Aesop in the East and West

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Aesop's fables are extremely popular in Japan, as indeed they probably are in most of the cultural areas of the world. Japanese children are exposed to these fables through pictures before they are able to read. Humorous pictures which appeal to young children are the main feature of these books, although most are accompanied by a simple text. Before they are old enough to receive compulsory education, children who can read a little read these texts themselves, and thus become familiar with the essentially simple morals of these animal fables. Even children who are usable to read at all have the fables read to them by their parents, and store them away in the memory of their earliest knowledge.

When choldren are old enough to receive complsory education and start to elementary school, they once again meet several of Aesop's fables in their textbooks. It should be mentioned, however, that the number of chances of encountering Aesop in Japanese elementary school textbooks has decreased considerably since World War II. This is because the principle underlying the policy of elementary education has taken a slight turn in the direction of placing greater emphasis on the social consciousness of the citizen than on the moral conduct of the individual. At the same time, there has been a recession in the general tendency to weave the moral into the very groundwork of education. This was not true, however, of Japanese education before the Second World War. In fact, moral instruction was considered to be the most important item on the agenda of compulsory education. In their Japanese language readers and moral instruction primers as well, without even being aware of it, children came in contact with many of Aesop's fables. For example, the fable of "The frog who burst herself and the cow":

> Once upon a time a frog caught sight of a cow in a meadow and, in envy of so much bulk, puffed up her wrinkled skin. Then she asked her children whether she was bigger than the cow. "Not so," said they. Again, with greater effort, she stretched

> her skin and in like manner inquired which was the bigger. "The cow," said they. Refusing to be beaten, in a final effort to blow herself out still more, she burst herself and fell flat.

Second graders, which is to say eight-year-olds all over Japan knew this story. This was already the case in the Japan of the Meiji Era, or the 1870's. Therefore, Natsume Soseki, a major figure in modern Japanese literature, was able, through the protagonist of his novel *And Then* (1909), to express his criticism of the arrogance of Japanese society immediately after having attained victory in the Russo-Japanese War, as follows:

> The point is, Japan can't get along without borrowing from the West. But it poses as a first-class power. And it's straining to join the ranks of the first-class powers. That's why, in every direction, it puts up the facade of a first-class power and cheats on what's behind. It's like the frog that tried to outdo the cow – look, Japan's belly is bursting.

At the time of the publication of *And Then,* Soseki's readers were able to understand immediately what he wanted to say through this metaphor, for in any case, people who would have read Soseki's works would certainly have completed compulsory education. In 1909, some 99% of the Japanese population received compulsory education.

In the Meiji Era, it was famous enlightened thinkers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Tsubouchi Shoyo who exerted the greatest influence of the compilation of elementary school textbooks. These men themselves had received an education that was founded for the most part on the cornerstone of the Anglo-Saxon humanities. Fukuzawa Yukichi's *Dômôoshiegusa* (童蒙教草 , 1873), was a partial translation of a book entitled *Moral Class-book,* by an Englishman named Chambers. It lists 29 moral lessons as headings, with several historical episodes or fables added as explanation for each one. At least ten of the stories used in this book are Aesop's fables. This book, edited and translated by Fukuzawa, was highly valued and widely used as material for elementary school textbooks in the early Meiji Era, or the 1870's. Thus Aesop's fables came to play an important role in early modern Japanese education. At around the same time that Fukuzawa was introducing the fables indirectly, an educator named Watanabe Tazune translated the whole of Thomas James' *Aesop's Fables* (New York, Grosset

and Dunlap) and published his translation over a three year period, from 1873 to 1876. This book also offered a rich source of material for textbooks as well as picture books and books for juvenile readers.

From the explanation I have given so far, it may sound as though the spread of Aesop's fables to Japan was simply one part of the great wave of the so-called modernization movement which began with the Meiji Restoration. Actually, however, Japanese people were already well acquainted with Aesop's fables in the late 16th century, some three hundred years before the Meiji Restoration. The fact that the Japanese were already familiar with Aesop's fables so long ago may seem quite starange to those who are unaware of the situation, but actually, there is nothing strange about it at all.

