The Study of Japan through Japanese Folklore Studies

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Abstract: Research findings of Japanese folklore studies have rarely been introduced in English in the past. One distinguishing feature of Japanese folklore studies is that it covers not only folklore, but also all aspects of Japanese people’s lives. *Nihon-Minzokugaku*, the official journal of the Folklore Society of Japan (FSJ), alone has published over 1,500 articles since 1958. With the cooperation of the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology, the FSJ will publish a series of articles in the *Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology* (JRCA) to introduce the society’s research efforts in the following areas: (1) family, kinship, and local communities; (2) environment and livelihoods; (3) religion and rituals; (4) festivals and performing arts; (5) oral tradition; (6) material culture; and (7) museums and public folklore. This introductory piece discusses the development of Kunio Yanagita’s folklore studies, particularly the influence of Western ethnology and anthropology in this process, in an attempt to characterize Japanese folklore studies.

Key words: historical development of Japanese folklore studies, Kunio Yanagita, Inazo Nitobe, influence of ethnology and anthropology

Introduction

There is a rich depository of work by Japanese researchers on their own culture and society in the field of Japanese folklore studies. However, practitioners of folklore studies mostly regard Japan as the only subject of their research and they write papers with other Japanese researchers as the target audience. There has been very little notion of publishing their work for the understanding of foreign researchers. This is because of Kunio Yanagita’s position in the pioneering days of this field, as well as the influence of the Second World War. Even after the founding of the Folklore Society of Japan (FSJ) in 1949, Japanese folklore researchers have rarely considered publishing their work overseas. The field of Japanese folklore studies has long been in a state of “sakoku” (isolation) (Kuwayama 2008: 148).

However, the scope of Japanese folklore studies actually covers not just folklore or folktale, but also livelihoods, childbirth and childcare, funerals and graves, rural villages, family and kinship, annual events, folk beliefs, oral traditions, and folk performing arts, as
well as contemporary issues such as disasters, cultural properties, and interactions with nature. In effect, Japanese folklore studies has tackled broad-ranging areas comparable to cultural and social anthropology. This is the key distinguishing feature of Japanese folklore studies when compared to folklore studies in other countries, which tend to have a heavy emphasis on the study of folklore or folktales.

Japanese folklore studies historically developed through academic exchanges with adjacent disciplines. Its research findings not only serve as excellent references for cultural and social anthropological studies on Japan, but should actually be regarded as important existing research. For example, Japanese folklore studies has conducted research on Okinawa on an equal footing with cultural and social anthropology and there have been lively academic exchanges between the two sides. In the 1980s, there was a vigorous theoretical debate between cultural anthropology and folklore studies on the issue of *kegare* (a state of pollution and defilement).

Similar to cultural and social anthropology, research in folklore studies is grounded in fieldwork. However, folklore studies differs from these anthropological approaches that also study other ethnic groups in that it consists almost exclusively of Japanese researchers studying Japanese people and culture. In this sense, Japanese folklore studies represents the Japanese people’s self-study of their own culture. In the case of Japanese cultural and social anthropology, which mostly study foreign cultures, academic methods involving long-term fieldwork or prior study of other cultures as well as the theoretical analysis of findings are necessary. Furthermore, such research does not stop at understanding a particular culture, but attempts to gain a comprehensive understanding of human society or culture.

In the 1920s and 30s Bronislaw Malinowski’s functionalism brought dramatic theoretical and methodological changes to evolutionary anthropology which started in Great Britain. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s Claude Levi-Strauss’ theories gave rise to structuralism which also greatly influenced other humanities disciplines. In the 1970s and into the 1980s, Clifford Geertz established the school of interpretive anthropology by focusing on the meanings of cultural symbols. Finally, the book *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) examined the question of power in cultural representations, as well as how to effectively convey meaning to others, introducing the concept of cultural critique to anthropological audiences (Takezawa 2007: 4-5). These theories were even linked to such concepts as gift exchange, lineage, and diaspora. Cultural and social anthropology have consistently contributed to building a common theoretical foundation for the world.

