BOOK REVIEWS

Ôyama Mahito. *Watashi wa goze. Sugimoto Kikue kôden* (*I Am a Goze. The Story of Sugimoto Kikue*). Tôkyô, Ongaku no Tomo-sha, 1977. 318 pp., Yen 1200.—.

Saito Shinichi. *Goze—Mômoku no tabi geinin* (*Goze—Blind Itinerant Entertainers*). Tôkyô, Nippon Hôsô Shuppan Kyôkai, 1972. 294 pp., Yen 630.—.

Neither one of the two authors is a professional anthropologist or folklorist. Ôyama calls himself a " free writer " and Saitô is a painter. However, what they introduce us to has significance for the study of Japanese culture from both of these viewpoints, although the phenomenon itself is restricted to a certain area.

The two books have several things in common besides the topic, the *goze*. First of all they use the same source of information. It is one of the last still surviving *goze* of Takada, Niigata Prefecture, Sugimoto Kikue. Furthermore, both are highly personal accounts of a *goze*'s life, its high moments and its many hardships. But here the two books differ from each other. Ôyama puts on record Kikue's life history as she tells it herself. Even in the printed text he preserves much of the flavor and the directness of the spoken language by retaining dialect forms and those contractions resulting from the swallowing of syllables. Saitô, on the other hand, describes his personal discovery of the *goze*, and how he retraced their trips from village to village in the mountains of Echigo. In this way, Saitô's book is as much his own story as it is the story of the *goze*. Yet even as the story of the *goze*, it is not so much the life history of a particular one of them. He rather describes the paths he wandered, the houses and their inhabitants he met and who were once the hosts to the *goze*. Where Ôyama tells us the personal story of the *goze* Sugimoto Kikue, Saitô tries to capture the atmosphere, the landscape and the kinds of people which made the *goze*'s itinerant life possible.

An individual's life history is an important means for an anthropologist to understand the concrete functioning of a culture from the viewpoint of the insider. Ôyama's book is certainly such a life history providing a lot of insights and fascinating—and sometimes emotionally moving—glimpses of life in rural Japan as it was before the war. Certainly, the area of action of the *goze* was restricted mostly to the villages in the mountains and on the coast of Echigo, the present Niigata Prefecture. Consequently, one will have to be careful in drawing conclusions about other areas, but still one may find here plenty of information on rural life about the turn of the century.

Echigo is a mountainous area where villages are cut off from each other by deep snow through long winters. In the lowlands of Echigo Japan's most delicious rice grows. But the country suffered from serious crop failures quite frequently—even deep into this century. It seems, therefore, to be possible that undernourishment and the dazzling brightness of snow are some of the main causes to account for the frequent cases of blindness or poor eyesight among the population of this area. Under such circumstances the establishment of formal *goze-yashiki* (*goze* manors) by the

han-government may have had the purpose of being some sort of welfare institution. Organized into a hierarchic group under a leader, the *oyakata*, these blind women were trained in the art of singing and of playing the *shamisen*. They had to adhere to a strict code of conduct, which was laid down in the "*goze shikimoku*" the "Code of the Goze". This code protected the status of celibacy of these women and garanteed at the same time their continued esteem by the population. This in turn provided the groups with the necessary means to make a decent and at times even a quite leasurly living. By contrast, those women who left the group in order to follow a man of their choice or those who were forced to leave for having broken the rules, had to renounce the protection granted the organized *goze*. Wandering alone, these *hanare-goze* could not rely anymore on the natural benevolence of the rural population, a situation which grew more and more difficult with the waning of beauty and advancing of age.

Kikue had lost her eyesight at the age of six through the carelessness of a doctor. The following year her parents had her accepted by the Sugimoto group so that the girl may become a *goze* and make a living. Already a month later the girl followed her group mates on her first travel, of course on foot. After becoming 22 years old she became the last *oyakata* and had to shoulder the responsibility for the discipline and the material subsistence of the group.

