THE STUDY OF THE FILIPINO
MARRIAGE TALES
— AS COMPARED WITH THE JAPANESE TALES —

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I Introduction

Two books, *Filipino Popular Tales*, collected and edited with comparative notes by Dean S. Fransher, and published by the American Folklore Society in 1921; and *The Collections of the Japanese Folktales*, volume 4, collected and edited by Keigo Seki and published by Kadokawa Publishing Company, 1953-1957, were used as sources for this study. The Philippine book includes eighty-two popular folktales plus thirty-five additional tales that could be classified under this category, and I found that thirty-five (or forty-three) of these tales were related to marriages. The proportion of marriage tales was very similar in the Japanese book.

In this paper I will deal only with the marriage tales, and will make no further mention of the other tales except to acknowledge here their existence and indicate that they may be found. The predominance of marriage tales in both books reflects that marriage is an important factor not only in folktales, but in human living as well. I found also in studying these marriage tales that we certainly study not only the effect of the actual marriage customs to the marriage customs to the marriage tales, but also the actual married life and marriage customs in these countries.

In this study1) I am going to try to analyze these customs and folklores from the point of view of the historical context. Specifically, I want to find which is older, and which is the more advanced; and the kind of characters that they reveal. Why do I emphasize this point of view?

It includes some reflections on the method of folklore in the past in which the non-historical classification has been emphasized.

II On the Form of Marriage
— From a Matri-local to a Patri-local —

There are two forms of marriage in the Philippine marriage tales—one is matri-local, and the other is patri-local. In a matri-local marriage situation the bridegroom first visits a woman (the future bride) and must formally marry her there, moreover, at least for a length of time he lives in the wife’s house. The reverse is true in a patri-local situation, where the woman goes first to the house of the man (future bridegroom) and formally marries him. They then

live together in the husband's house.

Following are examples that show the two forms of marriages which appeared in the Philippine folktales. In these examples I am going to show the conditions of the two marriages (ie, to show the kind of conditions they could get from the marriages). The number of each story is based on the abovementioned book.

1. The Matri-local Type

No. 39 "Alberto and the Monstors"

A king had three beautiful daughters. One day the three princesses went to the orchard to amuse themselves, and were swept away by a hard wind. The king issued a proclamation which said that any one who could find his daughters within three days would be allowed to choose one of the three for his wife.

In a neighboring kingdom there lived a king who had a brave son. The son began to search for the daughters, and took three items with him on his journey. One thing was a boot which would take whoever wore it to whatever place he wanted to go. The second item was a key that if knocked against a stone would open these one. The third thing which he took was a hat which would make the wearer invisible.

The boot soon brought him before a huge rock which had a small hole in it. The son put the key in the hole, and the rock suddenly opened. When he entered through the opening he found a street leading to a palace, and in the palace he met a beautiful princess. After that he fought against a seven-headed monster, and knocked it down and killed it.

He returned the three princesses to their father, and so married one of them. (The conditions of the marriage — magic and physical power).

No. 25 Juan Sadut

There was a couple who had a son that was so lazy that the father took him one day when he was sleeping and laid him down beside a field. When the son awoke a snake appeared and gave him a ring.

In the same country lived a king that would give his beautiful daughter in marriage to anyone who could fulfill three conditions: first, he must fight and kill the king's tiger; second, he must go and get the burning stone that the dragon in the mountains has in his possession and return it to the king; and third, he must answer correctly a question from the king.

With the help of the stone the son was able to meet all the conditions and he married the princess. (The condition of the marriage was physical and magical power.)

No. 2 "The Charcoal-maker Who Became King"

A king had a beautiful daughter and when she became old enough to be married, her father made a proclamation that whoever could bring him ten car-loads of money for ten successive days could have the hand of his beautiful daughter in marriage, and also his crown.

It so happened that the only son of a poor charcoal-maker heard this announcement and the very next day he came into possession of a purse which would merrily roll out silver money whenever it was hit upon the ground. He set off for the palace with his purse and when he arrived there he proceeded to get a great deal of money
from the purse. However, he lost the purse before the ten successive days had passed.

