Political Economy of \textit{Yanagita's} Folklore

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What contributions can the modern folklore make to the society? - It seems necessary to reach the agreement on this issue before making study of the methodology of the folklore.

Today, it is often pointed out that the folklore is in the fuddled state. Although, not only the folklore but also other humanities and social sciences in general are more or less in the fuddled state, the reason why it is mentioned loudly especially on the folklore study is that, in the common opinions, the traditional agricultural, mountain and fishing village have undergone great transfigurations in the modernization process and, therefore, it has become difficult to set the subjects of the study. The reason why there is a movement to reconsider the methodology may be because it is thought necessary to be freed from the methodology based on the traditional agricultural, mountain and fishing villages and to establish a method suitable to analyse the modern folk customs. If so, however, it seems necessary to clarify the significance to study the folklore before discussing the methodology. If the significance the folklore study must have is established, what should be clarified from the folk customs which is the subject of the study, and what approach should be taken in order to achieve the goal, etc. will be decided on as a matter of course.

On this point, there is a wide gap between \textit{Yanagita} Kunio and the modern folklorists. The life study of \textit{Yanagita} Kunio was to solve the problems of poverty. "Why the farmers are poor?". In order to search for the causes, he went deep into the folklore study from the economics. In this paper, the nature of the science he intended to pursue was characterized referring to "History of Meiji and Taisho; phase of life". For \textit{Yanagita}, the modern poverty is the "isolated poverty" and, therefore, in order to be freed from poverty, "isolation" must be dissolved; in more concrete form, it was thought that it could be achieved by obtaining the community among people. Because he believed that such community existed in the past Japan, he expected that it
could be achieved by restoring or re-establishing such community through the self-recognition by means of the folklore study.

However, the today's folklore, unlike Yanagita's, has positioned itself as the cultural history and there is no getting around the impression that this field has specified itself as a science that has nothing to do with the social problems. It is a matter of course that the modern folklore differs from that of Yanagita's, but in order to achieve a better development, I would like to propose to position the folklore study as the social science, and to clearly define what contributions this science can make to the society and what social significance this science has, before discussing the methodology.