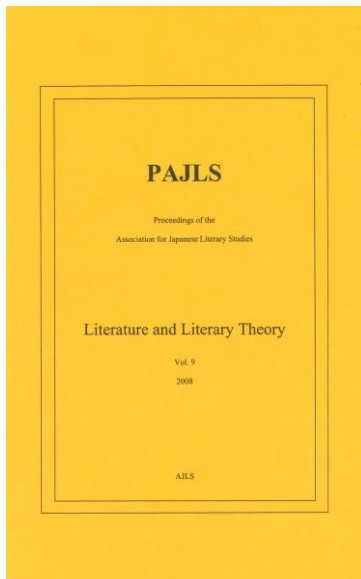


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Children’s Literature: Uno Kōji’s Rewriting of
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Cultural Translation in Modern Japanese Children's Literature: Uno Kōji's Rewriting of "Fuki no shita no kamisama"

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Japanese modern children's literature has been rewritten and translated again and again, and this was a significant way of producing new stories. Take for example, the children's magazine *Akaitori*.¹ Writers of *Akaitori* were critical of Meiji period children's literature and sought a new form of writing that took as its model Western artistic literature. Even then, writers still adopted old folk tales in order to produce new stories.

Generally speaking, rewriting (*saiwa*) is considered more creative than translation. This is because rewriting can adopt various folk tales, legends, and myths, and add more originality to the work. However, rewriting and translation are also similar; both can transform a given narrative by crossing discursive boundaries. In recent theory, it is said that historical and social contexts play an integral role in translation; as such we should pay more attention to the phenomenon of "cultural translation," because it reflects the political context and further determines the meanings of words.²

I will look at an example of an Ainu tale and see how the tale of one culture is translated into another. The translation I will look at for this paper is written by a *shamo*. *Shamo* refers to "the Japanese people," but it does not include the Ainu. Because the Ainu historically did not always include themselves in the category of "the Japanese," I will use the word *shamo* to specifically refer to the Japanese, not including the Ainu.

The theme of this paper is to look at how a *shamo* rewrote an Ainu folk tale. When the original Ainu tale was transformed into a new tale, what were its historical and social contexts? How did Japanese children's literature as a genre govern this transformation? These are my main questions.

I will start with the Ainu folk tale that was rewritten by Uno Kōji. Uno himself may not have been conscious of the implication of his own rewriting. However, even though Uno was not aware of the meaning, we should still examine the historical contexts of this transformation. We can see undisclosed historical and social contexts in Uno's rewriting. After Uno's work, I will also take up Takekuma Tokusaburō's translation of the same folk tale and compare it with Uno

¹ *Akaitori* was founded in 1918 by Suzuki Miekichi. In its manifesto, he claimed that Japanese children's literature had not yet attained great artistry like its equivalent in Western literature. To compensate for this, he published a new artistic magazine for children and gathered major authors in the field of Japanese literature. He rejected vulgar stories based on folk tales or fairy tales and other entertainments, and he wished his new magazine to become a model for children to learn composition, songs, poems, and paintings.

² For instance, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere say that "Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics, and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society." "Preface" to Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, eds., *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Pinter Publishers Limited, 1990). Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi also state that "Translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum" and "Translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries." Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, eds., *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1998), 2.

Kōji's. Since Uno was a *shamo*, and Tokusaburō an Ainu, I will thus be comparing a *shamo*'s rewriting with an Ainu's translation.

Uno's rewriting is entitled "Fuki no shita no kamisama," which was published in *Akaitori* in 1921. Before Uno's work, four texts related to Hokkaidō were published in *Akaitori*.³ These texts describe Hokkaidō as "a strange world," an object of exoticism. However Hokkaidō in these texts was not only "a strange world," but also a place that aroused political interest as a result of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the exploration of the Antarctic in 1910, and the Siberian Intervention from 1918 to 1925.

"Fuki no shita no kamisama" was the first rewriting of Ainu folk tales.⁴ There are two characters in Uno's rewriting, one is Koropokkunkuru, an Ainu god, and another is Kushibeshi, an Ainu man. The story takes place before the arrival of the Japanese to Hokkaidō. The god, Koropokkunkuru, is very kind to the Ainu, and always gives out food and clothes to them. He is usually a good god, but he has one distinct characteristic: he never wants to expose his body to the public. So, to cover his body, he always wears a straw jacket.

One day, the bad character, Kushibeshi, stole Koropokkunkuru's straw jacket. Koropokkunkuru, of course, wanted it back. Kushibeshi's bad deed made Koropokkunkuru angry, so the consequence was death: "Kushibeshi died, and since Koropokkunkuru went away somewhere else, it is said that the Ainu gradually died out. Now the Ainu seem to have disappeared."⁵

There are three important points in this story. First, this tale takes the form of *ywaitan*, which usually tells a story of origin. This story narrates an origin of the Ainu as the so-called "dying-race." The second point is that this story brings us back to the time and space before the Japanese came to Hokkaidō. The third point is that this story tells us about why the Ainu died out. It is not because of the Japanese, but because of the bad acts of one Ainu.