Next, he found two kinds of fruit and discovered that if he ate one kind, he would grow two horns on his forehead, and, if he ate the other kind, the horns would drop off. He found the lost purse by using these two fruits.

He then proceeded to get the required amount of money from the purse, married the daughter and became king. (The condition of this marriage was magical and economical powers.)

The Conditions of the Marriages

No. 1(a)      (Special ability)
No. 1(b)      (Special ability)
No. 3        (Physical power)
No. 10(a)     (Magical power)
No. 10(b)     (Magical power)
No. 11(b)     (Magical and physical powers)
No. 11(c)     (Magical power)
No. 12(c)     (Magical power)
No. 12(d)     (Magical power)
No. 17(a)     (Magical and physical powers)
No. 18        (Magical and physical powers)
No. 19        (Magical power)
No. 21        (Magical power)
No. 22        (Humanity)
No. 24        (Magical and special powers)
No. 32        (Intellectual power)
No. 35        (Magical power)
No. 38        (Intellectual power)
No. 44        (Magical power)
No. 46        (Magical and economical powers)
No. 48(a)     (Intellectual and magical powers)
No. 48(b)     (Intellectual and magical powers)

2. The Patri-local Type

No. 7(a) Sagacious Marcela

There lived a man, a servant of the king, who had a beautiful, virtuous, and above all, clever daughter, for no questions were too difficult for her to answer. The king was constantly surprised by her sagacity and one day conceived a plan whereby he might truly test the ingenuity of his servant's daughter.

First, the king said that she must make twelve dishes out of a tiny bird. The daughter answered that if the king could make twelve spoons out of a pin, she would also make the twelve dishes. Then the king said that she must sell some sheep for six reales, and with this money she must also bring the very same sheep back to him, alive. The daughter cut off the wool, sold it for six reales, and sent the money and the live sheep back to the king. For a final test the king told her that she must get him a cup of bull's milk, at the same time decreeing that no one could enter the river
the next morning. But the next morning the daughter took some stained bed clothing to the river saying that her father had given birth to a child. The king said that the idea of a man giving birth to a child was absurd. The daughter then answered that it would be just as absurd to think of getting milk from a bull.

Then the king made the sagacious daughter marry his son. (Condition of this marriage — intellectual power.)

The Conditions of the Marriages
No. 18 (the latter half) — (Economical power)
No. 29 ………… (Special ability as a woman)
No. 41 ………… (Humanity)
No. 45 (a) ………… (Humanity)
No. 45 (b) ………… (Humanity)

From the above, we learn the following things:

First, we can find many cases of the matri-local forms of marriage. From this folklore we can imagine that there were customs of matri-local marriage in the history of the Philippines, and in fact, in former days, the Philippines have had the actual custom of matri-local marriages. We can also imagine that the form of matri-local marriages appearing in the Philippine marriage tales is the mirror of the actual social life of the country.

Second, from the point of view of ‘conditions for marriage,’ we can find certain characteristics. In the case of the matri-local marriages, the conditions for marriage were mostly magical and physical powers, with some instances of intellectual power and humanity being factors. On the contrary, in the case of patri-local marriages, the conditions are found to be generally intellectual power and humanity.

From the point of view of the historical nature of society, the society, where an intellectual or a humanistic power has value, is a more advanced one than a society where physical or magical power has great value. By this criteria, we can note that the tales of the matri-local marriages are older than the tales of patri-local marriages. It would also follow that the society having the custom of matri-local forms of marriage is older than the society with the custom of patri-local forms.

Thus, we can say that from a “Difficult Question Bridegroom” to a “Solving a Riddle Bride”; from a magic and a physical power to an intellectual and humanistic power, is a stage of development noted in Philippine folktales. From the matri-local society to the patri-local society is a stage of development in Philippine society.

