

The Motif of Getting an Enchanted Wife in Japanese and Ukrainian Fairy Tales

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the analysis of the character of the Dragon/Serpent in Japanese and Ukrainian fairy tales. Its main functions, the role in plots and motifs, teratomorphic and anthropomorphic features are compared. The mythological basis of the character as a participant in the creation of the world and antagonist of the protagonist is outlined. Through comparative analysis is justified, that in Japanese fairy tales, the character of a Dragon/Serpent has the same features as the Ukrainian and Western European tradition, as well as purely national specifics.

Keywords: *fairy tales, dragon, serpent, character, motif, antagonist, plot.*

Introduction. One of the central motifs of fairy tales – both Ukrainian and Japanese – is the motif of getting an enchanted wife, closely related to the motif of breaking the taboo (400-425 according to the fairy tales of Aarne-Thompson and Berezovsky). A comparative study of the textual realization of this motif in the folklore of both nations will help to clarify the world universals and the national specifics of Ukrainian and Japanese cultural traditions.

Materials and methods. The material for the study is the texts of Ukrainian and Japanese fairy tales. The complex nature of the study involves the integration of a number of scientific methods. The article uses the method of system analysis, which allows to systematize the research material accumulated by various branches of humanitarian knowledge of traditional culture. For a deep and comprehensive understanding of the motif of getting an enchanted wife in Japanese and Ukrainian fairy tales the comparative folkloristic analysis of characters is used. A structural-typological method is also used to find out the general and specifically national nature of the origin of folklore characters.

Results or discussion. Japanese tradition. The wood-cutter Nihachi in the fairy tale “Snake Eyes” saves a woman tied to a tree with her own hair. She agrees to become his wife, but forbids Nihachi to ever ask her about anything. Subsequently, the ban is renewed – during childbirth, she orders him to build a fence around the house and “do not look until I myself come out to you with a child in my arms” [4; P. 21]. Breaking the taboo causes the couple to separate: Nihachi sees a huge snake in the place of his wife, is frightened, and she leaves him: “The mountain god was angry with me, cursed me and turned me into a terrible snake. But still I was allowed to take human form for a while. If a faithful friend met me, loved me and did not betray his word, I would remain a person forever. But you didn't keep your word!” [4; P. 22].

Of particular importance are the “magic gifts” that the snake leaves to her husband: she gives him her eyes one by one so that he can feed his little son. The end of the tale is somewhat parable, extremely moralistic: ten-year-old Botaro, seeking to see his mother, goes to the lake, but the sight of a huge blind snake scares him and he runs away. However, thinking about the kindness and love of his mother, he returns. “Botaro, Botaro, you were not afraid to go deep into the mountains and hug me. You were not afraid of my terrible appearance. Now the curse of the mountain god has lost power over me and I again

took on human form” [4; P. 25].

A similar motif is found in a number of other fairy tales. For example, in the fairy tale “Mother's Eye” the wife of a merchant is a snake saved by him; after he saw her true likeness, she was forced to leave him and their young child – but gave a “enchanted pearl” (which she had instead of one eye) so that he could feed his son – because he was born a human [8; Pp. 151-153].

The finale of Japanese fairy tales about a enchanted wife / husband mostly has an unhappy ending, which brings them closer to the legends and allows us to distinguish them in the group of “magic tales of the legendary type” /O. Asadchyh's term/.

Ukrainian tradition. In the Ukrainian fairy tale “Snake Wife”, the protagonist undergoes an initial test: getting lost in the woods, he meets a giant snake that threatens to eat him, but the boy is not afraid, and the snake (totem deity) promises to help him, but he must follow her advice. Thus, the poor mercenary receives considerable wealth and a beautiful wife, who jumped out of a half-pile of wheat bread set on fire on the advice of a snake. However, he is angry with his wife for the unfinished work, breaks the taboo – the ban on ever calling her a snake – and sees her true resemblance. Snake, considering the sincere repentance of her husband, orders to kiss her three times: after the first kiss, the man began to see everything that happens in the world; after the second – to understand the language of every creature on earth; and the third kiss let him know what was going on underground. “Now you go to the house, get married and if you want to live well, do not tell the woman the truth. My bane, you begged me from God, and now I will become a snake again...” [7; P. 318].

