A Yōkai Parade through Time in Japan

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Introduction

Japanese mythology is a subject filled with some of the most fascinating yet terrifying creatures one is likely to encounter nowadays, even when compared to those found in today's popular media across the world. The presence of these creatures that are shrouded in and survive on mystery, or *yōkai*, in Japanese history stretches deep into the past, with the first written recordings of them occurring in the 8th century. Relatively recently in the Edo period, an attempt at creating a visual catalogue of the numerous *yōkai* was made by Toriyama Sekien that included over 200 unique yōkai (Foster, Pandemonium 55). In more recent times, the *manga* (Japanese comics) industry alone is home to what seems an immeasurable breadth of mythological tales and influences. Modern Japanese society may be drastically different from that of just a hundred years ago, but the fact that Japanese mythology still plays such an important role in a society that at times hardly resembles its former self is both intriguing and unique. It is not that yōkai are still present in Japanese culture that is so interesting, but rather the degree to which they are present and just how many areas of Japanese society they pervade, from literature to film and much more. There are certainly other cultures whose mythology remains well-known but not in quite the same manner, as we find *yōkai* to be a particularly adaptive element of Japanese culture. *Yōkai* have continunously adapted to the changing Japanese cultural and political environment in order to survive. The *yōkai* that fill Japanese mythological, religious, and folk tales have not avoided transformation and have been applied liberally as authors, artists, and others have sought to create their own stories, mascots and the like using this distinctly Japanese element. This transformation has occurred almost invisibly at times, starting from the *yōkai* found in

myths, legends, and religious tales; proceeding into the Edo period when *yōkai* entered popular culture; and ending in the commodification of *yōkai* into a significant part of contemporary popular culture in Japan. These changes that *yōkai* have experienced have led to the creation of a unique aspect of Japanese culture, one that resists obscurity by accepting change and adapting to the altering Japanese environment just as the Japanese people themselves have had to do.

Review of the Literature

While there are somewhat limited English resources on the topic of yōkai, there are a few that I consider invaluable and will play a significant part in formulating my argument. The first is Michael Dylan Foster's book *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yōkai*. In his book, Foster addresses a wide array of issues relating to yōkai, covering a range of areas similar to my own. I will be making frequent reference to his argument as I pose my own unique argument. One of the primary tenets of his argument is that that which is mysterious must not and cannot be elucidated for that would destroy the mystery behind it and, consequently, it. Yōkai fall under this category of the "mysterious," which naturally leads to issues when constructing any sort of discourse on it, for, as he puts it, "the instant [yōkai] are pinned down and labeled, they transform into something different" (Foster, Pandemonium 29). To do what is essentially a part of human nature, to make sense of things is incongruous with yōkai and their existence to say the least. He addresses both historical representations of yōkai and contemporary representations, relying on encyclopedias of yōkai and more contemporary works, such as Mizuki Shigeru's manga *Gegege no Kitarō*. Even with such a far-reaching

discourse on the matter of yōkai, Foster concludes with much the same thing as he began, that they are undefinable.

Although less broad in the sense that it does not cover the vast expanse in which yōkai reside, Noriko T. Reider's book *Japanese Demon Lore: Oni from Ancient Times to the Present* is certainly not lacking in material from which to draw evidence. She discusses *oni*, one type of yōkai, in their various forms and types, relying on traditional tales of *oni* such as *Shuten Dōji*, and on their modern usage such as in pop culture. She discusses how *oni* have been commodified, an idea that I will apply to yōkai as a whole. Some of the translated tales I will make use of involve *oni* or *oni*-like beings, and Reider's work here will provide a solid base of more specific knowledge from which to work as I analyze them and place them in their appropriate historical, cultural, and political contexts. She also identifies *oni* as participants in the conceptualization of wartime Japan.

Further elaborating on the topic of wartime Japan and *oni*, Klaus Antoni's "Momotarō (The Peach Boy) and the Spirit of Japan: Concerning the Function of a Fairy Tale in Japanese Nationalism of the Early Shōwa Age" clearly singles out the *oni* as a propaganda tool. Making use of the tale of Momotarō and his conquest over *oni*, the Japanese government in the early Shōwa period (1926-1989) created war propaganda by focusing on the idea of foreigners who must be defeated. Antoni argues that the tale of Momotarō and other similar tales, involving such heroes as Minamoto no Tametomo and Minamoto no Yoshitsune, were utilized to inspire Japanese nationalism. His descriptions of the *oni* in each story he discusses contain valuable insights into a Japanese mentality that is related to *oni*.

