

BOOK REVIEW

Carmen Blacker: *The Catalpa Bow. A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan.* London, 1975, 375 pages, 30 illustrations.

Under the concept of shaman come a great variety of men and women in the past and present. They all have in common their ability to communicate with the other world. The shamanistic phenomenon in Japan antedates Buddhism; much of it has been absorbed by Buddhism and further developed. Carmen Blacker, lecturer in Japanese at the University of Cambridge, combined much fieldwork with a comprehensive study of written sources, as is testified by the amount of literature used and referred to in the footnotes. One of the special merits of the book is that many scattered beliefs, rites and practices are seen as elements of shamanism and brought to this focus. Only in this light are they understandable.

The term "catalpa bow" has been chosen as the title of the book because many female shamans use a bow of catalpa wood as a one-stringed instrument. The Japanese word for it is *azusa-yumi*. *Azusa* is the catalpa tree, which does not grow in Japan; *yumi* is bow. In spite of its name, the bow is in fact made of bamboo.

The author personally interviewed many practitioners of shamanic rites who in genuine honesty still believe in their vocation and in its underlying supernatural world. To be given special credit is Blacker's wide knowledge of the history of literature where in occasional references to pertinent customs and rites are made.

The material is presented in that logical coherence which the subject matter dictates. The first four chapters—1. The Bridge, 2. The Sacred Beings, 3. Witch Animals, 4. The other World—deal with the supernatural world and its inhabitants with whom the shaman communicates. Chapter 5—Asceticism—deals with the way the shaman acquires his special powers. It is found that he (or she) may either be summoned by a deity in a dream or a possession, or he may of his own volition give up his ordinary life and start a new one in close contact with the supernatural world. In both cases he must first go through ascetic practices: fasting, cold water ablutions, and the recitation of words of power. Chapters 6, 7, and 8—6. The Ancient Sibyl, 7. The Living Goddess, 8. The Blind Medium—treat the main types of Japanese shamans. Chapter 9—The Ascetic's Initiation—shows us how, to use Hori Ichiro's terminology, both the shaman by quest and the shaman by divine calling are initiated. This initiation means undergoing terrible austerities and, while one recites a holy text, submitting oneself to the guidance of a guardian god. The initiation is completed by either a visionary or a symbolic journey to the other world. These experiences give the ascetic supernatural power which he can use to fight off evil spirits or change them into willing cooperators in the pursuance of the good. The widening of the concept of shaman by the inclusion of the shaman by quest, was brought about both by esoteric Buddhism and by Taoism. The village oracles (ch. 13) and the mountain oracles (ch. 14) are the work of the ascetics. In them the divine being gives valuable information and advice for dealing with the problems of life. Another field of activity for the ascetic is exorcism, that is deliverance of a patient from demonical possession

(ch. 15).

It seems that the generally accepted concept of shamanism needs a revision if we want to bring all Japanese forms of communication with the other world within its ambit. The great majority of shamans, if we want to apply this term by all means, are self-made shamans, that is, shamans who cultivated the ability to shamanize in themselves and then obtained divine acceptance and sanction.

The last Chapter—Conclusion—speaks of the present vanishing of the belief in the other world due to the inroads made by technical inventions and commercial interests into the mysteries of nature. Blacker describes vividly what modern times have made of Ontake, once a mountain full of mysteries of nature and its inhabiting gods. This is the end of all of them. For the satisfaction of the curiosity of tourists and television viewers the mountain oracles can hardly be kept alive.

Perhaps the shamanic element in the New Religions could have been briefly discussed in this comprehensive treatment of Japanese shamanism. The New Religions show that the shamanic elements are so deeply engrained in these religions that they can grow and bear fruits even in modern cities.

Dr. Carmen Blacker's book is a great event in the field of religious studies on Japan. Scholars of Religion and folklorists may be interested to learn of other publications by the same author. They are: *Animal Witchcraft in Japan*, in: *The Witch Figure. Folklore essays by a group of scholars in England honouring the 75th birthday of Katherine M. Briggs*, ed. Venetia Newall, London, 1973.—*The Divine Boy in Japanese Buddhism*, *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 22, 1963.—*Initiation in the Shugendo: the Passage through the Ten States of Existence*, in: *Initiation: Contributions to the theme of the Study-Conference of the International Association for the History of Religion*, ed. C. J. Bleeker, Leiden, 1965.—*Millenarian Aspects of the New Religions in Japan*, in: *Tradition and Modernisation in Japanese Culture*, ed. Donald Shively, Princeton, 1971.—*Supernatural Abductions in Japanese Folklore*, *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 26, 1967.

