

scholars from the literary side and those from anthropology, though Zumwalt perceptively notes that they were usually working toward the same goals and sharing the same concerns. Finally, she shows some of the ways in which the conflict persisted beyond the 1950s—in the disagreement over the myth-ritual theory, the origins of African American folktales, and the preeminence of text or performance.

The strengths of this study make it necessary reading for anyone concerned with folklore studies as a discipline. Zumwalt has clearly identified a central theme in the history of American folklore studies and has traced its effects in detail. She has drawn extensively on the writings of major figures in American folklore scholarship, but even more importantly she has quoted from unpublished materials: letters to and from Newell, Boas, Child—in fact, to and from virtually every major player in the drama. Although Boas's professional correspondence is available in microfilm, it is still difficult to gain access to, and reading the letters of most of the other scholars who figure in the formative years of American folklore studies requires visits to archives. Inclusion of this material makes the book even more useful.

The flaws of Zumwalt's study are minor and, for the most part, stylistic vestiges of its original format as a dissertation. She tends to quote too often from secondary sources that are readily available, a practice that interferes with the flow of her otherwise clearly written prose, and occasionally she dwells upon aspects of the folklorists' careers whose bearing to her argument is tangential. However, those small quibbles do not detract substantially from the overall value of a book that the international community of folklorists should find very useful for understanding the past and the present of American folklore studies.

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#### JAPAN

EARHART, H. BYRON. *Gedatsu-kai and Religion in Contemporary Japan: Returning to the Center*. Religion in Asia and Africa. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989. xviii+280 pages. Illustrations, tables, bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$57.50; ISBN 0-253-35007-7.

Byron Earhart has for long been a major and influential figure in the study of Japanese religion, and this new book in which he presents a detailed discussion and analysis of one new religion, Gedatsukai 解脱会, will certainly enhance that reputation as well as adding to our general knowledge and assessment of the phenomenon of the new religions. Originally Earhart studied Gedatsukai in a joint research project with Miyake Hitoshi and some of the results of this research and the findings of their Japanese research students were published in a volume of essays edited by EARHART and MIYAKE in Japanese (1983). This welcome cooperation has clearly enriched the current volume, which is meticulously researched and documented, based on an extensive survey and analysis of 5707 completed questionnaires along with in-depth interviews with ordinary members and leading officials, and observations of rituals and participation in Gedatsukai rituals and pilgrimages.

The book examines Gedatsukai, a medium-sized new religion that originated in the late 1920s and now has some 250,000 members, from several angles: discussions of

the life, experiences, and teachings of its founder, Okano Eizō 岡野英藏, and the doctrines, development, organization, and rituals of the movement are set alongside detailed analysis of the behavioral patterns of members and what Earhart calls an "inside" approach, in which a number of members tell their own religious histories. Such accounts give us some vivid insights into Japanese religious attitudes in general and validate Earhart's view that the experiences of individuals represent, in a microcosm, the macrocosm of the world of religion in Japan (10).

The narrated experiences are, along with the analysis of the surveys carried out by Earhart and Miyake, the most informative parts of the book, providing valuable insights into such aspects as the motivations that lead people to join, who persuades them to do so, and the influence this has on their religious practices. Many of these findings are similar to those outlined elsewhere; again, as with other new religions, close friends and family are the prime recruiters, and the bulk of the membership and of recruiters is female. Where the survey does add new information is in showing that those who join tend to have, prior to membership, above-average levels of participation in traditional religious activities such as venerating the ancestors, praying to the kami, and visiting major religious centers such as Ise. After joining, though, all these activities increase in scale along with participation in Gedatsukai rites, meetings, and the like (107-120). There are one or two areas in which I would have liked further discussion of the implications of the data and some comments on the potential differences this might bring up with other new religions; Gedatsukai, for example, has a somewhat middle-aged membership compared to many new religions that appear to attract a high proportion of young people, and this begs the question, not tackled in this book, of why different new religions appeal to different age groups.

