

## BOOK REVIEWS

Three numbers published by Kokugakuin Daigaku Minzoku Bunka Kenkyukai (The Folklore and literature study group of Kokugakuin University). Tokyo:

*Denshō bungei*, No. 2. *Sōma chihō mukashibanashi shū*  
相馬地方昔話集 (Folk tales of the Sōma district, Fukushima), 1964,  
pp. 107.

*Denshō bungei*, No. 3. *Iwafune chihō mukashibanashi shū*  
岩船地方昔話集 (Folk tales of the Ifawune district, Niigata), 1965,  
pp. 128.

*Denshō bungei*, No. 4. *Oitama chihō mukashibanashi shū*  
置賜地方昔話集 (Folk tales of the Oitama district, Yamagata),  
1966, pp. 146.

This series is of interest for several reasons. At Kokugakuin University there has been a group studying *setsuwa* (old tales, myths and legends found in books) for several years, but four years ago this new group formed to study oral literature. It began with the intention of bridging the gap between folklore and literature. Professor Jingorō Usuda is responsible for the group and has written an introduction to each of the issues published by it, but the actual direction of the group is mainly the responsibility of a young lecturer, Junichi Nomura.

The first publication is sold out and not available to the reviewer, but it is mentioned in the introduction of the second number. The students started their research by a folkloristic approach to *Taketori monogatari* 竹取物語 (The old bamboo-cutter) and then made a careful study of *Momotarō no tanjō* 桃太郎の誕生 (The birth of Momotarō) by Kunio Yanagita. Then they decided they wanted to get the feel of what they were reading and set out as a group to visit the southern tip of Chita peninsula in Aichi where young Yanagita many years before had caught the vision of the possibilities of folklore research resulting in the present movement in Japan, a place also well described by the folklorist, Miss Kiyoko Segawa. Taped interviews with local people and pictures taken while they gave the students material for *Denshō bungei*, No. 1.

By the following year the unreported regions as to folk tales challenged them. Since one of their group came from the Sōma district along the northern coastline of Fukushima, they tackled that. Twenty-five students and three of the faculty equipped with tape recorders spent three days there from August 18 to 21, fanning out into ten cities,

towns and villages to meet local narrators and record tales. The result is in *Denshō bungei*, No. 2, a selection of 100 folk tales and thirteen legends from a total of 42 narrators. The publication furnishes a sketched map showing points visited. After the title of each tale the narrator's name is given. In the back of the book the date of birth and the present address of each are recorded. Only tales that are representative are selected for publication.

The following number reports the results of two short trips, one in August of 1964 and the other in January of 1965 by 38, two of which were faculty members and two students who were by then graduate students. These latter two and thirteen of the rest of the students made the field trip for the second year. Results were handled in the same way for a total of 283 folk tales and 14 folk songs from 62 narrators.

By No. 4 of *Denshō bungei* the combined total of faculty and students numbered 59, among which were eight graduate students. Veterans of two or three years numbered 22. This shows that the activity is still growing in popularity. This time they went again on two trips in August of the previous year and in January, netting 100 tales from 146 narrators.

Needless to say, such a mass attack upon the activity of collecting is based upon careful preparation and definite guides. Each year has brought a different emphasis or experience. Mr. Nomura feels that the time has passed for studying the folk tale just for its content—the themes or plot. The folk tale reflects a culture and a way of life which are as significant as the tale itself. He insists that students make a friendly contact with the narrator—not one of researcher and subject—and bring some pleasure into the lives of those they visit, to share with them their outlook as well as hearing the tales.

Of the three areas visited, the Iwafune district (*Denshō bungei*, No. 3) proved to be the most rewarding. Folk tales are still considered as something for adults there. They are told only at night and they are told at religious vigils *gomori* ごもり, certain deities such as *Hachiman* 八幡 and *Jizō* 地藏 and some other regularly celebrated vigils. Old women gather together at such times to recite tales for each other. Fewer tales were heard at Sōma than at Iwafune, but those few had many interesting variations. At Oitama the results were surprisingly meager. To the north in Yamagata many tales had been collected previously. The group concluded that the scarcity and weak quality of narrative was due to the fact that the Oitama district had outside contacts much sooner than districts to the north.

Tales in these numbers are named according to titles found in *Mukashibanashi saishū techō* 昔話採集手帳 (1936) and *Nippon mukashibanashi meii* 日本昔話名彙 (1948) by Kunio Yanagita. The former was issued as a guide to collectors and contains 100 sample tales set down briefly. The latter is a classification of Japanese folk tales made from Mr. Yanagita's notes and compiled under his direction.

Mr. Nomura has listed opening formulas, closing formulas, and responses made by the listeners which were observed in each area, explaining them and other problems met in collecting in the introduc-

tion to each number. The tales are set down in dialect without a glossary to help the uninitiated. Perhaps that will be included in future publications.

This technique of group collecting is new in Japan. The results offer no new types of tales, but it is heartwarming to see such interest on the part of many young students on one hand and the friendly response of local narrators to their efforts on the other hand. Veteran collectors make repeated visits to fill in missing parts to tales which appear in another telling. These tales collected by the students are brief, but there is a true ring to them. The young approach is welcome and we hope it will continue.

Fanny Hagin Mayer

RUTH QUINLAN SUN: *Land of Seagull and Fox. Folktales of Vietnam.* Illustrations by Ho Thanh Duc. John Weatherhill, Inc., Publishers, Tokyo, 1966, 136 pages.

The book contains 31 tales. Its author has spent one year in Vietnam as a Fulbright lecturer on the Faculty of Letters at the University of Saigon during the academic year 1964-65. In the Introduction the author reveals that in writing the book she received much help from her students at the University of Saigon to whom the folktales of their country are a familiar heritage. She is also indebted to native folklore scholars, especially to Pham Duy Khiem whose versions of many of the tales were published at Hanoi in 1943 and at Paris in 1951 under the title *Légendes des terres sereines*, and to Bach Lan who published *Vietnamese Legends* at Saigon in 1957. The Introduction gives also some general background information on the cultural and political history of Vietnam.

Justice can be done to a book only by taking it as what its author wanted it to be. This book is intended for the general reader to whom the author wishes to open a door to the spiritual life of the Vietnamese by introducing him into the world of its folktales. Thus the book is striving for an understanding of the people and at the same time its reading is an exquisite literary enjoyment. This enjoyment is intensified by the many pen drawings by a noted native artist.

M.E.

Monumenta Nipponica Monographs No. 25: *Folk Cultures of Japan and East Asia.* Sophia University Press, Tokyo 1966 (review of papers contained continued from Vol. XXV, 1966, pp. 249 ff.)

MICHAEL R. SASO: *Taiwanese Feasts and Customs* (pp. 74-100).

This paper is a noteworthy contribution to our knowledge of religion,