

ASSIGNMENT (Statistical Comprehensive)

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RASHOMON MOVIE INFERENCE

Rashomon is a Japanese psychological mystery film, directed by Akira Kurosawa, based on the short story "In a Grove" by Ryunosuke Akutagawa. The story features the death of a samurai, and it depicts the contradictory perspective and the testimonies of four different persons, about the same event of the death.

Before proceeding with the analysis, let us consider the fundamental difference between the original story and the movie. This should allow us to find out whether Kurosawa deliberately left some clues in the movie about the truth that he wishes to convey, or is those clues are just some pieces of cinematic arts. The original short story "In a Grove" by Akutagawa is much shorter in size, and comprises of much lesser details than the movie. Also, the woodcutter's final story is not present in the original story, possibly to bring out the farce of human nature and the narrow perspective of the greater truth. Hence, this original story is kind of pessimistic in nature. On the other hand, Kurosawa brings up the forth story, possibly as a hint to figure out the truth (As he tries to provide the viewer with much more information, if he wanted just the artistic details to be present, there should have been no reason to include the last story). The movie ends with a optimistic approach that there is still humanity left in the heart of the world, even though there is no consensus among the perspectives about life viewed by different people.

At the very beginning of the story, we hear the Woodcutter saying that he does not understand, however, according to him, he has already seen what really happened. From his perspective, every other character is found to be painted flawed, which also seems to explain why those characters are lying about the true event. Therefore, he should be able to decipher why each of the testimonies other than himself is lying. He also knows that he has done a crime by stealing the precious dagger, and would not try to bring up the stories under any circumstances. However, he himself asks the commoner to listen to the story, help him understand something. It brings up a suspicion to his story's credibility, and possibly, he has not seen the whole story and conjuring up the rest based on his perception.

Now, let us first consider woodcutter's testimony to the police. He says he went to the mountains to gather wood, and found the hat and clothpiece of woman, found the cap of samurai trampled over, found a piece of cutted rope and *saw a glimpse of a shiny amulet case with red lining*. Note that, this case was never ever mentioned in the story afterwards. However, according to the woodcutter's testimony, he got surprised and left his axe there at the crime scene and he immediately went to the police. Note that, if he reported this incident to the police, then he should be sure that these props which he mentioned to be found in the crime scene should be present there, else the police may suspect him. Hence, it is reasonable to assume, these props were present at the crime scene. Also, note that the Woodcutter went deep into the forest (his journey is long as we have seen in the movie) and he should be well aware of the roads he took as he goes there often (as described by him). He first came to find the woman's hat. Now, looking at Tajomaru's story, we find that Tajomaru lures the samurai to the crime scene through a dense forest, so dense that he has to use his sword to cut through the bushes. And later we see that Tajomaru brings the lady through the same route where the lady's hat got

stuck in a branch of the tree. If the woodcutter goes to those place usually often (to chop woods), then how the road could be so dense, which raises our suspicion.

Now, turning to the priest's story, we see that the samurai was on the road to Yamashina, with his wife riding on the horse's back. The samurai carried a bow, some arrows and a sword as well. It was in the afternoon, 3 days ago. We have no reason to suspect this testimony.

Now, according to the story of the Bounty hunter, Tajomaru is infamous for being a notorious bandit. Last time, when he almost caught him, Tajomaru somehow managed to escape. This time, he was found near the banks to Katsura river, 2 days ago, at dusk, with 17 arrows scattered over. The bounty hunter suspects that Tajomaru fell off from the horse which he stole from the samurai.

Tajomaru readily declines that he fell off from the horse. According to him, he drank from a spring near Osaka and by the time he reaches Katsura, he got stomach ache. Now, if we just turn to map of Japan, there is about 50 kilometers of distance from Osaka to Katsura river, with a horse, it would take at least 2 hour. However, if he got the poisoning from water only, according to medical theories, it would start to work within 30 minutes at most, which shows some inconsistency in his story. The only motive to lie about this simple fact is that he wants to hide the fact of his incompetence, and he wants to show himself as a very strong warrior. This mentality is also present in his story about killing the samurai in a face to face battle, where he tells that the samurai was a strong warrior, but Tajomaru is stronger than him. He also depicts that nobody has crossed swords more than 20 times with him, which shows a pride-based personality of him. Also note that, if the samurai was killed in the afternoon three days ago, and he was found two days ago at dusk, then it is not possible that Tajomaru took over the horse under control for about a whole day and then he fell off from the horse near the river. Hence, it might be the case that the horse was never under control, Tajomaru never went to Osaka, but went to Katsura river bank (or stayed in the vicinity, Katsura river is close to Yamashina, where the case might have happened. In contrast to that, Osaka is completely at a different direction).

