

On the Folktale *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage*: Classical Tellings and Worldwide Comparisons

HANABE HIDEO

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Introduction

THE folktale *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage* (“Yome no koshi ni ushi” 嫁の輿に牛, in *Nihon mukashibanashi taisei* 日本昔話大成 [Collection of Japanese Folktales]; “Ushi no yome-iri” 牛の嫁入り or “The Ox's Marriage” in *Nihon mukashibanashi tsūkan* 日本昔話通観 [Survey of Japanese Folktales]) is similar in its motifs to Japanese textual materials and tales recorded in the Aarne-Thompson Index (an international catalogue of folktale types) under the type “The Lecherous Holy Man and the Maiden in a Box” (AT896). The former are found in medieval collections of *setsuwa* 説話 (parables), such as *Shasekishū* 沙石集 (Sand and Pebbles) and *Ōdanshū* 雑談集 (Miscellaneous Discussions), and in collections of *monogatari* 物語 (narrative tales), such as the *otogizōshi* 御伽草子 (prose narrative) *Sasayaki-dake* ささやき竹 (Sasayaki Bamboo).¹

The story goes as follows. A Buddhist priest, seeing for the first time a beautiful young woman who has come to a temple to pray, comes up with a strategy to make her his wife. The strategy is half-successful, and she is brought to the temple in a carriage. However, on the way, when the person leading the cart steps away from it, a lord (*tono-sama* 殿様) who happens to be passing by switches the young woman with an ox and takes her as his wife. The ox that is brought to the temple goes on a rampage.

* This article is a translation of Hanabe Hideo 花部英雄, “Mukashibanashi ‘Yome no koshi ni ushi’ no kenkyū: Koten oyobi sekai to no hikaku” 昔話「嫁の輿に牛」の研究—古典および世界との比較—, *Kokugakuin zasshi* 國學院雜誌 120:3 (2019), pp. 19–32.

1. Translator's note: In this paper, the author refers to *setsuwa* and *monogatari* as “classical” tellings.

Research on this folktale has primarily been carried out by scholars of medieval Japanese literature. They have focused on presenting various versions and their differences and similarities, as well as the divinities, shrines, temples, localities, and figures that appear in the story. Ichiko Teiji 市古貞次 (1911–2004), who was a leading authority on medieval *monogatari* and *setsuwa*, pointed out in *Mikan chūsei shōsetsu kaidai* 未刊中世小説解題 (Explanatory Notes on Unpublished Medieval Stories, 1942) the similarity between *Sasayaki-dake* and related *setsuwa* collections. This was followed by the research of Nagai Yoshinori 永井義憲² and Sawai Taizō 沢井耐三.³ The former presented a previously unnoticed but similar story in *Shūrin shūyōshō* 鷲林拾葉鈔. While presenting his view that the story was told in the context of sermons on the *Lotus Sutra*, highlighting the story's character “Saka-no-mono” 坂ノ者 of Kiyomizudera 清水寺, he hypothesizes that it can be traced back to the Heian period (794–1185). However, the ground for concluding this is weak.

The temple/divinities that the young woman and/or her close family members visit vary between versions. In *Shasekishū* we find Jizō Bosatsu 地藏菩薩 (Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva), in *Zōdanshū* Kuramadera 鞍馬寺, in *Shūrin shūyōshō* Kiyomizudera, and in *Jizō bosatsu reigenki* 地藏菩薩靈驗記 Mibu Jizō 壬生地蔵. The different settings of similar *setsuwa* are probably related to the backgrounds against which these works came into existence. If the abovementioned temples were related to the management of these *setsuwa*, then this might be due to the involvement of the religious professionals that resided at them. However, here I will only raise this issue and not explore it further.

Above, I have noted developments in Japanese literature research based on materials in which stories similar to this folktale are recorded. However, research based on oral transmissions inside and outside of Japan lags behind, and only Minakata Kumagusu 南方熊楠 and Matsubara Hideichi 松原秀一 introduce versions of it.⁴ Minakata draws from his extensive knowledge to introduce similar stories from *Nansō satomi hakenden* 南総里見八犬伝 (Eight Dog Chronicles), China's *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang; Jp. *Yūyō zasso*), India's *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Ocean of the Streams of Stories; Jp. *Katāsarittosāgara*), and elsewhere. Matsubara introduces a similar story from France's *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* (One Hundred New Tales). However, in the second half of this story, the young woman is not switched out from the cart, and, furthermore, a lecherous holy man deceives her into thinking that she is carrying the child of God. In this way, the second half of the story develops a Christian-influenced

2. Nagai, “Kōkyō dangi to setsuwa.”

3. Sawai, *Otogizōshi*.

4. Minakata, “Bijin no kawari ni mōjū”; Matsubara, *Chūsei no setsuwa: Higashi to nishi no deai*, pp. 150–90.

motif. Matsubara then seeks out similar *contes* from European sources and engages in a comparative discussion of them.

