

Local region and Folklore

Regarding a video documentary about

"Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima"

produced by National Museum of Ethnology

1. Production of a long video documentary "Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima"

- National Museum of Ethnology had interviews about Hachigatsu Odori between 2004 and 2005 in Amami Oshima, Kagoshima prefecture, and produced a long video documentary about "Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima" in 2007.
- Hachigatsu Odori is one of most important traditional performing arts of the Amami islands, located between Kyushu and Okinawa, and continues to be performed to this day in Amami Oshima, Kikai Jima, and Tokuno Shima.
- What was the purpose of National Museum of Ethnology to interview and produce the video documentary about Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima?
- How should researchers establish relationships with local communities and people for investigation research?

Location of Kagoshima, Amami, and Okinawa



“Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima”
(by National Museum of Ethnology, 2007)

奄美大島の八月踊り

Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima

“Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima”
(by National Museum of Ethnology, 2007)



Shiromaeda, Kasari-cho, Amami city, Kagoshima Prefecture

2. How we can capture Hachigatsu Odori on video

Characteristics of Hachigatsu Odori 1: Form of performance

- Formation of the dance
Regardless of age and sex, participating as a group and dancing in a circle...
- Trinity of song, dance, and drums
Original songs + common words (more than 100 kinds)...
- Improvisational communication by songs between men and women
Words arranged in 8-8-8-6 syllables with 5 musical scales...

Characteristics of Hachigatsu Odori 2: History



"Nantou Zatsuwa"

- They were also dancing in the 19th century

Characteristics of Hachigatsu Odori 3: Variety



Two styles of Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima

- Northern style (multiple tone)
- ▼ Southern style (single tone)



- Northern style vs Southern style
- Songs: Different melodies and ranges between men and women / Same
- Mode of singing : Singing at the same time and speeding up... / Not singing at the same time or not speeding up...

* Different in each area

Characteristics of Hachigatsu Odori 4: Ritual



- Dancing at annual events (*Seasonal change in August of the lunar calendar, Festival for a plentiful year...*)
- Related to the dance of Noro (female oracle)...

3. History of performing arts as folklore

History of performing arts by Shinobu Orikuchi

- Shinobu Orikuchi (1887-1953)

It is difficult to review a performing art of a certain historical period
"by sorting into time"

Even Kabuki and Noh collected all kind of elements of performing arts and it is not easy to say what comes from a certain performing art.

Shinobu Orikuchi , "Nihon Geinoushi Rokkou"

History and Tradition of Performing Arts

- History of performing arts is almost about:
Process of continuous changes that new performing arts are repeatedly born under the influences of different kinds of performing arts in the previous time period



- It is difficult to understand the "tradition" based on the form of a certain period of time (*as the ideal form*)
 - * How and who should decide the "ideal form" in the first place?
 - * Wouldn't it deny historical elements of performing arts?

History of Performing Arts as Folklore

- History of performing arts = Process of continuous changes = Folklore (not tradition)

Folklore means here...

It is recreated very moment based on the previous performances as references, changes its form and contents, and is performed repeatedly according to the time period and changes of the social circumstance.

Ryoji Sasahara, "Sanbikishishimai no kenkyu"

- * "Folklore" is performed with changes according to the time and circumstances

Who Carries On The Tradition

- Tradition of performing arts is carried on (*with changes, recreation, and repeated performance*)



- The group who carry on the performing arts
= Who have actually carried on the performing arts?

*

How the performers actually feel and think about having carried on their performance?

4. Hachigatsu Odori For The People of The Island

In addition to the form, history, variety, and ritual, Hachigatsu Odori has more aspects...

When I was a child, I was waiting for Hachigatsu Odori more than any other event and it was the most pleasant moment of the year.

When the performers came closer to my home, I said "here they come!" with the excitement.

My mother liked the song named "Imono hano tuyu."

It has full of joy like an ecstasy, and if you experience it once, you will subconsciously miss it when the season comes and participate in the performance to look forward the ecstasy.

Yoshimori Ebara, "Hachigatsu Odori of Amami: Sono keitai to hassei no kotodomo"

** Experience of actual performer of Hachigatsu Odori*

From “Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima”



“The songs are about love. I could learn them because I like both singing and dancing...”

From “Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima”



“I learned it by watching our grandmothers. I’m lucky to be born where this performance has been carried on...”

A person who doesn't appear on "Hachigatsu Odori
of Amami Oshima"



*"I recently came back to the island and started to
perform... don't know mucho about it..."*

Voices and feelings of many people who actually perform



5. Gap Between Insiders And Outsiders

- Ideas and passions of insider (*participants of the performance*) are not the same with ideas of outsiders (*researchers and cultural property protectors*)

The meaning of history for the parties who is living in it is different from its observers and the chance of integration is negative.

I cannot say that I, who observe it from outside, am correct and the insiders are wrong.

