

out, there were no opportunities to observe the ritual performance context nor historical accounts of ancient Indian society. The bridge of interpretation as to what can be learned about "Aryan" society must be built by the genius of the interpreter of the texts. Jamison brings the eye of the philologist trained in Indo-European languages and literatures to her interpretations, seeing parallels with Greek and Persian texts. A balanced perspective from current studies in ritual performance, sociology, and anthropology would make her hypotheses even stronger.

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Ceremony and Ritual in Japan: Religious Practices in an Industrialized Society. Jan van Breman and D.P. Martinez, editors. Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. xiii + 268. Figures, tables, index. \$69.95 (hardcover) ISBN: 0-415-11663-5.

One sometimes rues the sprawling disorder of conference volumes, but in this instance, the diverse perspectives of the thirteen contributors from seven countries converge on several themes that lend coherence to the intrinsic fascination and generally high quality of the discrete studies.

The introduction by Jan van Breman frames the proceedings as an extended skeptical response to the much—and properly—maligned secularization hypothesis. Students of Japan have seldom found merit in predictions of religion's demise or confused religion with ritual. Thus, a number of the papers treat ritual as a formalized, performative frame of meaningful action and show how it flows over any simple dichotomy between secular and sacred. Examples include Sepp Linhart on the ritualization and subsequent trivialization of the "paper-rock-scissors" game popular for centuries in Japan; Ian Reader's delightful study relating sweeping and cleaning in Zen and the New Religions to secular emphases on hygiene and cleanliness; and Joy Hendry's tracing of the manifold ways in which towels are used in gifting.

It is also possible to see at least three other concerns that are motivating the authors. The first is the acknowledgment that ritual is not exempt from the dialectic between the permanency in change and the permanency of change. This is formulated eloquently by Robert J. Smith through a discussion that juxtaposes ordinary weddings and the recent Emperor's funeral. Both are modern fabrications antiqued with a traditional patina, reminding us that ritual is a "moving target." At any given moment there will be a tentative yet recognizable mix of the long-standing and the recent.

A second focus is the relative importance of rituals as vehicles of symbolic meaning and as vectors of social relationships. Jane Cobbi, for exam-

ple, finds that daily ritual offerings to Shintô and Buddhist deities privilege salted and sweetened foods respectively, and she relates this contrast to a series of other significant contrast pairs. Halldôr Steffánsson, by contrast, emphasizes how the interests of rural communities in asserting precedence over member households shape collective funerary rites towards a "neutralizing" of the dead in worship. And Hirochika Nakamaki offers a fascinating account of the instrumentalities of a variety of services to deceased employees at corporate memorial monuments at a famous Buddhist temple complex (Mt. Koya).

Finally, a number of other contributors take positions on the hoary question of belief and practice. That is, are the significant articulations of ritual to be found in professions and exegesis of belief or in the motivated enactments of ritual sequences? The volume's weight of opinion seems to be on the latter view. Especially interesting in this regard are the chapters by Jane Bachnik, who offers the most complete account I have read of a single Japanese funeral; and Arne Kalland, who interprets the parade of a fishing village's once-in-eighteen-years Shintô festival as the process by which participants, spaces, and objects interact to express and perform village hierarchy and solidarity. Because each of these issues is an enduring concern within the wider field of ritual studies, this volume can offer a broad audience an instructive overview of current work in one lively corner of that field.

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