

# Editorial

By

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When a man turns forty-two, he confronts a major turning point in his life, if not *the* decisive turning point, according to Japanese traditional belief. It is the time in a man's life, when he has definitely to part with his youth and to take up heavier social responsibilities. In a sense very reminiscent of van Gennep's term of a *passage*, popular belief takes this period to be a time when a man is particularly exposed to evil or inauspicious influences. To ward off these influences or to prevent them from exerting their noxious workings on his wellbeing he might make a special effort to engage himself for the good of his community, and he also might visit certain temples or shrines where he will buy a special *o-fuda*, an amulet, or have special prayers recited on his behalf. And last but not least, his friends might visit him with special presents for the occasion, and they would eat and drink together and have a good time. In many places this feast is held about the time of the Little New Year and is often called *toshi-kazane* or *toshi-naoshi*, which means to celebrate New Year once again as if to add another year quickly and thereby overcome the inauspicious number of forty-two. This precarious year is called *yaku-doshi*, the unlucky year. But not satisfied with the precautions taken in the year one becomes forty-two, some people stage a similar celebration, albeit somewhat reduced in size, in the previous year, and another again in the year after the critical one. I think this preliminary celebration of *mae-yaku*, if I might say so, applies to *Asian Folklore Studies*, because it has just entered its forty-first year.

A journal has no gender and is neutral in this respect. This being so, why should I come up with this kind of talk about *yaku-doshi* in a time that has grown more and more sensitive to the existing inequalities between the two halves of humankind? There is no special reason

this issue of *Asian Folklore Studies* should be particularly linked to any kind of male principle, but I feel very strongly that the publication of volume forty-one means a turning point in the history of our journal. Any turning point in human life, such as *yaku-doshi*, affects the person concerned only qualitatively or in certain accessories, and not at the very essence. In this respect one remains the same human being after the *yaku-doshi* as he was before. And yet, in some other respects, things have changed. Such is the case with *Asian Folklore Studies* at this moment. To mark the change in some externally recognisable manner I have broken an unwritten rule in the policy of editing the journal not to write an editorial for any particular volume. Going through old volumes I find only one editorial by the former editor, Dr. Eder, and that in the very first volume of 1942. In that editorial he gave the child a name and explained what sort of expectations he had for the child's future. It was his child in every sense of the word and for all of the almost forty years he cared for it he did so just as a father, sharing in all its ups and downs, in its moments of joy as well as in its times of depression. Looking back over this time we are truly amazed to notice how the journal has survived all the vicissitudes of forty years. This again brings back to my mind the metaphor of an adolescent human being. To grow up means to learn by an extended chain of failures and successes. In a very similar manner the journal had to go through weak and strong periods in terms of contributors and contents, and it not infrequently saw periods even more pressing in terms of financial support.

In the long run, I think, all this contributed to making the journal into the grown-up it has become today. It was started as a publication "to stimulate research work in the field of East Asian ethnology" and was intended "primarily as an instrument and organ for field-workers" (FS 1, 1942: iii). Although no mention of Asia was made in its title when the journal was started, the founder specifies the special area to be covered as "East Asia." Only twenty years later the term "Asian" appeared on the title page, marking the beginning of a fruitful period of close co-operation with the Folklore Institute at Indiana University, Bloomington. A check of the comprehensive index for the journal's forty volumes reveals that the first ten years are heavily dominated by contributions dealing with China or Mongolia. This is a period roughly identical with the time the journal was published by the Museum of Oriental Ethnology, the Catholic University of Peking.

Political events put an abrupt end to this period and sent the editor and his journal on a long journey during which they lighted at a number of places for longer or shorter periods of time until both

of them finally found a home at Nanzan University's Anthropological Institute in Nagoya, Japan. When he had reached this home, the parent was tired from all the wandering around and after only a few years of quiet security he passed away. It is certainly not exactly to the advantage of a periodical to have to move every few years. But we should be grateful for this history of wandering because it brought the journal and its editor in close contact with a large number of scholars and fieldworkers active in a wide range of areas. And this helped the journal to eventually cover the whole vastness of Asia, sometime even branching out shortly into the Pacific area.

From the beginning Dr. Eder did not have in mind to produce a local journal for local specialists. He conceived the journal rather as a means of scholarly exchange between worlds, or as he put it himself: "A secondary purpose of "Folklore Studies" is to communicate the latest findings to specialists in foreign lands as also to all other persons interested in ethnological studies, whether they be residents of East Asia or otherwise" (FS 1, 1942: iii). It should be a meeting place, where insiders and outsiders to a given culture in Asia can share and discuss their findings. Again, a look at the comprehensive index shows us the great extent to which Dr. Eder has brought together scholars from Asian as well as non-Asian countries to present facts and make them available for discussion in a wider context.

