

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REPORTS

OTTO KAROW: UTAGAKI-KAGAHİ (歌垣燿歌會). Ein Beitrag zur Volks-und Religionsgeschichte Altjapans.

Monumenta Nipponica Vol. V, No. 2 (1942); p. 1-45.

True to the program we have marked out for ourselves in our "Folklore Studies", namely, to give much attention to such bibliographies as deal with folklore matters of Eastern Asia, we, hereby, propose to give a report on a study which, in its treatment of the subject-matter, happily combines such research methods as are based on historical literary sources together with folklore research dealing with present-day conditions, with the added distinction, that it draws exhaustively from outstanding works of native research men. Since in these time many of our readers may not have a copy of the "Monumenta Nipponica" at their disposal, we wish to present a short summary of Otto Karow's research which he carried out on an important theme in the field of Japanese Folklore.

In European Nipponology the Utagaki-kagahi problem has received little attention up to the present. Karl Florenz, in his 'History of Japanese Literature' (Leipzig 1909), touches upon this subject and sums up the essentials of the custom as follows: men and women of every age and irrespective of their state assemble in a public place. There, while gathered into various groups, or formed in long extended lines, they sing the songs of old Japan, or improvisations, singly or in chorus. The sexes are free and entirely natural in their behaviour towards each other. Love-making is practiced by the alternate singing of love-songs. The aim of Karow's research studies is to throw as much light as possible on this custom by deleniating it through various stages in history, from its first origin up to its decline and end.

As sources the author used first the *Fudoki* (風土記), furthermore, the songs of the collection *Manyōshū* (萬葉集), which so far have not been sufficiently exploited in the interest of ancient folklore and history of religion.

According to Karow's well authenticated presentation of the facts, the Utagaki took place in ancient times first and foremost on Mount Tsukuba (筑波), in the province of Hitachi (常陸) (the present-day Ibaraki-ken). But there was also a number of other places where the Utagaki was held, such as the pine-dotted plain of Otome (童子女松原), which was also in the province of Hitachi, or again on Mount Kishima (杵島岳), in Kyūshū; on the Utagaki mountain in Settsu; also on the market place of Tsubaichi (海石榴市), in Yamato; and finally, on the seashore of Sumi-no-e (墨江). Considering the nature of these places, it appears that mountains, plains or the seashore were the favored sites for these gatherings.

The Manyōshū poem, No. 1759, of Takahashi no Muraji Mushimaro (高橋連蟲麻呂) is perhaps the most prolific source of information concerning the Utagaki celebrations held on Mount Tsukuba. Boys, girls, men and women all took part in them. And Takahashi relates in plain and unequivocal language as how, besides the eating and drinking and other carousings, also the freest and most promiscuous intercourse between the sexes was practiced as a part of the day's program. The deeper meaning of all that is hinted at by Takahashi in a remark which he makes regarding the veneration which is given a certain deity during the Spring and Autumn seasons.

Karow sums up the main features of the Utagaki in the following few points, as based on the ancient writings:

- 1) Men and women, in their tender years, or in full adult vigor gather in sacred places on mountains, plains or the seashore.
- 2) Those taking part indulge themselves in eating, drinking, song and dance accompanied with music.
- 3) During the dances the opportunity lends itself for love-making between the sexes and contracting of marriage vows.
- 4) These Utagaki revelries bear the character of a strict religious cult.
- 5) The Utagaki takes place on fixed days during Spring and Autumn season.
- 6) Sexual intercourse during the festivities is an elemental part of the religious cult and, as such, permitted by the deity during that time; in fact the taking part in sexual licentiousness seems to have been a religious obligation binding on everybody.

Karow also brings out the close connection existing between the Utagaki festivities — the partakers at which are, for the most part farmers — and the Nihinahe (新嘗) whose main idea centers around the blessing to be obtained from the Tsukuba god upon the next harvest. In this sense, therefore, the Utagaki is a kind of fertility rite, which finds its parallels in the beliefs and customs of Ancient China and of the Miao and other peoples of today. The gods presiding over the Utagaki, according to ancient sources, are conceived as male and female, whose identification in single instances is, however, not easy. Some features suggest a Sun-godess, others again the couple of Izanagi and Izanami.

In a secondary way the Utagaki also proved to be an important institution for the choosing of a life-partner in marriage. Love matches contracted during the time were believed to be especially favored by the deity and had divine sanction so as not to need further consent of the parents.

Later sources are silent about the Utagaki. Its traces in the texts of the Kataribe in the Kojiki and Nihongi already reveal various important changes. The Utagaki of later days, as practiced in court circles, is aesthetically polished and shows the influence of Chinese court dances and ceremonies. Utagaki-like matsuri of later times are the Yo-matsuri (夜祭) (night festivals), forbidden, 798; the Zakone (雑魚寝), the O-komori (御籠り) and the Bon-odori (盆踊). Concerning these festivals all historical sources are completely silent for a long time. Whilst, again,

the folkloristic literature of the Tokugawa period mentions practices similar to the Utagaki: matsuri—free sexual intercourse practiced as a religious cult—marriage contracts by divine sanction—social festivals with song, dance and carousing, usually held during the Spring and Autumn seasons. In its essentials, the custom has survived, in some more remote place, up to our modern times, and present-day folkloristic literature contains much material relative to this subject.

(M. Eder)

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