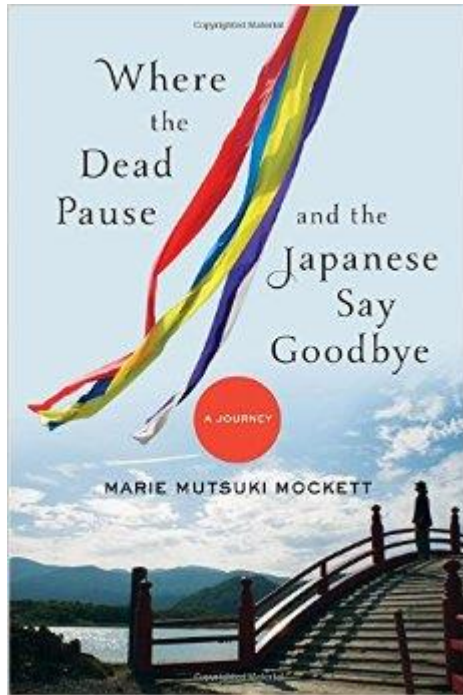


Highlighted Resources: March 2016

This month will be the 5th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake. Marie Mutsuki Mockett's memoir, [Where the Dead Pause and the Japanese Say Goodbye](#),



[Goodbye](#), looks at the aftermath of the earthquake and how it affected the many residents living in the Tohoku region. Mockett has a personal connection to the area as her family owns a temple in Iwaki, about eighty-five miles from Sendai in Tohoku. When the earthquake struck, their temple was slightly affected. However, it wasn't just the earthquake that brought grief to her family in Tohoku. At the same time, her father in America passed away unexpectedly. Throughout the book, she wrestles with the idea of

identity, her family's history, the history of Buddhism and Shintoism in Japan and the effects of a natural disaster on a country whose culture is so closely tied with nature.

Mockett's memoir is an educational journey for the reader and a personal journey for the author. She does an exceptional job of explaining Buddhism to the reader, describing the various sects and how they all developed. Her own relationship to Buddhism also changes throughout the book as she realizes that she wants to meditate more to become closer with her family at the temple. She writes of her visits to famous Buddhist temples known for their strict training programs. In particular, it is her experience at [清浄心院](#) (Shōjōshinin) that changes her views on the religion. She writes,

“Even now, months later, I can describe my time at Shōjōshinin, but there is a certain ineffable quality that escapes language, as there always is with things that shake us deeply” (Mockett, 156)

She also writes about the way nature is intertwined with Shintoism, the other main religion in Japan. In doing so, she comes to understand how the Japanese view life and death and why nature is so important. Her descriptions of Shinto help readers to understand why people take their shoes off in Japanese homes, why there are shrines in forests on hiking trails, and why it seems like every object in Japanese culture is alive.

Mockett is able to provide a sense of comfort with her writing. She is detailed in her descriptions of difficult subjects in a way that makes it accessible to readers from all backgrounds. She does not take away from the grief that members of the communities she visited have felt, but rather makes it understandable to people who may never have experienced this type of grief. In the end, Mockett comes full circle and is able to think about her relationship to Japan in a new light.