

appreciated objectively and widely for what they truly are: one fascinating tradition among many.

Every chapter in this book provokes substantial thought. It is well worth a close reading. Not all the contributors are as revolutionary in their thinking as Moriya and Umesao; one or two might not fully agree with the two editors. But scholars of *geinō* and of Japanese *geinō* scholarship will benefit hugely from this landmark work.

NOTE:

1. From the program of *Keshō's* recent North American tour.

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WALTHALL, ANNE. *Social Protest and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Japan*. The Association for Asian Studies Monograph No. XLIII. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1986. Xviii+268 pages. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$19.50; ISBN 0-8165-0961-1.

Social protest movements can be and have been studied from a variety of standpoints such as political, economic, ideological, and so forth. Rather than opting for one of these lines Walthall takes the position that such movements are only the surface of a much more complex substratum of beliefs, values, and attitudes of their actors. In order to understand the significance of an incident such as a rice riot in Edo, it is important to see it not only from the authorities' side, but also from the side of the actors themselves. For this purpose Walthall makes wide use of documents which may sometimes be shunned by historians but which are of primary interest to folklorists, namely tales, songs, chronicles, etc., created by the actors themselves. Walthall does not analyze the form or structure of such texts. She rather strives to disclose what they tell us about how their authors judged their own situation, what they did to redeem it, and how they assessed the result of their struggles. In this respect Walthall's study offers quite a different view of what happened in Japanese farming villages during the time of the *pax Tokugawa*, the Tokugawa or Edo Period, compared to the mostly static picture offered by most Japanese folklorists. They, in a continued effort to unravel the original and pristine form of customs or forms of social relationships and functions, often present a picture of life in a village which seems to be far removed from, or certainly not seriously involved in, tensions which could dangerously threaten the very functioning of a community.

Walthall concentrates on events during the Tenmei years (1781-1789), a period of conspicuous unrest caused by the farmer's precarious economic situation. In order to explain the reasons and consequences of those happenings, she includes the century before and after those years as their long-range historical context. The author rests her argument largely on linguistic evidence of the forms of protest which surfaced during this period. This includes mainly three types of documents: the petitions filed by the villagers with the ruler after thorough deliberations and following a prescribed form; the chronicles, written by persons of a certain status, like a village headman, as a warning to their successors as to what could happen if they should dare to abuse their position bluntly to their own advantage; the tales, which are *post factum* accounts

transmitted years after the events among the population as an attempt to explain the unbelievable.

Walthall intersperses her argument with a great deal of description which makes her points come alive as in a good story. There are two points which I believe are of special importance in this study. In order to appreciate them one has to keep in mind the basically rigid (or increasingly rigid) frame of status and customary regulations which governed Tokugawa society. Walthall skillfully shows how this structure is responsible for the peasants' plight, and yet provides at the same time fixed alleys of relief, as e.g. the petitions. Although the form of such petitions was strictly regulated, the peasants, with increasing skill, learned to use them not only to be granted a delay in taxes, but to employ them as a lever to press for more permanent administrative reforms to their advantage. Increasing insight into the connections between the mode of government and their situation and also into the importance of the market, especially for cash commodities other than rice, prepared them for such activities. The vexing point for us is that these movements were all very limited in scale, basically contained, surprisingly orderly and short lived, and this in spite of the seriousness and precariousness of the peasants' situation. What the movements bring about is usually some reform, but never a revolution. Therefore, it can be seen that the actors must have shared in a basic assumption, *viz.* that of a society where each member is structurally placed, yet at the same time is granted some possibility for movement and innovation. The consequence of such an insight would be that, even if we succeed in some cases to describe accurately the structural principles of a village or a shrine organisation, it does not mean that just by this fact alone we have automatically got a hold on what really happened or happens in a community in terms of its members' assumptions or expectations. This would not only be a warning to folklorists, but also an incentive to have another look at the familiar material.

