

## Book Reviews

Josef Kreiner: Die Kultorganisation des japanischen Dorfes. Veröffentlichung zum Archiv für Völkerkunde (Museum für Völkerkunde Wien), Band 7. Mit 4 Abbildungen, 8 Karten, 10 Tabellen im Text und 31 Abbildungen auf Kunstdrucktafeln; VI, 184 Seiten. Wien 1969.

The author of this monograph on the cult organisation of the Japanese village had the benefit of a sojourn of about four years in Japan during which he enjoyed the counsel of the most competent native cultural anthropologists and the wholehearted cooperation of local residents and institutions while he worked in the field. The problem which he wanted to investigate is a complex one. The cult organisations as they present themselves today are closely interwoven with the historical development of village religion, society and economics.

In Part I the author presents the problem under investigation and an outline of research done so far by other explorers. Summarizing Japanese research results he reminds us that the village community in the Northern part of Japan is presided over by an association of the heads of patrilinear families who are responsible for the cult of patrilinear ancestor gods, whereas in the Southern part of the country age classes are dominating in the village, worshipping patrilinear and matrilinear ancestor gods who at fixed times appear in the village from beyond the sea, bringing along with them their blessings in terms of good crops and other means of subsistence. Only recently a third form of village cult organisation came under discussion, the so-called *miyaza*, *miya* meaning a shrine of a god, and *za* literally meaning a seat, but signifying an association or a guild, in this case an association who is in charge of worshipping a god in the shrine (*miya*) on behalf of the villagers. More precisely can we say that it is an association of influential family heads who alternately are in charge of cult affairs and village government. Most Japanese students of folk life like to assume that the cult associations, called *miyaza*, are a later derivative of associations of privileged patrilinear families. A few other scholars however took a system of age classes with postulated secret societies as the starting point of the formation of the *miyaza*. Still others talk about a generation-class system as the basis of the *miyaza*. From the several proposed solutions of the *miyaza* question the essence of this particular form of cult association is still not yet evident beyond doubt.

Our author is trying a fresh approach and is going a long way to show that the *miyaza* is something really different from any other form of cult association. After having pointed out the *status quaestionis* in the whole complex of the problem, social and religious, he is in Part II delving into the religious life of the village community. He defines what a village is, which gods are worshipped in it, what the village god proper, the *ujigami*, is. He finds that the village god may either belong to the "Great Tradition" or to the "Small Tradition". By the gods of the great tradition he means those gods whose worship was promoted by the ruling class in a systematic attempt to enhance its own power and prestige. These are many gods contained in the official mythologies *Kojiki* and *Nihon*

*shoki*. Besides these gods, politically so important for the upper class, gods are worshipped in village shrines who belong to the small tradition, that is so to say naturally grown gods, sea-gods, mountain-gods, in general nameless nature gods. The latter gods, though frequently given a name taken from the official mythology, are basically guardian-gods of the village.

With the worship of such genuine village gods go together age classes, youth organisations, secret societies and the idea of visiting deities (*marebito*). The author connects the term *matsuri*, festival, with the idea of gods visiting the community, *matsuri* then being a derivative of *matsu* 'to wait', to wait for the god's visit and manifestation of his will. It is incumbent on the youth organisation to organize their proper reception and worship.

However the village god most frequently found everywhere is the *ujigami*, or clan-god, who is considered to be permanently present in his shrine within the village boundaries. The belief in visiting deities in its purest form is still current in the Ryûkyû Islands, in Japan proper it has lost its vitality, that it formerly was here equally strong can only be said as a conclusion from rudimentary premises. The word *ujigami* can be translated with 'clan-god' only with some reservations. What *uji*, or 'clan', originally meant, has been much discussed. The now prevailing opinion is that the nucleus of a clan was a patrilinear kinship group around which families gathered on the basis of a mere local relationship. It has not yet been established beyond doubt that an ancestor god in the biological sense stood at the beginning of the formation of the first clans. From hypothetical premises can only be drawn hypothetical conclusions.

