

rice and wood-shavings reflect the moonlight (93). And how could the moonlight reach the decorations, placed as they were in the innermost part of the house? The texts, despite the wealth of data they present, must be taken *cum grano salis* to the extent that they reflect such nostalgic longings for a poetic past. Enbutsu claims that such images are inspired “in the mind of a modern audience” (93), and if one is to believe the glossy publications that appear regularly around New Year one may be tempted to agree. This does not, however, say much about the reality of the rural New Year.

A problem of a different but related kind appears in Stephan’s text when she describes the decorations as sacred symbols. She points out that the decorations are meant to be a seat where the deity “can be welcomed and entertained,” but mentions that people are often not conscious of this and put the decorations up simply because custom demands it (47). This statement identifies the two extreme positions that can be found with regard to the decorations, and can therefore accommodate the range of possibilities that lie in between. However, when the same author says that people decorate tools or machines because “spiritual forces are thought to *animate* the material as well as the natural world” (56, emphasis mine), it is a different matter. If a farmer says that he decorates the tool that supports his livelihood because of a feeling of gratitude towards it, do we then have to conclude that he thinks of a spiritual force animating the tool? Could not gratitude be sufficient reason for such behavior? Or could not the decoration, in some cases at least, be considered a kind of talisman (*omamori*) that extends the blessing of the New Year deity to the farmer’s tools and vehicles? If such interpretations are regarded as unacceptable, then it seems to me that much in the study of folklore would amount to little more than an attempt to recreate a pristine and idealized past that might satisfy a certain “modern audience” but that would not tell us much about customs and their meanings.

These observations are not meant to discredit the authors’ work, but to draw attention to aspects of Japanese reality that tend to get hidden behind the book’s poetic text and wonderful illustrations. Since the book was published on the occasion of an exhibition organized by the Honolulu Academy of Arts, it is not surprising that it emphasized the aesthetic aspects of the Japanese New Year. Nevertheless, its nostalgic quality leaves a rather unreal image of the present-day rural New Year, a world in which we no longer hear even the sound of pounding *mochi*, a sound that not so long ago was said to attract the New Year deity to the house.

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SAWADA, MINORU. *The Origin of Ethnography in Japan: Yanagita Kunio and His Times*. Translated by Toshiko Kishida-Ellis. London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1993. 186 pages. Notes, index. Cloth US\$76; ISBN 0-7103-0450-1. (Available from Columbia University Press.)

Although Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962) remains well-known and often-read in Japan, this pioneer in ethnography has not come fully to the attention of readers in the West, largely due to the lack of good translations and evaluations of his work. Yanagita authored more than one hundred books, a substantial number of poems, and numerous agricultural pamphlets and essays; his collected works (published in thirty-six volumes) have sold over sixty thousand sets. If not *the* founder of Japanese ethnography, he is certainly *among* the founders, and his influence in the field is still pervasive — indeed, his methodology anticipated the current concept of participant-observer fieldwork and “reflexive” scholarship. His approach to *minzokugaku* has weathered the tests of time far better than those of many of the European scholars who are thought of as his models.

In the United States Yanagita's work has been mentioned by Richard DORSON (1963); Fanny Hagin MAYER, whose two books brought Yanagita some recognition (1984, 1986); J. Victor KOSCHMANN, ŌIWA Keibo, and YAMASHITA Shinji, who published in book form the papers given at a symposium on Yanagita (1985); and Ronald A. MORSE, who put out a small but well-researched study on Yanagita's role in the development of folklore and ethnography in Japan (1990). Unfortunately, this meager supply of information hardly does justice to the considerable theoretical insight offered by Yanagita. It is therefore a distinct pleasure to note the publication of Professor Kawada's new book, which provides us with many important theoretical and historical perspectives on Yanagita, his intellectual world, and the social/political aspects of his work.

