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Emergence of Antiquity: On Orikuchi Shinobu's Scholarship

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Abstract

Orikuchi Shinobu (1887-1953, with the penname Shaku Chōkū), as both a scholar and a creative writer, left a lasting impact on the fields of folklore studies, Japanese literature, and literary history. At the core of his work lies the concept of "antiquity (kodai)," understood as a continually emerging and evolving process, manifesting through language and ritual practices. Through an analysis of his major works, such as Kodai Kenkyū and The Book of the Dead, this paper examines how Orikuchi's antiquity was constructed through an "inverted" modern lens: it initially emerged as a reaction against modernity, imagined through language and folklore, yet it is simultaneously an antiquity shaped by modern consciousness, with his imagination of the ancient ultimately circling back to modernity itself. The central argument posits that Orikuchi sought to uncover an absolute, timeless archetype of antiquity through "non-antiquity"—both written records and contemporary folklore practices as phenomena. However, this vision of communal antiquity ultimately created a "discourse space" deeply intertwined with the ideological landscape of modern Japan.

Keywords

Orikuchi Shinobu, Japanese folklore, *Kodai Kenkyū*, *The Book of the Dead*.

1. Introduction

"Ten years ago, when I traveled to Kumano and stood at the edge of Daio-ga-zaki Cape protruding into the bright midday sea, I could not help but feel as if my soul's homeland lay at the end of that distant sea route. Even now, I cannot dismiss this as merely the sentimentality of a poet. Could this be an *atavism* of the *nostalgia* that once stirred the hearts of our ancestors?

"The 'mother's land,' which Susanowo-no-Mikoto yearned for till the green mountains withered away, and which Inahi-no-Mikoto crossed over to treading on the crest of the waves, must have been the homeland of our ancestors' souls. The name of the country to which Izanami-no-Mikoto and Tamayori-hime returned has been the interpretation of generations of *kataribe* (teller of tales), but in truth, it is a word filled with the common yearning of all people for the 'original land.'"[1] [1].

As a folklorist and Neo-nativist, Orikuchi Shinobu (1887-1953) was one of the leading disciples of Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962). As a creative writer known by the penname Shaku Chōkū, he produced works in various forms, including poetry and novels, securing a prominent place in the history of modern Japanese literature.

As "the only person in all of modern Japanese intellectual and literary history who left behind such important representative works in all three of these areas (tanka poems, folkloristic and literary studies, and the novel)," Orikuchi's two identities should be separated "not by the tenuous conjunction 'and' but by an equal's sign" [2]: his literary works served as the practice

[1] Translation mine, concerning Kamata Tōji (see Kamata, Tōji. "The Disfiguring of Nativism: Hirata Atsutane and Orikuchi Shinobu." *Shinto in History*. Routledge, 2013, pp. 310-311) and Chamberlain's translation of *Kojiki*. For the Japanese sources cited, the translations in this article are my own unless otherwise noted.

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and manifestation of his scholarly theories, depicting and examining the "antiquity." Or in Ando's opinion, the core of his scholarship was "language (*kotoba*), in and of itself." [2].

In this context, as summaries of Orikuchi's scholarship, these two keywords are almost equivalent. On the one hand, Orikuchi's conception of antiquity was rooted in language; he discovered antiquity in literary classics and oral words, tracing the emergence of language back to its origin. On the other hand, his antiquity was vividly manifested in his literary creations and scholarly research—characterized by the delicate, meticulous, and unrelenting use of obscure yet symbolically rich vocabulary from classics and dialects, as well as unique terms he coined known as "Orikuchi's Lexicon (*Orikuchi meii*)." Thus, Orikuchi's conception of antiquity emerges through language, manifesting as an intuitive narrative space in a constant process, with the language itself serving as an analytical tool, a medium that reveals and embodies "antiquity" (as a way of thinking), and simultaneously as a marker of Orikuchi's intellectual trajectory.

Orikuchi Shinobu was a prolific author, with his complete works spanning 56 volumes. As Orikuchi noted, his scholarship is featured in its capacity for analogy and association, leading to a cohesive integrity of Orikuchi's vast concepts and fields, from his academic studies in folklore, literature, and religion to his literary creations. Additionally, Orikuchi constantly evolved his ideas—undoubtedly, his concepts were in a state of "emergence." Given the multilayered and "self-referential" nature of Orikuchi's scholarship (which, in terms of the mapping relationships between its components and elements, can be described as almost fractal), this paper takes a progressive approach to analyze Orikuchi's conception of antiquity.