In reading this tale, it is clear that "the past" and "the present" are directly connected. It is as if nothing has happened in-between "then" and "now." All incidents including land extortion, servitude, epidemics, and modern assimilation policies by the *shamo* are ignored and deliberately erased.

In a broader sense, Tessa Morris-Suzuki points out that there is a cliché that the invaders use when conquering an indigenous land. This is the "Grand Narrative" that designates the invaded race as a dying race.⁶ This was precisely what was used in discussing the Ainu. Taking Suzuki's claim into account, "Fuki no shita no kamisama" can be seen as a new and modern children's story that contains the "Grand Narrative" applied to the Ainu in Japan since the Meiji era. The "Grand Narrative" has thus penetrated the consciousness of young readers.

Next, I would like to look at what Uno referenced in his rewriting. Until now it was not clear where Uno learned about the folk tale he adopted. However, from studies of Ainu folk tales, I found that a similar folk tale was passed down orally from generation to generation in the

³ The four texts are Satō Haruo, "Ōguma chūguma koguma" (1918), Kume Masao, "Kuma" (1919), Kikuchi Kan, "Ōkami to oushi no tatakai" (1920), and Eguchi Kan, "Yakanguma" (1921).

⁴ After "Fuki no shita no kamisama," many texts related to Hokkaidō or Karafuto (Sakhalin) were published in *Akaitori*. Uno Kōji's original story, "Aru Ainu jiisan no hanashi" (1921), Kitahara Hakushū's children's songs and non-fictional works about Karafuto (Sakhalin) are some such examples.

⁵ Uno Kōji, "Fuki no shita no kamisama," *Akaitori* (1921); reprinted in *Akaitori*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon kindai bungakukan, 1968), 42-51. All quotes are from this volume. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Japanese are my own.

⁶ See Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Henkyō kara nagameru—Ainu ga keikensuru kindai* (Tokyo: Misuzu shobō, 2000).

Tokachi region in Hokkaidō.⁷ According to the folk tale in Tokachi, when the god Koropokkunkuru gets angry, she exclaims “Nep, chī, Tokapu, chī,” which means “Let everything burn and let everything die.” From this Koropokkunkuru’s curse, “Nep, chī, Tokapu, chī,” Tokachi received its village name. The name Tokachi was left in order for its people to remember the curse and moral lessons.

Tokachi is not only important for the folk tale that Uno possibly referenced in his rewriting. This place is also a birthplace of the writer that I will be investigating next. The writer, Takekuma Tokusaburō, is an Ainu who wrote a book entitled *Ainu Monogatari*.⁸ It was published in 1918, three years before Uno’s rewriting of “Fuki no shita no kamisama.”

Tokusaburō was born in 1895, and educated in a system strongly governed by the assimilation policy of Meiji Japan. After going through this educational system, he became a full-time elementary school teacher and devoted much effort to educating the Ainu. And his teaching philosophy was inevitably biased by the assimilation policy.

In his book *Ainu monogatari*, he recorded a folk tale similar to the one we saw in Uno’s “Fuki no shita no kamisama.” Although Tokusaburō says the tales of Koropokkunkuru have regional variations, it is interesting to note how Tokusaburō described how the Ainu died out. In his book, Koropokkunkuru says, “The Ainu humiliated me. The Ainu will die out naturally, just as snow would melt and disappear.”⁹ This is a curse, and as we saw in Uno’s rewriting, this part expresses the “Grand Narrative.”

It seems that Tokusaburō’s writing suggests the extinction of the Ainu as a whole. However, we should not assume that this translation is completely the same as Uno’s rewriting. As I mentioned earlier, Tokusaburō is an Ainu who came from the Tokachi region. This is evident in the preface written by Kōno Tsunekichi who was a researcher of Hokkaidō, but I should emphasize that no one noticed the relationship between Tokusaburō’s folk tale and his birthplace, Tokachi.¹⁰

Regardless of his Ainu origin, I cannot deduce how much Tokusaburō was influenced by the “Grand Narrative” when he translated the Ainu text. In order to see if the “Grand Narrative” played an important role or not, we need to see the historical and social contexts of the time when Tokusaburō lived and translated this text.

It is first of all notable that Tokusaburō had an education that emphasized the assimilation policy. Thus, socially, in other parts of his writing, we notice his tendency to affirm the assimilation policy. However, it does not mean that Tokusaburō also accepted the fact that the Ainu was a “dying race.” In fact, for Tokusaburō, the Ainu would be able to strengthen their blood traits by mingling themselves with the *shamo*. His logic was that the Ainu traits would not “die out” as long as they were assimilated. He thus believed in the survival of the Ainu.

