

EGENTER, NOLD. *Göttersitze aus Schilf und Bambus. Jährlich gebaute Kult-fackeln als Male, Zeichen und Symbole. Eine bauethnologische Untersuchung der ujigami-Rituale des Volkshintō um die Stadt Ōmihachiman, Japan* [Sacred Symbols of Reed and Bamboo. Annually built cult torches as spatial signs and symbols. A study of the building traditions of the *ujigami* Shintō rituals as practiced around the town of Ōmihachiman in Japan]. (Schweizer Asiatische Studien, Monographie No. 4) Bern, Frankfurt / Main, Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1982. 152 pp., 24 drawings, 74 photos, glossary. Paper sFr 55.—. ISBN 3-261-04821-2 (German and English text)

The author, Nold Egenter, Architect ETH and building ethnologist, was involved in field research in about one hundred villages of Shiga Prefecture (Japan) over a period of four years from 1972 to 1976. His research concerned cultic torches used at village Shintō festivals (the German term "Ur-Shintō" should be strictly avoided; see Naumann 1970).

The greater part of these materials was published in 1980 on the occasion of the ETH (Federal Institute of Technology, Zürich, Switzerland)-exhibition "Göttersitz und Menschenhaus" as a catalogue together with a detailed introduction, photos and drafts under the title "Bauform als Zeichen und Symbol" (See the review in *AFS* XLI (1982): 132-134). The book under review here is a more detailed monographic case study of one representative village out of these materials: an attractive publication, bilingual (German-English), Japanese definitions given often complete with Japanese characters, numerous drawings, figures and photos.

The cultic torches (*taimatsu* 松明) explored by Egenter are objects built from reed and bamboo with a height of several meters. They are erected on the occasion of the annual spring festival in the shrine precinct of Ueda village near Lake Biwa, which comprises the main Shinoda shrine and the other *ujigami* 氏神 shrines of the village's four hamlets.

In the short chapter "The *taimatsu* festival of Ueda" (13-20), the author describes the place, the shrine and the festival (which lasts three days) as well as the cult groups; standardizes the torches, and explains his building ethnologist's and bulding historian's approaches to the explored data. Primary *taimatsu* are not torches (therefore the festival belonging to them is not a fire-festival in the deeper sense), but are cultic buildings as temporary seats of gods (*yorishiro* 依代) during the shrine festival, which are burned after the festival's end.

Egenter differentiates two types of buildings: those of immovable structures, erected directly on a definite location, and movable ones, which are built horizontally and after that transported to their final places in order to be erected there.

In the following chapter detailed descriptions of the construction of the two types are given, explained by drafts and photos. Here the immovable torch-type is more exactly divided into two structural possibilities: a column-like and a hut-like truss. Both are built by the adult male members of the village's cult groups. On the contrary the movable high-column forms are built by the young men's groups of the four hamlets and erected in the shrine precinct after a procession during the night.

After the building specification an evaluation of form and symbolism is given. Depending on the construction these are primarily based on paired opposites such as movable-immovable, full-empty, bright-dark, technical-natural etc., as well as on numbers of ropes or knots. But the author's most significant point with the im-

movable structures is their function as spatial signs within the shrine precinct and the village's world. On the other hand the characteristic of the movable high-column type is its variety in location. This reflects the relations of the four hamlets to one another, and the relationships between the hamlets and the main shrine.

Nevertheless Egenter does not recognize a contrast between the immovable and the movable forms, but sees only a polar variant proceeding from the inversion of the reed element as well as its enlargement by staggering. This observation leads the author to an important indication, namely the possibility of formal and constructional development in primitive building methods.

Egenter leads to general reflections about reed as the material primarily used and compares column forms of stone architecture and plant columns of the ancients. Connected herewith are considerations about the evaluation of the various types out of one hypothetical prototype.

Egenter concludes his research with an interpretation of these cultic buildings as "time relations determined by materials used," as "built time." In his opinion the temporary erection and intentional destruction of ritual buildings erected out of transitory material should be comprehended as a symbol of continuity in the change of life, whereas the erection of the buildings themselves and the festival should be seen as a break in the daily working life of the village community.

The author's approach is one seldom realized by the ethnology concerning Japan and the book is an important and competent documentation in the ergology of one part of a ritual. Of course, the study is mainly written from a building historian's point of view, which cannot and may not be evaluated in this journal, but it can open new possibilities for comparison and analysis in the fields of cultural and religious anthropology.