Aside from *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yōkai*, Michael Dylan Foster has also authored an article called "The Metamorphosis of the Kappa: Transformation of Folklore to Folklorism in Japan." In contrast to his book, this article offers a more in-depth look at one specific type of yōkai, the *kappa*. Foster discusses the common characteristics of the *kappa* and applies the concept of folklorism to it. He examines the transformation the *kappa* has undergone over time as it has been adapted to fit various media and purposes, going from a malevolent water deity to a safe, cute creature. This article provides a specific example of the changes many yōkai have undergone as a result of Japan's modernization.

Gerald Figal's *Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan* offers a perspective on yōkai in Meiji Japan that is steeped in references to *fushigi* (the mysterious) and the discourse of sociology scholars like Foucault. In reference to Inoue Enryō's own descriptions, Figal says that yōkai are a "thing that cannot be known by usual standards of knowledge and everyday reason," continuing to cite Inoue's own questions of what these terms of understanding even mean (Figal 42). This is similar to how Foster speaks of yōkai, as that which cannot be known. Relying on the idea of scientific knowledge and its application, he agrees with Inoue in saying that not all unexplainable phenomena can be attributed to yōkai (42). He makes use of the idea of twilight to describe the mystery behind yōkai, an idea that is much more readily understood by a Western audience. Twilight may be a term that Westerners can easily grasp, but the word "twilight" also refers to the time of day when yōkai are most likely to appear, so he is not simply applying a foreign concept to a Japanese issue. Figal argues that Japan is as unique as any other modern nation, that these mysterious entities do not

push Japan beyond being an ordinary modern nation (222), which I contest with my own thesis that it is specifically because of these yōkai and both their integration and active participation in contemporary Japanese society that gives Japan a unique part of its culture.

Definitions of and Elaboration on All Things Yōkai

How do we talk of something ambiguous, continually shifting, a constant presence that is forever absent? How do we describe the mysterious body always on the verge of discovery, the apparition already disappearing in the mist? (Foster, Pandemonium 2)

Brief Notes on the Japanese Language

The Japanese language is based on a phonetic syllabary, which is used in conjunction with borrowed Chinese characters, called *kanji*. *Kanji* have associated meanings that are often either similar to or the same as their use in the Chinese language. When transcribing Japanese into English, long sounds will be denoted by the use of the macron, for example "ō," but this can also be represented as "ou." Japanese nouns do not change form between singular and plural. "Yōkai" and other Japanese words will represent either based on their context. Japanese names will be presented as they are in Japan, with the surname coming before the given name. Lastly, when translating from Japanese to English (and vice-versa), there are occasions when a clear literal translation is impossible. Sometimes a term can only be fully understood by understanding its context and common usages. This is very much the case when dealing with yōkai, and as such the definitions used will likely appear vague or unstable. This is the intention, for it is

essential that they remain flexible. The definition, like yōkai, must retain a certain amount of mystery.

What Does "Yōkai" Mean?

The opening quote of this section from Foster's *Pandemonium and Parade* is appropriate as we make the transition into discussing what yōkai and its various related words are. A preliminary search for "yōkai" in a few Japanese-English dictionaries results in a mindboggling array of words that each have different connotations. To complicate the issue further, each word on its own fails to capture even the essence of what yōkai are. This is why a certain flexibility is necessary.

Yōkai (妖怪) can be defined as "monster, spirit, goblin, ghost, demon, phantom, specter, fantastic being, lower-order deity, or, more amorphously, as any unexplainable experience or numinous occurrence" (Foster, Pandemonium 2). The latter two, "unexplainable experience or numinous occurrence," are so general that they would seem to be unable to stand on their own, but it is actually these two ideas that are crucial when trying to get at the essence of yōkai. All of the words before them combined, from monster to lower-order deity, give a fair idea of what yōkai are, but are unable on their own to get at the core elements or characteristics of yōkai, their deep-seeded mystery. All of these things combined help to give a proper *sense* of what yōkai are as a whole, as a precise definition is impossible due to their very nature as mysterious beings. The concept of *fushigi*, or mystery, is vital to a yōkai. As soon a yōkai is defined, it loses its mystery and consequently ceases to be a yōkai. When I refer to yōkai, it will be with Foster's definition in mind.

It makes sense, then, that there are various other terms that are used when indicating a specific type of yōkai. The following are but brief descriptions and undoubtedly fail to capture the whole essence of yōkai, but it is my hope that they will allow the reader a more firm grasp of the material, ambiguous as it is.

