

## Remembering Folktales as Oral Tradition: A qualitative single case study of a "Goze"

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### Summary

The article addressed to remember folktales as oral traditions. Very fortunately the latest female minstrel with blind eyes (goze) who could do appeared unexpectedly. A qualitative single case study was adopted in order to divulge the phenomena. Being interviewed exclusively 13 times, she remembered very precious 34 folktales. (Animal Tales 3, Ordinary Folktales 26, and Jokes & Anecdotes 5) The characteristics of them were typically as follows: (1) Almost every folktale was told without faltering. (2) The content of them sometime conveyed the world of animism. (3) Each tone of her voices on the casts communicated the corresponding emotions in her folktale. (4) Ideophone, which was unorganized, but effusive and so lived, often appeared. (5) Gesture was hardly made. Simultaneously, as having reached the period of the latest minstrels, this study strongly indicated that their function of the transmission to the other persons have mostly disappeared. Nevertheless, it survived to the same minstrels scanty but surely.

### Objectives

This paper is to review the recalling of folktales transmitted through words of mouth. The most difficult task in this study is to find the person(s) to whom folktales are transmitted through mouth due to the limited capability of using letters in daily living. And such was the case.

It was very lucky for us that we were able to find the last Goze (in general means a blind old woman who recites the folktales through singing) who could recall old stories. She was such a wise old woman that unless we gather many folktales from her, it is obvious that we would lose a tremendous value. The previous report concerning the recall of old folktales through Goze are very much limited and may be only one by Iwase<sup>1)</sup>, a scholar of Japanese literature. Thus, a basic hypothesis "Goze is a propagator of folktales (p.19)" thus not standing on sufficient evidence<sup>2)</sup>. In such circumstance, this is the first qualified report based on the evidence obtained from the last Goze belonging to Nagaoka Goze premises. This does not mean that this is a specific example<sup>3)</sup> report, different from general rule and trend within a scientific frame works, but aims at recording (p.5)<sup>3)</sup> and researching such world from understanding an individual client as "new" and "one world".

This study describes the best available research on the recalling and Reciting of old folktales by the last Goze through repeated interviews following the Iwase's preceding research for the purpose to materializing the evidence based research. Main objectives are to clarify the two points [specific world<sup>4)</sup>] and [physical behavior<sup>4)</sup>] observable in this female Reciting old folktale, as the first qualified evidence based report standing on the view [knowledge clinics<sup>4)</sup>].

## Method

### 1 Client

The last Goze (called Uba) born January 28, 1913 as 5<sup>th</sup> daughter in 6 sisters and 4 boys at B-machi, A-prefecture within Hokuriku district and 89 year old currently. She became blind at the age of three years in her agriculture home due to poor sanitary condition and malnutrition due to poverty in those days. She had been in serious difficulty with her vision until complete blindness. Thus, she could not receive elementary education (according her comments).

At present, she further has hearing difficulty due to old age plus her lack of vision. We must use a wireless guided system microphone (Panasonic RD-560Z) all the time with the highest volume setting. Even so, we had occasional difficulty interviewing her. According to her medical doctor, she is in good health except for her sight and hearing impairment.

### 2 Procedure

#### 1) Term of interviews and places.

Thirteen interviews during August 17, X and June 6(X+1 year), once or twice a month, were performed. First 3 interviews were carried out randomly in the first week, thereafter the interviews started at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday. About one hour and half we spent for each session. The space of interview was 400cm X 570cm with one 76cm X 145cm table and 4 adult size chairs in center, and two sofas were set near the window. Two doors were blocked to prevent unnecessary entrance to the room.

#### 2) Methods of interview.

Uba, interviewer and three assistants were involved and data was obtained. Major data source were field note, recording by digital view camera and transcript recorded by IC recorder. Digital view camera was set across the Uba. IC recorder was placed on 50cm away from Uba. The interviewer and assistants

participated mostly as listeners.

#### 3) Hinting.

Let us know whatever story you can recall from any old story that you ever heard. Please do not add or neglect any part of the story as much as possible. Her answer at times she could not recall any stories. In such a case, the interviewer tried to induce her memory by presenting the story thus she could recall.