Unfortunately the present monograph was not published at the same time as the exhibition catalogue, as was the original plan, but about two years later. Firstly the catalogue presents the complete comparison materials which the author gathered during the same field research, and secondly in a long introduction he points out his theoretical basis. In order to make reading the monograph more effective a distinct reference to the catalogue at an adequate place by the author or the editor is to be expected. In this introduction Egenter explains his evaluation of the present cultic objects as symbolic, non-domestic buildings, deals with the possibilities of internal Japanese and intercultural comparisons, and classifies the symbolism of the pillars as subordinate and not in the first place relevant for the meaning of the structures. Further, the catalogue contains "general considerations about the festival traditions under research," a much more detailed and clearer description than that given in the monographic study, where the reader has to collect the necessary information from chapter 1, figures 6 to 8, and a couple of head-words in the glossary (e.g. *gōsha*, *honsai*, *kami-oroishi*, *ujiko*, *waka-rencū*, *yomiya*).

But because Egenter's decided approach as a building ethnologist in a study of instrumental elements of a ritual necessitates sufficient description of the ritual as well especially if the author does not aim only at documentation, but goes beyond that to give an interpretation of the objects, which should demonstrate their character as temporary signs pointing at the spatial and social organization of the village community itself. So the term *miyaza* 宮座 appears only in the catalogue, though it is a clue to the understanding of this kind of *ujigami*-rite and associates Egenter's work with studies on a crucial problem in Japanese culture still deserving a lot of research.

In fact one has to admit that the strictly ethnological conclusions remain rather vague, but in addition to its unquestioned documentary value the simultaneous reading

of the catalogue and the present monograph is very stimulating for scholars of folklore, cultural anthropology or else, too.

Three partly incidental points at the end: first, plate 1 (map of the region around the town Ōmihachiman) definitely needs a legend in a European language and, above all, an attached map of Japan as a whole. Second, it would be much more convenient for the reader if the plates, like the photos, followed at the end, for because of the chapter-by-chapter translation into English the plates have been separated by pages from the text related to them. Lastly, one cannot suppress some reservations with regard to the English version in comparison with the German text, which seems to be much more precise and far reaching, so that doubts may occur concerning the real contents of a certain statement.

REFERENCE CITED

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HESS, ALBERT G. and SHIGEYO MURAYAMA. *Everyday Law in Japanese Folk Art: Daily Life in Meiji Japan, As Seen Through Petty Law Violations: Woodcuts, c. 1878*. Aalen, Federal Republic of Germany: Scientia Verlag, 1980. 64 pp., 72 plates. Bibliography, index. US \$29.50 ISBN 3-511-09080-6

In 1878 a broadside was published in Kyoto presenting seventy vignettes illustrating petty infractions of the law (*kaii*). This woodblock print is the intriguing subject of Hess and Murayama's volume. The broadside's illustrations were printed on a single sheet measuring approximately thirty-five by fifty centimeters, entitled *Kaii Zaimoku Nanajū Kajō* 註違罪目七十箇條 (which the authors translate as "Minor Law Violations: Seventy Regulations"). The plates of the present volume enlarge each vignette separately, and the authors provide captions for each illustration with English translations of the original admonitions as well as brief comments or explanations for every vignette and provision of the ordinance. Hess and Murayama have also included a forty-one page text to accompany the plates.

The illustrations give fascinating glimpses of problems of daily life in urban Japan shortly after the Meiji Restoration, from which one can infer some of the attitudes towards law and order that existed then (and perhaps now). The simple, roughly executed scenes suggest the flavor of contemporary life in much the same fashion as do the more sophisticated, more carefully wrought *ukiyo-e* of the Tokugawa period; as the authors point out, these woodcuts resemble Hokusai's *manga*, or sketchbooks. Particularly interesting is the portrayal of the sometimes incongruous introduction of Western material culture into the lives of ordinary citizens, and the apparent ambivalence with which Western influences were viewed; in most of the frames that show Western dress, vehicles, or other items, it is the owner, wearer, or driver of the Western article who is seemingly at fault.

Though the majority of the infractions could as easily have been problems of earlier or later ages, clearly some arose only with the introduction of Western tech-