



## Can't Go Native?

PRODUCED, DESIGNED, AND EDITED BY

DAVID W. PLATH

MEDIA PRODUCTION GROUP

ASIAN EDUCATIONAL MEDIA SERVICE

DVD, 56 MINUTES, 2010

Reviewed by David Huebner



Press photos from the film's website at <http://www.cantgonative.com/>.



*Can't Go Native?* is the intriguing and very personalized account of American anthropologist Keith Brown's long relationship with the Japanese people. As a graduate student in 1961, Brown visited Japan for doctoral research. He fell in love with Japan and her peoples, culture, and customs. Brown's numerous trips to Japan are chronicled in this film, from his early encounters with a people transitioning to a post-World War II economy to a nation that ranks among the world's most affluent countries.

Most of Brown's work was centered on the urban Mizusawa and the rural Shinjō, which now are threaded together in an urban fabric. Utilizing the view of an anthropologist, the acuity of a historian, and the observations of a geographer, Brown engages us in many aspects of postwar Japanese life: land reform, merchants, samurai-descended families, farmers, transportation, family life, eldercare, and what Brown calls his "investment" in the people. Promoting his belief that today we are "missing the long-term wave of human action and interaction," Brown uses keen fieldwork techniques to learn about the culture, customs, traditions, and history of the Japanese people in this part of northeast Japan.

*Can't Go Native?* challenges the common assumption that globalization is making all peoples alike. While Japan is now a very modern and globalized nation, the country retains a sense of legacy that has not diminished with technology and modernization. Cities that Brown once visited that had not even one car—and required biking to get around—have vastly changed but still retain half the houses listed in the 1872 census.

Brown's secrets of success as an anthropologist owe much to his ability not only to observe the culture but also to engage and interact with the people.

Brown learns the language, eats the food, wears the clothing, and even participates in religious ceremonies, such as ancestral worship.

As a native Iowan who grew up on a farm, Keith Brown is able to blend his childhood experiences with his work in Japan. This film delivers in all aspects for social scientists, and Brown succeeds in acquainting us with the very personal side of the Japanese people, including their beliefs, thoughts, and daily activities. Brown noted that "Japanese life had wrapped itself around me," and yet he still had "to go out and unwrap it." The gift is opened, and Brown has delivered the package, so sit back and enjoy this very personal and heart warming documentary. ■

DAVID HUEBNER is a World Geography teacher at Ravenwood High School in Brentwood, Tennessee. He also instructs preservice teachers and teaches social studies as an adjunct at Vanderbilt University, Belmont University, and Trevecca Nazarene University. David is active in his local community and the Tennessee Council for Social Studies. He received the 2008 Teacher of the Year Award from the Tennessee National Geographic Alliance.

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