



Miyata Noboru
The Folklorist and His Scholarship
Watching the Tide, Knowing the Time

OBITUARY

AN “ACADEMIC FUNERAL”

The purpose of this essay is to examine what we can learn from the folklore scholarship of Miyata Noboru 宮田 登 who suddenly passed away on 10 February 2000 at the relatively young age of 63 years. His death was completely unexpected.

Miyata was born on 14 October 1936 in Yokohama into a family that had been cotton wholesalers in the so-called *shitamachi* of Edo. Throughout his life he quickly put people at ease with humor and jokes and was always conscientious; even while in bed at the hospital he continued to make phone calls. When he returned to the hospital after he had spent his last New Year's at home, he fell headlong into an abyss of fear. There was nothing anyone could do to help him. The feeling of loss that struck so many folklorists who were completely unprepared for his sudden demise has now spurred an impulse to remember him, which has resulted in the publication of many recollections about his life. Whatever the significance of these recollections may be, students of folklore are faced with the task of sorting through the whole of Miyata's scholarship and with ascertaining what among the wealth of his academic achievements should be passed on. The fulfillment of this task could indeed be called his “Academic Funeral.” Not only myself but the many scholars who are familiar with Miyata's work now need to discuss his folklore scholarship from as many perspectives as possible. Only by doing so shall we be able to assure the lasting presence of Miyata who dedicated his entire life to the discipline of folklore.

FROM “MIROKU BELIEF” TO “WEDDING AND FUNERAL CELEBRATIONS”

If we arrange the mass of Miyata's books in the chronological order in which they were published, we arrive at the list given in Table 1. Since the works in this list are arranged according to the year they were published as books, the writings and the ideas in them actually slightly precede the date of their publication. Although it would have been possible to arrange the list of Miyata's works on either the basis of his age from his 30s to his 60s or on social time periods, such as the 1970s, 80s and 90s, I have decided to divide the list based on the latter. The list begins with “A Study of Miroku Belief,” Miyata's first book and representative work, published 1970 when the author was thirty-

three years old, and ends with two books, “Religion of the Japanese” and “Weddings and Funeral Celebrations,” both published in 1999 when Miyata was sixty-two.

This manner of arranging his works reveals that during the seventies, when he was between the ages of thirty-three and forty-two, popular religion of the common people was the focus of his research. Later, throughout the eighties (between the ages of forty-three and fifty-two), the thrust of his research shifted more to the present time and to new areas such as the city and women. He did, however, continue to research popular religion as evidenced by his work on monsters (*yōkai* 妖怪), the soul (*reikon* 靈魂), and eschatological ideas. Even in the nineties (between the ages of fifty-three and sixty-two) he maintained his interest in popular religion through his research on feelings of insecurity, fantasies, belief in mountain deities, and folk shinto. We can also see that he further extended the scope of his research to include aging, the meaning of *kegare* (i.e., that which is regarded as unclean), and the relationship between royal authority and the art of observing weather conditions (*hiyorimi* 日和見). It should be kept in mind that the shifts in Miyata’s research indicated here are mainly gathered from the titles of his books. When we turn to the content of his research, however, it becomes clear that the constant theme throughout his work is “The common people and religion.”

LONGING FOR STRANGE WORLDS AND THE ART OF OBSERVING WEATHER CONDITIONS

In both body and mind Miyata felt an intense longing for worlds of the strange, a longing that served as a backdrop for his research theme “The common people and religion.” Quite unusual for him, Miyata described the circumstances of how he was initiated into the world of folklore studies in a short but highly revealing essay, “Myself and the study of folklore” (published in Miyata 1991). In this essay he discloses facets about his childhood such as the Christian kindergarten he attended and the life he had in Nagano Prefecture after his family evacuated their home during the war. He also tells us in this essay that as a youngster he was an exceptionally avid reader with a strong interest in the mysterious, the soul, and the otherworld, but that he tried to find the answers to his questions in the life he experienced around him.

