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For Science, Co-Prosperity, and Love : The Re-imagination of Taiwanese Folklore and Japan's Greater East Asian War

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For Science, Co-Prosperity, and Love: The Re-imagination of Taiwanese Folklore and Japan's Greater East Asian War

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Introduction

This paper examines how a mixed group of amateur folklorists in Japanese-ruled Taiwan (1895-1945) justified their interest in and practice of folkloric research during the war from 1941 to 1945 in the magazine *Minzoku Taiwan* (民俗臺灣, Taiwanese Folklore.¹⁾ It will demonstrate that they advanced two arguments to defend their cause. The first argument consisted of appeals to the principle that the pursuit of knowledge in general and folkloric knowledge in particular is good in and of itself. More specifically, they argued that studying Taiwanese folklore would contribute to such related fields as research on mainland China and Southeast Asia, two regions of vital strategic interest to Japan. The second argument stressed the practical value of folkloric information with regard to the delicate political and racial situation inside and outside Taiwan. A good knowledge of the island's folklore, they contended, would not just promote the assimilation of the Taiwanese²⁾ but also facilitate "cooperation" between Japanese and the peoples of the incipient Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. In other words, folkloric knowledge gained in Taiwan would serve the expansionist goals of Japan. However, in spite of their conviction in and enthusiasm for folkloric research, the same individuals were reticent about their personal – existential – relationship with that which they studied. Most of them steered clear of the issue, and the few who spoke on record typically admitted to admiring and cherishing Taiwan's culture only with serious qualifications. The aim of this paper is to analyze the claims made on behalf of the study of Taiwanese folklore and the ambiguities of its practitioners' approach to the subject in the context of colonial rule and the war Japan waged in the name of Greater East Asia.³⁾

I. Background

In July 1941, with a war raging on the Chinese mainland and the tension between Japan and the Western powers in the Asian-Pacific region escalating, a group of Japanese and Taiwanese launched the monthly *Minzoku Taiwan* aimed at the educated public. By the time it ceased publication in January 1945, a total of 43 issues had come out. Each issue had an average of 48 pages covering a wide range of topics pertaining to Taiwan and the adjacent areas in south China and Southeast Asia. In a society where the colonial government dominated not just the political but the social and cultural spheres, *Minzoku Taiwan* stood



The cover of the first issue of *Minzoku Taiwan* (July 1941)

out as a private and voluntary undertaking. Published by a local commercial press and sustained entirely by sales, its editors and contributors were all volunteers. Furthermore, unlike most specialized journals of the time, its pages were open to all since it was not linked to any professional or formal organization that discriminated against amateurs or non-members. A look at the background of the individuals who founded and sustained the magazine provides useful insights into its character. The signatories to the prospectus (*Minzoku Taiwan hakkan ni saishite*, 民俗臺灣發刊に際して) which came out before the first issue included three Japanese and two Taiwanese: OKADA Yuzuru (岡田謙), SUDŌ Toshikazu (須藤利一), KANASEKI Takeo (金關丈夫), CHIN Shō Kō (陳紹馨), and Kō Toku Ji (黃得時) (reprinted as OKADA et al. 1941). OKADA and KANASEKI taught at Taihoku Imperial University, the former a lecturer in the Faculty of Letters and Politics and the latter a professor in the Faculty of Medicine. SUDŌ was a professor at Taihoku High School. Of the two Taiwanese, CHIN was affiliated with the Institute of Ethnology at Taihoku Imperial University while Kō worked for the newspaper *Kōnan Shinbun* (興南新聞). Due to his status as a senior academic, KANASEKI assumed the title of editor, although it was IKEDA Toshio (池田敏雄), then with the Information Office (Jōhōbu, 情報部) of the Government-General, who did most of the editorial work from behind the scenes.⁴⁾ The cooperation of both Japanese and Taiwanese, the predominance of academics, and the participation of “people of culture”

are reflective of the magazine's ethnically inclusive, disciplinarily eclectic, amateurish character. The composition of its contributors was similar. Among the Japanese and Taiwanese who wrote for the magazine were lawyers, medical doctors, artists, journalists, and officials (IKEDA, M. 1982: 112-113). In principle, anyone with a sufficient mastery of Japanese and an interest in folklore could contribute to it.

That the magazine lasted three and half years was no mean achievement considering the combined effects of colonial rule and war throughout its publication-life. Colonial rule was, to say the least, unsympathetic to the local culture: ever since their takeover of the island, the Japanese had largely looked upon local customs with condescension and disdain. The island's traditional beliefs and customs were generally regarded as outmoded with some being denounced as irrational and barbaric (TSU 1999a and 1999b). Socially, their influence was believed to be so tenacious and pervasive that they hindered the islanders' appreciation of Japanese culture and, as a result, held them back from progress. Politically, they had the effect of perpetuating a cleavage between the colonizers and the colonized, not just obstructing day-to-day administration but also inciting occasional rebellions. Such negative sentiments notwithstanding, the authorities attempted no sweeping suppression of local customs, at least not until the Manchurian Incident of late 1931. The escalation of the Sino-Japanese conflict after 1932, compounded by the "Fascist turn" in Japanese politics (Gordan 1991: 302-342), inspired a series of vehement campaigns against Taiwanese culture. In 1932, there was the *buraku shinkō* (部落振興, Community Revival Drive; in 1934, the *shakai kyōka* (社会教化, Social Education Programs); in 1936, following Governor-General KOBAYASHI Seizō's (小林躋造) announcement on the policy of *kōminka* (皇民化, Japanization), the *minfū sakkō* (民風作興, Customs Enhancement Movement); and in 1937, the *jibyō seiri* (寺廟整理, Temple Liquidation Campaign). Eventually, the *Kōmin Hōkōkai* (皇民奉公會, Imperial Subjects' Association for Patriotic Service) was created in 1940 as an umbrella organization in charge of all programs galvanizing the whole population for war. While earlier campaigns were superseded by later ones, their aim remained consistent, namely, a speedy and complete political, social, cultural, and spiritual remolding of the islanders into *kōmin* (皇民, loyal subjects) of the emperor.

