

Thoughts and its Changing Process of Theatrical Movement in Rural Area :

A Case Study of Kenji Miyazawa's View of Art and the Activities of Young Men's Circles and Association in NAGATORO Village

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Summary

Kenji Miyazawa (1896–1933) proposed that the modern arts monopolized and biased by capitalism should be returned to the hands of the ordinary people and be restored by adding life force and vitality to them. In his thoughts can be clearly observed a strong influence of the democracy movements of the Taisho Era (1912–1926), which coincided with his adolescence, and the popular art theories stimulated by those movements.

The post-war rural theatrical movement in Nagatoro, Yamagata Prefecture, had its origin in Miyazawa's thoughts on the arts. Before the war, Jinjiro Matsuda, who had learned Miyazawa's ideas on the arts from Miyazawa himself, started theatrical movements of young farmers as a means of rural development. These movements were revived in the post-war years as circle activities with the help of students of Ichitaro Kokubu, the leader of a life recording movement, and the young people provoked by Matsuda's theatrical movement. This group activity was supported by local youth circles and associations. To these circles, staging was helpful in building solidarity among members but was an obstacle because it required large funds and much labor. Thus, owing to the collision of the need to strengthen the ties among members and the difficulty of financing, members engaged in staging work were often replaced by new ones.

The rural theatrical movements pursued both an ideal and the provision of entertainment. But as the young people's circles and associations were dissolved one after another, the rural theatrical movement based on these organizations disappeared. At present, this area has three theatrical groups, which are specializing in a direction that strengthens the aspects of enlightenment or art.