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KYBURZ, JOSEF A. *Cultes et croyances au Japon. Kaida, une commune dans les montagnes du Japon central* [Cults and beliefs in Japan. Kaida, a community in the mountains of central Japan]. Paris: Editions Maisonneuve & Larose, 1987. xxv+293 pages. Maps, figures, plates, bibliography. Paperback FF 152.—; ISBN 2-7068-0911-6. (In French)

Kyburz's work is based on fieldwork carried out during a series of visits in 1970-1971, and again in 1973-1975 to Kaida, a community of 600 households in the area of Kiso, in Nagano Prefecture. Kaida formerly belonged to one of the physically and culturally more isolated regions of Japan. It was not until the 1950s that it was thoroughly incorporated into the mainstream of Japanese society. Because of this relative isolation that was maintained until recently, Kyburz sees in Kaida a privileged opportunity to reconstruct "the past" with the abundant aid of historical records and, most of all, with the help of the living memory of informants that experienced life as it used to be in the old age, before modern age came bursting in (viii).

The nature of J. A. Kyburz's work seems to defy easy categorizations. As far as it is a detailed description of a given community based upon firsthand fieldwork and participant observations it is anthropological, as far as it is a meticulous reconstruction of past records concerning a local community it is historical, and then, as far as it is dedicated to "the urgent task of documenting traditional ways of life faced with modernization, the harbinger of the most profound changes" (as suggested by the publisher on the rear-side of the cover) it is primarily folkloristic in orientation.

The totality of the book under review is meant to give a comprehensive picture of all the different forms of collective worship found within Kaida, the community singled out for a study. A later publication, announced in the introduction, will then treat the more particular worship of the individual, the family or other restricted cult groups.

"Cults and beliefs in Japan" is divided into three major parts. First there is a long and detailed introduction to the environment, the geography, and the history of the community in Kaida. It makes for highly interesting reading, being as it is a "thick description" of living conditions in the region.

This is followed by Part One, describing the two major forms of officially recognized religious practices of the highlanders, centered around the Shinto shrines and the Buddhist temples within their community. Here the reader is presented with much descriptive material, reporting the exact lay-out, forms, and size of various edifices used for the religious practices, reinforced with the details of their past histories. This first part of the book also contains an overview of the seasonal cycles of religious life

generated within the precincts of all the different sacred buildings.

For readers familiar with the existing literature on the general subject of Shinto rites in the rural life of Japan, Shinto religious practices in Kaida seem largely to conform with the norm. Kyburz explains how Shinto worship in Kaida is a historical product having always reflected the organization of the local community, but having also, in the not so distant past, served the function of grafting it to the national body, the *kokutai*, through the network of State Shinto. Special worship of the war-dead at the time of the yearly festival within the precincts of one of the local shrines is unusual, though, and so is the chanting by the common participants in the festival of songs called *yokote*.

On the subject of Buddhist rites, detailed descriptions are included, some of which (like the ones relating to ancestor worship) one might rather have expected to find in the announced, forthcoming volume of Kyburz's work, to be devoted to "individual and family cult." The role and place of the temple priests in the community is described in general terms, that correspond closely to the common state of affairs in other parts of Japan. The reader is also provided with an account of the historical conditions that led to the systematic introduction and organization of Buddhism in the district of Kiso during the early Tokugawa period. The first mention of Buddhism in Kiso corresponds also more or less to the date of the oldest written records relating the history of the region. Perhaps the most noticeable thing about this chapter is Kyburz's implicit emphasis on some sort of fundamental outlandishness of the Buddhist religion within the community in question (141-143). The near avoidance of unnecessary contact with temples in people's daily life, along with their common ignorance of the contents of orthodox teachings of the Buddhist faith, are interpreted as bearing witness to that state of affairs.