On the other hand, the main objective of Japanese folklore studies has been to investigate a specific phenomenon, record it, and consider its significance in the local context. While the findings are discussed within the discipline, there has been little attempt to establish common theories for the international academic community. This is also the reason the discipline has been criticized for its weak theoretical foundation. In Japan, folklore studies has engaged in almost no internal debate to establish objective standards as an academic
discipline nor has it externalized this debate in response to such criticism (although, for instance, the Humble Theory in American folklore studies was introduced by Dorothy Noyes at the fourth study meeting of Gendai Minzoku Gakkai [the Japanese Society of Living Folklore] in January 2010 and has been debated in recent years).

However, this does not mean that the research findings of Japanese folklore studies have had no international significance. As mentioned above, the Folklore Society of Japan was founded in 1949. It has published 285 issues of its journal, Nihon-Minzokugaku,¹ in the 57 years since the first issue came out in 1958. More than 1,500 articles on a broad range of topics have been published, which have gained acclaim among scholars throughout the world specializing in the study of Japanese society and culture. The journal has had an English table of contents from its first issue, and it started printing the English abstracts of articles from issue no. 169 in 1987.

The FSJ has been given this opportunity by the Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology (JRCA) to introduce articles in Nihon-Minzokugaku in English to foreign cultural and social anthropologists who are interested in studying Japanese society and culture. The FSJ believes that this is also a good opportunity to do an objective assessment of the achievements of folklore studies in research on Japan. A series of articles will explain developments in the study of the following areas by citing certain representative papers: (1) family, kinship, and local communities; (2) environment and livelihoods; (3) religion and rituals; (4) festivals and performing arts; (5) oral tradition; (6) material culture; and (7) museums and public folklore.

**Japanese Folklore Studies and Ethnology**

Ethnology and folklore studies are both pronounced minzokugaku in Japanese although the kanji (Chinese characters) for these terms are different (民族学 for the former, 民俗学 for the latter). This is a fact that aptly reflects the distinguishing characteristic of Japanese folklore studies.

Kunio Yanagita (1875-1962), who is regarded as the father of modern Japanese folklore studies, was in Geneva for two years and six months from 1921 as an official of the Mandate Committee of the League of Nations, where he came to learn extensively about European ethnology. He made efforts to establish folklore studies as a field of academic pursuit after returning to Japan. He was concerned about the fact that both folklore studies and ethnology were called minzokugaku in Japanese because he was attempting to set up a distinctively Japanese field of study, not by mixing the two, but rather by using ethnology as a point of reference.

In what follows I will discuss how Japanese folklore studies was influenced by ethnology and anthropology in the process of its founding and development by Yanagita.

¹ Nihon-Minzokugaku means “Japanese Folklore Studies.” However, the official English designation of this journal is The Bulletin of the Folklore Society of Japan.
Yanagita’s Study of Agricultural Administration

Yanagita’s founding of folklore studies was closely related to his personal background. He wrote new-style poetry when he was a student and was a literary enthusiast who socialized with writers. However, he studied agricultural administration after he entered the Tokyo Imperial University. After graduating in 1900, he became a bureaucrat in the Department of Agricultural Administration of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. He worked as a civil servant for about 20 years, during which time he gave up his literary ambitions and maintained a strong interest in issues relating to rural villages and agricultural policy.

Since Yanagita studied European agricultural administration as a student, at first he advocated the propagation of Western agricultural economics. In an article in 1907, he stated that Japan should emulate the agricultural cooperatives of Western countries (Yanagita [1907] 1969a: 109). However, by 1910, he had realized that Japan needed to develop its own agricultural economics based on its own circumstances (Yanagita [1910] 1969b: 109) and not blindly follow Western learning.

After the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), the Japanese Ministry of Home Affairs began pushing for regional reforms. This was a centralized state policy without regard for local autonomy, which Yanagita was critical of. It is said that his clash with the Home Affairs bureaucrats on rural policy brought about a shift in his thinking. Yanagita favored agricultural administration that was not centered on landlords and wealthy farmers, but on small and tenant farmers, whose organization into cooperatives, he believed, would make farming an occupation compatible with modern capitalist society. However, this was unacceptable to the agricultural bureaucrats who believed in the physiocratic transformation of the country. It is reckoned that this setback also prompted Yanagita to go into folklore studies (Fukuta 1992: 16-23).

