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Storytellers in the Tourist Setting: The Construction of Language and Self in Contemporary Rural Japan

昔話の言語表現と語り手のアイデンティティ
－岩手県遠野の観光の現場から－

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Key words：folktale, storyteller, tourism, dialect, identity
キーワード：昔話、語り手、観光、方言、アイデンティティ

【要　旨】

柳田国男の『遠野物語』で有名な岩手県の遠野は、昔話の伝承が今も生き続けているというノスタルジックなイメージによって、都会から多くの観光客を集めている。この観光客が期待するイメージにもとづいて、「とおの昔話村」という観光施設の一角に「語りべホール」という場所がつくられ、地元の女性の語り手が観光客にこの地域に伝承される昔話を語るようになった。しかし、これらの昔話の伝承を支えていた状況は、高度経済成長にともなって根底的に変化し、昔話を語る言語も、すでにこの地域の日常生活で使われるものではなくなっている。したがって、語り手たちは、観光客に昔話を語るために、意識的に自分の昔話の言語をつくり上げなければならないのである。本稿では、観光の場におけるこのような昔話の言語の再構成の過程を分析し、語り手たちが、耳に残る伝統的な方言を媒介にして自分の伝承の根につながりながら、観光という状況のなかに、支配的なイメージに抵抗して新たなアイデンティティをつくり上げていく道筋を見出していることを指摘する。

Japan's high economic growth of the sixties and seventies brought great changes to the countryside. Nuclear families rapidly began to replace extended ones. The domestic hearthside—one of the places where oral traditions flourished—disappeared. With few children and grandchildren to gather round, the people who knew the folktales lost their audiences and venues.

During this period, many Japanese felt the loss of traditional things in their lives, and they began to seek out places where "authentic" traditions survived. Tono City, a town in the northeast, became one of the most famous tourist destinations for urdan Japanese to experience tradition and nostalgia.

In this paper I will consider how the people of Tono who participate in local tourist culture endeavor to resist the dominant image imposed upon them by mass tourism, and through their efforts create a new identity. I will focus on Tono's storytellers, with whom I have conducted field research since 1993.

It was The Tales of Tono (Tono Monogatari in Japanese),written in 1910 by Japan's most famous folklorist, Yanagita Kunio, that sparked an interest in this northeastern town. A collection of traditional tales, rewritten in a literary style, The Tales of Tono furnished the town with its dominant touristic image, an image full of wonder and mystery.

In her dissertation, *Discourses of the Vanishing in Contemporary Japan,* anthropologist Marilyn Ivy analyzes the efforts of the Tono City adminstration to invent a new civic space in the context of the "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan" tourism campaigns of the Japan National Railway. She writes (Ivy 1988:138), "no longer content to be the passive object of folklore studies, the city of Tono in the 1960s began actively reappropriating its depictions in Yanagita's narratives, turning its romanticized history of darkness and primitivity into a civic asset."

Although Ivy elucidates many aspects of cultural dynamics of the period of Japan's high economic growth, she doesn't analyze the experience of individuals involved. I believe that in order to understand how Tono's tourist image and culture have been created, it is necessary to consider individual efforts.

I will try to elaborate on an observation made by Michel de Certeau

(1984:viii) : "The presence and circulation of a representation tells us nothing about what it is for its users. We must first analyze its manipulation by users who are not its makers. Only then can we gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization."

In this paper I will investigate "this secondary production hidden in the process of utilization" and explore how individual Tono storytellers manage their roles in the tourist setting.

Touristic Contexts of Tono

Yanagita's Tales of Tono has had such a major impact in drawing urban tourists to the region that the Tono City administration has promoted itself with the catchphrase, "Homeland of Folktales." In accordance with this image, a "Storytellers' Hall" was construscted on the occasion of the "World Folktale Festiival," held in Tono in 1992. This "Storytellers' Hall" is the focal point for folktale performance in Tono. Beginning in 1993, the hall has presented six or seven women telling traditional folktales of the region on a daily basis from April to November. Few tourists come during the bitter cold winter months.