In the first section, focusing primarily on *Kodai Kenkyū*, the analysis will examine how some aspects of transcendental antiquity are constructed and manifested in Orikuchi's scholarship. The second section will explore the intuitive representation of Orikuchi's antiquity in his novel *The Book of the Dead* through the perspectives of two characters—the poet Ōtomo no Yakamochi and the high-ranking bureaucrat Fujiwara no Nakamaro. This section will also investigate how Orikuchi, as a modern scholar, generated a sight of the archetypal antiquity in a contemporary way, emphasizing that the dichotomy between "antiquity" and "modernity" itself is a part of modernity.

The third section will discuss the emergence or epistemology of antiquity, examining how it unfolds temporally from antiquity to modern times, spatially from the center to the periphery, and semantically from archetype to phenomenon. In a sense, the former, as an imagined construct, often overshadows or even obscures the latter as concrete facts. The concept of "*Tokoyo*" and the "mother's land (*Haha ga kuni*)" will be explored in the fourth section—a notion that Orikuchi, even in the archetypal "antiquity," referred to as imbued with "exoticism."

Finally, this paper will use the representative concept of *kataribe* as a metaphor to discuss Orikuchi's modern mythology. The argument presented here is that, the archetypal "antiquity" that Orikuchi constructed—framed through an inverted gaze and premised on a timeless cultural unity—inevitably shaped a perspective that resonated with cultural nationalism, or may have, even if unintentionally, converged with such a broader "discourse space."[3]

2. Cyclical Emergence: Methodology, Linguistics, and the Antiquity

It is worth noting that Orikuchi addressed some common criticisms in his postscript of *Kodai Kenkyū*, a three-volume work published between 1929 and 1930. He acknowledged that the book was far from perfect—containing "immature arguments" and expressing his "urge to rewrite" [4]some essays—viewing it instead as an attempt to trace back his twenty years of thoughts wandering among several fields, including a fair amount of speculation and

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hypotheses[2]. Nevertheless, in the same postscript, one can still notice Orikuchi 's emphasis on some specific research methods and, from the former, learn his approach to understanding (or constructing) the "antiquity (*kodai*)." In this postscript, he reviewed most of what is known by both his contemporaries and scholars of the present day as the typical elements of his scholarship—whether as "characteristics" or as "flaws."

Orikuchi's motivation to develop a "new Nativism (*atarashii kokugaku*)" as an inheritor of Yanagita Kunio at least partly lay in the desire to overcome the weaknesses of old folklore research from the Edo era, which was limited to a "hobbyist, essayistic collection" of folklore that only emphasized the divide between antiquity and recent times. On the other hand, he was not satisfied with "Anthropologic, Linguistic and Sociologic" methodologies, which often relied on inaccurate materials beyond one's direct experience and came to a too general result to address the relationships between specific phenomena [4].

Orikuchi believed that new Nativism should transcend this dividing line and uncover the "original form" of ancient beliefs that had been once "rationalized and modernized" by pre-existing studies [4]. He expected this knowledge production process to go beyond a discipline rationally cultivated by literature review, empirical research, or citation of others' investigations. *Kodai Kenkyū* was "an attempt to trace the outline of this new Nativism."

What he emphasized in his scholarship consisted of at least four elements: the language (*Gengo*), the ability to form analogy (*ruika seinō*), *jikkan* (actual feeling, or in Harootunian's words, "depth hermeneutics")[5], and the emergence or emerging process (*hassei*). His research method relied more heavily on the ability to form analogical or associative structures (though he also recognized that the lack of "differentiating capability" or "*bekka seinō*" was one of the shortcomings of his research), linking living folklore with documentation, literature with arts, oral dialects with written words, and the unified Japanese antiquated faith before the 7th century with contemporary folk practice—not only in Japan but also in Okinawa. He often viewed Okinawa as a lens to "discover ancient Japan" while acknowledging that Japan and Ryukyu had been separated since a "very ancient era." [4]

The most important—if not the only—way to link or combine "living life" and "fixed knowledge" was *jikkan*, which could provide an intuitive and profound interpretation of antiquity at the intersection of "philosophy and science" methodologies [4], moving beyond the great divide of time (tradition and modernity) and space (center and periphery), and finally reach the interior and essence of the native folk experience of a pre-assumed ethnical and cultural community.

