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How to Write "Japanese" Folk Songs

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Many new folk songs (新民謡) or newly-composed folk songs (創作民謡) were written from the late Meiji era to the early Showa era in Japan. And composing these songs was very popular among not only professional poets, but also amateur people.

This paper deals with the book, *How to Write Folk Songs* (『民謡の作り方』) written by the poet Rinnosuke Nishikawa (西川林之助) in 1933. It was for amateur writers. It represents abstract images of Japan and Japan's folk songs, and aimed to standardize and unify the concepts of various rural communities.

During the same period, traditional folk songs were changing. With the development of record media, they spread throughout the entire nation. This in turn, created a need to add their region's name to their titles to emphasize their origins.

The developments of traditional and contemporary "folk songs" are apparently different. One is known to be more general, and the other to be more specific. But actually they are fundamentally the same.

There are two directivities in cultural nationalism. The tendency to spread a nation's culture all over the world because of its value, and the other to keep it pure by insulating it from other cultures. However, these trends are not contradictory but rather, complimentary. These two "folk songs", the new folk song and the traditional one, are the embodiment of these directivities.

This paper will illustrate the correspondence between these directivities and folksongs.