not trusting the LDP government, however, they declined to take any high-ranking government positions. Instead, these economists mostly occupied prominent academic positions (such as at the University of Tokyo) and trained technocrats, influencing the government through various committees and other advisory functions and shaping Japanese economic literacy through popular books and magazines. In spite of their political opposition to the government, they were able to inject their visions into the national economic policy. In particular,

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Arisawa is considered to be one of the architects of Japan's rapid economic development that began in the 1950s.

When principles of democracy and the science of economics agreed, these men were most compelling. For example, Ōuchi fought against the postwar government's plan of issuing new bills and inducing inflation to pay off the national debt to wartime contractors because such a plan would not only harm the economy but also exploit the poor who would not know how to protect their assets from inflation. Furthermore, the resulting economic instability might lead to fascism as it did in Weimar Germany. The Ōuchi group also emphasized the importance of statistics as the best weapon against the bad government because statistics would make fiscal activities transparent and force the government to be honest. Unlike Michel Foucault, who saw statistics as a tool of the state domination, Ōuchi saw statistics as a means by which citizens could monitor their government.

The Ōuchi group's prescription for the Japanese economy was to remove its "dual structure," a situation in which large enterprises paying high wages coexisted with small low-wage businesses, and transform it to a more equitable one, by eliminating low-wage jobs and creating high-wage ones. At the same time, these economists promoted a new consumer culture, both democratic and economically rational, in which individuals lived in a private nuclear family and spent for their personal benefit.

When, however, political and economic arguments diverged, these economists had greater difficulties. The idea of eliminating low-wage jobs pushed against the interests of low-wage workers. Symbolic was the miners' strike at the Miike coal mine in 1960, triggered by the Mitsui Mine's announcement of layoffs. The logic of economics of energy policies suggested a shift from a coal-centered economy to an oil-based one, hence reducing the number of coal-mining jobs. This caused immediate problems for coalminers, however, whose labor union had very strong political influence over the JSP.

These issues fractured the intellectual alliance and political powerbase of those who hoped for rational economic policies and greater economic equity. Conservatives, as they gained power, exploited such wedge issues. The economists were often forced to choose between economic efficiency and democratic political changes. Sometimes, the LDP government appropriated progressive social policies in piecemeal ways, depriving the opposing JSP of an opportunity to mobilize opposing social forces. Moreover, the science of economics itself alienated the masses because of its academic nature but became more available to elite technocrats.

The economic reforms that Ōuchi and others championed turned out to be successful. The economic life in Japan had become much improved by the 1970s. Consumption culture and individualism based on the private life of the nuclear family became the norm. The issue of poverty lost its force to mobilize the masses, and the antifascist political agenda that Ōuchi and others advocated became obsolete. In the 1980s, Japan's so-called economic miracles amazed the world and engendered the myth of Japanese consensus to prioritize economic development over democratic social changes. In reality, people like the Ōuchi group were dissenters, who sought for democratic social changes against the conservative government. In the process of implementation of rational economic reforms, however, pragmatism induced compromises, negotiation concealed disagreements, and resulting rapid economic

development and changing social and familial life made such political contentions diluted and forgotten.

Thus, Laura Hein tells us a story of how some Japanese social scientists in the postwar era attempted to harmonize their democratic beliefs and their expertise. Initially, they were successful, but eventually, they were confronted with contradictions. Their initial struggles for social changes were forgotten, leaving only their contribution to Japan's economic achievements to the collective memory.

The central concerns of what we today call STS are the issues arising from various paradoxes between scientific expertise and democracy. If advanced scientific expertise requires specialization, and if science affects lives of many people, science can be a problem for a democratic society. Long before our life became heavily dependent on technology, social sciences like economics could already matter a great deal to society. In the immediately postwar Japanese context, however, science and democracy appeared to be one and the same. Yet, the two diverged partially because of their own successes. Hein's book depicts the irony of this historical paradox in the Japanese context after WWII.

One possible problem with this book is that it might exaggerate the roles of the Ōuchi group, especially to those readers who are not familiar with Japanese history. Among the *Rōnōha* Marxists, people in the Ōuchi group were not the only important ones. Japan's high-speed economic growth involved more parties than Arisawa and Takahashi. Popularization of economic thinking might have sources other than Ōuchi and Minobe because the postwar era saw flourishing of literature on the scientification of family lives. Yet, these shortcomings themselves are probably results of the richness and breadth of the materials in this book. The reviewer believes that STS scholars in East Asia have much to learn from this book.