Two consistent features that characterize Miyata can be expressed with the terms *hiyorimi* (an observer of weather conditions, or an opportunist) and *hijiri* 日知り (one who knows the value of time). In the 1960s, when Miyata was a student, the student movement reached its peak during the Sunagawa struggle and the struggle against the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.

Table 1: List of books by Miyata Noboru

Title of work	Year	Age
『ミロク信仰の研究:日本における伝統的メシア観』未来社 <i>A Study of Miroku Belief: A Traditional Messiah in Japan.</i>	1970a	33
『生き神信仰:人を神に祀る習俗』塙書房 <i>Belief in Living Deities: Customs to Venerate Persons as Deities.</i>	1970b	33
『近世の流行神』評論社 <i>Popular Deities in the Early Modern Era.</i>	1972	35
『原初的思考:白のフォークロア』大和書房 <i>Primitive Thought: The Folklore of Whiteness.</i>	1974	37
『民俗宗教論の課題』未来社 <i>Topics for a Theory of Folk Religion.</i>	1977a	40
『土の思想』創文社 <i>Thinking from the Soil.</i>	1977b	40
『日本の民俗学』講談社学術文庫 <i>Japanese Folklore.</i>	1978	41
『神の民俗誌』岩波新書 <i>Ethnography of the kami.</i>	1979	42
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『都市民俗論の課題』未来社 <i>Topics of Urban Folklore Theory.</i>	1982	45
『女の霊力と家の神:日本の民俗宗教』人文書院 <i>The Spiritual Power of Women and the Deity of the Household: Japanese Folk Religion.</i>	1983	46
『妖怪の民俗学:日本の見えない空間』岩波書店 <i>The Folklore of Monsters: Japan's Invisible Space.</i>	1985	48
『現代民俗論の課題』未来社 <i>Topics of Modern Folklore Theory.</i>	1986	49
『ヒメの民俗学』青土社 <i>The Folklore of hime.</i>	1987a	50
『終末観の民俗学』弘文堂 <i>Folklore of Views about the End of the World.</i>	1987b	50
『靈魂の民俗学』日本エディタースクール出版部 <i>Folkloristics of the Soul.</i>	1988	51
『江戸の小さな神々』青土社 <i>The Small Deities of Edo.</i>	1989	52

Title of work	Year	Age
『民俗学』放送大学教材 <i>Folkloristics.</i>	1990	53
『怖さはどこからくるのか』筑摩書房 <i>Where Does Fear Come From?</i>	1991	54
『老いと「生い」:隔離と再生』編著 藤原書店 <i>Aging and Growing: Isolation and Rebirth.</i>	1992a	55
『日和見:日本王権論の試み』平凡社 <i>Observing the Weather: An Essay about Japanese Royal Authority.</i>	1992b	55
『心なおしはなぜ流行る:不安と幻想の民俗誌』小学館 <i>Why is Healing of the Heart Fashionable: The Ethnography of Anxiety and Fantasy.</i>	1993a	56
『江戸のはやり神』ちくま学芸文庫 <i>Popular Deities of Edo.</i>	1993b	56
『山と里の信仰史』吉川弘文館 <i>The History of Belief of Mountain and Village.</i>	1993c	56
『ケガレの民俗誌:差別の文化的要因』人文書院 <i>The Ethnography of Kegare: The Cultural Reason for Discrimination.</i>	1996a	59
『民俗学への招待』筑摩書房 <i>Invitation to Folkloristics.</i>	1996b	59
『民俗神道論:民間信仰のダイナミズム』春秋社 <i>Theory of Folk Shinto: The Dynamism of Folk Belief.</i>	1996c	59
『歴史と民俗のあいだ:海と都市の視点から』吉川弘文館 <i>Between History and Folklore: From the Point of View of the Sea and the City.</i>	1996d	59
『老人と子供の民俗学』白水社 <i>Folklore of Old People and Children.</i>	1996e	59
『正月とハレの民俗学』大和書房 <i>Folklore of New Year's and Hare.</i>	1997	60
『都市とフォークロア』お茶の水書房 <i>The City and Fōkuroa.</i>	1999a	62
『日本人の宗教』岩波書店 <i>The Religion of the Japanese.</i>	1999b	62
『冠婚葬祭』岩波新書 <i>Wedding and Funeral Celebrations.</i>	1999c	62

