Japanese Folk Humor

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A serious study of humor may appear to be anomalous and its results a little difficult to gauge without canned laughter or flash cards calling for audience response, but it is time for a Japanologist to give his attention to humor among Japanese. As a starting point or hypothesis in the present study, I propose to take the statement of Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 in his *Warai no hongan* 笑ひの本願 [The need for laughter], " the Japanese are a people who laugh a lot."[1] The question is what makes the Japanese laugh with anything from a chuckle to belly laughter.

Taking some aspects of humor covered by Yanagita in *Warai no hongan* as a basis, I propose to examine folk humor as categorized in two reference works on Japanese folk tales, *Nihon mukashibanashi meii* 日本昔話名彙, compiled under the supervision of Yanagita, (Yanagita 1948) and *Nihon mukashibanashi shūsei* 日本昔話集成 by Seki Keigo 關敬吾 (Seki 1950–58). Then I will identify some of the themes in those three works which are found among tales recited in four one-narrator collections of Japanese folk tales.[2] I am not attempting to present a chapbook of humor, but just a few stories which common, ordinary Japanese laugh over.

Yanagita gathered together six of his published articles on laughter into *Warai no hongan* in December of 1945, but he could not publish it until the following year. The latest item, " Onna no egao " 女の笑顔 [A woman's smile], had been written in 1943 when stresses due to World War Two were building up, making the woman's role of maintaining calm and pleasantness in the home increasingly difficult. If one reflects upon the circumstances facing Japan at the time the book was published, one must salute the courage with which the aging Yanagita, then seventy-two years old, was helping restore normalcy to the spirit of his countrymen.

Yanagita pointed in *Warai no hongan* to the tradition in Japan that deities gathered around Ama no Iwado 天石戸 (" The heavenly rock cave ") to draw out the secluded Amaterasu-no-ō-mikami 天照大御神 from the cave by their laughter. Enma-ō 閻魔王, King of Hell, is represented with a smile on his face in spite of his fierce posture. Even Yama-no-kami 山の神 (mountain deity) can be amused by ritualistic laughter in folk faith when an *okoze*, a small dried fish, is displayed to her. Yanagita had written about that ritual in 1950.[3] One can conclude that laughter has its place in religious tradition, including folk faith, in Japan.

Yanagita referred in *Warai no hongan* to the laughter of men on the battlefield in their attempt to keep up their courage and to inflict distress upon their enemies. A number of folk tales concern the humor of profitless imitation. They are a means of training the young in Japan by pointing out to them the failure of imitation. Discipline of children is based upon their fear of being laughed at. Brief, humorous sayings, some found in folk tales, are also used to teach traditional wisdom.[4] It would be hard to decide which came first, the story or the saying, but their relationship is obvious.

It is not necessary to enumerate humorous tales such as those in *Konjaku monogatari-shū* 今昔物語集 or *Ujishūi monogatari* 宇治拾遺物語 to illustrate the taste in Japanese humor found in old literary works. Yanagita mentions the Japanese art cultivated from long ago of matching similar sounds in words with different meanings, a sort of sport with homonyms. It was evident in some of the poems of the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 and reached its height of refinement in *haiku* 俳句. Names invented in folk tales, also, are enjoyed for their humorous sound, such as Kitchyū, Kichigo, and Kitchyomu. These are especially popular in humorous tales collected in Kyūshū.

An examination of the two reference works on folk tales shows that Yanagita and Seki set up different categories for humorous tales. Yanagita did not include all the themes he presented in *Warai no hongan* in *Waraibanashi* 笑ひ話 (" humorous tales ") in his *Meii*. A number of them were in the category of *Chie no hataraki* 知恵の働き (" cleverness at work "). Some of the Kitchyū, Kichigo, Kitchyomu characters are found there. Along with them is the little novice in the *Oshō to kozō* 和尚と小僧 (" the priest and his novice ") group. The novice may outsmart the priest or stupidly follow directions to the letter, the priest being the dupe either way. Humorous stories about foxes and badgers may be in that category or in *Dōbutsu no enjo* 動物の援助 (" help from animals ") or in *Bakemono banashi* 化物話 (" ghost stories "). Those animals have the power to transform themselves to play tricks on people or on each other. Outwitting a *tengu* 天狗 to get his magic

invisible sedge hat and cloak is also considered to be a clever feat. One more type of clever story is about judgments.