In the given fairy tale the taboo has a different character – the main character cannot call the woman a snake, because it shows her true nature. Thus, attention is focused on the power of any word spoken in a fairy tale: in this case, it plays the role of a kind of reverse spell. In addition, this is the second, “moral” test that the man failed to pass: “... the husband had a good wife who chose him herself and did him a lot of good deeds, but he did not appreciate it... »[7; P. 313]. In this case, the abilities acquired by a man from a snake can be considered as a kind of punishment: now a man, possessing magical knowledge, must hide it in secret – he finds himself in a situation similar to that in which his wife was before.

Japanese tradition. In the Japanese fairy tale “Fish Bride”, a salmon fish saved by one poor man turns into a

woman. This character is unique, it is associated primarily with the peculiarities of the natural conditions of Japan, and, accordingly, the widespread Japanese beliefs in fish as totem deities, in the influence of the inhabitants of the sea and ocean (often – demonological: Kappa, Dragon Lord) on the life of the Japanese.

The heroine of the fairy tale herself offers to become a wife to a man – a characteristic feature of such Japanese fairy tales, which “profess” the law of “ongaeshi”, the obligatory gratitude for the good done – and tries to please him in every possible way. The secret is revealed when a man amazed by the delicious dishes of a woman tries to find out the secret of their preparation: peeping, he saw his wife turn into a salmon and swim in a bowl of soup. The man could no longer continue to live with her – and the girl became a fish again and returned back to the river.

In addition to the characters of snakes, fish, Japanese fairy tales associated with obtaining enchanted wives, are also characterized by the characters of birds, in particular nightingales and cranes.

A striking example is the fairy tale “Nightingale’s House”. One day a girl of extraordinary beauty approached the lumberjack’s hut: “Her face is white, she is covered by a large umbrella from the sun. The lumberjack stared at her. “There are such beauties in the world! I wish she would become my wife!” [4; P. 35]. The lumberjack’s wish came true – the girl offered to marry her and live with her in her house. Later, a taboo appears in the plot of the fairy tale: “Here are twelve keys to twelve barns. You can open eleven, but beware of entering the twelfth” [4; P. 36].

The miracles seen by the lumberjack in the rooms are truly of a Japanese national character: “The first one was filled to the brim with selected rice. In the second there were barrels of miso (fermented soybean paste). The third was filled with sugar, the fourth was covered with mountains of white wool, and the fifth contained salt. In the sixth waves were beating against the threshold, and many sea fish were swimming in the water...” [4; P. 36]. When he violated his wife’s instructions and peered out the window in the twelfth barn, he saw a strange plum orchard, where, despite the late autumn outside, spring abounded and nightingales chirped – suddenly all had gone, frightened by the lumberjack, the garden enveloped in autumn. At the same time, his wife’s secret was revealed: “Know, I am not a human, but a nightingale. I sang in the spring on a tree branch near your hut and fell in love with you. If you had not opened this door, you would have lived with me forever, knowing neither hard work, nor old age, nor diseases... But you did not keep your word! Now we must part forever. The god of these mountains often comes to that twelfth barn to listen to the nightingales sing. You angered him, farewell!” [4; P. 37].

“And then the woman turned into a nightingale, put the child on her tail and disappeared into the distance with a plaintive cry. Then the lumberjack seemed to wake up from sleep. He is sitting in his barn, and in his hands, he has an ax and a saw” [4; P. 37].

