

# Post-war Folklore Research Work in Japan.

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## I. Introduction

To get an idea of the conditions prevailing in the domain of Japanese Folklore Science after the second World War, we first have to keep in mind the following points:

1) Folklore Science in Japan came to life and is growing up as a science existing among the people only, not yet given the rank of an academic subject taught on the chairs of the country's universities.

2) Scope and range of the Science of Folklore show differences in the various countries. In Japan, for reasons of convenience in collecting materials, we may subdivide the field of research hitherto attacked into the following headings:

a) Physical Culture: dwelling; clothing; food; fishing; forestry; hunting; agriculture; traffic and commerce; exchange of gifts; social life; labour; village organisations; family system; marriage; birth; funeral; annual customs and festivals; religious ceremonies; handicrafts; children's games and plays.

b) Oral Literature: giving of names; dialects; proverbs and riddles; sonnets; folksongs; children's songs; story-telling and folk-tales; legends.

c) Mental Phenomena: ghost apparitions; taboo practices; magic; omens; divination; interests and tastes; folk medicine.

In England and America Folklore Science remained more or less restricted to oral literature, costumes, customs and manners, belief, witchcraft and magic; the Japanese Folklore Science has adopted a wider scope, including also technology, dialects and folk-speech, resembling in this point the French and the German concept of our science.

3) The Japanese Folklore Science as an occupation with organised collecting activities and comparative studies came into existence about the year 1910, that is rather late compared with other countries. Concerning its historical background and the ways of its gradual growing we may refer our readers to the paper by Yanagida Kunio: *Die japanische Volkskunde. Ihre*

*Vergangenheit, Entwicklung, und gegenwärtige Lage* (German translation by M. Eder.) *Folklore Studies*, vol. III, 2 (1944).

## II. Research Institutions and their Activity.

A. The revival of the review *Minkan Densho* (Folklore) and the foundation of the Japanese Folklore Society.

In the year of 1935 the Japanese Folklore Society was founded, with Yanagida Kunio as its president and with the monthly review *Minkan Densho* as its publication organ. The latter suffered great hardships as the war was drawn out so long and had finally to be discontinued after No. 6 of vol. X. After the war the review could make its appearance again. In August 1946, the review made its first step into the post-war world by sponsoring a series of conferences on Folklore.

The Japanese Folklore Society numbers 2000 members scattered all over the country. I endeavors to spread the knowledge on Folklore among the great public. The society underwent a reorganisation in April 1949 in order to strengthen its inner structure and to add new stimuli to its undertakings. It is headed again by Yanagida Kunio, its office was established in 631, Seijō-machi, Setagaya-ku, Tōkyō.

B. The foundation of the Institute of Japanese Folklore.

The pioneer of the Japanese Folklore Science, Yanagida Kunio, was directing, since 1935, the Rural Life Research Institute, and guiding in this capacity research workers in carrying out investigations on actual conditions of rural life throughout the whole country in numberless villages lost in the mountains and scattered along the sea-shores of our islands. The investigation results were laid down in two publications in book-form, namely "*Studies on the Life in Mountain Villages*" (1937) and "*Studies on the Life in Fishing Villages*," both edited with contributions of his own by Yanagida Kunio.

Yanagida, furthermore, donated his large collection of books and data to the said institute in order that further studies on Folklore might be conducted on a well organised basis. The Rural Life Research Institute above referred to was developed into a larger body in March 1947. It came to be called The Institute of Japanese Folklore. The new institute succeeded the former Rural Life Research Institute.

Fortunately Yanagida's book collection escaped damage by the ravages of the Pacific war and was not scattered. Through the donation of this library the institute obtained a fine basis for a center for further collection of field-work material and for the study of such and it is making rapid progress towards perfection of its equipment. The institute aims above all at the systematization of Japanese Folklore as a science. Its office is to be a center for the training of research workers and to give guidance and encouragements

to its cooperators in the field.

In April 1948 the institute was made a corporative juridical person. The Japanese Folklore Society is giving, as a frame organisation, its collaboration and enlightenment to the institute. At present the research institute pursues the following tasks:

1) Publication of the *Bulletin of the Institute of Japanese Folklore*.—This bulletin, issued semi-annually, carries reports of the proceedings of the fortnightly meetings of the institute and papers of its members.

2) The compilation of a *Bibliography of Japanese Folklore*.—The Japanese Folklore research work has rapidly made headway but it consisted until now almost exclusively in collecting data. These have now to be brought into order in a bibliography so that they become better available and accessible for further studies. The bibliography will include all related publications which appeared since the early years of Meiji classified under about 25 headings and will be provided with an index. The editors will also see to it that not only the vast field of Folklore is covered by the bibliography but also that those branches of cultural science that have bearing on it will be duly surveyed.