The remnants of ancient life were preserved in written or oral language on one hand, and entered actual life in the form of folklore after being modified by later generations on the other. Therefore, Orikuchi's scholarship preferred a "twofold approach." He focused on the emerging process of words, concepts, folklore practices, or artistic forms; simultaneously, he adopted a "retrospective" approach attempting to trace back to the antiquity or archetype along the path of its emergence and development. He pointed out that his narrative might involve chronological intermixing; however, he viewed this as a valuable approach to "synthesize" the developing process of a general topic or concept from the special cases or phenomena that remained in different times and spaces in Japanese history [4].

In his college thesis for Kokugakuin University in 1914, Orikuchi distinguished two kinds of language:

$$\text{Language contents}\begin{cases}\text{Differentiating}\\ \text{Involving} \rightarrow \text{quasi} - \text{absolute} \rightarrow \text{ambiguous} \rightarrow \text{meaningless} \rightarrow \text{implicit} \rightarrow \text{symbolic}\end{cases} \quad [6]$$

[2] He was aware that the notion *of kataribe* itself he had used was largely speculative: "The evidence in the historical documents has almost completely overturned the hypotheses generated by immature comparative methods about the position and social status of the *kataribe*. However, my study of antiquity is based largely on my efforts to concretize these hypotheses."

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This distinction can be easily related to the contrast between analogy/association (*ruika*) and differentiation/distinction (*bekka*) described above. To him, differential words conveying definite meaning were indirect; symbolic language was instead direct—towards the "emergence of an unknown meaning itself," retaining the capacity for multiple various subtle expressions before being fixed into a solid word (and further, its written form) and concept [7]. It is in this sense that an "involving" word can reach the "absolute" infinite capacity of expression with the concomitant infinite blurring and loss of its precise meaning and, at the same time, return to a primitive language as an extraordinarily polysemous, associative and symbolic—even religious—form of expression. This demonstrates the so-called depth, the world of thought in which the language (*gengō*) was born, and the world of antiquity, or in an archaic rhetorical sense, "the age of the deities (*jindai*)."

Orikuchi imagined an ancient way of thinking (i.e., ancient faith) shared by the native community with *cyclical emergence* as its essential feature; the latter was enabled by this ambiguous yet infinite "analogical" thinking, based on an oral tradition rich in variation, emotion, and imagination.

The nature of Orikuchi's antiquity can be understood through a less rigorous framework of comparisons: orality against literacy, spatiality (locality and synchronicity) against temporality, unconsciousness (actual feeling of collective phenomena) against rationality, and analogy against differentiation.[3][5]

For Orikuchi, the logic of ancient Japan was rooted in "emotion," distinct from the logic of "*Inmyō*" (*hetu-vidyā*), which could be seen as Orikuchi's metaphor for rational logic. The latter, originated from India ("*Tenjiku*"), reached Japan through multiple pathways: in ancient times through Buddhism (as itself) and Chinese logic (influenced by *Inmyō* in Orikuchi's perspective), and in modern times through Western logic, derived from the ancient Greek tradition, which Orikuchi also saw as being shaped by the influence of *Inmyō* [8].

Spatiality stood against the transient as a subliminal rejection of time-lapse, which was reached through the cyclical—rather than a purely unreturnable—timeline. This was accomplished through the power of this emotional and involving language, which could elevate reality into a symbol and render the symbol as reality. In this way, the timeline, in the symbolic sense, can return to its origin.

Orikuchi frequently emphasized seasonal rituals' religious and metaphorical significance; spring, as the beginning of the year, holds the meaning (i.e., its mysterious power) of renewing the soul ("tama," or as the synonym of *Mana*). Thus, at the precise moment when spring rituals are performed (marking the beginning of the year) and in the space where the New Year's prayers are recited, the soul is renewed once again; thereby, each spring is, in fact, a return to the "original" spring, to the archetype, to the absolutized antiquity outside or beyond history [5]. In this way, *antiquity* emerges through the reality of present ritual practices, and the *archetype* unfolds into the presence.

Eventually, the dimension of time is overcome; cyclicity links "antiquity" to locality. The narrative, although often beginning with a single village or clan, ultimately expands and reorients towards "Japan" (actually, "Yamato"), the original native community.

The worldview of antiquity—in a sense, this is Shinto (ways of the deities)—poetically combined the empirical and the transcendent, which used an analogic perspective to fuse intuitive experience with mystical, spiritual faiths as a natural cognitive phenomenon [9] rather than intentional and reasoned judgment. To some extent, his scholarship itself practiced this ancient way of thinking.

[3] This is a reference to Harootunian's summarize of Yanagita's folklore. Also, one can find the similarities between this framework and Orikuchi's criticism towards Haga Yaichi's *kokubungaku*.