Storytellers perform three times a day, for about thirty tourists per session. Audience members, whom I interviewed at the Storytellers' Hall in July and August of 1994, generally had two sorts of reactions to the storytelling sessions. The older tourists said that the performances made them feel nostalgic for the old stories they had heard from parents or grandparents. Younger generations responded that they were excited to hear genuine, orally transmitted tales for the first time. They said that they felt as if they were in another world. Their response indicated that they felt a kind of nostalgia, but it is a nostalgia created in their imagination through the medium of Yanagita's famous collection.

My interviews suggest that the dominant image in tourists' minds was based on a nation-wide concern for vanishing traditions. This dominant image was

imposed on Tono. Storytellers in Tono tell their tales within the framework of this touristic concern. I will now consider how one representative storyteller approaches this issue.

The Construction of Traditional Language in the Tourist Setting

Suzuki Satsu (1911-1996) was Tono's most famous storyteller (this article was written when she was alive). As a child, she heard many traditional tales from her father. These soaked into her memory. But earning a living as a barber and caring for her family, she almost completely forgot how to tell the folktales she had heard 50 years before.

In 1971, a radio reporter from NHK, Japanese major broadcast company, approached Suzuki Satsu's father with a request to tell traditional tales on the air. He had to decline, because he had a cold. The reporter turned to Suzuki Satsu, then 60 years old, and asked her to take her father's place. In spite of the fifty-year gap, she was able to tell one folktale smoothly. From then on, she began to tell stories again, and became widely known as a skilled storyteller. She was invited to tell folktales all over Japan—at exhibitions at department stores, meetings, and other kinds of performance events.

This is how Suzuki Satsu became a storyteller of traditional folktales. Tourists regard her folktales as naturally transmitted ones, but it wasn't so easy for her to perform them in the traditional dialect of the region. Since the period of high economic growth, everyday speech in this region has changed greatly, just as the way of life has. Suzuki has put forth a great effort to reconstruct the traditional ways of storytelling elaborated in her father's tales.

Suzuki (1993:331-332) comments, "It takes an unusual effort to tell one complete folktale in traditional dialect, recollecting fragments of my childhood memory. In my father's day, there was no difference between everyday language and the language of storytelling. But today, there is a big difference between them. The younger generations in Tono today cannot understand my folktales because they

have been educated in standard Japanese."

We can distinguish here three phases of language, traditional dialect in folktales, standard Japanese, and contemporary dialect of the region which is influenced a lot by standard Japanese. Most people use in their daily life the contemporary dialect influenced by standard Japanese (cf. Ozawa 1993:379). The tourists expect, however, the folktales to be spoken in traditional dialect. They expect that this traditional dialect survives in Tono's everyday life. And Suzuki Satsu also feels folktales should be told in traditional language.

With all those changes in language, Suzuki Satsu has had to recreate the language of her folktales. Solely for the purpose of her storytelling, she has worked to recollect the dialect of her childhood.

Storytelling in the tourist context has a special meaning for Suzuki Satsu as an individual. Becoming a mother and grandmother in the busy age of high economic growth, Suzuki missed out on the opportunities women had in earlier generations to tell folktales to their children. She found other venues to create her identity as a storyteller: department store exhibitions, storytelling events, and tourist productions. It is through these alternative venues that she has constructed her own storytelling language and identity.

It is pointless to argue whether or not her folktales are authentic without considering the context for her performances. Insofar as her folktales have meaning for the tourists for whom she performs, I consider them part of a living tradition.

Edward M. Bruner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1994:457) posit a new analytical concept "tourist realism" which makes tourists feel they are watching performances in their natural state. In the tourist setting in Tono, Suzuki's tales achieve "tourist realism" through her elaboration of the language.

Suzuki's folktales are difficult for tourists from other places to understand word by word. But after she has finished telling a story, she chats with the tourists in her everyday speech, the contemporary dialect of the region. Tourists from other places understand most of what she says. Thus she employs two types of language in her presentation for tourists at the Storytellers' Hall, a "storytelling" language

reconstructed from an older form of dialect, and the contemporary dialect of the northeast region. The contrast between these two types of speech enables her to transmit a feeling of authenticity to her tourist audiences. The tourists demand this authenticity, as Dean MacCannell (1976:104) has elaborated. In my view, what the tourists experience in the Storytellers' Hall is not a "pseudo-event," as Daniel Boorstin (1961:77-117) calls it. I find there a process of constructing authenticity.