Morioka Kiyomi: *Religion in Changing Japanese Society*. University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo 1975, 223 pages. Price: ¥4,800.

We have here a book that will interest all those who want to get a deeper insight into the effect that modern population shift and urbanization had on the religions of Japan. The pattern of the religious situation in Japan was formed by the tight links which connected religion in Japan with the social structure of the country. A change in this structure brought about a process of change in the religious field. In this book religion does not refer to a set of doctrinal convictions serving as guidelines for the conduct of life, but to participation in the performance of rites at the public shrine and before the Buddhist family altar as well. In public festivals the individual must participate as a member of the village community, in rites before the house altar as a family member. Any change in the position of the individual with respect to the community and its shrine will bring about a change in the religious affiliation of the individual.

The Buddhist religion was by its very nature originally an individualistic religion aiming at salvation by enlightenment. At least we can say so in general, making allowance for advances into the social sector which became manifest for instance in the Nichiren Sect (Nichiren's *Kokkaron* with its State consciousness) or the feudalistic organisation of the Pure Land (*Jōdo*) believers in the Ikkō Sect. In both cases the social engagement is based on doctrine.

During the Tokugawa time the Buddhist parish (*danka*) system, forced on

the temples by the government, transformed Buddhism into a family religion. Shinto on the other hand was predominantly village centered. Predominantly, we say, because the worship of the Ise Shrine had during the Tokugawa time already spread out into countless villages all over Japan. Many other famous centers of worship, both Buddhist and Shintoist, extended their influence too because of the numerous pilgrimage associations (*kô*).

Prof. Morioka measures Shintoist religiosity by the extent to which great numbers of migrants from the villages into the ever growing urban centers keep or lose their cohesion with the old *ujigami* parishes, at least for the time being not finding a substitute for this loss in new groupings of worshippers. His statements are based on carefully compiled statistics presented in 31 Tables. Of these Tables 17 give Shintoist, 5 Buddhist, and 8 Christian data, and 1 shows the population density per km² in a selected number of prefectures. For instance, in Aichi Prefecture this figure was 672 in 1950, but by 1970 it climbed up to 1,060. The Nagoya area is one of the most active centers of industrialisation. The corresponding figures for Tokyo are 3,091 and 5,324, those for Osaka 2,126 and 4,110. There are prefectures showing a decrease of population density. The figures for Akita are 113 and 107, those for Shimane 138 and 117. Morioka finds that the decreasing population makes it more and more difficult in some local communities to support the shrines, and that at the same time no remarkable increase of support has been noticed in the various local temples within the centers of immigration. To the contrary, the apathetic attitudes of the immigrants affected local shrine parishioners so that even their faith in their shrines subsided. The author comes to the conclusion that "both in areas of emigration and in areas of immigration Shinto is decaying" (p. 160). He also takes cognizance of the fact that some nationally prestigious shrines, not so closely bound to the locality, are more and more attracting followers, at least visitors, from wide areas. In Tokyo, at the great annual festivals the most frequented shrine is Meiji Jingû. In the Nagoya area it is Atsuta Jingû. In the monograph on the Atsuta Jingû by the chief shrine priest Shinoda Yasuo (1968) we find interesting figures. In 1933 (Shôwa 8) 1,200,000 visitors were counted at the Atsuta Shrine during the first three days of New Year, 1,720,000 in 1934, and 1,780,000 in 1935. But in 1946 (Shôwa 21), right after the Pacific War, the number dropped to 400,000. However in 1955 (Shôwa 30) the number was up again to 1,370,000, until 1966 (Shôwa 43) climbing to 1,690,000. Still more impressive are the figures for the Great Ise Shrines. Likewise weddings and other ceremonies at the Atsuta Jingû take place almost daily. A new field of activity there—and source of income—is also the blessing of motor vehicles and the issuance of amulets for the prevention of traffic accidents.

Concerning Buddhism, Prof. Morioka states that the present strong tendency among young couples towards living as nuclear families leads to the relinquishment of the Buddhist house altar (*butsudan*). Only the old people back in the native village somewhere are still keeping up their connection with their Buddhist parish temple, which takes care of funerals and sutra reciting before the house altar with its ancestral tablets. Buddhism became a family religion which it was not from the beginning and by its nature. There are some Buddhist movements which are out to make Buddhism again a religion for the individual. The so-called New Religions, both those of Buddhist and those of Shintoist coloring, cater also to the physical and the spiritual needs of the individuals. Some of them, however, like the strong Sôka Gakkai, a Nichiren Sect inspired lay movement, are positively building up group consciousness, thus appealing to the socially up-rooted immigrants from the provinces into the monster cities where

they feel lost in the amorphous masses. According to Morioka, Christianity as an individualistic religion is also profiting from the social changes; at least these changes do not work against it. Its lack of any spectacular success is due to other factors.