Saint Francisco Xavier (1506–1553), sworn friend of Ignatius de Loyola (1491–1556) and one of the founders of the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuit Society, came to Japan as a Christian missionary, landing at Kagoshima, the southernmost tip of her main islands in 1549. For approximately the next 90 years, until the Tokugawa Shogunate passed a law which drove all Portuguese out of Japan and prohibited Portuguese ships from landing on her shores in 1638, Japan was to experience her Christian century, an age that is unique medieval history. Xavier left Japan in 1551, intending to continue his missionary work in China. He was stricken by a fever in San Chou Tao (三洲島) and died there in 1553. During the approximately 30 years following Xavier's stay in Japan, the propogation of Christianity progressed; although not smoothly, slowly and steadily it began to produce results. Missionary work in Japan reached its zenith during the period from 1579 to 1582. In 1582, a papal legate (visitador) named Alessandro Valignani set out on a journey for Rome, taking with him an envoy of three young boys, representatives of three powerful *daimyo* in Kyushu. The three with their *compãnia* traveled through Portugal and Spain, finally reaching Rome, where they were granted an audience with the pope, and were welcomed warmly by both the papal state and the civilians of Rome. They returned to Japan in 1590, eight years after their departure. When they returned, they brought with them as a gift to Japan a Gutenburg-style printing press and one set of type, and this printing press was eventually set up in the Jesuit Society college (colégio) on Amakusa, a large island in the western part of kyushu. Thus the printing of the Jesuit Mission Press, later to become widely known through the collection of Sir Ernest Satow (1843-1929), the famous British diplomat who spent the years of the late Tokugawa and early Meiji period in Japan, was begun. And in 1593, the Jesuit Mission Press

printed and published its first Japnese translation – the romanized text *Esopo no Fabulas*. This was the first translation of a work of Western literature, aside from religious books (acta sanctorum, catechism, books of hours, etc.) to appear in Japanese, and was to be the only translation of its kind for quite some time.

Although they were the first to bring the printing press from the West (in this case the "West," however, was probably Macau, where there was a Jesuit Society *provincia*), the three young ambassadors were not the first to bring Aesop's fables as a gift to Japan. Aesop's fables had already been brought to Japan several years, or perhaps several decades, earlier by Jesuit Fathers (Padré), who used them as teaching materials for Latin classes in Japanese seminary or colégio. It is estimated that a translation of nearly the whole of the original text used by the Jesuit Fathers was completed sometime in the 1580's. This translation was written in literary style, but some parts of the original text which were left out of this early translation were rewritten in the everday conversational style in use at the time, and printed in roman letters in 1593. Here a question arises – why was this text, which had originally been translated in literary style, printed only after having been re-edited and re-translated in conversational style? The answer is that the romanized text was made for the purpose of providing a Japanese language reader for the fathers of the Jesuit mission, most of whom were Portuguese.

But which of the many editions of Aesop's fables available in medieval Europe was the original text brought to Japan by the Jesuit Mission? An attempt to answer this question leads directly to a consideration of the situation of Aesop's fables in the literary world of medieval Europe.

During the fifteen hundred years from the first to the 15th century A.D. – that long period of time that is usually referred to as the "middle" ages" – the transcriptions which played the role of imparting the most ancient of Aesop's fables to the Western world belonged to two lines of descent, the Phaedrus-Romulus line and the Babrius-Avianus line. Three transciptions of the Romulus line were circulated most widely, which means that during the middle ages, what Western readers read as Aesop's fables was actually a collection of medieval animal fables called *Romulus*.

It is a well known fact that in the latter half of the 15th century, Johannes Gutenburg, a man of Mainz am Rhein, invented the printing press and put it to practical use, and that this was an epoch-making event in cultural history. Sometime in the decade between 1460 and 1470, his printing

business entered a stage of stable distribution. At approximately the same time, around 1480 to be more exact, Heinrich Steinhöwel (1412–1483), a doctor and humanist of Ulm, Germany, compiled and published an epoch-making Aesop.

Steinhöwel collected and organized the transcriptions of medieval animal fables which were scattered about in the form of *Romulus* and *Avainus* collections. In addition, his Aesop included the *Remicius* collection, edited by Maximus Planudes, which had some years earlier been brought to Italy from Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, and was beginning to gain some fame; *Fabulae extravagantes,* a collection of animal fables with a strong Hebraic flavor which is thought to have been circulated in Greek during the middle ages; *Disciplina Clericalis,* a collection of tales originally having nothing to do with Aesop, edited during the 12th century in Spain by Petrus Alphonsus, a Jewish convert; and *Facetiae,* a collection of humorous stories edited by Poggio Bracciolini, an Italian of the same period. Steinhöwl placed "Aesop's Life" (Vita Esopi), taken from the *Remicius* collection, at the beginning of the volume, and followed it with the other collections, starting with *Romulus,* in the order in which I mentioned them. Each of the 164 fables was printed in the original Latin, along with Steinhöwel's German translation.