The aim of this paper is to engage in an international comparison of the folktale *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage*. First, after comparing the characteristics of this folktale and Japanese *setsuwa/monogatari*, I will carry out a comparative analysis with similar tales from overseas. I have adopted this approach because medieval Japanese tales of lust—which are from a specific time and place—might be able to play a mediating and enhancing role in comparisons between this Japanese folktale and similar tales from other countries, an endeavor that investigates growth process and transmission of these folktales while making clear their regional characteristics.⁵

An Ox in the Bride's Carriage and Setsuwa/Monogatari

MATERIALS FOR COMPARISON AND TABLES

In table 1, I have listed *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage*-type *setsuwa/monogatari* and the *rakugo* comic storytelling piece *Otama ushi* お玉牛, as well as fifteen folktale versions of this story. While this is not many folktale versions, it is an adequate number for comparative purposes. Looking at their distribution, there is a good number from the Tohoku area and the Amami Islands, and few from central or western Japan. At first glance the folktales appear to be different from medieval *setsuwa/monogatari* in terms of their themes, motifs, and development. However, historically they have had a deep relationship, and here I have ventured to include them in the same table, partially in order to make their differences apparent.

From its title, the *rakugo* piece *Otama ushi* appears to have been composed with the *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage* folktales and *setsuwa/monogatari* serving as a foundation. The story is as follows. The playboy Shigehira brags about having won over the highly regarded beauty Otama and how he was going on a nocturnal tryst to see her. On the day of the tryst, a family member puts a calf in her bedding. Shigehira sneaks in and, in the darkness, caresses and praises its horns, hair, and skin. However, in the end the calf shakes off the futon and dashes away. The following day, his friend asks Shigehira if he made Otama gasp, to which he replies no, adding the excuse, “I made her moo.” This is the punch line. While it is more of a parody of *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage* than a similar story, I have included it here as an example of an early modern transformation of this story. In fact, this is the same as folktale no. 15, and the phrase “I thought it was her gray hair but it was a cow!” in folktale no. 18 is related to *rakugo* as well. Also, the incident in the bedding found in the above *rakugo* piece is also the same as the climax scene in the

5. Aarne, *Mukashibanashi no hikaku kenkyū*.

Table 1. *Yōme no koshi ni ushi*. Made by the author.

	SETSUWA/MONO-GATARI OR AREA OF TRANSMISSION	MAIN CHARACTER	OCCASION	DECEIVER	STRATEGY
1	<i>Shasekishū</i>	Young Woman	Jizō worship	Young Buddhist priest	Whispers near her ear “the first man”
2	<i>Zōdankshū</i>	Noble young woman	Visit to Kurama-dera	Kurama priest	Instructs her as deity to marry temple priest
3	<i>Jizō bosatsu reigenki</i>	Hikohime	Visiting Mibu Jizō	Passionate Buddhist priest	Using bamboo tube, “the first man ...”
4	<i>Shūrin shūyōshō</i>	Woman	Kiyomizu visit	Buddhist priest	Using bamboo tube, “the first man ...”
5	<i>Sasayaki-dake</i> (Pattern I)	Noble young woman	Kurama cherry blossom viewing	Superintendent (<i>bettō</i> 别当)	Using bamboo tube, as deity instructs her to marry superintendent
6	<i>Sasayaki-dake</i> (Pattern II)	Noble young woman	Summoning high monk to request prayers	Saikō-bō	Instructs her from a bamboo tube to marry Saikō-bō
7	<i>Otama ushi</i> (<i>rakugo</i>)	Otama	Young woman’s gossip	Shigehira	Forced nocturnal tryst
8	Kizukuri, Aomori	Sanko	n/a	Rich person	Gets her as bride using pressure
9	Tsuchibuchi, Tōno, Iwate	Young woman	n/a	Buddhist priest from neighboring village	Give daughter and 50 <i>ryō</i> to temple
10	Itoyo, Kitakami, Iwate	Elder sister	n/a	Buddhist priest	Give daughter and 50 <i>ryō</i> to temple
11	Kotooka, Yamamoto, Akita	Young woman	Comes to temple hall to pray for marriage	Superintendent (<i>bettō</i> 别当)	Give her to temple’s superintendent

