JAPAN

Lebra, Takie Sugiyama, editor. *Japanese Social Organization.* Honolulu:
    University of Hawaii Press, 1992. xi+236 pages. Index. Paper US
    $14.95; ISBN 0-8248-1420-7. Hardcover US$34.00; ISBN 0-8248-
    1386-3.

T. Sugiyama Lebra, already well known for her editorship of *Japanese Culture and
Behavior: Selected Readings* (1974) and her comprehensive work *Japanese Women:
Constraint and Fulfillment* (1984), has now produced another reader on Japanese
society. The present work takes up, not general or normative issues, but special areas
of society that have until now been neglected.

Interestingly, although six of the seven contributors are women, there is nothing
like a feminist bias. Only two papers deal with subjects concerning women (one con-
siders the life course of women, the other studies the all-female entertainment troupe
known as the Takarazuka Revue). All of the contributions are thoroughly researched;
some are more descriptive (like one on homes for the elderly), while others are more
problem-oriented. A common aspect is the relation between individual and organiza-
tion, be it a neighborhood, a Japanese company overseas, or a terrorist group. Yet
these are not just more studies on so-called Japanese groupism—they focus on different
forms of groups, showing the large variety of group life and the characteristics of social
organizations in general. To Lebra the organization must be regarded not only as a
system of symbols, but, as she explains in her introduction, as a "time" and a "frame"
(the fundamental categories that tie together all of the papers). These notions provide
a highly stimulating framework for the ideas presented in the book, though in my
opinion they would have been better presented after the papers, as they tend to pre-
determine the reader's expectations.

The meaning of traditionalism was one of the main issues raised in Theodore C.
Bestor's *Neighborhood Tokyo* (1989). In his paper here, "Conflict, Legitimacy, and
Tradition in a Tokyo Neigborhood," he once again shows how tradition functions in
a neighborhood community when attempts are made to legitimize innovations against
the will of the established authorities. In this case it is the acquisition of a new *mikoshi*
for the autumn festival of a Tokyo ward that arouses conflict between the elderly leaders
and the young-to-middle-age generation. Thanks to a common cultural symbolism
the status quo of the neighborhood is saved in the end.

In chapter 2, "The Spatial Layout of Hierarchy: Residential Style of the Modern
Japanese Nobility," Lebra describes the spatial seclusion of the Japanese aristocracy
both inside the aristocratic house and inside Tokyo as a whole. Here horizontal (*oku/
omote*) and vertical (*kami/shimo*) boundaries overlap each other, as do the boundaries
between the sexes. Lebra's spatial analysis also provides proof of the historical dy-
archy of the imperial house, known already in political sciences as the system of double
responsibility.

Chapter 3, by Mary C. Brinton, is entitled "Social Organization of Japanese Wom-
en's Life Course." Although the life course of the Japanese woman has already been
examined in other monographs, Brinton takes a broad perspective by comparing it to
the life course of the American woman and placing it into the broader context of both
societies. She succeeds in analyzing the strong influence in the Japanese woman's life
of "stakeholders," like parents or employers; the American woman, in contrast, is more
autonomous, and must rely much more on her personal decisions. For Brinton the
decisive factor is not simply individualism versus groupism but the influence of the

social organization of Japanese and American society.

Chapter 4, "Life on Obasuteyama, or, Inside a Japanese Institution for the Elderly," by Diana Lynn Bethel, is a detailed ethnographic study of an old folks home. Bethel shows, in particular, how the social relations of the residents are hierarchical among those of different ages and egalitarian among those of the same age or among those who entered the institution during the same year. The entire group adopts a family-like relationship, as manifested by the way in which they address each other in kinship terms; to Bethel, this shows how much these patterns of behaviour rely on cultural symbols.

Tomoko Hamada's "Under the Silk Banner: The Japanese Company and Its Overseas Managers" also takes up the subject of social relationships, this time between the managers of a corporate headquarters and the managers of its overseas subsidiaries. The thesis Hamada attempts to prove is that "the Japanese firm's approach to multi-nationalization derives from and is an extension of the relational dynamics of the inter-organizational alliance between the parent firm and its subsidiaries in Japan" (139).

Although contemporary Japanologists have published much on the subject of the "Japanese woman," they have largely ignored the lesbian subculture, as Jennifer Robertson correctly notes in her paper "Doing and Undoing 'Female' and 'Male' in Japan: The Takarazuka Revue." Robertson, discussing the historical development of roles relating to gender, sex, and sexuality, shows the part played by an idiosyncratic understanding of female and male roles in the well-known Takarazuka Revue. She again sees the decisive influence of the larger context—Japanese society—on the process of gender creation.

Patricia Steinhoff, author of the last paper, "Death by Defeatism and Other Fables: The Social Dynamics of the Rengo Sekigun Purge," is already known for her other publications on the Red Army. Here she gives a moving account of the purge that occurred during the winter of 1972, when twelve members of the Red Army were killed by their own comrades. By reconstructing the social and psychological dynamics underlying the events, she analyzes both specific Japanese group behaviors and universal group dynamics (known from Western group life). She concludes that specific features of Japanese social organization, especially those relating to authority and loyalty, exacerbated a conflict based on universal group dynamics.

The wide scope and thoroughgoing analysis of the articles in this collection testify to the rising quality of studies on Japanese social phenomena. In addition to notes and references, it contains an index and short introductions to the contributors.

REFERENCES CITED
BESTOR, Theodore C.
    1989 *Neighborhood Tokyo.*   Stanford: Stanford University Press.
LEBRA, T. Sugiyama
    1974 *Japanese culture and behavior: Selected readings.*   Honolulu: University of
          Hawaii Press.   Revised edition published in 1986.
    1984 *Japanese women: Constraint and fulfillment.*   Honolulu: University of
          Hawaii Press.

                                                    Margret NEUSS-KANEKO
                                                    Niigata, Japan