There exists a scholarly tradition in Japan, a legacy from the Japanese School of National Learning, handed down to the present day through the Yanagita-Origuchi school of studies of folklore, that has tended to picture Buddhism in Japan as a permanent outsider to the religious sensibilities of the people. A younger generation of Japanese scholars of folklore in recent times have on the other hand begun promoting a reevaluation of the role and the importance of Buddhism in Japan and the deep marks it has left upon the culture. In any event, in spite of his emphasis on the marginal role played by Buddhism as an organized religion within the community, Kyburz's holistic account of religious life in Kaida seems all the same to point to a considerable impact, to say the least, that it has had, and still has, on the cultural life of the highlanders, both directly and indirectly.

All death rituals are conducted in a Buddhist fashion in Kaida as they are almost everywhere else in Japan, and, as well, the greater part of the folk beliefs of the community seemed to this reviewer to be modeled after, or expressed through, Buddhist imagery.

This brings us to Part Two of the book, where various things relating to the folk beliefs of Kaida come into focus. Horse breeding is reported to have been central to the social and cultural life of the inhabitants of Kaida. In this part Kyburz notes the widespread practice all over Japan to associate worship of the horse with celebrations of spring. It is presumably based on the belief that the spring festival marks the descent of the *kami* from the mountains to the fields, and the horse was seen as the divine mount for that annual displacement of the divinity. He then suggests that the cult practices in Kaida centered on the horse may have superimposed themselves on those ancient traditions because of the extraordinary importance of the breeding of horses in that region (209). The birth of a horse seems to have been treated ritually as

if it were a human being: preoccupations with an easy birth; gift giving to neighbors after birth; celebrations on the seventh day after birth, etc. (213). The death of a horse was treated with the same ritual care as if it were a human being (214).

The image of Batō-Kannon, Kyburz explains, dominated the ritual universe consecrated to the horse. "When we look closer, it turns out that this image was composed, as it were, by two ideas that were different, but at the same time merged; on the one hand there was the concept of a tutelary divinity (similar to the one protecting the human community), and on the other hand, the one of a bodhisattva characterized by his compassion and benevolence. If the former seems likely to have risen from an indigenous foundation, the second is certainly a contribution from the outside" (216). Kyburz's account and analysis of the folk religion of Kaida are first and foremost aimed at tracing the extent to which it can be understood as a function of local traditions, how it has grown as if naturally out of the environment and from the patterns of subsistence that the inhabitants of the region have maintained and developed over the centuries. External sources of religious inspiration and the diffusion of Greater Traditions are accordingly relegated to a secondary position.

The book is finally brought to an end with a few partial conclusions that will presumably be further substantiated in the announced volume on individual and family forms of religious life in Kaida.

In this review I have only evoked a few of the multiple sides to traditional religious life in Kaida as described by Kyburz. His work is undoubtedly a welcome contribution to Japanese studies. What we have here is the foundation to a unique attempt to build a solid monograph around the religious aspects of social existence in rural Japan.

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CHINA

KÖHN, LIVIA. *Seven Steps to the Tao: Sima Chengzhen's Zuowanglun*. Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XX. Nettetal/Germany: Steyler Verlag Wort und Werk, 1987. 205 pages. Appendix of Chinese texts, bibliography, index. Paper DM 70.—; ISBN 3-8050-0195-9; ISSN 0179-261X.

Livia Köhn has made a major contribution to the study of religious Taoism and Chinese meditational practices. Early research on Taoism centered primarily on the period from its inception in the second century through the sixth century. A secondary focus has been the Sung and Yuan, particularly the Pure and Bright Way of Loyalty and Filial Piety (*Jingming zhongxiao dao* 淨明忠孝道, studied primarily by AKIZUKI Kan'ei) and the Complete Perfection movement (*Quanzhen jiao* 全真教, studied by CHEN Yuan, SUN Kekuan, KUBO Noritada, and others). Tang Taoism has remained a gap in our knowledge, a void broken only by Edward SCHAFER's *Mao Shan in T'ang Times* and Isabelle ROBINET's study of commentaries to the *Laozi*. The present work offers an annotated translation of four major texts in the Taoist meditational tradition.

The centerpiece of the book is a translation of the *Discourse on Sitting in Oblivion* by the eighth-century patriarch of the Supreme Purity sect, Sima Chengzhen. It is preceded by a roughly fifty-page-long analytical essay, which attempts to place the work in the Chinese meditative tradition.