For doctrinaires (*shugisha* 主義者) at that time, *hiyorimi*, in the sense of “opportunist,” was a term used to express the utmost contempt. Nevertheless, Miyata later dared to call himself playfully a *hiyorimi shugisha* and at the same time, he also proposed to use folklore material to rediscover the wisdom of *hijiri*, which was behind the practices of the *hiyorimi*. This later led him to develop his theory of the origin of royal authority, which reached fruition in his work “Observing the Weather: An Essay about Japanese Royal Authority” (1992b).

Although Miyata humorously referred to himself at this time as a “person watching the weather” (*hiyorimi no hito* 日和見の人), during his life he was known as a uniquely “caring and considerate person” and earned the gratitude of a wide array of people of different ages and gender. His consideration of others can be seen in his research and in his flexible, nonconfrontational style. On one occasion, he even wrote that “in principle, I am the type that dislikes polemics and avoids clashes” (Miyata 1974). I believe that among the factors that molded his character as a nonconfrontational and considerate person who did not forget those upon whom the sun does not shine, were his innate personality and his extraordinary “learning” that he acquired from his experiences as a youngster.

“TRANSMISSION” AND “DEVELOPMENT”

Three distinct characteristics of Miyata Noboru’s folklore scholarship are “transmission,” “development,” and “deepening.” Miyata dedicated himself to the “transmission” of folkloristics (*minzokugaku* 民俗学) by faithfully and methodically transmitting the scientific achievements of his predecessors since Yanagita Kunio. He also strived for the “development” of folkloristics by building on the achievements of his predecessors and by boldly cultivating new areas. Finally, he habitually and relentlessly refined his arguments in a way that resulted in a “deepening” of them.

How Miyata felt about the “transmission” and “development” of folklore scholarship is already evident in his early work. The article “A personal opinion concerning criticisms levelled against Japanese folklore scholarship,” published when Miyata was thirty (republished in Miyata 1974), is a declaration of independence for Japanese folklore scholarship from the folklore science of Yanagita Kunio as well as a defense of Japanese folklore science against the overwhelming force of postwar historical science and the offensive launched by postwar cultural and social anthropology. It was also a proclamation that claimed folklore would not follow cultural and social anthropology nor history, nor seclude itself in its own little world. Miyata argued that all these branches should preserve and further develop their

respective characteristics while actively building cooperative relationships with each other. Shortly after, while still refining his folklore methodology, Miyata published his main work, "A Study of Miroku Belief" (1970).

In this study of Miroku beliefs, the three distinguishing features of Miyata's work mentioned above can already be discerned. Concerning "transmission," Miyata digests the complicated but highly suggestive style of Yanagita's "Miroku's boat" (みろくの船, included in YANAGITA 1968) and carefully transmits Yanagita's perspective, while also "developing" it by widening it even further. According to Yanagita, the belief that Miroku comes to this world from beyond the sea was transmitted in two areas: (1) in Kashima, Hitachi, in particular, as well as in the Tōkai and Kantō region where the Kashima dance was transmitted; and (2) in the Yaeyama archipelago in the south where the *nirō* deity tradition was transmitted. On the basis of his theory that Miroku beliefs were transmitted in both a northern and southern region, Yanagita developed the theory that the Japanese originated from a combination of northern and southern cultures. Miyata, interested in Miroku, used—hence, "transmitted"—Yanagita's method of comparing similarities (*ruikeiron* 類型論) but refined it to show that Miroku beliefs developed in various ways in different areas throughout the Japanese archipelago and not just in Kashima and Yaeyama. Miyata then attempted to elucidate the form of Miroku beliefs in local societies with different historical backgrounds. In the end, Miyata was able to show that underlying Japanese folk beliefs were utopian ideas and images of Miroku's Pure Land as well as Miroku related beliefs and different lineages of messianic thought. Concerning Miyata's two other characteristic features, "development" and "deepening," it can be said that in the first edition of his work on Miroku belief (1970) he identified both utopian and messianic ideas but paid particular attention to the latter. By the time of the second edition (1975), however, he had done more research and his ideas had progressed. He pointed out that in Japanese folklore the search for an ideal world of Miroku, a utopia, was actually stronger than the messianic expectation of a Miroku coming to earth.