It is clear that by that time, Yanagita was already an advocate of the common folks’ viewpoint, which could also be attributed to his fascination as a young man with literature depicting the life and feelings of the common people. Therefore, instead of agricultural administration, as a result of this major shift in his thinking, he turned to a new field of study in the humanities dealing with the life and culture of the common folk. This change in Yanagita was also greatly influenced by his encounter with Inazo Nitobe (1862-1933), author of Bushido: The Soul of Japan (1900).

From the Encounter with Nitobe to Folklore Studies

Yanagita met Nitobe around 1907 and remained his student afterwards. Yanagita’s efforts to establish folklore studies as a field of research were strongly influenced by Nitobe. After studying at Johns Hopkins University in the United States, Nitobe also studied at the University of Bonn in Germany, later receiving his doctoral degree from Halle University. In 1901 he was invited by the Japanese government to help develop an industrial policy for
Taiwan, Japan’s newly acquired colony after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). He insisted that policies in Japan should not be simply imposed on Taiwan.

Nitobe also taught colonial policy at the Tokyo Imperial University from 1906, where he advocated the colonial power’s respect for the culture of the colony. Based on the lesson he had learned from American anthropologist Franz Boas’ cultural relativism, he called for accepting cultural differences and mutual understanding in order to eliminate discrimination (Satani 2015: 25-32). Nitobe also applied his respect for the local culture in Taiwan to the rural areas of Japan. He was alarmed by the assimilation of local cultures into the central culture as a result of large numbers of people moving to the cities in the course of Japan’s modernization. He championed the scientific research of local history, custom, dialect, and so forth, which he called jikatagaku (literally, regional studies), and he suggested ways to develop local autonomy based on the German Heimatkunde method of studying local history (Satani 2015: 58-64). In 1907, Nitobe delivered a series of lectures on regional studies, which had a profound impact on Yanagita. In fact, Yanagita’s subsequent studies were the realization of Nitobe’s thinking on the scientific study of regional cultures.

Yanagita went on a trip to Kyushu and Shikoku in 1908, during which he was moved by the coexistence of old Japanese customs with the ways of Tokyo-centered modern civilized society. In the same year, he went to the village of Shiiba in Miyazaki Prefecture. Building on his interviews with the village head, Yanagita later gave accounts of life in a mountain community in his book Nochino Karikotoba no Ki (1909) – an ethnography containing a detailed list of words used by local hunters. This was probably the first book of Japanese folklore studies in Japan.

Japan at that time was in a rapid process of Westernization. Yet, traditional lifestyles, customs and traditions handed down from ancient times were still thriving in the rural regions. Through firsthand experience on his trips to these regions, Yanagita saw this phenomenon as an exceptionally Japanese aspect that differed from the situation in Britain or France, where traditional culture had been transformed by modern civilization. He began to advocate a field of study that respected such distinctive characteristics.

He published his famous Tōno Monogatari (translated into English as The Legends of Tono) in 1910, which was much more than a collection of curious stories of ghosts and spirits in one locality. His message to urbanites was that Japan’s traditional culture was still alive and well in rural areas and the Japanese should realize the value of their own culture that this embodied. This message was the concrete expression of Nitobe’s concept of jikatagaku focusing on regional and Japanese distinctiveness.

From Local Studies to Folklore Studies
Yanagita’s encounter with Nitobe, particularly through their subsequent involvement with the Kyōdōkai (Homeland Society), an association for the study of Japanese folkways, was a key factor in the shift in his thinking from 1907. Although this group was non-academic and consisted mostly of bureaucrats, Nitobe managed to propagate Heimatkunde (Satani 2015: 66-
While involved with the Kyōdō, Yanagita launched the journal Kyōdo Kenkyū (Local Studies) in 1913 with mythologist Toshio Takagi. Takagi wrote in the inaugural issue that the journal’s goal was to study all aspects of the lives of the local people in the Japanese nation-state (Takagi 1913: 2), which included both tangible and intangible aspects, past and present. Yanagita sustained this basic thinking when he established Japanese folklore studies as a discipline in the 1930s. He insisted that Japanese folklore studies must not be focused solely on oral tradition and must study all forms of folk culture. He thus laid down a distinctively Japanese approach to folklore studies.

