

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

enthusiastic.<sup>1</sup> The coastal regions of southeastern China, we learned for the first time, were in the midst of a vigorous renaissance of traditional religious practice, sparked by political liberalization, economic development, and increased contacts with overseas Chinese religious communities. The book under review here, a rewritten version of Dean's 1988 doctoral dissertation, is the first of what we hope will be a series of monographs based on his extensive fieldwork and on the textual and epigraphic data he has collected.

The book has three primary aims, two of which are successfully met. First, Dean sets out to describe the history and current practice of three major god cults, those of Baosheng Dadi 保生大帝 (the Great Emperor Who Protects Life), Qingshui Zushi 清水祖師 (the Patriarch of the Clear Stream), and Guangze Zunwang 廣澤尊王 (the Reverent Lord of Broad Compassion). These cults were chosen not only for their prominence but "because they span the 'Three Religions,'" in that the Great Emperor was a Daoist doctor, the Patriarch a Buddhist monk, and the Reverent Lord a paragon of Confucian filial piety (18). The sections of the study devoted to these cults are enlivened by Dean's descriptions of what he learned not only through observation of the festivals celebrating the gods' birthdays but also through careful translation of unique documentary evidence on successive official investitures of the gods and on aspects of their cults.

Second, Dean is concerned to document the social matrix in which these cults are again beginning to flourish. He carefully traces the *fenxiang* 分香 (incense distribution) networks of the three cults. Particularly interesting in this regard are the cults of the Great Emperor and the Patriarch, both of which have important (and supportive) affiliates in Taiwan. Dean also documents the tensions between the state and these religious communities over the extent of cult activity. These accounts reveal the inventiveness and courage with which the local populace meets official opposition to their activities. For instance, before the 1986 procession of the Patriarch of the Clear Stream, Buddhist and Taoist monks as well as certain of the leading participants were arrested and use of the god's statue from the main temple was denied. Yet, in Dean's words,

a statue of the god that had been selected by the people for use in place of the statue locked in the temple was sent up the mountain by a different path . . . . As soon as the sedan chairs were ready . . . the procession made its way down the main road, though there had been talk of taking smaller paths and avoiding confrontation with the police. But people were stirred by the solemnity of the occasion and inspired by their ever-growing numbers. As they marched up the main road, people scurried to set out offering tables with incense while the god passed by. Most families had feared to set up a table, but everyone got swept up in the spirit of the procession. Midway up the road into town the procession was passed by the jeep of the County Leader, but there was no stopping now, and what was one jeep to several hundred people? (106–109)

The third aim of this book, announced in the title and reiterated throughout, is to demonstrate that Daoist ritual "functions as the main structuring element in the vast liturgical framework that supports the festival of the local gods" (3). This assertion remains unproven. Dean in fact tells us nothing about the "liturgical framework" for each of the three festivals he describes. The examples he cites to show how Daoism might structure cult festivals (50–53) all come from *jiao* 醮 rituals performed on the mainland and in Taiwan and not from observances of the three cults under study here.

According to Dean, the "most obvious" way Daoist ritual structures god festivals is that "the timing of . . . different aspects of the festival is determined by the timing of Daoist ritual" (50). This is not true of any of the three festivals he presents here. Quite the opposite. In the case of the Patriarch, Buddhists perform the inner ritual on the god's birthday—exactly the reverse of the *jiao* sacrifices Dean discusses earlier in the book. While Daoists lead the subsequent procession, Buddhists follow after the sedan chair "dispensing talismans" (103). We are not told how various participants might have interpreted this arrangement; in

any event, both sorts of priest were jailed in 1986 while, as we have seen, the procession went on without them. The central ritual for the Reverent Lord, “the largest and most significant expression of popular religious activity in Fujian today” (132), proves to be the procession to the tomb of the god’s parents that Dean did not (or was unable to) attend. It is difficult to see, then, how the Daoist rituals Dean did observe (at what was originally a Great Emperor temple!) on the god’s birthday might “structure” more than a portion of this cult’s observances. Even the birthday of the Daoist deity, the Great Emperor, was not marked by a *jiao* ritual when Dean was there. Instead, as numerous groups of mediums brought their gods to pay homage, “one Daoist priest dared to don his robes briefly at the entrance of one large group” (66); on the actual birthday, “the Daoist priest who had been summoned some time before did not appear by the chosen hour . . . so the ritual had to be postponed” (67).

Dean does show how, historically, “Daoism came to cooperate with local elites organized around local cults by casting local gods as Daoist divinities,” and, in modern observance, “how Daoist ritual specialists fit into the functionings of cults” (179). These are not, however, activities that provide underlying structure, as he wants to argue.

What Dean does vividly demonstrate is the vitality and persistence of these three cults in the face of efforts by the central government — even, at various stages of history, by Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism — to define, reconfigure, and thus control them. Though Dean does not develop this point, it seems clear from the example of the procession of the Reverent Lord in 1986 that the government’s efforts to control popular religion by removing the more conspicuous heads — the professional clergy — is doomed to failure. Is this because such cults are in fact Hydra-headed serpents? Or do the structuring principles lie still deeper? It is hoped that Dean’s future work will answer this and other questions with the same care he has brought to the description of these three cults.

Stephen A. BOKENKAMP  
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#### NOTE

1. See particularly Dean’s “Field Notes on Two Taoist *jiao* Observed in Zhangzhou in December, 1985,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 2: 191–201 (1986) and “Funerals in Fujian,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 4: 19–78 (1988). Both articles contain close descriptions of contemporary Daoist practice on the mainland.

DREXLER, MONICA. *Daoistische Schriftmagie. Interpretationen zu den Schriftamuletten Fu im Daozang* [Daoist writing magic: Interpretations of the *fu* amulets in the *daoasang*]. Münchener Ostasiatische Studien, Band 68. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994. viii + 241 pages. Bibliography, Chinese glossary and index, illustrations and facsimiles. Paper DM 96. —; ISBN 3–515–06388–9. (In German)

The Chinese writing system, with its distinct characters, is both essentially pictorial and highly abstract; it shows a multiplicity of focus and meaning, yet is full of graphical inspiration. For this reason writing in China was, even from the earliest times, considered more than a mere means of communication; it was a collection of symbols full of sacred and magical power (CHAVES 1977). In religious Taoism, which tends to develop certain aspects of ancient Chinese culture in its own way, writing — in a celestial, pure, and thus more potent form — was elevated to the rank of the highest creative essence of the cosmos, the first manifestation of the Tao, from which the universe came into being (ROBINET 1993, 20).

It is thus not surprising that in ancient China stylized forms of writing were used in state