
The Folk Tales “*Sanmai no Ofuda*” and the Texts of *Nho* “*Kurozuka*” “*Yamauba*”

TSUGANE Miono

This article discusses the historical dynamics of a folk tale and the correspondence of the folk tale with the texts of *Nho*. The folk tale called “*Sanmai no ofuda*” is a story that a Buddhist boy training at a temple runs away from *Yamauba* or *Onibaba*, a mountain witch. In the most variations, the child goes to the toilet and runs away throwing three magic cards at the monstrous woman.

It is possible to analyze the analogies into three different types, according to the elements of structure of the story, as follows:

- (1) *Onibaba*-type [temple – boy – mountain – flower picking for the dead – *Onibaba* – toilet – flight by magic cards]
- (2) *Yamauba*-type [temple – boy – mountain – chestnuts picking – *Yamauba* – toilet – flight by magic cards]
- (3) *Yamahaha*-type [girl – mountain – *Yamahaha* – flight]

In the case that the woman is *Onibaba*, she appears at the Bon festival and catches a child to eat. In the case of *Yamauba*, she gets angry with those invade her territory in the mountain by taking chestnuts. In the *Yamahaha* case, the story lacks the elements of a temple, a toilet and the magic cards.

It is estimated that the simple *Yamahaha*-type is the oldest, the *Yamauba*-type which contains the elements such as a temple and toilet is newer, and the *Onibaba*-type is the newest.

The contrast of *Onibaba* and *Yamauba* also exists in the two texts of *Nho*, “*Kurozuka*” and “*Yamauba*.” In “*Kurozuka*,” *Kijo*, a demoness, appears as a village woman. She laments her old age with spinning. It turns out that she has killed many people. After all she is defeated by prayers of a mountain priest. In “*Yamauba*,” *Yamauba* appears as a mountain woman. She dances to declare her territory in the mountain and disappears beyond the mountain. Although the folk tale, “*Sanmai no ofuda*” was recorded in the 20th century and the *Nho* texts, “*Yamauba*” and “*Kuroduka*” were created in the 15th century, they are correspondent. The folk tale takes over the motif more than 500 years ago.

Referring to Kunio Yanagita’s theory about the ancestors and the original-inhabited nation,

discrimination and fear against old women without children is assumed to be in the background of *Onibaba* and *Kijo*. And a fear of the descendants of the original-inhabitants driven to the mountains is assumed to be in the background of *Yamauba* and *Yamaha*.

Both the folk tale and the texts of *Noh* possibly reflect the historical memory of encounters between indigenous descendants living in the mountains and people living in flatland villages, and dilution of its memory.

Key words: *Yamauba* ; the woman living in the mountain, *Onibaba* ; the woman eating children, territory of mountain and territory of flatland , folk tales and texts of *Nho*, tradition and transition