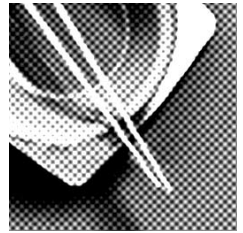


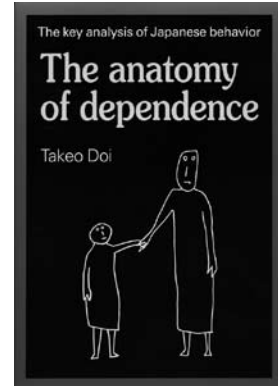
Society / Culture



The Anatomy of Dependence

Takeo Doi

(Kodansha International, 1973)



56

This famous book describes at length the author's concept of *amae*, which he describes as a uniquely Japanese need to be in good favor with and consequently be able to depend on the people around oneself. He likens it to children's assumption that parents will indulge them, and describes the Japanese ideal relationship as that of parent-child, emphasizing that all relationships strive for this closeness and protection though such an embrace does to some extent crush initiative and individuality.

It is Doi's contention that European languages lack an equivalent word for *amae*. This lack, he argues, implies a want of social recognition and a need for feelings of dependency in the West.

Though the feeling of being emotionally close to another human being is not uniquely Japanese, its expression in terms of *amae* is. At the same time, the rich, semantic meaning attached to the term does differentiate Japanese culture, in his view.

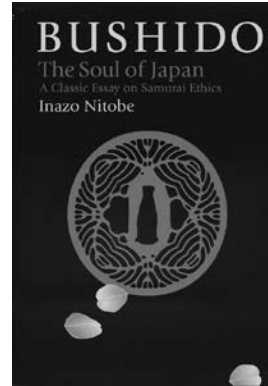
There is no doubt that this theory of *amae* is more developed in Japan and that the feelings it engenders are deep, but that it is unique to Japan is questioned by the fact that the work has been recognized as having a universal application.

Bushido:

The Soul of Japan

Inazo Nitobe

(Kodansha International, 2002)



This classic, originally published in 1905, remains an important book. Bushido is characterized as “the way of the warrior,” “the samurai code of honor.” During the modernizing Meiji era, Bushido was reinvented and became an important force in the rise of Japanese nationalism.

This “new” Bushido had no written text until Nitobe wrote this book which presents Bushido not just as a martial discipline but as a system of ethics and morals, a whole school of thought that has no set dogma but consists of qualities and practices. These would include concepts such as courage, veracity, sincerity, honor, and loyalty, all of which he examines.

His learning and the demands of his subject meant that the result would be an eclectic book. He delved in Buddhism, Shintoism and Confucianism while seeking similarities and contrasts by citing philosophers going back to the Romans, the Greeks, and even various Biblical figures.

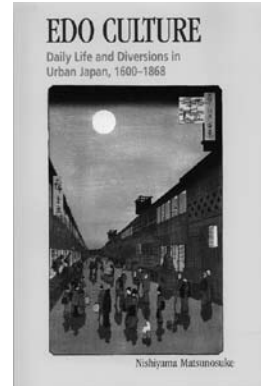
Writing in 1905, he could not know to what uses Bushido would be put during the Pacific War, could not see that as a historiographic term “Bushido” would also become a problematic construct. One which, however, now serves to describe a set of ideals which undoubtedly influenced many from the last days of the samurai until now.

Edo Culture:

Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868

Matsunosuke Nishiyama

(University of Hawai'i Press, 1997)



58

Though Nishiyama is one of the finest historians of Edo culture, his work has hitherto not been much translated. Here, in Gerald Groemer's translation, we are given a selection of his writings.

Divided into three sections, this selection first gives a history of the city Edo (now Tokyo) itself during its formative decades, and how it was socially shaped by merchant and samurai alike. Also, how the Edo aesthetic was formed by the various communal activities of the commoners within the city.

