

porated as actors in a traditionally based local play, in ways that Disney could never imagine.

The part on Japan begins with a description of itinerant theater groups performing the *taishū engekī* popular plays, which are often performed at hotels, spas, and other places to entertain and attract customers. Such plays are also performed at theaters in Tokyo and Osaka frequented by aficionados. As in China, the author follows, admires, and interviews the various members (old and young, male and female) of several such traveling ensembles. She discusses their lives, their audiences, the historical roots of their art, and the art's affinities with more elevated and more heavily formalized art forms like the kabuki. A discussion of the famous all-women ensemble of Takarazuka and their exquisite venues is also included, as an example of "elevated" popular culture (and also as one example of formalized onstage transgression of gender roles).

Yet another section visits the whole issue of Japanese local festivals (*matsuri*) as popular performance. The author explores the multiplicity of meanings invested by the various participants and onlookers into the festival and its components, including the roles of demons, lion dancers, and other animal dancers. This discussion, focusing on the community-solidifying powers of the *matsuri*, also investigates the use of lion dancers at grave rites (as *hakajishi*, in "grave lion" performances during the Obon festival).

The nature of the book as an overview of so much very interesting materials does not allow much space for in-depth analyses. But the *matsuri* might also be explored in Bakhtinian terms, as liminal time providing release from the solidity of everyday working life. The relative lack of Japanese-style popular festivals in China could actually provide grounds for an enlightening comparison between the two countries, which otherwise is conspicuously lacking in a book treating both. In China such frivolity as one meets with in the Japanese *matsuri* no longer exists as it is currently prohibited in most places there, and the traditional forms that might sustain it may indeed be mortally wounded in most places—but popular festivals are on a comeback, as can be seen in the curious revival mentioned by Nygren of *yangge* harvest dancing, which today is done outside of its original peasant context.

The bibliography might have been more generous. Jennifer E. Robertson's book *Takarazuka* (Berkeley, 1998) and the like might have been included. On the historical roots of the hereditary transmission of performance arts in China, one should note the recent work by the Swedish scholar Anders Hansson, *Chinese Outcasts: Discrimination and Emancipation in Late Imperial China* (Leiden, 1996), which includes excellent reviews of the status of artist groups.

In sum, the book under review offers an exciting overview and introduction of the state of popular theater and performing arts in China and Japan. The book is the result of wide-ranging investigations and is a useful point of departure for the discussion of such topics as the complex impact of television and the coming new media. The book has a Japanese-Chinese character index for cross reference, and is richly illustrated with the author's photographs of many performances and ensembles.

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WACKER, MONIKA. *Onarigami. Die heilige Frau in Okinawa*. Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 19/B, Volkskunde/Ethnologie, Abt. B. Band 55. Frankfurt/M: Peter Lang GmbH, 2000. 230 pages. Tables, bibliography. Paper DM 79.00. ISBN 3-631-36061-4. (In German)

Studies of the interaction of religion and society on the Ryūkyū islands have for a long time

now been appropriate to broaden our conception of what has to be defined as “Japanese” culture and society. The important role females play in Ryūkyūan religion has especially aroused the interest of scholars and often led to misinterpretations such as viewing them as remnants of a primordial matriarchy and as linked to Chinese reports of “sacred” queens or ruling priestesses in second-century Japan. The system of priestesses (*nuru* [J. *noro*]), which is connected with the belief in the spiritual predominance of the sisters (*unai, unari* [J. *onari*]) over their brothers (*wiki, ekeri*), ever since the classic 1926 monograph by Yanagita Kunio *Imōto no chikara* (The power of the younger sister) has been used quite often to interpret similar culture traits in other parts of Japan, which were seen as “remnants” or “survivals” of a much older cultural stratum preserved up to the ethnographic present in Okinawa.