	SUCCESSFUL?	RESCUER	REPLACEMENT	ENDING	SOURCE
1	No	Samurai Buddhist priest	n/a	Freed from curse	<i>Shasekishū</i>
2		Lieutenant General (<i>chūjō</i> 中將)	Calf	Calf rampage	<i>Ōdanshū</i>
3	Yes	Feudal Lord (<i>daimyō</i> 大名)	Calf	Calf rampage	<i>Jizō bosatsu reigenki</i>
4	No	Rich person	n/a	Marries daughter of Saka-no-mono	<i>Shūrin shūyōshō</i>
5		Kunai Shōyū	Calf	Calf rampage	<i>Sasayaki-dake A</i>
6		Regent (<i>kanpaku</i> 関白)	Ox	Ox goes on a rampage, stampeding through a crowd	<i>Sasayaki-dake B</i>
7		n/a	Ox	Sharing a bed with an ox	<i>Otama ushi (rakugo)</i>
8		Lord (<i>tono-sama</i> 殿様)	Calf	Young woman becomes wife of lord, ox goes to her parent's house	<i>Kizukurimachi no mugashikoshū</i>
9		Lord	Calf	Young woman returns, ox goes to her parent's house	<i>Tōno no mukashi- banashi</i>
10		Lord	Calf	Returns ox to her par- ent's house	<i>Suneko, tanpako</i>
11		Master (<i>Yakata- sama</i> 屋形様)	Ox	Young woman returns, ox goes to her parent's house	<i>Akita mugashiko</i>

	<i>SETSUWA/MONO-GATARI</i> OR AREA OF TRANSMISSION	MAIN CHARACTER	OCCASION	DECEIVER	STRATEGY
12	Bizuka, Shinjo, Yamagata	Young woman	Buddhist priest called for Buddhist service	Buddhist priest	Hand over to temple for bad fortune exorcism
13	Nishizao, Nagaoka, Niigata	Young woman	Praying to mountain god for marriage	Dim-witted person	First man you meet on the way home
14	Yamanashi	Elder's daughter	Praying to tutelary deity	The peasant Gonbē	Give daughter to Gonbē
15	Mitsu, Okayama	Young peasant woman	Gave in due to repeated visits	Young person	Slips into young woman's bedding
16	Kotoura, Tottori	Young woman	Praying to hall of fortune	Hall caretaker	Give her to the caretaker
17	Yatsuka, Matsue, Shimane	Elder's daughter	Praying to tutelary deity	Young Buddhist priest	Man who comes to shrine's land should marry into your family
18	Kagawa	Elder's daughter	n/a	n/a	n/a
19	Kikajima, Kagoshima	Woman	Woman makes vow to a god	Young man	Become the young man's wife
20	Naze, Kagoshima	Young woman	Goes herself to temple to pray	Priest	Become priest's wife
21	Naze, Kagoshima	Beautiful woman from village	n/a	Priest	Come to be my wife in a large box
22	Kohamajima, Taketomi, Okinawa	Young woman	To talk about daughter finding a marriage partner	Buddhist monk from China	Give your daughter to the monk to extend her life

	SUCCESSFUL?	RESCUER	REPLACEMENT	ENDING	SOURCE
12		Lord	Ox	Young woman becomes wife of lord, ox goes to her parent's house	<i>Shinjō no mukashibanashi</i>
13	Yes	Lord	Calf	Young woman becomes wife of lord, ox goes to her parent's house	<i>Obaba no mukashibanashi</i>
14		Bandit	Calf	Ox rampages	<i>Kai mukashibanashishū</i>
15		n/a	Ox	Runs away upon hearing "moo"	<i>Okayama-ken Mitsugun mukashibanashishū</i>
16		Samurai	Calf	The ox does not return to the young woman	<i>Daisen hokuroku no mukashibanashi</i>
17	Yes	Lord	Calf	Young woman becomes lord's wife	<i>Hiruzen bonchi no mukashibanashi</i>
18		Man	Calf	"I thought it was her gray hair but it was a cow!"	<i>Nishi Sanuki chihō mukashibanashishū</i>
19		Lord	Unweaned calf	Unweaned calf goes on a rampage	<i>Kagoshima-ken Kikaijima mukashibanashishū</i>
20		Child of lord (<i>dono</i> 殿)	Brown ox	Young woman goes to lord, brown ox goes to her parent's house	<i>Fukushima Naomatsu mukashibanashishū</i>
21		n/a	Young horse	Young horse goes on a rampage	<i>Hisanaga Naomatsu ōna no mukashibanashi</i>
22		Young samurai	Calf	Cow is reunited with daughter at theater	<i>Okinawa no mukashibanashi</i>

classical telling *Sasayaki-dake* (Pattern II),⁶ in which the priest pats the inside of the tub while praising the young woman (the ox). This is truly an interesting point in terms of comparisons between oral tradition culture and literature/the arts.

When creating the table, I first divided the story's constituent elements into two parts: the first part that consists of the "deception" to get the young woman, and the second part that consists of her being "replaced" in the box with an ox and rescued. Then, I added the "occasion" that led the young woman to become the target of the deceiver, and the "conclusion" that follows the whole incident.

THE "OCCASION" AND "DECEPTION FOR MARRIAGE"

Next, I will go through this table to discuss notable content found in the story's constituent elements. Despite temples playing such a significant role in the "occasion" part of classical *setsuwa* and *monogatari* that one is led to assume that the *setsuwa* were managed by temples, in folktale versions one finds Shinto gods more than temples, as well as some folktales without an "occasion" part. In these latter cases there is no scheming: the suitor is intimidating, directly demanding money and the young woman. Despite temples playing a small role overall in such stories, the priest's attitude is, in contrast, arrogant. It appears that from the beginning the storytellers intended to have the priest play the evil role of a deceiver.