The second section indicates the degree of interaction between urban and rural cultures during the nineteenth century and shows how itinerant pilgrims, traveling players, and the like created an unprecedented cultural diffusion.

The third section is dedicated to music and the theatre. In it the author analyzes the relations of the various social classes to musical genres and aesthetics in general, the final chapter focusing on urban vaudeville.

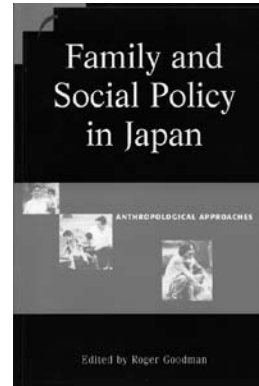
As the translator points out in his introduction, Nishiyama's main interest was the culture of the city of Edo itself. This is because "the culture of Edo the city gradually became the hegemonic culture of the Edo period." To this one might add that to the casual foreign viewer the culture of Edo then became the culture of Japan.

Family and Social Policy in Japan:

Anthropological Approaches

Roger Goodman (ed.)

(Cambridge University Press, 2002)



The nine essays here collected and edited by Roger Goodman originated as papers presented at the Japan Anthropological Workshop held in Osaka in 1999. They deal mainly with fairly recent changes: the aging population, the growing foreign population, education, child abuse, etc.

Goodman states in his introduction that anthropology can bring perceptions that differentiate it from other disciplines. For example, the anthropologist is in a position to make a distinction “between what people say they do, say they should do, and actually do.” Further, anthropology has the ability “to unpack the taken-for-granted assumptions that lie behind the production of policy.”

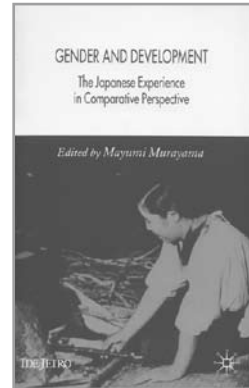
All of this is demonstrated in various degrees in the papers he includes to illustrate his thesis. At the same time some of these essays are enriched by analyses of legislation or analyses of social issues in the medium, thus straying from a strict definition of the confines of anthropology.

The result is a number of different perspectives on social issues. Revealed is that the relationship between the state on one hand and the individual on the other is not simply one-way. Individuals are also molders of policy.

Gender and Development: The Japanese Experience in Comparative Perspective

Mayumi Murayama (ed.)

(Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)



60

Though Japanese economic development is widely discussed, less attention is given to social development, and much less to gender-related issues. By examining Japanese experiences related to gender, the various authors in this collection seek insights relevant to developing countries.

The book covers such themes as economic development and gender disparities, population policy, rural livelihood programs, as well as female political participation, the sharing of domestic work, and discourses on the modern family.

Each chapter deals with the Japanese case in a comparative perspective with developing countries. The common message is a call for the creation of an interactive space to exchange individual experiences and insights between societies in order to formulate a more powerful gender and development agenda.

Among the topics considered in these papers are Japan's postwar family system and its implications, a two-country comparison as to how socialism has contributed to gender role changes, an investigation into the successes of women in local elections, etc.

In her introduction Murayama emphasizes the attempts made to integrate gender and development issues in Japan and in various developing countries. Her essay, at the conclusion of the book, includes her own thoughts on this growing integration.

Japanamerica:

How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the U.S.

Roland Kelts

(Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)



Japanese popular culture has considerably influenced the entertainment patterns of countries all over the world. In particular, manga and anime—pop-style cartoon narratives and animated cartoon films—have been eagerly accepted.

How this occurred is the basis of this account, but its basic question is how could such a rigid society as that of Japan produce a pop art that is so wildly imaginative. Among the author's contentions is that such kinetic story-lines, such apocalyptic narratives, such sex, such violence, might be permissible only in a place that had experienced nuclear devastation.