Another inconsistency we find in his story is that he, despite being an infamous bandit, remembers to collect the sword and the horse of the samurai, however, and forgets to steal the dagger. (If we think that he forgot about the dagger, he should have forgotten about the horse too, as he has seen it before the appearance of the dagger). We also find that he remembers that the dagger was indeed precious, as it has pearl inlay. If he has taken such great interest in the dagger that he remembers the details about it even after three days, he should have remembered about it under a cool head. Therefore, there can be only two possible explanation for him not to steal it, either he lost his cool or he is forced to leave without giving him an opportunity to steal it. Also note that, Tajomaru used a rope to bind the samurai to the pine tree. It was never mentioned how Tajomaru got hold of a rope. So, we may think that it was with him all along, and may be one of his necessary belongings. Therefore, he would always try to collect it before leaving the place, and the rope was found at that place by the Woodcutter, which we already have established to be true. Therefore, Tajomaru left the rope there, necessarily showing that Tajomaru was possibly forced to leave the place.

Turning to another aspect of the story, all of the stories, other than the woodcutter tells about the existence of the dagger, and in each story, we see the dagger craved into the ground. This provides a justification that first part of the Tajomaru's story may be true, the woman took out the dagger she had and attacked Tajomaru. This also, in some way, pictures the love that the lady had for her husband.

Finally, during the end of the battle according to Tajomaru's story, he throws the sword

to the incapacitated samurai. Why would he **throw** the sword to an incapacitated enemy, this raises some suspicion.

Next, we turn to the lady's story. According to the lady's story, Tajomaru proudly announced his name and left the place after the rape took place. In such a case, Tajomaru left in a cool head and hence he would have collected the dagger along with when he collected the sword. This part of the story does not make sense. Later, she depicts her husband as the main villain of the story and she told that she lost consciousness hereafter. When she regained consciousness, she found her husband dead, with her dagger thrust into his chest. She never mentioned that she was the killer, or that she wanted to kill the samurai.

Coming back to the main story, the commoner says that one has to beware of the woman's story, and the woodcutter and the priest both nodes to support this statement. This represents an important aspect of contemporary society.

Turning to the dead man's story now, we find that the police believed in superstition (that a dead man's soul can be brought back by a medium). Also, the woodcutter strongly declines to accept the story of the dead man. According to the samurai, the bandit tried to console the lady after the rape, while the lady accepts the proposal made by the bandit. In return, the lady asks the bandit to kill the samurai. Now, in order to enforce someone to kill the samurai, it is reasonable to assume that the wife should have hated the samurai extremely. However, her love for her husband was already seen when she attacked the bandit with the dagger. This implies, the samurai lied about this matter. Continuing on, the bandit throws the lady onto the ground, and finally asks the samurai whether to kill or save the lady. The dead samurai also explains that just for this reason alone, he was ready to pardon all of the bandit's crime. At the same time, the wife ran away and the bandit ran behind her, and he could not catch her. After many hours was passed, the bandit returns, and frees the samurai. Here, there are two possibilities;

- The bandit felt pity to the samurai. Then he would return the sword to him.
- The bandit wanted to rob the samurai and leave him there. Then, he would also steal the dagger.

Clearly, none of this happened as the sword is taken, but the dagger is left behind, which is why this part of the story where samurai commits hari-kiri is not true. Also, note that he finally says that the sun went away, and someone gently withdrew the dagger from his heart, which supports the existence of another character, solely for the purpose of stealing the dagger, namely the woodcutter.