Jyunzou Kawata , “Symposium on Mixture of history and folk”

- * *Is it unnecessary to consider the ideas and passions of insiders which are different from outsider's pinions?*
- * *Can we say that we understand it enough by concluding it without concerning ideas and passions of insiders?*

6. New Theory of Performing Arts

From “New theory of languages” suggested by Kunio Yanagita

- There is nothing more variable than languages
- Languages are consisted of new words of old words
- Creates and adapted for “necessities” in the daily life
- New words take root after being experimented and approved by the group



- The language used in the daily life of local people is established -> Various dialects of different regions

New Theory of Performing Arts

- There is nothing more variable than performing arts
- The performing parts are consisted of new performing arts of old performing arts
- Creates and adapted for “necessities” in the daily life
- New performing arts take root after being experimented and approved by the group



- The performing arts in the daily life of local people is established -> Various performing arts of different regions

Concept of New Theory of Performing Arts

- New theory of performing arts gives the prior right of making voluntary decisions about how the culture should be to the parties *(local people who actually carry it on)*

In New theory of performing arts:

- * *The understanding of outsiders (researchers) cannot be considered superior to voices and feelings of performers*

In addition:

- * *Allows to accept the distribution of various folk performances as performing arts created and changed by voluntaries of local people*

7. New Theory of Performing Arts and Local Study

We didn't try to study local regions but something in local regions, especially the history of people as group, and tried to restudy it in local regions or through ideas and feelings of local people

Kunio Yanagita, "Kyodo kyoiku to kyodo kenkyu"

- *Studying in local regions = Studying histories and cultures based on ideas and feelings of local people*
-> *Respected the prior right of local people*

In case of performing arts...

- * *Respect feelings and consciousnesses of people who have actually performed in the region*

For a better concept of local culture in New theory of performing arts and Local Study

- Listening to voices of many people and reflecting them
- Chance to exchange ideas and opinions of many people inside and outside of local region
 - ➔ *Those of researchers will be one of them*
- Chance for people inside of local region to think about their life, history and culture
- Ideas for local people to review their history and cultures in the future
 - ➔ *Recording and saving accurate current situation*
- Not to fix as a common myth but continuously update
 - ➔ *Realize the concept of various culture and history which local people have the priority right to local people to decide how to carry on (change)*

Defects of Local study

“Common mistakes:”

Emphasizing too much on unusualness of what only exists in the region or not paying attention because of considering it something very usual

Local study does require to divide into small areas but it is not effective if it is isolated

Kunio Yanagita, “Kyodo kyoiku to kyodo kenkyu”

- It is necessary to avoid centrism of its culture and local egoism

➡ Cooperation and comparison with other regions

➡ Generalization of fragmental concepts

* Importance of concepts of outsiders as references and objects of comparison

8. Records of Local Region as a Better Concept

In records of local region, we must demonstrate how the local region has developed until today, what kind of restrictions and routs they have, and with what conditions they exist and, when someone refers them, they must help him/her to think about what he/she can do so that the village will be able to stay in the happiness

Kunio Yanagita “Kyodoshiron”

* *Records of local place = Observation of local people’s lives and history + Material which gives opportunities to realize a better life of the local village in the future*

“Hachigatsu Odori of Amami Oshima” as Records of Local Region

- The goal of the documentary was to produce “records of local place for Hachigatsu Odori” that helps people to improve Hachigatsu Odori in the future as well as the observation of Hachigatsu Odori.
- Therefore, we showed the documentary to the local people who actually perform and asked their opinions and impressions



- We tested if the local people revalue their performances and start to think about how their performance should be in the future after watching the documentary.

** After Amami Oshima, we also showed it and asked opinions and impressions around Amami Oshima, such as Kagoshima, Kikai Jima, Tokuno Shima, and Okinoerabu Jima*

9. People Who Watch the Documentary

(1) Passion for Hachigatsu Odori

- I like Hachigatsu Odori since I was a student and I have very good memories of beating washbowls to dance on the beach every time I came back to the island for vacations.
 - A young girl in the documentary said that she learned the dance and songs by listening and watching but, this is the ideal way to learn the performance for us too.
 - The story of an old woman is the most valuable in the documentary. I want all the successors in the island to listen to it and learn the performance.
 - It is our responsibility for our ancestors to study and carry on old traditions. "Shimaguchi," a number of Hachigatsu Odori, must be really respected.
- * *They were mostly positive opinions: reconfirming the passion for Hachigatsu Odori by watching the documentary.*
- * *The audience sympathized especially with the stories of women. They even gave applauses for some of them while they were watching.*

