esting array of opinions and impressions. In the final chapter, she considers some of these responses to Japan and her perceptions of sociocultural differences in the Meiji Era, and aspects of her role as a mediator between Japanese and American cultures. Fluent in the Japanese language, she faithfully studied Japanese literature throughout her life in Japan. She and her husband adopted many customs of the culture, from offering their guests slippers at the door, dressing their grandchildren in Japanese clothes to celebrate the new year, to displaying the Japanese flag next to the American flag on holidays. Kilson concludes that Mary Jane Greene was herself significantly transformed by the culture she sought to transform.

Supplementary to the text are three appendices: a chronology of milestones in her life; biographical details of her eight children; and selected writings of Mary Jane Greene, chosen to illustrate her life in Japan.

Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan

William R. LaFleur

Princeton University Press, 1992. 257pp. Appendix, chapter notes, bibliography and index.

Reviewed by Stuart D. B. Picken, International Christian University, Tokyo

THE BOOK IS EXTREMELY interesting, and offers many original insights and valuable observations, but, as the author confesses, it also contains parts to which readers may have objections, for example, learning from Japan. I wonder indeed, if these are the parts to which objections will be made. That the reader must decide for himself or herself.

The volume is in three parts, dealing respectively with generic concepts created in Japanese culture, historical traditions on abortion and natalism followed by a concluding section on the contemporary situation and the issues surrounding abortion in its wider world context. Taking these in turn, part one as a basic resource on a new topic in the study of Japanese religions is by far the most careful and least controversial. The opening section sets the tone by illustrating that behind the image of the Daibutsu in Kamakura, there is another world of Buddhism represented in La Fleur's argument by the Hase-dera which is devoted to Kannon, a figure in the Buddhist pantheon associated with healthy childhood, along with another figure of Indian origin, Jizo, whose task it is to protect the souls of miscarried, aborted or stillborn children. The temple states that there are 50,000 such souls under the protection of Jizo. The existence of Jizo suggests to the author that people feel the need to "do something" after an abortion. The temple caters for natural (miscarriage) and induced abortions as well as for stillborn infants. The central category may rank numerically highest, but the others exist, and the temple has provided pastoral comfort in all cases.

On page 26, the author refers to abortion as "horrifying and abominable" a judgment that sets the tone of some of the subsequent discussion. I think in the early stages, instead of suggesting that the book has a slant, the author might have spent more time discussing the origins of those rituals which "fit into that piece of bricolage" which he perceptively analyses as the Japanese moral posture in the world, something constructed out of various elements and embodied in ritual. He is very sensitive to the complex meanings that survive in ritual, especially in Japan, and this itself is a valuable insight that religion experts usually ignore. Greater study of Japanese rituals as the work of a *bricoleur* culture would be a

substantial redress to many of the negative views taken of Japanese religion and its lack of "doctrine and ethics." If La Fleur is right, they are present in ritual, and with that idea, I would heartily concur. The remainder of the first part consists of a discussion of numerous aspects of the development of the *moral bricolage*, the complex value system which is set forth in the rituals under discussion. The image of water, the role of the *mizuko*, the language of "return." the process of social birth and death and the various discussions are extremely constructive. The research, argument and analysis makes this by far the most valuable part of the book.

The central part is devoted to historical processes that emerged during the Edo period. The issues center on the demographic problem of Edo as it expanded. Miscarriages must have been greater in number and therefore the need for some kind of mental assuage must have grown accordingly. His argument crystallizes into the conclusion that during the Edo period, a kind of tacit understanding about abortion came into being, for which Buddhism provided a pragmatic cover. He argues that the Malthusian doctrine does not apply to Japan, and that therefore abortion became the only effective method of population control.