## Results

### 1 Evaluation of psychological state and daily activities through observation of behavior.

Psychological N system scale for elders (NM scale) and N system daily activity scale for elders (N-ADL) were used for checking the capability. The evaluation values were obtained from the person(s) observing Uba from nearby.

#### 1) NM scale

Following items were score 10 and within a normal range: house work, tidiness, conversation, inscription, memory, and speculation. Total score of 49 points and normal in general.

#### 2)N-ADL

Walking and sitting-standing scored 10 points within a normal range.

Putting-on and taking-off her clothes, bathing, eating and toileting were 9 points for each and stayed within normal range. Because her living action is limited, the evaluation values are speculated at somewhere between 7 and 9. When these are compared with NM scale values, it is rather low in total.

### 2 Folktales recalled.

Yanagida<sup>9)</sup> ruled old folktales as the story with beginning of [long time ago] and ending with [one has split]. Uba did know that old style needs such phrases. However, her recalled folktales had many without such rule that it was difficult to apply strictly. According to Uba, the folktales transmitted in her parents' home had such phrases but they were missing in her elder

sister's folktales. But once her folktales from her home started, we noticed the missing of such phrases in them. This agreed with the indication in [Folktales by Goze](1). Thus in this study, the definition of concepts of folktales depend on [A large collection of Japanese folktales (abbreviated as Taisei)] and [A general survey of Japanese folktales (abbreviated as Tsukann)] which are considered as the standard classification of folktales in Japanese literature but not Yanagida' rule, to define the concept of folktales.

#### 1) Catalog of folktales.

Topics during our interview covered a wide variety, like her personal story of the past, stories of art, Goze's traveling, and children's songs. We have recorded 38 tales, old stories, orally recited ones, outside of this areas. Among those, 34 are old story, one orally recited one that is not included in Taisei nor Tsukann, and three are legends. Table 1 shows the list of folktales. This results were compared with the Iwase's. He obtained old stories from Ms. Kikue Sugimoto who is last Goze in Takada. She became blind at the age of five and Iwase made contact when she was 73years old until 76 years old. During this period, she recalled 83 folktales recited orally including 54 contained in Taisei. It looks less number of stories from Uba, however, the number will increase since we still continuing the contacts with her.

#### 2) Style of old story.

Old folktales were classified into tales of animals, authentic tales and funny stories according to Taisei. The number of stories Uba had recalled were 3, 26 and 5, respective to the above. The number of stories that Kikue had recalled were 8, 25 and 21, respective to the above. Following the quassquare test, the distribution of numbers became a meaningful ( $df=2$ ,  $X^2=8.01$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This results may suggest that Uba shows a strong point on recalling authentic old stories, while Ms. Kikue

Sugimoto can recall funny stories as much as the authentic old stories.

Next, we classified animal tales accordingly via sub classification in Taisei into 11; confliction, distribution, running, competition, fight between monkey and crab, kachikachiyama (bad racoon and good rabbit), Koyano rou (rain leaking old house), society, previous life of birds, where animals come from, and new type stories. Also authentic folktales were classified 17 subclasses to compare the folktales from Uba and from Kikue; gloom wed with non human, bride wed with nonhuman, difficult questions given to gloom, birth, destiny and richness, curse and treasure, brothers, old man next door, aged guest, step child, foreign country, repayment of kindness from animals, escaped mice, stupid animals, man and fox, new style tale and complement. The funny stories were classified into seven, stupid man, exaggeration, wisdom, sly man, formality, new style and compliment. In case of Uba, the stories and the number were as followed; old man next door (4), escape stories (3.5), bride with non human (3), man and fox (3), complement (authentic folktales) (3), stupid man (3), new type stories (authentic folktales) (3), destiny and richness (2), and step child (2). 85 per cent of them belongs to authentic folktales and the stars were human.