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Another piece of evidence for the possible existence of this contrasting framework is that Orikuchi's oral, spatial, and sensory traditions were disrupted and discolored by the later written (with apparent relation to Chinese characters) and rational interpretations, characterized by "the rational quirks of the immature scholars around the time of the Nihon Shoki"[1], or "the rational view of the Nara" [10]and subsequent eras.

One can easily find that his interpretation—or imagination—of antiquity is tinged with Romanticism, which aligns with what Isaiah Berlin used to describe German Romanticism: the symbolism, the notion of "depth," and the irreducibility. The two consequential phenomena Berlin identified, "the nostalgia" and "the paranoia of a certain kind," especially the former, also applied to Orikuchi to varying degrees [11].

3. *The Book of the Dead*: Yakamochi's Melancholy

Ōtomo no Yakamochi embodies this subtle nostalgic melancholy and susceptible temperament, debuting in Orikuchi's famous novel *The Book of the Dead (Shisha no shō)*.

It should be stated here that Orikuchi Shinobu's (Shaku Chōkū) literature works went beyond themselves. To some extent, his literary works were a visualization of his constructed antiquity through his folklore and cultural theory, and the process of creation was his practice of the ancient way of thinking *as a modern writer*. *The Book of the Dead* is "the author's historical discourse in the form of a novel," [12]an attempt to envision an alternative form of historical discourse, as mentioned in the afterword of *Shintokumaru* (1917), to make history concretely emerge from itself "as a novel, or even further, a play." [13]

Thus, this analysis, which considers the Nara era as a parallel to the "modern" era within the above-mentioned comparative framework of "orality/literacy" and "antiquity/modernity," is merely one of the many perspectives of interpretation of this novel. Yakamochi and Nakamaro, rather than Iratsume and Shigatsuhiko (the so-called protagonist and main supporting character[4] of the book) [14], are chosen for this brief analysis because they are, in some sense, more "realistic" and historical, thereby contributing to the contextualization of the absolute "*antiquity*" and its realistic counterpart on the timeline.

Yakamochi had a typical modern-colored "general unease" as well as "his natural tendency toward melancholia" [15](which itself is a characteristic of modern temperament) towards his unfitness to this rapidly advancing "modern era." His situation exemplified those who feel left behind by the progress of the times, clinging to traditions from which they once felt inseparable—as a modern subject. However, it's an *incomplete* nostalgia of a man, in his inner monologue, "all too good at giving up on things." [16]. In contrast, the spirited man whose face seemed to be forever young, Fujiwara no Nakamaro, had nothing "other than pure, youthful desire" [16] in his heart.

On the one hand, Yakamochi could hardly bear his pathos towards the inevitably fading customs and duties of his family since the age of the gods; on the other hand, he actually gave up, like his father Tabito, yielded to modernity, and abandoned the endeavor to keep or uphold the old customs in reality. The unfinishable movement of the world mentioned by Isaiah Berlin manifested in him in such a subtle and multilayered, emotionally rich manner: his heart swung between the nostalgic stone wall and the new-fashioned constructed earthen wall, between the oral traditions from the divine ancestors of the Ōtomo clan and the Chinese tales and poetry imported via Dazaifu, between Nara and Chang'an—interestingly, the "modernity" here is equally foreign-originated.

[4] Shigatsuhiko is the "supporting character (*Wakiyaku*)" of this book; though, as a ghost or divine spirit, he appears more like the *shite* rather than the *waki* in the Noh, which might be another reason this novel can be considered modern.

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The Nara-era version of modernity can perhaps be summarized by Nishijima Sadao's well-known four elements of the East Asian World: Buddhism, Confucianism, Chinese characters, and the Code System (Ritsuryō System) [17], all of which reached their peak of reception during the Asuka, Fujiwara[5] and Nara era. This process beginning with the Taika Reform was initiated by politicians whom Orikuchi referred to as "originators of Sinicizationism" [18], one of whom was Nakatomi no Kamatari, the great-grandfather of Toyonari and Nakamaro.

Yakamochi and Nakamaro are indeed comparable figures, not only as individuals but also in their family backgrounds. The Ōtomo clan, with its divine origins and military prowess, whose golden age had already begun to decline as early as the 6th century, even before the decline of the Shima no Otodoke family ("the Soga family, the Otodoke Branch" [16]). The famous coup d'état, the Isshi Incident, marked this latter event as the prelude to the Taika Reform, which also signaled the rise of the Fujiwara clan, with the surname bestowed as an honorary title to Kamatari.