In contrast to Yanagita, who criticized and confronted the historical sciences, Miyata sought equality and dialogue with historical science. Rather than see the cluster of folk religious expression that can be clearly identified in Japanese history from the end of the Edo period into modern times as a general religious phenomenon, he interprets it in relation to Miroku beliefs, which he identified as underlying Japanese folklore. He proposes this kind of interpretation as being the distinctive character of folklore studies.

Miyata's "development" was not limited to an exchange with the sciences of history and religion, nor was it restricted to the idea that Japanese

folk culture is limited to the Japanese archipelago. In his study of Miroku he calls for a wider view of the evolution of Miroku belief beyond Okinawa by including as points of origin the southern islands, the Korean Peninsula, China, and even southeast Asia and India. It is in this work on Miroku that we can see Miyata emphasize the need for a link between Japanese folklore and comparative folklore.

REFINING AND “DEEPENING”

One of the characteristics of Miyata’s work that was discussed by his junior colleagues and students during his lifetime was his habit of frequently refining his arguments. But Miyata did not become defensive about his ideas and continued his writing undisturbed by objections to them. A faithful reader will of course notice that for Miyata refining did not simply mean restatement but a deepening of his original hypotheses. Miyata noticed, for example, that in the first edition of his “A Study of Miroku Belief” he had paid too much attention to messianism. He therefore quickly amended his argument by shifting the weight of it in the second and revised edition to a discussion of utopia. In this work, he also further expanded the discussion to include an exchange with the academic study of history and religion and attempted to develop a comparative approach to folklore. In this way he proposed a way to refine folklore theory and achieve a “deepening” of folklore scholarship. The same kind of “deepening” of his arguments can be noticed in his later studies such as those on sexuality, aging, and *kegare*.

While sexuality was a topic Yanagita avoided, Miyata took it up without reservations as he believed that folklore and beliefs related to sexuality were part of the common thought of humankind. He felt that if sexuality related beliefs were discussed in organic relationship with other elements of belief that they would reveal themselves to be like the nodes in a net, forming a coherent system. He developed this idea in his “Problems concerning the study of beliefs related to sexuality” (in 1977a) and developed his theory of sexual folklore in such works as “Primitive Thought” (1974), “Topics for a Theory of Folk Religion” (1977a), and “The Spiritual Power of Women and the Deity of the Household” (1983). In an earlier article of 1971, “Sexuality in folk belief” (republished in Miyata 1974), he positioned beliefs concerning sexuality as being a kind of magic that links the reproductive force of genitals and sexual intercourse with the productivity of agricultural products. While he referred to M. ELIADE (1968), who pointed out the relationship between the fertility of the earth and the fecundity of women, Miyata goes further and explains the teachings concerning the sexual union of men and women of the Fuji confraternity (*Fujikō* 富士講), a typical form of Japanese folk religion, saying this is characteristic of a line of thinking about

the equality of human beings and the elimination of inequalities perpetrated against women. In other words, he first argued mainly for a positioning of sexual folklore within agrarian culture, but later, in an article of 1980 (republished in Miyata 1983), he says that in the folklore of sexuality found among mountain and fishing populations there are beliefs related to the sexual organs that do not assume sexual intercourse. He then points out that in the folklore of sexuality in a hunting culture (i.e., a non-agrarian culture) one can find magical power attributed to the erected penis. He hypothesizes that phallic worship that originally did not presume sexual intercourse changed at the stage when the folk tales of agrarian society were linked to the motif of harmony between yin and yang.