Kikue sums up her feelings in the introduction to Ôyama's book with the following words: "I am a *goze*. It is already more than 70 years that I practice this trade. But I tell you, if I engaged in this trade I certainly did not do it because I liked it. To travel is an onerous thing. It was just that there were many people waiting for us and eager to hear our songs. This probably gave us the strength to take to the road. For the sake of our *oyakata*, our leader, we got so far that people waited for us to come, in spite of our clumsy performances. That's what I am grateful for. Now if I quietly look around me, it is just as when one's teeth fall out—one after the other. I notice that one after the other the companions disappeared until finally only the three of us are left. If I could be reborn once again, I wish to become an ordinary girl and spend my days with open eyes. And I would like to see with these my eyes the red flowers of the camellia, the green leaves of the *gemboshi* tree, and the faces of those people in the *goze* inns so dear to us. All this, too, is fate. I am reconciled to it." (Ôyama, pp. 2–3).

In Ôyama's book we can follow the highs and lows of this long life of wandering from village to village. Only January and a few days around Bon in summer saw the *goze* in Takada or in their native homes, all the rest of the time meant travelling. Two aspects are particularly striking: the warm atmosphere of natural friendliness emanating from Kikue's account together with her unfailing religiosity and faith in *Hotoke* and *Kami*. In this sense the book is a rich source of folk religion where beliefs are not just described, but are alive in the narrator's mind.

Ôyama lets Kikue freely tell her story and organizes it only around certain topics like chidhood reminiscences, the *goze*'s travels, daily life, rules and sanctions, etc. After each chapter the author then adds additional material and background information such as e'g. a "day of the *goze*", a year's travel schedule, the text of the *shikimoku*, the rules, a description of the *rites de passage* of the *goze* and finally all the songs Kikue could still sing, although she must have remembered many more. Therefore, this book is not only Kikue's personal document, it gives at the same time a wealth of good information about things important in a *goze*'s life.

Saitô differs quite a bit in that respect. He declares right away that he does not want to write a scientific or a historical book. Rather than use written sources he

wants only to relate what he saw and heard and felt when meeting the *goze* Sugimoto Kikue and her world. He too, interviewed Kikue (actually earlier than Ôyama and causing Ôyama to take interest in the study of the *goze*), but he then went to visit the valleys and hamlets, where the *goze* used to go. There he met the farmers and some of the families who used to give lodging to the *goze*. He listens to their memories of the days when the *goze* came around. His text is interwoven with his own reflexions, but it is a good complementary source to Ôyama because he relates the other side of the same phenomenon, i.e., the people's view of the *goze*. He illustrates precisely how well received and highly esteemed the Takada *goze* were among the population. They were treated the same as members of the families where they used to stay. They brought small presents to the children all the way from Takada, remembered family events and, last but not least, were friends to the women. Women looked to the *goze* as partners, to whom they could freely talk and open up their minds and hearts. This contrasts the *goze* with all the other types of itinerant entertainers or peddlers, who lack this sort of intimate relation to the local people.

In the chapter "The History of the *Goze*" Saitô tries to trace their history. The beginnings are rather obscure for lack of records. Therefore, I think, it does not help very much to speculate that there may have been *goze* by the time that the *shamisen* had become so popular that some blind musician could make a living by playing it. Ôyama, in a similar argument, thinks that there must have been *goze*, because there existed groups of blind male musicians. But what is the point of such an argument *ex silentio*? There is nothing which would prove that the female *goze* have purposely been left out in those documents which mention organized groups of only male blind musicians.

The first instance which can be established is that *goze* seem to have settled in Takada at the time when Takada was made a castle town and the center of a local government in 1614. But documents which explicitly mention *goze* are available only for the time towards the end of the Tokugawa period.