In contrast, the Fujiwara clan, first realized by Tankaikō ("Lord of Ōmi," Fujiwara no Fuhito's Chinese-style honorary title) with keen political wisdom, split from the also divine-originated Nakatomi clan and gained its political prominence. Fujiwara no Nakamaro, a modern-day powerhouse known by the title "Daishi Emi no Oshikatsu Ason,"[6] was a crucial figure in this Sinicization movement. Aside from external pressures on expression, these are what Orikuchi's relentless use of official ranks, honorific titles, and posthumous names was meant to reveal: an immersive ancient context between the old faith and the "modern" Sinicized regime, between oral traditions and the rhetoric marked by Chinese characters.

The comparative framework of "orality/literacy" and "antiquity/modernity" was embodied in these two figures; this is not to say that Yakamochi represents "antiquity" as an out-of-date mid-level aristocrat and Nakamaro represents "modernity" as a prominent, powerful bureaucrat, but rather that the conflict is illustrated through their contrast. Between them, Yakamochi, as a sentimental poet who felt more or less powerless over the reality that surrounding him, might be more like a "typical" modern person whose nostalgia paralleled his clan's misfortunes and the decline of the native tradition—the "*Sehnsucht*" [11] towards an ultimately undiscoverable infinite archetype, while also containing a sense of *incompleteness* in wavering between an unsatisfactory reality and an unattainable origin.

Orikuchi's sympathy for Yakamochi is evident not only in this novel. However, another more important aspect is that Yakamochi is the second "viewpoint character" aside from the heroine, Iratsume.[7] In his dialogues with Nakamaro and others, he acted as the listener (i.e., the position same as readers), and his inner thoughts, rather than those of his counterparts, were depicted.

Inner monologue, as the evidence of the presence of an inner self (interiority), according to Karatani Kōjin [19], marks modernity and modern literature. The book is a "modern novel," expressing what Orikuchi called "a period of ancient life as reflected in the modern view." [14]

In this regard, its portrayal of antiquity—through Yakamochi's eyes—is filtered through a modern perspective as Karatani described that simultaneously discovered landscapes and the inner self. In this epistemologically "inverted 'field,'" the stone wall was transformed *following* the earthen wall, from a signified to a signifier, as a decontextualized "landscape" and a visional representation of the contradiction between "tradition" and "modernity." For the first time, it became visible to the narrator-viewpoint character (and, more importantly, to the reader possessing this character). It is precisely within this field seen by a modern person (Yakamochi,

[5] This should refer to the era when Fujiwara-kyo was the capital (694-710), not the middle Heian period..

[6] Fujiwara Emi no Oshikatsu (藤原恵美押勝) was also a name with Sinicized honorific rhetoric. Here, "Emi (恵美)" roughly means "virtue of beneficence," and "Oshikatsu (押勝)" means "putting down" the rebellion and "gaining victory."

[7] Some discussions illustrate how Iratsume was portrayed as a modern subject. See Amano, Ikuho. "Poetics of Acculturation: Early Pure Land Buddhism and the Topography of the Periphery in Orikuchi Shinobu's *The Book of the Dead*." *Japanese Language and Literature*. Vol. 54, no.1(2020), pp.1-36.

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the author, and the reader) that the stone wall, as a signifier, becomes a symbol of absolute "antiquity."

The modern perspective comes into play here. Antiquity is antiquity precisely because of the comparison with modernity. However, once the landscape (i.e., the interiority projected outwards) is discovered, it is immediately transformed into something "self-evident," something "as an existence which preceded the inversion." Thus, this retrospective perspective, which enabled the discovery of the ancient, the archetype, the interior, and the landscape, immediately wishes to discover its origin in the "antiquity" it had just discovered. This paradox of seeking the root of modernity in quasi-absolute antiquity created by the former, this inversion itself, is "the material apparatus of modernity."[8] [19].

4. Center, or Archetype: Emergence of Antiquity

Orikuchi's antiquity (*kodai*) is not just chronologically ancient; the cyclical emergence of antiquity enabled non-temporal absolute antiquity as an archetype of the national and cultural essence, as discussed above. Conversely, this also holds: it is precisely because his antiquity is a non-temporal, archetypal "way of thinking" or faith, rather than a specific region in a particular time and space, that his antiquity can unfold infinitely across the two dimensions of time and space, with its "involving" nature and the unlimited vitality in its constant cyclicality. As Andō Reiji said, to Orikuchi, *hassei* (emergence; emerging) and *kodai* (antiquity) are synonymous, which is a never-ending dynamic process that is constantly repeated until the present, and each time renews itself. [7]

It is worth re-emphasizing that the emergence process of the antiquity allows for changes: "While Japanese Shinto and national morals are often perceived as unchanged since ancient times, they have actually evolved over time." [8] Thus, examining the true nature of that "antiquity" necessitates tracing back along its path of emergence, as mentioned above. However, the evolving of "antiquity" does not imply discontinuity but rather a renewal (of its manifestations) with the changing times.