He attributes the ideal of fecundism, something greater than natalism, to the *Kokugaku* (National Learning) scholars and to revived Shinto ideals. The Meiji ideology of *ukoku-kyōhei*, (a nation strong in wealth and military power) implied a population big enough to produce a large army. This was encouraged out through the precept that having children was a religious obligation, something that Buddhism could not enjoin. The anti-*mabiki* (culling) stance of Confucian moralists of the Edo period was not supported by Buddhists, and so neo-Shinto thought is held responsible. But in this regard, was Japan really different from the blood/soil nationalism of nineteenth century European nations, and was Shinto not manipulated into that scenario? Further, it could also be argued that the pragmatism found in Buddhism may also have Shinto origins. These points aside, the historical material is again well assembled, and will be of enormous value to anyone interested in either Japanese religion or in a well-researched but less trodden path of Edo life. It is certainly refreshing to read this kind of essay in contrast to the stereotyped and arid studies of the "Village headship in X-mura: a model of Edo political life" or "The world of X: a samurai's diaries of Edo life, 1727–1738" type. Too much antiquarian or biographical study has been misnamed "history." La Fleur's work is history in the fullest sense. The one problem I have is that Professor La Fleur explicitly takes sides from the beginning. The discussion in the central part is sometimes obscured through being punctuated in places by an unfocused polemical attitude, some convoluted sentences that hinder direct meaning from coming through and some odd cases of logic. Concerned scholarship is justifiable. Emotional scholarship is dangerous.

The odd reference to Marx, for example, spoils a good discussion. Like the question of whether or not the Edo period was the least typical of Japanese history (p. 69), it is irrelevant and gets in the way of understanding. The Edo period lasted three centuries, and its influence lingers into a fourth. To think of Japan other than it is of no help in coming to terms with what actually is. In this vein, Marx was wrong, he claims because Japanese women got round the state's rules. The fact that they had to get around the rules proves that the Marxian analysis of religion in society was basically correct. But why waste time arguing with Marx? The author seems to want to deal with too many side issues, and this is what confuses the main issues from time to time. Contrasts with China are interesting, but are really

extended footnotes that have been built into the text. I cannot stress too much the value of much of what is written, but it is partly spoiled by that kind of polemical approach that is in danger of losing the idea of the forest amidst the trees.

The third part takes off into the modern situation, and again contains much clever analysis and well-researched insight. The idea of "soul possession" (on a par with *kitsune-mochi*?) has a big impact on religious organizations and compelled them to invent rituals to prevent revenge. If this is so, it shows that beneath the Buddhist exterior, the roots of Japanese folk religion remain as strong and healthy as ever. This could shift the ground of the argument to the point where it is not Buddhism versus Shinto, but the use of Buddhist rituals in a bricoleur way to deal with a primitive fear. Buddhism's links with death are long and deep, and therefore, it is not surprising that the links are there. A little more discussion of Amida and Jizo would have opened up this issue. So much for the limitations.

The book has three great merits which outweigh the problems I have raised. Firstly, it is a superb attempt to relate an issue in the field of Japan studies to the wider academic world outside, showing that in some cases, what is true in Japan is true elsewhere, but that sometimes it is not (for example Malthus). It is not narcissistically "Japanological," but tries to see Japan studies *in obiter visa*. The author is clearly excited about what he has seen, and rightly so, but is a little overwhelmed and tries to deal with too many issues that are of no direct consequence. But his insights are always suggestive, which heightens the frustration.

Secondly, it argues most convincingly that there is a complex value system at work in Japan, the result of the bricoleur mentality, and that moral issues are dealt with, not verbally, but through the symbolic power of ritual, and further that this system has as its goal, the preservation of social order. To those interested in social, political and economic value systems, this is a model for thought. Behind apparently moral positions that are recognized as such in the west, there is always a hidden, and different agenda in Japan. *Seichō no Ie* (House of Growth), for example, attacks abortion, according to the author, not on right to life grounds, but on neo-Shinto grounds. It shows how far religious movements in Japan may have to go in order to accommodate government inspired social norms. It also underlines the point that similar ideas found in Japan and the West may not necessarily share common or even similar presuppositions.

The conclusion is a return to learning from Japan, and particularly Japan's pragmatism which the author declares Americans seem to have erroneously viewed as their own philosophy. He raises the issue of population control and even the question of how the *mizuko kuyō* might be transferred to Christianity. He seems to return to a more objective stance on the problem, and offers some provocative comments.

In short an abundance of riches, that calls for time, effort and serious reflection which, I think, is very worthwhile.

Japanese Religion and Society: Paradigms of Structure and Change

Winston Davis

Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992. x + 327 pp. Photos, figures, notes, and index. Paper. n.p.

Reviewed by David Reid, Seigakuin University, Tokyo

WHAT MAKES A BOOK worth reading? Someone has suggested that in the world of scholarship a book can be considered