The chance for Miyata to seriously discuss the problem of aging came when he happened to be asked to discuss the culture of old people as a subculture. In a previous article of his, namely, "Old person and child" (1982, republished in Miyata 1996c), Miyata brought together different theses on the images of old people. The article carefully organized the history of the folklore research on old people. It delineated Yanagita's image of old people and examined previous theses on old persons (grandfather and grandmother) and children (grandchildren), the traditions of throwing away old people (*ubasute* 姥捨て), and Orikuchi's argument about *okina* 翁 (old man). Later, in his 1987 work on the elderly culture as a subculture, "Where old age is lived," he paid greater attention to the factually-based picture of old people drawn up by MIYAMOTO Tsuneichi (1981), and then, in a similar vein, he turned to observe the image of active old people described by NOMOTO Kan'ichi (1980), and to the role of the elders of a *miyaza* 宮座 (Shinto shrine group) in the Kinki area studied by TAKAHASHI Tōichi (1978). He contrasted these images of old people with the reality of suicides committed by old people in Niigata Prefecture as they had been reported in the *Yomiuri shinbun* (Yomiuri newspaper). Finally, he brought all these factors together to develop a broad theory about old people. During this time, he employed Victor TURNER's (1974) theory of the center and of liminality as well as the theory of the border as it has been advocated since Arnold van Gennep in order to develop his argument about the spiritual meaning of children and old people. At the same time, he further broadened the object of scientific discussion to include how the *miyaza* elders of a particular village society properly fulfilled their religious and social role by using their great authority to regulate the festival of the local deity (*ujigami* 氏神) and settle problems related to land. Miyata finally also included the *yononaka jō* 世中翁, the holder of experiential knowledge used to divine the weather and the outcome of the crop. As a result of this work, he argued that within the concept of aging (*oi* 老い) there is a positive aspect of prosperity (*oi* 生い) (MIYATA 1989–90).

When we think of Miyata's characteristic reshaping and deepening of arguments, we cannot overlook his willingness to make use of the latest research results. This willingness is evident, for example, in his use of CHIBA Tokuji's article "Wife and mountain deity" (1975), which *deepened* Miyata's thinking about sexuality, and also in his use of works by NOMOTO Kan'ichi (1980), TAKAHASHI Tōichi (1978), and HAGIWARA Hidesaburō and Noriko (1973), all of whom prompted the deepening of his thinking about aging. In the late 1980s, Miyata also absorbed much of the research by young graduate students at the time such as Sekizawa Mayumi and Koike Jun'ichi. In this way Miyata kept his eyes assiduously open for what was happening around him and used new achievements to advance, like a long distant runner, to ever newer horizons.

HARE, KE, AND KEGARE

During the 1980s an epoch making controversy concerning the terms *hare*, *ke*, and *kegare* unfolded in Miyata's specialty, the study of folk religion. The controversy began with a debate over Yanagita's definitions of *hare* and *ke*, according to which *hare* designated the non-ordinary space and time of ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, while *ke* designated the ordinary space and time of work and rest. It was Yanagita's basic position that folk life could be grasped if the rhythmic cycle of *ke* and *hare* were understood. The cultural anthropologist NAMIHIRA Emiko (1984), in contrast to Yanagita, claimed that *hare* meant purity and sacredness, while *ke* meant ordinary and profane. She further introduced the term *kegare* (impurity or pollution) and claimed that the variations of Japanese folk belief could be understood within the way *hare*, *ke*, and *kegare* related to each other. It appears that Namihira constructed her discussion of *hare*, *ke*, and *kegare* by combining Yanagita Kunio's "*hare* and *ke*," E. Durkheim's "the sacred and the profane," and E. Leach's and M. Douglas's "purity and impurity." In a different manner, Sakurai Tōkutarō proposed that *hare* and *ke* did not express a contrasting relationship but rather that each was mediated by *kegare*. According to his interpretation, *kegare* meant the withered (*kareta* 枯れた) state of *ke* (i.e., the withered state of the spiritual power of the rice plant). He then argued that *hare* (i.e., ceremonies for a deity) served to reinvigorate the life-giving force that was found in a weakened state, *kegare*. He proposed, therefore, a cycle from *hare* to *ke* to *kegare* (1985). Miyata supported Sakurai in this controversy but said that *ke* is a term that stands for both the spiritual power of the rice plant and the life force of humans. He further took *kegare* to be a sub-category of *ke*, and proposed a contrasting development on one side from *ke* to *kegare*, and on the other side from *kegare* to *hare*, pointing out that *kegare* functioned to designate a liminal area.

