

Studies in Japanese Folklore

Richard M. Dorson, General Editor

Tōichi Mabuchi and Tokuhiko Oto, Advisory Editors

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Studies in Japanese Folklore, edited by Dr. Richard M. Dorson, is one of numerous oriental studies that are opening up fields of knowledge that at present are practically unknown to most Western scholars. As the general editor well says, although "Japan has developed a

REVIEWS

mature science of folklore . . . the copious reports and investigations by the Japanese are almost completely unknown and unavailable to Western folklorists," and, one might as well add, to most scholars in the field of social studies as well.

The volume begins with a comprehensive and enlightening survey of what has been done in the subject by Japanese and foreign scholars, in both Japanese and Western languages, which will be exceedingly valuable for all who intend to do any further research in this field. The second essay by the late Dr. Kunio Yanagita, Japan's most eminent folklorist, is entitled, "Opportunities for Folklore Research in Japan."

The remainder of the volume is divided into five sections: Rice Farmers, Fishermen, Ironworkers, Worshippers, Housewives, Youth. In all there are fifteen essays by well known Japanese folklorist, each of which contains important data for readers of this journal who specialize in the study of Japanese religion, although the most important are the five essays in the section entitled "Worshippers."

A critical evaluation of these essays would require a greater degree of specialized knowledge than this reviewer possesses; but they leave the impression of rather unequal value, and one wonders whether in every case the essays were as carefully prepared as they should have been. It would be a mistake, for example, for the uninformed reader to draw many generalizations from the essay dealing with the Shrine priesthood (pp. 221-36), and the statement on page 221 about some of the local village shrines being "run independent" is quite misleading, because practically all shrines are independent entities today. Moreover, the footnote on page 234 stating that the number of shrines in 1956 "was down to about 80,000" is unfortunate, because the figure is for the number of *incorporated shrines* which is quite a different matter. There is, in fact, no reason to think that the number has decreased at all since 1945, and it may be that it has increased.

However, the value of this and other articles far outweighs any minor discrepancies, and it is sincerely hoped that the reception this

REVIEWS

volume receives will induce Indiana University and the general editor to produce in the not too distant future a second volume of a similar

nature or a volume of translations of works listed in Dr. Dorson's essay. W. P. W.