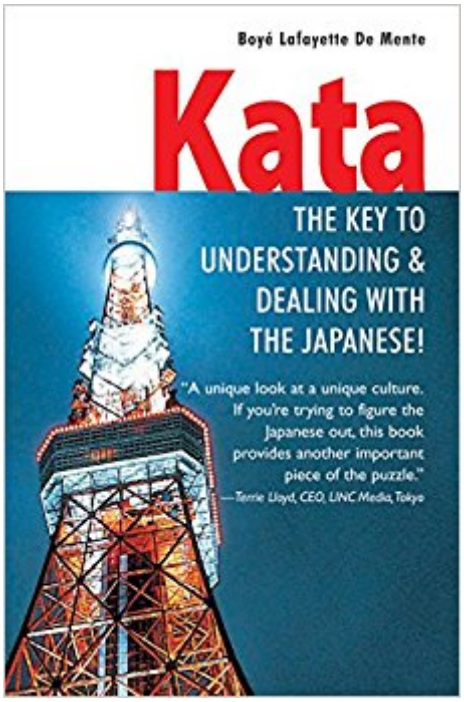
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Kata: The Key To Understanding And Dealing With The Japanese!



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Synopsis

"A unique look at a unique culture. If you’re trying to figure the Japanese out, this book provides another important piece of the puzzle."Ã¢â ¬â •Terrie Lloyd, CEO, LINC Media, TokyoIn this first book ever to explain why the Japanese think and behave the way they do, veteran Japanologist Boye Lafayette De Mente, author of more than 30 books on Japan, unlocks the mystery of kataÃ¢â ¬â •the cultural molds that have traditionally shaped and defined the attitudes, behavior, and character of the Japanese and are primarily responsible for the traits and talents that make them different from other people.In 70 brief essays, ranging from "The Art of Bowing" and "Importance of the Apology" to "The Compulsion for Quality" and "Exchanging Name-Cards," the author looks at the origin, nature, use, and influence of kata (literally the form and order of doing things) in Japanese life and how this cultural conditioning causes the Japanese to think and react in the way they do. Because all relations with the Japanese are influenced by kata, the key to dealing with the Japanese in personal, business or political matters requires knowing how to work within the confines of kata and when to induce or compel them to break the kata and behave in a non-Japanese way.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Even long-time students of Japan will find the book illuminating and though-provoking."
Ã¢â ¬â •Sam Jameson, former Tokyo Bureau Chief of the Chicago Tribune and the Los Angeles Times

Boye Lafayette De Mente has been involved with Japan, China, and Korea since the late 1940s as a member of a U.S. intelligence agency, student, trade journalist, editor, and author working out of Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, and Singapore. He is a graduate of Jochi University in Tokyo and The American Institute for Foreign Trade (now Thunderbird: The School of Global Management). His 70-plus books include Japan's Cultural Code Words, Business Guide to Japan, and Japan Unmasked.

Boring. Every time I pick it up I fall asleep. It seems like it exaggerates the rigidity of Japanese culture in a very one dimensional way. There are many wonderful artists and inventors in Japan who think outside the box. According to this book creativity and innovation like that is not possible.

I work for a Japanese company and this book has helped me understand the Japanese culture much better this making my job easier.

I wished this book was available 40 years ago when I first started working with the Japanese. It would have helped illuminate mistakes and lowered expectations.

Well, what can I say, the Author clearly has an understanding of what Kata is! He has taken it pretty far and applying it at all aspects of the Japanese cultural identity and he does it real good. This is a MUST read book for those of you out there that can not instinctively read other cultures and the socio-cultural meanings behind the fasad, but it is a must read book for anyone trying to understand the Japanese society.

Sent to another party who might be able to get some good advice dealing with the Japanese business culture in her profession

Just received the book today and while the content looks worthwhile, I don't believe the description of the book was accurately represented because there were red marginal notes on pages 1 - 24, front and back, with all other pages "as described."Condition: Used - Very GoodBook has appearance of only minimal use. All pages are undamaged with no significant creases or tears. With pride from Motor City.

