

the tripartite system in the legends and myths of cultures that are heirs to Indo-European tradition. *The Destiny of a King*, like most of Dumézil's scholarship, weaves a fascinating pattern of the tripartite ideology but loose threads remain. This paperback is a welcome addition to Dumézil's works in English translation which deserve a much wider audience.

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BESTOR, THEODORE C. *Neighborhood Tokyo*. Studies of the East Asian Institute, Columbia University. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989. xviii+347 pages. Tables, maps, appendices, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$35.00; ISBN 0-8047-1439-8.

In Theodore Bestor's view, a Tokyo neighborhood is not a fragment of rural countryside, oddly surviving in the midst of a great city—any more than that city, as some have said, is no city at all, but just a loose agglomeration of small towns. There is surely a traditionalism at the heart of this form of neighborhood life; but the need is to understand it on its own terms, and not as some fancied detritus of agrarianism or pre-urbanism. The small shopkeepers who are the backbone of these neighborhoods in effect maintain "an alternative social world" to the larger one outside its borders. But that alternative world is not static; it merely has its own dynamic, which emerges in part from the interplay between neighborhood structure and ward structure, city government and the nation at large. The task Bestor has set himself is to study that dynamic in action. "I argue," he says, "that traditionalism—as an active agent creating and re-creating images and meanings that attach to the social forms around which people organize their lives—is an index not of *isolation from* but of *interaction with* the broader society" (262).

And so, as one might expect, he is very good at describing change—especially change that occurs within the mists of the allegedly unchanging. *Omikuji*, those fortunes printed on thin bits of white paper, are still obtainable from the neighborhood shrine, but now they are dispensed from a vending machine. In the evening processions of the autumn festival, one *mikoshi* (sacred ark) is equipped with four floodlights, powered by two car batteries installed within the *mikoshi*. Every evening be-

tween four and six, a loudspeaker system plays 'light' music for the ease of shoppers. The old *chindonya* (itinerant actor-musicians in feudal costume who were used for store openings and promotions) are in demise. One old street in the neighborhood has been nicknamed "Gakkai-dōri," for all the new members of the Soka Gakkai who live there. Turkish baths still exist, but the designation came to be resented by members of the overseas Turkish business and diplomatic community; the proposed new name is "Soapland." And there is a new style of coffee shop where the waitresses wear no panties; these are called "no-pan kissa." What do the French say? The more things change, the more they stay the same.

The local shrine apparently has a *kaguraden*, though Bestor does not use the term; perhaps it is no longer called that. At *matsuri* (festival) time, it is used for a sort of variety show, which may include shamisen and koto music, and "comic mimes loosely derived from classical *kyōgen* farces," all presided over by a garrulous master of ceremonies. It is also used for "Nō drama and traditional dance." The language, you see, becomes a little fuzzy here; Bestor is not at his best when it comes to the cultural and sacral side of neighborhood life, and its historical roots. What does he mean by "traditional dance"? And are those "comic mimes" in fact *kagura*?

The neighborhood shrine is called Tenso Jinja. There is a picture of it, taken in 1935; but we are told that the structure was wooden, and becoming unsound, and so the whole shrine was rebuilt in the early 1970s in glorious ferro-concrete. Judging from the picture, the old building was in the Shinmei style, and had a thatched roof. The new building is (Bestor says) in the "traditional" style; but what style is that? Taisha, with the extended roof beams (*chigi*) facing front? And why the style change?

Bestor's neighborhood is located about two and a half kilometers, or a mile and a half, south of the big Shinagawa station on the Yamanote Line. It evolved from a village called Hiratsuka and, later, a town called Ebara. Bestor calls it Miyamoto-chō because at its center is the shrine (*miya*; *moto* means source, or origin-place) that serves all the surrounding neighborhoods. The shrine is called Tenso Jinja; its deity is Amaterasu-Ōmikami.

Of course, the neighborhood is not really called Miyamoto-chō; Bestor wants to disguise its identity—just as he gives false names for his neighbors, to protect their privacy. But is the shrine then truly called Tenso? And was the town named Ebara, and the village Hiratsuka? The device is a time-honored one, but I wonder if it isn't time to dispatch it, along with other well-intended forms of dis-information. They only serve to cloud the picture.

So there are ambiguities here, and lacunae. We want to know something of the history of the shrine, and the parish; we want to know the name of the Buddhist temple, and its sect. But these gaps are annoying precisely because the author has done such a thorough job in all but these few areas. His two-year stay, and repeated return visits, have produced a wealth of detail regarding social organization and social and political interaction. As a writer he is clear and lively, and admirably jargon-free. He portrays the neighborhood, its shops and streets, its people, its uphill and downhill sections, and all its local color, so effectively that we feel that we have been there with him, amid the sights and sounds. He has a gift for brevity; he describes the *kannushi* (shrine priest) as "a mostly unwatched technician of the sacred."

If there is ever a second edition or a sequel, I would say: more pictures. There are just four pages of the author's own photographs here. We deserve more; and they would add greatly to the worth of this rare document of everyday life in a rapidly fading past.

I see that Bestor now resides in an old neighborhood of upper Manhattan called Inwood. I wonder what he is up to. Another book, I hope.

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GUTHRIE, STEWART ELLIOTT. *A Japanese New Religion. Risshō Kōsei-kai in a Mountain Hamlet.* Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies, Number 1. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1988. xiv+245 pages. Figures, photographs, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$21.95; ISBN 0-939512-33-5.

Risshō Kōsei-kai is one of the most impressive groups in the religious arena of postwar Japan. It is a lay Buddhist movement which exhibits particular Japanese features in that it takes its doctrinal inspirations from Nichiren and the Lotus Sutra, and centers its religious attention mainly in care for the ancestors. On an international level it has made itself a name also in the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) through the activities of its cofounder and president Niwano Nikkyō.

Guthrie's intent is not to study Risshō Kōsei-kai as such: his interests lie with how and for what reasons this religion was accepted in a small Japanese mountain hamlet. He sides therefore with the believers, eliciting and interpreting their motives for joining. In order to put the book's main part into perspective, Guthrie first describes the traditional religious institutions and activities of the hamlet and the social relations involved. For the main part, and in his analysis of the believers' attitudes, he focusses on six life histories as core material. With this he demonstrates that the believers, in making their decisions, had done so after rational and practical considerations. They accepted the new religion because it offered them not only a better way to understand their experiences than through traditional village religion, but also a way to control them more efficiently. But notwithstanding such new aspects, Guthrie finds that the believers made use of a model which is fundamental to Japanese social relationships, namely the parent-child (*oya-ko* 親子) relationship, and which they applied to establish a new social network based on criteria of their new belief. In conclusion he finds that the decisions of the villagers to accept this new religion cannot be seen as a mere strategy to escape from a trying situation, but that they are based on an evaluation of advantages and disadvantages of the new religious, and by extension of the new social, situation. With this the author offers concrete material for the rationality of religious decisions, an idea he has earlier discussed in relation to its wider background in the history of anthropological thought (1980). The particular attraction of the book is the fact that it describes how a religion is accepted and operates in the living environment of a village.

Guthrie's approach to the study of a New Religion in Japan from the point of view of the concrete situation of the believers is new and his conclusions, as far as they concern the situation of Risshō Kōsei-kai members in Yamanaka, are sensitive and as such convincing. Nevertheless, his conclusions or statements concerning the hamlet's and Japan's traditional religion in general are at least open to discussion. Here it shows that Guthrie "relied heavily on English-language sources" and only the "most relevant primary" Japanese documents (18). I fully agree with the author in seeing the *oya-ko* relation as a fundamental structural feature in social and religious