It is because of this repetitiveness and cyclicality that the antiquity could be spread into a unified communal antiquity, evolving from the central to the local level, from the center to the periphery, from the archetype to the phenomenon and thus, allowing antiquity to overlap with modernity and reality.

Orikuchi was undoubtedly aware of the multilayered structure of Japanese culture. However, he believed that any accepted foreign tradition in Japan naturally had a corresponding native element concealed beneath the surface of Buddhism or Chinese beliefs. In this way, Orikuchi countered the "Continental origin theory," which posits that these traditions originated from the Asian continent, such as China or India. [20]

Also, he viewed the process of the periphery actively or passively aligning with the center as the natural formation of the community. The court ceremonies could be passed to local and even rural areas by those obligated to periodically go to the capital to serve, such as court ladies (*uneme*) and lower-ranked warriors (*jige no bushi*). After completing their terms, they mostly returned to their hometowns, rarely staying in the capital, bringing the ceremonies back to their local regions. On the other hand, if peripheral regions had had significantly different beliefs from the court, it would have automatically conformed to those of the noble classes due to the principle of "toadyism (*jidai shūgi*)." [8]

Orikuchi recognized the political and cultural hierarchy between the center and the periphery. However, a safe conclusion can frequently be drawn towards imagining Japan as a community

[8] One can easily find more meaningful parallel structures between Karatani's theory and Orikuchi's scholarly and literary practice, centered on the contrast of "orality-locality-antiquity" and "literacy-externality-modernity"; the linkage of emotion—oral language—self-expression constructed by modernity, is another example.

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or *Gemeinschaft* when those differences are *overcome*, which appears almost natural to center around the court. "Even the faith called Shinto by the folk," as Orikuchi stated, "is the faith of the aristocracy (which is read as '*ōkimi*,' meaning 'the imperial family') that spread to ordinary people." [8]

However, because of the capacity of traditions to spread from the center to the periphery, the periphery became where antiquity could be preserved; in the central regions, the ancient way of thinking had been covered layer upon layer to the point that it almost lost its original form. At the same time, the center's beliefs were initially derived, consolidated, and developed from various peripheral regions. One can easily find that this paradox of the "center" is similarly reflected in the basic framework of Yanagita Kunio's Surrounding-zones dialect theory (*Hōgen Shūken Ron*).

In this sense, chronological tradition and modernity were interpreted as spatial or social center and periphery, embedding the possibility of finding the shared "essence" in peripheral spaces and groups. More precisely, it was about finding the pathways to antiquity (as an archetype) in the periphery where the remnants of folklore practices (as phenomena) resided, using the retrospective hermeneutics (*jikkan*) to piece together these transformed—even disfigured—remnants with the literate records of ancient life, thereby reconstructing the latter.

The above-described de-temporalized and finally spatialized ahistorical native antiquity, based on the "premodern/modern" or "stasis/change" dichotomy, is a part of modernity. In Karatani's analysis, the nation is distinct from the ethnic, as it is not achieved through a community of blood and soil. However, the nation, as part of the Trinity of the modern nation-state (nation, state, capitalism), is based on the combination of the rational social contract of citizens and the imagined community's "sympathy" and "reciprocity" of mutual help [21].

The point to emphasize here is that the discourse seeking a community in antiquity is itself part of the epistemological framework and ideological apparatus of modernity. It is because Orikuchi sought this "antiquity" as a modern person that Orikuchi could imagine unfolding it into contemporary society, evoking a reconciled resistance to modern life, which called for a "cultural continuity" [22].

Thus, the practice of tradition is invented as a performance of antiquity. Imitation (*Modoki*) is also part of the cyclical emergence of ancient thought, as Orikuchi describes it.

As a result, Orikuchi's social and local peripheries were, in a sense, discovered in the manner of Karatani's "landscape" and Yanagita's "*jōmin*"[23] (similar to Herder's "*das Volk*"): they did not embody their essence or interiority but served as metaphorical signifiers. Here, they became the bearers of the "antiquity," the national, ethnical, and cultural nature, the prime experience of the community (whose original experience eventually transcended class, urban-rural, and regional differences to become entirely interconnected and homogeneous), and the unconscious evidence of Japanese-ness. This essence, having wandered to the periphery throughout the long historical process, is now to be rediscovered through folklore studies—summoned as the "Renaissance" of the "Shinto spirit" [8].