By most indicators, therefore, mid-1941 was perhaps the least propitious time for starting a folkloric magazine in Taiwan. Just across the Strait of Taiwan, Japan had been locked in a protracted war with China for four years and only a year had passed since the Japanese army entered French Vietnam, which expanded the conflict to Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the Japanese government's position on the war had hardened: the earlier rhetoric of confinement and a speedy end to the fighting in China gave way to talks about decisive military action in *Nanpō* (南方) or "the South"³ so as to produce a fundamental solution to the "China problem." Because of its status as a colony and its strategic position as Japan's stepping-stone to Southeast Asia, Taiwan was under tremendous pressure to render moral and material support for the ambitious schemes of its suzerain. Although serious fighting did not take place on the island, the reality of a proliferating war was brought home to its people by relentless propaganda, political campaigns, and emergency measures (KONDŌ 1996: 46-60, 141-260, 351-438). To ensure greater solidarity with the home country, various programs were implemented to rid the Taiwanese of old, *shinateki* (支那的, Chinese) habits and to

inculcate in them Japanese values and behavior. Ever more stringent measures were also imposed to make the people economize and increase productivity. When the logic of assimilation and total war was pushed to the limit, the colonial government demanded that the Taiwanese adopt Japanese names and volunteer for duties on the front. Under these extraordinary circumstances, the publication of *Minzoku Taiwan* could not but invite accusations that it went against the grain of the unfolding “holy war.”

II. For Science

The magazine's editors and contributors defended their apparently irrelevant pursuit by arguing that the search for new knowledge was good in and of itself and that the advancement of science was a human imperative. A corollary of this tenet was that a people's (or a society's) ability to maximize this good served as a measure of its level of progress. The greater the intellectual curiosity a people displayed, the more “advanced” it was seen to be; and the more advanced a people was, the stronger its desire to seek even more knowledge. This position was sometimes stated in broad, universal terms, at other times with reference to specific areas of research.

Take the aforementioned prospectus: it was unequivocal about human beings' duty to pursue knowledge. Opening with a pledge of support for the Japanization policy, it asserted that the swift eradication of “ugly and corrupt customs from the past” (*kyūrai no rōshū heifū*, 舊來の陋習弊風) would enable the Taiwanese to enjoy the benefits of modernity. This is followed by the observation that it was a “natural development” (*shizen no nariyuki* 自然の成ゆき) for the tide of assimilation to sweep away harmless customs, which were doomed to disappear anyway as time passed. After dissociating the magazine from any suspicion of antiquarianism, it advanced the argument that citizens of civilized nations who had the ability to do research were “duty-bound” (*gimu*, 義務) to study all phenomena. Hence, it was the obligation of the Japanese (*waga kokumin*, 我が國民, literally meaning “our people”⁷⁶) to record the customs of Taiwan, even though they might be “ugly and corrupt.” The prospectus concluded in a convoluted way. On the one hand, it reiterated that the magazine had no qualms about the decline of the local culture. On the other hand, it supported folkloric research on the grounds that the colonial authorities encouraged the study and protection of even “natural things that were without practical value” (*jitsuyōteki kachi no tomowanai shizenbutsu*, 實用的價値の伴はない自然物).

That folkloric study was a responsibility of civilized peoples was reemphasized in the epilogue of the eighth issue (Anonymous [T. I.] 1942), whose anonymous author (IKEDA Toshio?) invoked the authority of the then defunct Taiwan Kyūkan Kenkyūkai (臺灣舊慣研究会, Association for the Study of Old Taiwanese Customs). Created in 1900 by the Government-General,⁷⁷ it was given the task of promoting the study of the island's traditional culture and social institutions through the publication of *Taiwan kanshū kiji* (臺灣慣習記事, *Journal of Taiwanese customs*), of which 80 issues came out between 1901 and 1907. Paying tribute to the Association's “lasting achievement” (*fumetsu no kōseki*, 不滅の功績), the epilogue pointed out that the Association justified its activity in terms of an obligation on the part of the colonizing Japanese. The journal's prospectus (*Hakkan no ji*, 發刊の辭)

proclaimed that the association's members – almost all of whom were Japanese working for the colonial government⁸⁾ – dedicated themselves to investigating local customs in their spare time as the fulfillment of a “natural duty” (*tenshoku*, 天職) (Anonymous 1901a). Maintaining that *Minzoku Taiwan* subscribed to the same view, the epilogue noted that folklorists should record both good and bad customs in a scientific and impartial manner while guarding against any nostalgic sentiment.

While neither the prospectus nor the epilogue posited an *explicit* link between folkloric research and the level of cultural development, MIYAMOTO Nobuto (宮本延人), a researcher in the Institute of Ethnology at the University, argued for such a connection between the two (1941 4:5). Observing that developed societies generally took a strong interest in *mikai bunka* (未開文化, primitive cultures), he contended that the impulse to study *dozoku* (土俗, indigenous customs) was a function of a society's cultural achievements. The Japanese, it was implied, proved their superiority by their interest in Taiwanese folklore. But MIYAMOTO did not stop there. He further claimed that a people's ability to examine its own culture amounted to proof that it had transcended its inferior past. This is an important statement as it left open the possibility for the Taiwanese to break free from their past through examining their own folklore. In addition to refuting the view that folkloric interests were antithetical to *seikatsu kaizen* (生活改善, lifestyle reform) – a euphemism for Japanization – MIYAMOTO in effect argued that the study of folklore was not just a sign but also a means of progress for both Japanese and Taiwanese.

