

QUACK, ANTON. *Priesterinnen, Heilerinnen, Schamaninnen? Die po'ingao der Puyuma von Katipol (Taiwan)* [Priestesses, healers, shamanesses? The *po'ingao* of the Puyuma of Katipol]. *Collectanea Instituti Anthropos*, Band 32. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1985. 168 pages with bibliography. DM 42.—, ISBN 3-496-00783-4. (In German)

With this publication we welcome one more volume of the Katipol Puyuma texts collected by the late Dr. D. Schröder and his collaborator in Katipol, Rev. P. Veil.

This time the texts concern Schröder's prime field interest, the institution of the *po'ingao*, those female religious functionaries considered by him to be the guardians of tradition and religion in a situation of rapid cultural change. Schröder's previous work among the Monguor (T'ujen) had led him to an intensive occupation with shamanism and the formulation of his own definition of the phenomenon (Schröder 1955: 848-881). He went to Katipol expecting to find in the *po'ingao* an institution with strong shamanistic traits (15-16). The situation he found conformed to his set of criteria and so he did not hesitate to call the *po'ingao* "shamanesses."

These are the premises from which Dr. Quack, editor of the texts and author of this book, had to work after Schröder's death.

The book consists of a descriptive and an analytic part. The descriptive part is very valuable, because, apart from giving the texts in the original language which is a great achievement in itself, it provides a record of the institution from the perspective of the practitioners themselves. They describe their initial sickness, confirmation of their vocation by dreams, or other supernatural sanctions, formal apprenticeship and final assumption of office after a complex initiation ritual.

Quack's textual record of the wide range of *po'ingao* ritual activities is focused to the two central aspects of securing and strengthening life and well-being (fertility) and diagnosing and curing diseases (including recalling lost souls).

Quack draws attention to the fact that some, but not all, *po'ingao* are able to perform *miaqo'as*. The literal meaning of *miaqo'as* is to cause rain or dew. It represents Kaqorasan, the supernatural place where the ancestral *po'ingao* reside with Toro, the primeval *po'ingao*. At the occasion of *miaqo'as* Toro descends from Kaqorasan and speaks through the *po'ingao* who is in trance. Nevertheless, all *po'ingao* present, appear to experience some altered state of consciousness, except for the one who is deliberately placed apart and supposed to bring them out of trance after the event.

All the rituals described have a stereotyped structure and are couched in ritual language and double verses. They invariably start with a rite for pacifying and banishing malevolent supernaturals, followed by an invitation and formal announcement of the ritual to follow and its purposes to a number of supernatural beings which vary in number and composition according to the request of the day. They usually include Toro, the *po'ingao* ancestors of the officiating *po'ingao*, and *naithas*, "the highest." The offerings to the supernatural beings are symbolized in arrangements of betel nuts, glass, or ceramic beads and iron filings (formerly pottery shavings), the chief paraphernalia of the Katipol *po'ingao*.

When the *po'ingao* looks for a lost soul abducted by a malevolent supernatural, she purchases its freedom by means of betel nuts spiked with beads, restores it to the body, and strengthens it by an additional rite.

In a statement, since repeated by others, Schröder (1957: 36) argued that among the ethnic minorities of Taiwan, the Puyuma have the most developed shamanism. While this judgement may be open to debate, it strikes one as somewhat ironic that in

order to demonstrate it, he selected a village where not only a number of practitioners adopted Paiwan ritual practices, using Paiwan (language), but where the very institution itself is known by a Paiwan loanword: *pu-lingaw* (*pu*=to have, possess, acquire; *lingaw*=soul). Other Puyuma call the institution *təmaramau*, a word which is retained in Katipol in the restricted meaning of a curing ritual (156).