However, when, for example, a young village person is the deceiver, he carries out a deceptive act that involves scheming. These are the same as the strategies in classic tellings: hiding in the shadows of the gods/buddhas and saying one's own name, instructing a young woman to go to a specific place or through the temple on a specific route and then going there before her. In some cases, this works, and in others it does not. I have indicated this under the "Successful?" column. For example, in numbers 3, 13, and 17 in the table, the woman does as the deceiver instructs, the latter gets the former, and he brings her to an appointed place in a carriage. In contrast, in numbers 1 and 4, the strategy is unsuccessful: the woman meets another man before the deceiver, who goes off with her. Therefore, the subsequent development of the young woman being replaced with a cow does not appear. These two stories are a little unnatural when seen from how the story forms. For example, the subsequent development changes greatly. This form probably was the result of changes made later to these versions in an effort to make them stand out.

6. The *Sasayaki-dake monogatari* ささやき竹物語 (held by Iwase Bunko 岩瀬文庫) in *Muromachi jidai monogatari taisei* 室町時代物語大成, vol. 6, is a comparatively shorter Pattern I, and the *Sasayaki-dake* ささやき竹 (formerly held by the Akagi Bunko 赤木文庫 in the same volume) is a Pattern II longer version. Yokoyama and Matsumoto, *Muromachi jidai monogatari taisei*.

Incidentally, in numbers 12 and 22, we find a strategy that does not appear in classical tellings: the ox and woman are summoned so that an exorcism can be carried out to remove bad fortune. I will touch upon this again when engaging in an international comparison.

“RESCUE” AND THE MEANING OF THE OX

Of the constitutive elements of the rescue motif found in the latter half of the story, let us first turn to the “rescuer.” In the story’s classical tellings, the rescuer is presented under the commonly used name for an authority figure of the era. In contrast, in the case of folktales the rescuers are always either lords or samurai. It appears that narrators imagined the story against the backdrop of the Edo period (1603–1868). Also, the woman is almost always replaced with a calf (ox). Medieval *setsuwa/monogatari* and folktales are the same on this point. This constitutive element only being an ox is something that does not change regardless of the era, and is a unique characteristic of Japanese tellings compared to those of other countries.

Finally, let us turn to characteristics of the conclusion. Excluding numbers 1 and 4, which do not have a “replacement” part, the *setsuwa* and *monogatari* have a happy ending, with the women marrying a high-status man. In contrast, the temple priest incurs considerable loss, being unable to control the rampaging ox. Turning to folktales, six of them (8, 12, 13, 17, 20, 22) clearly state that the woman becomes the wife of the lord. In two of them (9, 11) the woman returns to her parent’s home, and in six of them the priest sends the woman back to her parent’s house because she had turned into an ox (8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 20). When seen from the numbers, we cannot say that the folktales are particularly concerned with the young woman’s marriage. In relation to this, in one story (22), this is followed by the calf being raised at the parental house of the young woman who returned and the ox being reunited with the daughter.

In classical tellings, the rampaging ox is quite a nuisance, but folktales demonstrate a strong interest in the whereabouts of the calf. We can see this as having come from the reality in which people lived: they raised oxen and used them for agriculture. In the background to a single *setsuwa* or folktale are people’s actual daily lives that are deeply related to them. Extra caution should be exercised with regard to easy desk work-like judgments that ignore this.

Plot Developments in *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage* Around the World

When engaging in an international comparison of folktales/*setsuwa*, due to the issue of different languages being used, one must make clear the criteria for recognizing similar stories. Therefore, here my basic criteria are the existence of the deception and rescue motifs. These motifs appear in a variety of contexts and also vary greatly

Table 2. *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage* around the world. Made by the author.

	REGION	COUNTRY/SOURCE	BEGINNING	
			MAIN CHARACTER	OCCASION
1	East Asia	Korea/ <i>Kin Tokujun mukashibanashishū</i>	<i>Yangban</i> young woman	Listening to the young woman's gossip
2	East Asia	China/ <i>Yūyō zasso</i> , vol. 11	Mo's daughter	n/a
3	Tibet/Mongolia	Russia/ <i>Hoppō minzoku no minwa</i>	Young woman	Prays at monastery
4	Tibet/Mongolia	Mongolia/ <i>Shiddi-kūru</i>	Young woman	Praying at Avalokiteśvara Hall
5	Tibet/Mongolia	Tibet/ <i>Chibetto no shiki jonjūnanawa</i>	Young woman	Praying at Avalokiteśvara Hall
6	East Asia	Vietnam/ <i>Sekai no minwa: Ajia II</i>	Young woman	Young woman visits temple
7	India	India/ <i>Katāsarittosāgara</i>	Merchant's daughter	Mendicancy
8	India	India/ <i>Sekai minwa zenshū, Indo-hen</i>	Young woman	Young woman's marriage consultation
9	Europe	Bulgaria/ <i>Sekai no minwa: Tōō</i>	Bride	n/a
10	Europe	France/ <i>Sekai no minwa: Nan'ō</i>	Female servant	n/a
11	Europe	United Kingdom/ <i>Sekai no minwa: Igrisu</i>	Tailor	Plum-eating promise

