

BOOK REVIEW

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Etudes d'ethnographie japonaise.

Le Conte du Coupeur de Bambous (traduction).

Par René Sieffert

The present volume of the *Bulletin de la Maison Franco-Japonaise* consists exclusively of contributions to our knowledge of Japanese ethnography and is therefore duly entitled to be introduced to our readers. The contents proper are preceded by two "In Memoriam" of leading French orientalist, Alfred Foucher and René Grousset.

In his study on Japanese ethnography the author outlines the origin and development of what he calls ethnographic studies in Japan. We need not argue about the term, though its use in this context is uncommon. He gives full credit to the founder of the Japanese Folklore Science, Mr. Yanagita Kunio, and to his collaborators and disciples, and he lays before us the organisation of research work in this field, throwing light into all corners of the academic world where individual scholars and ethnographic or folkloristic societies are at work. Many names of authors and their publications are listed which would otherwise easily evade our attention. I may be blamed for speaking *pro domo*, but for the sake of completeness I hope to be permitted to add to the list of ethnological courses given in Japanese universities the ethnological courses given at Nanzan University in Nagoya where a whole Anthropological Department (anthropology is taken by us in the American sense) has been established. It comprises instruction in prehistory, ethnology (this year I myself am in charge of a course on ethnological methodology and of one on Asiatic ethnography), linguistics, methodology of Folklore Science, and Japanese Folklore Science. Though the author admires the productivity of the Japanese folklorists, he is not blind to their weak points, short-comings in their methods. He is right in reducing this weakness to their difficulties in keeping close contact with the theoretical and methodological orientation of our science in Western countries, from which most of the Japanese folklorists are barred by language difficulties. These barriers prevent them from joining the discussions of fundamental theoretical and methodological questions, and from offering their achievements to international criticism. Falling in line with the author, I wish to

add that it is urgently desirable that Japanese scholars begin to write in one of the four world languages which have by agreement become the instrument of communication for international scientific congresses. I do by no means imply that the vernacular language should be completely discarded. Polish, Finnish, Hungarian, Danish scholars and others all have their native publication organs, too. But more important and conclusive Japanese treatises should be written in a language that would make them accessible to the whole community of ethnologists all over the world, as it is done by those Western scholars whose native language does not enjoy the privilege of being one of the four congress languages. In few fields this urgency is felt more than in ethnology where the research object itself, the development of mankind and its culture, requires that the scholars of all territories work hand in hand in close alliance. Only by doing so can regional problems be properly grasped and the way opened towards their solution. May we refer here to one example of such an approach to a regional ethnological topic, Prof. E. Ishida's *The Kappa Legend. A Comparative Ethnological Study on the Japanese Water-Spirit Kappa and Its Habit of Trying to Lure Horses into the Water* (Folklore Studies, Vol. X, 1950). The title of the Japanese book, of which this essay is a translation is *Kappa Komabiki Kô* 河童駒引考. What is to be hoped for is that the Japanese folklorists acquaint themselves sufficiently with ethnology in general and with the particular problems of East Asian ethnology. A similar desire can be expressed with equal urgency to our Western folklorists, if they want to be more than mere illy illuminated data collectors for ethnologists. A narrow and therefore sterile cantonalism undeniably exists also in some sectors among our Western folklore research workers. Fritz Krüger in his "*Die romanischen Völker*" (in Hugo Bernatzik, *Die Grosse Völkerkunde*, Leipzig 1939, Bd. I) has shown us, as others have in other fields, what can be made of national folkloristic data in the hands of an ethnologist with the broad outlook on culturo-historical matters which his training has given him. What Japanese folklorists need first is a clear idea of the position of Folklore Science among the cultural sciences, and then a well established methodology resulting from this position. With the increase of collected data, such a theoretical orientation becomes more imperative. Many Japanese folklorists know this and are struggling towards this goal. It can be hoped that Mr. R. Sieffert's critical remarks will be helpful in pushing further developments in the right direction.

Here we must, however, avoid exaggeration lest onesidedness creeps into our judgment of the situation. There can be named quite a few publications which are the fruits of painstaking and systematic scholarly work. Picking out some at random, I will mention Fujita Motoharu: *Nihon minka-shi* 藤田元春: 日本民家史 (History of the Japanese House); Nakayama Tarô *Nihon miko-shi* 中山太郎: 日本巫女史 (History of the Japanese Sorceresses); Hayakawa Kôtarô: *Hanamatsuri* 早川孝太郎: 花祭 (The "Flower Festival", a special type of rural *kagura*, the sacred dances and music of mountain villages along Tenryû River in Central Japan); Ishihara Keiji: *Nihon nômin kenbiku* 石原憲治: 日本農民建築 (The Japanese Farmhouse Architecture), 16 vols., a survey of the existing farmhouse types illustrated with many photos and drawings; Takei Takeo: *Nihon kyôdo gangu* 武井武雄: 日本郷土

玩具 (Playthings of the Japanese Country-side); Arisaka Yôtarô: *Nihon gangu-shi* 有坂與太郎: 日本玩具史 (History of Japanese Playthings), 2 vols; and by the same author: *Nihon binamatsuri-kô* 日本雛祭考 (A Study on the Japanese Doll Festival). Achievements like these will forever be cornerstones in the still incomplete but steadily growing structure of Japanese Folklore Science. Through his deep and broad knowledge of all fields of Japanese folkways, the indefatigable and prolific Mr. Yanagita Kunio and his assiduous associates are furnishing us year after year with detailed amounts of data, thus contributing to the elucidation of old and new problems. Together with the author of the issue of the Bulletin under review here, foreign ethnologists not familiar with the Japanese language, also regret that these quantities of information are all hidden behind the barrier of a difficult language. For Japanologists, Mr. R. Sieffert's well classified bibliography is a great help, and they will follow with keen interest the continuation of it in the coming issues of the Bulletin which Mr. Sieffert promises.

His bibliography first lists the periodical publications, that is, journals of general interest and regional journals, many of them now defunct. In his analytical bibliography publications of a general character come first, among them the new Dictionary of Japanese Folklore Science; then introductions to the study of Folklore Science and treatises on the methodological approach to it, the latter giving us an idea of the theoretical principles upon which Japanese Folklore Science is based. Then follow well arranged lists of publications on the various fields of the people's life, beliefs, customs, etc. Treatises contained in books written in common by several authors are separately listed. Mr. Sieffert's bibliography certainly is eventful in the history of Western publications on Japanese folkways.

By the same author: *La fête du feu de Kurama.*

The fire festival of Kurama near Kyôto is celebrated annually during the night of October 22-23. The author, who assisted twice at it, gives here a detailed description of it. The fire there is the principal and central element. The festival is characterized by huge torches that are carried along through the village by young people and by the hazardous way people expose themselves and their straw-thatched houses to the dangers of the sacred fire. This is a well described example of the numerous fire festivals in Japan. The author abstains from an interpretation of its meaning because he finds this could only be done in a thorough study of fire festivals which is outside of the scope of his present paper.

By the same author: *Le Conte du Coupeur de Bambous (Taketorimonogatari) (Traduction).*

This is a translation of the *Taketorimonogatari* in its textual version in the *Konjaku-monogatari*. The author's introduction to the translation outlines the history of the text and of its interpretations and related studies. His notes are of interest to students of Far Eastern folktales. Many explanatory and critical notes are added to the translation.

Mr. Sieffert's three papers, totaling 200 pages, cover a vast field of research on Japanese folklore and will prove to be of lasting value in the annals of the Western scholars' discovery of this section of the cultural life of mankind. M. Eder