There are, however, many other reasons for the explosion of a pop-art ethos that in ten years could earn \$25 billion—the achievement of Nintendo's Pokémon manifestation. The author is particularly persuasive in his description of the “permission of the dark,” a kind of tacit approval which allows the particularly violent and sexual excesses of both manga and anime, and eludes any kind of social censorship.

Countering this is the example that violent crimes against women are exceedingly rare in a country that makes first-person rapist video games. There would thus seem to be some correlation between the actual and the virtual.

Japanese Science: From the Inside

Samuel J. Coleman

(Routledge, 1999)



62

There is a general impression that Japan has a relatively poor scientific record, that career structure and organization priorities have hampered both scientific research and the advancement of scientists themselves.

A reason for this often advanced is that the poor record is the product of cultural factors—the “Japanese way.” It is just this concept, however, that Coleman’s book attempts to counter.

In this ethnographic study he demonstrated the importance of moribund policy decision in holding back scientists. “As long as Japan is unable to translate its wealth and talent into substantial scientific contributions we are all the poorer for it,” writes Coleman.

He then analyzes the problem of career mobility in science in Japan, that the status quo in university and government laboratories, the relations between scientists and lay administrators, and the problems encountered by women scientists.

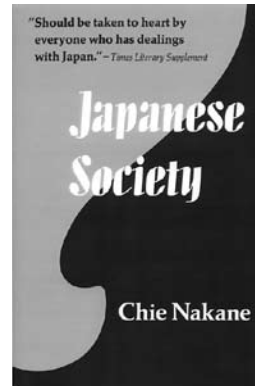
With the world’s second largest economy, Japan is still faced with excessive governmental control over education and research, with faculties still holding to ideals of age/grade promotion, and a preference for incremental advance over bold experimentation.

As Coleman writes: “Global science needs as many competent players as possible to address the thorny problems of health and environment.”

Japanese Society

Chie Nakane

(University of California Press, 1970)



The achievement of this now well-known sociological text is that the author presents not merely a society composed of independent groups and institutions but one that is united by a single overarching structure. The one basic structure here stressed is verticality (rather than the horizontal structure sometimes found in other cultures), a principle observed in the relations among Japanese, most illustrated in this thesis by those between someone who is senior and someone who is junior, that is someone more powerful and/or richer over someone less.

Though sometimes criticized for its simplicity, Nakane's principle has made contemporary Japan more understandable for many. In this book we see the roles of the traditional Japanese family now being reenacted by businesses, the samurai mentality transformed in the salaryman, the lord/peasant, landlord/tenant scenario of traditional Japan is seen as played out in the modern management systems.

Using the structural approaches of (in particular) British anthropology, the author explains her subject through an analysis of the historical social structure of Japanese society. The different sections of her book indicate both her aims and her means: "Criteria of Group Formation," "Internal and Overall Structure of Society" and "Characteristics of the Japanese Man."

Japan's High Schools

Thomas P. Rohlen

(University of California Press, 1983)



64

The author, an anthropologist, spent more than a year in Kobe observing a cross section of five urban high schools. These included not only the most elite but also those vocational schools that were plagued by delinquency.

In this book he reports on the character of the institutions through descriptions of school organizations, classroom instruction, adolescent peer relations, and much more. Placing these details into a larger context makes visible the factors that form Japanese high schools and makes them what they are.

The factors include the competitive university entrance system, the differences in student education, and differences in social background. In turn the influence of high school education on Japan is assessed, how the student level of today will be the worker level of tomorrow.

The inherent contradictions among these considerations are examined and the anthropologist must conclude that providing Japan with a trained and disciplined work force is accomplished only at significant cultural and human costs.

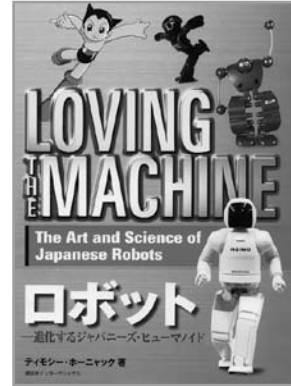
Rohlen not only renders an ethnographic account of five schools, he also draws a portrait of today's Japanese high school education, one in which the varied ethnographic findings are used to provide contextual analysis.