Much more valuable than such speculations about the possible origins of the *goze* are Saitô's reflexions on their relation with the *han*-government and the local landowner class. He asks, why did the *han*-government establish the *goze-yashiki* and impose on the *goze* the strict rule of celibacy? Why could the *goze* pass from one territory into the other without restrictions at a time when strict rules governed the movements of the population? He admits, that he has no definite answer to such questions, but he wonders if the *goze-yashiki* were just a sort of welfare establishment to take care of at least some of the many blind girls and the victims of *kuchi-berashi* (the custom of giving away female children into adoption in order to reduce the number of family members to be fed in poor families), who also may be taken into a *goze* group. Could not the *goze* also have served as a valuable source of information for the government concerning those far-out places the government found it difficult to reach? Was this the reason why the *goze* tended to take lodging with the same landowner over long periods, more than hundred years in some cases? And was the strict rule of celibacy imposed on them as a means to prevent the possible leakage of gathered information to unauthorized ears? These questions may be difficult to answer in a positive way, but certainly they are stimulating thoughts about the political significance of an institution which seems to be utterly unpolitical.

Finally I might mention Saitô's reflexions on the role the *goze* played in the cultivation and the spreading of folk songs. It is almost impossible to think of folk songs without taking into consideration their activity. The *goze* did not wander only through the mountains of Echigo; they also followed the coast of the Japan Sea; and

some even went as far as Hokkaidô with the fishermen who were attracted by the growing importance of the herring fishing season.

The two books draw a picture of a side and a phase of Japanese culture which is on the brink of disappearance. Not only do they bring it to life before our eyes, they also provide a means to understand many an aspect of rural life in present-day Japan.

Peter Knecht

SCHIFFELER, JOHN Wm. *The Legendary Creatures of the Shan Hai Ching.* Taipei, Hwa Kang Press, 1978, 6+X+163 pp. Price NT $430.00 or US $12.00.

The author says the aim of his work is to provide " the reader with a description of one-hundred and forty-four of the legendary creatures which are illustrated the *Shan-hai ching t'u-shuo* (山海経図説)" (*sic*) (vii–viii). The illustrations of this text are redrawn for his book. On the page opposite the drawing he adds some explanation. What he calls " a description " is actually a quotation from a recent Chinese commentary to the *Shan hai ching* by Hao I-hsing, which he has translated and annotated. The explanations, however, for a great part, are guesses at where the legendary place names could be fitted into present geography. The result of this attempt is a rather quaint mixture of legend and present reality.

If the *Shan hai ching* had attributed to these legendary creatures some meaning by putting them into a system of " cosmo-magical symbolism " (iv), then such meaning does not come through any more by this kind of presentation.

The quotations describing the creatures are taken out of their context and limited to the very line, where the animal in question is actually mentioned. Therefore, references in the original lose their meaning. Instead, the reader is confronted with the author's references to other works.

On the whole one finds little information about the original itself, and about the meaning of these legendary figures ; there is very little which surpasses the mere statement of their strange features.

Peter Knecht

OINAS, FELIX J. (ed.). *Folklore, Nationalism, and Politics.* Indiana University Folklore Institute Monograph Series, vol. 30. Columbus, Ohio, Slavica Publications, Inc., 1978, 189 pp.

Most of the contributions to this volume have been published earlier as a special issue of the *Journal of the Folklore Institute* (vol. 12, 1975, nos. 2–3) of Indiana University, Bloomington. One contribution appeared in the same journal a few years earlier (vol. 9, 1972, nos. 2–3). In this edition an index of names and topics is added.

Geographically speaking, the contributions cover three areas, viz. the United States, Europe (with a heavy concentration on Eastern Europe), and Asia (from Turkey to the Far East). There is one article on America, five on Europe and four on Asia.

The majority of the articles trace the interplay of folklore and politics and nationalistic movements in a historical perspective, following the ups and downs of the

society in question. As the Finnish and Turk examples show, increased interest in and enhancement of folklore research is not the privilege of a certain political trend in a country, but folklore may be used in similar ways to political ends by otherwise contrasting or even opposed political forces. Whether the supposedly characteristic traits of a particular people are emphasized by a leftist or by a rightist movement or government, there seem to be two directions of orientation, each of which may be emphasized at any particular time. One would be what L. Dégh in her article calls " past-orientation ", i.e., a more or less distant past is seen as a kind of " Golden Era " of high moral and national values. William A. Wilson's account of the fate of the *Kalevala* is in this respect specially illustrative. But there is also another orientation directed towards the future and towards the society-to-be-built. In this case folklore is used not only to depict a new and better world, but also to promote and propagate a certain vision of what the nation should be by suppressing other views held by ethnic or political minorities or adversaries. Here we would have to list the contributions of Oinas, Klymasz and Austerlitz on Soviet Russia, of Eminov on China, and, albeit with a difference of emphasis, the article of Reuss on America.

