

## REVIEW

Takie Sugiyama Lebra and William P. Lebra, eds., *Japanese Culture and Behavior: Selected Readings*, revised edition. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986. 428 pages, tables, graphs, index. Paper. ISBN 0-8248-1055-4. No price.

Rare indeed is the reader who will fail to benefit from this attractively designed and beautifully planned smorgasbord of essays. The book is to be commended, though it is not without flaws.

At the time the book was prepared, both Takie Sugiyama Lebra and William P. Lebra were professors of anthropology at the University of Hawaii. The latter died, unfortunately, on New Year's Day of 1986. His scholarly breadth, wisdom, and passion will be sorely missed.

The standard comment on such a book is that the essays are of "uneven quality," and the same comment could doubtless be made of this book, despite the fact that 13 of the 23 essays are new to this revised edition. The "glue" that holds the essays together is the overall focus on the cultural context of Japanese behavior and the behavioral manifestations of Japanese culture. Within this general frame of reference, the essays are grouped in four parts, each with a masterful editorial introduction.

Part 1, "Moral Values and Sentiments," deals with what is held up to Japanese people as normative: how they should behave, the attitudes they should take. According to the "editorial note" that introduces this part, the intention here is twofold: to present culture as a storehouse of values that constrain the individual from without, and to present the individual as guided by the values that he or she experiences inwardly as "sentiments." Here we find general discussions such as John Pelzel's "Human Nature in the Japanese Myths," Eiichiro Ishida's "A Culture of Love and Hate," George De Vos's "The Relation of Guilt toward Parents to Achievement and Arranged Marriage . . ." and the like.

"Interaction, Communication, and Grouping," the title of part 2, deals with what is manifested in observable behavior. Here the intention is to present "what the Japanese actually do, not just what they think they ought to do" (p. 105). In addition to the old stand-bys, Takeo Doi's "Amae" and Chie Nakane's "Criteria of Group Formation," there is a delightful article by Harumi Befu on dinner entertainment in Japan, another by Sonya Salamon on the role of "male chauvinism" in married life, and others that need not be mentioned here.

The editorial introduction to part 3, "Development and Socialization," identifies its purpose as one of seeking to trace the process by which a newborn child, in the hands of adult culture-bearers, is molded in such a way as to grow into a recognizably Japanese person. There is also one essay on the "spiritual educa-

tion" of new employees in a Japanese bank, another comparing moral precepts taught in schools of Japan and the United States, and still another on violence in the home perpetrated by Japanese teenagers. In contrast to parts 1 and 2, which account for approximately 100 pages each, and in contrast to part 4, which has only 61 pages, part 3 is allowed over 140 pages. If quantity may be taken as a measure of importance, it appears that the editors attach particular importance to this part.

Part 4, "Cultural Stress, Psychotherapies, and Resocialization," begins with the recognition that no individual Japanese perfectly embodies "the normative model." It seeks, accordingly, to present certain forms of deviation generally regarded as pathological, and goes on to introduce a few forms of therapy—partly as practiced by mental health professionals, but for the most part as culturally available treatment options. Here we find, for example, Yuji Sasaki's "Nonmedical Healing in Contemporary Japan," Takie Sugiyama Lebra's "Self-Reconstruction in Japanese Religious Psychotherapy," Yomishi Kasahara's still fresh essay on "Fear of Eye-to-Eye Confrontation . . ." and others.

The plan for this book, as expressed in the editorial notes that introduce each of its parts, is ambitious and impressive. If the essays that accompany this plan really corresponded to the editors' intentions, there would be little to criticize. But the distinction between "the normative" and "the actual" on which the editors rely applies equally well to the difference between the editorial introductions and at least some of the essays. I cannot go into detail in this brief review, but in general I can say that while most essays are of excellent quality, several offer little more than empirical or even impressionistic descriptions. For the most part, however, the selections seem adequate, and in one or two cases, even brilliant.

Readers of this journal may be especially interested in the concept of religion that crops up from time to time in this book. Almost without exception, the authors refer to religion as represented solely in its institutional forms. Only occasionally, as in the case of "ancestor worship," is there passing reference to religion as a cultural form. The idea that the "basic value system" of a culture might also be treated as religious does not seem to occur to anyone.

In his review of the first edition of 1974, Carlo Caldarola characterized this book as "a valuable reader in the hands of beginners in the study of Japanese culture and society." This assessment, though by no means mistaken, requires two complementary comments.

In the first place, the book can be valuable to people other than beginners. Even scholars professionally engaged in the study of Japanese culture and society are likely to find here an overlooked article, there a provocative insight. The restriction to beginners is unnecessary. In the second place, the beginner can easily be misled by this book. As any teacher knows, the beginner, grasping for stable reference points, easily tends to treat generalizations as absolutes, thus skewing them in directions never dreamed of by the authors. One illustration will suffice. Given the notion of cultural homogeneity tacitly assumed by

some scholars and explicitly touted by many Japanese politicians and bureaucrats, it would be easy for the beginner, on encountering the phrase “the normative model,” to interpret it as an ideal that all Japanese people are taught and to which all aspire. The fact is, however, that there are many normative models in Japan. A boy in a middle-class family in Kagoshima, for example, will grow up with ideas about how to conduct himself toward the women in his family that differ sharply from the ideas other boys learn in other parts of Japan. Again, what is morally normative for most Japanese people is a far cry from what is morally normative for the yakuza (Japan’s Mafia-like gangs). “The normative model,” therefore, is not a cultural absolute, but a generic term that embraces diverse models. Illustrations could be multiplied ad infinitum, but the point is clear: when using this book, the beginner will benefit by guidance from a knowledgeable instructor.

Twelve years elapsed between the publication of the first edition and the publication of this revised edition. I, for one, hope that there will be a third edition, perhaps under new editors, toward the end of this century. I further hope that the new edition will be a little more comprehensive. Two areas may be suggested. One is an area to which the editors themselves call attention but regret being unable to include: the issue of ethnic heterogeneity and its correlate, the cultural situation of ethnic minorities (and foreigners) in Japan. The other is the issue of how conflicts relating to religious freedom are handled in contemporary Japan—a sensitive issue, to be sure, yet one that can lead to important insights into the dynamics of social, political, and legal relationships among groups of people with differing ideas of what is normative for Japanese society today and in the years ahead.

**David Reid**

*Tokyo Union Theological Seminary*