(2) Differences of Performance

- Hachigatsu Odori has many common numbers across regions but, if you watch the documentary, you will find that not all the words are the same in other regions.
 - Details of the performance are not the same. It is amazing how they are different even though all the villages are geographically close to each other.
 - Today, I saw the performances of Kasari and Tatsugou for the first time but I understood the differences because the documentary explained.
 - The differences in dances and songs of each region are a big problem to carry on Hachigatsu Odori. Now, I am concerning how we should carry it on in the future.
- * As Hachigatsu Odori is performed at the same time of the year in all regions, many people saw performances of other places for the first time in the documentary and recognized the characteristics of their own villages and differences with others.*
- * When they found the differences, they started to think that they should protect the identity of their performances.*

(3) Critiques

- In my village, every single person participates and it has very important role of respecting of old people. I also wanted you to talk about it in the documentary.
 - The narration bothered me. The pronunciation wasn't good. I am very concerning that this will lead misunderstanding if it stays in the video. The expression of local dialect is very difficult.
- * *We haven't thought about the relationships between Hachigatsu Odori and old people. I regret it more than anything in the documentary.*
- * *There were many critiques about the language. It seems that the local people felt it very strange. It was hard for us to find an appropriate way to express specific expressions and pronunciations of the region and I think it will be our assignment for the future.*

(4) Concerns

- I think many of you here actually perform but, if anyone knows procedures to learn dancing and singing well, I want you to teach me.
- They teach Hachigatsu Odori in schools but there is also a problem. They can't teach love songs or sexual songs between men and women. We are trying to think of a way to support them in the community to carry on the performance.
- In my village, women are good at playing drums and dancing but not singing. There are not many men. We organize an activity club to practice them periodically and feel our way for finding a solution. We want to continue the performance anyhow.

* *Almost all the performers have concerns and difficulties in order to continue the performance*

* *These concerns and difficulties show that it is not easy to keep the local community itself as a result of the depopulation, aging of society, and low birthrate in all regions.*

(5) Ideas

- In our village, we write words of songs in Kanji and Hiragana and add ruby to the dialect of Amami. The dialect is easier to understand in Kanji. If we use a text in Kanji, we all can learn the same words regardless of age.
- It will be easier to learn if we make a DVD to show how to perform and practice with watching.
- I teach the performance to women married into families in our village from other villages once a month. If they learn songs first, it will be easier to learn drums.
- If we let young people be responsibility of all the performance, they will learn it very quickly.

** After watching the documentary, many people introduced their ideas and challenges to solve problems and difficulties to continue the performance.*

** In all regions, there people who are trying new methods instead of persisting traditional ways. Some of them were people who came back to their villages after retirement.*


(6) Suggestions

- If we record the words of songs of every village in a book and keep it in a library or periodically communicate each other to learn the performances of other places, I think Hachigatsu Odori would be more exiting in all over the island.
 - I want you to sell this documentary so that other people out of the island can learn about Hachigatsu Odori.
- * The suggestion to establish a network between villages is interesting. People of different villages have never gathered in one place to exchange their opinion in the past.*
- * I think people felt the network would help the performance after watching our documentary and exchanging their opinions.*
- * We are not able to sell the documentary because of complicated problems but sent DVDs to libraries and museums in the island so that everybody can watch them for free.*

10. Standpoints of New Theory of Performing Arts: Like "vagabond Tora-san"

- Our way of understanding performing arts is not certainly natural

** We always build a concept based on some frameworks we set*

 *But “cultural heritage” and “tradition” are sorts of ideologies that are not sure and reliable as the frameworks*

Therefore

- ”It will be over if you say that”
- * We could reach a better concept of performing arts if we understand it with our own wishes and responsibilities instead of just saying because it is “cultural heritage” or “tradition.”*

10. Standpoints of New Theory of Performing Arts: Don't hate changes

Yanagita's concept about languages:

- It is unavoidable to change languages
-> It should be changed for the improvement

Understanding history of language

= Understanding rules of its changes and linguistic abilities

-> beneficial for realizing better changes of the language in the future

Applying it to performing arts:

- It is unavoidable to change performing arts -> It should be changed for the improvement

Understanding history of performing arts

= Understanding rules of its changes and abilities of performances

-> beneficial for realizing better changes in the future

* *Knowing about the past(history) is not equal to conservatism Expecting the possibilities of changes the society will be able to become wiser as much as they want.*(Kunio Yanagita)

10. Standpoints of New Theory of Performing Arts: For whom performing arts exist



Hachigatsu Odori of Tarama Jima

Cultural heritage: Classical performing arts, folk dances

vs Non cultural heritage: Children's play and pop dances

10. Standpoints of New Theory of Performing Arts: For whom performing arts exist

- For whom folk performing arts as cultural heritage , tourist resources, and World Heritage primarily exist?

* *Who designate cultural heritage , tourist resources, and World Heritage?*

- If local people enjoy folk performing arts designated as cultural heritage , tourist resources, or World Heritage?

* *Even the tiredness of local performances repeated every year...*

- Who has the priority right to carry on and continue the folk performing arts?

* *Primarily to local people who actually participate*

= Fundamental of New theory of performing arts