All these contributions describe the various functions to which " folklore " has been put. By doing so they have in commong their historical approach to the problem and the understanding of the key concepts, particularly the one of " folklore ", which could be described as " folk narrative " or " oral traditions ". We are shown that such traditions can be and have been used for political ends. But are we shown how they are used? By " how " I mean the way in which certain themes or motifs are selected while others are refuted in view of a political purpose. The story of the *Kalevala* would be a case in point. However even more interesting in this respect is Kolti's short article. He gives a concrete example how a song is inspired by historical and recent events and how the elements taken in it are selected and emphasized according to the political and religious viewpoint of the narrator. This short but very well documented example is a reminder of how difficult and at times how dangerous it can be if one tries to reconstruct history from such literary traditions.

Only one contribution does not mention " folklore " in its title, neither directly nor indirectly. And even there, where Linda Degh speaks about folklore, she understands it not just in its narrow literary meaning, but in a much broader sense. In accordance with the aims of *European ethnology* she sees the folkloristic approach as " the intensive, fieldwork-based study of a people's interrelated social, intellectual, and material aspects of culture in their ethnic context," (34). She mentions the case of minorities surrounded by ethnically different populations, and stresses the importance to study their attitudes to their *Urheimat* as well as to their new *Heimat*. In order to understand the functions of folklore in politics and nationalistic movements it seems very important to me to consider this social aspect of the impact and not only the literary or intellectual one.

Just as we find two different concepts of " folklore ", we are confronted with two meanings of " national ". One is the political concepts of nationalism, which is closely related to ethnocentrism. Dorson, however, when speaking of the national characteristics of Japanese folktales, does not imply a political meaning. He points out three characteristics of Japanese folktales: predominance of the legend, strong dependency on folk beliefs, and intimate association with forms of traditional theater. Already at the symposium in Tokyo in 1975 where this paper was read, its emphasis on the religious bias of Japanese folktales was highly appreciated. At the same time it was pointed out, that although there are cases where legend and *densetsu* can be considered to be the same genre, there are significant instances where these two genres

are not and cannot be identical. One such instance is that *densetsu* is close to everyday life and the feeling of the common folk whereas Dorson makes it a characteristic of the legend that it describes " an extraordinary event " (cf. R. Dorson, Folk Legends of Japan, Tokyo 1962, p. 18). This would demonstrate again that terms in different languages may imply quite different connotations.

Dorson stresses the intimate association of these legends with performing arts. As far as performance itself goes, there is a commong tradition linking theatrical arts including the professional story-tellers of *rakugo*. All of these forms use, as far as the content of their performance is concerned, very much the same material, which is often taken from widely known folktales. Certainly, the intimate connection of such contents with performing arts is evident, but this connection is only one aspect of the function of legendary materials in Japanese culture. In fact, this folktale stratum reaches out into wider fields than only performing arts. Especially that literary field called *setsuwa bungaku* cannot easily be bypassed.

Finally, there are some formal criticisms to be made. In Austerlitz's article the reference to the page with table 1 is incorrect, because it is taken from the original publication. It should read page 142 instead of 206 (p. 139). In Dorson's article Gôjo Bridge should be Gojô Bridge (p. 156), and the chapter mentioned in note 29 should be " Geinô to goraku " and not " Geinô to goroku " (p. 162). There is some confusion around Ôoka Echizen-no-kami, whose name is repeatedly misspelled as Ôka Echizen-no-kami (cf. pp. 151, 157, 159, 188). In the appendix one is even made to believe that these were two different personalities, because the correct and the wrong spelling are listed, but the personality in question is only Ôoka Echizen-no-kami Tadasuke, 1677–1751 (p. 159).

