

Japanese Repatriates Doing 'Kikigaki': The Cultural Movement of Omura Ryo and Morisaki Kazue in the 1950s and 1960s in Japan

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Introduction

What was the significance of the cultural movement created by repatriates in postwar Japan? In this presentation, I explore the characteristics of Morisaki Kazue (森崎和江) and Omura Ryo (大牟羅良) by comparing their *kikigaki* (聞き書き), a term which refers to works that are created by listening to events told by the person concerned and writing about it. Recently in Japan, the value of *kikigaki* is being reconsidered alongside the reevaluation of Ishimure Michiko (石牟礼道子), who wrote down the unspoken voices of patients suffering from Minamata disease. For example, several magazines have published special features on *kikigaki*, and important works from the past are being reprinted. Moreover, this renewed interest in *kikigaki* has spread beyond academia. Sato Izumi stated that *kikigaki* is distinctive because it is words made possible by the listener. The listener is not merely a passive listener of someone's narrative, but rather an active participant who creates a space for the speaker's testimony (Sato 2019: 71). This statement demonstrates that the listener plays a crucial role in *kikigaki*. In this context, I will examine the "field of testimony" formed by the repatriates Morisaki Kazue and Omura Ryo, and the *kikigaki* that emerged from this field.

1. The Activities of Two Japanese Repatriates in Postwar Japan

Morisaki Kazue was born in colonial Korea in 1927. At the age of 17 and shortly before Japan lost the war, Morisaki emigrated to Japan; therefore, unlike many works of repatriation literature and direct accounts, she did not write about the hardships of emigrating from Korea. However, her work is based on her identity as a second-generation colonist. For this reason, many previous studies have considered her to be writer who belongs to the genre of repatriation literature because she possessed self-awareness as an embodiment of the violence that existed between imperial Japan and colonized Korea, and because she expressed her discomfort with postwar Japan (Narita 2010). She lived in a coal mining area in Northern Kyushu, and together with Tanigawa Gan (谷川雁) and Ueno Eishin (上野英信), she published a magazine called *Circle Mura* (サークル村, 1958–1961). As a contributor to the magazine, Morisaki documented female coal miners who had been forgotten in postwar Japan. Subsequently, her writings have been discussed by postcolonial and feminist scholars.

Omura Ryo was born in Iwate in 1909. In 1938, after working as a teacher for 9 years, he moved to Shinkyō (新京) to join the Manchukuo Concordia Association (満州帝国協和会), where his brother was a member. After Japan was defeated in WWII, he spent time as a prisoner of war in Okinawa and returned to Morioka in 1946. Living in poverty, he secured his livelihood by peddling

daily necessities for four years. In 1951, he became an employee of the Iwate Medical Bureau (岩手県医療局) and became involved in editing *Iwate no Hoken* (岩手の保健, 1947-), a periodical published by the Iwate Federation of National Health Insurance Societies (岩手県国民健康保険組合連合会). After Omura began writing editorials, the magazine began covering a wide range of issues closely related to the lives of rural youth, women, and the elderly as well as hygiene and health care. Due to these achievements, Omura and Yamashiro Tomoe (山代巴) are cited as important people in the history of postwar Japan (Kitagawa 2002).

Being born in colonial Korea and moving to Manchuria are not equivalent experiences; however, Morisaki and Omura both had experienced living outside of Japan during the war period and in Japan during the postwar period. It is important to note that they performed *kikigaki* while reflecting on these experiences. I will now examine what they have in common.

2. Commonalities: Adopting Dialects

Morisaki and Omura both dealt with the voices of people on the periphery of postwar Japan. In both of their works, the voice of the narrator is written in dialect. Interviews of female coal miners were first serialized in *Circle Mura* with an illustration by Senda Umeji (千田梅二), and other interviews were serialized from 1959 (Morisaki 1959). In their stories, these female coal miners talk about their memories of the hardship of working underground.

Omura launched a series of new projects in the early 1950s that took up the opinions of readers. For example, the series “Voice and Recording of the Common People” (庶民の声・録音), which began publication in issue 33, contains stories about people who were seen and heard by Omura and others there at a farm, just as the title indicates. His collaborators and Omura spoke about the working poor and the events of the war.

Both Morisaki and Omura tried to take up the words of the narrator directly by using dialect, and they both choose not to think of themselves as representatives of women and farmers. Rather, they place themselves in a different position from the people. This choice was influenced by their experiences outside Japan during the war.

Originally, Morisaki tried to atone for colonialism by learning about coal mines as a method to understand Japan. This approach was based on Morisaki’s recognition that coal had enabled the modernization of Japan and the war of colonial expansion. Subsequently, Morisaki learned about the misery of coal production, which supported colonialism, through women’s stories, which were told in a dialect that was completely different from the standard Japanese language learned in colonized Korea (Morisaki 1984).

Omura also based his work on the experience of recognizing the gap between the Five Races Under One Union (五族共和) theory and reality, an experience which occurred after he traveled to Manchuria and had several military experiences. He was influenced by Takoi Motoyoshi (蛸井元義),

who he met at the Manchukuo Concordia Association. Takoi Motoyoshi believed that the real feelings of the local people should be accepted, and he wanted to take up the experiences of soldiers and the people who saw and heard about them in the villages where he peddled daily necessities after the war (Omura 1958). Omura thought that it would be effective to listen to conversations in people's living spaces, such as an *irori* (囲炉裏), or to ask farmers to write articles.