"State made available the space of the nation the folk occupied once they were constructed and was, therefore, prior to both the nation and the folk." [5]. Harootunian's criticism pointed out the reality of this imaginary *Gemeinschaft*: while it was indeed based on a reaction against modernity (such as temporality, literacy, rationality) and the modern state, it ultimately failed to prevent itself from merging with the ideology which claimed an ethnic-cultural community constructed by a homogeneous "folk."

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5. The Myth of Displacement: Exile and Nostalgic Exoticism

In many senses, "exile" is a crucial term in Orikuchi's imagination—or rather, I wish to use this term as a metaphor to describe the spatial, temporal, and semantic movement of the "essence" discussed above.

When Orikuchi stood on the island of Japan, imagining the "Marebito" (rare divine visitor; in Harootunian's interpretation, "god/men"[5]) *arriving* from the "strange land (*ikyō*)" each spring to bring blessings to the native inhabitants, this sentiment was different from Yanagita's depiction of "suffering of the isolated island (*kotōku*)" during the League of Nations conference, where he likened Japan, in its contact with the Western world, to Okinawa as an isolated island. What Yanagita referred to as the "isolated island" has real implications: outside of it lies the natural foreign land, while within it lies internal economic and social issues. (It is worth noting that Yanagita made this statement not as an "out-of-office (*zaiya*)" folklorist but as a *layperson* member of the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations.) [24,25]

On the other hand, Orikuchi's "strange land" detached from its realistic counterpart and fully enters the realm of symbolism—imagination. In a certain sense, I believe Orikuchi's imagination of a transcendent "strange land (*ikyō*)"—which precisely became the seed of the ancient communal faith—serves to affirm the *locality*, the homeland, and the shared experiences. In this context, the *ikyō* is again symbolically (which is a part of the "analogical" way of thinking) discovered.

The mentioned "strange land" is used to refer to "the Eternal Land (*tokoyo*)" and the "mother's land (*haha ga kuni*)." It is important to note that Orikuchi described this longing as "exoticism (*ikyō ishi*)." The *ikyō* is not the same space-time as antiquity; instead, it is a purely transcendent place, even transcendent the imagination of antiquity. If antiquity represents a form of nostalgia (*kaikyō shin*), then the *ikyō* is nostalgia's nostalgia, antiquity's antiquity. The figurative memory of this strange land in the hearts of the prime community had already faded even in the "antiquity" imagined by Orikuchi. It survived merely as a faint, nostalgic shadow of "exoticism," forming the inherent seed of ancient beliefs in visitors from overseas or the heaven—Marebito.

Orikuchi himself gave a romantic explanation for this: at the far end of the horizon (*umisaka*), the sea and sky appeared to merge, and the Marebito were said to arrive from the sea as if descending from the heavens [8]. However, it is not difficult to observe that this "overseas," which once might have had a realistic counterpart, has now been symbolically replaced by the "heaven," which undoubtedly bears a solid *central* significance in this symbolic system.

There are at least two kinds of "nostalgic exoticism" here: spatial and temporal. If the dividing line between the strange land and real world is spatial, then the nostalgia for this strange land, which began to fade even in antiquity, represents a nostalgic exoticism on the timeline. His "motherland" (as a word undoubtedly abstracted from the "individual" mothers' land of mythological figures like Susanowo-no-Mikoto and Inahi-no-Mikoto) went beyond a real geological space and became a super-empirical, romanticized, and mythologized realm, which he believed existed in the spiritual world of the prime communal identity.

Another notion by Orikuchi is highly significant in this context: *kishu ryūritan*, or "'tales of exiled and wandering nobles." [26]. Without a doubt, in terms of content, this is primarily a category of tales (*tan*), a type of story *narrated in the first person* by those "tellers of tales."

For Orikuchi, narrative or the action of "telling a tale" held extraordinary mythological significance. In this first-person narration, the story's protagonist and the narrator (teller of tales) blur together *in the listeners' perception*. The boundaries between storytelling and performance are not distinctly defined, and there is a seamless transition between verbal narration and stage performance (as physical and verbal expression are often complementary). It is within this logic that "narration" and "performance" transform into "possession (*hyōi*),"

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where the performer becomes the medium possessed by the divine spirit—Marebito—and finally becomes "the bearer of the divine words (*mikotomochi*)" of the protagonist of the tales.