A final chapter is devoted to the "Development of the Sociology of Religion in Japan, 1900-1967" (pp. 171-182), and this is followed by an "Integrated Bibliography" (pp. 185-223).

The author persuasively argues that religion characterized by rural village cohesion and household (*ie*) integrity, which is the foundation of Shinto and Buddhism respectively, is more and more disappearing. But this conclusion concerning the prospect of religion in changing Japanese society is only as valid as the premises on which it rests. The village cohesion or community consciousness in Shinto and the function of Buddhism in the ancestor worship are only isolated, though important, aspects of the Japanese religiosity. Shinto and Buddhism are already reduced to a minimum of religiosity, hanging on a feeble string, if supported by these factors only. During the Tokugawa period a secularisation process had already reduced the ambiance of religion. The two traditional religions were already weakened by Confucianism and secular learning. Furthermore, a social automatism is at work destroying what is left of Shinto and Buddhism. It has rightly been said that the essence of Shinto is naturism. Consequently, the fewer the chances are becoming to experience the mysteries of nature, the weaker true Shinto will become. The rationalisation of the conduct of life had already set in long before our time. The old Buddhist fervor and piety with its central thought of salvation had thinned out. The old shrine and temple religiosity may go, but there still can and shall be religion, though not with the forms and organisations of old.

A decisive factor in the transformation of the established religions in Japan is education. It fosters independent thinking and individualism and downgrades conformity. Genuine education is not hostile to religion, it deepens religion.

These our remarks go beyond the scope of Prof. Morioka's book and are not critical of it. The question of the relevance of religion in an industrialised and urbanized society is on many peoples mind, not only of that of the clergy, Shintoist, Buddhist or Christian, which is anxious of support for its shrines, temples and churches. Without true religion mankind cannot survive. Sociology of religion is an important subject, but not the only and most decisive one in the study of religion, since religion is not the product of society.

M.E.

Hua Shan: The Taoist Sacred Mountain in West China. Its Scenery, Monasteries and Monks.

Foreword and 111 photographs by Hedda Morrison. Introduction and Taoist Musings by Wolfram Eberhard. Hongkong, Vetch and Lee Ltd., 1974. HK\$60.

The publishing house Henri Vetch, French Bookstore, Peking, was once a household word for sinologues and China enthusiasts in general. It is gratifying that M. Henri Vetch now pursues his activity in Hongkong. The present book on the sacred mountain Hua Shan evokes nostalgia in all those for whom the "good old China" is now gone or at least no longer accessible. Hua Shan, one of nine sacred mountains of China, is situated not far from where the Wei

River flows into the mighty Huang Ho or Yellow River. The two authors traveled there more than thirty years ago. Mrs. Hedda Morrison, *née* Hammer, is a professional photographer, Prof. Wolfram Eberhard is an outstanding sinologue at Berkeley University. The photographer succeeded superbly in portraying the slopes and peaks of the Hua Shan complex with its paths along breathtaking ridges and its temples and cloisters half lost in the clouds and mist. The photos are arranged in three groups: mountains, monasteries, monks. The monks are cloistered Taoists, living with nature, and striving for harmony with it. Prof. Eberhard competently accompanies the pictorial representation of this Taoist world with his "Taoist Musing" with quotations from Taoist literature. One familiar with Chinese art will recognize those misty landscapes with towering mountains, waterfalls, gnarled pine trees and hermits meditating in their tiny abodes. All this is reality captured by the authors in this book and not only the imagination of artists. The book brings home to the beholder Taoism in action, or we can say, Taoism applied. We are sadly concerned about what happened meanwhile to this strong strain of Chinese spirituality. The book by H. Morrison and W. Eberhard at least is a worthy monument to it.

M.E.

The Nine Sacred Mountains of China. An Illustrated Record of Pilgrimages Made in the Years 1935–1936 by Mary Augusta Mullikin and Anna M. Hotchkis.

Hongkong, Vetch and Lee Limited, 1973. 145 pages Index. Price HK\$75.