Loving the Machine:

The Art and Science of Japanese Robots

Timothy N. Hornyak

(Kodansha International, 2006)



Japan has long had an interest in humanoid robots. Other countries are now equally interested but a difference is that Japanese robots are built and marketed as friends. They are like pals or pets, they are warm and human-like.

In contradistinction, those of the West seem “all vacuum cleaners or war machines.” The U.S. has the terrifying Terminator while Japan has the friendly Atom Boy. Japan sees robots as potential colleagues rather than as potential adversaries.

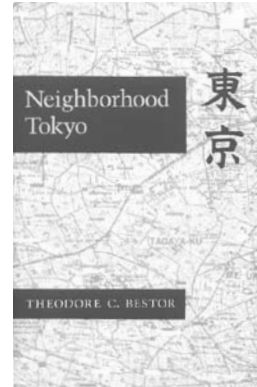
The reasons behind this attitude make up the thesis of this book. The author has said that the Japanese “are very successful at combining engineering and design in robotics. The result is that robots end up seeming a lot more like living beings, instead of just buckets of bolts ... Japanese feel an irresistible urge to treat them as fellow beings rather than lifeless automatons.”

There are numerous reasons for this. One of them is the demographic problem in Japan. The population is shrinking - by 2030 some third of all Japanese will be over 60 years old. The love for robots is based on the coming need of robots. Not only the elderly but also industry itself will be in need of helping robotic hands.

Neighborhood Tokyo

Theodore C. Bestor

(Stanford University Press, 1989)



66

This classic sociological account is an ethnographic analysis of the social fabric and internal dynamics of one small neighborhood—the residential and commercial district in Tokyo where Bestor carried out his fieldwork from 1979 through 1981.

It is a study of the social construct in (and maintenance of) a neighborhood in a society where such communities are said to be outmoded by the major trends of modernization and social change that have so transformed Japan in the last century. Bestor's is a study not of tradition in its aspect as historical continuity, but of traditionalism—the manipulation, and recombination of cultural patterns and symbols so as to legitimate contemporary social realities.

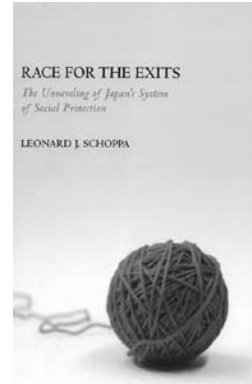
He examines the cliché that Tokyo is just a congeries of villages and then exposes a much more accepted “wisdom.” Urban neighborhoods, he says, are not rural villages and they do not exist as lingering remnants of moribund social forms. Rather, they continue as vital social units. Without the social “glue” that local institutions, shared values of community, and a sense of communal identity impart, neighborhoods could not effectively achieve the political and administrative ends that are so often the sole reasons for their existence.

Race for the Exits:

The Unraveling of Japan's System of Social Protection

Leonard J. Schoppa

(Cornell University Press, 2006)



Japan's system of social protection that grew up between the 1960s and the early 1980s was well-suited to its time. Now, however, there are a number of serious strains in the system. Japan is facing a declining supply of workers and many Japanese firms are struggling against a system of social protection that burdens them with high costs.

In addition, contrary to expectations, Japan's long-term recession has provoked no sustained political movement to replace the nation's malfunctioning economic structure. It would seem that the country's basic social contract has proved resistant to reform, if not to erosion.

As the author writes: "The only way the nation can steer itself onto a sustainable macroeconomic path is by adopting fundamental social and economic reforms designed to boost productivity, encourage the participation of women and immigrants in the workforce, and facilitate work-family balance so that families can choose to have more children."