The most convincing modern studies in this socio-religious system we owe to Mabuchi Tōichi, late professor of social anthropology at the Tokyo Metropolitan University, an authority in studies of Indonesian ethnology and an exponent of the Dutch school of anthropology. Mabuchi conducted extensive as well as intensive field research in the Miyako and Yaeyama islands in general and on the island of Hateruma in particular. Cornelius Ouwehand also chose Hateruma for an extended field study in the 1960s and 1970s, which resulted in the impressive monograph *Hateruma: Socio-Religious Aspects of a South-Ryukyuan Island Culture* (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1985) that includes analyses of a huge amount of material, especially prayer texts, to reconstruct the worldview of the island. The Norwegian anthropologist Arne Røkkum in his fieldwork on Yonaguni (Dunang) used a similar structuralistic approach, resulting in his latest publication, *Goddesses, Priestesses and Sisters: Mind, Gender and Power in the Monarchic Tradition of the Ryukyus* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1998). Røkkum comes from the school of Gamō Masao at Meiji University, to whom we owe the important discovery in the 1950s of a bilinear/ambi-linear system of kinship prevalent in villages in the northern part of the Ryūkyū islands (see, for instance, his “Amami no minzoku: Shakai” [Folklore of Amami: Society] in *Nihon minzokugaku taikei*, vol. 12, Ōmachi Tokuzō, ed., Heibonsha: Tokyo, 1959, 7–22). Patrick Beillevaire from Paris has also more or less taken a structuralistic view on festivals on Tarama Island (“Le Sutsu Upunaka de Tarama Jima: Description d’un rite saisonnier et analyse du symbolisme spatial sur une île des Ryūkyū [Japon],” in *Bulletin de l’École Française d’Extrême-Orient*, vol. LXXI 1982, 217–57), while Susan Sered lays greater strength on the gender problem in her analysis of her one-year stay in Henza village, Okinawa (see Sered’s *Women of the Sacred Groves: Divine Priestesses of Okinawa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Lastly, one has to mention William Lebra’s *Okinawan Religion* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1966), which I think is the most important study on Okinawan religion, even though it definitely overestimated its shamanistic traits. To conclude these introductory remarks, I humbly add my own monograph on religion and society on the island of Kakeroma of the Amami archipelago: *Beiträge zur Erforschung von Religion und Gesellschaft auf den nördlichen Ryukyu: Der Noro-Kult von Amami-Oshima* (Beiträge zur Japanologie vol. 2, Wien: Universität Wien, 1965). This monograph was influenced more by Japanese cultural anthropology than by the Viennese school of historical ethnology, and attempts an analysis of the Ryūkyūan worldview by using Harada Toshiaki’s concept of a village tutelary deity more than Orikuchi Shinobu’s well-known concept of “visiting deities” (*marebito*). (See *Nansei Shotō no kami kannen* [Concepts of Deities in the Ryūkyū Islands], by Sumiya Kazuhiko and Josef Kreiner [Tokyo: Miraisha, 1977 and 1999]).

From these remarks one may easily understand that Wacker’s monograph has to be placed in a broader context of not only Japanese but also Western anthropological studies, which, especially in the last couple of years, have resulted in a number of remarkable publications. Wacker’s work compares quite well with the recent monographs by Ouwehand,

Røkkum, and Sered. One of her assets is the extensive field research experience that she has gained over many years (1991 to 1996) in many parts of the island chain, excluding the Miyako and the Amami archipelagoes. Wacker is also well versed in the history of Okinawan research and always formulates her questions on the basis of that research. She does not restrict her study to only the data derived from her field research but also includes an analysis of the system of state priestesses in historical times (from the village-priestesses [*niigan*] to the priestesses of administrative areas [*nuru*], and then up to the high-priestesses of the whole kingdom [*chifjin* or *kikoe-ōgimi*]). This enables her to reconstruct the historical processes by which the system of *onarigami* (i.e., the system in which sisters act as tutelary deities or spirits for their brothers or other male members of their ambi-lineal kinship group) has come into existence. Wacker's work is an example of a well-balanced application of the cultural-historical theory and method.

The volume is divided into four main parts. To provide background on the Ryūkyū islands, Wacker outlines their history in chapter 2 up to the present, but focuses mainly on the period before the annexation of the islands to Japan in 1879. (A historical description is later given in chapter 5 of the state religion and the system of state-priestesses in the Ryūkyūan Kingdom). Chapter 3 gives a history of the research on the topic. Here one wonders why Mabuchi Tōichi—the most prominent figure in the study of Ryūkyūan religion, cosmology, and social structure—is mentioned in such a casual manner. It might be that Wacker's connection with universities in Kyushu during her study in Japan has restricted her awareness of the scholarly discourses in Tokyo, and thereby has also blurred her vision of the connections, for instance, between Mabuchi, Uematsu, and Ouwehand (who, by the way, is missing entirely from Wacker's description of previous research). This might also be why more attention was not given to the work of Gamō Masao, whose studies might have been of great use for Wacker's argument concerning ambi-lateral kinship. Gamō might also have been omitted because his work concerns the Amami archipelago, which was not considered by Wacker because, as she points out, Amami had been an integral part of the Ryūkyūan Kingdom for only forty years (1571–1611). But when her arguments concern folk culture, political assignments are insignificant. Moreover, in the context of a cultural-historical reconstruction, the situation in Amami might provide excellent insights into the religious life on the village level before 1600 as it was uninfluenced by Chinese and Confucian ideologies as well as the developments at the court in Shuri.