For both of these theories the different understandings of the terms *hare*, *ke*, and *kegare* were crucial. According to Namihira, for example, *ke* meant the ordinary and profane, and was a term that combined the meaning of Yanagita's "*ke*" with that of Durkheim's "profane." In contrast to Namihira, Sakurai and Miyata defined the term *ke* as "life force," and thus gave it a new meaning entirely different from that of the *ke* of Yanagita. At the time of this debate, I had the opportunity to participate with Miyata and Namihira in the research project called "Ritual, Performing Arts, and Folk Worldview," which was sponsored by the National Museum of Japanese History. I argued at the time that there was no need to change Yanagita's definition of the terms *hare* and *ke*, but attention should be devoted to a new definition of the term *kegare*, and to do this an inductive argument based on the folk concepts concerning the pollution of death was crucial. I then claimed that *kegare* means the "power of death," in contrast to the term *kami*, which means "power of life." "*Kegare*," "*harae*," and "*kami*" would, according to this argument, represent the mechanism by which deities were born (SHINTANI 1987, 2000a, 2000b). At that time, Miyata did not immediately respond to this argument but preferred to elaborate on the problem of the relation of *kegare* to discrimination, a topic that was long dear to him (Miyata 1996a). In a later conversation, though, he highly praised a paper in which I had argued that money functions as a device to absorb *kegare*. The argument asserted that shrines, where people throw money offerings, are commonly understood to be sacred as religious institutions, but in reality, both the shrines as well as the money offered function as devices for absorbing pollution (*kegare*) and turning it into purity.

FOLKLORE OF THE CITY AND COMPARATIVE FOLKLORE

The study of folklore, as it was done by Yanagita Kunio, focussed on Japan, the Japanese, and the agrarian village societies of Japan that were based on rice cultivation. In contrast to Yanagita, Miyata labored from an early stage in his career to formulate urban and comparative folklore studies. His ideas for urban and comparative folklore started to take form in 1975 with the revised edition of "A Study of Miroku Belief," but his first concrete proposals for these types of folklore studies came in 1978 with the publication of "Japanese Folklore." In this book, Miyata begins by faithfully tracing the theory of continuity between the capital city and the hinterland (*tohi renzokuron* 都鄙連続論) proposed by Yanagita, and by examining the possibilities of the "modernology" (*kōgengaku* 考現学) advocated by Kon Wajirō. Then he states that it is necessary to examine the question of whether urban folklore can be established by taking the folklore that develops naturally in the city as its object, or whether its object should be the folklore discovered

as a consequence of the phenomenon referred to by the sociological or geographical term urbanization. Regardless of how it was understood, Miyata thought it was necessary to establish the city as a field for folklore research. At the same time he openly confessed that it was still not clear what kind of methodology should be applied in this sort of research. As for comparative folklore, Miyata first ascertained that Yanagita Kunio did not simply cling to studying the folklore of one country but had also set his sights on a global folklore. He then goes on to point out that although Yanagita took folk terminology as standard for his methodology, it would be possible to overcome his shortcomings, at least for the cultural area where Chinese script is in use, by paying attention to the multivocal character of the language and to the functions of a multivocal language. From there it should then be possible, he asserts, to arrive at a comparative study of folklore. Finally, he professes to be ready himself to try it out with the terms "Miroku" and "white." It may be safe to say that he had achieved considerable results when he tried his hand at comparative folklore for the revised edition of "A Study of Miroku Belief."

