

KIMISHIMA HISAKO 君島久子, editor. *Nihon minikandenshō no genryū: Nihon kisōbunka no tankyū* 日本民間伝承の源流——日本基層文化の探究 [Sources of Japanese folk tradition: Research into the basic strata of Japanese culture]. Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1989. 590+vi pages. Tables, diagrams. Cloth ¥7,110; ISBN 4-09-390081-7. (In Japanese)

This work represents the proceedings of the sixth symposium in a series on the comparative study of the sources of Japanese folk culture, sponsored by the National Museum of Ethnology (Senri, Osaka). The volume, which contains twenty individual papers plus transcriptions of the discussions by the symposium participants, ranges broadly over the subject, as the following list of the volume's contents shows:

- A. East Asia: Japan and its environs:
 1. "Form and Conventions of Mythic Narrative," Matsumae Takeshi
 2. "Transmission of Myths in the Middle Ages," Fukuda Akira
 3. "Characteristics of Folktale Transmission," Nomura Junichi
 4. "Two or Three Issues in the Folk Narrative of Minami-jima," Yamashita Kinishi
 5. "Outline of Ainu Folk Legends," Asai Tōru
 6. "Tennaru and Iyaki of Korea," Choi In-hak
- B. North Asia, from the Amur Region to Central Asia:
 7. "Folktales as a Means of Discovering the Origins of Japanese Culture," Nelly Naumann
 8. "The Mythic World of the Amur River Region," Ogihara Shinko
 9. "The Buriat and Yakut Core of the Mythic Narratives of North and Central Asia," Tanaka Katsuhiko
- C. China, from the Han people to the minority peoples:
 10. "A Comparative Study of Stepmother Myths of China and Japan," Zhang Zichen
 11. "Transmission to Japan of Totemic Mythic Traditions of the Chinese Minority Peoples," Lan Ying
 12. "Chinese Folktales and Japan," Kimishima Hisako
 13. "Cosmogonic Myths of Minority Peoples of Southwest China," Murai Nobuyuki
 14. "Political Unification and Nation-building Myths of Yunnan Minority Peoples," Hasegawa Kiyoshi
- D. Southeast Asia, centered in Thailand and Burma:
 15. "Structure of Thai Foreign-Visitor Narratives," Yoshikawa Toshiharu
 16. "Burmese Spirit Beliefs and Folktales," Tamura Katsumi
 17. "Structure of Japanese Folktales," Ozawa Toshio
 18. "Function of Japanese Folktales," Araki Hiroyuki
- E. Lineage of Japanese myths and folktales:
 19. "Lineage of Japanese Myths," Ōbayashi Taryō
 20. "Lineage of Japanese Folktales," Itō Seiji
- F. Problems and prospects of discourse on the origins of Japanese folk narratives, a general discussion.

No brief review can adequately deal with the variety of papers found within this volume. Nor does the editor attempt to present any unified framework for the discussion: such would be premature. Nonetheless the reader who perseveres through to

the end of the book will have been treated to a comprehensive introduction to ethnology as it bears upon Japanese culture, as well as to a number of interesting studies that focus on particular problems.

It should also be noted that this volume boldly employs an approach that has been rejected as a viable methodological principle throughout the world by anthropologists and folklorists, namely, the quest for origins. I suspect that Japan is one of the few places where such a subject could be broached seriously, addressing as it does the Japanese concern for identity following the devastation of the Pacific War and the country's subsequent rapid economic growth. Indeed, several contributors express uneasiness regarding this very issue. Many scholars may thus be put off by the theme of the volume, but I urge them to read on, for there is much of value in this work.

Among the specific studies let me note the first, by Matsumae Takeshi, who discusses the history of scholarship (both Japanese and Western) on the definition and significant features of myth. Matsumae is particularly interested in whether oracular utterances in the context of religious rituals may contribute to myth construction (although he is careful to distinguish oracular utterance as the raw material of myth from the myths themselves). His conclusion, after considering Chinese, Korean, and Ainu shamanic utterances as well as those gleaned from Japanese sources, is a cautious yes. He is particularly indebted to the work of Matsumura Takeo and Origuchi Nobuo.

Nelly Naumann, the only Western contributor to this volume, is the author of the excellent monograph "Die webende Göttin." She attempts in her paper (no. 7) to place the general concerns of the symposium into a phenomenological framework, especially that provided by her mentor Franz Vonessen. This is rather heavy going, and her concern to relate oral tales or legends to myth by way of "spiritual experience"—which for her is the source of all "true myth"—may raise more questions than it solves.

Ozawa Toshio, in paper no. 17, recognizes his debt to the pioneering Russian morphologist Vladimir Propp, but expresses dissatisfaction with his work because, in part, it fails to take up the question of origins. Ozawa stresses the relative uniqueness of Japanese folk narrative, especially in its brevity and simplicity, and finds in the protagonist—whether an old person, adult, young man, or child—his structural principle of classification. With this as a guide he delineates three further criteria or perspectives: the entire narrative structure (by which he primarily means the way the tale affects the protagonist in particular episodes); the main motif; and the final result (that is, the final state in which the narrative leaves the protagonist). Ozawa's approach will seem heretical to structuralist purists, beginning as it does with what many would consider a nonstructural element (the age and gender of the protagonist). It seems that this is a part of the price he pays for attempting to address the question of origins.

Alan L. MILLER
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio