

## JAPAN

DEVOS, GEORGE A. *The Incredibility of Western Prophets. The Japanese Religion of the Family*. Publication Series Vakgroep Culturele Antropologie en Niet-westerse Sociologie, No. 21. Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, Antropologisch-Sociologisch Centrum, 1984. Vi+65 pages. ISBN 90 70313 12X. Dfl. 12.50 or US\$3.50.

The release of these two previously published articles in modified form provides an opportunity to comment on the provocative and fruitful critical claims made by DeVos. The common thread of these two articles is the thesis that two of the leading "Western prophets," Freud and Marx, are incredible or inapplicable to the Japanese situation because of the nature of "the Japanese religion of the family." Not only Freud, but psychoanalysis generally has little following in Japan, because "Psychoanalysis has, as its basic premise, the autonomy of the individual" (13), and Japanese identify more as members of groups (especially the family) than as individuals. A more important reason for the rejection of psychoanalytic theory is that delving into the unconscious would threaten family cohesion, something that Japanese cannot bring themselves to do because it would attack the foundation of their cultural and social identity. Marx and Marxist economic analysis is neglected or inapplicable to Japan because its assumption of increasing alienation between classes with the advance of industrialization does not hold true in Japan—especially due to the effective force of the "expressive functions of Japanese paternalism." DeVos notes an irony here: "What the theorists curse as the hampering effect of traditional cultural attitudes that prevent the realization of workers' gains, seemingly, to some extent at least, are presently being utilized in Japan for collective national economic efforts" (35).

In pursuing this double thesis, DeVos radically questions much Western social science theory while providing deep insights into Japanese culture and provocative comparison / contrast with Western culture. DeVos dares to say that Western theory is "culture-bound" because "It is so 'rationalistic' and individualistic in some of its theories that it tends to see all human action as based on utilitarian self-interest" (pp. 11-12). He says that the "Quiet Therapies" as interpreted in the book of the same title by David K. Reynolds (and for which one of these two articles served as an afterword) work well in Japan because they avoid the rationalistic and individualistic tendencies of Western psychoanalytic theory, and match the Japanese cultural context of a more "syncretic" ("visual-spacial rather than verbal-sequential") and collective approach. The author casts his net to the depths of the Western tradition to make comparative comments on both the theoretical issues and also the content of Japanese culture, because he views Marx and Freud as "notable Judeo-Christian prophets." This leads him to criticize Lévi-Strauss for utilizing "an Aristotelian form of logic" and Mary Douglas for falling back on "her own Judeo-Christian mode of analysis as a means of explanation" (3). Such rigid approaches as these, as well as Marx and Freud, have not yielded good results in Japan, where a different system operates: "Just as a Christian convert comes to believe in the love of Christ, Japanese believe deeply in their religion of the family" (17).

Within these two articles DeVos provides "psychocultural" insight into many aspects of Japanese culture: the prominent role of "nurturance," especially by maternal figures, the nature of "interdependency," the role of "vicarious identification," and even the nature of guilt. These insights are clarified and substantiated more fully than the call for a new theoretical approach to Japanese culture. Generally DeVos

has criticized the Western " culture-bound " approach for its overly rationalistic, individualistic, and analytic emphasis. These radical comments may anger some readers, but if they provoke a reconsideration of theoretical assumptions, they will prove worthwhile.

The present reviewer is sympathetic to this radical critique, especially in light of the rather wooden application of certain " Western " theories to Japanese culture and religion, but is not yet convinced of the general theoretical plan implied by this critique. It is not completely clear what the recommended " syncretic " approach would be, except for greater emphasis on expressive rather than instrumental concerns. DeVos is in favor of ' primary process thinking,' but does not spell out fully what this would be: it is a critique of Western cognitive controls, especially control over nature, but that still leaves the positive study plan undeveloped. Potentially there is a dangerous dichotomy here between " us " and " them ": with " us " being criticized for rational, analytical, logical, individual, thought and control over nature; and with " them " being praised for espousing the non-rational, syncretic, intuitive, collective, thought and flow with nature. The argument in these two articles does not state this dichotomy explicitly, but without further clarification of the positive approach some readers may assume such a conclusion. Such an East-West dichotomy was posed earlier by figures such as Alan Watts, and there are any number of proponents of similar " us-them " juxtapositions of the pre-logical intuitive mind against the logical analytical mind. Especially because this reviewer has found the psychocultural work of DeVos to be highly stimulating for the interpretation of Japanese religion, it is to be hoped that he will elaborate the approaches sketched in these provocative articles. We would all profit from a more thoroughgoing psychocultural treatment of Japanese culture, society, and religion.

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MOERAN, BRIAN. *Ōkubo Diary. Portrait of a Japanese Valley*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985. Xii+257 pages. Hardcover US\$28.50, ISBN 0-8047-1296-4.

Western ethnographers of the Japanese countryside have provided us with an unusual number of rich and sensitive portraits of rural life patterns. One thinks particularly of the works of the Embrees, Richard Beardsley, David Plath, Robert J. Smith, Ronald Dore, and Gail Bernstein. To that list one must now add Brian Moeran. Moeran, moreover, is of special interest to folklorists because his research has focused on the potters of the small Kyūshū hamlet of Sarayama, whose pottery is widely known in " folkcraft " (*mingei*) circles as Onta ware. The subject of his dissertation and a recent book, *Lost Innocence* (Moeran 1984), was the complex relationships between these potters' social organization of production and marketing and the public's aesthetic standards of appreciation and appraisal. The public includes both local dealers in near-by Hita City, leaders of the national folkcraft movement, and the urban consumers of the New Middle Class, who have come to fetishize such expressions of folk art as Ontayaki.

Moeran returned to the Sarayama area in the early 1980s for a second two-year period to continue his research and to revise the manuscript that became *Lost Innocence*.