The second main part, chapter 4, analyzes the social organization (especially the kinship system), beliefs in and concepts of deities (especially the fire-deity, Hi-nu-kan, the deity of the sea, and the water-deity), and finally the role of women in society. The discussion is weakened when holy places and sanctuaries of the village (and their connection or lack of connection with the fire-deity) are conceptualized more or less according to Nakamatsu Yashū as being connected with ancestor worship without taking into account the much more convincing ideas of Harada Toshiaki, who links them to his concept of a village tutelary deity. (See, for instance, Sumiya Kazuhiko's *Nihon no ishiki* [Japan's consciousness], [Tokyo: Iwanami, 1982; second edition 1994], in which the approaches of Yanagita and other researchers are analyzed).

The most impressive part of the study is contained in chapter 5. Here Wacker is at her best. Starting from a description of the belief in *onarigami*, she convincingly shows here that *onari* refers not only to "sisters" but to all women and their spiritual dominance over men, especially their function as tutelary spirits of males from their ambi-lateral kinship group. A short description distinguishing between those female shamans (*yuta*) who are initiated and those who are chosen (by the deity) would have been helpful at this point. Next Wacker gives an analysis of the system of clan-priestesses based on three examples, one from Shuri and two

from agricultural villages in Okinawa. Wacker also examines the *nuru* (*noro*) cult groups of the religion at the state level, using examples from Kudaka, Izena, Hateruma, and Ishigaki (Shiraho). Finally, she investigates the hierarchy of the state religion with the *chifijin* or *kihoe-ōgimi* as the highest priestess of the kingdom.

As results of these studies, Wacker postulates that an ambi-lineal kinship organization (which in different parts of the island chain is referred to as *wēkā*, *utuza-mūri*, or *harōji*) may be seen as a basic social structure, which later, after the fifteenth century (and in agricultural villages even later), was overlaid by a unilineal or patrilineal clan system (*hiki*). I agree with Wacker that we have to reckon with these two different kinship organizations, but I would also take into consideration similar organizations in Fujian and other parts of China. The *munchu*-system of patrilineal kinship groups, for example, is never mentioned by Wacker, so that one can only guess as to its relation to the *hiki*. In regards to Wacker's historical reconstruction as a whole, I am quite skeptical.

The analysis of the succession line of the *chifijin* is I think the most valuable part of the study. Time and again it has been reiterated that the highest priestess of the kingdom is the sister of the king. Wacker proves, however, that this was not the case even as an ideal form; on the contrary, many priestesses have been wives, widows, or mothers of the kings. This finding corresponds to what Wacker found in her field studies at the village level, and to what I had already pointed out in the early 1960s for Kakaroma Island. A much earlier study by Steward Spencer ("The Noro or priestesses of Loochoo," in *TASJ*, second series, vol. VIII, 1931, 94–112) also reports a similar finding in agricultural villages of Okinawa.

To conclude, Wacker's book is a very impressive first study of the system of beliefs of *onarigami* (female tutelary deities), and its social background in the Ryūkyūan islands. It provides a thorough analysis of field data as well as of historical material. One may only hope that her thesis, written in German, will receive attention in international discussions on Ryūkyūan culture as well as on the role of females in society and religion.

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## CHINA

KNAPP, RONALD G. *China's Living Houses: Folk Beliefs, Symbols, and Household Ornamentation*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999. xi + 185 pages. Numerous illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$62.00; ISBN 0-8248-1998-5. Paper US\$34.95; ISBN 0-8248-2079-7.

Families and households are controversial social units among scholars of Chinese society. Every researcher agrees with their importance, but each has a somewhat different opinion on how to define their contents and boundaries. Regardless of opinions, however, Chinese houses are undoubtedly physical structures more clearly perceived by outsiders than by insiders that provide us with knowledge on the many social meanings with which Chinese people live their lives.

As a scholar of geography, Knapp shows us a variety of Chinese houses across time, space, and social class. In Part I, "In Quest of Spatial Harmony," he explores the ways in which Chinese families structure their dwellings as templates for social harmony and for asserting hierarchical distinctions. When we deal with Chinese houses we have to recognize that there is a core room in each house. Knapp states that "this core room is always symbolic