A second point which is of particular interest to folklorists is the analogy Walthall sees between actions of protest and religious festivals. The use of symbols with strong religious overtones as marks of identification for the crowd going on a rampage or the belief evident in the later tales, that the crowd had been led by some supernaturally strong and mysterious hero, shows that the people themselves understood their actions as such an analogy. The action itself and its excitement created a strong sentiment of equality among the participants which disregarded the hierarchical arrangement of everyday society. This provided a way for *catharsis* from repressed emotions as well as towards the creation of a new and better world. In such a context it is interesting to compare the roles of two kinds of outsiders: on one side the victims of a riot who are branded as scheming against the general agreement of the villagers, and on the other side those strong otherworldly helpers who suddenly appear to lead the rioting crowd. The author does not intend to discuss this point in further detail, but her identification of this problem is very suggestive.

Walthall's book is an inspiring example of how dry texts can be brought to life to tell us about the thoughts and feelings of the people who produced them. In this respect it can be hoped that its low price will be an incentive to buy and read it. However, I feel that the intention to produce a good book cheaply has gone a bit too far with the reproduction of maps. They give the reader no clue how a landscape looks and where a particular area is located within a province or any recognizable section of the country. They also do not disclose whether a line might be a river or a road. It can easily be imagined that natural borders or links between villages and hamlets could have played a role in directing the thrust of those movements and therefore, in order to gain a clearer understanding of the circumstances of a movement in space, it would

have been helpful to have a more concrete idea of how an area was actually laid out.

Walthall has done us a great service in showing concretely that a village in the later Tokugawa period was a much more dynamic entity in many respects than it is often held to be. But beyond this the book has more general relevance especially for folklorists, because it shows a good and suitable way to link forms of oral tradition to the social situation of those who produced it.

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CENTRAL ASIA | SOVIET UNION

LEVIN, ISIDOR, editor. *Märchen vom Dach der Welt. Überlieferungen der Pamirvölker* [Tales from the roof of the world. Oral traditions from the peoples of the Pamir]. Translated by Gisela Schenkowitz. *Die Märchen der Weltliteratur*. Köln: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1986. 336 pages. Map, bibliography. Hardcover DM 32.00; ISBN 3-424-00883-4.

The Eugen Diederichs Verlag in its prestigious series *Die Märchen der Weltliteratur* (folktales in world literature) has already published many valuable collections of the folk narratives of various Asian peoples. The present volume by the distinguished Soviet folklorist Isidor Levin, the co-editor and compiler of the comprehensive *Svod Tadzhikskogo fol'klora I* (Moscow 1981) offers a rare insight into the oral traditions of the Pamir mountains, a true *terra incognita* for most Western readers.

The Pamir region (also known as Badakhshan) forms the eastern part of the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan, and also extends into Afghanistan, Pakistan and China. It has sheltered various small East Iranian languages, collectively called the Pamir languages, such as the Shughni group, the Yazhulami, Wakhi, Ishkashmi, and Munji, which are the supposed remnants of the tongues spoken by the ancient Baktrians and Sakas, who once dominated the area. The present population of these Pamir peoples is officially estimated to number 70-80 thousand (cf. Oranskii 1979, 39). In spite of a conscious policy to preserve the ethnic identity of these groups, their traditional bilingualism (Pamir languages plus a local, so-called Badakhshan version of Tajik, which functions as lingua franca between the various ethnic groups) now rapidly changes to monolingualism, i.e. to Tajik. Actually, many of the tales included in this book were apparently recorded in Tajik and Soviet Pamirists point out that nowadays only the members of the Shughni language-groups still tell their tales in their original tongue.

The linguistic and folkloristic heritage of these little known peoples has been studied primarily by Russian/Soviet scholars.

The folk narratives of this region were made accessible for the first time to a larger reading public through the pioneering publication in Russian of *Skazki narodov Pamira* by a group of leading Soviet Pamirists (Grunberg and Steblin-Kamenskii 1976). In spite of a certain similarity with this work in the title Professor Levin's book is a new undertaking and not just a German translation of the former collection. He publishes here thirty-four tales taken mainly from the Archives of the Tajik Academy of Sciences in Dushanbe and from dialectological publications of Soviet Pamirists.

The tales are topically arranged under the following four headings: "On the power of women" (ten tales, 7-93), "On magicians, kings and Simurg" (seven tales, 94-154), "On interpreters of dreams, swindlers and wise counselors" (seven tales, 155-207), and "On the cunningness and tricks of animals" (ten tales, 208-239).