In November 1942, on the occasion of the creation of the Dai-Tōashō (大東亞省, Ministry of Greater East Asia), the magazine reinterpreted its idea of an obligation to study Taiwanese folklore. It declared that, as the leader of the new geopolitical entity known as the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, the Japanese now had the duty to study not just Taiwan but also China, Southeast Asia, India, and even Australia (Anonymous [T. K.] 1942) (KANASEKI Takeo?). It further declared that the goal of studying Taiwanese culture was none other than the creation of a new discipline called *Dai-tōa minzokugaku* (大東亞民族學, Greater East Asian Ethnology). Thus, the magazine linked the duty to produce folkloric knowledge to Japan's self-proclaimed prerogative to lead Asia and redrew the scope of folkloric inquiry to coincide with Japan's expanding wartime empire.

The valorization of folkloric research as a duty was reinforced by two other claims. The first claim was that folkloric study in Taiwan was a salvage exercise. In a colloquium with the leading folklorist YANAGITA Kunio (柳田國男) in Tokyo, KANASEKI highlighted this urgency with the observation that traditional ancestor worship in Taiwan had already changed due to the introduction of Shinto into local families (Anonymous 1943c: 9). The speed of cultural change in the colony, in his opinion, was faster than in “metropolitan” Japan due to the policy of assimilation. HANAYAMA Susumu (花山進) expressed a similar concern in the *Tenshin* (點心, Dim sum) column of the January 1945 issue (30). Pointing again to the assimilation policy as the main agent of change, he observed that the language immersion programs for young Taiwanese were so successful that folklorists had better hurry to document old customs before they vanished altogether.

The second claim was that folklorists should strive to record “facts.” The magazine made it clear that folkloric study in Taiwan was still in the elementary stage of data collection

(Anonymous [T. I.] 1941; Anonymous 1941; Jōdaijin (上大人) 1941). Without ruling out the possibility of the development of an analytical or theoretical perspective in the future, it insisted that the most basic and pressing task of the moment was to compile as many “factual” (*aruga mamani*, 在るが儘に) reports as possible on linguistic, social, and cultural conventions from specific places (Henshūbu 1943: 6).

The emphasis on objective description led to a search for a common, standard methodology. Believing that contributors should be provided with a model for data collection and presentation, CHIN Shō Kō suggested that YANAGITA Kunio and SEKI Keigo's (關敬吾) *Minzokugaku nyūmon* (民俗學入門) might be a useful guide (Henshūbu 1943: 7). TAI En Ki (戴炎輝), another Taiwanese, proposed that standard questions be designed for all folklorists to adopt (1943). KANASEKI asked none other than YANAGITA for guidance, observing that there was no professional folklorist in Taiwan who could help (Anonymous 1943c: 3). In 1944, the magazine announced that it was about to start compiling a standard questionnaire (Henshūbu 1944a, also Anonymous 1944d). Nevertheless, this search for an objective method did not produce anything more than an informal understanding that folklorists should coordinate their research according to some common themes (Anonymous 1943c: 4). Toward this end the magazine tried to call for contributions on particular topics (e.g., Anonymous 1944a) and reported on the themes of the special issues planned by *Minkan denshō* (民間傳承), the journal published by YANAGITA's circle (Anonymous 1944b, 1944c). In May 1944, for instance, it reprinted the announcement by the committee for celebrating YANAGITA Kunio's 70th birthday (YANAGITA Kunio sensei koki kinenkai 1944 35: 25), which identified marriage, ancestor worship, and the treatment of strangers as three areas for joint international research (*kokusai kyōdō kenkyū*, 國際共同研究). Whatever the results of such announcements, it is nonetheless clear that the mere publicizing of common research topics fell far short of the magazine's original aim of standardizing data-collection procedures for all folklorists in Taiwan.

Besides appealing to the universal duty to know, the magazine also promoted the study of Taiwanese folklore for the contributions it could make to the study of China, Japan, and the Asian-Pacific region. This position was articulated most clearly in a roundtable discussion in April 1943, in which NAKAMURA Akira (中村哲), KANASEKI Takeo, CHIN Shō Kō, IKEDA Toshio, MATSUYAMA Kenzō (松山慶三), and TATEISHI Tetsutomi (立石鐵臣) participated (Henshūbu 1943). NAKAMURA equated Taiwan's folklore with that of Fujian and Guangdong provinces across the channel. As an example, he suggested that Taiwan's sacrificial trusts (*saishi kōgyō*, 祭祀公業) were a variation of clan-based ancestor worship in China. KANASEKI stated that, while Taiwanese folklore was a branch of Chinese folkloric study, there were advantages to understanding the mainland through an outlying island because valuable data tend to survive in *inaka* (田舎, less developed areas). As for the relationship between Taiwan and Japan, KANASEKI was less certain: he speculated that folkloric data from Taiwan might throw light on some ancient Japanese practices. In contrast, IKEDA was confident that there were parallels between the marriage practices of Nara era Japan and modern Taiwan and suggested that the two be studied together. KANASEKI was adamant that folklorists who study Okinawa should pay more attention to Taiwan. He faulted them for their Japanocentric approach, even advising YANAGITA to turn

to Taiwan and south China instead of ancient Japan for explanations of the custom of *senkotsu* (洗骨, bone-washing) in the Okinawan islands.

Besides throwing light on Japan proper and Okinawa, CHIN and NAKAMURA thought that folkloric study in Taiwan could develop a new line of inquiry. They pointed to the interaction between the people of Taiwan and Japan as a field of research where insights into how Japanese culture adapted to new environments could be gained (Henshūbu 1944b). They also observed that similar interactions were taking place outside Taiwan as a result of the Japanese empire's expansion. KANO Tadao (鹿野忠雄), a specialist of the island's aborigines, found another use for Taiwanese folkloric information. He believed that knowledge of Taiwanese customs was indispensable for aboriginal research (1941). Claiming that his work was still not making satisfactory progress after seventeen years of aboriginal research, he attributed one of the reasons to his ignorance of Taiwanese culture. Noting that aboriginal culture had come under strong Taiwanese influence, especially in the area of material culture, he deemed it essential that Taiwanese cultural elements be eliminated in the process of retrieving the "original" (*zairai no*, 在來の) culture of the aborigines. In other words, he believed that a better understanding of Taiwanese culture would help scholars distil a "pure" aboriginal culture from their field data.

