

## BOOK REVIEWS

### JAPAN

KOUAMÉ, NATHALIE. *Pèlerinage et société dans le Japon des Tokugawa. Le pèlerinage de Shikoku entre 1598 et 1868*. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2001. 317 pages. Maps, tables, glossary, chronology, Japanese text of sources, bibliography, subject index, name index, English and Japanese summaries. Paper 38 Euros; ISSN 1269-8326; ISBN 2-85539-615-8. (In French)

This thoughtful and admirably researched work is a sociological study of the pilgrimage circuit around the island of Shikoku (comprising eighty-eight holy sites associated with Kōbō Daishi/Kūkai, 774–835) during the Edo period. It is not a religious study of the topic—something that Kouamé makes plain repeatedly, especially in a brief and avowedly inconclusive subsection on the religious faith of the pilgrims; still less is it a folkloric one. From the start, her focus is on the pilgrimage as a social phenomenon, with a marked emphasis on the interaction between the pilgrims and the local populations along the route. For this purpose she has mobilized and expertly analyzed a wide variety of sources, some published but most available only in manuscript form to the researcher patient enough to track them down. These include local administrative and legal documents, pilgrim diaries, and collections of votive slips (*fuda*) distributed by the pilgrims. Although never slow to acknowledge her debt to other scholars, Kouamé is never reluctant, either, to offer her own interpretations of a body of evidence that despite her best efforts remains somewhat fragmentary.

Popular tradition attributes the origins of the Shikoku pilgrimage to Kōbō Daishi himself, but scholars propose other ideas, all of them speculative. According to a source cited by Kouamé (I have not managed to locate the story myself), *Konjaku monogatari shū* (ca. 1100?) mentions three monks who followed the coast round the four provinces of Shikoku in pursuit of the Way of the Buddha, which suggests at least an early notion of the pilgrimage. The pilgrimage appears to have gained popularity among laymen in the Muromachi period, and in 1598 the daimyo of Awa, Hachisuka Iemasa, built eight temples intended to offer the pilgrims lodging. However, little seems to have remained of this venture a hundred years later. The first substantial account of a journey recognizable as the modern pilgrimage is the diary of Chōzen, a monk who made the journey in 1653. Then in 1687 the monk Shinnen published his *Shikoku henro michishirube* (“Guide to the Shikoku Pilgrimage”), which often provides a point of departure for Kouamé’s analysis of later accounts. The popularity of the pilgrimage grew in the eighteenth century and culminated in the years 1804–1830, which Kouamé calls its “golden age.” After a break caused apparently by the Tenpō famines (1833–1839) the pilgrimage resumed, but (at least until 1868) never at quite the same level as earlier. However, it certainly continued to flourish, and, as most readers will know, it remains famous in the contemporary world. Oliver Statler’s *Japanese Pilgrimage* (1983) beautifully evokes the experience of the pilgrimage in English, and the pilgrims (*henro*) circulate to this day—on foot, by bus, by car, or, according to Kouamé, sometimes even by helicopter.

The heart of Nathalie Kouamé's book, approached after a careful account of such basic considerations as the "sociological profile of the pilgrims" or "the place of Shikoku in Tokugawa Japan," begins in part two. Here, she starts by treating the policy of *han* and local authorities, expressed in laws and regulations, toward the pilgrims who constantly passed through their territory; the consequent obligations incurred by the pilgrims; and, conversely, the pilgrim's recognized rights. There could of course be friction between pilgrims and the local people (for example, several pilgrim diaries mention being turned away here or there, at the end of the day, from a house that seemed to promise lodging), and there were certainly crises. Pilgrims could become ill or even die on the road, and such events left their traces in the documentary record. Kouamé gives a meticulous account of how these problems were handled. Regulations required that sick pilgrims be cared for, and those who nursed them were often paid a reasonable wage from funds gathered from as many as ten neighboring villages. When the patient recovered, a village-to-village relay (*mura-okuri*) was organized to accompany him or her home or to the nearest port.

In the second half of part two, Kouamé discusses in detail the practice of *settai*, hospitality or assistance rendered to pilgrims by the local population. Shikoku seems to have become famous throughout Japan for *settai*, although local authorities, for example those of Tosa, were not necessarily sympathetic to it. No doubt rooted ultimately in an ancient and more or less universal human impulse to assist the needy traveler, *settai* developed as a distinct practice especially in the early nineteenth century. Surviving records show that some villagers could be quite generous while others of equal economic standing remained wholly aloof. (Not that gifts of goods and services to individual pilgrims were likely to be more than very modest, but there were often a great many pilgrims.) Thus *settai* was not a collectively felt obligation for the whole village, but instead a matter of household choice.

