
■ Book Review ■

TANAKA Masakazu and TACHIKAWA Musashi
(eds.), *Living with Śakti: Gender, Sexuality and Religion
in South Asia*. Senri Ethnological Studies no. 50.

Senri: National Museum of Ethnology, 293 pp.

This is a collection of nine articles discussing gender and sexuality in South Asia, as indicated in the subtitle. The main topics of the articles include goddesses, the pantheon, myth, ritual, ceremony, festival, caste and others, in other words, all contributors deal with the goddess / woman with reference to religion. The theme of the editor's introduction and the titles of the nine articles are as follows.

Introduction: Writing on Gender, Sexuality and Religion in South Asia (Masakazu Tanaka)

Part I. Hindu Goddesses in Texts

1. Hindu Thinking on Śakti: A Historical Perspective (Musashi Tachikawa)
2. The Autumn Goddess Festival: Described in the Purāṇas (Shingo Einoo)
3. The Warrior Goddess in the Devīmāhātmya (Yūko Yokochi)

Part II. Goddess Festivals in Context

4. The Navarātri Festival in Chidambaram, South India (Masakazu Tanaka)
5. The Transformation of Śakti: Gender and Sexuality in the Festival of Goddess Ramachandi (Akio Tanabe)
6. The Marīāi Village Festival in Maharashtra (Timothy Fitzgerald)

Part III. Gender and Sexuality in Rural India

7. Women and Tradition in India: Construction of Subjectivity and Control of Female Sexuality in the Ritual of the First Menstruation (Yumiko Tokita-Tanabe)
8. Rethinking the Ambiguous Character of Hindu Women (Yasumasa Sekine)
9. Rituals, Service Castes, and Women: Rites of Passage and the Conception of Auspiciousness and Inauspiciousness in Northern India (Yūko Yagi)

According to the editors' preface, this work is a result of an interdisciplinary attempt between Indologists and anthropologists, and is also a by-product of the joint-project on "Goddess studies" held in the National Museum of Ethnology from 1991–1994. The fact that the contributors include relatively "younger scholars" indicates a new direction in Japanese South Asian studies. Although the subtitle mentions "South Asia", all the articles are centralized on India, except that Tachikawa discusses the system of the Hindu pantheon and the metaphysical significance of the goddess in a wider context.

In the introduction Tanaka insists that this collection not only provides new data on gender, sexuality and religion, but also new interpretations along with a historical perspective, which are related to the issues of Orientalism initially advocated by E. W. Said. Tanaka also analyzes "Japanese versions of Orientalism" found in the publications of intellectuals during World War II (1941–1945) in the main part of the introduction. Even in contemporary Japanese works on India it is not difficult to discern traces of such images of India, Hinduism and Hindu women. He emphasizes that "the following articles more or less attempt to overcome such problems and shed light on new directions in writing about South Asia".

The first part consists of three articles by Indologists on the basis of Sanskrit material.

Tachikawa's article, according to Tanaka, plays the role of another introduction to this volume and enables readers to understand the development of the goddess cults and the concept of *śakti* in the history of Hinduism. Tachikawa explains the system of the Hindu pantheon mainly by focusing on the triad of Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahmā and says that, especially in the traditions of Viṣṇu and Śiva, the power (*śakti*) of the gods came to be identified with their female partners. Moreover, with the help of the "archetype theory" of Jung, Tachikawa clarifies that while the primary matter from which the world arises can be regarded as the archetype "mother" in orthodox Hindu philosophy such as Sāṃkhya, the mother-goddess in Hinduism corresponds with both the power involved in the self-formation of the world and the matter from which the world is created.

Depending on the descriptions found in the Purāṇas, Einoo discusses the content and formation of the autumn Goddess festival, which has

long been widely performed in the Hindu world under the names of *Durgā-pūjā*, *Navarātri*, *Dasai*, etc. According to Einoo, the goddess rituals in the Purāṇas related to this festival can be classified into four groups: (1) those centered on the worship of the goddess, (2) those including the honoring of young girls, (3) those including a rite for destroying a dough effigy of one's enemy, (4) those including the worship of weapons. Some rituals included in the first category can be specified as a rite for awaking the goddess. Einoo's article is not only an elaborated examination on the basis of a wide range of material, but also provides the historical background for the following articles by Yokochi and Tanaka.