Yanagita divided his *Waraibanashi* into *Ōbanashi* 大話 ("exaggerations"), *Mane sokonai* 真似損い ("profitless imitation"), and *Oroka mura banashi* 愚村話 ("tales of foolish villages"). The most popular stories in the third division seem to be about simpletons, such as the foolish son-in-law who does not know how to behave when visiting his in-laws. A rumor still circulates in Japan that there is a whole village of fools, and a real place name is used for it. If one were to go there to inquire, he would likely hear tales about a foolish village elsewhere. There are also stories about country folk who venture to cities to look for work or to go on pilgrimages. They are befuddled over manners observed or signs which they cannot read. They illustrate the universal link of dilemma or pathos to humor.

To be sure, *waisetsu* 猥褻 ("obscenities") exist in Japan as well as elsewhere, but good taste bars such tales from being published. Yanagita lists types of obscene stories in the dialect of several regions, but he does not go into detail. Mizusawa Ken'ichi 水沢健一 has accumulated a number of such stories, for he sets down all that a narrator shares with him, but I have heard him say that he is still undecided about how to dispose of such stories.

Seki names Part Three of his *Shūsei Waraibanashi mukashibanashi* 笑話昔話 ("humorous folk tales"). Vol. I of Part Three is divided into *Orokabito tan* 愚人譚 ("stories about foolish people") and *Kochō tan* 誇張譚 ("exaggerations"). Volume II of Part Three has in it *Kochi tan* 巧智譚 ("stories of cleverness"), among which the little novice is presented, and *Kōkatsu mono* 狡猾者 ("tricky characters"). Seki writes in his Introduction to Part Three, Vol. I that ordinary tales, also, can be amusing in the way they are told.

Yanagita's *Meii* and Seki's *Shūsei* both draw upon pre-World War Two source material and handle it in the same way by geographical distribution of a tale-type, published source, brief notes, and references. Yanagita's work, however, is highly selective, kept within the limits of a single volume. Seki's six volumes were published when paper shortages were less severe, and Part Three contains references to stories reported in post—World War Two collections.

Sketches for a Smile

The reader is not supposed to have been amused up to this point. He may be even slightly bored, but there is still some introductory information which he should have before sampling folk humor. The one-narrator collections of tales were made by Mizusawa Ken'ichi in

Niigata prefecture. Presented chronologically by the year of birth of the narrator, they are *Tonto mugashi atta gedo, Dai-Isshū*, 122 tales recited by Nagashima Tsuru, born in 1868; *Yukiguni no obaba no mukashi*, 105 tales recited by Takahashi Nao, born in 1890; *Obaba no mukashi*, 140 tales recited by Ikeda Chise, born in 1901; and *Akai kikimimi zukin*, 251 tales recited by Shimojo Tomi, born in 1904. Each of the four narrators can give the name of the one from whom she heard a tale—a parent, grandparent, or other, sometimes naming three or more generations. She will tell only those tales which are in her line of transmission although she may have heard of others. All of the tales these women recited were transmitted from lines reaching back prior to modern times.

Perhaps the reader will find occasion to smile over a few sketches of tales which the four narrators found amusing. Yanagita mentioned humor in names. Tomi told about a long name. A couple thought a long name would insure a long life for their child. They went to the temple to ask the priest to name him, but they lost their little son when he fell into the well in their yard. While the parents ran to a neighbor to borrow a ladder and to explain to the deaf old woman why they needed it, Chōgiri-chōgiri-itchōgiri-michōgiri-chōgiri-chōgiri-chōzaburo-anoyama-konoyama-kayakiriyama-no-zutten-fudabō-fudabō-no-tobatate-basa-no-nodokubiki-no-tongarime drowned (Mizusawa 1969b: 468–469). This is rather sardonic humor, but the tale is well distributed in Japan.

An example of humor in cleverness comes in the story about the priest at the temple who had three young novices to train. Chise told about how the priest liked to dip into a jar of *ame* (syrup), but he told his novices that it was poison for children to eat. They schemed to get a taste of the *ame* when the priest was away one day. They broke his favorite flower pot and then cleaned up the *ame*. When the priest came home, he found the boys crying. They said that they had accidentally broken the flower pot and felt so bad about it that they wanted to die. They ate up the *ame* and still did not die. That was why they were crying. There was nothing the priest could do about it (Mizusawa 1969a: 59–61).

