

Reviews

George B. BIKLE, Jr. *The new Jerusalem: Aspects of utopianism in the thought of Kagawa Toyohiko*. [Association of Asian Studies Monograph 30]. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976. 343 pages. US\$4.95 paper, \$8.95 cloth.

As he explains at the beginning, Dr. Bikle's book is not just another biography of Kagawa. What he tries to do in this book is to interpret "the utopian aspects of Kagawa's thought in terms of Japan's more general transition from tradition to modernity" (p. 7). Though I have by no means read all the English language literature on Kagawa Toyohiko (1888-1960), I have the impression that most of the previous books and articles on Kagawa in English were written rather uncritically and tend to be mere panegyrics.

Kagawa was undoubtedly a very unusual person. Mere enumeration of the major events and achievements of his life is enough to convince us of his astounding versatility and almost preternatural energy. (Kagawa was at one time or other during his seventy-two-year lifetime a slum worker, a bestselling novelist, a mass preacher, a major leader in the labor movement, the farmers' movement, the cooperative movement, the peace movement, and so on.) Since Kagawa was a truly charismatic person, the temptation to write an uncritical panegyric is great.

Bikle obviously did not succumb to such a temptation. While reading the book, we sense throughout that the author feels considerable admiration for Kagawa, and many of Kagawa's ideas are accorded sympathetic treatment. He maintains, however, a critical detachment from Kagawa, and in this respect he differs from authors such as William Axling and Helen F. Topping.

Bikle's book is, I believe, the first western language work on Kagawa that makes extensive use of Kagawa's Japanese language writings. Even in Japanese there is perhaps no book that examines Kagawa's thought, from the earliest period to the last, with a thoroughness comparable to Bikle's. I was very pleased to find in his book a detailed discussion of such works as *Sekai heiwa ron* ("A treatise on world peace"), written when Kagawa was only eighteen years old, and *Koya nikki* (Kagawa's personal diary covering part of 1908).

To the best of my knowledge, both have seldom been even referred to in previous English language literature on Kagawa.

Firsthand examination of Kagawa's writings, including those so far almost completely neglected, has enabled the author to treat squarely aspects or traits of Kagawa that escaped the notice of many other writers. For example, by using Kagawa's *Mu no tetsugaku* ("The philosophy of negation" in Bikle's translation), written in 1909, the author has been able to point out what a deep state of despair Kagawa was in shortly before he started to work in the slums. Bikle is also one of the few western writers who has noticed in Kagawa what he calls "his Promethean conceit" (p. 129). Besides introducing English-speaking readers to many of Kagawa's ideas, Bikle will no doubt help to correct the usual sugary picture of Kagawa and make it three-dimensional.

Perhaps I should also make one or two adverse comments about Bikle's book. In the first place, some may be as put off as I was by a certain mannerism in his writings. The author seems to command a remarkably large vocabulary. Perhaps for this reason he seems determined not to repeat simple words. Thus, instead of repeating Kagawa, he uses "the prophet," "the sage," "the seer," and so on. Instead of simply saying "utopia," he uses in turn "Atlantis," "Canaan," "Ilium," and the like. There are also many words the average reader will have to look up in a dictionary. This sort of thing creates the impression that the author pays more attention to vocabulary than to simple, clear communication.

In the second place, both in the bibliography and elsewhere, the titles of many works in Japanese are read or transcribed incorrectly. I will cite a few examples from p. 329 and indicate corrections in square brackets.

- Line 9: *Taiyō wo Utsuru [Iru] Mono* (Those Who Shoot at the Sun)
 Line 36: Ōkawa [Ogawa] Kiyosumi. "Richiyado Bega [Richādo Bekā] no Kagawa Toyohiko Ron" (Richard Berger's [Baker's] Theory of Kagawa...)
 Line 40: *Kagawa Toyohiko, Jin [Hito] to Shisō Shirizu [Shirizu]* (Kagawa Toyohiko, The Man and Sequence of His Thought [Kagawa Toyohiko. The series "Men and Their Thought"])
 Line 43: Tanaka Yoshimitsu [Yoshizō], ed. *Kami ga Ware ga Bokusha [Kami wa Waga Bokusha]...* (God is Our Shepherd...)
 Line 49: "Kagawa Junichi no Kodomo [Kotodomo]" (Kagawa Junichi's Child [Miscellanies about Kagawa Jun'ichi])

In the text as well as in his bibliography, the author often writes *nōmura* for the Japanese word "village." The correct reading is, of course, *nōson*. Isolated examples of this kind are inevitable in a book by an author who is not a native speaker of Japanese, and it normally has nothing to do with the real value of a book. In the case of this book, however, the frequency of simple errors of this kind is a bit too high. It makes us doubt the author's ability to interpret Japanese texts correctly.

In point of fact, there are some mistakes in this book arising from a misunderstanding of Japanese texts. On p. 10, for example, the author writes about Kagawa's father, Jun'ichi, as follows: "There he distinguished himself in scholarship and debate and by order of the daimyō himself was sent abroad by the *han* to study in London, England." What is actually written in the Japanese source given in footnote 5 of chapter 2 is: "Jun'ichi's talent was recognized by Hachisuka Mochiaki, the former daimyo of Tokushima *han*, and he urged Jun'ichi to go and study in London. Jun'ichi was very much tempted to do so. In the early years of the Meiji [era], however, even the very progressive Kagawa family could not readily comply with Jun'ichi's wish." The implication is, of course, that Kagawa's father did *not* study in London.

I also feel that, probably due to lack of feeling for certain nuances of the Japanese language, the author's interpretation of Kagawa's writings and words is sometimes too literal, sometimes wide of the mark. I fail to understand, for example, how the author can call *Koya nikki* "that charming affirmation of life" (p. 153). Basically it has, to my mind, a very gloomy and nihilistic content. I suspect that the author's view is colored by a literal interpretation of Kagawa's later words: "*Koya nikki*... is a diary of the happiest period of my life" (*Kagawa Toyohiko zenshū*, vol. 22, p. 139). A man may, however, be induced for some reason to call what was actually the most miserable period of his life the happiest, from a distance of eighteen year later. Again, Kagawa's introduction of himself as "*oyabun* of the Shinkawa beggars" is, in my opinion, interpreted too literally by the author when he entitles one chapter "Boss of the beggars." Kagawa was never "*oyabun* of the Shinkawa beggars" in a literal sense, and I doubt that he, in order to emphasize his status as a boss, uttered these words "in lordly tones" (p. 81). What was behind these words was probably simply his desire to shock.

REVIEWS

Despite the few criticisms I have made, Bikle's book is undoubtedly one of the most substantial ever written on Kagawa, and no future student of Kagawa will be able to ignore it. He may disagree with Bikle at important points, but this book will give him a very useful point of departure for his own investigations.

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