
Joy Hendry uses a social anthropological examination of one community, the village of Kurotsuchi on southerly Kyushu Island, to illuminate the pivotal role of marriage in Japanese society. Marriage from pre-Meiji times to the present, she points out, has been crucial to the continuation of the ie, that union of the genealogical family and household/property. Marriage establishes the house head as an integral member of the village associations for governance, tax collection, care of the shrines, road building, and mutual aid. Moreover, it brings together Shintoism and Buddhism in a harmonious blending of rituals concerning birth and death.

Notwithstanding its continued important traditional functions, marriage is, as Hendry so pointedly demonstrates, undergoing considerable change. The one-time samurai family system, with its obedience-centered Confucian values (including marriages arranged without the spouses even seeing one another), gave way to the miai marriage (where the husband and wife were allowed minimal interaction to estimate each other’s merits) and, to a lesser extent, in more recent times to the ren’ai or “love” marriage. Improvements in the status of women have occurred. The wife can no longer be killed for adultery, nor need she resort to a convent or the supposed magical powers of a “divorce nettle tree” to win freedom from her husband. Today, she has legal recourse if maltreated by her spouse. Parental consent for marriage is no longer necessary by law. Personal choice, in samurai terms, a “disruptive act, rebellious against both family and nation,” won legitimacy in post-war Japan. Joy Hendry details these developments both in Kurotsuchi and the Japanese nation. Her chapter on “The Historical Context,” although brief, is the best available exposition of those changes.

*MARRIAGE IN CHANGING JAPAN* is more than a mere treatment of marriage ceremony and changes. It is a fine anthropological description of many aspects of Kurotsuchi life-economic, educative, governmental, religious, ritualistic—a living chronicle of a people’s expectations, cooperation, and modes of existence. Within the household, Hendry lucidly describes the paternalism of familial authority, bath-taking, eating arrangements, and leisure-time activities. Relationships between parents and children, siblings, husbands and wives, and spouses and in-laws are all examined. Hendry has an eye for intricate detail but usually avoids excess. Her conciseness and well-organized style make this work an example which other anthropologists and ethnohistorians might do well to imitate.

Hendry’s generally comprehensive view is not without limitation,
however. Her examination of the reasons for choice of a specific spouse do not deal much with class or kinship concerns. These seem to be at least as important, if not more so, than the factors she does enumerate, which include the avoidance of *burakumin* (social pariahs), care for personal health of spouse, property considerations, the age of the bride, and religion. The non-specialist in Japanese studies may also find her use of no fewer than 200 Japanese words and concepts rather hard to follow. She makes some allowance for this by including a glossary of terms in the appendices, but the appearance of several unfamiliar words in the same sentence can occasionally prove problematic. These criticisms do not seriously detract from the meaning and clarity of her work; there is no doubt this book will prove a vibrant example for future researchers.

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During 1970 and 1973, University of Maryland professor of psychiatry Virginia Huffer spent some time with the women of the Lardil and Kaiadilt tribes who live on Mornington Island in northern Australia’s Gulf of Carpenteria. Forced to accommodate increasingly to Western ways, these women struggle to maintain traditional linkages while they undergo modern change. This conflict between the past and the future, as well as the everyday realities of their existence, are presented through Huffer’s psychobiographical lens, primarily through the intervention and words of her chief informant, Elsie Roughsey, a “cooperative, friendly, generous, and intelligent” Lardil woman who is, in aboriginal terms, a “good yarner.” Elsie’s tribal name—Labbarnor—“sweetness of the fig”—gives the book its title. The work is essentially Elsie’s statements mixed with descriptive and analytical observations by the author and short treatments of interviews with nine older Lardil women, seven younger (teens through twenties) Lardil women, and seven Kaiadilt women.

Lardil children had been brought to Mornington Island in the 1920s to be educated by white missionaries. Other Lardil continued to exist