These definitions are taken from *Kodansha's furigana Japanese-English Dictionary*, which offers a few somewhat concrete ideas for the reader to imagine more clearly each type of yōkai and how there can be so many different types. The definition I am using for yōkai is so broad largely because of the many terms that are subsumed under "yōkai." A *Bakemono* (化け物) is a "ghost; goblin; monster" (Kodansha 384), but is literally just a "changing thing," a frequent characteristic of yōkai. A *Yūrei* (幽霊) is a "dead person's spirit; ghost" (499), an idea that is very familiar to Westerners. An *Oni* (鬼) is a "demon; ogre," and the dictionary further specifies that it has "a human-like body with two horns on its head and fangs" (73); but it should be noted that this is still malleable, as the number of horns is not always two, for example. *Fushigi* (不思議) is a term that is defined as "marvel; wonder; strangeness" (420) and is not a type of yōkai, but is instead a characterizing feature of yōkai. This brief survey of related terms is intended to be a starting point for the reader as we delve into a sometimes dizzying array of Japanese words that often lack precise English counterparts. They are to be taken with a grain of salt, however, as the passage of time has not forgotten to leave its mark on almost every one. This trend applies to yōkai themselves, as well. What held true a thousand years ago may not hold true in the Edo period, for example, and likely does not hold true today.

Part 1: Ancient Origins

Kojiki and the Creation Myth

Within this structure of the supernatural, looking at deities can yield some important clues, as deities and demons are often related. Looking back to the first recorded histories of Japan does not offer much in the way of yōkai, but it does offer a necessary foundational understanding of how the supernatural has been integrated into Japanese society in the past. The first two compilations of Japanese history are the *Kojiki* (712) and the *Nihon shoki* (720) (Borgen 61). The *Kojiki* (古事記) is translated in Borgen and Ury's article as "Records of Ancient Times" and is a combination of both historical events and supernatural events, including Japan's own creation myth (65). The *Nihon shoki* (日本書紀) is translated as "Chronicles of Japan," and covers similar events and stories, often containing differences between its own versions and the *Kojiki*'s (75).

Japan's creation myth is a source of mystery, the involved gods forever without physical substance, but embedded into the ancient Japanese consciousness as a simple matter of fact. It offers an explanation for how the nation of Japan came to be through the actions of the gods and firmly links Japan to said deities. Among the various deities that take form in the creation myth, there are both benevolent and malevolent aspects shown between them.

The creation myth has multiple versions, but it tends to retain the same main points. To summarize, Izanagi, a god, and Izanami, a goddess, descend to Earth from heaven and create the numerous islands that comprise Japan. As they start to produce the gods of the land, Izanami gives birth to a fire deity who burns her terribly, which leads to her death. In his great sorrow at the loss of Izanami, Izanagi slays the fire deity and journeys to the land of the dead to bring her back. Alas, having eaten its food, Izanami is

unable to leave. After breaking his promise not to look at her, Izanagi discovers that Izanami's body is now covered in maggots and is a generally terrifying sight to behold. The shamed and outraged Izanami then chases after Izanagi, who fled upon seeing her grotesque figure, sending various pursuers after him. She sends "the deity She Who Defiles," then "the eight thunder deities with a thousand five hundred warriors of [the land of the dead]," and finally Izanami herself chases after the fleeing Izanagi, her previous attempts thwarted. In the end, Izanagi escapes Izanami as well, but there is a price for his actions. He seals her away, but her anger does not abate, and she decides to kill a thousand people a day to which Izanagi responds that he will aid in the creation of a thousand five hundred people a day (Borgen 67-68).

Afterward Izanagi purified himself, and produced three deities: the well-known sun goddess, Amaterasu; Susanowo, god of storms; and Tsukuyomi, the moon god (Borgen 68). Susanowo is a powerful deity, whose temperament could cause natural disasters. Amaterasu is far more benevolent, inspiring awe rather than fear.

This is the story behind Japan's creation, and to a certain extent it informs the multitude of experiences the Japanese people have had with yōkai. Not only does the creation myth inform as to what types of deities *protect* Japan, it makes very clear that there are darker, malevolent forces at work of which one must be careful not to aggravate in any way lest their punishments fall upon one's own head. The idea that such terrifying forces exist has been in Japan since at least since 712, the date of completion of the *Kojiki*. Whether or not these forces were present since long before that, one cannot say for sure, but it is doubtful that this was new at that time.

Looking at deities as another manifestation of the supernatural, they are not so different from yōkai. They are both indefinite, lacking substance, forces that appear temporarily and then disappear. The promise that Izanagi makes to not look at Izanami when he visits the land of the dead reflects the unknowable nature of yōkai. Izanami's grotesque form is not for Izanagi to see; it is forbidden. It is both unknown and is not supposed to be known. Izanagi is not supposed to know what she looks like, just as yōkai are not for people to know. In the scene in which Izanami chases Izanagi in the land of the dead, the powerful negative forces that pursue Izanagi are distinct from yōkai in that they are deities but they do share some similarities.