It is worth noting one of the most important features of Japanese fairy tales, clearly expressed in the given text – a woman in Japanese fairy tales is an active person, the reasons for her actions are primarily her own thoughts and

beliefs. Well-known Japanese folklorist Kawai Hayao notes: “In European fairy tales, the hero tames the monster and saves the girl that it has captured – this is their main content. This does not happen in Japanese fairy tales. In Europe, the assertion of a man’s own identity takes place outside the connection with other personalities. However, from the very beginning, the Japanese have an attraction to “female consciousness” [1; P. 6]. Indeed, the heroine of Japanese tale becomes the wife of a lumberjack because of her love for him. For Ukrainian fairy tales, love is mostly not a cause, but a consequence, the result of actions – “and they lived happily ever after”; it is thought of as a necessary component that is available, but attention is not focused on it. Ukrainian fairy tales are built according to the appropriate formulaic model, in which the feelings of the heroes are predetermined and predictable. However, for Japanese fairy tales, the girl’s desires and thoughts are extremely important. In this regard, Kawai Hayao wittily remarks: did anyone ask the heroines of European (and Ukrainian in particular) fairy tales about their desire to become the protagonist’s wife? And in the Japanese tradition, there is, for example, the fairy tale “Canvas, bleached in the moonlight”, which tells about a girl against her will married to a man – and now she is trying to get rid of an unwanted marriage. What is the difference? In our opinion, it is necessary, again, to take into account the unconventional for domestic fairy tales’ proximity of Japanese fairy tales to legends – hence such in-depth attention to the feelings of the heroes; in addition, the specifics of the mentality of the Japanese, the cultural and historical features.

But back to the character of the woman-nightingale. In the fairy tales of Japan, this character is extremely common, most often it is combined with the motif of closed doors and wonders hidden behind them. The heroine in such magical tales acts as their guardian. Take, for example, the fairy tale “The Japanese Nightingale Settlement”.

The nightingale turned out to be a woman whose house was accidentally found by a lumberjack. She asks him for a favor: “The weather is good, so I decided to visit the city. Won’t you guard the house until I return?” – of course, followed by a taboo on opening any door, which the protagonist later violates. The miracles he saw in the rooms are different from the characters in the previous tale: he sees three beautiful girls; a kettle that “rustles like the wind in the pines”, gilded folding screens; rich military attire – armor and bow with arrows; a enchanted raven horse; a silver bucket with a gold ladle, over which is hung another gold bucket, where the drops of amazing sake (rice liquor) flow; finally, a flower garden, a bird’s nest and three eggs in it [8; P. 185]. Three small birds flew out of the eggs dropped by the lumberjack and disappeared – they were the daughters of the hostess. “Suddenly the hostess returns. She looked at the lumberjack with bitter reproach and burst into tears:

– Who in the world is more treacherous than a human? You broke your promise and lost my three daughters. My dear daughters, hohohokekyo!” [8; P. 186].

In another fairy tale, “Crane-Wife”, a crane becomes the wife of a poor young man: she took the form of a human likeness to thank the young man for his salvation. The young wife weaves an incredibly beautiful fabric, which she calls “brocade” – but when the husband looked

at how she does it, it turned out that "... his beautiful wife was not in the room, instead there was a white crane behind the loom and plucking the soft down with its beak from the wings, feather after feather, weaved" [5; P. 27].

Ukrainian tradition. Fairy Tales about a bird-woman are also widespread in the Ukrainian tradition. So, for example, in the fairy tale "Bird-Girl" the young man Ivanko, having shot from the parental rifle, wounded a beautiful little bird. She asked three times: "Ivan, twist my neck and I will be your faithful wife. And we will live well". The guy with tears in his eyes twist the little bird's neck. And such a beautiful girl appeared that it is impossible to think and remember, except to tell in a fairy tale" [6; P. 63].

Ivanko's charming wife is also endowed with extraordinary abilities. She, like Yuzuru from the Japanese fairy tale, weaves amazing canvases. However, she does it with the help of enchanted looms, and not turning into a bird again – obviously, her second form for her is already lost: "She made herself such looms that they weaved themselves. Just tell them: – Weave this and that!... Once the girl ordered the looms: – Weave me such a shawl, so that there was no such shawl in the world..." [6; P. 63].

