

Animals Behaviour in Japanese Fairy Tales analysed with Propp's Analysis of Functions in Folktales

Research Article DOI: 10.59600/ijcae.v1i1.1

Mgr. Jan Vrba, MSc, MBA, DBA, D. Phil

Faculty of Administration and Economic Studies in Uherské Hradiště, Toruńska
Szkoła Wyższa - Akademia Jagiellońska, Poland, jan.vrba@fves.eu

Abstract

The research paper aims at creating an analysis of animal's behaviour in Japanese fairy tales on the example of selected fairy tale. First part is setting up a related definitions such as characteristics of traditional fairy tales with connection to Japanese fairy tales specifically. Second part of the research is focused on analysis of selected fairy tale by Theodora Y. Ozaki using Vladimir Propp's Analysis of Functions in Folktales. Text synthesis, analysis, comparison, and other methods are used.

Keywords: Animals Behaviour, Japanese, Fairy Tales, Personification, Yei Ozaki Theodora

1. Introduction

The primary purpose of this research paper is to present an overview study of a selected fairy tale and to provide an illustration of animal behaviour in Japanese fairy tales based on the selected fairy tale. To achieve this, the subsequent secondary aims are employed:

- Secondary objective no. 1: to develop an overview framework of the Traditional fairy tale in the context of Japanese fairy stories; the narrative of Traditional fairy tales, and the Traditional function of animals in Japanese myth is presented as well.
- Secondary objective no. 2: utilize Propp's Analysis of Functions in Folktales to analyse a selected Japanese fairy tale.
- Secondary objective no. 3: to illustrate a animal personification in Japanese fairy tales based on the analysis.

The objective of Japanese fairy tales, especially the original ones, was to frighten children and prevent them from engaging in undesirable behaviour, such as leaving the campfire alone after the night.

Throughout history, the plots of traditional fairy tales have gradually become less and less frightening and cruel and the content may have changed to e.g., happy endings.

This research paper concentrates on traditional fairy tale as told by Theodora Yei Ozaki in around the turn of the 20th century.

2. Literature Review

Traditional fairy tale, not only Japanese fairy tale, has certain characteristics and traits which are generally (Zralá, 2010):

- Since we do not know the author and the story is not placed in any particular time, the action could have occurred hundreds or even thousands of years ago, making the story temporally universal.
- Certain introductory and concluding lines are repeated throughout the stories (e.g., "Once upon a time, there lived a farmer..." and "They lived happily ever after...").
- Fairy tales have a simple and instantly recognizable structure that is also reasonably simple to memorize. Children must be able to differentiate between good and evil.
- Typical characters exhibiting typical traits. The witch is bad, but the princess is beautiful and gentle.

- At the conclusion of the narrative, the positive perspective prevails. Good prevails over evil, and love conquers hatred. I would like to emphasize that some Japanese fairy tales have tragic endings; an illustration is the tale of Urashima.
- Examining the skills of the primary characters (heroes). Typically, the protagonists must pass a test, "exam," or trial to demonstrate that they possess the requisite attributes and skills.
- Magical and supernatural elements. Examples of magical and supernatural elements include witches, elves, fairies, and gods. There are supernatural characters such as Jamamba, Tenga, and Kappa in Japanese fairy tales.
- Personification. In every fairy tale, both good and evil are personified. A dragon can signify evil, while a prince or leprechaun can represent good or happiness.

Momotaro, The Tale of the Bamboo Picker, and The Moon Princess are typical examples of traditional Japanese fairy tales in which a childless couple magically conceives. There is also a popular tale of a fisherman named Urashima in which time pauses for the main hero in an undersea castle, but when he returns to the shore, he has abruptly aged.

2.1 Plot of Traditional Fairy Tales and its parts as of Propp's Analysis of Functions in Folktales

According to Propp's Analysis of Functions in Folktales, the plot of traditional fairy tales consists of following parts with following given characteristics (Propp, 1999, pp. 101-107):

- 1. Description of the initial situation** – time and space limitations, composition of the family, future hero, childlessness often appears and is followed by prayers.
- 2. Preparatory part** – various prohibitions or separations are expressed, possibly violation of the prohibition or the first appearance of a pest (negative hero); various questioning and the like often appear,
- 3. Exposure** – the negative hero's own activity, and the connecting moment; a form of the hero's consent, often in order to prevent damage by the negative hero or to find an object (person), the hero goes "somewhere".