Kyōdo Kenkyū represented three changes in Yanagita as a scholar. First, while starting as a researcher of agricultural administration under Nitobe’s influence, he had moved toward the direction of a new field of inquiry, local studies. Second, Kyōdo Kenkyū accepted contributions from writers regardless of their position or occupation. Yanagita avoided the paradigm of the writer at the center writing about people in the periphery. He did not want this new field of study to be dominated by authoritative professors; he wanted society to benefit from the fruits of research and envisioned an organization for this purpose. This later took the form of the concept of no no gakumon (discipline of the folk by the folk), which was crucial in determining the basic direction of Japanese folklore studies. Third, the articles Yanagita himself contributed were no longer concerned with social science issues such as agricultural administration. His writings were in the spirit of local studies, in which researchers studied their own localities. They were about folk beliefs and folklore in Japan. This was due to Yanagita’s personal interest in Japanese culture, which eventually came to define the basic orientation of Japanese folklore studies.

**From European Ethnology and Folklore Studies to Japanese Folklore Studies**

**Appointment to the League of Nations and Western Ethnology/Folklore Studies**

In 1919 Yanagita resigned from the government and started working as a journalist for the Asahi Shimbun, Japan’s leading newspaper, on the condition that he would be free to travel in Japan and overseas for the first three years. He traveled to Sado Island, Tohoku, Central Japan, Kyushu, and Okinawa and contributed his travelogues to the newspaper. He might have intended to practice jikatagaku as a journalist. He had even planned to travel to Western countries during the latter half of his appointment.

However, in 1919, soon after the end of the First World War, Japan became a member of the Permanent Secretariat of the League of Nations, where Nitobe was named one of the undersecretaries general. Nitobe appointed Yanagita as a member of the Mandate Committee in 1921 because he thought Yanagita had a good understanding of his concept of colonial policy (Satani 2015: 98-99). At that time, the League of Nations was dominated by

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2 In his Kokyō Shichijūnen (Home Seventy Years), Yanagita wrote: “I thought a job that allowed me to travel freely would be good. Working for a newspaper seemed to be the only option” (Yanagita 1974: 246).
the so-called “progressive” view of history, which held that Western countries were advanced
countries, while Asian and African societies were backward nations that needed to develop
toward attaining Western civilization.

Based on Nitobe’s thinking on the rule of Taiwan, Yanagita argued for respect and
protection of native cultures and asserted that education in the colonies must not consist
solely of the education of the elite in the colonial power’s language and must be conducted in
the native language (Satani 2015: 112). However, he was ignored by the Western-centered
League of Nations which did not have any experts on ethnology or any consciousness of the
need to respect minority cultures (Burkman 2012: 40).

Meanwhile, during his stay in Geneva for two years and six months starting in 1921,
Yanagita made significant progress in his study of Western ethnology and folklore. He
attended lectures in anthropology at the University of Geneva, benefited from the insights of
the scholars he met, and collected many books on folklore studies and anthropology
(Burkman 2012: 41). At a second-hand bookstore in Berlin, he encountered Franz Boas, who
taught him about the difference between Volkskunde and Völkerkunde (Yanagita 1969: 249).
Yanagita learned extensively from the latest studies in anthropology and ethnology in the
West in the early 20th century, such as those by British scholars W. H. R. Rivers and
Bronislaw Malinowski, American anthropologist Franz Boas, French sociologists/
anthropologists Émile Durkheim, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, and Marcel Mauss (Kawada 1997: 36).
Although Yanagita was disillusioned with the Western-oriented League of Nations, he came
into contact with the most advanced world of learning at that time. This brought about a
major transformation in Yanagita’s studies after he returned to Japan.

**Publication of Minzoku (Ethnic Studies)**

Disappointed with the League of Nations, Yanagita resigned and returned to Japan in
November 1923. Realizing from his work there that both political independence and
preservation of indigenous culture were necessary for breaking away from colonialism,
Yanagita also came to believe that for Japan to gain a respectable place in the world and
assert its cultural identity, it was necessary for Japanese studies to be founded on the
principles and values of cultural relativism. He embraced this ideal as his mission. Yanagita
had thus broadened his perspective from Japanese regional studies to Japan in a global
context (Satani 2015: 130-132).