The plot of the Ukrainian fairy tale is schematically much more complicated: the king (tsar), who fell in love with Ivan's wife, tries to send him to the grave, but his wife helps him fulfill the king's difficult task – to get animal and bird milk, to bring precious things from the mountain. However, the most characteristic difference is the lack of prohibition and broken taboos in the tale – because Ivanko knows from the beginning about the magical nature of his wife. In addition, there are different "reasons" for the protagonists to get an enchanted bride. If in a Japanese fairy tale the young man's wife becomes a bird saved by him as a reward for his salvation (such a motif of "gratitude", as we noted, is the main for this type of Japanese fairy tales), then in the plot of a Ukrainian bird wife can be considered more as a "gift", derived from "other world" (the key in this tale is the symbol of a gun, which the father, dying, ordered to "sharpen - and it will faithfully serve you" – he gets a wife thanks to it, through the help / mediation of his father).

Characters of a woman-snake and a woman-bird are combined in the heroine of the Ukrainian fairy tale "Wise Ilyana". The poor man's son Les' saw and caught a beautiful bird, and later it turned into a beautiful girl: "I will be your wife," she says. "But you can't ask what I'm doing." If you ask, I will become a bird again and fly back to my lands" [6; P. 251]. Such a prohibition is explained by the impossibility for an ordinary person to join the omniscience that is available to magical beings, the inhabitants of two worlds - the human's and otherworldly. In fact, Ilyana has the gift of foresight: she did not shed a single tear at her son's funeral, but she cries over the death of Les's mother, because "such a good woman is hard to be found in the world. And she did not miss her son, because he would have become a great criminal, many widows and orphans would have remained because of him" [6; P. 252]. Les' breaks his promise by asking her about her strange behavior, and she flies away from him like a bird. To get his wife back, Les' has to pass more than one test: to get extraordinary strength (having lived with a miller for 3 years, he can lift 12 meters (about 1200 kg) of can-

dles and play with this bundle), fly to the edge of the world with a crow and look for Ilyana. Interestingly, Ukrainian fairy tales are characterized by the character of a crow as a mediator between the worlds, quite often it is likened to the character of a snake that kidnaps princesses. For the second time, Ilyana appears as a snake – to acquire a human form, she must be thrown into a cauldron with steamed milk. In Ukrainian fairy tales, such a motif is quite common: bathing in boiling milk gives extraordinary strength, beauty, and restores youth. It is interpreted as a rite of purification – like the fire from which a witch comes with a pure soul.

Japanese tradition. The central character of many Japanese fairy tales about an enchanted wife is Yuki-Onna – "snow woman" – one of the most famous Japanese yokai. Yokai – the main characters of Japanese demonology, quite numerous, differ in location, type and function. However, as noted by O. Sadokova, "...for all their dissimilarity, they are quite naturally grouped by the main feature – place of existence, which determines their appearance and characteristics of behavior" [9; Pp. 61-134].

The eminent Japanese folklorist and ethnographer Kunio Yanagita classified the Japanese yokai by dividing them into five major groups: those living in the mountains; living in reservoirs (sea, river, lake); living on the outskirts of the road; living in houses; yokai, which, appearing in specific circumstances and in clearly defined situations, are not too attached to the landscape. It is important that almost all yokai are characters from folk tales.

Yuki-onna belongs to the fifth category of yokai classified by K. Yanagita.

Beliefs in Yuki-Onna are most characteristic of the northern regions of Japan – the island of Hokkaido and the northern part of the island of Honshu, where there are many tales and legends about her. In the minds of the Japanese, Yuki-Onna appears as a beautiful but completely white, almost transparent woman, as if created from ice and snow. Her movements are slow and graceful. She appears at night or late in the evening during a snowfall or snowstorm. Often, she is one-eyed or has only one leg, which brings her closer to the semi-chthonic characters of Ukrainian fairy tales – especially Baba Yaga. The blindness of fairy-tale characters (or half-blindness, poor eyesight) testify to their belonging to the afterlife, the world of the dead; at the same time, this feature often gives the character a hidden "true" vision of the essence of things. Researcher of demonological beliefs of the Japanese O. Sadokova notes: "... Most often, according to the Japanese, Yuki-Onna can be found in the first days of the New Year. In the prefectures of Iwate and Aomori, it was even customary to perform special rites during the Little New Year (koshyogatsu), on the 15th of the first month, in order to please Yuki-Onna" [9; P. 72].