"She who defiles" is obviously a negative force, one that causes harm, much as yōkai are said to have been in the past up until as recently as the early 20th century. The eight thunder deities with their warriors from the land of the dead are another obviously negative and fearful force. Thus from as far back as the eighth century, the supernatural, and consequently yōkai have had a connection to Japan and its very dawn of creation. Their role in the history of Japanese culture has deep roots that expand in innumerable directions, complicating the topic of yōkai and simultaneously allowing it to blossom as it has aged.

Heian Court Literature

In *The Tale of Genji* (源氏物語) by Murasaki Shikibu, from approximately the beginning of the eleventh century (McCullough 3), the story focuses on the loves and romantic adventures of Genji and is usually a tale grounded in logic. However, there is strong evidence in the story of the involvement of an *ikiryō*, a type of yōkai and an existence not bound by logic. There are multiple translations of the story available, some

more reader-friendly than others, and the differences are readily apparent between them at times. In the McCullough translation, in the "Aoi" chapter we read that, "the great suffering of the lady Aoi, which showed signs of being caused by a malignant spirit" (138). There is a very clear indication that it is possible that some sort of supernatural force is at work, causing the health problems Aoi is having, which later leads to her death.

An *ikiryō* (生霊), the yōkai plaguing Aoi, is what might be called a "living spirit" or "vengeful spirit." It is the spirit of a living person, powered by intense hatred, and separated from its physical container, the body. In *The Tale of Genji*, the *ikiryō* is that of Lady Rokujō, one of Genji's lovers, but one whom he neglects. This is, at least, a popular theory to explain some of the mysterious occurrences in the story. Working with this theory to understand the events that take place, one can see a good early example of the mystery inherent in yōkai and the innate difficulty in defining what "yōkai" means. Despite Lady Rokujō's high status, Genji does not pay her the respect that she is due. He seems to lose interest in her while her interest in him grows and festers to the point that her spirit separates from her body of its own will and attacks some of the women with whom Genji is involved. First it kills Yūgao, then Genji's first wife, Lady Aoi, and it eventually attacks Murasaki but does not succeed in killing her. All of this is done without Lady Rokujō's encouragement. She does not desire to cause these deaths, but her spirit, the *ikiryō*, is uncontrollable.

There is a sense of mystery that pervades each of these occurrences. The term *fushigi* would not be out of place in describing it. The "strangeness," the nature of each as scientifically unexplainable, is a key element in each attack. No one can understand

exactly what is happening. Even when Lady Rokujō figures out that the vengeful spirit is her own, caused by her feelings toward Genji and her intense jealousy, she is powerless to stop it. Unable to be constrained by logic, the *ikiryō* continues to attack the women around Genji of whom Lady Rokujō is jealous.

When examining the relation between the events that are both mysterious and frightful in the creation myth and *The Tale of Genji*, one of the notable and curious aspects is the fact that they both originate from a female entity. Izanami, a female deity, wreaks havoc by causing people to die every day when spurned by her partner, Izanagi, a male deity. Lady Rokujō, similarly spurned by the object of her own romantic desires, falls into a state of such uncontrollable jealousy and anguish that her pain manifests itself in spiritual form to exact vengeance on those women who would take Genji's attention. Izanami's declaration that she will kill a thousand people each day might lead one to believe that in doing so, she removes the mystery from these deaths. This is not entirely the case, however. She makes no mention of how she will do it, as she remains sealed away in the land of the dead. The direct causes of these deaths remain unknown, maintaining the mystery inherent in the supernatural. Similarly, the deaths Lady Rokujō causes remain an unknowable mystery to Genji. He fails to discover that these events are the result of the intervention of an *ikiryō*, a malevolent, vengeful spirit which he himself indirectly caused to come into existence. In true yōkai fashion, the *ikiryō* remains undiscovered and evasive of all attempts to purge it. Izanami and the *ikiryō* represent the unknowable nature of the mysterious, one of the qualifying traits of yōkai.

Myths and Tales of All Sorts

Moving onward from the early eleventh century, Tyler's translations of assorted stories from between approximately 1100 and 1350 (Tyler xix) offer much less ambiguous manifestations of yōkai. In many cases there is an explicit reference to a yōkai, but the stories contain much of the same sense of mystery and wonder as the *ikiryō* of Lady Rokujō in *The Tale of Genji*. Even when more clearly identified, these yōkai retain their quality as being *fushigi*. Some of these stories have a didactic message, some recount incredible tales, and there are even those that have no obvious purpose other than to frighten or startle. This is not to say that their types are limited to just these three. In each case, regardless of purpose, the stories serve to elucidate the idea that yōkai have an impenetrable mystery, or their nature as *fushigi*.