In 1925, Yanagita launched a journal titled Minzoku. “Minzoku” (民族) is a multifaceted
word meaning “people,” “ethnic group,” “nation,” and so forth, which explains why ethnology
is called “minzokugaku” in Japan. However, Yanagita’s intention was more complex as the
journal was not simply devoted to ethnology (Yanagita 1969d: 256). While the first issue of
Minzokugaku indeed carried a Japanese translation of Rivers’ lecture on “The Aims of
Ethnology,” which clearly showed the influence of European ethnology, Yanagita actually
wanted to use ethnological methods in the study of folklore, thereby establishing a new field
of study in Japan.
Minzoku was very different from Kyōdo Kenkyū published before Yanagita went to Geneva. First, it became more academic, moving away from the non-academic orientation of respect for local cultures Yanagita himself had advocated. There was a shift to the full-fledged scholarly study of Japanese culture as a whole. Yanagita’s previous contributions to Kyōdo Kenkyū had often been based on the analysis of written materials. He now believed that this methodology was inadequate and incompatible with the new methods of ethnological study, so he did not revive this journal after returning to Japan (Oka 1973). Under the influence of Malinowski’s functionalist methodology of participant observation and interviews, which he learned in Europe, Yanagita advocated the introduction of new functionalist research methods based on what was considered objective data at the time.

In a speech on folklore studies in Japan given to the Japan Sociological Society in 1926, Yanagita stated that folk culture researchers must also be students of folk culture (Yanagita 1969d: 257). This closely mirrored what Malinowski wrote in his famous introduction of Argonauts of the Western Pacific, that the student must possess real scientific aims and know the values and criteria of modern ethnography (Malinowski 1967: 73). In other words, researchers should chronicle folk culture through direct investigation and research papers should be based on field study findings. Yanagita thus established fieldwork as the basic methodology of folklore studies.

**National Folklore Studies in an International Context**

Despite the influence of Western ethnology and folklore studies in his works, Yanagita actually had mixed emotions about these disciplines because he was anxious to create his own field of scholarship. In his book Kyōdo Seikatsu no Kenkyūhō (Research Methodology of Folk Life) published in 1935, Yanagita praised the Germans’ separation of studies on the lives of the German people (Volkskunde) from those of people of other countries (Völkerkunde) and he criticized the French for failing to do so (Yanagita 1969e: 295-296). He also disapproved of the British scholars’ domination of research and the disconnection between the researcher and the subject of research (Yanagita 1969e: 292).

Britain and France were then the leaders in folklore studies among the Western nations, while Germany was considered to be backward. Yanagita modeled the nascent Japanese folklore studies after German Volkskunde. According to Masao Oka,³ the British had low regard for traditional culture, viewing it as a remnant of an earlier stage of evolution that was irrational and unenlightened. By contrast, the Germans attached great importance to the common folks’ culture as the embodiment of the cultural foundation of the nation. Yanagita advocated the discovery of what was unique or indigenous in traditional culture, regarding all aspects of the Japanese people’s lives as worthy of research. In this sense,

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³ Masao Oka went into ethnological study after graduating from the Tokyo Imperial University. He became a key member of the editorial board of Yanagita's Minzoku. He was later estranged from Yanagita due to differences in their research foci. He went on to study ethnology at the University of Vienna under Wilhelm Schmidt and became a leading Japanese ethnologist after the Second World War.
Japanese folklore studies as envisioned by Yanagita was very similar to German folklore studies (Oka 1958: 290-291).