Finally, we turn to the woodcutter's story. The woodcutter's story seems the most reasonable one, it goes along with the contemporary viewpoint of society towards females. It also depicts the fight between the samurai and the bandit being a nonsensical one, which contradicts other people's belief about the bandit being a notorious one. Also, at the very end of the battle, Tajomaru also seems to throw the sword at the samurai, which seems unreasonable. Also after the battle ends, when Tajomaru started collecting the sword, he was shown to have a surprising look on his face. If he is a bandit, then death should be very common to him, and hence he would not have been surprised at all. Also, after the woman cut the rope tied to the samurai using the dagger, she kept it to herself. However, she did not use it anytime later to save her from the bandit, as if it vanished in thin air. This suggests that the woodcutter really did try to hide the fact that there was a dagger.

Now, let us now consider the murder weapon first. In the stories where the samurai is killed by the sword, Tajomaru kills him by throwing the sword to the incapacitated samurai. In practice, a sword is not really designed for throwing, firstly it may not hit the target, and even if

it hits, it would not deal a deep wound. Therefore, we may assume that such forgery of the story of throwing the sword is made solely for the purpose of making it consistent with the wound found on dead samurai's body, which should be a short but lethal wound. In this context, the dagger should be the main murder weapon based on all the evidences.

Now, we consider the motives for lying for each individual. Tajomaru's story is solely based on his pride, he already knows that he is going to be punished by death, and he just wants to depict himself as a legend among all bandits. This is the sole reason that he depicts the lady as fierce, and the samurai as strong, while he represents himself stronger than them. The lady blames mainly her husband, she did not tell that Tajomaru killed the samurai, even out of hatred for him. She was extremely shocked by her husband's response to the events and she tried to picture her purity as much as possible. The samurai, on the other hand, did not blame Tajomaru for what he did, but he strongly opposes his wife. He depicts him as the main villain of the story. However, if he was murdered, then he would lie about suicide only if he is ashamed of something being brought to light. But, he already depicts his lose against the bandit when the bandit tied him to the pine tree. Therefore, a murder would have happened only if the samurai did lose a second time, either to the bandit or to someone else.

Note that, the horse was taken by the bandit, only if he left the grove before the lady, otherwise the lady would have used the horse to run away. As established earlier, the bandit was forced to leave the area before the lady, in a state of shock.

Based on the above inferences, I think the true story was like this:

The bandit lured the samurai to the grove and tied him up to the pine tree. He went to the lady to bring her to the grove, and the lady took out the dagger and started attacking the bandit. Tajomaru managed to evade the attacks somehow and finally incapacitated her and forcibly raped her. Tajomaru, then asked her to marry him, the woman declines to reply anything. Under such circumstances, the lady tried to free her husband and used the dagger to cut the rope. The samurai, after being freed, refuses to fight the bandit as he started to disgust his wife. The bandit, under these circumstances, thought of leaving the place collected the rope (which was still tied to pine tree, but the bandit now takes it from there). As the woodcutter described, when the bandit was ready to leave, the woman provoked each of them to fight each other, which in turn, started a fight between those two. Tajomaru suffered some injuries during the fight, but managed to continue the fight. The lady, then got frightened, tried to help (the samurai or Tajomaru) in the fight, and unfortunately ended up thrusting her dagger onto the samurai's chest. Tajomaru, under such an unforeseen turn of events, got surprised, and left the place with just taking the sword of the samurai (as a reflex of picking up loots which he got in front of him). On the other hand, the woman also got shocked under this circumstances, and lost consciousness. This is the time, when the woodcutter came into the scene, just to pick the dagger up from the dead man's chest. After she regained consciousness, she found that the dagger was not there, and she suspected the presence of another witness of the event. She left the place and went to the temple in order to beg forgiveness for her wrongdoing. The bandit Tajomaru, somehow managed to get to the horse and used it to leave the place. However, he could not go anywhere far with his injuries, so he stayed near those areas for a whole day. Also, the samurai, if found to be murdered by his own wife, a woman, during an ongoing battle, would put him to a greater shame than losing a manly battle. The woodcutter, despite seeing the whole story, he does not understand his own self under the control of greed that helped him to steal the dagger from dead man's chest, while he also does not understand, whether the woman tried to kill her husband, or the bandit during the fight, as she had enough reason to hate both of them.

❖ THE END ❖