What is the significance of taking up the voices of people on the periphery? I argue that they questioned their wartime responsibilities in postwar Japanese society, adding creativity to the words they listened to from different perspectives.

3. Differences: The Creative Listening Place

Although Morisaki and Omura have some things in common, they also do things very differently. While Morisaki collected the voices she heard, Omura encouraged people living in farming villages to listen to others. By analyzing this difference, the methodological features of both will become clearer.

First, *kikigaki*, which Morisaki serialized in Circle Mura, was revised and rewritten as *Makkura* (まっくら—女坑夫からの聞き書き, 1961) and became a book. Morisaki published this book three times with many additions and corrections. It did not contain the stories of the women; however, it described scenes of old women and the scenery of the coal mine at the time of the interview. It also contained Morisaki's comments. The work also notes slight differences in the dialects spoken by the women in the coal mine. Miners, even those in Kyushu, had come from as far away as Hiroshima. The use of language also relates to women's position as coal miners. While placing importance on the way women speak, Morisaki describes the past and present lives of women through his own additions.

Omura planned to publish a photo in a magazine in addition to the article I just introduced; he also planned to write and send a story about what readers would recall when they saw the photo "Let them tell something!" (語らしめよ!). For example, an old woman in a photograph is briefly described as a rural woman who is the greatest victim of feudalism, and the reader is asked to recall or imagine the hardships of the women he saw and heard in the countryside and to describe their stories using dialect. A man working at a town hall described the first voice of an old woman as if it were a voice addressed to him. He also makes the old woman retell her experience of losing her son in the war and her admonition to take good care of her parents (Sasaki 1953: 50).

Although there are differences, their works both attempt to listen to people creatively and deeply. In Morisaki's approach, dialect and creativity divide the experiences of women who can be classified together as female coal miners. Moreover, the depiction of the coal mine landscape adds texture to the woman's lives. Omura's approach enabled readers to imagine the lives of people they had encountered. The stories posted by readers were generally unknown to everyone. It might have been something they had seen or heard about, or it might have been their experiences, or both. Here, dialects are used as a

circuit for collaborative editing that mixes people's experiences, and by their own hands, the experiences come to fruition as the experiences of the entire farming community.

4. How to Represent Coal Mining and Rural Areas

However, it should be noted that while both Morisaki and Omura have used dialects effectively, the space of discourse when speaking in dialects can often be limited. That is, when a dialect reinforces a sense of community, the experience of suffering described via the written word can be absolutized. For example, Morisaki Kazue wrote "Yama Babaa" (ヤマばばあ). This work discusses the sorrow of an old woman who was left alone in a closed coal mine. However, it is also important that Korean laborers are mentioned in the story about the old woman. Although she has compassion for Korean workers, she also speaks about experiencing communication difficulties that result from her not understanding the Japanese language. This also demonstrates the asymmetry in their relationship and the intersectional oppression of Korean women. Therefore, this story is not simply the story of a tragic experience of an old woman who worked in a coal mine. Another text quoted this story and emphasized that it was a forced encounter for the Korean people, which shows that Morisaki did not fully understand this story. Additionally, in Morisaki's carefully edited transcription, this asymmetry is described by mixing an old woman's speech, which is spoken in dialect, with the single voice of a Korean woman (Morisaki 1961: 135-150).

In the case of Omura, in an interview conducted in Iwate after the war, it is said that he had a positive military experience and did not have to worry about food, clothing, or housing compared to farming. There were arguments in favor of rearmament and taking back Manchuria. Omura clearly points out that this is a dangerous trend, paying attention to the background of such opinions as the fact that the lives of poor farmers invited such opinions (Omura 1954). In addition, during a time when there were many discriminatory opinions about people who moved to Iwate Prefecture after being repatriated, he tried to encourage people to be considerate by stating that he was also a repatriate (Omura 1951). According to Omura's account of hearsay about an old woman, she was affected by hardship during the war and the joy of her conscripted grandchild's return; however, in the supplementary note, it is asserted that the old woman's devotion to guarding the home derived from her desire to protect her grandchild, not out of feels of loyalty or patriotism.

Conclusion

My analysis here suggests that Morisaki and Omura were both taking up local voices, adding different creative elements, and constructing their won narratives. It was not simply an uncritical recording of their voices, but a relativization of their positions as listeners. The reason for this emphasis is that when local voices are taken up, they are often viewed in a contrasting and one-dimensional way in the relationship between the countryside and the city. There have been many local self-

representations of health in Iwate, and Iwate is referred to as a rural area that possess different cultural resources and wartime experiences compared to urban areas.

However, to speak of the countryside only in relation to the city is a mistake that overlooks different perspectives on the countryside. In this sense, Morisaki and Omura draw on their own experiences outside of Japan to bridge the gap between postwar and wartime experiences and draw attention to the migration of people not only from rural areas in Japan but also from Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula. In this sense, it is possible to regard the efforts of both parties as unique acts that occurred in a situation where the voices of the local people and the position of repatriates intersected despite their differences.

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