Kawada (who specializes in Japanese cultural history at Nihon Fukushi University) begins his treatment by situating Yanagita in the agricultural politics of the early 1900s. The newly graduated political lawyer was employed by a government agency to evaluate issues related to the development of a national economic policy. Yanagita, convinced that a proper national policy could not afford to ignore the cultural traditions of the people, found himself more and more involved in the study of social and cultural systems that functioned on the vernacular level. At the same time, however, he developed some very complex economic philosophies of his own with regard to the national economy, finding himself at odds with nearly the entire Meiji government, which was trying to bring in capitalism "at the top" without regard to the cultural ramifications "at the bottom." In any event, Yanagita soon tired of bureaucracy but kept expanding his interests in the expressive systems of the common people, which he often referred to as the "invisible culture" of Japan since they seldom appeared in books, museums, or government policy. His increasing interest in the extended family system, regional festivals, religious traditions, and the like made him perform a fieldworker in his own culture. In his efforts to develop a fieldwork methodology and critical approach suitable for the fieldworker, Yanagita, in conjunction with his colleagues, created a system that defined the field of ethnography in Japan until updated and extended by more recently trained anthropologists during the 1970s and 1980s. Kawada shows how Yanagita divided his field of inquiry into three increasingly complex levels of scrutiny.

1) Material culture, or — more properly — the customs and conventions of everyday life that are external and open to inspection. These are visible traditions, like traditions in clothing, food, labor, festivals, rites of passage, dancing, games, toys, tools, etc., and may be observed by anyone willing to look for them. They can be sketched, described, photographed.

2) Verbal art and oral materials: the customs of everyday life that are sung, spoken, chanted (like prayers, tales, legends, proverbs, children's language). These are not readily sketched (though today we would tape-record them), and they require facility in the language and dialect. These, more than the items on level 1, should be dealt with by an insider who is articulate.

3) Psychological phenomena: customs that require the researcher to reflect introspectively on aspects of belief and logic. These relate to beliefs about the meaning of life, about cause and effect, and about life skills, and require the fieldworker not only to know the language but to share in the people's worldview. Yanagita defines the goal of ethnographic research as the ability to "grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world" (124). Importantly, in this task it is levels 1 and 2 that help the researcher to understand level 3, and not the reverse. In other words, ethnography for Yanagita is not simply about gathering descriptive data on "folk behavior," but consists of the effort to understand the internal worldview and spiritual stance of living groups of people.

Of course, because Yanagita was convinced that foreigners are not capable of penetrating the "subtle inner workings of the natives" (127), he argued that the most proper way to study "provincial" life is to get the local natives in the region to do it themselves, an idea that has attained a great deal of support in recent times, even among those who — like myself — believe that an outsider is not entirely incapable of making the leap into an esoteric culture.

The concept of training and encouraging people to undertake ethnographic self-examination is one way to insure that conclusions are consistent with the cultural logic, and to insure that outsiders — even with the best of intentions — do not feel they have a license to colonize. It is also a subtle reminder of Yanagita's belief that culture persists as long as people continue to practice it. In encouraging "natives" to lay claim to the study and interpretation of their own culture, Yanagita was also encouraging them to continue in their traditions, to celebrate their ancestors, to animate their worldview. In claiming that the people's own cultural power was in their own hands (and thus not in the hands of the Meiji era's scholarly revisionists), Yanagita was promoting an idea that was not only ahead of its time, but was far more revolutionary than his critics have given him credit for.

Kawada provides in this brief but comprehensive study a reasoned and fair assessment of Yanagita's ideas, including some pointed reminders of its weaknesses and illogical conclusions. What emerges is a rich picture of a man who established far more than he realized in the way of ethnographic perspective. In fact, the book highlights Yanagita himself so well that one is tempted to reverse the title and subtitle — the book is overwhelmingly about Yanagita Kunio and his times, and along the way gives us a glimpse into the origins of ethnography in Japan. For anyone interested in Japanese intellectual history as registered on the vernacular level, this book is a must (although, considering this small volume's astonishingly high price, potential readers might want to look for it in their local library).

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CHINA

DEAN, KENNETH. *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China*.

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. xiv + 290 pages. Illustrations, tables, charts, map, 3 appendices, glossary of Chinese terms, bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$35.00; ISBN 0-691-07417-8.

During the period from 1984 to 1991, Kenneth Dean embarked on a well-designed course of fieldwork with the goal of discovering the state of the Daoist religion in Fujian Province. In preparation, Dean spent a year in Taiwan observing the Daoist ritual practice that has been extensively studied by K. M. Schipper and others. Then, armed with firsthand knowledge of the types of practice traditional to the peoples of this region of China, Dean devoted himself to the formidable task of surveying Daoist practice in Fujian itself. When, in 1986, Dean began to publish his preliminary findings, the response of the scholarly community was