

Editorial Intent

Special Feature: “Interrogating the Boundaries of Japanese Culture”

Historically, the borders of “Japan” were not consistently defined. Even today, there are still a considerable number of people who subscribe to the illusion that “Japan” as a country is a singular entity that covers a territory that has remained constant. However, a look back through history reminds us that the “Japan” at the time when the *Nihon shoki* was compiled in the eighth century and the “Japan” as a modern state with colonies were different, as is the “Japan” of today.

Just as “Japan” has been an entity in flux, “Japanese culture” likewise can be seen as having boundaries that differ depending on one’s perspective. In this inaugural volume of *Kokugakuin Japan Studies*, we decided that we would like to reinterrogate the boundaries of Japanese culture and produce this special feature with that goal in mind.

The article by Professor Taniguchi Masahiro investigates how the world was understood in the eighth-century *Kojiki*. He argues that in the *Kojiki* the division between the world of the *kami* in the heavens and on the earth and the world of human beings was not as simple as it may seem.

Professor Hanabe Hideo discusses the world of old folktales in his article. He considers what sorts of possibilities for comparing worldviews arise when tales with largely the same motifs are discussed as ancient folktales, when they are discussed as medieval *setsuwa*, and when they are discussed as folktales of foreign origin.

Finally, the article by Professor Ishikawa Norio takes up the concept of “Japonesia [*yaponeshia*]” as coined by novelist Shimao Toshio. The space covered by this concept stretches from the South Sea Islands north to include the Japanese archipelago. Ishikawa examines what the meaning of this word “Japonesia” held for Shimao. It is from these three perspectives that we will interrogate the boundaries of Japanese culture.

KJS Editorial Committee