III On Marriage Tales Between a Human Being and a Different Form of Life or Existence

1. We can find some tales in which human beings marry what we consider to be a different form of life or existence: an animal, a devil, etc. Examples of this type of folktale are as follows:

No. 18 “Juan and His Adventures”

There lived a poor couple and their three daughters and they all made their living by selling tree leaves. One day, when the father had cut down a tree, a snake emerged demanding payment for the leaves insisting that the man’s three daughters become the
wives of his friends: the kings of the lions, eagles and fish. The three daughters became
thewives of the snake's friends and sometime thereafter, their brother was looking for a
princess, who was lost. Their husbands—his brothers-in-laws—helped him. The brother
married the princess.

No. 19 "Juan Weaving a Monkey's Skin"
A couple, who were childless, prayed to God to give them a son, even if the son
was in the form of a monkey. A monkey was born and when he became old enough
to marry he went out to look for a wife. The monkey sought a princess, who was in
a castle in the midst of the sea through the work of a bird (or three witches). The
monkey married the princess, casting off his disguise (the monkey suit) and becoming
a sparkling young man.

No. 29 "Chonguita"
The king had three sons and he sent them on a journey to earn their fortunes.
The youngest son met an old man who induced him to marry a monkey, but the other
sons married females of the human specie. When they all returned home the king was
surprised to see his youngest son's wife, the monkey. But when he gave three difficult
questions for the three wives to answer, the monkey wife gave the best answers.
Thus it was that the youngest son became the king and his wife changed into a woman.

No. 22 "The Reward of Kindness"
A mother, who was childless, prayed to God to lest her have a son and her prayers
were answered but the Devil came and took the son. The Devil and the son exchange
clothing and the son became a bear-like man. In this form he expressed kindness to
an old man and in return the old man made his daughter marry the son. Following
the marriage ceremony, the son cast off his bear-like appearance and became a noble
youth.

No. 41 "The Enchanted Princess"
There was a rich king who lived in a beautiful city near a wild forest and his son
fell in love with a witch, who was living in the forest. When the son became old
enough to marry the king forced him to marry a lady of the city. The witch became
angry and changed the city into a forest and she was transformed into a monkey. Four
centuries passed and then the monkey caught a beautiful girl and married her. The
girl came to love her husband, the monkey, and on the evening of the tenth day she
found herself beside a prince in a palace.

2. We can also find such tales in the folklore of Japan. Examples of the Japanese tales
are as follows:

(A) "The Snake Bridegroom"
There was a man who visited a young woman every night and since he was
a handsome youth, the daughter and her mother were happy. However, it seemed
curious that the young man would come visiting even on the most terrible nights. So,
on her mother's advice, the daughter used a need to sew thread to his clothing. When
he left the mother was able to follow him and see him enter a cavern. He, who was
a snake, was speaking to his mother (who was also a snake) telling her that he had
gotten a woman with child and that they must have an abortion performed in a certain
way. The mother returned home and the abortion was performed in the way the snake had stated was necessary.

(B) "The Monkey Bridegroom"

As the father was cultivating a field, he was talking to himself, saying that if anyone would help him, he would give one of his three daughters to be their wife. A monkey helped him and the father came back to the house and talked to his daughters. Of the three, the youngest agreed to become the monkey's wife. When the monkey called for her at the house she gave him a flower to carry. The monkey was killed when he fell over a precipice and the daughter returned to her father's home.

(C) "The Crane Wife"

One day a man helped a frog, who was being attacked by a snake, and soon thereafter a woman came to visit him. They were married and when the time came for the woman to give birth to a child she left the house but the husband followed and saw her go into a pond. Hearing a frog croaking he threw a stone into the pond and then returned home. When his wife came back she was limping and thus the husband knew that she was really a frog. She left his house forever.

(D) "The Crane Wife"

A young man once helped a crane that was being killed and soon thereafter a beautiful woman visited him and they were married. She was a weaver but had secured a promise from the husband that he would never look into her weaving house. Since the cloth sold for a high price he asked that she do another weaving, but this time he broke his promise and peeked into the weaving house. He saw a crane there weaving with feathers she pulled from her body. As the wife had been seen in her natural shape, by her husband, she left his house.

