



Echoes of Tradition: Exploring Japanese Folk Culture Book Exhibition

Like many foreigners that come to visit Japan, I was influenced by Japanese popular culture since my childhood. Whether it was watching Dragon Ball on TV or playing Sonic videogames on my elder brother's Mega Drive, many of the products that I consumed were from Japan. That influence was what would later lead me to get interested in studying Japanese back at university in Spain, and eventually what brought me to Japan at least three times as an exchange student. After living here for almost 5 years, I have been facing many different aspects of the so-called "Japanese culture" in my daily life. But what is "Japanese culture" anyways?

This book exhibition is dedicated to people who, like me, grew up with Japanese popular culture and developed an interest in the country that produced all of this, and because of that wanted to know more about the folk culture through which the people of Japan live their daily life. I have prepared this selection of books to introduce folk culture from many different perspectives, but while selecting the books I kept in mind Edward Said's notion of "orientalism" and the dangers of exoticizing Japan and falling into biased assumptions of national character. That is why I included the book "Japanese Modernization and Mingei theory: cultural nationalism and oriental orientalism", which introduce

concepts that might be helpful when reading the books presented in this collection.

In fact, some of the books chosen for this exhibition might be considered orientalist in some ways. Still, there's always something new to learn with each read, and I would like to challenge you to take the books here and read them with a critical perspective, always having in mind questions like "what is Japan and Japanese culture?" and to carefully consider the concepts of nation and culture. I really believe that thinking about these questions will, whatever your nationality is, help you live your life in the world with a new point of view.



Antonio Fernandez Caro
Graduate School of Arts and Letters

民間文化とポピュラーカルチャーは、地域社会の心臓のようなものであり、結束の強いグループの伝統や慣習を反映しています。日本では、お祭りや能楽のドラマ、そして空手のような武道の楽しみがそれを思い起こさせるかもしれません。これらの活動は過去の遺物ではなく、今日でも私たちの周りに生き続け、ある程度社会の発展に貢献し、影響を与えています。

これを念頭に置いて、今回は日本の民間文化とポピュラーカルチャーの様々な側面に深く踏み込んだ書籍の展示を企画しました。以下の書籍の選択には、民俗学、宗教学、人類学、歴史、美術など、異なる分野のタイトルが含まれています。この展覧会では、以前の知識がほとんどない一般の人々にも読みやすい本を中心に、トピックのより深い理解を促す専門的な本も含まれています。日本の民俗学の父と呼ばれる柳田泉の著作など、学術的な書籍も含まれています。以下の読書を通して、日本の魅力的な文化を探求してみてください！

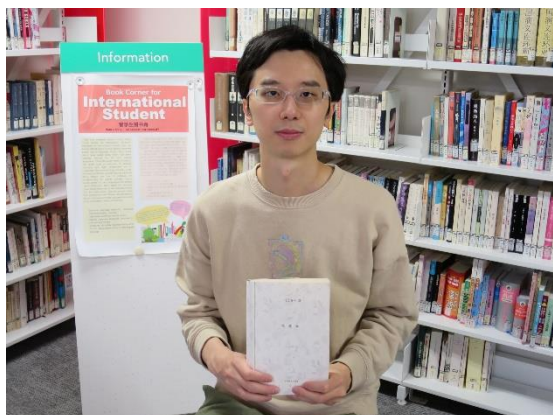
Folk and popular culture are like the heartstrings of a community, echoing the traditions and practices of tight-knit groups of people. In Japan, it might remind us of ikebana, the drama of moth theatre, and the discipline of martial arts like karate. These kinds of activities are not a relic the past—they're still alive around us today and permeate and influence the basis of the society we know to some degree.

With this in mind, this time we are putting together an exhibition of books that dive deep into the various aspects of Japanese folk and popular culture. The following selection of books include titles in different fields like folk studies, religions studies, anthropology, history, art, etc. In this exhibition we have included books that are easy to read for the general public without much previous knowledge, and for those wanting to engage in a deeper understanding of the topics there are some academic books included too including the works of the "Father of Folk Studies" in Japan, Yanagita Kunio. Try to explore the fascinating culture of Japan through the following readings!

Written by **Fernandez Caro Antonio**

How do you like the library?

In this section, we will introduce how international students use the library in the form of interviews.



Liwei Gong

Postdoctoral researcher at the Graduate School of International Cultural Studies

Where do you come from?

I come from the Guangdong province in China. This region is also known as “Canton”, which is famous for being the area in which the Cantonese language is spoken.

What do you study? / What school do you belong to?

I am a postdoctoral researcher at the Graduate School of International Cultural Studies. I do research in Linguistic Typology.

What is your favorite thing about this library?