Nonetheless, the book as such is a wealth of descriptive detail that will be invaluable for any who wish to learn about and understand not just the new religions themselves but Japanese religion in general. The final chapter deals with the reasons for the rise and popularity of the new religions, and here Earhart argues that three intersecting strands: social environment, prior religious influence (which of course includes the Japanese religious environment itself), and the innovative influences of a founder figure and his immediate followers, are all necessary elements in the process of formation. This view has been clearly established by the data presented in the book, with the life histories themselves showing in miniature the intersection of these themes, and a comprehensive diagram depicting this pattern of formation and development is given (228-229, also 231).

Earhart states that the more one studies the new religions the more they resemble the old traditions, a point that I largely concur with. Thus the new should be seen as "contemporary transformations of the Japanese religious tradition" (238) that (as with Gedatsukai) enable their members "to return to the center of their tradition" (239). This conclusion, well established in the book and amply outlined in the final chapter, also raises, but does not perhaps develop fully enough, the issue of the extent to which new religions such as Gedatsukai are attempting to preserve traditional values and expand and develop them into wider, international ones.

The important points raised in the last chapter are a little marred, however, in two ways. The first is that Earhart's highly critical assessments of earlier Western interpretations of the new religions are overstated. It is right to say that concentrating almost entirely on social conditions and anomie as the root causes of the rise of the new religions is too narrow a view, but it is hardly necessary to oversimplify so radically the arguments put by earlier scholars, especially when the book has already shown the deficiencies of this argument by making it quite clear that other factors are also

important. Earhart is correct in stating that the new religions deserve equal treatment with the established ones and should be seen as positive religious developments rather than, as the "crisis" theory tends to see them, deviations from the norm. It is here, however, that my second point of criticism is located. This is not a new line, for much of contemporary Japanese scholarship has already gone beyond seeing the new religions in deviant terms and has established that they should be viewed in a positive way. Earhart is obviously most concerned with what Western scholars have to say, and is making a point most clearly for a Western audience, but I think the book would have been enriched for Western readers if more attention had been paid to recent Japanese interpretations.

These are minor points, however, compared to the overall. Anyone with an interest in the new religions or, indeed, Japanese religion in general has cause to be grateful to Earhart for producing such a rich source of material on Gedatsukai. It is perhaps the most rounded and detailed picture of a Japanese new religion published in English and as such is essential reading for all involved in the study of religion in Japan.

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1983 *Dentōteki shūkyō no saisei: Gedatsukai no shisō to kōdō* 伝統的宗教の再生: 解脱会の思想と行動 [The regeneration of traditional religion: Thought and action in Gedatsukai]. Tokyo: Meicho Shuppan.

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EDWARDS, WALTER. *Modern Japan through Its Weddings. Gender, Person, and Society in Ritual Portrayal*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989. xii+173 pages. Bibliography, index. Cloth US\$27.50; ISBN 0-8047-1512-2.

The title of this study by a young American anthropologist is puzzling: not "Japan and its weddings" but "Japan through its weddings." As the author says in his introduction, he sees "weddings as a window to Japanese values" (12) and ultimately aims "to explore values that define what it means to be a person in Japanese society" (10). Yet it is wrong to expect that, with the weddings, the excessive commercialism of the weddings in Japanese society is also analyzed. The author explicitly does not intend to lend himself to social criticism. As becomes clear in the last analytical chapters, his intention is to oppose Western individualism to Japanese collectivism, since the reproach by one of the author's Japanese friends that all Americans are selfish (4) obviously had made a deep impression on him.

His method is strictly ethnographic and inductive. He first gives a detailed description of a wedding as it was performed in a wedding hall where he had been working for some time to gather background information about such ceremonies. Seeing wedding as a "performance" or a "series of poses," he meticulously describes the Shinto ceremony with the exchange of saké cups and the reading of the oath, then the wedding party with its more or less formal speeches, the symbolic cutting of the cake, the candlelight ceremony where the young couple light a candle on each of the guest