Finally, reflecting wartime propaganda about Greater East Asia, the magazine also argued that the study of Taiwan had relevance beyond East Asia. CHIN Shō Kō proposed that Taiwan was uniquely suitable for undertaking research on southwest China and north Indochina (CHIN 1943). He apparently based this claim not just on Taiwan's strategic location but also on the island's cultural affinity to these areas. At the same time, KANASEKI tried to relate Taiwan to peninsular as well as insular Southeast Asia. To demonstrate the connection, he pointed out that the custom of chewing betel nuts was common across a wide region that included Taiwan, Malaya, and Celebes (Henshūbu 1943a). He implied that since Taiwan and Southeast Asia share similar cultural traits, knowing the former would produce a better understanding of the latter. Elsewhere, the magazine argued that Taiwanese folkloric study could become a building block for the new ethnology of Greater East Asia, which would include Madagascar, Australia, India, China, and Southeast Asia (Anonymous [T. K.] 1942). This time, however, not even a betel nut of evidence was offered to show any coherence to the discipline envisioned.

III. For Co-Prosperity

Conscious that the advancement of science alone was not enough justification for promoting folkloric study during wartime, the magazine pursued a second line of argument. It contended that the study of folklore in general and Taiwanese customs in particular could assist in the realization of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. The thrust of this argument was that folkloric knowledge was indispensable for dealing successfully with the diverse peoples in the Co-Prosperity Sphere. The magazine used this argument flexibly, adapting it to suit different geographic areas. Broadly speaking, a line was drawn between colonial Taiwan and the newly occupied territories in China and Southeast Asia. With regard to the former it stressed the role folkloric study could play in facilitating assimilation. In the

latter case it advocated the skilful use of folkloric knowledge to avoid friction with the local peoples and so secure their cooperation.

A better understanding of folklore, the magazine maintained, would go a long way toward preventing any misunderstanding between Japanese and Taiwanese in their daily interaction, achieving harmony and thus greater solidarity between *naichijin* (内地人, mainland Japanese, literally meaning “inlanders”) and *hontōjin* (本島人, islanders). It illustrated this point by anecdotes. For example, the following story appeared in the opinion forum *Randan* (亂彈, Random notes) of the August 1941 issue (RAIKŌ 1941 2:27). Once during a festival at the Taiwan Shrine (Taiwan Jinja, 臺灣神社), tea was served to the Japanese participants. An elderly Taiwanese who happened to pass by helped himself to the drink. At that point an indignant Japanese snatched the cup from him and splashed the tea in his face. It was explained that such a misunderstanding arose because the Japanese thought the tea was meant for the participants of the festival only. But the Taiwanese believed it was for the public since it was the local custom to provide free drinks during festivals as a form of religious charity. Another story illustrating the same point has a novice doctor causing great anxiety among patients in the hospital where he worked by walking about in a white robe (KINKEI 1942).⁹ This was because, it was pointed out, his outfit reminded the patients of the local mourning dress. Elimination of inadvertent cultural frictions like these, the magazine claimed, would help achieve the *naitai yūwa* (内台融和, harmonious fusion of inlanders and islanders), in other words, cultural assimilation (*dōka*, 同化).

Assimilation was thought to create the necessary conditions for the successful mobilization of human and material resources in the colony. Hence, the magazine was eager to show that it too could render *hōkō* (奉公, patriotic service), in other words, to contribute to the war. Toward this end it organized a colloquium in September 1944 to explore relevant issues (Anonymous 1944e). The participants took pains to point out that the magazine provided practical information that would lead to greater efficiency in the deployment of resources. For example, they noted that the authorities were pleased with the studies of native architecture, diet, and riverboats that had appeared in the magazine. To better fulfill their responsibility, they asked the Imperial Subjects' Association for instructions about what information to collect. The magazine would then announce the topics and solicit responses from its readers. KANASEKI stressed that the magazine welcomed such guidance, as researchers were not always clear about the administration's priorities. RIN Bō Sei (林茂生), the Taiwanese representative from the Association, responded that since it was difficult for the authorities to fathom the true feelings of the people, the magazine could play a vital role in providing insights into the *shinsō* (真相, real situation) on the ground. In this connection, NAKAI Atsushi (中井敦) proposed that the magazine could assist in the *shisōsen* (思想戦, war on thought) by investigating (and presumably advertising) the progress achieved by the Taiwanese over the past fifty years. Such a study would make them better appreciate how much they had benefited under Japanese rule.

Not content with showing its relevance to the political situation in Taiwan, the magazine emphasized that its activity was consistent with and supportive of the Japanese effort to create a “new” Asia or the Co-Prosperity Sphere. The first claim under this premise was again the avoidance of misunderstanding between the Japanese and the local peoples of

Southeast Asia. The magazine asserted that the key to governing *i-minzoku* (異民族, alien peoples) was to grasp their heart. He reported that a Japanese company in the South had trouble hiring native laborers for long periods because the local custom was such that a husband who was away for more than ten days could not object to other men flirting with his wife (Anonymous 1942). The native workers were therefore unhappy about working for the said company, resulting in low productivity. Without indicating a solution, it claimed that this example proved the practical value of folkloric knowledge.