And a last remark about *rakugo*. There are only two " tools " a professional teller of *rakugo* would use during a performance to give expression to a wide range of different things. These are a fan (jap. *sensu* or *kaze*) and a cotton towel (jap. *tenugui*). He does not use chopsticks but only imitates their use with the folded fan (cf. p. 157), as can be seen clearly on photograph nr. 3 " Eating noodles " in Hrdličkova's articles (Journal of the Folklore Institute IX, 1972, between pp. 200 and 102).

Inspite of the above mentioned differences in interpretation and viewpoint of the numerous contributors, this is a book which presents a thematically integrated series of " case studies ". I wish to recommend it as an incentive to further studies along the line it suggests.

Peter Knecht

VEIT, VERONIKA. *Mongolische Epen VII.* Übersetzung von drei südmongolischen Epen. Asiatische Forschungen Band 54. Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1977. 102 pp. DM 32.—.

This small volume is an addition to the series of Mongol epics edited and translated earlier by N. Poppe. Still there is a certain difference. Poppe's are translations of epic poems of the Khalkha Mongols in Northern Mongolia, but the poems presented here have been collected in Southern Mongolia during the second quarter of this century.

The translator puts the original text (in transcription) and the translation on opposite pages providing in this way the opportunity to check the translation. And what will be probably still more appreciated is that by doing so she has made texts available, which otherwise would hardly be accessible in western libraries, as she her-

self mentions in her introduction.

Besides the transcription of the texts, their translations, and a short glossary of words which are difficult to translate or which present a particular problem, the translator contributes a short introduction in which she describes briefly the general background of the three epics. Admittedly, it would be impossible to unfold a full argument on only three pages, but even so one is left with certain doubts. One may wonder, for example, whether the recent time of the collection of an epic provides a reasonably safe ground to speculate on the origin of certain of its motifs from a particular " foreign " source, in this case Chinese literature. It is quite possible that the epic tradition itself had preceeded its collection considerably, so that the time of the collection provides only a very relative point of comparison at best. The motif in question here is the one, in which a newborn baby is exchanged with a kitten (p. 75, v. 80, or another animal), and which, we are told, may have been taken over from Chinese stories known at that time in Mongolia (p. 8). In the third epic of the collection it is said, that the hero despises princely authority and power. The translator thinks that this could be interpreted as a possible influence of modern political thinking. It could. But in the end after the hero's victory over his wicked enemy, the text points out clearly, that the hero on returning home greets his beloved subjects (" *Untertane* ") and takes his beloved country under his protection (pp. 99, v. 234 s.). Is this section of the epic then to be explained by nothing other than " *dichterische Freiheit* " (poetic licence)?

There are some minor points I would like to mention. Some misprints crept into the otherwise impeccable text: " Folclore " for " Folklore " (p. 8, n. 21), " ausgestreckte " for " ausgestreckt " (p. 53, v. 968), " unerdrücken " for " unterdrücken " (p. 65, v. 1218), " der Könige " for " der König " (p. 79, v. 161). Others are concerned with the usage of some words. On p. 41, v. 713 the first " sie " should probably be omitted, so that the sentence would read: " und erst als sie keine Seite mehr riefen . . . " A few pages later (p. 47, v. 850) one wonders a little about the word order of " Alle Naran Qarans Leute ". Shouldn't it rather be something like " Alle Leute Naran Qarans . . . "? And finally there were two words which irritated me because they seemed to be a little bit off the mark. On p. 61, v. 1136 it says, Mangrus " pflegte . . . seinem Tresor einzuverleiben ", what he had squeezed out of his captives. It should certainly mean that he added this to his other treasures, but in German the word " *Tresor* " does not mean " treasure " but " safe ". A different case is the word " *Schutzbedürfnis* " (p. 89, v. 12). This is a word with an intransitive meaning, something like " somebody's need of protection by someone else ". It cannot, therefore, be used in a case when somebody feels the obligation to protect others as it should be in the instance under discussion.

These critical remarks should not detract from the value of this translation. It would be unfair to press the introductory remarks of the translator too much since there was only limited space to develop them further. I wish to recommend this small book by which Ms. Veit has given us a translation which is a pleasure to read and which permits us to savour the flavor of these stories full of lovely and heroic feats.

Peter Knecht