

will want to read and reread this book as well. While occasional loose threads are inevitable in a project of such ambition, Ohnuki-Tierney has nonetheless woven an admirably coherent and suggestive study that cannot be ignored by any serious student of ritual or of culture.

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*Gedatsu-kai and Religion in Contemporary Japan: Returning to the Center.* H. Byron Earhart. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989. xviii + 280. Tables, map, figures, 20 illustrations. \$57.50 (hardcover). ISBN 0-253-35007-7.

*Ceremony and Symbolism in the Japanese Home.* Michael Jeremy and M. E. Robinson. Photography by Urata Hoichi. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989. xv + 196. 6 tables, 29 figures, 30 plates plus endpapers, with commentary. \$35.00 (hardcover). ISBN 0-8248-1226-3.

Both religion and the multigenerational family are frequently imagined to be endangered species in the disenchanting and nuclearized socioscape of contemporary Japan. Both of these books challenge that stereotype, and in so doing, offer valuable insights into the rituals of a memorable old family and a dynamic new religion.

The *ie* is the Japanese ideal of a stem family. Probably originating with medieval warrior houses, it spread selectively through early modern society, and was legislated by the prewar state as a national patrilineal template. It is a staple of social science writing, and after being reviled for its authoritarian overtones in the early postwar period, it is making something of a sentimental comeback in popular media as yet another distinctively Japanese accomplishment.

For his dissertation research in the early 1980's, Jeremy and his wife lived for eighteen months with one such *ie*, the Tadas, a prominent household in a rural town of the Tono district of northeast Japan. When Jeremy left academics for banking, a colleague, Robinson, revised the thesis for publication; hence, the joint authorship. The result is a personal and impressionistic account of *ie* life as taught, with a quiet dignity, by the Tadas to the Jeremys.

There is a naive quaintness to Jeremy's search for the meaning of the *ie* for the Japanese, an almost studied neglect of its complex history and ideological construction. On balance, however, the lack of pretense, the wealth of folkloristic detail, and the striking photographs (by a Tono local) disarm this hardened academic reader. It is misleading history and unoriginal anthropology, but it is an effective, indeed eloquent, introduction to the ceremonies of family life as many Japanese think they may have wanted them to have been.

The core of the book is two pairs of chapters. Chapters 2-3 discuss respectively the social and the ritual aspects of the *ie*, the social organization of the household and its ceremonial round. Chapters 4-5, the second pair, are illuminating accounts of the social and physical renewal of the stem family—the ceremonial stages of the marriage of the eldest Tada son and the rituals of building a new house (house siting geomancy, roof raising ceremonies, farmhouse architectural principles). Jeremy is impressed with how both the new marriage and the new house reproduce, while subtly changing, the old relations and routines. Interestingly, this theme of renewal also underlies Earhart's study of Gedatsu-kai, one of the hundreds of Japan's so-called "new religions."

While established forms of Buddhism and Shinto barely survive, these small, syncretic and sectarian movements have thrived in modern Japan. Ranging from the sober to the millenarian, they are full of paradoxes. Founded by charismatic visionaries, often women, they develop tightly structured hierarchical organizations, with men assuming most top positions. They feature highly elaborated and inventive

cosmologies and doctrines, yet most people seem to join for the practical impulse of this-worldly problem-solving. Gedatsu-kai is one of the larger (claiming a quarter-million members) and more mainstream, preferring soul-searching to faith-healing.

Earhart, a distinguished scholar of Japanese religion, has been studying Gedatsu-kai for twenty years, including several years of intensive collaboration in 1979-80 with a Japanese scholar and his students. This was a prodigious team effort. They conducted extensive observations of national and branch meetings (Chapters 5-6) and the full ritual calendar (Chapter 7). They interviewed scores of church leaders and local members, and collected a large number of life-histories (Chapters 1 and 3). These make fascinating reading and are of more than analytical significance, because testimony-giving is a life-ordering practice of Gedatsu-kai. The team also surveyed by questionnaire over 5,700 church members. There are now several excellent case studies of Japanese new religions; Earhart's is certainly the most thorough canvassing yet.

His principal argument is encapsulated by the subtitle; as he has said in an earlier book, these are not really new religions but renewed religions. They are timely and creative reworkings of long-standing religious idioms; they are modern reinvigorations of traditional cultural practices. They have been dismissed in the past as fanciful responses to societal crisis. Earhart's book allows us to appreciate how deeply they entwine mainstream society, individual talent, historical moment, and cultural repertoire.

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