	DECEPTION TO MARRY			RESCUE		CONCLUSION	NOTES
	DECEIVER	STRATEGY	SUCCESSFUL?	RESCUER	REPLACEMENT		
1	Buddhist monk	Carries the woman away in a chest of drawers	n/a	Group of hunters	Tiger		
2	Buddhist monk	(Taken by robber)	n/a	Prince of Ning	Bear	Monk eaten by bear	
3	Poor man	In the shadow of a Buddhist statue, "first visitor"	Yes	Khan boy	Tiger	Tiger rips him up	Young woman's background investigated
4	Poor man	Hides in shadow of Buddhist statue, "first visitor"	Yes	Khan prince	Tiger	Eaten by tiger	Young woman's background investigated
5	Poor man	Hide behind Avalokitesvara, "first visitor"	Yes	Neighboring country's prince	Tiger	Eaten by tiger	Young woman's background investigated
6	Merchant Mon	Temple spirit tells her to marry Mon	n/a	Hunting prince	Tiger	Tiger comes out of basket	
7	Ascetic	Releases young women's basket into river to eliminate bad fortune	n/a	Prince	Monkey	Bitten	
8	Islamic clergy member	Black box released into river due to instructions in dream	n/a	Neighboring country's prince	Hunting dog	Dog bites and kills	
9	Cunning person	Bride replaced with corpse	n/a	Wedding ceremony witness	Female dog	Bites man's nose	Beans/chicken/pig/ox exchange
10	Turlendu	Exchanges mule for female servant	n/a	Person from inn	Dog	Bites man's nose	Louse/chicken/pig/ox exchange
11	Demon	Offers tailor to demon	n/a	Cowherd	Male goat	Small demon is injured	Promise to demon

in degree. However, since differences show the characteristics of areas, I have kept my criteria loose. Also, following the previous section, I have broken down eleven texts into their constituent elements to create table 2. I have divided the table into four regions (East Asia, Tibet/Mongolia, India, and Europe) and will go through and explain the stories falling under each of them.

EAST ASIA

Here, I have included Vietnam in addition to Korea and China as it is not only part of the Chinese character cultural sphere but also due to the similar content of the folktales. Incidentally, if I may go on a brief tangent, about three years ago I resided in Hanoi, Vietnam, for a month. In preparation for my trip I read Japanese translations of Vietnamese folktales and was surprised to come across one that was very similar to Japan's *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage*. This is what led me to engage in comparative research on the subject. The story goes as follows.

An unmarried young woman goes to a temple and prays to marry a high-ranking government bureaucrat. The merchant Mon finds out about this, and, pretending to be a temple spirit, arrogantly tells her to marry him. The young woman becomes determined to marry Mon, looks for him, and tells him about the temple spirit's words. When Mon, having put the young woman in a basket, is carrying her to his house, he encounters a prince going hunting. Putting the basket by the side of the road, Mon hides in the bushes. The prince opens the basket to find the young woman, asks her what happened, takes her as his wife, and puts a tiger in the basket. Mon returns home carrying the basket. He has his mother engage in marriage preparations, and, upon opening the basket, a tiger comes out.⁷

While the Vietnamese story's deceiver is a calculating merchant, in the Korean and Chinese versions he is a devious Buddhist monk. In these versions there is no deception involved. All of a sudden, he violently kidnaps the young woman. However, when being transported, a hunter or the Prince of Ning, an actual historical figure, takes away the young woman, replacing her with a tiger or bear, and the story ends mercilessly, with the monk being eaten. The Chinese *Yuyang zazu* is a ninth-century (Tang dynasty, 618–907) book by Duan Chengshi 段成式 (803–863). This indicates that already from around this time there was a rescuer motif.

TIBET AND MONGOLIA

Tibet and Mongolia, located at the edge of Central Asia, as well as the northern peoples of Russia and Siberia, are centered around nomadism and oasis agriculture.

7. *Tera no sei*.

Perhaps due to their shared regional environment, their stories are similar. It is even possible that they are directly related, belonging to the same genealogy.