The most concrete link between Taiwan and Southeast Asia that the magazine could point to was the common ancestry of the Taiwanese and the Southeast Asian Chinese. Thanks to the geographic spread of the overseas Chinese, the magazine could argue that knowledge of Taiwanese folklore was useful in most parts of the Co-Prosperity Sphere. The prospectus pointed out that Japan had a pressing need for information about the Chinese people as Japanese interests penetrated the South ever more deeply and widely. Since the Japanese had to work with the Chinese diasporas in south China and Southeast Asia, getting to know the Taiwanese would provide a basic knowledge of the Chinese in these areas. In the January 1942 issue, the editor expressed his excitement about the outbreak of the Pacific War and the astonishing performance of the Japanese military (Anonymous [T. K. I.] 1942). Predicting that Japan was about to take control of all Southeast Asia, he noted that it would soon become necessary for the Japanese to “work with” (*teikei*, 提携) the overseas Chinese, who occupied a central position in the region’s economy. Reckoning that an understanding of one’s collaborators is a prerequisite for cooperation, he proposed that the Japanese obtain the necessary knowledge via the shortcut of studying the Taiwanese, whose ancestors came from the same places in south China as the Chinese of Southeast Asia. In the next issue, IKEDA Toshio, writing under the penname KŌKEI (黄鷄),¹⁰ proposed that the Japanese go beyond merely studying the Taiwanese to recruiting them to work in Southeast Asia (KŌKEI 1942). Due to their language and customs, he opined, they would be ideal middlemen between the Japanese and the Southeast Asian Chinese.

Together with Southeast Asia, China was an essential component of the Co-Prosperity Sphere. NAKAMURA Akira wrote in the January 1943 issue that China was the ultimate goal of Japan’s war effort, and so the overriding concern for folklorists should be to contribute to the understanding of China (1943). He reminded the readers that since Japan waged the Greater East Asia War to find a “fundamental solution” to the Sino-Japanese War, research on China must go hand in hand with research on Southeast Asia. Indeed, he believed that the former was not just more difficult as a field of inquiry but ultimately also more “meaningful” than the latter, as he saw China as the key issue in the study of *tōyō shakai* (東洋社会, oriental societies). Noting that the East Asia Institute (Tōa Kenkyūjo, 東亞研究所), the Institute of the Pacific (Taiheiyō Kyōkai, 太平洋協會), and the East-Asiatic Economic Investigation Bureau (Tōa Keizai Chōsakyoku, 東亞經濟調查局) had begun to coordinate their research on the South, and that the Research Department of the South Manchurian Railway Company was active in north China, he declared that it was time for the colonial administration in Taiwan to commit itself to the systematic study of south China, which had remained “unknown” until now. The study of Taiwanese folklore, in his opinion, would furnish a useful foundation for this important undertaking as the islanders had originated

from across the channel.

NAKAMURA was not alone in championing China as the subject of folkloric research. Early in 1941, OKADA Yuzuru spoke about an active role for Taiwanese in the Japanese expansionist scheme (1941 3: 1). In his view, they had a special responsibility to facilitate Japan's mission among the people of south China and the Chinese in Southeast Asia. Although he did not specify the reason, presumably he made the connection because these populations shared common cultural and linguistic traits. To substantiate its claim of relevance to the war, the magazine reported in 1943 that Japanese nationals active in north, central, and south China had expressed interest in and support for its dissemination of folkloric information (Anonymous 1943a). It went on to observe that only those people who were "living" (*jissen*, 實踐) and "struggling" (*funtō*, 奮闘) in China could appreciate the true value of a folkloric magazine like itself. It made the same point again in the following issue when commenting on the creation of the Minzoku Kenkyūjo (民族研究所, Ethnological Research Institute) under the Ministry of Education. At a time when politics demanded input from ethnology, it declared, the magazine had a grave responsibility since its subject matter was particularly relevant to south China and the Chinese in Southeast Asia (Anonymous 1943b).

Perhaps the best summary of the role of folkloric study in the context of the war came from ŌSAWA Sadayoshi (大澤貞吉), the head of propaganda at the headquarters of the Imperial Subjects' Association (1943). While agreeing that finding a solution to the war in China was important, he argued that ethnology must not overlook its duty to assist in the construction of the Co-Prosperity Sphere. This is because the *konton jōtai* (混沌状態, chaos) resulting from one billion people co-existing in the Sphere had to be given a "proper shape" (*ittei no keitai*, 一定の形態). The different races had to be "lined up in an orderly fashion" (*seizen taru tairitsu*, 整然たる隊列) according to the ideal of *hakkō ichiu* (八紘一宇, the whole world under one [Japanese] roof). It is clear from this statement that the ultimate aim of folkloric research or ethnology was to enable Japan to rank-order the different peoples within its wartime empire in a way that would confirm its self-assigned leadership.

IV. For Love

Despite their enthusiastic promotion of folkloric study, the editors and contributors to the magazine were remarkably reluctant to admit that they took it up because they felt personally attracted to Taiwanese culture. The prospectus, with its emphasis on scientific advancement and political relevance, provoked a brief but sharp rebuke from Yō Un Hei (楊雲萍), a Taiwanese writer and amateur historian (1941a).¹¹ In an essay entitled "Research and Love," he railed against the "arrogance" (*takabisha na taido*, 高飛車な態度) and "mechanical methods" (*kikaiteki na hōhō*, 機械的な方法) of self-styled researchers of Taiwanese culture. While he welcomed the surge of interest in the island's literature and folklore, and accepted that research must be conducted in an objective manner, he chided those people (presumably Japanese) who denigrated the local literature despite their ignorance of its language or claimed to be "unconcerned about vanishing customs" (*sono inmitsu o oshimu dewa nai*, その隠滅を惜しむではない) before they had a chance to study them properly. Without naming

any person or publication, he asked researchers of Taiwanese culture to show more “warm understanding” (*atatakaki rikai*, 暖き理解), “love” (*ai*, 愛), and “humility” (*kenson*, 謙遜) in their work.