- 4. Donors** – this part is dedicated to the journey of hero from home to the donor (mostly magical donor such as fairies or witches), further describes the donor of the object itself in terms of properties and appearance.
- 5. The section of the helper's entrance to the end of the first plot sequence** – a detailed description of the magic item, for example, destination, form, properties and such. In this phase, misfortune or lack is also usually eliminated.
- 6. The beginning of the second plot sequence** – either a new negative hero (pest) or a repetition of the previous negative hero.
- 7. Continuation of the second sequence of events** – the unrecognized arrival of the main hero (in Japanese fairy tales, for example, as a ghost or a skeleton), the unauthorized demands of the negative false hero also appear; normally a difficult task for the true protagonist (hero) is handled. This part may contain the knowledge of the true heroes, his unveiling or wedding and obtaining the throne.

2.2 Traditional Role of animals in Japanese mythology

Some animals perform a positive function, whereas others perform a negative function. I believe the positive or bad role of specific animal characters is ingrained in Japanese mythology and history. For examples of animal figures entrenched in mythology, I will first discuss the Kojiki Chronicle, the first large-scale historical text written in Japan at the time (Krupa, 2007).

The most well-known animal characters in this chronicle are the hare and the crocodile, each of whom is featured in a separate story. After outsmarting the crocodiles, the hare dashes across the bay to the opposite end of the land. Consequently, one of the crocodiles bites off hare fur. A group of princes on their way to propose to a princess offer poor advice to the hare. Only the last prince assists the hare in a good manner and is willing to help the hare. The Hare repays the generosity with a prophecy that will eventually be realized. The last and only deserving prince weds the princess. In the myth cited from the Kojiki Chronicles, the hare is a prophet. In the Kojiki chronicle, the hare is a prophet, yet in Japanese fairy tales, it plays a different role (Krupa, 2007).

There are further animal figures in the Kojiki narrative. The mouse, for instance, plays a favorable role in Japanese mythology. The scene in which the mouse shows Okuninushi a narrow cave where he may wait out the danger after Susano sets fire to the grass surrounding him is an illustration of the mouse's good role (Krupa, 2007).

The traditional Japanese view of animals and animal representations, however, can be gleaned from tales, myths, legends, and fables other than those contained in the Kojiki chronicles.

Let me mention for instance Lafcadio Hearn and his story in which a badger plays a significant role. The story is about a badger that terrifies a shopkeeper by assuming the guise of a woman without a face. This narrative alone is proof that the Japanese have a negative perception of the badger (Web Archive, 2006 ; Kyoto University, 2013).

Various shrines in Japan are devoted to the fox, an important traditional animal in Japanese mythology. According to myths and legends, the fox's function is vaguely described. It can serve both beneficial and harmful purposes. Interesting fact is when the Japanese fox plays a bad role, it typically has several tails (Web Archive, 2006 ; Kyoto University, 2013).

By providing these instances, I merely wanted to demonstrate that the perception of animals in Japanese culture dates back to the time when the earliest myths and stories were established and to provide interesting examples. However, different animals play varied roles in different fairy tales, and whether a particular animal plays a bad or good role in a particular version of a certain fairy tale depends on a number of aspects. In one fairy tale, the fox is a positive character, and in another, it is a bad one. I feel that it depends not only on the narrator of the fairy tale (especially in the days of oral tradition, when everyone may alter the story to their own liking a little bit), but also on the general tone of the fairy tale (Web Archive, 2006 ; Kyoto University, 2013).

3. Methodology

Firstly, the fairy tale is described from the point of view of:

- Plot summary,

- For analysis of the plot of the selected Fairy Tale is used Vladimir Propp's Analysis of Functions in Folktales,
- Forms of Personifications in the fairy tale,
- Cultural context of the selected fairy tale.
- The core part is part „b“ which is an analysis of the plot of the selected Fairy Tale is used Vladimir Propp's Analysis of Functions in Folktales,

For the own analysis of the plot of the selected Fairy Tale (part b) is used Vladimir Propp's Analysis of Functions in Folktales Which divides the plot into smaller numbered parts. There are two main plot lines in the Japanese fairy tales, and both are analysed accordingly:

- Number of characteristics according to used Vladimir Propp's Analysis of Functions in Folktales,
- Name of the characteristic,
- Proof of mentioned characteristic existence in the selected fairy tale.

For the analysis fairy tale called „Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab “by Theodora Y. Ozaki was used. Theodora Y. Ozaki published this fairy tale in 1908 in publication called „Japanese Fairy Tales“.

4. Analysis of Japanese Fairy Tale The Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab

The origins of fairy tale called The Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab dates back to the book of Japanese Fairy Tales authored by Theodora Y. Ozaki in 1908, on pages 207 to 218.

4.1 Plot Summary of selected Fairy Tale

A crab and a monkey are interacting on the riverbank. The monkey discovers a persimmon seed, whilst the crab discovers a rice dumpling. However, the persimmon seed is rock-hard.

