

FOUR COLLECTIONS OF JAPANESE FOLK TALES

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The present review covers four volumes of Japanese folk tales collected in Niigata Prefecture, Japan, by Kenichi Mizusawa 水澤謙一. They are: *Echigo no Minwa* 越後の民話 (1957), *Tonto Mukashi Atta gedo, Dai Isshu* とんと昔あったげど第一集 (1957), *Tonto Mukashi Atta gedo, Dai Nishu* とんと昔あったげど第二集 (1958), and *Tonto Hitotsu Attaten gana* とんと一あったてんがな (1958). All four books are published by Miraisha, Tokyo.

The author previously published tales in local journals and a volume, *Mukashi Attaten gana* (1956), under the auspices of *Nagaoka Shiseki Hozon Kai* 長岡史蹟保存會 in Nagaoka City. The author is a member of the Niigata Folklore Society and the national organization. He has an extensive library of books by leading folklorists of Japan, but depends largely upon Mr. Kunio Yanagita for reference and guidance in technique. He resides at his family estate at the edge of Nagaoka City, where he was born. His interest in local legends and tales covers a long period of time, but his serious efforts in collecting began after the close of World War II. He is encouraged and aided in his work by the Nagaoka City Board of Education, Banzo Yuki, Superintendent, and in 1957 he received a Cultural Citation from the city. This year, 1958, he was honored by the Prefecture of Niigata for his cultural contributions.

The four volumes under consideration deserve a more leisurely introduction, but in general they represent the same approach and technique. Mr. Mizusawa goes to the old narrators in mountain and rural communities to hear the stories at first hand. Since the best time for story telling is in the winter, roads in this region covered with deep snow would deter most researchers, but he puts on his skis and travels far back into remote areas quite undaunted. Taking down notes including the original dialect, he does not labor over minute points, but depends upon repeated visits to fill in problems. He maintains an easy, happy frame of mind while hearing the tales. This is reflected in the freshness and genuineness of the narrations. Each tale bears the name and age of the narrator, the locality, and the year of recording, except where such material is covered in his preface.

Each volume except the first contains a helpful glossary of dialect. However, in the body of the text, in a parallel column beside the dialect, the explanation or standard Japanese equivalent is given, so that the reader may read without too much interruption from checking notes. He has not toned down the graphic vocabulary and earthy humor of the original, but has employed enough of standard Japanese to put the tale across.

One may be tempted to criticize the duplication of tales in a given volume or among the four volumes, but these appear in variations which are interesting to

compare. He has justified this in his introductions.

Echigo no Minwa 越後の民話 (1957) pp. 299

The form of this book is in line with those of a series of *Minwa* from various parts of Japan, published by Miraisha. It is illustrated by a noted cartoonist, Mizushima Miho 水島爾保, whose comical little sketches are intended for the general reader. They are not without value because of the local flavor, which is genuine in detail. A hand-sketched map indicates the three old divisions of Niigata Prefecture, Joetsu 上越, Chûetsu 中越, and Kaetsu 下越 into which he also divides the tales. From each of these regions he has selected one representative narrator, who together account for fifty five tales. The remaining twenty-two tales have been selected from twelve other narrators. At the end of the book he has included nearly thirty children's traditional poems.

The fact that Mr. Mizusawa used the term *minwa* 民話 rather than the established *mukashibanashi* 昔話 in his title signifies only a conformity to the request of the publisher and not any new departure in technique or point of view. Old folklorists see no justification for introducing a new term at this time. This *minwa* is a recently invented term used primarily by a group who are attempting to popularize folk tales, but with an emphasis upon *People* rather than *Folk*. Their *People's Tales* frequently are of no value to scholars concentrating upon genuinely old material. A brief introduction by the author makes clear his sincerity of purpose.

Tonto Mukashi Atta Gedo, Dai Isshu とんと昔あつたげど第一集 (1957)
pp. 382

This volume of one hundred twenty-two tales were all told by a single narrator, Nagashima Tsuru 長島ツル (90 yrs.). This and the following book should be considered together because the tales are from a single area in and around Nijumura 二十村, now administratively within the limits of Ojiya City 小千谷市 for the most part. Eight photographs and a hand-sketched map give the reader a more substantial impression of the narrator, the region where the tales were heard, and on the author. The material was gathered between 1955 and 1957. An introduction by the author gives general information about field work and an account in particular about the remarkable old woman who recites the tales. The title of this volume is one of the opening phrases used in this area to begin a folk tale.

Tonto Mukashi Atta Gedo, Dai Nishu とんと昔あつたげど第二集 (1958)
p. 351

In this volume thirteen photographs and a hand-sketched map of a limited detail from the former volume give views of folk crafts, customs, and scenes which supplement Vol. 1. The glossary does not duplicate the previous words and it is far more extensive. In the introduction the author probes more deeply into the roots of the life in the area, and he ties twenty-seven of the tales directly to practices and beliefs in that region. He indicates the possibilities offered for more extensive research. Material in this book was gathered from 1956 to 1957. It contains one hundred thirty-four tales recited by fifty-one narrators in nineteen different little

communities. One notes a wide range in the ages of the narrators and the number of short, humorous tales here.

Tonto Hitotsu Attaten Gana とんと一つあつたてんがな (1958) p. 292

Here, as in the two previous collections, Mr. Mizusawa has used photographs. Whereas two volumes of *Tonto Mukashi Atta gedo* contain tales of a remote mountainous area and maps are useful, the two place represented in this volume are out on the plains in easily identified places. He selected two narrators from among five who each recited more than one hundred tales to him. Seventy are from those told by Ishida Yomi 石田ヨミ (94), Mitsuke-shi, Shimoseki-machi 見附市下關町 and fifty by Kasahara Masao 笠原政雄 (40), Nagaoka-shi, Fukasawa-machi 長岡市深澤町. Although the problem of duplication with previous collections is apparent, Mr. Mizusawa offers them for comparison of given tales as they are told in the mountain homes and in villages on the plains. The introduction is mainly devoted to the method of selecting tales and the backgrounds of the two narrators. The title to this book is another opening phrase employed in this area. It should be noted that a single narrator does not always employ the same opening or closing formula. The latter, however, appear in greater variety and length.

In closing this review of Mr. Mizusawa's four collections of folk tales, the activity of the author should once more be noticed. He has given tales from nearly seventy old narrators' going to many different communities to collect them. That he still has files untouched goes without saying. It may be mentioned here that he has one more manuscript ready for publication. This will follow the same method as used up till now, but it is his intention to devote more time from now to research in folk faiths as are evident both through the tales, the dialect, and variations on the one hand and through a more careful examination of legends and old landmarks.

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