I like that this library provides a large open space for studying. I think that this is perfect for people who, like me, prefer studying with white noise in the background. For example, I sometimes study in my lab, but at other times I prefer studying in the library. The lab is an environment that we are familiar with, we have established relationships with other students, so being there requires interaction. However,

if I come to the library, I don't need to communicate with anyone, yet I do not feel isolated due to the white noise. Another thing I like about this library is the vast number of reference books and grammars located in the stack room that I can use for my research.

Do you have a favorite place to study in the library?

My favorite place is the reading space on the balcony overlooking the PC area from the 2nd floor. I like it because it is like a small private area, yet in an open space, and not a separate study room. I think that it provides a good balance between privacy and quietness that you want for your research, and a spacious room where you can feel comfortable and not isolated. Not many people know about this space because it is slightly hidden in the back of the library, so I encourage you to try studying there!



Please share your favorite/recommended book from this library.

If I could choose one, it would be Murakami Haruki's *Dance Dance Dance*. The reason is because of the ultimate message I have recognized in this book: “on a journey to discovering the real meaning of life and love, you don't need to care too much about needless things – just dance dance dance – no matter what, just keep moving forward”. What makes reading this book quite engaging as well is that it is written in Murakami's signature style – 80% realistic and 20% fantasy – including

surreal spaces and characters, with a touch of a detective element. Murakami's works are very famous in China, and since I have only read the Chinese translation, I became quite curious as to whether what I have read was the translator's voice, or the voice of the author. I may have to read the Japanese version of this book for comparison.

How often do you use the library per week?

When I was a student, I came here approximately once per week, or once in two weeks. It depends on the study period – if I am doing research, I come more often. In the last year of my PhD study, I came here a lot to write my papers. Before that I didn't use the library so much for study, but after discovering that special place in the library last year, I started coming more often and felt motivated to study there.

Which part of the library would you recommend? Why?

There are two areas that I would recommend to other students. The first one is the secret space on the balcony, but since there are not too many seats there, maybe it is better to use the Flexible Area on the first floor. The second place is the corridor on the 2nd floor, right in front of the Global Learning Room. There are comfortable pink sofas there, and not many people pass, so you can read a book there without any interruption.



Interview by **Petrovikj Hristina**

My Hometown: Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (China)

In this column, we introduce the hometowns of our members, giving you a glimpse into their culture and some traveling tips from locals!

My hometown, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, indeed holds a special place within China due to its significant Korean population and cultural heritage. It's fascinating to learn about the diverse ethnic makeup of China, with the Han Chinese being the majority and numerous ethnic minorities contributing to the country's rich cultural tapestry. Yanbian, with its unique status as an autonomous prefecture, highlights China's commitment to recognizing and preserving the cultural identities of its minority groups.

The ancestors of the Korean people in China initially lived on the Korean Peninsula and fled to northeast China in the mid-19th century due to oppression and exploitation by the feudal ruling class. Later, a large number of refugees came in to escape the war and settled in China, and lived together with the local Han and Manchu people, gradually developing into the present ethnic minorities in China. Korean language and writing, dress, food, are very similar with South Korea and North Korea, due to the same lineage.

The Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture is a special administrative unit established by the government to protect the rights of ethnic minority groups. In Yanbian, governance involves representation from both Koreans and Han Chinese, with bilingual Korean-Chinese education provided in kindergartens and schools, alongside several welfare policies tailored for Koreans. Encompassing an area of

43,329 square kilometers, roughly equivalent to 55 Sendai cities, the prefecture's population stands at just 2.07 million. Situated at a latitude similar to Hokkaido in northeastern China, Yanbian experiences harsh winters, with temperatures plummeting to as low as -30 degrees Celsius.

The region where Yanbian is situated shares borders with Russia and is separated from North Korea by a river, located in close proximity to the Sea of Japan, what makes it a significant border city with a remarkable diverse culture during times of peace. Growing up, I experienced a bilingual environment where the latest fashion trends arrived from Korea, encounters with Russians on the streets were common, and Japanese and Korean goods adorned the homes of millions.

Yanbian is affectionately referred to as the "Little Seoul of China," not only due to the prevalence of the Korean language but also because of its rich food culture. Kimchi, miso soup, and cold noodles are staple flavors ingrained in the daily lives of Yanbian residents. If you visit Yanbian, you can indulge in Korean cuisine while adorned in traditional costumes, relax in the hot springs of the Changbai Mountain shared by both China and North Korea, and enjoy performances by talented Korean artists showcasing their singing and dancing prowess. Additionally, Yanbian has recently made headlines for its discovery of dinosaur fossils and the establishment of a dinosaur-themed amusement park!