The story is as follows. A poor man eavesdrops on a couple's conversation, and the following day hides in the shadows of an Avalokiteśvara statue before they come to the Avalokiteśvara Hall. When they arrive, he says, "Tomorrow, give your daughter to the first man that visits." Having successfully acquired the daughter and wealth, he puts her in a box and brings her back to his village. First, he buries the box and returns to his house, saying that he's going to carry out a ritual to become rich. A prince who passes by the buried box shoots an arrow into the now black mound of sand, and rescues the young woman from the box into which the arrow had stuck. He replaces her with a tiger, and leaves. Not knowing this, the man brings the box to his house and opens it. The tiger jumps out and eats the man.

Subsequently the young woman becomes a queen, has three children, and is living happily. However, retainers come to have doubts about the queen's background. Troubled, she returns to her hometown to escape the castle. She finds her parent's house surrounded by a grand palace and temple. Her younger brother and parents welcome her. The retainers who went with her see this and return to the castle. The following day she awakens, but the palace and temple are gone—they were illusions. The queen is able to restore her prestige and again returns to the castle to live.⁸

In real-world background to this sequel-like part, a strong social status system may have existed in which people married those fit for their social status. This development probably ensured that this story felt realistic in this area, and in this sense, we might be able to say that it shows regional inland Eurasian characteristics of *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage*. Incidentally, *Siddhi-Kür*,⁹ which includes this story's Mongolian telling, is the Mongolian version of India's *Vetalapañcavimsati* (Twenty-Five Tales of the Corpse Demon).¹⁰ There are also multiple Tibetan versions. However, this story is not included in the Indian and Tibetan versions and it was probably subsequently added. It is quite possible that there were Buddhism-mediated influences between Indian, Tibetan, and Mongolian *setsuwa*.

Nishiwaki Takao 西脇隆夫, who recently translated *Siddhi-Kür*, introduces at the end of the volume similar stories to those contained therein, including some similar to *A Bride in the Ox's Cart*. While I did not include them here because they are only summaries, there is no doubt that in countries surrounding China there are many versions of this story and it was widely adopted.

8. *Musume no Hemapuradēpu*.

9. Nishiwaki, *Shiddi, küru: Mongoru setsuwashū*.

10. *Shiki nijūgowa*.

INDIA

At an early stage, this story was included in *Kathāsaritsāgara*, which was compiled around the middle ages. It is as follows. An ascetic who is engaging in the practice of silence visits the house of a rich merchant to beg for food. Seeing the merchant's beautiful daughter who had brought him food, he speaks, in spite of himself. When the merchant asks why, the ascetic replies that it is because an inauspicious sign appears on the daughter, and informs the merchant that if he does not put the woman in a black box with a torch attached and release it into the Ganges River at night, his family will be destroyed. The merchant does as he is told. A prince who had come to bathe then finds the box, and opens it to reveal a beautiful young woman. Disciples sent by the ascetic then pick up the box and deliver it to him. However, the prince has replaced the young woman with a monkey, and the monkey comes out and bites the ascetic.

This is a comical plot, and the actions of the characters are depicted vividly. In this story the ascetic informs the family that their daughter has an inauspicious appearance, and plots to make her his own. In Japanese folktales we also find it said that the young woman and ox have an inauspicious appearance. With that said, I do not intend to try and show based on this that the story came from India to Japan. This element exists probably because in both India and Japan priests and the like would treat people with inauspicious signs. I see this similarity as being due to the stories matching people's actual lives.

As can be seen by the telling included in the likes of *Sekai minwa zenshū*, the *Kathāsaritsāgara* story is still found in India today. Also, according to the explanation by Iwamoto Yutaka 岩本裕 in the same book, it is also found near Ceylon.¹¹ The transmission situation in India serves as a great reference when thinking about Japan.

EUROPE

Lastly, turning to European versions, one finds that they differ greatly in content than those we have seen above. They do not contain the first part's deception motif and the rescue motif also differs. In all of the European versions, a cunning person demands that various things be exchanged for something he holds, and the bride (female servant, demon) that he had acquired as his final exchange is replaced with an animal. The content of France's *Turlendu* [*Dururandu* in Japanese] is as follows.

The cunning Turlendu leaves a louse at an inn. It is eaten by a hen, and he demands the hen. At the next inn, the hen is eaten by a pig, and he receives the pig. This pig dies from being kicked by a mule, and he receives the mule. When a female servant mistakenly drops this mule in a well and kills it, he receives the female servant,

11. Iwamoto, *Sekai minwa zenshū*.

and has an inn hold onto a bag into which he has placed her. The owner of the inn replaces the female servant with a dog, and upon opening the bag at his home a dog comes out, and bites his nose.¹²

This development is the same as Japan's *Warashibe chōja* 藁しべ長者 (The Straw Millionaire).¹³ However, this is a story of success in which the main character replaces one item for another. In the case of France, it is a tale of failure with a surprise ending that results from the woman being replaced.

In the Bulgarian story (9), the cunning person acquires a bride by making a fuss that a participant in a wedding ceremony, who had knocked down a corpse he had propped up, actually killed the person. However, in the end she is replaced with a female dog. The trick of propping up a corpse and then making a fuss that it had died after it is pushed over matches the Japanese folktale *Chie aridono* 智恵有殿 (The Lord with Wisdom).