In "Take a Good Look," a horse-headed demon as tall as the roof is the sole point of interest, and the story itself leaves something to be desired in terms of storytelling, as its purpose appears only to be to instill fear (Tyler 241). It is a quick little account of a man seeing such a demon upon looking out a window and no harm befalls the man other than a terrible fright. It contains a description only detailed enough to cover the most obvious points, the head and height of the yōkai. Even so, there is much about the yōkai that is unknown. What color is its skin? Does it carry any tools or weapons? Does it mostly look like a humanoid figure? Compared to the *ikiryō* in *The Tale of Genji*, this is a much more explicit description of an encounter with a yōkai but still one full of mystery.

Much of the fear yōkai inspire relies on the fact that they are mysterious beings, unknowable by nature. Sometimes with a form that is obscured by incomplete descriptions and sometimes obscured by the lack of physical details, these yōkai rely on

the concept of *fushigi* to create and maintain their power over the minds of people. Their power is maintained and enhanced partly through the variety of stories involving them.

There are didactic stories and those that include an overt warning of the possibility of death. In "Fox Arson," the story tells of a man who shoots an arrow into the back leg of a fox spirit who immediately exacts its revenge upon the man by transforming into a human and setting fire to the man's house (Tyler 298). It ends with the line, "It's better to leave them alone," a clear message for those who would dare to involve themselves with yōkai (299). In "The Funeral," it states that demons are drawn to locations where funerals have been held (296). Yōkai are connected to death, and in the story a man is attacked by a boar that has transformed into a frightening human form covered in flames. The man rested near a funeral location and immediately after he faced a life-or-death situation. This, too, is an example of a didactic tale that warns of the possibility of death for those who get too close to yōkai. To avoid the unknowable is to keep oneself safe.

For all of the stories that inspire fear in yōkai, there are also those that offer a possible recourse when confronted with one. These are stories that speak to the power of Buddhism and Shintō, and the relationship between deities and demons. "The River of Snakes" involves an ascetic who happens upon a river of snakes and, unable to escape up a steep slope fast enough, is saved by a demon (Tyler 138). He attributes this incredible occurrence to *Kannon*, the goddess of mercy in Buddhism, to whom he has devoted years chanting sutras. Assuming that he is right, and that it was indeed the result of *Kannon*'s interference, the distance between demon and deity is not so far. They are related enough to have some form of communication through which the demon is able to do her bidding.

The demon who would in most circumstances be seen as a dangerous existence is shown to be one who is capable of performing good acts. One of the most intriguing aspects of yōkai is that their negative association can change. If humans worship a particular yōkai, it can become a deity, changing its negative association completely and making it a positive association (Reider 115). Through religion, some of the fear surrounding yōkai is dispelled, although not entirely, because religion offers a non-scientific means of understanding.

On a somewhat less serious note when compared to the previous examples, there are stories that involve a parade of demons and sometimes their love for playing tricks as well. The idea of a parade of demons is one that is reflected in Foster's book *Pandemonium and Parade* and is a common element in both older and more contemporary stories. Sticking to stories from the period between 1100 and 1350, there are a few that show the parade as playful but tinged with the peril inherent in any yōkai encounter. "Lump Off, Lump On" shows the parade of yōkai as a dance- and drink-loving group that possesses magical abilities passing through a forest, and they use their magic to remove a lump from a man's face. Having heard that this man's lump was removed, a different man with a lump on his face attempts to gain the favor of these yōkai only to fail in impressing them, and has the other man's lump placed on his face as a consequence, giving him two lumps total (Tyler 239). "Singed Fur" represents the parade as an ominous existence, their path lit by fox fires which they use to send a man into an illusion, causing him to lose his way (301). The presence of a large group of yōkai proceeding down the street became a thing to be feared and avoided, particularly at certain hours. "Suddenly, Horse Dung" does not include a parade of demons, but it tells

of mischievous, formless yōkai who magically transport a boy away, returning him days later and barely alive (284). Their magical abilities are the same abilities that allow them to cause so much trouble for people, whether it be causing illusions in a man or spiriting him away as they please. Their use of magic solidifies them as mysterious and unknowable, as no ordinary human can command such power.