There is still another factor that determined the child's future, and that is the way Dr. Eder saw the relationships between Ethnology and Folklore Science. I do not need to enter into his lengthy discussion of this relation, a discussion that reflects very much the scholarly discussions going on about that topic at that time in Europe, where Eder had finished his studies only a few years earlier. In spite of changes in the smaller details, basically he kept steadfast to his first general statement: "We feel . . . that for practical purposes no essential distinction should be made between Folklore Science and Ethnology when investigating the peoples of East Asia, but the investigator will find it advisable to emphasize the outlook and technique of one or the other according to the subject he is trying to analyze" (FS 1, 1942: vi). This meant then that he did not want to limit the study of culture and its traditions only to certain traditions (e.g. oral traditions) or only to a certain particularly "traditional" stratum of a given society. He was convinced that the complex societies of East Asia could not be approached in the same way used for what he somewhat awkwardly called "uncultured peoples or such as have no literature of their own" (FS 1, 1942: v). In any case, whatever the specific approach of a given contribution might be, he did not want to limit the

journal to just one outlook, he wanted it to show as many aspects of Asian cultures as possible in order to make the relative importance and position of any single aspect comprehensible within its larger supporting framework.

I think these are the features that characterize *Asian Folklore Studies*. It would make little sense to stick to a certain outlook just because somebody has once decided that it should be like that. But I think that this general framework does not force us to a narrow and inflexible stand, but rather enables and challenges us to be ever open to new approaches, new insights and new fields. If there is anything in the academic world that should be buzzing with life and ever fresh energy, it is a journal. This is the point where the weakness of the simile of an adolescent is apparent. As a journal *Asian Folklore Studies* wants to remain ever young and I shall do my best to keep it young.

Yet there *is* a turning point and I would be too optimistic to say that this involves no strain. This point is marked first by the death of Dr. Eder. He who had guided the journal through so many years had no real chance to lead a successor into his own footsteps. His successor had to find out gradually where these footsteps were and in many a case he had to learn it the hard way. Too often he stepped on other people's toes, but their understanding, friendship and solidarity has helped to overcome the first difficulties. I am very grateful for this and wish to express my deepest appreciation to all of our contributors and subscribers. This support by so many gives me the conviction that the difficult times of those moments meant in fact the turn to full adulthood of our journal.

As I have pointed out above such a turn is nothing that will affect the essence of the journal. Therefore, *Asian Folklore Studies* will keep its openness to all Asian cultures. As an expression of this we have chosen our new mark on the cover page: six masks from various parts of Asia. In the upper row from left to right: Java, Korea, Japan; in the lower row from left to right: India, Japan, Nepal. The fact that we choose a new mark is to underline at the same time, that there are a few new things. One of them, as I already mentioned, is the new editor. After a year and a half I still feel very much a newcomer to the job, but I hope to become more and more acquainted with as many as possible of our old friends, and I also hope to make many new friends for *Asian Folklore Studies*. Another not so visible but nonetheless very important innovation is the fact that Nanzan University has taken full responsibility for the publication of the journal. This enables us to work without worrying from day to day about financial problems. I have the special hope that it is exactly by close collabora-

tion with the Nanzan Anthropological Institute that we can come in better and still more satisfying and fruitful contact with Asian cultures and the scholars dealing with them, and that from this vantage point our journal will become a better and better means of fostering deeper knowledge and better understanding. A final innovation concerns the contents of the journal. Besides the usual articles, news and book reviews, we carry this time a review article and something that hardly can be called an article, i.e. the two wordlists of the Kankanay. Interest in such a contribution is no doubt limited to very few specialists, yet I think that once in a while the journal should be able to open its pages to material that cannot be presented otherwise than in a crude or raw form, but which is still worthy of publication. By doing so I wish to encourage other authors who might have some "bulky" yet original material to submit it to us.

This volume is a new start on an old road. I hope that walking together on this road with old and new friends will lead us all to new sights and insights. There is, however, one friend of our journal who has shared a long part of the road and who has now parted from us. Dr. Richard M. Dorson was instrumental in arranging the link-up between *Asian Folklore Studies* and the Folklore Institute at Indiana University that saved the journal in one of its most difficult times. The two men, Dr. Eder and Dr. Dorson, did not agree on too many points of scholarly concern to them, yet they were friends for many years. I am saddened to have lost this friend and wish to dedicate this issue

to the memory of  
DR. RICHARD M. DORSON  
1916-1981