Priests at temples are always having unexpected things happen in stories, such as people being blown across the sky and landing upon their pagoda and the like. Nao told of a woman who lived with her recently acquired help next door to a temple. The girl worked well, but she grew pale and paler. When the old woman asked her what was wrong, the girl said that she was trying to keep from breaking wind. The old woman assured her that it was all right for her to let one go. The girl warned her to grab onto the post in the house. Then the

girl rolled up her kimono and broke wind. It blew the old woman through the smoke vent under the roof and she landed on top of the temple. The girl ran to her rescue, but the old woman fell into the yard. The priest rushed out to see what had happened and found the old woman with all her hair scraped off. He thought she had decided to become a nun and named her Muribōzu-myōjin (" The Manifestation in Forced Baldness "). The story goes on to tell how the girl was sent back to her family. On her way she blew pears from a tree which children were trying to pick and dislodged a boat loaded with a thousand bushels of rice that had been stuck on a sandbar in the river (Mizusawa 1974: 122–124).

The phenomenon of breaking wind has been taboo in translation, but it is an old subject of humor in Japan, one that appeared as early as 1100 in *Konjaku monogatari-shū*, Vol. 27, No. 39. All four women told stories about feats accomplished by breaking wind.

Foxes and badgers have been well introduced through translations of Japanese folk tales. They are often given fancy names. Tomi told about O'Hana Fox and Gonbe Badger who decided to see which one could appear in the best disguise. O'Hana appeared first, decked out as a beautiful bride. When she came to the *torii* in front of the shrine, she saw a fresh, steaming hot *manjū* (a bun stuffed with red bean jam) that had been dropped there. Forgetting her disguise, she reached down to pick it up. When she started to take a bite, it said, " You lost out, O'Hana Fox! " The badger had tricked her by his disguise of a *manjū* (Mizusawa 1969b: 305–306).

The fondness of foxes for red beans and fried bean curd is their undoing in a number of stories. And fox stories frequently have a shrine as background.

Tsuru told how three foxes thought that they had found a good way to indulge in their favorite food when they saw three warts on the bottom of an old woman when she stooped by her garden patch to relieve herself. They came disguised as officers on the next day to the old woman's house and announced that the governor of the district had heard of the old woman's three warts and wanted to see them. They had been sent to get them. The old woman was frightened, but to delay matters, she offered them lunch. When she asked what they liked to eat, they said it was red beans steamed in rice and fried bean curd. After they had eaten their fill, they declared that they would excuse her for that day, but they would be back on the following day for the warts. They repeated this trick until the old woman and her husband were distraught. A neighbor happened to pass the shrine at night and heard loud goings on. He saw three foxes dance and sing

about their sport with the old woman. He reported it and loaned his big watch dog to the old woman's husband, who put the dog into the shrine and closed the doors tight. The dog finished off the foxes (Mizusawa 1957: 126–128).

From historical times, common people were plagued by codes, revised codes, inspectors, spies, and such. It was possible for them as well as *ninja* to protect themselves by deceit to outwit intrusions into their privacy. Some of the fox stories may well have been invented to give an outlet of their resentment or a way of retaliating.

The famous Yahiko Shrine is featured in the dilemma of an excitable man. Chise told about a man who wanted to go to worhsip to Yahiko as others did. To be sure that everything would go all right, he decided to prepare his lunch the night before. He put it in a box by his pillow. In the morning he was confused and ate the starch his wife had prepared for laundry instead of the rice gruel. When he started out, he tied on one legging, but the other one he tied to the leg of the ladder by the door. As he went hurrying along, he bumped into somebody on the way. He apologized and then looked up and saw a Jizō set by the road. He said his prayers at the shrine and then sat down to eat, but he discovered that he had brought his wife's pillow stand instead of his lunch box. He really was very hungry. He decided to buy a piece of *mochi* 餅 (rice cake). They cost 3 *mon* each. He picked up the biggest one, the one out in front of the shop. He discovered that it was the wooden display *mochi* when he bit into it. He went home completely frustrated and bawled his wife out for not helping him start off in the morning. He discovered that he had gone one door beyond his own, however, when his neighbor's wife protested that she did not know what he was talking about (Mizusawa 1969a: 427–429).

W. E. Griffis gave a complete version of this tale, which he had heard in Fukui, in his *Mikado's Empire* (Griffis 1876: 496 ff.). It has been reported from all over Japan since tales have been collected.

A pigeon, a snipe, and a water rail set out to worship at Yahiko, too. In Tsuru's story, the birds found 100 *mon* along their way. They quarreled over how to divide it. An ant overheard their fuss and came out of his hole to offer to arbitrate the matter. He gave eight (***ha**chi*) *mon* to the pigeon (***ha**to*), seven (***shi**chi*) to the snipe (***shi**gi*) and nine (***ku***) to the water rail (***ku**ina*). He took what remained into his hole as ant's (*ari* 蟻) gain (mōke 儲) (Mizusawa 1957: 202–203).