Steinhöwel's comprehensive Aesop was a great success. Almost immediately it was translated into Italian, French, and Spanish, and in 1484, based on the French translation by J. Machault (1483), William Caxton's famous English Aesop appeared, and began to spread throughout the English speaking world. Thus Steinhöwel's Aesop, along with its translations into English, French, spanish, and other languages, gave rise to an astounding number of editions, some of which were faithful to Steinhöwel and others of which were variant editions. To take as an example those editions composed only of the Latin portion of Steinhöwel's original, it is believed that within the approximately 30 years following the publication of Steinhöwel's first edition, some 150 variant editions had appeared. The Steinhöwel edition was to maintain its reputation as the most authoritative version of Aesop's fables in the Western world for more than 300 years, until a still older version was discovered at Augsburg, Germany, early in the 19th century. This older version was the *Augustana Recension,* which succeeded . . . Steinhöwel as the authorized edition when it was published and identified as the text which preserves Aesop in Greek, in his oldest form.

By the time the Fathers (Padré) and Brethren (Irmao) of the Jesuit

mission arrived in Japan in the latter half of the 16th century, the existence of the Steinhöwel edition had made Aesop's fables extremely important in the literary world of the West, as well as having captured for them a high degree of popularity as general moral literature. Despite the fact that they were so-called pagan, or heathen literature, the fables were brought to Japan by Jesuit missionaries, who not only read them themselves, but also had the Japanese read them, and underlying this situation was the historical fact of Aesop's widespread populatity, which had permeated the whole of 16th century Europe.

As I said before, it is believed that in 1539, when the romanized edition *Esoho no Fabulas* was published by the press associated with the *colégio* on the island of Amakusa in western Japan, the manuscript of a Japanese translation in literary style which formed the basis for this edition was already in existence. Based on this manuscript, a literary style edition written in the native Japanese script (伊曾保物語) was compiled and published sometime in the 1610's It was not the Jesuit Mission Press that printed this edition, but rather a printing technique of Korean origin, using wooden moveable type. Typography had long been developed in the East, and in 16th century Korea the technique had advanced into a highly efficient machine. The Japanese autocrat Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who invaded Korea in 1592, seized a printing machine and one set of type and brought them back to Japan. With this as its foundation, a printing operation of a different origin from that of Gutenburg was begun in Japan as well. This happened at approximately the same time that the Jesuit Mission Press began its operations. Thus purely by accident, two types of typography, one of Western origin and the other of Eastern origin, were put to practical use and began operations in Japan, late in the 16th century.

The first works to be published by the printing press of Korean origin were ethical and political treatises, such as *Xiao-jing* (孝經) and *Zheng-quan-zheng-yao* (貞觀政要), which politicians needed to circulate widely because of the demands of policy and administration. Almost immediately, however, with the popularization of typography, literature also came to be circulated through the use of this new technology. It was a course of events quite similar to that through which the Jesuit Mission Press, which was originally established for the purpose of printing religious works, came to give the opportunity for publication to Aesop, a secular work. And when the time came for the Korean printing press to give this opportunity to literature, one of the earliest works to be chosen for printing and publication

was the Japanese Aesop, *Isoho Monogatari* (伊曾保物語).

With reference to content, the Japanese Aesop, published sometime in the 1610's (the exact date of publication is not known), is richer than *Esopo no Fabulas,* published by the Jesuit Mission Press in 1593. It is for the most part a faithful Japanese translation of nearly 100 fables – that is, approximately two-thirds of the 164 fables contained in Steinhöwel's Aesop, the original text. Except for the addition of a few editorial devices, the translation of Steinhöwel's "Vita Esopi" is also faithful.

