

Buchbesprechung

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ITÔ, Y.: Behaviour and Social Evolution of Wasps. The Communal Aggregation Hypothesis. Oxford Series in Ecology and Evolution, edited by R. M. MAY & P. H. HARVEY; 160 pages with 26 black & white pictures, tables and graphics, 15.5 x 23 cm, paperback, £ 13.50

In this book, YOSIAKI ITÔ presents data on tropical wasps which encourage him to suggest that kin selection has been over-emphasized as an evolutionary explanation of sociality. He concentrates on the Vespidae (paper wasps and hornets), a group much discussed by evolutionary biologists because it exhibits all stages of social evolution: subsociality, primitive eusociality, and advanced eusociality. The author reports field observations by himself and others in Central America, Asia, and Australia, showing that multiple egg-layers in a nest are not uncommon. Because coexistence of many 'queens' leads to lower relatedness among colony members than in single-queen colonies, he suggests that kin selection may not be the most powerful force determining observed social patterns. Instead, sub-social wasps may first have aggregated for defence purposes in habitats with a high risk of predation, with mutualistic associations among many queens. Through parental manipulation and then kin selection, differentiation into within-generation castes may have followed. Of interest to all students of ecology, evolution, and behaviour, this book beautifully illustrates the ability to combine wide-ranging data with thoughtful questions that is the author's trademark.

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