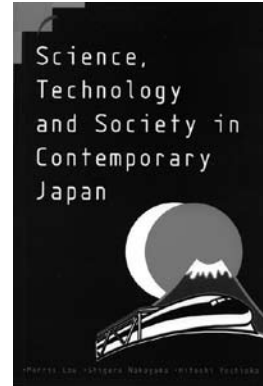
Now, instead of reform, firms shift jobs overseas, lifetime employment is no longer an expectations and women give up trying to balance family and career. These trends have created grave economic pressures. As industries reduce their domestic operations the economy is further diminished. The unraveling continues and accelerates.

Science, Technology and Society in Contemporary Japan

Morris Low / Shigeru Nakayama /

Hitoshi Yoshioka

(Cambridge University Press, 1999)



68

Here is a book exploring the relationship between science, technology, and Japanese society. It aims to examine how this relationship has contributed to economic growth and national well-being. A team of three leading scholars in the field present a synthesis of competing views on the role of science, technology and medical care in contemporary Japan.

The presentation discusses government policy and the private sectors, communication in the age of computers, the role of the automobile industry, the part played by both quality control and the aerospace industry. Also considered are medical care, the role of gender, and consumer electronics and their effects.

Some chapter headings will give an idea of the book and its scope: Cooperation vs. Competition; Quality vs. Quantity; National Interest vs. Local Interest; Domestic Technology vs. the Exportation of Technology; Women vs. Men in the Science and Technological Workforce.

Through this book the reader may gain some insight into the interplay between the different values and interests involved, the power and knowledge contained, all affecting their outcome in Japan. Though Japanese science is sometimes seen as lagging behind, this account finds the nation turning to science and technology to guarantee its future.

Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan

Robert N. Bellah

(The Free Press, 1957)



A question sometimes asked is how Japan could transform itself from a quasi-feudal to a modern industrial state in just fifty years. It shares with the rest of the nearby Asian homeland the same religious influences, the same traditionalism that has, in the opinion of a number of scholars, inhibited modern industrial capitalism in, say, India.

Bellah answers this question by offering a strong argument that the industrialization of Japan came through a special religious configuration. It affected Japan in the same way that European capitalism was influenced by Protestantism.

Religion during the Tokugawa Period (1600-1868) supported a greatly stabilized society, one now freed of civil wars. At the same time this led to a concentration of political power in the person of the emperor. Religion was closely associated both institutionally and ethically with the controls of this central political force.

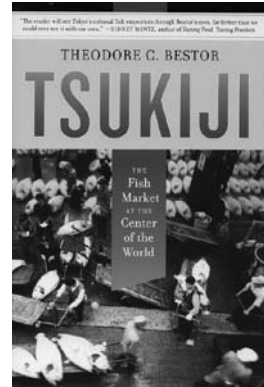
How this eventually affected the economy of the country is charted by the author. In short, the religious beliefs of the Japanese created a Protestant-like work ethic in Japan. It has been said that not since the publication of Ruth Benedict's view of wartime Japan has the field of Japanese studies been given such a comprehensive and ordered vision of motivations.

Tsukiji:

The Fish Market at the Center of the World

Theodore C. Bestor

(University of California Press, 2004)



70

This book is an ethnography of the Tsukiji fish market in Tokyo. It offers a detailed account of the economic trends, the political constraints and incentives, the consumer preferences and the whole complex web of social activities that support this typical and necessary organization.

Of it the author has said: “Corporations, cartels, and markets should be of as much interest to anthropologists as communities or clans. The critical issues of organizing social relations around production, exchange, and consumption—activities that determine ownership, distribute surpluses, legitimate property rights, and structure access to common resources—are of no less anthropological significance than the study of a moiety.”

Here Bestor has carried out his extensive fieldwork. What most interests him is how economic transactions are embedded in social institutions and how markets are as much about social and cultural trends as they are about pure economics.

The ideas that organize Bestor’s book are here used to define a Japanese food industry which is no more or no less socially embedded than any other complex economic institution in any other society. *Tsukiji* is a study through which we can gain an understanding as to how culture can influence the patterns of economic activity.