Both Japan and Germany were latecomers in modernization, so the formation of a national culture was important. Yanagita believed that folklore studies should be a field of learning that would help form an image of indigenous Japanese culture and establish a Japanese identity. His idea that it was necessary to present Japanese culture to the world community amid the wave of internationalization in order to resist the pressure to assimilate with Western culture reflected his experience at the League of Nations. (Satani 2015: 158). He regarded *Volkskunde* as the self-study of native culture, which he called “ikkoku minzokugaku” (national folklore studies) in Japanese. While *ikkoku minzokugaku* tends to give the impression of a field of study confined within one country — *ikkoku* literally means “one country” — it was actually meant to start with the study of Japan before proceeding to assert Japan’s cultural identity in the international arena. In that sense, it was also a means to adapt to internationalization. Yanagita wrote in *Seinen to Gakumon (Youth and Study)*, published in 1928, that it was Japan’s mission to develop folklore studies and lead the surrounding regions in this field of study. He contended that the establishment of national folklore studies in each country and the mutual recognition of nations on an equal footing would lead to the establishment of international folklore studies. In his mind, national folklore studies was not actually limited to the study of Japan, but was also meant to disseminate messages on Japan’s indigenous culture to the international community.

**From Minkan Denshō to Nihon-Minzokugaku**

**The Founding of Minkan Denshō (Folk Tradition) and Minzokugaku Kenkyū (Ethnological Studies)**

During the prewar period, Japanese folklore studies was not an academic discipline developed through research and education in universities. In 1933, Yanagita started to give lectures on folk tradition to young researchers who gathered at his home. In 1934, participants in his lectures conducted field studies in rural villages all over Japan with a list of common research topics. In 1935, Yanagita and a number of young folklore researchers conducted a series of lectures on folklore studies. On the day the last lecture was delivered, there was a suggestion to organize a national body for folklore studies. This led to the founding of *Minkan Denshō no Kai* (The Folk Tradition Society). The society published a monthly bulletin, *Minkan Denshō*, which printed reports on folk culture from its members all over the country. Few academic papers were published because there was only a small community of full-fledged folklore scholars at that time. However, articles appeared from time to time introducing European folklore studies and ethnology, including the works of Arnold van Gennep, Robert Hertz, Wilhelm Schmidt, and Bronislaw Malinowski (Fukuta 2009: 140).
On the other hand, the bulletin made practically no mention of the study of ethnology in Japan. The Japanese Society of Ethnology, predecessor of the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology (JASCA), was founded in 1934 and it started publishing its official journal *Minzokugaku Kenkyū* (Ethnological Studies) in 1935. Yanagita was not involved in its founding. It is thought that he was antagonistic toward this group because it was dominated by university-based academicians. He felt that the academic nature of Japanese ethnology and its study of foreign cultures and adoption of Western theories were contrary to his own approach to research. There was tension between the two camps.

The start of the Pacific War in 1941 also had a major impact on folklore studies. *Minkan Denshō* vol. 8, no. 4 indicated in its foreword that since folklore studies was the Japanese people’s self-study of their own culture, this would constitute basic education for Greater East Asia. Plans were made to hold folklore studies conventions in the Japanese colonies of Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria and to conduct joint international research as a project to celebrate Yanagita’s 70th birthday. *Minkan Denshō* vol. 10, no. 1 proposed joint research projects with the nations of Greater East Asia in addition to the study of Japanese culture (Fukuta 209: 177-178). Due to wartime exigencies, however, all these plans failed to materialize and with its last issue, vol. 10, no. 8., *Minkan Denshō* ceased publication in August 1944.

**Postwar Japanese Folklore Studies**

*Minkan Denshō* was revived after the war in 1946. There was no major change in the methodology and subject of folklore research, but instead a new system of research collaboration where researchers shared materials in their studies was established. In 1947, Yanagita founded the Institute of Folklore Studies, using his own home study as the head office of the new institution. The Institute listed among its objectives the study of folklore for the benefit of the Japanese people and it strove for close cooperation with relevant overseas societies.

Amid the wave of democratization in postwar Japan, folklore studies came into the limelight as an academic field that studied the life of the common folk. In 1947, *Minkan Denshō no Kai* formed an alliance of six academic societies with the Anthropological Society of Nippon, the Japanese Society of Ethnology, the Japan Sociological Society, the Japanese Archeological Association, and the Linguistic Society of Japan. The Japanese Association for Religious Studies and the Association of Japanese Geographers participated in the next year, and finally, the Japanese Psychological Association joined in 1950. In the same year this alliance of nine societies started joint research on Japanese society and culture.