3. As we have seen, there are tales in this marriage category, between humans and other forms of life, in both Philippine and Japanese lore. Here, I would like to discuss these tales in a general way.

First, in the Japanese tales we find certain characteristics:

1. Almost all of the tales end in tragedy.
2. From the study of these tales and the parties involved, we find two characteristic features,

   In some tales we find the wife as a human being and the husband as something other than a human. In others we find that the wife is something other than human while the husband is a human being.

3. From our study we also find that the form taken by the parties to the marriage assume two characteristic features.

   In some tales one of the parties first appear as something other than human (such as a monkey), and that after they become engaged or married, they become human. In others, one of the parties first appear as a human being but after the engagement, or marriage, take on a form which is other than a human being.

   In comparing Philippine and Japanese tales we find that the Japanese tales in this category are much later. We also find that the Philippine folktales of this type differ from the Japanese so let us look briefly at the general characteristics of the Philippine
tales.
1. Almost all of the tales end happily.
2. There are many tales where one of the parties is seen, for the first time, as an animal
   but following the engagement, or marriage ceremony, change into human beings.
Since these tales are seemingly contrary to all that we know of life, the question arises
as to why we have so many tales in this category. From my study it must be put forth
that the reason is that people who have a great number of such tales live in rather intimate
relations with animals and have beliefs concerning animals and also respect for them.
Under these circumstances we might say that the thought in Philippine tales stems from
a familiarity with animals which is more prevalent than in the Japanese tales. Thus, we can
assume that belief in animals is stronger in the Philippines than it is in Japan. We might also
conclude that these Philippine tales are more backward than the Japanese and that the society
where these tales are found is more backward than the society where Japanese tales are found.
However, we must leave room for speculation as to whether this type of tale was carried
from the Philippines to Japan.

IV On the Role of Clothes and Skins as They Appear in Folktales

1. In Philippine marriage tales we can find instances where the hero puts on a cloth or an
   animal skin and later removes it. Examples of this are:
    No. 22 "The Reward of Kindness"
    This story has been outlined previously, but briefly it is the story of the Devil
    forcing the son to exchange clothes with him. The Devil puts on the son's soldier-like
    cloth while the son put on a bear-like cloth (skin). Following the son's marriage to an
    old man's daughter, the son cast off his bear-like cloth and became a noble youth.
    No. 24 "The Devil and the Guachinango"
    Once there was a widow whose daughter told her that she would be better off
    married to the Devil than she was to that man. The Devil overheard her and donning
    human clothes, visited her. After they were married, the daughter wore a cloth but
    the Devil told her to take it off because it made her look ugly. The daughter refused
    to take it off saying that she had been wearing it since childhood. When there was
    trouble over the cloth, the mother visited a church and spoke to the priest of this
    trouble. He then told her that the husband was a Devil.
    No. 19 "Juan Weaving a Monkey's Skin"
    This story has also been previously outlined but briefly in tells of a couple who
    gave birth to a monkey and how the monkey went in search of a wife. He discovered
    a princess in a castle, in the midst of the sea, and married her. He then cast off his
disguise (the monkey skin) and turned into a sparkling youth.
2. Similar marriage tales can be found in Japanese folklore. Examples are as follows:
    (E) "A Heavenly Maiden Wife"
    There lived a young man whose livelihood was fishing. One day he went to the
    beach and there he found a beautiful cloth hanging on a branch of a pine tree. He took
    the cloth and there appeared a naked woman claiming the cloth and also stating that
    she could not return to the sky without it. He refused to return the cloth but took
the woman home with him and they were married. She lived with him seven years, bearing children, and then she found the cloth, with the help of her children, for her husband had tried to hide it. She put on the cloth and returned to the sky taking her children with her.

(F) "Old Woman's Skin"

The stepdaughter was driven from home by her stepmother but her nurse gave her an old woman's skin to help her avoid temptation, because the stepdaughthr was very beautiful. When she put the skin on she became an old woman in appearance. She became the servant of a rich man but one day, a son of the rich man saw her in her natural body while she was bathing. When the son took sick his father discovered that he was really in love. A fortune-teller had given the father this advice. The stepdaughter removed the old woman's skin and married the son.