Yokochi's article, which deals with Goddesses, considers the process of the establishment of the Goddesses in the *Devīmāhātmya*, one of the most important works of the goddess cult of Hinduism, in the history of Sanskrit literature. Yokochi enumerates the descriptions of Goddesses found in the *R̥g-veda*, *Taittirīya-āranyaka*, *Harivaṃśa Mahābhārata*, Purāṇas and others to show the "amalgamation of goddesses" to one Great Goddess. With reference to Parpola's recent studies, she suggests the possibility that Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, the buffalo-slaying goddess, originates from a goddess in the Indus civilization. The goddess in the *Devīmāhātmya*, Yokochi says, receives the influence of Vindhyaśinī, a guardian deity of Mt. Vindhya, and Yokochi infers a royal goddess ceremony to purify weapons prior to a military campaign for its background. It should be noted that Yokochi pays much attention to archaeological findings as well as Sanskrit material.

The second part comprises three articles on goddess festivals from the viewpoint of anthropology.

Tanaka's article deals with the *navarātri* festival in Chidambaram, Tamilnadu. Tanaka verifies the discourse that this festival is regarded as "a typical women's festival". He explains both the domestic *navarātri* performed by a priest class and the *navarātri* festival in Naṭarāja Temple in a comparative perspective. As for the domestic *navarātri*, he elaborates a ritual device, *kolu*, which can be interpreted as a Hindu cosmos centered on the Goddess. The *kolu* also plays a complementary role to the temple, which is violated by chaos through animal sacrifices etc. Moreover, Tanaka relates sexuality to the fact that the nighttime rites performed by women shift to daytime *pūjā* by men, as the domestic *navarātri* festival proceeds. Tanaka also indicates the necessity of intro-

ducing a social perspective to analyze the variety of *navarātri* festivals rather than a symbolic interpretation.

Tanabe focuses on the festival of the goddess Ramachandi, a local goddess in Orissa. He first tries to interpret the cosmological symbolism represented in the procedure of the festival, then considers the fact that the particular historical background and knowledge reproduced in the festival reconfirm the socio-political order of the village. Tanabe pays special attention to the transformation of *śakti* in the process of the festival. He explains that it transforms itself from an ambivalent and dangerous power to a benevolent and protective power and finally comes into symbolic union with royalty. Through the Ramachandi festival, the village people come to share a common cosmology and, at the same time, they strengthen the historical identity and social order peculiar to this village. Tanabe concludes that the issue of gender and sexuality in the ritual are related not only to the symbolic contents of the ritual, but also to the larger power relations behind the scenes in continuously changing historical contexts.

Fitzgerald deals with the worship of Mariāī, a local goddess in Maharashtra, who is not a member of the common Hindu pantheon and does not possess any mythological background. Where Fitzgerald did his fieldwork, many local goddesses like Mariāī co-exist and historical devotees to the goddesses are also worshipped. Local people believe that Mariāī is identical with Mahākālī (Māṅgkālī) and that she represents Mahākālī's impure aspect, though the high caste priests and benefactors of Mahākālī temple deny it. Mariāī is said to have a strong connection to the scheduled castes, but high caste people also worship her and are involved in the festival with their own role. Mariāī occupies boundaries geographically and symbolically, and this fact becomes more obvious in her festival. According to Fitzgerald's interpretation, the festival symbolically represents, reverses, dissolves and recreates an ideal order of social relations. However, the situation became more complicated because one scheduled caste, Mahar, which used to be connected with Mariāī's worship and festival in great depth, converted to Ambedkar Buddhism.

The third part also includes three articles from the viewpoint of anthropology and they all take up the subject of domestic rituals concerning women.

Tokita-Tanabe discusses a first menstruation ritual investigated in Orissa village. In her introduction, she indicates the problem that the issues regarding women in India have emphasized either the problems of gender inequality and the asymmetric power relation between men and women, or the rich cultural-symbolic world of women related to the term "*śakti*". These two approaches, she says, should be combined in order to grasp the overall complexities regarding the construction of female "subjectivity". In addition, further attention should be paid to the transformation of the traditions regarding women in modernization and urbanization in India. Tokita-Tanabe clarifies the procedure of the first menstruation ritual based on her field work, and she points out the existence of a strong women's community in the village life. According to her analysis, the village people categorize the world into "home" and "outside", and these two categories correspond to women and men respectively. Tokita-Tanabe summarizes that the first menstruation ritual constructs women's subjectivity where female creative power is celebrated by a community of women acting as autonomous subjects of action and at the same time women become subject to hierarchical relations based on gender difference.

