



Tōhokugaku: Wasu-rerareta Tōhoku

[Tōhoku Studies: The Forgotten Tōhoku]

By Akasaka Norio

Kōdansha (Kōdansha Gakujutsu Bunko), 2009. 301 pp. ¥1,050.
ISBN 978-4-06-291932-6.

東北学／忘れられた東北

赤坂 憲雄

講談社（講談社学術文庫）／2009年／301ページ／本体1050円／ISBN 978-4-06-291932-6

When speaking of Japanese folklore studies, the first person that comes to mind is probably Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962). Yanagita's research was pioneering in how it salvaged parts of Japanese culture that had been overlooked in the field of historiography and how it shed light on the lifestyles of the *jōmin* (“abiding folk”)—the folklorist's term for the common people of ancient Japan, similar to the German notion of *Volk*—which had been neglected until then. His research also greatly contributed to the establishment of fieldwork-based folklore studies.

Like all scholarly research, however, Yanagita's approach to folklore studies is not without its flaws. In order to create an image of Japan as a homogenous ethnic group, he placed rice cultivation and ancestor worship—as well as the common people who were the agents (*shutai*, “subjects”) of those activities—at the heart of Japan's cultural identity. Using Yanagita's work as a base, the author of this study sharply discerns the correlation between the birth of folklore studies and the contemporary demands of creating the Japanese nation-state.

What fell through the holes of Yanagita's sieve? In order to find out, the author set up an observation station in Tōhoku and walked around visiting villages deep in the mountains, keeping a straightforward account of everything he heard. What emerged from that was a picture of Tōhoku before rice cultivation and a faith preceding the reception of Buddhism. The author shows that Tōhoku is much more culturally diverse than previously thought and that Yanagita's vision of a Tōhoku where the common people all grow rice is nothing more than an illusion.

This book, which dismantles the myths surrounding Tōhoku and sheds light on lifestyles in remote areas and mountainous regions that have not been talked about previously, is essential for a true understanding of Japan. When it is translated, it would be helpful to include a clear introduction and commentary about the context in which this book was written. (CK)

Akasaka Norio

Born in Tokyo in 1953. Folklore scholar, professor at Gakushūin University, and the director of the Fukushima Museum. After establishing the Tōhoku Culture Research Center, he founded the journal *Tōhokugaku* [Tōhoku Studies] in 1999. Received the Minister of Education's Art Encouragement Prize in 2008 for *Okamoto Tarō no mita Nihon* [Okamoto Tarō's Japan]. Has written extensively on Tōhoku.



赤坂 憲雄（アカサカ ノリオ）

1953年東京都生まれ。民俗学者。学習院大学教授、福島県立博物館館長。東北文化研究センター設立後、1999年『東北学』を創刊。『岡本太郎の見た日本』で2008年芸術選奨文部科学大臣賞受賞。他に東北に関する著書多数。

日本の民俗学といって、まず思い出されるのは柳田国男であろう。歴史研究の分野で見落とされた部分をすくい上げ、それまでないがしろにされてきた「常民」の生活文化を掘り起こした点では柳田国男の研究は先駆的であり、また、フィールドワークにもとづく民俗学の確立に大きな功績を残した。しかし、あらゆる学問研究と同じように、柳田国男の民俗学も決して完全無欠ではない。

単一民族としての日本像を作り上げるために、柳田国男は稲作と祖霊信仰およびその主体としての常民を文化アイデンティティの中心に据えた。著者は柳田国男の仕事を土台にしながらも、民俗学の誕生と国民国家の創出という時代的要請との相関性を鋭く見抜いた。

柳田国男の^{ふるい}篩から何がふるい落とされたのか。それを検証するために、著者は東北の地に観測点を設け、山奥の村を訪ね歩き、地道な聞き書きを続けてきた。そこで見えてきたのは、稲作以前の東北の姿であり、仏教を受容する前の信仰であった。東北にはこれまで知られていない文化の多様性があり、柳田国男がいうところの、稲を作る常民たちの東北はただの幻像に過ぎない。

東北にまつわる神話を解体し、これまで語られていない僻地や山奥の生活文化に光を当てる本書は、真の日本理解にとって欠かせない一冊である。翻訳に際して、本書はどのような文脈において書かれたかについて、わかりやすい案内や解説が望ましい。(CK)

Also published in: n/a

Publisher:
Kōdansha Ltd.
(attn. Foreign Rights Dept.)
2-12-21 Otowa, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo
112-8001
foreignrights@kodansha.co.jp

翻訳出版はありません。

翻訳出版に関する連絡先:
株式会社講談社
国際ライツ事業部
〒112-8001 東京都文京区音羽2-12-21