*Minkan Denshō no Kai* attained a greater degree of respectability in academic circles by working with other humanities associations. It decided to transform itself into a research organization like the other academic societies, renaming itself the Folklore Society of Japan (FSJ) in 1949. Yanagita was elected for an indefinite term as the first president. Even though Japanese folklore studies thus far had been centered on him alone, he was already...
74 years old. The FSJ’s bylaws were amended in 1950 to institute a board of directors system, under which the directors, who represented the members, elected a president from among themselves. This was a sign of the generational change of folklore researchers.

In 1953, *Nihon-Minzokugaku* was launched as the FSJ’s official quarterly journal. Unlike the monthly *Minkan Denshō*, mostly academic papers were published, achieving an academic standard on par with other academic societies. At the 6th FSJ annual convention in 1954, cultural anthropologist Eiichirō Ishida delivered a lecture on “Anthropology and Japanese Folklore Studies.” He claimed that the objective of Japanese folklore studies was the study of the Japanese people’s *ethnos*, and that similar to American anthropology, Japanese folklore studies was part of anthropology in the broad sense. In reaction to this, Yanagita, who held the view that Japanese folklore studies was the study of Japanese history in the broad sense, was furious that none of the Japanese folklore researchers refuted Ishida. He decided to disband the Institute of Folklore Studies (Fukuta 2016: 8-9).

The demise of the Institute in 1957 slowed down the FSJ’s activities. *Nihon-Minzokugaku* also suspended publication after printing the vol. 5, no. 2 issue. However, a decision was made to reinstitute the FSJ secretariat in 1958 and the publication of the society’s official publication, renamed *Nihon-Minzokugaku Kaihō (FSJ Newsletter)*, also resumed.

After the disbanding of the Institute, its books were returned to Yanagita, who in turn gave them for safekeeping to Seijo University, located near Yanagita’s home. In 1958, Seijo started a folklore studies course. That same year, Tokyo University of Education, predecessor of Tsukuba University, was also authorized to recruit students for a historical methodology course. This was the beginning of folklore studies education in Japanese universities.

In 1960, Yanagita delivered a speech titled “The Grievous Degeneration of Japanese Folklore Studies,” criticizing what he saw as folklore studies’ excessive focus at that time on strange and amusing stories. He asserted that there is no use for a field of study that does not serve the country (Fukuta 2009: 293-294). While the purpose of his criticism was unclear, the FSJ’s journal was at that time indeed dominated by rigid academic studies of local topics of interest based mostly on interviews, which were different from field reports on local culture. Since Yanagita had favored the latter in *Minkan Denshō*, he was probably critical of folklore studies becoming too academic. He consistently upheld his position that folklore studies should be a *no no gakumon* – a discipline of the folk, by the folk, for the folk, if you will – that served the nation and its people.

British scholar Michael Gibbons is well known for asserting that the traditional academic approach consisted of theoretical research within a single discipline, and for advocating the need for the transdisciplinary, new production of knowledge in modern scholarship, with the participation of not only university researchers but also of a large number of other people (Gibbons 1997: 4-6). The thinking behind transdisciplinary folklore studies as a field of study open to all people which Yanagita advocated 100 years ago foreshadowed Gibbon’s approach (Oguma 2005; Suga 2013).
Yanagita passed away in 1962. The division of labor between fieldwork by local people interested in their own customs and practices on the one hand, and, on the other, research/writing by metropolitan scholars, which used to be observed even in Yanagita’s days, underwent significant changes with the demise of the charismatic master and the rise of younger generation researchers. Folklore researchers started to work in universities, pursuing university-centered education and research, rendering folklore studies increasingly academic.

The FSJ has continued to be active up to this date. Nihon-Minzokugaku Kaihō changed its name back to Nihon-Minzokugaku in 1970, from issue no. 67. As of February 2016, it has published a total of 285 issues. The journal has become a depository of field studies of folk culture all over Japan. In the 1960s and 1970s, a considerable number of anthropologists who studied Okinawa also contributed their work. We hope that foreign researchers interested in Japanese studies will make use of the research findings recorded in Nihon-Minzokugaku, and, under the title of “Anthropology and Folklore in Japan,” we are pleased to present research trends in seven areas in Nihon-Minzokugaku starting with the next volume of JRCA.

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