In the case of the UK (11), the character is eating a plum and says that if they eat more they would not care if they are kidnapped by a demon, thereby digging their own grave. When a demon is about to take his life, he is replaced with a male goat thanks to the quick wit of a cow herd. It concludes with the goat going on a rampage and the demons having a terrible time. The above is based on the *Sekai no minwa* 世界の民話 (World Folktales) series, and I have referred to Ozawa Toshio's 小沢俊夫 explanations therein.¹⁴

The examples from Europe greatly differ from the Asian *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage*. The replacement motif is used in the last part of a pattern in a cumulative tale.¹⁵ While we cannot say that these stories directly influenced each other, perhaps ideas arising from people's actual daily lives are in the background.

The Folktale *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage*: International Comparison

Above, I have compared the content of the *setsuwa/monogatari* and folktale tellings of *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage* in Japan, as well as with folktales from around the world of the same type and with the same motifs. Based on this, I would like to try and trace the process of this folktale's birth, growth, and movement from the perspective of its emergence, themes, and transmission.

12. *Dururandu*.

13. *Kōnjaku monogatari*shū.

14. Ozawa, *Sekai no minwa: Kaisetsu hen*.

15. Saitō, "Ruisseki mukashibanashi to wa nani ka."

THE FOLKTALE'S EMERGENCE

Generally speaking, it is nearly impossible to decide when and where folktales emerge. This is due to them having been orally told by a large number of now nameless individuals and not being written down unless there was some need to do so. This is also the case for *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage*.

However, if we consider this issue in terms of probability, we could say that it probably emerged from India, where Buddhism's roots lie. This is because temples and temple priests/monks play a major role in the story's development. Initially a beautiful young woman visits a temple hoping to find a good match, and a superficial Buddhist monk/priest who sees her launches a plan. We could say that the priest engaging in the quite immoral act of pretending to be a Buddhist icon while hiding in the shadow of its statue is an idea that comes from a critical position that rejects a secularizing Buddhism. However, this issue of secularization is not limited to India but is found in all Buddhist countries. This might make it certain that this folktale emerged in the Buddhist country of India; not only is this story related to Buddhism in terms of its content, but the countries in which this story of a degenerate monk/priest is transmitted includes, in addition to India, other Buddhist countries such as Tibet, Mongolia, and Japan. This is because the story's telling is authentic or real in the context of a Buddhist country. This story has had an impact in environments where Buddhism and Buddhist priests/monks have a strong influence within society.

The issue of degenerate clergy members is not limited to Buddhism. One finds stories of them in other religions. In the second part of the story discussed by Matsubara Hideichi from France's *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* mentioned earlier, a priest impregnates a young woman and deceives her into thinking that she is carrying the child of God. This is related to Christianity. Furthermore, the degeneracy of church clergy in medieval Europe is humorously depicted by Giovanni Boccaccio in *Decameron*.¹⁶ This is like the degenerate priests in Japan's *Zatsudan-shū* and *Sasayaki-dake*, which are from the same time period. While what is presented as realistic depends on a country's cultural environment, structural problems are always found in human society.

However, looking at how this story was told in Japan over time, while we find temples being deeply involved in the middle ages, the influence of Buddhism decreases in folktales. As the deceiver shifted from the temple priests of *setsuwa* and *monogatari* to the young people of folktales, the Buddhist hue grew weaker. This issue is related to the story's themes as well, and I will discuss this again in the next section.

16. Hirakawa, *Decameron*.

THE FOLKTALE'S THEMES

I have already discussed how this folktale is comprised of a deception motif in its first part and a rescue motif in its second part. However, looking at these two motifs in terms of themes, we find that there are subtle changes in content with regard to the balance of the two. For example, when weight is attached to the deception, much attention is paid to the rhetoric of the deceiver's strategy. As a result, the demise of this character tends to be more hair-brained and comical. Saikō-bō 西光坊 in the classical *Sasayaki-dake* (Pattern II), and marriage with Saka-no-mono in *Shūrin shūyōshō* are typical examples of this.

On the other hand, as we can see in the examples from Korea and China, when weight is placed on the rescue in the second part, the young woman is replaced with a tiger (viciousness itself), and bloodshed ensues. The immoral behavior of the evil monk—in other words, the vicious act of kidnapping and seizing the young woman—serves as a premise for this draconian punishment of death. In either case, in the background to these two motifs lies a base logic of righting wrong in society: there are punishments appropriate for wrong acts. Depending on the emphasis, differences appear in how the story develops.