The special value of this book is that it was written and illustrated by two accomplished draftsmen and painters, M. A. Mullikin from America and A. M. Hotchkis from England. After receiving a profound training in well established art schools, both resided in China for a long time. The idea to cover the nine sacred mountains of China as artist pilgrims was suggested to them by Monsieur Henri Vetch in Peking in the early thirties and was carried out in two joint expeditions. The nine sacred mountains of China consist in the five sacred mountains of the Taoists and the four sacred mountains of the Buddhists. The mountains sacred to the Taoists are: 1) T'ai-shan of the East in Shantung Province, 2. Heng-shan of the North in Shansi Province, 3. Sung-shan or Chung-yüeh at the center in Honan Province, 4. Heng-shan or Nan-yüeh of the South in Human Province, Hua-shan or the Flower Mountain in Shensi Province. These five mountains are presented in Part I. In Part II the four sacred mountains of the Buddhists are represented, namely 1. Wu-t'ai-shan, the North Mountain of the Five Peaks in Shansi, 2. P'u-t'o-shan, the West Mountain Island, in Chekiang, 3. Chiu-hua-shan, the South Mountain of Nine Flowers in Anhwei, 4. Omei-shan, the West Mountain in Szechuan.

Also the two artists delved into the literature on Taoism and Buddhism so that they were able to present their pilgrimages in the light of these two religions as well as in their sketches and paintings, not only being motivated by artistic concerns. Their fascinating travelogue records the joy and comfort they shared with numerous pilgrims. We learn much about the gods worshipped in the big and other small temples on the slopes and peaks of the sacred mountains, about the hopes and sorrow the pilgrims carry in their hearts to the gods and goddesses, and about rites and ceremonies in the sanctuary, on the life of monks

in their cloisters and hermitages. With a great number of drawings and paintings the belief of the people is brought to life before our eyes. Many historical data are added on the vicissitudes of the various temples in their often turbulent past. The pictorial side of the book will enchant the art connoisseur while its religious side will attract the interest of all students of Chinese religion.

M.E.

Mongolische Epen IV. Übersetzung der Sammlung P. *Xorloo, Xalx Ardyn Tuul*, von N. Poppe. In: Asiatische Sammlungen, Band 48. Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1975, 250 Seiten.

According to the information given on the cover of this volume, *Mongolische Epen I, II, and III*, and the translation by Nikolaus Poppe, appeared in the collection *Asiatische Forschungen* as Vol. 42 (1975), Vol. 43 (1975), and Vol. 43 (1975), and Vol. 47 (1975) respectively. Only Vol. 48 came to our knowledge. We are in our journal not concerned with Mongolist studies as such, but as folklorists we are keenly interested in the epics of the Mongols. Vol. 46 presents nine epics translated in to German by the most competent Mongolist Nikolaus Poppe. In the foreword by the translator we are given some information about the provenience of the nine epics. It seems their texts are variants of current Mongolian folk literature and have been written down in recent times. We regret not to have at our disposal N. Poppe's "*Mongolische Volksdichtung*", Wiesbaden 1955, which could perhaps help us to assign the right place of the nine epics in the bulk of Mongolian folk poetry. As it becomes evident from Poppe's foreword, they are still popular among singers and storytellers in Mongolia.

Here we can only briefly characterize this kind of poetry. The epics recreate a world of heroes who are almost supernatural beings, giants of strength, endowed with superhuman gifts. There is a Khan ruling over an entire continent, with ten times ten millions of subjects and innumerable sheep, cattle, yaks, horses, which occupy entire steps, mountain ranges and valleys. In an exaggerated way certain horses are praised. Like their masters they are of enormous beauty, size, and swiftness, and often they are capable of talking and giving their masters prudent advice that saves them in a desperate situation. Three years old boys start on an adventurous journey with the aim to conquer a princess in a far away country. On the way they accomplish miraculous deeds first fighting against huge hostile armies and against a fearful monster (*mangus*), and finally engaging an opponent in a contest of physical strength and winning a victory. All this is hardly meant as a farce or as something grotesque; there is nothing vulgar in the tales of these legendary heroes. We would like to know something of the function of the national epic in Mongolian society. Who is telling the legends, for whom and on what occasions? It seems that this kind of narrative art gives satisfaction to a people which in the present situation cherishes the glories of the past. It is probable that these legends are an expression of the cultural values of the Mongols. A scholar of comparative literature or folklore could use these legends are translated by Poppe as a springboard for further studies.

M.E.