



## Marriage in Changing Japan: Community and Society.

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very direct, perhaps rather too straightforward, links between population size and class conflict and between class position and political allegiance are suggested without elaboration. Gilmore reminds us that his material refers to the twilight of the Franco years, but no reader today can help wondering how the political and administrative changes since 1975 have worked out locally. In the light of the information scrupulously presented here it would certainly be interesting to know how well the overriding consciousness of class identity has fared.

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\*A review article on this book appeared in *Man* (N.S.) 16, 451-62.

HENDRY, JOY. *Marriage in changing Japan: community and society*. 274 pp., tables, diagrams, plans, maps, index. London: Croom Helm, 1981. £14.95

Joy Hendry demonstrates for marriage in twentieth-century Japan what Robert J. Smith (*Ancestor worship in contemporary Japan*, Stanford, 1974) has demonstrated for ancestor worship and Carmen Blacker, for shamanism (*The Catalpa bow*, London, 1975): that the oft-claimed social homogeneity and cultural uniformity of Japan dissolves into problematic variation on any close examination. Hendry presents an impressively detailed ethnographic portrait of marriage practices and beliefs in a single rural community and turns to history and structural analysis, in a somewhat less satisfactory attempt, to account for and encompass the variation she finds.

The community is Kurotsuchi, a settlement of fifty-four households on the fertile Tsukushi Plain on the island of Kyushu. It is rather atypical of contemporary rural settlements for its continued agricultural orientation (a prosperous horticulture allows half of the households to remain full-time agriculturalists) and for a persisting density and vitality of village groups and interhousehold ties (the village even boasts a thriving community bathhouse). Through interviews and inspection of family registers, Hendry was able to trace family composition, succession sequences, origins of in-marriage spouses, destination of out-marriage children, and other features of most Kurotsuchi families for the past seventy years. She effectively illustrates how the popular conceptual dichotomy of 'love marriage' and 'arranged marriage' has masked a broad continuum of marriage initiatives and describes the forms that family investigations, go-betweens, refusals, and acceptances have taken in the village over the years. Hendry then depicts composite and actual sequences of gift-exchanges, farewell parties, marriage cere-

monies, and celebratory feasts that constitute the ritual steps 'between betrothal and permanent co-residence' (p. 191). To place these marriage rituals in a wider ceremonial context and to argue for the central role of marriage in the village nexus of obligations, she includes a discussion of annual festivals and life-cycle transition rituals. This careful attention to the nuances of marriage negotiations and ceremonies in a single locale should prove valuable not only to the Japan specialist.

Less persuasive, however, is Hendry's explanation for recent shifts in village marriage patterns. That is, Hendry prefaces her ethnography with a useful and wide-ranging review of the English and Japanese literature on pre-second world war and post-war marriage customs, but she draws on this historical sketch only to suggest that contemporary practices lag behind the radical post-war legal reforms, especially provisions about the family in the new Constitution and the revised Civil Code (p. 114). Certainly social forms in a state society are shaped in part by the legal initiatives of the political and administrative centre, but it is surely insufficient to view local practice as merely chasing after codified law. The causal significance of legal change is further diluted by other forces (e.g., the changing structure of employment) that may stand behind both legal reform and changing marriage practices and which must be considered in any truly historical explanation.

I am also not fully convinced of the interpretation of the significance of marriage which is offered in the final chapter. Hendry concludes that the marriage union, variously performed, plays a 'pivotal' structural role in village society. It is said to mediate a series of oppositions between joyous celebrations (*keiji*) and rituals of mourning (*chōji*), between Shinto and Buddhism, between the synchronic ties among households and the continuity of the individual household over time. This is an intriguing suggestion but it must be more rigorously defended. It also requires further development; the nature of 'mediation' remains ambiguous as does the relationship of the ceremonial sequence to local social structure. If the former is not a mere reflexive representation of the latter, how does it contribute to the ongoing reconstitution of village society in contemporary Japan? Still, her speculation leads the reader back to the ethnographic core of the book, which remains a useful contribution.

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HOEFER, ANDRAS. *Tamang ritual texts. 1, Preliminary studies in the folk-religion of an ethnic minority in Nepal* (Beitr. Südasienforsch. 65). 184 pp. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1981