Studies of this kind force a writer into an uphill battle with terminology and Quack has fought valiantly. However, his choice of "demons" for *koatheng na viroa*, the unhappy malevolent souls of those who died an "evil" death and to whom the pacification and banishing rites at the outset of every ritual are directed, is not fortunate. Quack himself objects mildly to Schröders inclusive use of *Gebet* (prayer) to cover *ngadir* (a. ritual texts and songs recited by the *po'ingao* during rituals; b. the language of these texts which as "language of long ago," or "language of the *po'ingao* and *raxan*" differs from everyday usage) and I tend to agree with him. However, the term used in recent Japanese publications in this context *jumon wo tonaeru* 呪文を唱える (to chant a spell, recite an incantation) is even less appropriate. "*Jumon wo tonaeru*" is not to be confused with *juso* 呪詛 (cast an evil spell). This aspect of *po'ingao* activities, neutralizing evil spells, or casting counterspells, is not mentioned by Quack, but taken up in some detail by Suenari (1983). Furuno (1972: 113) uses *jutō* 呪縛 (*ju*=spell, incantation, *tō*=*inoru*=pray). Quack is in a quandary about what to call the *po'ingao* and while I fully sympathize with him, the title "Priesterinnen, Heilerinnen, Schamaninnen?" is not much of a title, as far as book titles go. However, recent Japanese publications (Suenari 1983; Kasahara 1979) share the terminological insecurity, shifting back and forth between different terms. Retaining the original local term, while fully recording all its phenomenological and functional aspects, preferably in the words of the practitioners themselves, as Quack has done, is the only way to avoid the otherwise inevitable distortion attending transcultural labelling of religious concepts or experiences, the observer himself does not, or cannot share with the practitioners.

In the analytic part Quack gives an impressive list of current opinions on the nature of shamanism, but the overwhelming impression left by this array is that a consensus is not to be expected in the foreseeable future. If, for comparative purposes, it should be imperative to determine whether the *po'ingao* of Katipol, or their fellow practitioners elsewhere in Taiwan, are "true shamans," or "shamans only with due reservations," it must not be forgotten that we are not really in a position to judge, since what we can observe today is the residue of what was perhaps a more complex past. As a case in point one may cite the parallel Amis institution of *tsi-kawas-ai* which has lost all vestiges of trance in some areas, while retaining it as an absolute prerequisite in others. Field location may therefore determine the conclusions drawn about the nature and ideology of an institution to a considerable extent.

For all these reasons this reviewer has become increasingly skeptical about straining the Puyuma, or for that matter other local, data through the mesh of alien cultures and judging them either adequate (true shamanism) or deficient. This may make me a minority of one, but I would have preferred to see some of the space taken up by this problem, dedicated to the discussion of some of the very interesting culture-historical and/or ethno-historical questions raised by the texts themselves, or by the ritual paraphernalia of the *po'ingao*.

Quack's study is entirely self-contained, constricted by a framework of two constants: the Schröder / Veil texts and the local boundaries of Katipol. While, at least among the ethnic minorities of Taiwan, data collected at one locality tend to be truly valid for this locality only, occasional glances beyond the confines of one's own *sekal*

(village) are necessary to keep things in perspective.

In this sense it is regrettable that Quack has not consulted Suenari's (1983) thought-provoking paper on the healing rituals of the (Rikavong) Puyuma which discusses the institution of the *tamaramau* vis-a-vis Christianity, Buddhism, Shintoism (as unsuccessfully enforced by the Japanese colonial authorities) and Chinese folk religion. Suenari's conclusions might have provided Quack with different perspectives for his chapter on the present situation and prospect for the *po'ringao*.

Throughout the early literature on the Eastcoast of Taiwan one finds tantalizing bits and pieces of evidence linking this area and the nearby Ryūkyūs in general, or some islands in particular. Without drawing decisive conclusions, Mabuchi (1976) discussed similarities in optional cult affiliation among the Puyuma and the Miyako islanders (Ryūkyū). He called for cooperation of experts in different fields for the solution of specific problems. Paraphrasing him, I would like to call for determined comparative studies of the institution of ritual experts among the ethnic minorities of Taiwan as represented e.g. by the *po'ringao* of Katipol, and the *yuta* of the Ryūkyū islands (Lebra 1966 and many others).

These studies will depend on the availability of a great number of reliable primary sources like the one presented by Quack. I do hope his work as editor-in-chief of "Anthropos" will give him time to continue publishing and analysing Puyuma texts.

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