This criticism elicited a rejoinder from KANASEKI, one of the signatories of the prospectus, to which Yō responded with a sur-rejoinder. KANASEKI’s defense was that Yō had misunderstood what the prospectus said when it asserted that the magazine was unconcerned about the discontinuation of local customs (1941b). Suggesting that Yō had overlooked the “context” (*bunmyaku*, 文脈, also *goki*, 語氣), KANASEKI clarified that the magazine was motivated by something more positive than a mere sense of regret for the vanishing past. Admitting that the prospectus had chosen to highlight folkloric study as an obligation to science and as a practical knowledge, he gave the assurance that the founders of the magazine were not just “eager” (*netsui*, 熱意) to understand Taiwanese customs but also loved the Taiwanese people. He added that another aim of the magazine was to nurture capable folklorists of Taiwan, whom, he predicted, would have to come from the local people. Ending on a conciliatory note, he thanked Yō for his criticism and his pledge of support in spite of the misunderstanding. In his sur-rejoinder, however, Yō refused to concede any ground, insisting that he had not misconstrued the context. Moreover, he pointed out that he had made the promise of support *before* seeing the prospectus, not after as KANASEKI implied (Yō 1941b).

Yō’s criticism struck at the heart of an issue that was to plague the magazine throughout its publication life: namely, what should be the proper attitude – and by inference the motivation – of folklorists who study Taiwan in a wartime, colonial situation. What Yō saw in the prospectus was a cold scientism that disdained personal and emotional attachment to the object of knowledge. It was only at Yō’s prodding that KANASEKI affirmed that he and his colleagues loved the Taiwanese and their customs. Yet, one might pursue the matter further by asking what KANASEKI meant by this love. Since Yō did not pose the question, there is no direct answer from KANASEKI. Nevertheless, some clues may be found in his other writing in the magazine. In the prologue he wrote for the first issue, for example, he justified the study of folklore by speaking of it as a *kinenbutsu* (記念物, monument) (1941a). While an ordinary monument was a physical mnemonic device, he explained, a real monument consisted of a collective memory transmitted “from mind to mind” (*kokoro kara kokoro ni*, 心から心に). Extending the metaphor, he characterized any *denshō dantai* (傳承團體, group of people in continual possession of a culture) as a monument. He called upon the readers to “lovingly preserve” (*aigo*, 愛護) any monument, for even if a monument was doomed to perish (like Taiwanese culture) it was still worth studying. Here, KANASEKI displayed the same kind of ambivalence as found in the prospectus. On the one hand, he insisted on a self-evident need to study folklore but on the other, he declared that folklorists need not feel for what they study. Therefore, it is no coincidence that KANASEKI compared folklore to a monument before recommending love and preservation. Even as a metaphor, a monument still carries a strong connotation of an object, a relic – a display to be gazed at, perhaps even admired, but is ultimately devoid of vitality and agency. Although he never said so, KANASEKI certainly created the impression that Taiwanese folklore deserved care and preservation only in an attenuated state, after it was transformed from living practice to an object of dispassionate

observation and recording.

It was only when writing under a penname in the “random notes” section in the same issue that KANASEKI allowed himself to register some reservation about the Japanization campaign that was responsible for the suppression of so many local customs (KINKEI 1941). Expressing his admiration for the “grandiosity” (*ōyō na kifū*, 鷹揚な氣風) of wealthy, prominent Taiwanese families, he thought it a pity if it too could not escape the relentless drive toward assimilation. Repeating the observation he made in the prologue – that great effort had been made to save rare natural objects – he opined that it was “very unreasonable” (*taihen fugōri*, 大變不合理) if nothing was done to prevent the decline of good customs. Yet, without proposing any concrete preservation measure, he doubled-back and suggested that literature might be the best means of recording the declining local culture. He urged writers in Taiwan to try to inculcate a love for the island’s culture in the Japanese people because assimilation could succeed only if the Japanese learned to love the Taiwanese. Compared to the two previous pieces, here KANASEKI was more explicit about the excesses of the Japanization policy. Not only did he show personal sympathy with the local culture, but he also believed his compatriots should share his feeling. He chided those Japanese who had lived in Taiwan for years and yet felt nothing but contempt for its people and folklore. For him, they were “truly unfortunate” (*jitsu ni fukō*, 實に不幸). Nevertheless, his position remained ambivalent. Although lamenting the imminent disappearance of *one* aspect (the generous spirit) of Taiwanese culture, he was content to have it preserved in literature. And the real paradox is this: even though he admonished the Japanese to love Taiwanese culture, he did so in the name of assimilation, which was, by his own admission, destroying the very culture that his fellow Japanese were advised to learn to appreciate.

Although KANASEKI, under the cover of a penname, managed to express cautious admiration for Taiwanese culture, he never so much as hinted that it might be superior to Japanese culture in some regard. By contrast, YANAGI Muneyoshi (柳宗悦), the preeminent connoisseur and promoter of Japanese *mingei* (民藝, folk craft),¹²⁾ was openly enthusiastic about the island’s material culture, rating it higher than its counterpart in Japan in many ways. He was also explicit that anybody who loved handicraft but was cold to the people who produced it could not be said to have true love for it (YANAGI 1943 24: 1).

YANAGI came to Taiwan in mid-March 1943 and spent about a month touring the island. KANASEKI was one of YANAGI’s companions and he recorded the latter’s comments on the road for publication in *Minzoku Taiwan* (YANAGI and KANASEKI 1943). What YANAGI discerned in the things he saw, from textiles and woodblock prints to pottery, bamboo craft and architecture, was a *chikara* (力, power) that gave them a *hone* (骨, inner substance, literally meaning bone) and an *utsukushisa* (美さ, beautiful shape) as well as made them *omoshiroi* (面白ひ, intriguing). Unlike KANASEKI, he did not hesitate to rate what he saw on the island superior to that back home. In his view, folk art in Japan lacked some of the techniques he saw in Taiwan, but most importantly it had lost the “power” that inhered in Taiwanese handicraft. He thus criticized his compatriots for looking down on Taiwanese culture,¹³⁾ advising them instead to respect and learn from the island’s superior craftsmanship. Reckoning that Taiwan benefited from the confluence of different cultures, he expressed high hopes for it to become a cradle for the formative arts of the future East Asia.