This is an example of play with homonyms. And the arbitration by a local official or prominent citizen, along with the frequently dubious advantage to the arbitrator, follows a familiar pattern in matters of law.

A newly recorded humorous story, one that Seki included in his Part Three, can be illustrated by Nao's story about a letter written by somebody who did not know how to write. A mother was concerned about her daughter who had gone far over the mountain as a bride. A neighbor who had an errand over there offered to take a message to the girl. The mother got a piece of paper and drew five tree forks (*mata*) on it and folded it and asked the man to take it to her daughter. The girl read it—*mata* can mean ***or***—as worry about this or that or that. She took a piece of paper and covered it completely with charcoal ink. She folded this and asked the man to take her message to her mother. He was impressed by the ability of the mother and daughter to write. When the mother looked at the black page, she understood that her daughter was too busy to come home, but would do so as soon as she had a chance (Mizusawa 1974: 81–82; Seki, Type 421).[5]

Complete Versions for a Chuckle

If these brief sketches from the four collections have not been enough to bring a smile to the face of the reader, perhaps a more complete version of a few stories will prove to be amusing to him. No translation can duplicate the homey, gentle humor set down in dialect by Mizusawa, but an attempt will be made to convey the spirit of the stories. The opening and closing formulas are being retained without translation because they are part of the recitation; translation would destroy their rhythm and no English equivalent is available. All four old women happened to give a version of each of the following four stories. I will let each one tell one of them.

This is Tomi's version of "Rat sutra":

Atta ten ga no.

There once was an old man and an old woman in a certain place. The old man died. Although his old wife wanted to recite a sutra for him, she did not know one.

An itinerant priest came along and stopped at her door. He said, "Please let me stay here tonight."

The old woman said, "Please come in and stay. My husband died and I would like to have you recite a sutra for him."

The priest did not know a sutra because he wasn't a real priest. He sat in front of the family altar and thought, "Now what am I going to say?"

Then the man saw a rat stick its head through a hole in the sliding door. The man intoned, "*On chorochoro ana no nozoki* ("peeping through a hole")."

The rat came into the room followed by another, and the two seemed to confer about something.

The man continued, " *Naniyara koso-koso katari au* (" what are you whispering about ")? " He continued to repeat these two lines with the right intonation for a sutra to sound impressive.

Although the old woman could not understand what was said, she thought, " This must be a good sutra. I'll memorize it! " After the man left her house, she recited the lines every night.

Then two robbers came one night to steal from the old woman. They looked in to see how things were. They heard, " Peeping through the hole! " They said to each other, " Can that old woman know we are here? "

While they were talking it over, they heard, " What are you whispering about? "

They declared, " That old woman knows for sure we are talking together. Let's go back! " And they ran off.

Iki ga pon to saketa. (Mizusawa 1969b: 143–144)

Considering the time spent by Japanologists deciphering sutras, this light folk humor about the value of prayers should prove to be refreshing.

Chise's version of " Gutsu and Gutcha " is something in the same vein of light humor along with a religious subject:

Atta ten ga no.

There were two boys named Gutsu and Gutcha in a certain place. Their mother said to Gutsu, " Today is the memorial day for your father. We must send for the priest at the temple to recite a sutra. Gutsu, go get the priest."

" All right. Where is the priest? "

" The priest wears black clothes and is in a high place."

Gutsu set out and saw a black crow in the top of a tree. He said, " O-Tera Sama (Sir Priest), O-Tera Sama, it's Father's memorial day. Please come to recite a sutra."

The crow called, " Ga-ga," [that's how Japanese crows talk], and flew off.

" I went and told the priest."

" Oh, that's fine. What did he say? "

" The priest up in the tree said *ga-ga* and flew away."

" You fool! That was a crow. Gutcha, you go this time."

" All right. Where is the priest? "

" The priest wears black and is in a low place."

" All right," answered Gutcha as he ran off. He saw a cow that belonged to somebody else.

" O-Tera Sama, O-Tera Sama, it's Father's memorial day. Please come to recite a sutra."

The cow answered *moo.*

Gutcha came home and said, " I'm home now."

" Oh, that's fine, that's fine. What did the priest say? "

" He said *moo*."

" You fool, that was a cow. I'll go this time. While I am away, Gutsu, you cook rice and Gutcha, you cook soup." Then she set out.