These stories cover a spattering of typical types of stories and represent some of the cultural beliefs of the time. Approximately a thousand years ago, yōkai were already integrated into Japanese society in such a way that their ripples can be seen in the literature and even documents intended to be historical records, like the *Kojiki*. Based on the story of the ascetic who is saved by the demon sent by *Kannon*, it is evident that at least under the influence of Buddhism, not all yōkai were inherently evil creatures with no capability for good. On the whole, however, at this time most yōkai stories were about the mischievous and malicious acts committed by these undefinable entities.

An encounter with a yōkai was a rare and ominous occurrence that could have dire consequences. A man could be entranced so that he would unwittingly travel to an area from which he had no idea how to get home or a man might find that the fox spirit he harmed would waste no time in exacting its vengeance by burning down the man's house. In the blink of an eye, these yōkai will appear and disappear as they please. To actively search for and find one is in itself a difficult task, for no one can say when and where they will next appear. They are unexplainable entities, full of the danger that comes with the unknown.

Part 2: The Edo Period

After inspecting so many different short stories involving and about yōkai, it is now possible to examine some of the first major changes that yōkai and the associated literature about them underwent in the Edo period (1603-1867). Notable artists such as Toriyama Sekien joined the yōkai industry, helping to shove these mysterious beings into popular culture. He was not alone in doing so, but his name is by far the most commonly associated with yōkai of the Edo period. The ways in which yōkai were used and presented to the public in all their manifestations saw drastic modifications. What were once merely fearsome things that occasionally carried didactic messages with them became toys for the public's amusement, even going so far as to subordinate their power to the shōgun's. The identity of yōkai was in flux, and as a result their power underwent changes, too. In a sense, the power of yōkai became framed within the boundaries of the human imagination. At the same time, it existed outside of this frame, exerting its mystery and curious nature across the land.

The "encyclopedic mode" (Foster, Pandemonium 31) essentially introduces modern scientific reasoning to the idea of yōkai. It entails the collecting and classifying of as many yōkai as possible. By breaking yōkai down into distinguishable, individual parts people are then able to exert some form of influence over them (31). By taking that which is *fushigi* and creating classifications for each kind of yōkai to fall into, the mystery is dispelled. Giving people an almost tangible representation, an image for one to rely on in identifying potential dangers works to reverse the power structure between people and yōkai that had up till now been a matter of fact. Suddenly they were not just something to be feared; they were a point of intense curiosity. When people gained

somewhat concrete descriptions and visual representations of them, they lost much of their mystery but none of that which attracted people to them.

Toriyama Sekien

Toriyama Sekien's work is a perfect example of the encyclopedic mode as Foster describes it. *Gazu Hyakkiyagyō* (Illustrated Hyakkiyagyō) was the first of a four-volume set by Toriyama, and this set includes illustrations of over two hundred yōkai, including labels for them and often brief commentary or description. This freed yōkai from their respective tales and legends, allowing them to exist on their own as individuals in the Japanese consciousness (Foster, Pandemonium 55).

The title of the first volume, *Gazu Hyakkiyagyō*, takes its name from the idea of both the supernatural group and supernatural event that is the *hyakkiyagyō*, the "night procession of demons" (55). This "night procession of demons" is the very same thing as the parade of demons discussed earlier in ancient tales. This theme remained popular and even before Toriyama's own encyclopedic classifying of yōkai, there existed illustrations of the *hyakkiyagyō* in scroll format (55). Where Toriyama's own work differs is in his distinct separation of each yōkai from both their respective stories and other yōkai (56). Rather than existing as one member of a large group of yōkai, Toriyama validates the existence of each one by attributing unique characteristics and a title for them. It was during the Edo period and because of Toriyama's contributions that "[t]hings notorious for their shape-shifting took on recognizable shapes" (57). When the mysterious was classified, that which was previously mysterious became largely identifiable.

The Kappa

Between the four volumes, Toriyama's works contain over two hundred unique yōkai. While most came from Japan's own folklore, fourteen came from China – a result of a rich history of cultural exchange between China and Japan – and eighty-five may be original creations of Toriyama (Foster, Pandemonium 71). Among those with Japanese roots, perhaps one of the most notable is the *kappa*, a creature that usually lives in "freshwater rivers and pools" (Foster, "Metamorphosis" 3). Toriyama's own illustration of the *kappa* reflects this. It is shown as a generally humanoid creature reaching out of the water from between plants. Its fingers are webbed as are its armpits. The head has a small dish atop it, the face is slightly elongated, and unkempt hair frames its face and the dish (Toriyama 36). The sheer amount and types of plantlife are strong indicators of the inseparable nature of the *kappa* and water.