Condemning contemporary Japanese lifestyle as “gradually becoming pathologically weak and thin” (*byōteki ni yowaku usuku naritsutsu aru*, 病的に弱く薄く成りつつある), he urged the Japanese to tap into the power of Taiwan’s material culture, which he described as having *haba* (幅, breadth), *tsuyosa* (強さ, strength), and *atsumi* (厚み, substance).

The thrust of YANAGI’s comments had the effect of inverting the colonial hierarchy, placing the colony above the colonizer and making the former the latter’s tutor in cultural matters. This inversion was ultimately unstable, compromised as it was by his equivocation on the question of esthetics. At one point it appears that the Japanese ultimately came out on top of their colonial subjects: YANAGI reserved for them the exclusive right to educate the Taiwanese about esthetics (1943). Until they taught the islanders the art of appreciation, he asserted, the latter would remain unconscious of the beauty of their own handicraft. In this way the Japanese could hold on to the more exalted position as teachers of an abstract form of knowledge and a sophisticated kind of consciousness, although they could not provide any technical instructions to the Taiwanese. Nonetheless, YANAGI seems to have undermined the value of esthetic consciousness when he criticized the Japanese for making too much fuss about folk craft. He praised the Taiwanese for being oblivious to the superior quality of the things they manufactured (1943). For him, such esthetic innocence – the ability to take beautiful things for granted and use them in everyday life – was the ideal state that the Japanese should strive to attain. Following this line of reasoning, it would be pointless, indeed counterproductive, for the Japanese to try to impart esthetic knowledge to the Taiwanese. Since YANAGI did not resolve this contradiction he offered no clear alternative to the established colonial hierarchy, although he had done more than any other contributor to the magazine to problematize it.

The issue of “love” was never taken up again after the short exchange between KANASEKI and YŌ, and no one spoke as enthusiastically as YANAGI did about Taiwanese folk craft in the pages of *Minzoku Taiwan*. Rather, as discussed above, the magazine took every opportunity to respond to “official warnings” and criticism from unspecified sources by affirming time and again its commitment to the furtherance of human knowledge and Japan’s geopolitical interests.

Concluding Remarks: Taiwanese Folklore Re-Imagined

Perhaps the best way to appreciate how the study of Taiwanese folklore was “re-imagined” in anticipation of and during the Greater East Asian War is to compare *Minzoku Taiwan* with *Taiwan kanshū kiji*, which was regarded by the former as its predecessor, and try to see how they differ in terms of the purpose of research, subject matter, and methodology.

As its main promoter GOTŌ Shinpei (後藤新平) saw it, the mission of *Tawian kanshū kiji* was to investigate and elucidate the quasi-legal customs of the Taiwanese so as to enable the colonial authorities to co-opt traditional social institutions for its administrative goals (Anonymous 1901a). It was his position that assimilation was a gradual, centuries-long process, and so, during the transition, it was only prudent for the colonial regime to adapt itself to the local conditions, not just tolerating indigenous ways but actively taking advantage of them to consolidate itself. For him and his protégé OKAMATSU Santarō (岡松参

太郎), a European-trained law professor at Kyōto Imperial University, the ultimate purpose of studying Taiwanese culture was to draw up special laws for enactment in the colony, i.e., *shokuminchi rippō* (植民地立法, colonial legislation). Accordingly, *Taiwan kanshū kiji* was interested not just in any and every custom, but those of a normative and regulatory nature. Once these quasi-legal customs were articulated and rationally ordered, it was reasoned, the basic structure of Taiwanese society could be understood, making it possible for the colonial administration to maintain social stability by propping up the existing structure. This concept of *kyūkan chōsa* (舊慣調査, old customs research) was premised on the belief that the Taiwanese were an *iminzoku* (異民族, alien people); while it was possible for the Japanese to intellectually understand the working of Taiwanese society, the cultural and social gap between Taiwanese and Japanese could not be easily bridged in practice, at least not in the foreseeable future. The aim of *Taiwan kanshū kiji*, therefore, was to understand instead of erase the differences between the colonizers and the colonized.

A similar demarcation between Japanese and Taiwanese was maintained and reproduced in the research methods of *Taiwan kanshū kiji*. At the conceptual level, the main ideas GOTŌ and OKAMATSU used to define their project came from Europe, in particular Britain and Prussia (NAKAO 1999: 248, TSU 1999b: 198-204). The analytical perspective that emphasized kinship and the land system, for example, was derived from European colonial experience and legal scholarship, which was then imposed on Taiwan to yield rational and systematic knowledge of the islanders. It is doubtful whether any Taiwanese at that time could grasp the significance of the intellectual genealogy of GOTŌ and OKAMATSU. Nor could the Taiwanese collaborators offer their own insights into the structure of Taiwanese society using the same terms and concepts employed by the two. At the level of practice, the gap between the knowledge-producing colonizers and the information-yielding colonial subjects was only too glaring: almost all contributors to *Taiwan kanshū kiji* were Japanese. It was not that Taiwanese did not participate in the research that led to publication in the magazine – they were interviewed, consulted, and employed as research assistants – but their involvement went largely unacknowledged. Hence, *Taiwan kanshū kiji* defined itself as an exclusively Japanese act of knowing – the Taiwanese were there to be known, not to know.¹⁴⁾