To reinforce this fact, we can look at how Tokusaburō conceived of the Japanese education system through the assimilation process. In the textbook descriptions of the Ainu, Tokusaburō noticed some discriminatory remarks, characterizing the Ainu to be an inferior race. He strongly opposed such descriptions and claimed that the Ainu should be treated equally. While endorsing the improvements that the Japanese education system brought to the Ainu, Tokusaburō felt that some descriptions were inappropriate to foster sympathy amongst the

⁷ See Inada Kōji, ed., *Nihon mukashibanashi tsūkan vol. 1 Hokkaidō (Ainu)*, (Kyōto: Dōhōsha, 1989), 606-607.

⁸ Takekuma Tokusaburō, *Ainu monogatari* (Sapporo: Fūkidō shobō, 1918). All quotes from Tokusaburō’s text are from this work.

⁹ Takekuma, *Ainu monogatari*, 4-8.

¹⁰ Kōno Tsunekichi excavated pit dwellings related to Koropokkunkuru in Hokkaidō in 1896.

shamo. Tokusaburō saw the need for a better curriculum to educate the *shamo* to understand the Ainu better.

Tokusaburō also mentions that the decline in the population of the Ainu was historically caused not only by the Ainu themselves, but also by the *shamo*. That is to say, Tokusaburō notices the importance of the “process” of assimilation. It is worth recalling here that in Uno’s rewriting, the two points of time, “the past” and “the present” were directly connected as if nothing had happened in-between. In contrast, what matters to Tokusaburō was the “history” between “the past” and “the present.” Thus, *Ainu monogatari* has both sides: an affirmation and criticism towards the assimilation policy. In this sense, Tokusaburō’s translation includes the “Grand Narrative” but differs from the “Grand Narrative” at the same time.

So far, I have looked at what Uno rewrote and what Tokusaburō translated. In Uno’s work, I identified the usage of folk tales in children’s literature and claimed that the “Grand Narrative” in such folk tales shaped his writing. In Tokusaburō’s work, I pointed out the importance of looking at both the historical and social contexts in which the folk tale was translated. To conclude, I would like to examine how one Ainu folk tale could transform and influence the “Grand Narrative.”

What connects the indigenous folk tales and the “Grand Narrative” is anthropology and archaeology. After the Association for Japanese Anthropology was founded in 1886, academics argued over what to designate as the older indigenous race, the Ainu or Koropokkukuru. It is the so-called *Koropokkuru ronsō* (the Koropokkuru debate).¹¹ Anthropologists advocated that Koropokkukuru was the older indigenous race because of these folk tales. The argument was further developed into a question of whether Japanese was a single race or a mixture of different races. Once this question was raised, the Koropokkukuru debate, which was initially a regionally-specific debate, took on a national dimension as it engaged with the construction of “Japanese” identity.¹²

It is not a coincidence that Tokusaburō’s book, *Ainu monogatari*, attempts to introduce the Ainu via the anthropology framework. And the folk tale I have been discussing is translated into Japanese and included in this book. In fact, *Ainu monogatari* has a chapter entitled “Ainu shuzoku” (The Ainu Race) and in the third section “Ainu zoku to Koropokkukuru” (The Ainu Race and Koropokkukuru), Tokusaburō says, “it is doubtful that the Koropokkukuru was an indigenous race older than the Ainu.”¹³

Tracing the indigenous people back in time, this debate reminds us how important it is to examine the connection between the two points of time, “the past” and “the present.” Anthropologists found the Ainu and Koropokkukuru as “barbarians” that lived in “the past.” The *shamo*, in contrast, was the more “advanced” race than the Ainu and Koropokkukuru. The *shamo* characterized both the Ainu and Koropokkukuru as the old, “inferior” races.¹⁴ It is in this context that Ainu folk tales were rewritten and translated. In effect, the *shamo* produced a boundary between themselves and the Ainu, and as such, they could assimilate the Ainu without jeopardizing the “Japanese” identity by rewriting Ainu folk tales. In this process, a variety of regional differences were eliminated and were memorialized as “past” figures from “a long time ago” and further removed from the “now.” This is the “Grand Narrative” that we saw today in

¹¹ Koropokkuru is another name for Koropokkukuru. Koropokkuru is the name commonly used to refer to the debate.

¹² See Oguma Eiji, *Tan’itsu minzoku no kigen: <Nihonjin > no jigazō no keifu* (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1995).

¹³ Takekuma, *Ainu monogatari*, 8.

¹⁴ See Tomiyama Ichirō, “Kokumin no tanzō to ‘Nihonjinshu,’” *Shisō*, no. 845 (November 1994), 37-56

both Uno and Tokusaburō's writings. However, I want to emphasize again that there are decisive differences between Tokusaburō's text and the "Grand Narrative." We should not ignore them. The differences are subtle, but decisively important.