In case of Kikue Sugimoto, the stories and number were as follows; stupid man (15.5), stupid animal (7), sly tale (4.5), repayment of kindness from animals (4), gloom wed with non human (2.5), previous life of birds (2.5), step child (2.5), wife with nonhuman (2). Fourty nine per cent of them were funny stories. Outside of funny stories, previous life of birds as a story of repayment of kindness from animals and stupid animals and repayment of kindness from animal, "Iruikonin - muko and Iruikonin - Nyubou" as authentic folktale are main part as the stars were animals.

The subclass stories that both Uba and kikue

failed to recall were animal competition, distribution, society and new type story as animal folktales, and gloom with difficult question, curse and treasure and foreign country as authentic folktales. Moreover, sly man, formality, new type story and to complement were funny stories.

3) Transmitter of folktales.

Pass way of transmitting folktales can be classified for six, at large. The persons worked for transmitting and the number of folktales transmitted were shown in chronological order: before she becomes Goze in 1920, from grand father (8), between 1927 and 1945, from elder sister Goze, Kin Hayashi (2), between 1961 and 1967, elder sister Goze, Isa Kato (19), in 1975, from Kennichi Mizusawa (1), unidentified year, someone at Goze house (1), Unknown year and from unknown person (3). The results obtained were compared with the Iwase studies. Among 54 tales by Kikue Sugimoto, the transmitters were known in 32 stories and the pass ways were grossly classified to six. Those transmitters and the number of stories were following; Ms. Katsu Sugimoto, head Goze (13), her family member (8), other members of Goze (7), some one in Goze house (2) old woman nearby and masseuse (one for each). These results were agreeable on that 90 per cent of pass way were through Goze group or her family between last Nagaoka Goze and Takada Goze.

Classification of the types of recalled folktales by Uba according to the transmitter shows the uniformity in animal tales from he grand father (2), authentic old story (3) and funny story (3). On the other, the tales transmitted to Kin Hayashi and Isa Kato were that 19 out of 21 were authentic folktales. Only one of animal tales and funny story were transmitted to Isa Kato. Classification according to transmitter that Kikue Sugimoto had recalled were following: from her family, animal tales (3), authentic story (1), and funny story (4). The story transmitted

from Katsu Sugimoto and Goze group were animal tales (5), authentic story (8), and funny story (7).

Finally her experience of Uba herself as a transmitter of folktales was questioned. She repeatedly indicated the absence of experience. She pointed out the reason is the wide spread of television. It caused the no request for Goze song in Goze house. All she was doing was the chat. Even before that, she does not remember any request for folktales, although some songs may be requested. This is same for Kikue Sugimoto who says that she has an experience to memorized a story on her trip but never remember to memorize any folktale (29)<sup>1)</sup>.

4) Recall of folktales.

① Required time for recall.

The periods were measured in second and required period and number of stories were indicated in vertical and horizontal scale, respectively. A typical value for required periods were Mdn=379 sec., Min.=52 sec., Max=2309 sec. and a large deviation was noticed. In general, recalling time for funny story was short (Mdn=414 sec., Min=52 sec., Max=578) and the longest for authentic ones (Mdn=426 sec., Min=117 sec., Max=2309 sec.). 27 stories among 34 had no memory loss and the average time required was Mdn= 454 sec. (Min=138, Max=2309). The remaining 7

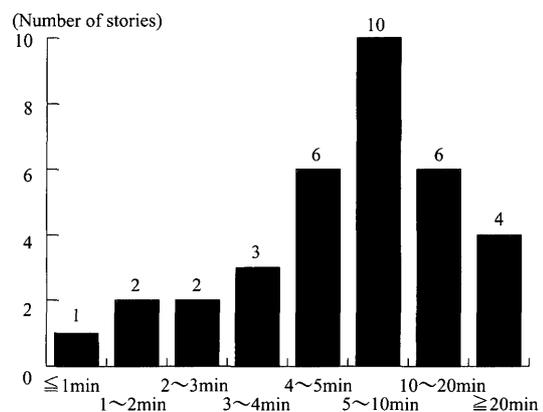


Fig Time required for recalling.

had some unrecalled portions and fragmented (Mdn=120 sec., Min=52 sec., Max=612 sec.) Such stories, however, had coordination throughout the contents.

