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# The Idea of Inclusion as Represented in Japanese Children's Books

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## 要 旨

本研究ノートは2014年9月13日、メキシコシティで開催された第34回国際児童図書評議会（IBBY）世界大会での発表原稿である。IBBYは、子どもの本のノーベル賞と言われる国際アンデルセン賞を授与している団体である。今大会のテーマは「May everyone really mean everyone（皆が価値ある人ですように）」であり、筆者は、日本でミリオンセラーになっている「ぐりとぐら」シリーズと「ノンタン」シリーズについて、日本の子どもたちがどのように包摂（誰にとっても居場所がある状態）を体得しているのかを分析した。

日本の絵本読者は、仲間のために自分の能力を使い工夫して皆で幸せになるという思想を支持していることが明らかになった。日本の子どもたちは物語を通じて繰り返し擬似体験をしているので、順番を我慢強く待つことができる。

Japanese children's books often have a tendency to include the theme of coexistence with nature, and to include different cultures. Also, the development of picture books for children from three years old to elementary school age helps us to rethink the reality of the world. I will analyze certain picture books loved by children, in the light of their contribution to the Japanese idea of inclusion.

Seeking and practicing the idea of inclusion, which means everyone has the right to physical well-being and to the development of his or her talents, requires our sympathy and analysis of the world. Reading children's books where the child reader identifies closely with the protagonist, helps us develop these abilities, and especially literature teaches us to understand and appreciate the fact that everyone

has their own language, value-system, religion and life-style. Knowing the reality, on the other hand, helps the reader reflect on why the distribution of natural resources has neither been equitable nor adequate in making use of nature.

I will analyze Japanese picture books concerned with this idea of friendly inclusion, as well as those which foster children's imagination. *Guri to Gura: Guri and Gura* (1963, Fukuinkan-Shoten) by Rieko Nakagawa and Yuriko Omura has been very popular among Japanese children and their parents, and is one of the most representative works on this idea of inclusion. Up to 6 million copies of this book have been published from 1963 to 2013 (Interview, 2014b). It has also been translated in England (1966), Denmark (1969), Taiwan (1987), Korea (1994), Thailand (1995), the Netherlands (1999), Cambodia (1999), Sri Lanka (2003), France (2008), China (2008) and Hungary (2009), according to the list of "Books on Japan: a special exhibition on Japanese picture books in foreign languages April 20 - August 31, 2013" (Books on Japan 2013). Here is a resume of the story:

Two wild mice, Guri and Gura, go to the woods to get some acorns and chestnuts to cook. They find a big egg there, but it is so big that they cannot take it home. They think deeply about this problem, then come up with a marvelous idea which makes all their friends in the woods happy. If we found an egg in the woods, we might want to bring it home and cook it. But in this story, the egg is too big for them to carry, so they think and think, and finally they hit upon the idea of bringing a frying pan to cook it on the spot. They decide to make a sponge cake, and go back home to bring the biggest frying pan, some flour, some butter, some milk, some sugar, a bowl, two eggbeaters, two aprons, matches and backpacks (Nakagawa and Omura 1963, 11). We can usually carry such things in backpacks, but that frying pan with the lid is too big to put in a backpack, so they decide to drag the frying pan and roll the lid. This scene (Ibid. 1963, 12-13) is very exciting for little readers, because two little mice (with which little child readers identify themselves) manage to try a new method which they have neither known nor experienced before.

They begin to cook the big egg right where they found it. Gura makes an oven and Guri mixes and stirs the egg with all the other ingredients in the bowl. They put the mixture in the pan, then into the oven, and keep baking it. All the animals living in the woods who noticed the smell of the baked sponge cake come and gather around the oven: a rabbit, two frogs, a snail, a hedgehog, a lion,

two squirrels, a deer, a mole, three birds, an owl, an elephant, a pink flamingo, a bear, a wolf, a wild boar, a turtle, four newts, a snake, three crabs and a crocodile. They are all waiting for the big sponge cake because Guri and Gura are pleased to share it with them (Nakagawa and Omura 1963, 20–21). They all eat it with great satisfaction (Ibid. 1963, 24–25). Finally, Guri and Gura make a car out of the eggshell and go back home in it.

I evaluate that the most interesting elements in this picture book “Guri and Gura” are things which seldom occur in our daily lives. For example, it is very unlikely in the woods to encounter a huge egg which would be cooked sunny side up as big as a full moon (Ibid. 1963, 7). How to cook this huge egg is a very exciting problem to manage and to solve. And another example is that the two little mice which child readers identify with, make repeated efforts to achieve their aim while they keep thinking of a sponge cake as their goal. In addition to these examples, it is a marvelous idea that they share the cake with their friends, and also that they finally make a car out of the egg shell. These kinds of experiences are very important in developing our own skills and in fostering our well-being.

Ms. Nakagawa, the author of this book, said that her experiences as a teacher at a day nursery school from 1955 to 1972 inspired her to write *Guri and Gura*, and that the parents of every family have their own way of educating their children. (Nakagawa 2013, 181–195). She spent her teaching time with the children while respecting each child's way of life. The web site “The ten secrets of Guri and Gura” (Fukuinkan-Shoten 2014a) reveals that they are five-year-old twins and are in the most senior class at a day nursery school.

This book, *Guri and Gura* (Nakagawa and Omura 1963), has been very popular among children for over 50 years. For this 50 year anniversary, a “Guri and Gura” exhibition started on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in Tokyo, and will be held in Kagoshima, Hiroshima, Nagoya, and Fukushima (Fukuinkan-Shoten 2014b).