By contrast, the founders of *Minzoku Taiwan* were not grappling with competing models of colonial rule, searching for the best approach to govern a newly conquered people. For them Japan's rule of Taiwan was not just an indisputable fact but a brilliant success that qualified the suzerain as a civilized nation. Instead, they were prompted to action by the very success of colonial rule, which seemed to be quickly approaching the goal of assimilation – something that GOTŌ thought, just three decades earlier, would take two or three hundred years to happen – and so causing local customs to vanish at an alarming rate. As a salvage project, *Minzoku Taiwan* did not focus on any particular category of customs but was decidedly inclusive in coverage. It refused to exclude even “unwholesome” customs, insisting that scholars have the duty to record all phenomena impartially. However, this salvage project was not without serious ambiguities. This is because the practitioners also claimed – no doubt partly to mollify their critics – that folkloric research would help assimilation. In terms of science, therefore, *Minzoku Taiwan* was to remedy the excesses of assimilation, but in terms of politics, it was to facilitate the very policy whose damage to

science it aimed to ameliorate. In short, the magazine was simultaneously committed to the preservation and erasure of Taiwanese culture. Moreover, although less conceptually coherent than *Taiwan kanshū kiji*, *Minzoku Taiwan* was no less insistent than its predecessor that it could provide vital input into the governance of newly conquered peoples. By the application of Taiwanese folkloric knowledge, it claimed to be able to help the Japanese in the occupied territories in South China and Southeast Asia to formulate and implement policies sensitive to the culture of the local people. Like its predecessor, *Minzoku Taiwan*'s emphasis was the understanding and respect of cultural differences between Japanese and other peoples. This time, however, the beneficiary of this cultural sensitivity was not the Taiwanese – who were now expected to conform to Japanese ways as “imperial subjects” – but the “alien” peoples in the South.

Further ambiguity can be discerned in the collaborative relationship between the Taiwanese and Japanese involved in the *Minzoku Taiwan* project. In sharp contrast to the absence of Taiwanese contributors from *Taiwan kanshū kiji*, *Minzoku Taiwan* was jointly launched by Japanese and Taiwanese and regularly featured articles by the latter. In this sense the Taiwanese were on an equal footing with their fellow Japanese folklorists as producers of knowledge. This was a far cry from the lopsided relationship between Japanese and Taiwanese in the production of *Taiwan kanshū kiji*. However, it must be pointed out that even in *Minzoku Taiwan* the partnership was not entirely equal. The Taiwanese were required to write about their culture in Japanese, and the most frequently cited model of research, YANAGITA and SEKI's handbook, was of Japanese origin. Moreover, regular Taiwanese contributors such as CHIN Shō Kō and TAI En Ki were not only products of Japanese higher education but eventually dropped their Chinese names for Japanese ones at the height of the assimilation campaign. In other words, the Taiwanese were writing in *Minzoku Taiwan* as Japanese. What more, one might ask, could an assimilation policy hope to achieve?

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Notes

- 1) Although the magazine identified “folklore” as its focus, it was decidedly inclusive – almost haphazard – in coverage. It explicitly solicited contributions from geography, natural history, and local history, and published articles in such varied fields as ethnology, linguistics, and archeology. To add to the confusion, both editors and contributors switched back and forth between “folklore” and “ethnology” (both are read *minzokugaku* although written differently) as if they were interchangeable in explaining the magazine's mission and their own research.
- 2) In my usage “Taiwanese” refers to the Han Chinese settlers, excluding the aborigines (*Takasagozoku*, 高砂族, or sometimes simply *banzoku*, 蕃族, or barbarians). *Minzoku Taiwan*,

which is rendered as “Taiwanese Folklore,” while focusing on the Han Chinese, also included reports on the aborigines and the peoples in other parts of East and Southeast Asia.

- 3) Recently, KAWAMURA Minato (1996: 118-141) criticized the magazine as mere *Shina shumi* (支那趣味, China-exoticism) doomed to fail in its pursue of an illusory Greater East Asian Folkloric Study. His assessment elicited a rebuttal from KOKUBU Naoichi (1997), one of the regular contributors to the magazine. KOKUBU and others (including Yō Un Hei [1983]) who had been associated with the magazine have published fond memories about the publication after the war (see the articles by IKEDA [1982], KOKUBU [1982], NAKAMURA [1982], MOCHIDA [1982], and TAMIYA [1982]). They stressed that the magazine was an indirect challenge to the unreasonable cultural policies of the time. As someone not directly involved in the magazine’s production, NEZU Masashi (1980) expressed the same opinion in an article on the relationship between the Japanization campaign and *Minzoku Taiwan*. I am grateful to Professor YAMAJI Katsuhiko for providing me with the articles by KOKUBU (1997) and Yō (1983).
- 4) According to IKEDA Mana (1982), IKEDA Toshio chose to remain in the background because he was directly employed by the Government-General.
- 5) The precise geographic scope of “the South” was hopelessly loose. It varied not only from person to person but also from time to time as the battlefield changed. At the least it included Southeast Asia and the South Pacific islands, but it could also cover Taiwan, Australia, and New Zealand.
- 6) It is unclear whether this term was intended to include Taiwanese as well. It could be argued that since Taiwanese were *legally* Japanese they were covered by the term “our people.” But it could also be argued that the Japanization campaign was proof that Taiwanese were not considered *culturally* Japanese. It is therefore uncertain if Taiwanese qualified as members of “our people.” I have chosen to render the term narrowly as “Japanese.”
- 7) Governor-General KODAMA Gentarō (児玉源太郎) was the chairman (*kaitō*, 會頭) of the association, although all evidence points to GOTŌ Shinpei, the vice chairman, as the principal driving force behind it (Anonymous 1901b).
- 8) See the membership list in the appendix of v.1(6).
- 9) KINKEI was the penname of KANASEKI Takeo (IKEDA, M. 1982: 116).
- 10) KŌKEI was the penname of IKEDA Toshio (IKEDA, M. 1982: 116).
- 11) This piece originally appeared in *Taiwan nichinichi shinpō* (臺灣日日新報), May 29. It was reprinted together with KANASEKI’s rejoinder in the second issue of *Minzoku Taiwan*.
- 12) See KANASEKI (2000) for a useful discussion of YANAGI’s *mingei* movement in Japan and its manifestation in “colonial” North China.
- 13) By “Taiwanese culture” YANAGI meant the cultures of the Han Chinese and the aborigines.
- 14) In an essay written after the war, IKEDA (1982: 130) noted that the Japanese contributors to *Taiwan kanshū kiji* had a condescending attitude toward the Taiwanese.

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