The monkey with dumplings is envious of the crab, so he proposes an exchange. The crab initially resists, but the monkey is too intelligent, so he uses reasons to convince the crab that the deal will be extremely beneficial. Eventually, there will be a trade. The

crab plants a seed of persimmon. Eventually, it develops into a tree that increases each year. One day, the crab desires a persimmon but is unable to scale the tree to obtain one. Consequently, he seeks assistance from an old familiar monkey. However, he should not have done so, as the monkey will begin plotting to steal all the persimmons for himself.

The monkey climbs the tree and consumes the sweetest and most flavourful persimmons. However, none of them fell for the crab's consumption. When the crab begins to cry, the monkey throws the hardest and robust persimmons at him. He kills the crab by doing so. But the crab has a son who witnessed his father's demise. Crab son recalled the incident of exchanging a persimmon seed for a rice dumpling and quickly considered the killer of his father.

The young crab enlists the aid of others to revenge the loss of his father. It consists of the stone mortar, the bee, and the chestnut. Together, they devise a scheme to entice the monkey inside the crab house. They invite monkey to a seven-day post-death ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the old crab passing. The monkey is sat alone in a chamber awaiting the tea ceremony at the ceremony. Monkey is thereafter attacked by a chestnut which cracks and hit the monkey, and a bee, which stings the monkey in the face. In addition, a stone mortar showers the monkey with stones.

A monkey in severe pain after being stung by a bee and covered in stones meets a young crab, which instantly rips off monkey's head with its claws.

4.2 Analysis of the plot of selected fairy tale with use of Propp's Analysis of Functions in Folktales

The tale of the crab and the monkey consists of two distinct plots (storylines). The first plot (storyline) involves a crab and a monkey exchanging found objects and concludes with the crab's death at the hands of the monkey. The second plot (storyline) begins when the main protagonist (hero – son of deceased crab) arrives and decides to take revenge on the monkey for killing the crab. A bee, a stone mortar, and a chestnut also enter the story at this point (as helpers of main hero). The protagonist and his allies decide to avenge the death of the elderly crab.

In addition to the numbering of characteristics and the specific characteristic's name, as in Propp, the proof of existence in fairy tale is also added.

Part 1: First Storyline of the Fairy Tale

Plot summary: *Crab and monkey play in the river, exchange found objects → a persimmon grows into a tree with lots of fruit → the crab can't reach the persimmons, so he asks the monkey to help → the monkey gets jealous, kills the crab by attacking him and throwing hard persimmons, eats more persimmons → end of first storyline.*

Table: First Storyline Analysis.

Number of Characteristic	Name of Characteristic	Proof of existence in the selected Fairy Tale
1	Temporal and spatial delimitation of destination.	"A long time ago, one day in Japan."
2b	Composition of the family according to the roles of the acting persons.	Crab, monkey.
33 - 34	The first appearance of a negative hero (villain).	A monkey who wants to trade a persimmon for a dumpling.
33	Name.	Monkey.
34	Way of villains involvement in the storyline.	Playing on the river bank.

46 - 51	Bad Actions of a villain (negative hero).	The monkey eats all the good persimmons and throws bad (hard) persimmons from the tree at the crab until the crab is killed.
46	Character of villain.	Monkey.
47	A form of bad actions.	Eats persimmons, throws the hard persimmons at the crab and kills it.
48	The object used by villain.	Persimmon.
49	The owner of the stolen object.	Old crab.
50	The motivation and goal of the villain actions.	The monkey's envy and hunger.
51	Forms of villain's disappearance.	Escape after realizing monkey killed the old crab.

Source: own analysis based on Propp, 1999, pp. 101-107 ; Ozaki, Y. T., 1908, pp. 207-218.

Part 2: Second Storyline of the Fairy Tale

Plot summary: *The arrival of the young crab → the summoning of helpers → the plan for revenge → the revenge and death of the monkey.*

Table: Second Storyline Analysis.

Number of Characteristic	Name of Characteristic	Proof of existence in the selected Fairy Tale
10	Future hero - name, gender.	Male, son of a Murdered Crab.
12	Future Hero – Connection to the previous storyline.	Son of a Murdered Crab.
82	Helpers Names.	Bee, chestnut, mortar.
83	Form of helpers summoning.	The young crab called the bee and the other helpers.
93	The second appearance of the villain (negative hero).	Invited to a condolence ceremony held seven days after the crab father's death.
102 - 105	Fight with villain (negative hero)	
102	A place to fight.	A room intended for a tea ceremony.
103	Before the fight.	The young crab and its helpers keep the monkey waiting for a long time.
104	Forms of combat.	Chestnut - snaps and hits the monkey in the neck.

