

BOOK REVIEWS

Sakurai Katsunoshin: Ise Jingū (桜井勝之進・伊勢神宮). In: Shrines of Japan, No. 4. Tokyo, Gakuseisha, 1969. 251 pp., 6 plates. Yen 580

Walking under the centuries old huge cedars to the main hall of the Inner Shrine (*naigū*) of Ise you do not just hear the voices of schoolchildren and the grating sound of the white pebbles under your feet, but also the sound of hammers. Carpenters and craftsmen are busy preparing the new shrine for the Goddess of Ise. In the fall of 1973 everything will be ready and the Goddess will be transferred in a solemn procession to her new shrine. This will be the last and most important of a long series of ceremonies, which was started eight years earlier with a rite at "the mouth of the mountain" (*yamaguchisai* 山口祭, where the trees for the new shrine were felled. Principally the transfer to a new shrine is to take place every twenty years, but there were times of war and bad harvests which prevented a new construction after the necessary laps of time. Notwithstanding such hardships in its long history, the shrine of Ise is the scene of busy preparation of its sixtieth reconstruction.

This fact seems to be a good opportunity to introduce a small volume, whose author is a priest at the Inner Shrine of Ise. Although its publication goes several years back, the book is apparently meant as a sort of introduction into the shrines of Ise in view of the great event. This determines its character: a blend of scholarly exposition resting on a vast background knowledge of the shrines' history with the aim of introducing to the visitor the exterior beauty of the shrines and their superb surroundings as well as their deeper religious significance.

In the first few chapters the author talks about the necessary spiritual preparation for a proper shrine visit, describes the region at the foot of Mt. Takakura, where the shrines are located, and the most important personnel and objects used at the shrines. But the first half of the book concentrates on a brief history and the meaning of the Outer and Inner Shrine respectively. Although the author mentions this or that old source, the student won't find a bibliography for further studies. But he will find a solid introduction and a number of hints to existing problems.

The second part takes up the religious meaning and activities of the shrines. Here the *kanname sai* (神嘗祭) and the ceremonies connected with the preparation and transfer to the new shrine receive most attention. This makes it very clear with what great importance the shrines are held for the well-being of the country represented in person of the Emperor. Like a counterweight to this solemnity the pilgrimage to Ise means the fulfillment of a lifelong wish for the ordinary people and at least a temporary release from the restrictions of everyday life. This together with short sketches of a few eminent priests are the content of the last chapters. A short appendix comprises a few lists: the ceremonies in preparation for the new shrines; a list of the ceremonies and rituals during the year; a list of ranks and of their holders at the shrines and finally a list of the dependent

shrines belonging to the *Ise Jingû*.

Although a great number of names and technical terms is used, one can read through the book without waisting too much time consulting dictionaries. Most of the technical terms are accompanied with *furigana* renderings.

Peter Knecht

Miyamoto Tsuneichi: *Ise Sangû* (宮本常一・伊勢参宮) [Pilgrimage to the Ise Shrine]. Tokyo, Shakai-shisô-sha, 1971. 245 pages, illustrated, Yen 320.

This booklet by a well-known scholar in the field of cultural history and folklife of Japan, treats of the sanctuary of Ise from a historical, political and sociological perspective. The word 'Ise' reminds us of one of the central pillars of Japanese theocracy. In Ise is worshipped the sun-goddess Amaterasu, the ancestress of the Imperial house. The sacred authority of the Emperor was built on the belief in his divine ancestry. As an institution this ended with the Pacific War, but the Ise Shrine as such with its grandiose and expensive ceremonies is still intact, kept going by its vested interests and by voluntary contributions from numerous other Shintô shrines all over the country, where contributions for Ise are solicited.

In Ise we find in fact two shrines, the Inner (*naigû*) and the Outer Shrine (*gegû*). The author reconstructs first the history of both shrines, scrutinizing a vast amount of well known and lesser known documentary sources. He finds that after the failure of the Yamato Court in the fourth and fifth centuries in its attempt at the conquest of the Korean peninsula, that court sent expeditions in an easterly direction, subduing peacefully or by war the clans in power there. Historians say that the Ise Shrine became the seat of the divine Imperial ancestress in the latter half of the fifth or some time in the sixth century. This concerns the Inner Shrine (*naigû*). The Outer Shrine (*gegû*) is not mentioned before the year of 803. Its Goddess Toyo-ukehime is said to have been a local fertility goddess. Emperor Temmu, after having won a decisive battle, sent in 675 an Imperial princess to Ise to officiate there as priestess at a thanksgiving ceremony. From that time on the worship at Ise became the prerogative of the Imperial house. The unification of the country was completed with the Taika Reform which was carried out from the middle of the seventh to the early eighth century. The new Law Codes of this political innovation created the economic basis for the Ise Shrines. The provisions of the Taika Reform however did not last long. In the provinces the powerful warrior clans of the Taira and Minamoto established their rule, the Taira finally being defeated by the Minamoto. Briefly, the warriors (*bushi*) never challenged the authority of the Court as they needed the Court's sanction for their own authority. Under their rule the worship at Ise went on as before. In the provinces branch shrines were founded together with their attendant priests and land endowments. Later numerous priests of lower ranks, the *onshi*, went out from Ise to the provinces and propagated the Ise belief. Many confraternities, the *Ise-kô*, were created which collected contributions for Ise and organized pilgrimages there. It is a long and eventful story how the old Imperial sanctuary became finally the great national shrine. Ise calendars and amulets from Ise were other factors in this process.