While Toriyama also includes one alternative name for the creature in his *Gazu Hyakkiyagyō*, "*kawatarō*" (Toriyama 36), there exist other titles for it beyond this. To name but a few, aside from *kappa* and *kawatarō*, it has also been known as *kawappa*, *kawako*, *mizuchi*, and *suitengu*. The numerous names attributed to this one creature are the result of the large number of areas across the nation that have their own *kappa* stories (Foster, "Metamorphosis" 3). Foster comments on the meanings of some but not all of the alternative names he discusses in his article, such as *kawappa* and *kawako* reflecting the similarities between it and children. He does not offer *kanji*, the ideographs borrowed from Chinese, in his explanation of the various names. It is impossible to know what *kanji* a Japanese word uses without proper context, so I cannot say with certainty which they use. The word *kappa* itself is written as 河童 (2), meaning "child of the river" (3). In

its distinct parts, 河 refers to a river and 童 refers to a child. The presence of water and a child-like form are two almost vital components of the *kappa*.

Mizuchi and *suitengu* may seem like they have nothing to do with the other names, but this is not the case. Again, Foster does not include the *kanji* for either of these terms, but at least for *mizuchi* he describes it as a "water snake" (Foster, "Metamorphosis" 2). The presence of water is noteworthy, and the fact that it references a snake rather than a child-like form is likely an effect of the various areas in Japan that had their own versions of *kappa* tales. As for *suitengu*, I can only surmise that it takes the characters 水天狗; 水 meaning water and 天狗 being a reference to another yōkai that is called a *tengu*. The name itself is a combination of one of the most common traits of the *kappa*, water, and a well-known yōkai.

Water as the locale is pivotal in both of these names, but the physical form is less strictly regulated as it appears as a snake as *mizuchi* and likely as a sort of *tengu* as *suitengu*. The *tengu* is a yōkai that is frequently depicted as a humanoid figure with wings and a long nose, and often with red skin. Toriyama created an illustration of the *tengu* as well (Toriyama 30), a testament to its status as a yōkai. In the case of the name *suitengu*, it appears that an already existing yōkai, the *tengu*, was simply adapted to fit a different setting, which in this case is the *kappa*.

Originally the *kappa* was a frightful creature of which one must be aware at all times when near an area it could inhabit, for it loved to pull people into the water. The true threat of the *kappa* was in its proclivity for pulling not just humans of all ages into the water but animals as well, whereupon it would attempt to steal the liver of its prey by reaching up through the anus of its victim (Foster, "Metamorphosis" 6). This led to many

stories of *kappa* arising and many sightings of them near rivers or pools of water being reported. Before it could reach the liver of its prey, it had to remove something called the *shirikodama*, a ball previously believed to exist at the mouth of the anus, and the loss of the *shirikodama* would lead to certain death (6-7). People feared the *kappa* for its potential to bring death to anyone it encountered. Those who would travel near a body of water suitable for a *kappa*'s residence knew to be cautious for a single careless mistake could cause their own demise.

It was only somewhat recently that the *kappa* truly lost its danger. Before this, the *kappa* retained a danger factor, even if the specific type of threat it posed changed. Already in the Edo period, one tale tells of a *kappa* that attempts to molest a doctor's wife when she uses the toilet, and in the end offers valuable medical knowledge in exchange for its arm that the wife cut off (Foster, "Metamorphosis" 12). The *kappa* is not yet without danger but it is also showing signs of change toward a less deadly version of itself. In this instance, the *kappa* is obviously not an entirely foreboding existence as the people involved with him do benefit greatly in the end. Its nature is still mischievous, if not an outright threat to one's safety, but it is a being conquerable by human means. Its dangers are identified through the identification of its tastes, but overall little is known about the *kappa*. Even with all of this information on it, what people had at this point was simply evidence of its influence. The *kappa* itself remains mysterious. It was not until the 20th century that one could frequently find the *kappa* represented as the cute, loveable, and harmless creature that is often depicted today, which will be discussed in more detail in Part 3.

The Beginnings of a New Change Continue

With catalogues of yōkai like the *Gazu Hyakkiyagyō* becoming a part of popular culture, more changes began to take place in the Edo period. Suddenly these harbingers of misfortune became playful things, used like children's toys for entertainment. As opposed to the encyclopedic mode, which presented knowledge and its representation in a new way, the "ludic mode" simply refers to cultural practices which have no purpose other than enjoyment (Foster, Pandemonium 48). Within such a playful mode, it became possible for contradictions to exist, between representations of a particular yōkai for example, and allowed normally unrelated discourses and topics to exist simultaneously (49). In play, one's own imagination is the only limiter, even if there are expectations as to what lines one will and will not cross. As yōkai were adapted to fit this ludic mode that crossed barriers, they were set free to take part in the larger cultural conscience, as they began to appear in everyday forms of entertainment.