		<p>Bee - stings the monkey in the face.</p> <p>Stone Mortar - covers the monkey with stones.</p> <p>Young Crab - cuts the monkey's head off with its claws.</p>
150	Punishment of villain.	The Punishment for Monkey - getting revenge by being murdered by the young crab and its helpers.

Source: own analysis based on Propp, 1999, pp. 101-107 ; Ozaki, Y. T., 1908, pp. 207-218.

4.3 Forms of Animals Personification in the selected Fairy Tale

The monkey and the crab both have their natural appearances and are still capable of their animal behaviours (for instance, crab is unable to climb the tree). Despite this, both the crab and the monkey have been observed engaging in human-like behaviour, such as when they were seen trading found objects and, later, when they participated in the tea ceremony. There is also a clear yearning for bloody vengeance, even though animals frequently exhibit behaviour that is very similar to this.

4.4 Cultural Context of the selected Fairy Tale

Monkeys occupy an intriguing position in Japanese culture. The human form is frequently compared to that of a monkey. Japan is also home to the only monkeys in the world that bathe in hot springs, which is a fascinating fact. The monkey performs a negative function in the analysed Japanese fairy tale earlier because it is naturally envious and relatively intelligent (On Mark Production, 2013).

Monkeys are not simply a symbol of evil or envy in Japanese culture. The well-known troupe of three "wise monkeys" originates in Japan. First monkey speaks nothing

negative; second monkey hears nothing negative, and third monkey sees nothing negative.

As of crab (old crab) in the described and analysed story, the crab serves as the scapegoat for the monkey's jealousy. His role is hence impartial. It does not harm anyone, but it also does not help (On Mark Production, 2013).

5. Conclusion

It has been discovered, through research of various Japanese fairy tales, that there are numerous categories, or levels, of animal personification. There are a variety of categories that can be used to classify the ways in which various animal figures are given human characteristics in the fairy tales that were researched. The following table provides a listing, with examples, of the three main levels of personification as suggested.

Table: Degrees of Animals Personification in Japanese Fairy Tales.

Degree of Personification	What is personified	Example in Fairy Tales
1	Behaviour, action, thinking only.	Monkey, crab, turtle behave and think like humans.
2	Only appearance and certain behavioural traits (except speech).	Transforming a spider into a beautiful girl who plays a stringed instrument. But the girl is unable to speak.
3	All at the same time (even for a short while).	The fox transforms into a beautiful girl who earns money by singing and dancing in the city. In the Cat Palace, the cat transforms into a girl who acts like a human and talks.

Source: own, based on literature studies, analysis and reviews.

The first degree of personification is based on an animal's thought and behaviour. Even though the animal is not human, it still thinks and acts like a human. It can, for example, speak and sing. The turtle is able to communicate but does not alter its form. Monkeys and crabs do not alter their appearance, but they behave and think similarly to humans.

It can be seen that the second degree of personification consists solely of transforming an animal into a human and adopting only certain human attributes and behaviour. In the fairy tale, for instance, the spider transforms into a beautiful girl. Spider performs partially human actions by playing a stringed instrument, but cannot communicate in this form. This indicates that a complete personification is not yet reached.

The third degree of personification can be described as a complicated personification. Not only is the animal's thinking and behaviour represented in the fable, but also its physical appearance is personified. An example would be a fox that, for a brief period of time, takes the behaviour and look of a human and can sing and dance. The fox assumes the appearance of a beautiful female and earns money in the city by singing and dancing.

References

- KRUPA, V. (2007). *Japonské mýty Kodžiki*. Bratislava: CAD Press. ISBN 80-85349-97-3.
- Kyoto University. (2013). *Tamamo no mae*. [Online] Available from: <http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit-e/otogi/tamamo/tamamo.html> [Accessed 10 May 2022].
- OZAKI, Y. T. (1908). *Japanese Fairy Tales*. New York: A.L. Burt Company, publishers.

- On Mark Productions. (2013). Monkey in Japan. [Online] Available from: <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/monkey-saru-koushin.html> [Accessed 10 May 2022].
- PROPP, V. J. (1999). Morfologie pohádky a jiné studie. Jinočany: H&H, 1999. ISBN 80-86022-16-1.
- ZRALÁ, Z. (2010). Pohádky a morální vývoj dítěte. Brno: Universita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně - fakulta Humanitních studií - Institut mezioborových studií Brno.
- Web Archive. (2006). The Mujina. [Online] Available from: <http://web.archive.org/web/20091027112208/http://www.geocities.com/axaria/mujina.html> [Accessed 10 May 2022].