However, when focus shifts from the temple priest to the young women, subtle differences arise. In the case of Japanese *setsuwa* and *monogatari*, marriage becomes a major theme. In this case, the young woman is presented as a divine blessing, the daughter of a fallen aristocratic family, or the holder of diverse abilities, and the narrative unfolds from her perspective. Also, the stories are highly realistic. For example, the terms used for the rescuer's social status match those found at the time. This tendency might reflect the narrator or audience hoping that their daughters would marry an exalted person.

The issue of the young women's origins found in Tibet, Mongolia, and elsewhere is similar in the sense that it is related to marriage. Her background being investigated by others serves to ensure the reality of a commoner daughter and king marrying. This is also probably because of a high interest in marriage. With regard to this point, the charlatan wishing for the bride or female servant as his last exchange in the Bulgarian story and France's *Turlendu* is due to an attachment to marriage.

In Japan's folktales the same level of interest is shown in ox-raising as the young woman's marriage. I covered this in the second section's discussion of the rescue and the ox. This is not a way of looking at the story that sees the ox as a sign of the degenerate priest's punishment but is an understanding with people's daily lives in mind. Looking at this as an issue of development over time from classical tellings, we could say that the theme of marriage spread and became a secondary development. This is related to the folktale's schematic choice of characters: the young woman's marriage is with a

stereotypical partner (like a “lord”), just as it is a “prince” in folktales from other countries. The content of a folktale changes due to the era and cultural environments in which it is told. This is also proof that folktales live along with their tellers and listeners.

THE SPREAD OF THE FOLKTALE

Diffusionism is an academic theory that, explaining cultural history and heterogeneity, holds that human culture flows from high places to low places, just like water. On the other hand, the theory of multi-dimensional simultaneous emergence (*tagenteki dōji hasseiron* 多元の同時発生論) holds that human culture arises when human society and living environments reach a certain level. To simplify, in research on folktales, geographical-historical methods have primarily relied on the former, while psychological structuralism has relied on the latter.

When interpreting *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage* with Buddhism in mind, diffusionism is more compelling. As I have already discussed above, Buddhism, the teachings preached by Śākyamuni Buddha in India, spread from west to east. Connecting the countries in which this folktale has been passed down, we can derive a route that goes from India, through inland Asia, to Mongolia and East Asia, and then Japan. Tracing this route, we could see this folktale as having reached its present form in Japan after undergoing unique transformations in each of these areas.

When understood as having developed in this way, we could say that the folktale's development as *setsuwa* and *monogatari* in medieval Japan consisted of it being reconstructed and written down in Buddhist books or by people affiliated with Buddhism to fit the sociohistorical situation of Japan at the time. On the other hand, there is little material to judge whether the European-style replacement motif was directly transmitted from India. This is an issue to be explored in the future after more materials have been collected.

Conclusion

The folktale *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage* is known as a story similar to the classical *Sasayaki-dake*. While there has been research on its various versions and formation in the field of Japanese literature, scholarship on folktales and international comparisons has been limited to introductions of various versions and other information. This paper has examined *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage* from the standpoint of folktale research by engaging in an international comparison primarily of Japanese classical tellings and versions found in Asia.

In classical tellings, the Buddhist priest's strategy to acquire the young woman fails magnificently, and she marries a high-status person. However, while in folktales there is some interest in the young woman's marriage, we find new developments. For

example, the calf—who was just a nuisance in classical tellings—is returned to the young woman's house, and she becomes involved in raising it. This was a change that took place in the context of people using oxen for agriculture and the like.

Looking overseas, we find that while in Japan the thoughtless behavior of the temple priest invites derision and mockery, in the stories from Korea and China, we find drastic developments in which, for example, the monk takes the young woman by force and is then punished for this by death. Also, in the likes of Tibet and Mongolia, we find a sequel in which people investigate the background of the young woman who married the prince. This might be related to this area's social status system. We find regional characteristics in other countries' stories as well. For example, in India the box is released in the Ganges River.

It is highly probable that this story originated in India. It appears at an early stage in an Indian parable collection, and Buddhist temples and monks are involved. It is possible that as part of Buddhism's eastward expansion it went through inland China and was brought to Japan in the middle ages by priests or through Buddhist books. It appears that in the process of taking root in each country, this story underwent unique changes. While we do find a bride (female servant) being replaced—apparently a transformation of the rescue motif—in European stories, I will turn to the issue of the direct relationship of this with this folktale at another point.

In the discussion of the regional distribution AT896, “The Lecherous Holy Man and the Maiden in a Box,” it is stated that there are similar stories in West Asia. Therefore, further research that takes into account these regional traditions is needed.

Seki Keigo 関敬吾, holding that folktales are not dead like items on display in a museum but, rather, exist in people's heads, proposed the terms “folktale biology” or “folktale ecology.” Folktales live while changing with the times, and here I have highlighted the changing form of the folktale *An Ox in the Bride's Carriage* in light of this principle. Making clear how a single folktale emerged and moved while growing and changing is the geographical-historical research method, and I have followed this in this paper.

(Translated by Dylan Luers Toda)

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