

Visual Media and Folklore Studies: The Case of Kunio Yanagita

Visual Media, Folklore, Kunio Yanagita

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This study examines the relation between Kunio Yanagita, the founder of Japanese folklore studies, and modern visual media to elucidate the formation of scholarly knowledge in Japan. Although Yanagita showed significant interest in photography and film, he did not fully adopt them as research tools. This stemmed from technological limitations of early visual media and from his methodology, which prioritized objective records yet relied on premodern imagination. By analyzing practices such as diagramming photographs, overlapping evidence, and expectations for talking films, the study reveals tensions and possibilities between folklore studies and visual media, providing insights into the interplay of modern media and scholarly knowledge production.