As the author develops her account of *settai*, the reader wonders more and more often why the practice flourished so. Surely the donors, too, must have derived some benefit from it. Japanese scholars of the pilgrimage explain that the pilgrims on their sacred journey brought with them blessings for anyone who helped them, and that these were the donor's reward. No doubt there is some truth to this, but, human nature and human needs being what they are, one would also expect in the long run something more tangible. Kouamé devotes much of the third part of her book to supporting this hypothesis. In so doing she returns to a theme she has already touched on before. According to her, Japanese scholars more or less unanimously present the pilgrims of the time as impoverished, marginal people without significant material means. Certainly this was true of some, but Kouamé goes to great pains to show that it was by no means true of all. As she develops her argument, the only really plausible conclusion comes into sharper and sharper focus: there was indeed an exchange of material benefits between the pilgrims and the communities through which they passed. Many of the pilgrims were, if not rich, then at least financially stable and integrated into their society. On their journey they bought goods and services, and of course they made offerings to the temples they visited. In other words they brought with them an influx of wealth, however modest, that perhaps more than compensated the communities along the way, collectively at least, for the generosity of some of these communities' members. A particularly simple and evocative example is that of the famous hot spring baths of Dōgo in Iyo (Ehime-ken). The baths were free to *henro* pilgrims, which the pilgrims no doubt found welcome. However, during their stay in Dōgo (often up to three days) they spent money on many other things. Surely Dōgo as a whole did not lose on the exchange.

Kouamé concludes by discussing the significance of the pilgrimage for Shikoku at large. Roughly a third of the pilgrims seem to have come from the island itself, but in those days strictly local loyalties were far stronger than now. Even for Shikoku residents, the pilgrimage

must have widened geographically narrow horizons to include for the first time the entire island; and so too for those with whom they came into contact in each locality. Another third came from provinces across from Shikoku along the Inland Sea, but the rest were from all over Japan, even northern Honshu. Kouamé suggests that even as these visitors still further enlarged the outlook of the local people, their experience gave the otherwise economically backward and “peripheral” Shikoku a distinct, Japan-wide identity as the new, nation-building era of Meiji approached.

For a reader more accustomed to English writing on Japan, it is striking to find that Kouamé routinely refers to the Tokugawa era as Japan’s “modern” period and to post-Tokugawa times as “post-modern.” Such are the vagaries of convention.

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## CHINA

BØRDHAL, VIBEKE and JETTE ROSS. *Chinese Storytellers: Life and Art in the Yangzhou Tradition*. Boston: Cheng and Tsui Company, 2002. 432 pages, b/w illustrations and photographs, VCD set. Paper US\$45.00; ISBN 0-88727-356-4.

*Chinese Storytellers* is a multi-media look at lives and stories of several older storytellers in the Yangzi 揚子 delta city of Yangzhou 揚州, China. A cultural and economic hub in the late imperial period, known especially for its role in the salt industry, Yangzhou is today a modernizing city that maintains in some aspects a charm of eras past. In their book about the traditions of professional storytelling in that city, the authors have innovatively combined personal narratives of several aged storytellers, excerpts from the tellers’ signature stories, and context-rich images of them in action on the storytelling platform, carefully integrated into the text. The accompanying CD-ROM presents viewers with additional rich images of each storyteller in action.

The work begins with an introduction to storytelling in China, retracing (as is necessary to the project at hand) some of the ground that Vibeke BØRDAHL covered in her more scholarly study *The Oral Tradition of Yangzhou Storytelling* (1996). The introductory chapters outline trends and themes in the history of Chinese storytelling traditions and offers speculation on its relation to vernacular fiction of the late imperial era. Along the way Børdahl defines and explores an array of useful terms related to storytelling and performance in China, presented with English equivalents and Chinese graphs. The book then turns to a contextual portrait of historical and modern Yangzhou, which gradually shifts to intimate descriptions of life that include demure gardens, quiet side streets, and private homes. The sensitive photographs by Jette Ross that accompany this section perfectly complement Vibeke Børdahl’s narrative and reveal a great deal about a number of traditional crafts, customs, and cuisines. With these introductory frames in place, the authors move on to descriptions and photographs of the storytelling houses where storytellers regularly appear to tell their tales. Customs and activities that make up the fabric of life in these houses are again presented in knowing detail, and many references to the local jargon (which often differs from usages in the nearby storytelling center of Suzhou 蘇州) are used to describe things related to storytelling.

Other sections detail the mode of transmission of stories and include several genealo-