3) Publication of folk-customs descriptions of all provinces of the country.—Field surveys are at present already on the way, for them rather limited areas, single villages and settlements in the mountains, are taken as units, to get as exact as possible a picture of real life. The final goal is to record all manifestations of folk-life in geographically defined monographs, about one hundred of such are planned, several of them have already appeared.

4) Compilation and edition of folkloristic glossaries.—As far as it is not contained in ordinary Japanese dictionaries, the whole terminology connected with marriage, birth and upbringing of children, funeral, farmers' villages, fishermen's villages, mountain villages, clothing and dwelling, the seasons of the year, taboo customs, kinship and family systems has already been catalogued and published in eleven single books. After the war two more have come off the press, one is a supplement to the glossary of speech in farmers' villages, the other is dedicated to the language of children. In preparation are: a supplement to the glossary of terms on dwelling, glossaries concerning dwelling, glossaries concerning food, traffic, labour, village organisation, that is how villages came to existence and are growing, in a word the making of villages. All these vocabularies are continuously revised and enlarged and it is intended to prepare at the end a synthetic vocabulary of Japanese folk-customs.

5) Giving assistance to sociological education.—After the war, under the new educational system, sociology figures among the subjects taught in primary and middle schools. In this connection a good deal of folkloristic knowledge is thought necessary. An office for the compilation of sociological reference books exists in the vicinity of our Folklore Institute, namely 377, Seijō-machi, Setagaya-ku, Tōkyō. In matters of Folklore Science the former

is assisted by the latter.

C. The Research Institute of Folk-Culture (Attic Museum) and the Museum of Japanese Folk Art.

The Attic Museum, under the directorship of Shibuzawa Keizô, has since its foundation (1934) published about one hundred reports, but after the end of the war it was handicapped by lack of funds. The Museum of Folk Art got through the war undamaged. After the war students of folk arts among the nationals of the allied powers took some interest in it, but it could not yet return to its former lively activity.

### III. The Trends of Folklore Research.

In the past, the attitude of Japanese scholars in general was too abstract and theoretical. Against this a reaction came after the war. Especially in social sciences the research took a new turn to positive work and field explorations. After the war jurisprudence and sociological studies and particularly sociological surveys of agricultural villages were started with a fresh impetus and these studies and surveys are falling in line to a great extent with Folklore Science as far as the collection of their datas in the field and their arrangement is concerned. For such work law students and sociologists are looking up to the folklorist for theoretical and methodological guidance. This came about with the rising estimation of folk-customs and folk-life as valuable research material for sociologists and also others. The analytical method of the folklore-explorer is now made use of also by the students of social life. Labour organisations, family systems, marriage customs, youth associations, the arrangement of religious ceremonies and festivals are now becoming outstanding and favorite topics in the field of sociology. Thus it is not surprising that Folklore Science and Sociology, as far as theoretical and methodological orientations go, came to have many common interests and are walking side by side on not a few stretches of the way.

The importance of Folklore Science is still more increasing due to another circumstance. Sociological thinking has penetrated the field of historical research, and consequently also the study of history begins to profit from the methods and techniques of Folklore Science.

The materialistic concept of history in the doctrine of Marx begins to encroach on the field of Japanese Folklore in the hope of finding there new arguments and avenues of approach. Some Communist minded people think they can inject their materialistic concept of history into the body of Folklore Science to the embarrassment of the cultivators of this science. In the past, the Japanese Folklore Scientists never worked with preconceived historical notions and will hardly do this in the future. They intend to continue their research in an objective spirit that respects facts and will not try to model the

facts after ideologies. On the contrary, the ambition is to improve methods in order to establish the facts with the greatest possible accuracy. Pursuing this aim, great stress is laid on a correct relationship with cognate sciences, such as history, sociology, religious science, linguistics, psychology, and on collaborating with these sciences within the own sphere and to the advantage of Folklore.