Very often it was the meeting with Yuki-onna that explained the misfortunes that happened to a person during a snowstorm. After all, she could appear anywhere (on the road, in the field, by the river), come close to the traveler and follow him: with each step it became harder for a person to go, because Yuki-Onna put him to sleep until he lost consciousness and died of cold. It was also dangerous to trust Yuki-Onna's assurances of her kindness and innocence. Because of this, quite a few men fell into the trap, who were said to have died a violent death because they

married a “snow woman”.

However, along with the character of an insidious seductress in Japanese folklore, another character type of Yuki-Onna has developed. She was spoken of as a “short-lived beauty”, gentle and sweet, but who lives only until the first days of spring. In such cases, marrying a “snow woman” did not have tragic consequences for the hero, but meant only the sudden disappearance of his wife, after which there were only wet clothes, a comb and hairpins [9; P. 74].

Both images of Yuki-Onna are presented in Japanese fairy tales. In the fairy tale “The Snow Woman”, apprentice Minokichi witnessed how a “charming woman in a dazzling dress” froze Master Mosaku with her “icy wind-like breath”. Considering Minokichi’s beauty and youth, she spared him, but ordered him to be silent about what he saw and heard, otherwise he would die. The next winter (!) the young man met a charming girl, Yuki, got married, and subsequently became the father of 10 children. However, once his wife’s lantern-lit face reminded him of the face of the woman who had killed his master. Yuki-Onna really turned out to be his wife – and if it weren’t for their children, she would have taken his life because he broke his oath [5; Pp. 43-46].

Yuki-Onna appears differently in the fairy tales “The Cold Lady” and “The Snow Wife”. The plot of these fairy tales resembles the Russian fairy tale “Snow Maiden Sne-gurochka”. Thus, in the first case, one fisherman, seeing an icicle, wanted to have the same wife – “thin, slender and beautiful” [8; P. 487]. However, his wife disappeared when he persuaded her to bathe in hot water. In the fairy tale “The Snow Wife”, the young man found Yuki-Onna in the snow; but with the advent of spring, the young wife began to “lose weight and wither before the eyes” [8; P. 488]; in the end, all that is left of Yuki-Onna is clothes in a puddle of water.

Ukrainian tradition. In the Ukrainian tradition, there is also an authentic, not typical of the folklore of other peo-

ples, the image of an enchanting wife – the heroine of the fairy tale “White Lyoshka (Piglet)”, collected by M. Stelmakh. Her birth is unusual: without children for a long time, the couple turned to a fortune teller for help – and after a while they had a baby. It is probable that this resemblance was caused by the influence (help?) on the birth of otherworldly forces – a kind of innate curse. The girl was able to throw it off, completely get rid of the pig skin only after marriage and the appropriate ritual beating with twigs (also a characteristic motif for many Ukrainian fairy tales, for example, apples, which after beating with a twig became palaces – that is, acquired a true resemblance): “Her husband ran into the stable behind her with those twigs and closed the door behind him in the stable, and hit those twigs three times, then she took off that skin and became such a nice, so pretty beauty that everyone stared at her”. [3; P. 245].

Conclusions. So, one of the most common types of both Ukrainian and Japanese fairy tales are tales about an enchanted wife. The main motif of most of them is a broken taboo.

Female characters in Japanese fairy tale prose are more active than in Ukrainian. Most often, the motif for the hero to get an enchanted wife in Japanese fairy tales is explained by their “confession” of the law “ongashi” – the obligatory gratitude for the good deeds which were done. Japanese fairy tales of this type, in contrast to Ukrainian, are characterized by an unfortunate finale. In our opinion, it is appropriate to define this type of tales as “fairy tales of the legendary type”, which emphasizes O.V. Asadchykh (in the preface to the manual “Folk Epic of the Land of the Sunrise”) [2].

Character of the snake women and bird women are universal for the folk traditions of both nations. At the same time, in their repertoire there are also original characters – girl-lyoshka (piglet) in Ukrainian fairy tales and Yuki-onna in two opposite guises – in Japanese fairy tales.

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