The Social Climate That Cheers “Kakkoii!”

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Folklore study in this country is about to finish its role as a science. Although it is in the final stage, it is not aware of the certain time and repeats its self-justification and tries to escape from reality. There will be no future with Japanese folklore study unless it faces up to its current conditions and the reality.

Productive discussions will certainly be held about folklore study if the present overall social circumstances including folklore study are addressed instead of having closed discussions within the boundaries of the subject of folklore study. Japan in the 1980’s created a society that distributed “printed” information in incredible amount and with astonishing rapidity for commercial purposes (some call this society “advanced information-oriented society”), and folkloric information was not free from such treatment by the society. In a society like this, folklore study is treated none other than a symbol or a trademark to be traded like any other good and the repercussions from the commercialization on a small community of folklore study left ineffaceable influence. This interrelation must be clearly defined from the standpoint of folklore study.

One approach to the definition may be made by analyzing “new academism”, or the commercialization of academic works, which took place from the early to middle 1980’s. No significant discussions have been held yet as to what was “new” or on what premises it was accepted by the society. In this thesis, I tried to get the bird’s-eye view of the trends of “new academism”, discuss a background where its commercialization started, and describe and analyze the process of folklore study having become drawn to the gravitational forces of commercialization. I earnestly expect such work of mine as this will be useful for folklore study and folklorists to be more “cautious” and “reflective” of themselves in the future.