#### ②Examples of recall

These were written in local and old Japanese language with many fragmentation, so that translation was omitted.

#### 5) Unique behaviors for recalling folktales.

When we set aside seven stories, which she could not recall even with the interviewer's prompts, like "Hamaguri-Nyobou" wife does not eat, girl without hands, shigama-wife, bird-eating old man and mountain priest fox, "Tobi-fukou," the first uniqueness was that there is no intermitting of story telling or a hard time to recall the story, and everything was smooth. The second uniqueness was her rich vocal expression. In detail, the tempo varied a great deal depending on the persons on story. Feeling was expressed well through her voice. The speed was never too fast but also never too slow. The local dialogue used was mid Niigata area including many old words scarcely used today.

For mimetic words, repeated words used frequently depending on her expression. The sound of words was rather lively without limitation than formality and following the rules. She did not use motion. Occasional nodding of her head on recall and light movement of her upper body during conversation were her only noticeable motions.

In comparison with Iwase study, it has been noticed that the special feature of Uba's talking were very similar with the one from Kikue Sugimoto, in confidence of recall, richness in voice and scarce use of motion. Some difference were somewhat faster in talking speed, less in local dialogues and use of more formal and standard word for mimetic words.

#### Discussion

It was our great surprise and pleasure that we

could meet the last Goze who could recall more than 30 folktales with high quality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Japan. More over, Uba was genuine talker who can recite 27 stories without fragmentation within seven minutes of average recalling time. Uba showed the less number of folktales than Kikue Sugimoto but she can be ranked better talker, judging from her recall of the longer authentic stories.

The most frequently recalled tale in sub classification was about on old man next door. This may indicate her unsatisfied experience on imitating her elder sister's skill. Stories never talked were gloom with difficult wedding question, cursing and treasure and foreign country. The absence of gloom with difficult wedding question may relates to the fact that Goze was never able to marry in rule of Goze association in mid Niigata area. The absence of cursing and treasure may come from that it is not conceivable, for Goze, any falling treasure from the heaven. Also the reason that she does not think of a foreign country comes from the same reason that such place is unimaginable for Goze. All of these indicate the locationally restricted hard life of Goze.

Next, we would like to consider the establishment of basic hypothesis that Goze is a transmitter of folktales. This hypothesis is not applicable to Uba. There is no evidence that Uba has recited folktales that she learned. It may be supportive fact that only one out of 34 stories is that she heard in Goze house. Such is the case for Kikue Sugimoto<sup>1)</sup>. However, it is not acceptable for generalization that Goze is not a transmitter of folktales. Uba retired to be Goze in 1976 and Kikue sugimoto retired in 1964. Both of them lived in the last end of Goze era and it might be highly provable that the Goze's function of reciting the folktales had been deteriorated.

The meaning that those two last Goze have never recited the folktales around a fire place has

been considered. This fact does not mean that they did not transmit the old story. Both of them certainly learned folktales from other Gozes on their trips. Goze had only scarce reciting function towards outside but they reciting folktales within limited groups but sound method.

A the essence of the story flower wife, which we have discussed here, is that an evening primrose plays an important role for helping hard working man. This indicates the world of imagination that a plant with life is speaking to the people in action. Such world is not limited to the story of flower wife but often observed in many folktales. These mean that it is the specific world recalled by Uba, which are largely different from the dualistic under paintings that insists basic establishment of world is independent and different from perception<sup>9)</sup>.

Finally, we discuss the method of talking with Uba as a physical action. After removal of fragmented old story, the recalling of stories was surprisingly firm. Ambiguity was rarely noticed. This was noticed even in the case of recalling the stories on her life, art, travel as a Goze, songs and children's songs. Her physical motion was seldom noticed during story-telling. This may be a reflection of forbidden things that Goze never use her motion in her work. In contrast to that, the expression of her feeling with richness but without order, freely with lively mimetic words was uniqueness to her talks. Despite Goze's hard

life, their telling of folktales has been always relieved and full of life and a excellent physical action by oral transmission.

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