From that time forward, Miyata actively pursued the construction of urban folklore theory in combination with such topics as the transformation of folklore and modern folklore theory. He soon became the leader for many young researchers and built a productive network in which members quoted the work of each other. In an effort to find a new methodology for folklore with the city as a research object, Miyata first introduced MORIGUCHI Tari's (1944) early work, then, directed his attention to IWAMOTO Michiya's "Preliminary considerations concerning a science of urban folklore" (1978). What Miyata actually wound up doing, however, was developing the study of the folklore that continued to spring up in the city and that was related to the anxieties and prayers of urban people, such as tales of monsters and uncanny experiences. Miyata's folklore research consistently showed his desired aim of creating a vigorous science that had modern society as its object. It should not be forgotten, however, that for him an understanding of "modern" was always connected with a folklorist's sense of history. This does not mean that he solely focused on the changes that occurred during the decade that came immediately before him. Rather it meant for him that if one is to study the folklore of modern society, one has to consider the previous period of about two hundred years since the middle of the modern age (*kindai* 近代) as one unit, much in the same way as the continuity of generations is generally considered within a person's lifetime from great grandparents to grandparents to parents, and then to the person in question. Miyata believed it was necessary to reflect on how the religious consciousness and worldview of the Japanese had changed during this two-hundred-year period, and how deep these changes had taken root in the consciousness of

modern people and in their daily lives. This kind of awareness of history was not only backed up by Miyata's broad knowledge of history, it was further based on the common view in the science of folklore that one must pay attention to the slow changes of a folklore phenomenon in history (Miyata 1999b). On the other hand, in the midst of an accelerating internationalization and globalization, Miyata developed his framework for comparative folklore and thoroughly discussed in a positive manner the folk culture of immigrants of Japanese descent in his contribution in 1986 to the volume "Modernity and Folklore" (reprinted in Miyata 1993a).

A PERSON OF FORESIGHT—BECOMING AN OLD MAN (*OKINA*) WHO READS THE TIME

The foresight of Miyata Noboru is first evident in his uncommon ability to collect information. He always had a keen nose for detecting new trends in research. When Tsuboi Hirofumi pointed out the existence of a culture based on taro (*imo*) and dry-field agriculture (1979) in contrast to the culture based on rice cultivation that was the focus of folklore since Yanagita, Miyata was among the first to praise Tsuboi. On marine populations and non-agricultural people, Miyata also learned much from the perspective of historian AMINO Yoshihiko (1984). Miyata, moreover, applied in his own work the theories of the cultural anthropologists YAMAGUCHI Masao (1975) and Victor TURNER (1974) and made their theories more palatable. He was very eager to promote exchange with researchers in America, France, and in particular with Korean and other Asian countries as evidenced, for example, in the tripartite talk "Concerning the history of sensibility" (CORBIN et al. 2000). He was also fast to react to the arguments about folklorism that had begun in Germany as well as to the discussions about cultural studies and multiculturalism that had arisen in the United States. Whenever there was a chance for Japanese folklore science to respond to these movements, Miyata would speak out.

Therefore, as Miyata passed the age of sixty, with his publications about human life and aging increasing, and with his foresight and relentless collecting of information, he quite literally became more and more the old man "reading the time" (*hijiri no okina* 「日知り」の翁). He was the man to discern new developments of the times, and would have undoubtedly showed the way forward for numerous folklorists, but modern medicine, which is supposed to be the most advanced, ended up cutting Miyata's life short. It remains up to the surviving folklorists, regardless of age or gender, to unrereservedly dedicate their energies to cultivating the seeds for revival (*umare kiyomari* 生れ清まり) of a discipline Miyata has sown.

THINKING IMAGINATIVELY ABOUT THE DEAD

“A society that has lost its power to think imaginatively about its dead is bound for decline,” the anthropologist Namihira Emiko once said. In the present essay I could only refer to a small number of Miyata Noboru’s many achievements. Miyata’s life was short, but the work he accomplished by being on the move daily and using his energy for the benefit of folklore studies will continue to be an unending source of potential. Now it is important to discuss the many theories Miyata offered, not only for the sake of Miyata but also for the study of folklore, which needs to further develop and advance.

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