Pictures of the city



Korean cuisine of Yanbian

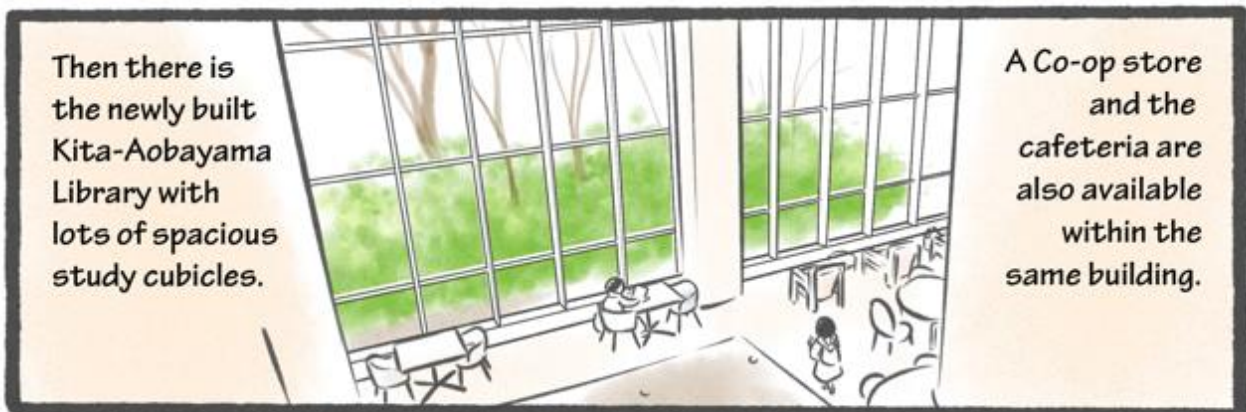
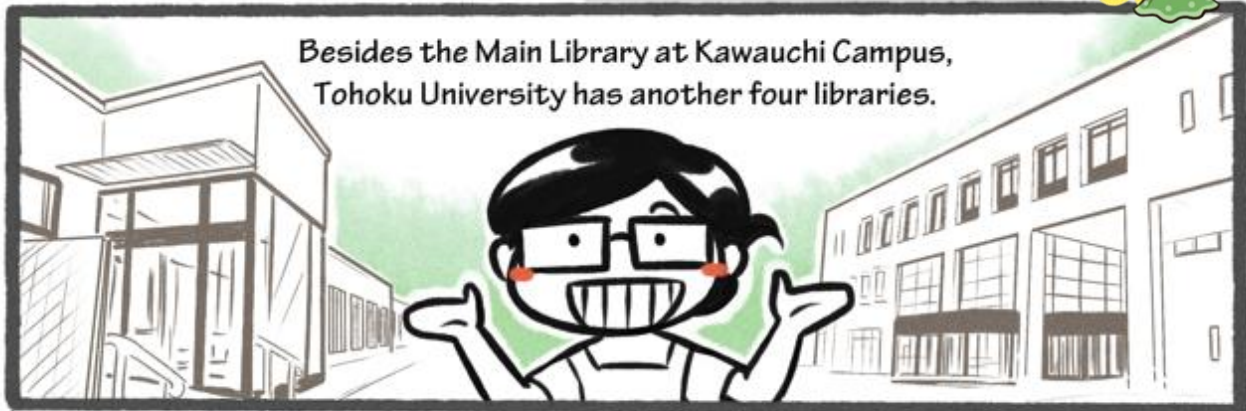
*All photos were taken by author's family.

Written by **Zhang Wenxin**

Manga Corner

At Manga Corner, you will see scenes that frequently happen to newly enrolled students.

Hi! I am Andhika from Indonesia! I like reading and drawing manga, and I hope you enjoy my short manga.



Editors



Petrovikj Hristina [Editor-in-Chief]

A graduate student from North Macedonia enrolled in the Graduate School of International Cultural Studies. She has many hobbies, some of which include: singing, journaling, travelling, reading, watching movies, and photography. She has lived in 3 different countries so far, travelled across Europe, and is hoping to embark on an Asian tour in the near future. Her secret dream is to be a member of a rock band, but since that has not come true yet, you can often find her in a karaoke booth instead!

Helen Li

A 3rd year PhD student from Economics and Management Department, majoring in monetary economics and financial time series analysis. She previously lived in the USA and came to Japan in 2019. She has been playing the piano for over 10 years, and is also a semi-professional athlete of speed skating since before she was 14. She is an excellent female gamer of MOBA games such as DOTA and Honor of Kings. Her dream is to become a university professor or a diplomat, but a superior professional athlete of Esports if she was 10 years younger.



Andhika Wijaya



A graduate student from Innovative Japanese Studies Major, who was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia. She never had seen snow before she came to Japan, so she's always going 'wakuwaku' when the snow is falling down even though she has to struggle a lot with the cold temperature. She loves drawing, reading comics, travelling to scenic places, enjoying nice music, singing at karaoke, and playing with cute animals. Please don't mind her if she makes strange noises when she saw a photo of cute animals. Aside of those, one of her major passion is enjoying food and making review notes about it.

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