Sekine's article also deals with the first menstruation ritual (coming-of-age ceremony for girls, in Sekine's term), surveyed in Tamil. Sekine points out that the dichotomy of positive and negative aspects is insufficient to understand Hindu women and he suggests introducing "pollution" ideology to overcome this insufficiency, as well as Dumont's "pure / impure" ideology. When discussing the first menstruation ritual in Tamil, which shares many common elements with the Orissa version introduced by Tokita-Tanabe, Sekine attaches much importance to the segregation of girls in the process of the ritual. Through this stage, the girl's "*śakti*" in menarche, which has its origin in chaos corresponding to the marginal point between culture and nature, transforms into a productive and reproductive power, or sacred fertility, after being encoded to culture. Sekine suggests distinguishing "purification for creation", in which he finds positive meaning, from "purification for elimination". In his previous publications, Sekine has repeatedly advocated his ideology of "pollution" to overcome Dumont's "pure / impure" ideology, which has been strongly criticized as limited to social aspects. Hindu women's "ambiguity" is the ideal exemplification to illustrate the different dimensions

between "pollution" ideology and "pure / impure" ideology.

Yagi's article investigates a few rites of passage performed in an Uttar Pradesh village. Yagi also indicates the insufficiency of "pure / impure" ideology in analyzing the roles of particular castes and women involved in these rites, and she emphasizes the need to focus upon "auspiciousness / inauspiciousness" ideology to overcome it. Through the three kinds of rites, marriage, childbirth and funeral, Yagi notices that the Brahman priests engage in the elimination of inauspicious affairs, while women of low castes perform songs and plays related to auspiciousness. In conclusion, she clarifies that the social hierarchy does not correspond with the ideology of "auspiciousness" and "inauspiciousness". However, Yagi admits the invalidity of this ideology to explain the positive involvement of women in the rites, and she ascribes it to the ambivalence of women's reproductive powers, impurity and fecundity.

As I have outlined so far, this volume shows the variety of studies concerning goddess / women in the Hindu world. By and large, most articles should be the latest results from the corresponding field. From the position of Indology, the articles in the first part, which illustrate the scheme of the goddess cult in a historical perspective, demonstrate the standard of this theme in Japan. The articles from the anthropological approach contribute to provide data and theory based on recent field surveys in various areas.

It is astonishing that all the articles, except Tanaka's introduction and Tachikawa's one, deal with rituals. Although interest in ritual seems to have fallen out of fashion in anthropology, Japanese anthropologists who study South Asia still maintain a great concern with ritual. This may be due to the fact that ritual is one of the limited topics that can be shared by scholars of both anthropology and Indology.

I should emphasize that this collection is the first attempt at compiling the results of the studies on goddess / women in India. As the editors intend, the articles written by young scholars may display one of the tendencies in this field in Japan.

In the remaining paragraphs I would like to discuss two points regarding the editorial policy that the editors took in this work.

First, though the editors insist that this is the result of a joint project between two genres, or the "by-product" of a particular project held in the National Museum Ethnology, it is surprising that the contributors

pay very limited attention to each other. Some articles deal with the same, but not shared material, topic, theory: i. e. *navarātri* festival (Einoo, Tanaka, Tanabe), ritual of first menstruation (Tokita-Tanabe, Sekine), royal ceremony (Einoo, Yokochi, Tanabe), goddess myth (Yokochi, Tanaka, Fitzgerald) etc. Dumont's "pure / impure" ideology seems to be still a disputable topic for the anthropologists specializing in India, but Fitzgerald, Tokita-Tanabe, Sekine and Yagi discuss it independently without referring to each other's results. "*Śakti*", which is included in the main title of this volume, should be one of the most important keywords, but Tachikawa's philosophical scheme was not reflected in the following articles while Tanaka allocates it as "another introduction" to the whole volume.

Second, it is rather difficult to recognize the character of gender studies, or feminism here. It may be true that the editors never define this collection as the result of gender studies, but most readers would expect the latest studies of "gender and sexuality" in South Asia as the subtitle reads. The editors, at least, should have clarified where this attempt can be allocated (or cannot be allocated) in the trend of gender studies.

These points, I infer, are caused by editorial policy, because most of the articles (at least seven) had already been published in different journals and books in Japanese. Some of them were, of course, revised or / and expanded before the compilation of this volume, but it is also recognized that some are just translated from Japanese to English with minor corrections. It is quite problematic whether this is *really* the result of "interdisciplinary studies" on gender and sexuality in a strict sense.

We can admit that one of the characteristics of South Asian studies in Japan is a close link between anthropologists and Indologists, as Tanaka indicates in his introduction, but, on the other hand, many participants in such a joint project enumerate the difficulties, discordance, or sometimes barrenness in the discussion. The editors of this collection seem to put aside the effort to dissolve these problems here. This volume, I regret to say, can only be defined as an anthology of recent studies on goddess / women in Indian Studies in Japan.

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