This interesting little book manages to pack insightful observations about the history and

permutations of traditional Japanese "kata," or form in 168 pages. The easiest way to understand kata is that it’s the Japanese people’s idea of the "correct" way of doing something, which in Western equivalent, is etiquette. The Japanese, having derived its culture from a military heritage, infuses "form" into every aspect of their lives: everything from the correct form of humility, to bowing, exchanging name cards, ambiguity in giving answers, making an apology, dealing with foreigners, traveling in groups, and running an office. While this book seems to be geared more towards businessmen and women attempting or considering doing business with the Japanese, it also briefly looks at the cult of cuteness, infantilism, copying, and the Japanese approach to baseball. There’s even a quick observation of the importance of role-playing (which some of us may know as cos-play) and that those we now see at the Hajaruku district, while appearing outlandish, will return to their staid office clothing come Monday morning.I read in other reviews that De Mente exhibits a certain ethnocentric arrogance in his look at Japanese culture (the author worked in Japan as a member of the U.S. Military Intelligence Agency in 1949), so I paid additional attention for that monster to rear its ugly head. But I found that that’s precisely where the strength of some of De Mente’s observations lie. No one ever learns anything when everyone is at their best behavior. The protection of etiquette is that it veils what we really want to say. Unfortunately, the quoted praises in the bookcover are from people in similar positions, meaning non-Japanese. I’d be interested to hear what the ethnic Japanese practicing Kata really think about De Mente’s observations, because an analysis of behavior is sometimes akin to conspiracy theories: easy to point out, difficult to disprove. You have a list of evidence and that list traps you into what you "see" in order to support of your evidence.De Mente states at one point that the Japanese are eager to promote their kata mentality and "continue to emphasize its strong points as the ultimate social formula which the rest of the world should adopt." I tend to think this is not accurate, as all the Japanese I have come across are insular, keep to themselves, and have no interest in proselytizing their "way" to outsiders. De Mente continually brings up the notion that the Japanese use language, kata, and Japanese-ness as barriers to outsiders (foreigners) from penetrating their culture. That, to me, doesn’t seem as if the Japanese are all that interested in getting the world to adopt their social formula at all. By contrast, when comparing the Japanese to progressive Western culture, De Mente observes that "their society is ruled by form and formulas and in a sense, in many areas, is empty of the individual human content that makes up a much more complete and satisfying emotional and spiritual life." It seems instead, the writer feels that Western culture is the ultimate social formula that the Japanese should adopt.There’s also mention of how the Japanese tend to be unfair ("in the Western sense") and consider anyone who they have not developed good working relationships with to be "fair

game." But then he advises that to get the upper hand - when dealing with the Japanese - one should draw them away from their base, use English as a barrier when one wants to be demanding and get things accomplished, and exploit the tendency of the Japanese to treat any transactions made in a language other than their own as an event that exists in the "other" realm from their reality.The author often portrays the Japanese as tit-for-tat businessmen who trade favors, lunches, and parties for business deals. He talks about "Machiavellian political intrigue" where office workers block and sabotage each other's projects for personal promotion. The truth is, this has nothing to do with Japanese kata. It's capitalism at it's best, as a global Western culture is quickly replacing anachronistic societies. Working at many different offices in New York City and New Jersey , I have seen these same white collar dramas play out time and again, without a single Japanese person in sight.I don't want to give the impression that this is a negative book about the Japanese. It does laud many of the great qualities of a disappearing culture. After all, this is the very same author who wrote "Why the Japanese Are a Superior People!" I love the spot-on sections on the Japanese being "modernized, but not Westernized," the superficial acquisition of Western "product" as identity, and silence utilized as a weapon to expose the Americans, who fear pauses and combat that fear by talking non-stop. That had me rolling on the floor.

This is one of the only books on Japanese culture that was written in such a fashion that I couldn't put it down. It covered a variety of topics I hadn't even thought to ask, and didn't address things like "Japanese people bow because it's polite", but "Japanese people bow because it's polite, this is why it's polite, it relates to their early culture because of this, and here are some examples of conditioning as it relates to the bow, etc etc". It's very well written, very interesting, and eye-opening to the westerner. I would recommend this book to anyone who has a genuine interest in Japanese culture that goes beyond anime, and would DEFINITELY recommend it to those pursuing Japanese and Asian studies in college.

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