In this way, the sorrowful yet moving and noble tales of "exile" instead constituted the connection between the center and the periphery. The center and the periphery, as well as antiquity, modernity, and the future, are connected by language-narrative-mythology elements. "The Marebito, which has two extremes—the *hokahibito* (wandering performers) and the *mikotomochi* (sorcery kings)—are mediators between the celestial world and the terrestrial world." [27]. Another way to put it might be more precise: "the Marebito functions as a kind of reverse image of the *kishu ryūritan* theme," depicting "the hero's journey to the periphery as seen from two different perspectives." [26].

Orikuchi attempted to connect classical texts with the "living classics" [28] or the contemporary actual folk practices, linking the *ancient center* with the *modern periphery* and decontextualizing the classics. Classical texts like Kojiki, Nihon Shoki, and Fudoki, which originated from the court, had not claimed to represent the perspectives and positions of the periphery. Mythological protagonists who experienced a certain kind of displacement or exile, such as Susanowo-no-Mikoto and Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto, rather than exemplifying the shared melancholy of the communal identity, more closely resemble the process by which kingship unified the periphery. In such a narrative, the "real" ancient lives of marginalized groups in history were more or less obscured by this unfolding of the center towards the periphery.

"Kingship is not only the establishment of order but entails an apparatus which domesticates disorder/chaos on the mythologic and symbolic level," Yamaguchi Masao noted [25]. Orikuchi's modern mythology might function similarly—symbolizing the periphery; it paradoxically reinforces the hierarchical relationship between the center and the periphery on a symbolic level. In this sense, Orikuchi succeeded in transforming objectively existing folk into phenomena in the quest for "archetypal" antiquity.

It must be acknowledged that this archetype, which is ready to unfold into reality and the implied multilayered structure of "reality," indeed entails narrative dangers: it occasionally overlaps a layer of mythological or even metaphorical characteristics upon actual politics, thus legitimizing and preserving inequalities [29]in geopolitical reality to some extent—most notably the symbolization and, as Murai Osamu's criticism pointed out, *epicization*[30] of contemporary affairs. In this sense, Orikuchi's "archetype" obscured reality, ultimately transforming it into a modern mythology.

6. Conclusion

Orikuchi endeavored to find the fundamental unified faith theory to explain all the cultural phenomena of "Japan" in literature, folklore, and even history. This romanticized and symbolized non-temporal essence or archetype has existed from the time of the founding of the Japanese nation until the present, shared by the court and wandering performers across literature, religion, and folklore.

In this context, "romanticize" is meant literally; this is on the extension line of Romanticism. His antiquity was, from the beginning, a transcendent and unattainable past. Simultaneously, it was abstracted from the "non-antiquity" (written records tainted by rationalism; contemporary folklore practices buried under various foreign superstitions) in an inverted manner and then attempted to seek evidence of its existence within itself. His self-referential (i.e., "cyclically emergent") antiquity studies enveloped themselves within their logical framework. I would describe his notions Marebito or *kishu ryūritan*, or even his whole scholarship, as, to some extent, a kind of "nostalgic exoticism."

His scholarship is self-referential, unfolding inward in this process of cyclical emergence. He was practicing the ancient way of thinking he described (not just in his creative works but also

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in his academic pursuits) and ultimately became a modern *kataribe* who merged with his antiquity in his narratives of his modern mythology.

Through his extraordinary literary talent, Orikuchi discovered a unified communal antiquity beneath Japanese culture, which is richly and vividly multilayered. Simultaneously, with the insight of a *Man'yo* literary figure and a modern ethnologist, he recognized the emerging process of beliefs and language across time and space and the dynamic interplay between center and periphery. He knew that the original beliefs were not rationalized or moralized in the way later interpretations might suggest but were imbued with a passionate duality of justice and evil. However, this awareness, as a reaction against modern "rationalism," led to the implicitly indiscriminate legitimization of the entirety of this "antiquity," with antiquity itself (as the archetype) becoming the unquestioned source of value. To some extent, the periphery Orikuchi reconstructed was nothing more than an exiled archetype of the center. Moreover, the pre-*Ritsuryō* or *Jindai* community he identified, as Harootunian critiqued, never extended beyond the bounds of the nation-state.

Indeed, this could be seen as an imagined alternative to modernity. However, Orikuchi's attempt at opposing modernity invertedly became an effort to locate the origins of modernity's imagination of antiquity within itself. This paper does not seek to reiterate the constructed nature of antiquity as an archetype. Rather, it emphasizes that the act of shaping a myth of an imagined community is, from the outset, intimately tied to the identity of the modern subject, and thereby to the historical and ideological terrain of modern Japan.

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