The two boys built up a fire. When the rice began to boil *gutsu-gutsu-gutsu*, Gutsu thought it was greeting him and he answered,

" Yes, yes, yes, yes! "

When the soup began to boil *gutcha, gutcha, gutcha*, Gutcha answered, " Yes, yes, yes, yes! "

No matter how often the boys replied, the rice kept on boiling *gutsu, gutsu, gutsu, gutsu*, and the soup boiled *gutcha, gutcha, gutcha, gutcha*.

" Even when we answer, they keep on calling to make fun of us. Let's get even with them." The boys took the kettles out to the thicket behind the house and dumped their contents.

Then their mother came home. She asked, "Are the rice and soup done? "

" No matter how many times we answered, they kept on calling us. They were so mean that we threw them out in the back thicket! "

" You fools! We won't have anything to serve the priest now when he comes. Well, there's nothing to do about it, but we can warm up some sweet wine for the priest. I'll lift the jar down, so grab [the] bottom." [Japanese use personal pronouns sparingly.]

" All right."

The mother climbed into the rafters to get the jar of sweet wine down. She called, " Now both of you, grab [your] bottoms hard. Are you ready? "

" Yes, yes," they answered as they grabbed each other's bottoms hard.

" Are you ready? "

" Yes, yes! "

" Hang on hard."

" We're hanging on hard."

The mother let go of the jar and it came crashing down and broke, spilling the wine all over.

" You fools, even when I told you over and over to hang on, what did you hang onto? "

" We hung on this hard. Look, our nails dug in so hard, blood came out! "

" You fools, you hung onto each other's bottoms."

Now there was nothing left to serve the priest when he came. There was no help for it. The mother decided to heat up the bath.

When the priest arrived, the mother said, " We have nothing to serve you, O-Tera Sama, but please enjoy a bath."

The priest got into the tub.

" How is the bath, O-Tera Sama? "

" It's a little cool. Please heat it up a little for me."

" Gutsu, Gutcha, fire up the bath! "

" There isn't any more wood! "

" Oh, pick up anything around."

The boys burned up the priest's kimono, his sash, and his loin cloth. When the priest got out of the tub, he had nothing to put on. He rushed back to the temple holding up his towel to himself.

Iki ga saketa. (Mizusawa 1969a: 180–184)

The version of " The big bean tree " told by Nao is somewhat shorter than most versions:

Atta ten ga no.

In a certain place there was an old man and an old woman. The old man swept the dirt floor of his work room, and the old woman swept the sitting room. The old man picked up a big bean.

" Granny, Granny, I picked up a big bean." [Even a single bean was important to the thrifty old couple.]

" Well, I declare! So you did. If we toast it and eat it, it will taste good."

" If we eat it, that would be the end of it. I'll plant it."

The old man buried the bean in the ground. It sprouted and grew up until it reached Tenjuku, the Sky World. When the beans ripened, the old man said, " The weather is fine today. I think I will pick beans."

The old man climbed the bean tree, picking beans, until he reached Tenjuku. He found himself on fluffy, white clouds.

Thunder [the deity] came out and said, " Well, old man, what did you come to such a place as this for? "

" I happened to come to Tenjuku while I was picking beans."

" That's it, is it? You came at the right time. There is a drought going on below. Let's make an evening shower. You can help me."

" All right."

" I'll beat my drums and you can scatter water. Drop a little at a time with a dipper from that wooden basin. That will make it just right for an evening shower."

Thunder gave the old man delicious cooked navels to eat which he had taken from naked children below. [Japanese children are told that if thunder sees an exposed navel, he will take it to eat.]

Then thunder beat his drum and the old man sprinkled water from the dipper a little at a time. People below who were suffering from the drought were happy over the evening shower. That made the old man feel so good that he poured more and more water from his dipper until he caused a flood. Houses and trees floated away, and there was great confusion. The old man was so startled that he fell from the sky.

Iki ga pōn to saketa. (Mizusawa 1974: 125–126)

Each of these three stories which I have presented is listed under " Exaggerations " by Yanagita. The following tale by Tsuru is from

his " Tales of foolish villages." She told four different stories about sons-in-law. The custom of arranging a marriage and sending a daughter off through the services of a go-between meant that frequently her family did not have a good chance to know the groom well until after the wedding. It was customary for him to be invited to the bride's family at a stated time, perhaps at New Year, to give the family an opportunity to look him over. In each of Tsuru's stories, a son-in-law is coached on manners at home by his bride before he starts out to make a visit at her parent's home.