By 17th century publication standards, this Japanese Aesop is thought to have gone through an unprecedented number of editions – in other words, to have been extremely successful. Around 1660, a more readily accessible edition, with illustrations by a Japanese artist came out, and gained even greater popularity among the common people. Illustrations were also added to the "Vita Esopi" section, so that we can see what sort of image the Japanese people of that time had of Aesop. Although he is supposed to have been an ancient Greek slave, the illustrations show that the Japanese imagined Aesop as a character somewhat like the court jesters (茶坊主 or 御伽衆) often employed by Japanese *daimyo.*

The medieveal Japanese Aesop, which was circulated under the title *Isoho Monogatari*, was a direct translation of Aesop's fables into Japanese, and was accepted as one kind of *kana-zōshi* (假名草子), or popular storybook. It was furthermore numbered among the other storybooks popular at the time, which were structured like collections of short stories, and in some cases was even regarded as a collection of Japanese folk tales.

Let us take an example from a collection of stories entitled *Gigen-Yauki-Shû* (戲言養氣集), which is thought to have been published sometime around 1620. (The title means: "humorous stories to enrich the human heart.") In this collection is included a didactic short story with a very long title which means: "The key to getting along in this world lies in the skillfull use of 'truth' and 'falsehood.' " When we read this story, we see at once that it is the famous story of "The Fox and the Crow," which is also included in La Fontaine's *Fables:*

> When a crow, perched on a high tree, was about to eat a piece of cheese which he had carried off from a window, a fox who coveted the prize spoke up as follows: 'Oh, Mr. Crow, what a lustre your plumes have, how graceful your face and your figure! If only you had a voice no bird would rate higher.' Anxious

> to show that he did have a voice, the foolish crow opened his mouth to sing and let fall the cheese, which the crafty fox immediately snapped up with eager jaws. Too late the crow, betrayed by his own folly, moaned his loss.

The 17th century Japanese storybook editor, who did not know of a food called cheese, of course changed a piece of cheese to a piece of meat, and along with this added several morals of his own to the story, but the rhetoric of the words of enticement with which the fox seeks to trick the crow are essentially the same as those used in the fable as we find it in the well known collections of Aesop and La Fontaine. This fable was probably taken from an early book printed with wooden type sometime in the 1610's – an older source than the readily accessible edition of the Japanese Aesop.

To give another example, the story known as "The Mice take counsel about the Cat" is included in Soga Kyûji's (曾我休自) *Iguchi-Monogatari* (爲愚癡物語). (The title means: "Nonsensical Stories that make Fools of People") *Iguchi-monogatari* was published in 1662, and belongs to the same *kana-zôshi,* or storybook genre. The story "The Mice take counsel about the Cat" is another famous one, which may also be found in La Fontaine's *Fables,* but as for its origin, it cannot actually be numbered among Aesop's fables. It was included in the *Abstemius* collection, one of the medieval collections of Latin stories, and thus seems to have found its way into the Steinhöwel edition, which contains many kinds of medieval stories which actually have no connection with Aesop. The text of this story has countless variant readings, but the one I will read now is the version contained in *The Writings of Odo of Cheriton:*

> The mice held a meeting to consider how they might defend themselves against the cat. One wise mouse spoke up and said, 'Let a bell be tied to the cat's neck, then we'll be able to hear him wherever he goes and to be on our guard against his sly assaults.' All the mice thought this a very good plan, but one of them asked, 'Who is going to tie the bell on the cat's neck?' 'Not I, certainly,' said one of the mice. 'Nor I,' said another. 'I wouldn't go near him for all the world.'

Although the content is basically the same as this British version, the Japanese author rewrote the story in a style that reflects the atmosphere of

the age in which he lived. This can also be said of the moral appended to the translation included in *Isoho Monogatari*: "Even the samurai who is always full of courageous talk quivers with fear and finds that his legs refuse to carry him forward when he actually gets on the battlefield. This is what we mean when we say that the tales a warrior tells of his exploits in war when he is safe at home are not to be depended upon." This is just the kind of moral we would expect from a military society. (The translation of this story appeared just around the time when Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) had conquered the whole of Japan, finally putting an end to a 130 year period of constant civil war. It was indeed an age in which the competence of the samurai was regarded as the ultimate power in which to place one's confidence.