(G) "An Ashe's Man"

The stepson was driven from his home by his stepmother and entered the employee of a rich man as a bath-burner (bath-heater attendant). Because of the ashes put on him by his stepmother and those falling on him from the bath-burner, he looked ugly. A daughter of the rich man went to the theater and there she saw a handsome young man whom she recognized as the youth who was the bath-burner for her house. She became sick but was informed by a fortune-teller that it was a sickness of love. The youth of the ashes cast off the ashes, became a handsome young man and married the daughter.

3. From the preceding examples we might deduce the following things. From the Philippine tale No. 22 we find the Devil becoming a human when he put on the soldier-like cloth and the son became a bear-like man when he put on the bear-like cloth. Here the cloths played an important role in transforming the Devil into a human being and the human into an animal. The same type of transformation also occurs in the Philippine tale No. 24 where the devil becomes a man when he put on human dress.

There are similar incidents to be found in the Japanese tales as illustrated in tale (E). The heavenly maiden became a human woman because she removed her cloth and the reverse occurred when she found the cloth and put it on. A somewhat similar incident is found in tale (F) where 'skin' is used in place of 'cloth' and the beautiful daughter became an old woman when she put on the old woman's skin. Here also, the reverse procedure occurred when she removed the skin.

In the story of the 'ashes' as found in tale (G) the events follow the same pattern. Though the ashes are neither cloth nor skin, they nevertheless cause a transformation from beauty to ugliness and when removed the youth reverts back to his natural, but handsome, state.

From the Philippine tale No. 19 we find the emphasis upon animal skin rather than the cloth or human skin. Here the animal skin played an important role in transforming the character; that is, the monkey was changed from an animal to a man by discarding his monkey skin.

However, in Philippine tale No. 24 we find the cloth taking on a slightly different role for there is no real transformation of characters. When the Devil, who has taken
on the role of a man and the future husband, tells the daughter, his future wife, to take off a cloth she refused to do so on the grounds that she had been wearing it since childhood. In this context the cloth plays the role of connecting the present with her childhood.

V Conclusion

There are many marriage tales to be found in Philippine folktales and they indicate that marriage is of primary importance, both in folktales and in real human life. In these folktales we can find two forms of marriages dominating, matri-local and patri-local, with the matri-local tales in the majority. From this, we might conclude that, in the earlier history of the Philippines, the custom of matri-local marriages prevailed. This, then, would lead to a further conclusion that the conditions for a couple marrying were generally the physical or magical powers that dominate the matri-local folktales. It has already been pointed out that in the patri-local custom the conditions were generally intellectual or humanistic powers.

From a study of the historical nature of society it has been determined that the society where intellectual or humanistic power has great value is a more advanced society than the one where greater value is placed on physical or magical power. On this basis, we note that the tales of the matri-local marriage customs are prior in time to the tales of the patri-local tales, and, also, that the society having the matri-local custom is the predecessor of the society with the patri-local custom. Therefore, we can further state that, in the Philippines, the custom of marriage underwent a transformation from the matri-local to the patri-local.

It was also found that there are tales in which human beings marry with a different form of life or existence, such as animals or the Devil. There is a similarity between the tales found in both Japan and the Philippines, although there were differences noted. These differences were found mainly in the endings for the Philippine tales end on a happy note in comparison to the tragic ending found in the Japanese tales. Also, it was found that in the Philippine stories the animal finally changed into a human being whereas the Japanese tale concluded with the human being (or shape) being transformed into, or back into, an animal.

These distinctions indicate that a society having tales similar to those of the Philippines has a more familiar relationship with animals than those who have tales of the Japanese order. This might also show a much stronger ‘belief’ in or about animals than held by the Japanese.

From a historical context the Philippine tales are more backward than the Japanese which would indicate that the society having such Philippine tales is more backward than the Japanese society, though we must leave room for speculation as to whether this type of tale was carried from the Philippines to Japan.