Resisting the Dominant Image

I will turn now to how storytellers resist the dominant image of Tono, an image which originates in Yanagita's collection, The tale of Tono. I will elaborate on how Suzuki Satsu has reconstructed one of the most famous tales from this collection, the story of Oshirasama, the silkworm god. "The Silkworm God" is the story of a tragic inter-species love affair between a girl and a horse. The story elaborates on ritual practices connected to silkworm cultivation. "The Silkworm God" is the most popular tale at the Storytellers' Hall, so most storytellers tell this story first, to cater to tourists' expectations and interests.

"The Silkworm God" is the tale that Suzuki Satsu tells most frequently, as well. Suzuki did not learn it from her father, however. Because it is the most famous story in Yanagita's collection, she was asked to tell it at the 1971 opening ceremony of Tono's civic center, even though it was not in her repertoire. Shortly before the ceremony, Suzuki learned the outline of the story from a school principal well-versed in the folktales of the region. She improvised the story before the audience. Suzuki told the story in her own style, based on an outline of Yanagita's tale. Since then she has told the story over and over. It has now become entirely her own.

Suzuki Satsu has reconstructed many stories in her own style, a style which is based on her memory of her father's voice. She described her situation in this way (Suzuki 1993:331): "A lot of folktales that my father told me remain in my ears. If any part of a story remains in my ears, I can reconstruct it, even from a

book or an outline that I have heard from someone. But if my father's voice does not remain in my ears, I cannot reconstruct the story."

It is in Suzuki's creative process, whereby she makes new stories in her own style, that I locate a resistance to the dominant, nostalgic image imposed on Tono. Appropriating the stories of Yanagita's famous collection, she has constructed the tales in an original style, based on her father's. In so doing, she has not only opposed the dominant image, but has also discovered a way to construct a new identity in contemporary Japanese society while sustaining a relationship with her ancestral tradition. It may be difficult for her to subvert the dominant image in her storytelling. But attentive audiences in the "Storytellers' Hall" may revise their image of Tono when they come in contact with her real performances. In this respect, I regard the storytelling in the "Storytellers' Hall" as a kind of resistance to the dominant image. We find there Michel de Certeau's "manipulation of users." And the manipulation we have examined thus far is a highly creative process.

Conclusion

Tourism in Tono is based on a nostalgic image, imposed upon Tono from outside. That image, in some cases, has an oppressive effect on Tono residents. Anthropologist William Kelly (1986:613) writes about the nostalgia boom in Japan that, "It seeks out particular, authentic "customs" of localities, but it then decontextualizes them in the service of a generalized and homogenized "folk tradition." The furusato (homeland) "boom" has appropriated the individual's homeplace as the nation's heartland. "

This generalized and homogenized image imposed from outside may prevent some rural dwellers from forging a positive self-identification with their homeland, in Tono and elsewhere. But, as I have observed, storytellers who participate in Tono's tourist productions have managed to construct positive self-images through the creation of their own narratives. They use the imposed, dominant image to create a new kind of storytelling. They manipulate this dominant image, and "adapt

it to their own interests and their own rules," as de Certeau (1984:xiv) elaborates (cf. Ota 1993). This manipulation constitutes a kind of resistance.

Touristic demand for authenticity has given them a way to make use of their childhood experiences: their childhood memories furinish material for the reconstruction of folktales. While Suzuki Satsu and other storytellers create texts similar to Yanagita's in structure, they smuggle in a lot of their own inventions, in terms of narrative detail. In this way they resist the dominant system.

Telling folktales to tourists thus gives new meaning to their lives. Resisting the generalized nostalgia, they have found a way to make use of their rural exerience. The strategy of these storytellers in resisting the dominant system suggests to us a model for finding meaning for our lives in the complex contexts of contemporary societies.

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［付　記］

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