#### IV. The Various Fields of Research Work.

Under the never failing encouragement and direction of Yanagida Kunio, a good number of monographs, covering almost all fields of our science, has been produced, some of them we shall name below. "*Village and School Youth*" (Sept., 1945); "*The Appearance of Villages*" (July, 1948), "*Annual Customs and Festivals*" (March, 1949). In these books, meant for youthful readers, clothing, food, dwelling, plays and games, people's customs and beliefs are treated. Humoristic literature is represented in the "*Sources of Laughing*" (Jan., 1946) and "*Fables and Tales*" (Oct., 1946). "*Oral Literature*" (Jan., 1947) investigates the field of unwritten oral traditions and their relationship to Japanese Literature. "*The Language of Daily Life*" (July, 1946) consists of reflections on every-day Japanese speech from the viewpoint of Folklore Science. As a result of dialectical research appeared "*Where is the West going*" (June, 1948). It is a comparative study on the words for silk-worms, ants, fruits of the mulberry-tree, the rain-bow and related terms collected from all over the country, with suggestions for the study of Japanese and the methods of its teaching. "*Glossary of names of Japanese Fairy-tales*" (March, 1948, under the editorship of the Japanese Broadcasting Association and the supervision of Yanagida Kunio) is the largest accomplishment of the Japanese Folklore Science after the war, classifying as it does 240 groups of fairy-tales under fifteen headings. Of each fairy-tale, the outline of its content are given, its variations, the places of its geographical distribution and the titles of the literary sources which contain them. At the end of the book an index is added. This scholarly work sums up the results of thirty years work of Japanese fairy-tales research and it can serve as a starting point for the inclusion of Japanese fairy-tales into the international comparative study of fairy-tales.

Since the end of the war Yanagida Kunio has devoted most of his time and strength to the study of the indigenous beliefs of Japan, especially to the question of ancestor-worship, and has laid down his conclusions in "*On Ancestors*" (April, 1946). This book was followed by "*On Festival Days*" (Dec., 1946). "*On Buddhist Temples in the Mountains*" (June, 1947), "*On Clan-gods and Clan-members*" (Nov., 1947). These writings form a series with the title "*The New Nipponology.*" "*On Marriage*" (Aug., 1948) deals

with marriage with an heiress and with the origin of marriage ceremonies, with dowry and other questions. The book is a collection of ten treatises. In "*Talks and Reflections on Family Life*" (Nov., 1946), the important questions of marriage and family systems are ventilated before the whole Japanese public. Hori Ichirô, in collaboration with Yanagida Kunio, in "*On Graves Called 'Thirteen Tumuli'*" (Aug., 1948) carries through a theme that occupied Yanagida during forty years. A problem, that is religious and archæological at the same time, is here attacked, it is linked up also with the so-called *obo* of the Mongolian grass-planes. We have here an example of a comparative folklore study. "*The Folklore of Kitakoura*" (April, 1949) is part of a long series of monographic studies on the village life in out of the way districts.

The pupils of Yanagida Kunio planned after the war the edition of "*Collected Writings of Yanagida Kunio.*" This plan began to realize with "*Man's Life in the Mountains*" (May, 1949), seven more volumes have already followed, comprising old and new writings of the master. Besides this, for the celebration of Yanagida's seventeenth birthday an anniversary volume with papers of folklorists and scholars of related sciences was prepared; in February 1947 the first fascicule of it appeared, since then the number has increased to twelve fascicules.

In the following we shall direct our attention to publications of authors other than Yanagida Kunio and his school, to the problems they discussed and to the degree they could shed light on them. Wakamori Tarô in his "*Introduction to Japanese Folklore*" (Aug., 1947) met the desire of many to have a book that surveys from bird's-eye-view the whole field of our subject. A book summing up carefully the present state of our science has been written cooperatively under the title "*New Folkloristic Investigations*" (Oct., 1947), edited by the Folklore Research Institute. On social habits, Ariga Kizaemon wrote "*History of Marriage in Japan*" (Nov., 1948), treating therein marriage from the point of view of sociological history and opining that marriage is not only something belonging to the family institution, but that a place and a function in village life have to be assigned to it. Segawa Kiyoko discussed marriage together with the institution of the *go-between*, in collaboration with Yanagida, harvesting the best results hitherto achieved in regard to this topic. Furthermore, kinship association of people who are related to one another in the same degree, traditional practices concerning retirement, family headship, age grades, funeral customs and other matters were successfully investigated by Seki Keigo, Konno Ensuke, Hagihara Tatsuo and Ôtô Tokihiko.

Kurata Ichirô in "*Economics and Oral Folk Traditions*" (March, 1948) entered into the complex problem of the distribution of fishing and hunting catches. He came to see the distribution customs as affairs of human relationship going beyond the economic sphere.

Customs bearing on social ethics were studied by Naoe Hiroji and Ikeda

Hiroko; the writers collected and compared a great number of dialect words and endeavoured to bring to light the ethical feeling of the common people in old times as well as its connection with the social structure of their lives.