Tsuru's story, " The Knothole " illustrates this:

Tonto mukashi ga atta ge do.

A young bridegroom who lived in the hills was invited to his wife's home for them to look him over. Since the daughter's husband was coming, her parents built an ornamental alcove in their house to impress him. The daughter thought that her parents expected her husband to be ignorant about such things because he lived in the hills. She decided to explain it to him. She said, " When you go to my parent's house, be sure to praise the newly made ornamental alcove. Tell them that it would be a good idea to hang a scroll of the Three Sacred Sites over the knothole in the post." [The Three Sacred Sites are the Imperial Grand Shrine of Ise, Hachiman Shrine, and Kasuga Shrine, written in characters.] She drilled her husband over and over on what to say.

When the young man arrived at his wife's home, he was welcomed and taken immediately to see the alcove.

He said, " You have a fine alcove. It is a pity there is a knothole there. If you hung a scroll of the Three Sacred Sites over it, nobody would notice it."

The family was delighted with him. They declared, " What a clever son-in-law."

The father-in-law took the young man out to the stable. He said, " Son-in-law, have a look at the good horse we have."

When the young man saw the tail end of the horse, he said, " You have a fine horse. It's a pity there is a knothole in its tail end. If you hung a scroll of the Three Sacred Sites over it, nobody would notice it."

At that, everybody was shocked.

Kore de ichi go saketa doppen. (Mizusawa 1957: 279–280)

HUMOROUS stories based upon religious themes are found in the West as well as in Japan, but there is a certain earthy, satirical vein in those told by the four old women which reflects the gap that existed between temple circles and common people in Japan. Scholars frequently refer to specific dates as the time when Buddhism was introduced into Japan, but the fact is that it was brought to the elite few of officialdom. Many centuries passed before it came to commoners by word of mouth.

During Tokugawa days, temples served as keepers of official census records. They listed all marriages and births, and it can be assumed that such offices were supported by suitable gifts. Temples also took their share of rice tax collected with their help. That priests were the butt of humor in folk tales may be an expression of the resentment among commoners over the official character of temples.

Since this is a study based upon a hypothesis, shored up by reference works and illustrated by examples from published collections of folk tales, a statement of results is due. It would take a computer to give information about the distribution of all the themes presented in collections of folk tales made before and after World War Two. More than one hundred new collections of folk tales have been published or are scheduled to be published since World War Two. The tales which have been presented are among the newly-collected ones, but they are types which are well represented among the earlier collections upon which the two reference works were based.

Taking the four one-narrator collections as indication of the place of humor in Japanese folk tales, I can state that a surprising number of humorous stories are among them. There are many duplications, of course, but thirty-seven of the *waraibanashi* of Yanagita's *Meii* and an additional twenty themes he mentioned in *Warai no hongan* and eleven more in Part Three of Seki's *Shūsei* were found among them. In all, there were one hundred one different humorous tales in the four collections. Those recited by Tsuru topped the rest with 31 percent of her stories being humorous.

The samples of humor found in the four one-narrator collections answer the question, " What makes common Japanese laugh " to support the hypothesis, " Japanese are a people who laugh a lot."

NOTES

1. Yanagita 1971, Vol. III, pp. 149–236. The editors of this edition of Yanagita's works list the following articles as having made up the original book:

Warai no bungaku no kigen. *Chūō kōron* 43/9 (1928).

Warai no hongan. *Haiku kenkyū* 2/8 (1938).

Jisakusha no dentō. *Bungaku* 6/8 (1938).

Kitchyūkai kiji. *Chihō* 34/6 (1926; original title " Mukashibanashi no atarashii sugata ").

Warai no kenkyū. *Kitaazumi-gun kyōdo shikō* 4 (1932; original title " Rigen no zokushin no kankei ").

Onna no egao. *Shin-joen* 7/6 (1943).

2. These are the four collections listed under Mizusawa in the References.

3. See Yanagita 1971, Vol. IV, pp. 441–448. Part I of this essay was published

in *Gakusei bungaku* 1/2 (1910), and Part II appeared in *Jinruigaku zasshi* 27/1 (1911).

4. For example, the saying, "Even a monkey can fall from a tree." See Yanagita 1954, p. 45.

5. That all-black letter contains a pun on *suki* 隙, meaning "opening" or "chance." No open spot on the page meant no chance to come home to the mother. There is also humor in the way the messenger is impressed by the ability of both mother and daughter to write letters.

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