When the writer Soga Kyûji put this story into his collection, he expanded the original story, adding many new flourishes of his own. Furthermore, he added his own original comment, which is somewhat different from the moral of the *Isoho Monogatari* version. His comment, which reveals an extremely "anti-democratic" outlook, is as follows: "This is all the wisdom that can be expected from the massess. The common people gather together from time to time to complain about the authorities, but when it comes to putting their plan into action, there is not one who will step forward and say. 'I'll do it.' "

One more example, from a slightly later time, that should be cited is that of Shiba Kôkan 司馬江漢 (1738–1818). An intellectual who is representative of the late 18th century, he was an artist of Western painting, and a scholar who studied Western sciences through the Dutch language. I believe it is a well known fact that at the time, the only way to obtain information concerning Western art and science was to master the Dutch language and pursue the study of Dutch scholarship. As an artist, Kôkan was quite popular among the common people, and among his writings is a book entitled *A Collection of Moral Illustrations* (*Kunmau-Gakai-Shû* 「訓蒙畫解集」, 1814), composed primarily of didactic fables from the Chinese classics, with illustrations. Among them, he included five fables from *Isoho Monogatari,* and attempted to explain them through pictures. This seems to be evidence that *Isoho Monogatari*'s popularity among the common people endured for as long as 200 years after its appearance in Japan. Paradoxically, however, the style Kôkan used when he rewrote the five Aesop's fables for his illustrated text, as well as his comments on the fables, show that during the period from the late 18th century to the beginning of the 19th,

the once readily accessible edition of *Isoho Monogatari* had already become a rare book, or a curiosity, and even someone like Kôkan knew of its existence for the first time when a *daimyo* showed him his own personal copy, which he counted among his treasures. Furthermore, we can see no trace of Aesop's having been circulated among the Japanese people either in the form of Japanese translations or retold versions of those translations, between the time when Kôkan used five of his fables in his illustrated text, and the 1870's, when, as I mentioned before, enlightened educators began to introduce his fables through American and British editions.

Despite the situation I have just outlined, in the middle of the 19th century, Japanese intellectuals often used Aesopian metaphors when expressing their views of the political situation, or of life in general. It is clear that these people were not aware of the existence of the old translation called *Isoho Monogatari*; yet even so, they spoke in an Aesopian manner. Here we must turn our attention to the role of Chinese editions of Aesop, and quotations of Aesop's fables in Chinese books in general.

There is a very detailed study of the Chinese translations of Aesop by Shinmura Izuru (新村出, 1876–1967), of the Imperial University of Kyôto, and since there was not a tremendous amount of data to be recorded in the first place, it is probably safe to assume that Shinmura's study adequately covers the situation up until the end of the 19th century.

According to Shinmura, the first Chinese translation of Aesop was a manuscript entitled *Hoang-i* (況義), or *Selectae Esopi Fabulae,* edited by Kin-ni-ko (金尼閣) (Nicolas Trigault) in 1625. It is a selection of a mere 22 fables, and Shinmura's study tells us that the translation is poor. Trigault, a Frenchman, dictated the translation of these 22 fables to Paul Chang (張賡), who wrote them down. Several transcriptions of the translation were made, and some of them were brought to Japan. But when the proscription of Christian literature was ordered as a part of the Tokugawa Shogunate's policy to prohibit Christianity in 1630, *Hoang-i* was thought to be a book of Christian dogma, and was therefore counted among the works of literature to be banned. For this reason, although the existence of *Hoang-i* is known, very few Japanese actually read it.

Therefore, when we read the theological treatise *Honkyô-Gaihen* (本教外篇, 1806), by Hirata Atsutane (平田篤胤, 1776-1843), an important Shinto scholar of modern Japan, and come upon the following metaphor for Hades, the land of the dead, it strikes us as quite strange:

> The fox is the wisest of all the animals. Once by accident he wandered into a tiger's cave, but before he had gone too far, something startled him, and he turned back and lept out of the cave. He was startled because he saw the tracks of many animals on the floor of the cave, but they were all leading towards the inside; not one was leading toward the outside. What we call 'death' is a tiger's cave for human beings. This is also the reason people fear 'death.'

This fable, which is called "Lion's Cave: Many tracks lead Into it but none are seen leading Out," is one of the fables included in *Hoang-i*. Is it possible that Hirata somehow happened to read this forbidden book, and thereby came to know of this story? Actually, it seems that Hirata learned of this fable not through *Hoang-i*, but rather through the version contained in a book called *Chi-jên-shih-p'ien* (「畸人十篇」), edited by an Italian named Matteo Ricci (利瑪竇, 1552-1610). This book of Ricci's was also, of course, a forbidden book in Japan at the time. Hirata therefore kept his treatise *Honkyô-Gaihen,* in which the influence of Christianity could clearly be seen, a secret, refusing to make it public during his own lifetime. I would like to say in passing that this is an unusual instance in which the influence of Christianity can be seen in Shinto, Japan's indigenous folk religion. At the same time, it is interesting to note that this ancient Grecian fable, which is also quoted in the *Alkibiades* of Plato, was once again used as a metaphor, and quite appropriately, by a Shintoist in Japan early in the 19th century.