Certainly not all clan-gods belong to the great tradition, there are countless instances of clan-gods who do not and never did. Some of them are ancestor-gods, not coming at times from abroad, but having their burial places within the reach of the clan territory. Other clan-gods have no genealogical connection with their clan (*uji*), having been picked out either from the great or the small tradition. Our author thinks of a third possibility to explain the permanent presence of the clan-god by introducing a local earth-god, again cementing his opinion with a good amount of data collected by folklore researchers.

To explain how it happened that the priestly functions in worshipping the village gods were taken over by alternating functionaries, several attempts were made of which our author seems to follow that of Harada Toshiaki. The latter, stressing the sacred character and in some cases even divine character of the village priest, thinks that the realities of life made it necessary that all the ritual avoidances and religious restrictions imposed on cult functionaries are limited only to one or at most few members of the community. What is known as *miyaza*, or 'shrine association', is one of the possible systems of an alternating priesthood. Its distinctive peculiarity is of a social nature, only privileged families, enjoying a respected standing in the community, are eligible for a priestly function. The author knows well that he finds himself on almost virgin soil and that extensive monographs have first to be written before something more definite can be said about this kinds of village cult organisation. With painstaking effort he follows the twists and turns of the pertinent Japanese literature and tries to give it a consistent interpretation.

About half of the book is taken up by the author's attempted synthesis of village cult organisation in general. In Part IV the author then presents the findings of his own fieldwork on cult and cult organisation at the Uwase Shrine in Wakasa Province, Fukui Prefecture. He persistently endeavored to treat

religious, social and economic life as a whole with all the dynamics of community life in a village, recording also the differentiation of matters in the different parts of the village. It comes as no surprise that such differentiations touch upon basic concepts, for instance, when elements of a kinship (*dôzoku*) complex are intermingled with a complex of age classes and a complex of generation classes. We have to recall that in the vicissitudes of history older forms of social and religious life disintegrated and were re-assembled to new forms.

In an Appendix (p.142-178) the author lays before us description and content of documents on the cult organisation of the Uwase Shrine. These documents are in themselves a rich source of information on religious matters in the life of the villagers. They belong to a category of literature which is called *komonjo* (old documents) and became the subject of specialized studies. The Appendix is followed by a bibliography which is valuable to every student of Japanese folk life and lore.

Dr. Kreiner's monograph deserves our high esteem in several respects. Being both a trained cultural anthropologist and a linguistically well prepared Japanologist who is laboriously ploughing through a great amount of Japanese ethnological and folkloristic literature, he reveals the organic relationships that exist between village religion and society. Many things of course are hypothetical as long as not all parts of the very variegated country have been explored equally intensively, but of possible hypotheses the author built up good ones, for the time being perhaps the best ones. On the *miyaza* (shrine association) and other related topics the discussion is still going on, in it Dr. Kreiner's contribution cannot be ignored even by native scholars. We have here another case of pioneer work in Japanese ethnology done by a foreign researcher.

M. E.

### Thomas Immoos: The Birth of the Japanese Theater.

In: *Monumenta Nipponica*, Studies in Japanese Culture, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, Tokyo, 1969; pp.403-414.

Starting from the fact that all forms of theater, beginning from the very oldest, are still preserved in the Japanese theater, the author wants to "investigate what the living forms of theater can teach us about archetypal rites and performances" (p.404). Since the written texts are not very old he tries to establish the underlying ancient patterns through comparison with similar forms in other cultures. In this aim the paper resembles two articles published earlier and reviewed in this periodical<sup>3)</sup>.

Primitive man's understanding of the world surrounding him is not a philosophical one but a magical one. By actually re-presenting the expected effects in appropriate rites he thinks to force the powers active in this world to produce them. Survivals of such rites in a play may tell us something about

<sup>3)</sup> Thomas Immoos: *Das Tanzritual der Yamabushi und ein Ritual der Wiedergeburt im Yamabushi-Kagura*. In: *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, Band L, Tokyo 1968; pp.1-25.