Research on the customs and manners of fisher's villages was pushed ahead by Sakurada Katsunori and Takeuchi Toshimi. Regarding the formation of villages, several authors, centering around Yanagida Kunio, worked on the so-called *kaito* (lit. inside an enclosure or fence). For their topic they collected historical references from medieval sources and studies of present-day conditions thus succeeding in presenting a description of the smallest unit of a self-determining organisation of villages. They had to find out for this end the original form of the gardens in the middle ages. This is not only an interesting question for the historian but also for the sociologist who wants to study the principles governing land-distribution in present-day Japan.

To the study of oral literature, the editors of the review *Minkan Densho* (Folklore) have consecrated a special issue (June, 1948). The previous year (Oct., 1947) Orikuchi Shinobu, who with his "*Studies on Ancient Times*" (*Kodai Kenkyū*) had inaugurated historical folkloristic researches, published "*The Origin of Japanese Literature*" (Oct., 1947).

Concerning the collection and comparative study of dialect material, Kurata Ichirō has given us an important contribution in his "*Word Groups*" (*Minzokugaku*, vol. III, No. 2). Miyanaga Masamori in "*All Corners of Japan*" (Oct., 1947) has provided us with a report on his many dialectological investigation trips and with much interesting information on dialects. Miyanaga, well known for his standard works on the dialects of the Ryūkyū Islands, is also devoted to the publication of his monthly "*Dialects and Folklore*." Matsumura Takeo in his "*Language and Folklore*" has expressed his theoretical ideas, but with regard to the treatment of dialects the folklorists differ from his opinions. At the time of the foundation of the Research Institute for the Japanese Language (end of 1948) the desire for collaboration with the folklorists in dialectological matters was expressed.

In the field of religion, two societies were inaugurated after the war. The one is the Society of Religious Folklore and has its seat at the State University of Tōkyō; the other is the Society of Shintō Religion. However, neither of the two societies gives the impression of vigorous work.

Ikegami Hiromasa and Akatsukasa Michio in "*Reflections on the Investigations of Popular Beliefs of the Japanese*" (July, 1948) have contributed something to the history of our science and offered a correct criticism of Folklore Science regarding the investigation of popular beliefs. Yanagida and Wakamori have given a fresh stimulus to the study of field-gods, the Harvest Festival (*niinamesai*), taboo practices, the fox and rice-growing, house-gods and others; Hori Ichirō, Ishizuka Takatoshi, Togawa Anshō and others have also done a good deal of work in these fields.

The Folklore Science made its voice also audible in the discussion of sociological education. In this matter, Yanagida had already pointed out earlier the stand-point of Folklore Science, then Wakamori in his "*Life and History*" (July, 1948) and Makita Shigeru in "*Village Society*" (Nov., 1948), Hagihara Tatsuo in "*Country Customs*" (Aug., 1948) touched the same topic.

Because of their great age the investigation of the customs preserved on the islands of Okinawa is of special importance for the Japanese Folklore Science, but in the course of the war, owing to the large-scale devastation, folkloristic materials have been scattered and it is not easy to resume the research work. Two years after the end of the war "*Collected Papers on the Civilisation of Okinawa*" (Dec., 1947) appeared to the great satisfaction of all interested in the antiquities of Okinawa. The papers are treating of history, folk-customs, language, legal institutions and other items. A continuation of the collection is scheduled. The Japanese folklorists are anxious to resume collaboration between Okinawa and Japan in the pursuance of common aims and feel sorry that field-surveys became impossible after the war.

#### V. Conclusion.

The Japanese Folklore Science is of comparatively late date and has not yet established an academic tradition comparable to that of Europe and America. No courses on Folklore exist yet in the universities and, consequently, the number of specialised scholars in this branch of knowledge is rather limited. After the war the formation of such specialists became the task of the still young Folklore Research Institute. But on account of the economic hardships in our post-war time, scientific organisations and independent scholars are not given conditions favorable for a whole-hearted devotion to their work. Local and regional Folklore associations are only slowly returning to work. The most serious obstacles for the resumption of Folklore investigations are the inconveniences of travelling. Fieldwork, the very life of Folklore Science, is handicapped by high railway fees, inadequate hotel accommodations, food shortage, at the same time social changes and the disappearance of old customs are going on rapidly. Though the urgent exigency of fieldwork is felt, its realisation is yet hardly feasible. To this difficulties are added the high costs of communications with local collaborators. Mention must finally be made of the dissatisfactory condition of printing and publishing. To cope with these difficulties the government has utterly failed to find means and ways, and in the year of 1949 we do not yet know how we shall be able to overcome the obstacles put in the way of a successful continuation of Folklore research work.

Tôkyô, July 16, 1949