The second Chinese translation is *Esop's Fables* (「意拾喻言」), translated by Mun Mooy Seen-shang (蒙昧先生) in 1840, at Kwangtung (廣東). This second translation, having escaped proscription, was brought to Japan and read widely there. In addition to the Kwangtung edition, there was a Shanghai (上海) edition, which also found its way to Japan. Handwritten manuscripts of these translations were also made.

At around the same time – to be more specific, during the 1840's and 1850's, just before Japan was opened to the West – a magazine called *Hsia-êrh-kuan-chên* (「遐邇貫珍」) was imported to Japan, and read widely. I myself have never seen this magazine. There is no sign of it in any of Japan's public libraries. I am, therefore, hoping to obtain some information concerning it from the participants of this conference. It seems that this magazine printed several of Aesop's fables in each issue. Yosida Shôin (吉田松陰, 1830–1859), who was known as an enlightened and

progressive thinker as well as a revolutionary during the last years of the reign of the Tokugawa Shogunate, apparently had the opportunity to read *Hsai-êrh-kuan-chên,* and took great interest in the Aesop's fables published in it. He also took notice of the function of satire, and the political lessons contained in the fables. He wrote the afterward of a manuscript version of one of the Chinese translations of Aesop, which had been transcribed by a Japanese. (This translation, the title of which is *Esop's Fables* 「伊娑菩喩言」, is though to have been based on *Esop's Fables* (「意拾喩言」) In Shôin's afterward, we find the following passage:

> At the present, scholars of Western studies say that all Western countries are civilized and enlightened; that they are all on the side of justice and humanity, and that they have no evil intentions. (I interpret "evil intentions" as meaning territorial ambition) But the fact that books which set forth this kind of political strategy through metaphor are widely read shows where their real intentions lie. When I once read the fable of "The Horse, the Stag, and the Man" (馬鹿同遊) in *Hsia-êrh-kuan-chên* (「遐邇貫珍」) I could not help thinking of it in connection with the international political situation that has recently come into being in our own country. . .

This passage shows us that Shôin linked the morals of several of the fables to specific events of his own time. Because Shôin wrote the themes and titles of these fables in Chinese, it is difficult to determine which numbers they correspond to in the standard version of Aesop's fables. It is also difficult to find out the names of the diplomatic events, or to obtain specific information about them. It is virtually definite, however, that the fable referred to above is "The Horse, the Stag, and the Man" (Horse allows a man to ride him, in order to attack his enemy; he is then enslaved by the man). If so, it is well known as the fable which Stesichoros tells to the people of Himera in the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle. In his time, Japan was faced with a crisis in her international relations, and Shôin was wise enough to realize that if Japan sought to borrow the strength of another foreign country as one means of dealing with danger from the outside, she would only succeed in inviting a new and greater danger. Furthermore, he saw in the moral of this fable a warning against this kind of foreign policy, which was, after all, nothing but a temporary expedient. It is also possible that he saw, in the background of this fable's having been published

in the magazine *Hsia-êrh-kuan-chên,* the extremely difficult position in which China found herself at the time. The continued defeat of China (淸國) in the Opium War (1839–42) and the Arrow War, or the Second China War (1856–60), and her weakness in the face of invasion by the Western powers, was extremely shocking news for the Japanese at the time. Perhaps Shôin saw in this fable feelings of regret on the part of the Chinese intellectuals who had expounded the policy of "borrowing the enemy's power to control the enemy" (以夷制夷).

Perhaps it is mere coincidence that Hirata Atsutane and Yoshida Shôin, who represent two contrasting ways of thought in Japan at the time, both borrowed from Aesop, each one using his fables to help explain an important concept in his own philosophy, and that the fables used by Hirata and Shôin were metaphors that had been used by Plato and Aristotle, the great philosophers of ancient Greece, and furthermore, that these fables entered Japan through Chinese translations, but this interrelation, in which China, Japan and ancient Greece are bound together through Aesop's fables, is of great interest to us. (Trans. from Japanese by Margaret Fittkau Mitsutani.)