The Folklore of "Fūdo"

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Conventionally the natural and spiritual features of region (we call it "Fūdo") have seldom been discussed positively in our folklore. This is partly because the word "Fūdo", which means natural and spiritual features, is much ambiguous in Japanese and that equivocal use of this word has been left to take its course both in its intensive and extensive sense. A number of people admit however that the "Fūdo" implies a sort of regional sense, sensitivity or inclination which cannot be expressed by any other wording.

The "Fūdo" should therefore be regrasped in the general framework of people's recognition process of Nature, not as an object of natural science. Though this recognition was once applied in the basic theory of WATSUMI Tetsuro on which he discussed the "Fūdo" as his subject matter, his discussion developed only into his personal speculation, not into the process of people's recognition of the natural and spiritual features of regions.

The "Fūdo" if it is to be defined in its intensive meaning, may be grasped as an image that can evoke a "subjectivization" of the environments which surround humans. From the standpoint of the subjectivization of environments this approach can be identified with that idea of KANJ Toukichi according to which he attempted to classify the river from the point of view of the insects living therein in his ecological study.

YANAGITA Kunio made no positive proposition on the problem of Fūdo. His final objective in his folkloristic works was to abstract the regional mind. He finally spellbound this mind contending that it can be understood only by persons from same regions. This paper attempted to prove that the mind is an intensive reality of the Fūdo. In the same line of understanding, such folklorists after YANAGITA as CHIBA Tokuji and TSUBOI Hirofumi, who were much interested in the problem of Fūdo, tried to break that spell.

By way of abstracting an interrelation of vocabulary produced in some regions by an association, we can predict an existence of an association system such as
“Saijiki” (a collection of haiku divided into four seasons), which is based on an emic image association. These predictions have been described in this paper taking up some material examples, which must be an effective approach to comprehend regional sense and sensitivity. Because the spatial range of the Fūdo is much elastic, it is not productive to understand it within the geographical framework only. The author thus proposes to rediscover our Fūdo in a folklore specialized in a study of regional sensitivity.