In 1964, Nakagawa also wrote *Sorairo no Tane: The Blue Seed* (Fukuinkan-Shoten). Since 1964, 1.8 million copies of this book have been published (Interview 2014c). It tells the story of a boy who exchanges his toy plane for a fox's “blue seed” (Nakagawa and Omura, 1964, 2–3). He plants it in his garden and carefully waters it (Ibid. 1964, 4–5). He has been waiting for a bud to come out, but he finds that a small blue house appears instead! (Ibid. 1964, 6–7) After he waters this blue house, it grows larger. Then a chick enters the house and declares “It's my house” (Ibid.

1964, 8–9). The house grows larger and a cat comes in (Ibid. 1964, 10–11). The house becomes even larger, and a pig comes in. It gets larger again, and then the boy and his friends also go in (Ibid. 1964, 12–15). This house expands even more, and now a rabbit, a squirrel, a dove, a wild bear, a raccoon dog, and three elephants enter as well (Ibid. 1964, 16–17). The blue house grows to become a castle and all the children in the town and all the animals in the woods are now together inside (Ibid., 1964, 18–19).

Finally, the fox comes back to return the toy plane to the boy and to get back the blue castle. Then he announces “Get out, everybody, because this is my house!” (Ibid. 1964, 20–21) When everybody has left, the castle begins to fall into pieces (Ibid. 1964, 24–25). This story *Sorairo no Tane: The Blue Seed* (1964), as well as *Guri to Gura: Guri and Gura* (1963), represents the idea of friendly inclusion in Japanese society.

Figure 1 shows that the seven books of the “*Guri and Gura*” series have reached 17.76 million copies in total. Five of them have sold over a million copies. We can therefore realize how popular and influential “*Guri and Gura*” books are.

Also, *Gurumpa no Yochien: Gurumpa's Kindergarten* (1965, Fukuinkan-Shoten), written by Minami Nishiuchi and Seiichi Horiuchi, has attained 2.2 million copies

Title	Published in	Million Copies
<i>Guri to Gura: Guri and Gura</i>	1963	6.00
<i>Guri to Gura no Okyakusama: Guri and Gura's Guest</i>	1966	4.00
<i>Guri to Gura no Kaisuiyoku: Guri and Gura's Swimming in the Sea</i>	1976	2.30
<i>Guri to Gura no Ensoku: Guri and Gura's Excursion</i>	1979	2.50
<i>Guri to Gura to Kururikura: Guri and Gura and Kururikura</i>	1987	1.50
<i>Guri to Gura to Sumire chan: Guri and Gura and Sumire chan</i>	2000	0.90
<i>Guri to Gura no Oosouji: Guri and Gura's Whole Cleaning</i>	2002	0.56
	Total	17.76

Figure 1: Guri and Gura Series.

Source: Public Relations Department of Fukuinkan-Shoten Interview 2014b by Sachie Asaka (e-mail), June 2, 2014.

from 1965 to 2013 (Interview 2014c). Gurumpa, a muddy, cry-baby elephant, begins to work, but he cannot succeed either as a baker or in other jobs. Finally, he opens a kindergarten and spends his time happily with the children. This “Gurumpa” book, just like the “*Guri and Gura*” series, encourages the readers to do their best until they find a goal allowing them to share happiness with others.

We have another protagonist just as popular as “Guri and Gura”; it is “Nontan”. “*Nontan Buranko Nosete: Let Me Go on the Swing, Nontan* (1976) written by Sachiko Kiyono and Yasuomi Otomo, the first in a 21-book series entitled “Nontan Asobou yo: Nontan, Let's Play” (Kaisei-sha 2011.7), reached 2.37 million copies between 1976 and 2013 (Tohan 2013). This white cat “Nontan” is widely accepted and the series has surpassed 29 million copies (Interview 2014e). In the first book, Nontan insists to keep occupying the swing while his friends (three rabbits, a bear, a pig and a raccoon dog) want to play on the swing as well. But he rejects their pleas over and over. Finally, they declare that they do not want to play with Nontan anymore. Then, Nontan promises to give someone else a turn after counting up to 10. However, he only counts repeatedly from 1 to 3: “1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3.” His friends complain “That's not fair!” The reason why he keeps counting only from 1 to 3 is that he cannot count up to 4 and over. So all his friends count from 1 to 10 together, and then they play with Nontan. This scene is very common in kindergartens in Japan.

It is necessary for us to share goodness and joy with others in order to be good friends with each other. This is one of the key ideas in the concept of inclusion. Nontan and his friends each have their own respective personalities, and insist on their own individual ways of doing things, just like human children. If you want to be happy with your friends, you need to develop your own capabilities, since this is essential for our well-being. We learn this while playing with friends.

At my university, in a course entitled “Encounters with Different Cultures: the Acceptance of Different Cultures in Literature (2000-present),” each student has to recommend their favorite picture book, the one which had the most influence on his or her life. And every year, some books in the “Guri and Gura” and “Nontan” series appear in this best book list. I realized that “Guri and Gura” and “Nontan” are, in a certain sense, the children readers themselves. So I analyzed those two series of picture books so as to more fully discover the idea of inclusion in Japanese society.

In conclusion, through this analysis, we realize that children should become happier as members of an inclusive society by developing their ability to create new solutions by sharing their talents with others around them.

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