As the encyclopedic mode sought to make yōkai a part of scientific understanding through catalogues, it also had the effect of increasing awareness of and interest in them. Games and game-like activities arose in Japan that capitalized on this interest, such as *hyaku monogatari* and *kokkuri*, the latter of which was a product of the Meiji rather than Edo period but would nonetheless captivate the participant and dominate his/her curiosity, solidifying the power of yōkai. These two activities are examples of the ludic mode, marked by a desire for fun rather than knowledge.

Hyaku monogatari, which translates as "one hundred stories" and started early on during the Edo period, is a practice that involved a group of people gathering for the purpose of sharing stories of the mysterious (Foster, Pandemonium 52). Naturally these stories of the mysterious included many stories involving yōkai. The thrill of the

unknown was a major motivating factor for participation, and yōkai offer a plethora of opportunities for thrill in story-telling. The process of a *hyaku monogatari* session started with the lighting of a hundred candles. For every story told, the group would extinguish one candle until every single candle was extinguished, taking away all light. At this moment, it is said that a *bakemono* will appear. Whether the result of expectation or because an actual yōkai would appear at this moment, the tension that built up over the duration of one hundred mysterious stories could lead to experiencing the supernatural for the participant, which represents a powerful transition from the "supernatural narrative" (52-53). What was once restricted to stories could break free from one's imagination and enter into one's reality or perception of reality.

This was a playful activity for its participants, one that was meant to entertain. Not surprisingly, the value of such entertainment was noticed by those who would capitalize on it. They collected and published the kinds of stories one would likely encounter in a *hyaku monogatari* session (Foster, Pandemonium 53). If one never participated in such an activity, one would not be nearly as likely to hear these tales of the mysterious. Therefore collecting and publishing them gave an even wider audience the chance to learn about these curious happenings. Beyond that, due to the nature of the *hyaku monogatari*, one would encounter not only tales of local yōkai but also those of yōkai from distant areas of Japan (54). As people told and heard different stories, it allowed for the spread of more localized stories to areas that would not normally encounter them. The spread of yōkai-related tales in these published collections led to the adoption of yōkai as a legitimate part of popular culture in the Edo period. The idea of

using them for entertainment purposes gained momentum as they were consumed and perpetuated.

In 1860, as the shōgun Tokugawa Iemochi prepared to visit the mausolea of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the government officials posted a sign at Nikkō, near the mausolea, that warned the "*Tengu* and other demons" to depart until Iemochi's visit had concluded. This act recognized "at least the hypothetical existence of *tengu* and other demons if only to display shōgunal power over them" (Figal 78). By now yōkai had spent plenty of time as part of the cultural consciousness. Their existence, true or not, offered the shōgun an opportunity to assert his power as ruler of Japan. Their effects had become so far-reaching that even the shōgun took notice.

Scientific Encouragement in the Meiji Period

Following the Edo period, the Meiji period (1868–1912) was characterized by its efforts to further scientific thinking, doing away with the cultural baggage of the past. This included yōkai which were undoubtedly a hindrance to these efforts, as they represent a topic outside the realm of science. It is an interesting change, to see yōkai transform from a popular element of entertainment to a belief discouraged by the government. Half a century after the shōgun's order for the "*tengu* and other demons" to depart on account of his visit, the Education Ministry of the Meiji government helped publish an elementary school ethics textbook that informed educators that it would "like to see [them] teach their students [that] 'There is no such thing as *tengu*'" (Figal 79).

The government is all of a sudden fighting back against an element of Japanese culture that has existed in different forms and with varying degrees of power for over a thousand years. Not only that, they even target the youth specifically. Even if the adults

who were already well-acquainted with yōkai did not change their ways to follow the government's wishes, a majority of the children would be exposed to such clear, concise statements as "There is no such thing as *tengu*." They would grow up with ideas like this as facts, thereby slowly destroying the presence of yōkai in Japanese culture as they grew older.

It would not take long, however, after the Meiji period ended for yōkai to re-emerge in the culture without the blatant opposition of the government. Even before this, when the Meiji period had just begun, in the 1880's *kokkuri*[1] "was an extraordinarily popular divination game that neatly encapsulated the conflicting discourses of the moment" (Foster, Pandemonium 85). As a divination game, *kokkuri* was deeply involved with things such as spirits, which the participants would attempt to summon through its practice (87). The actual apparatus was uncomplicated, necessitating only a tripod formed of three bamboo rods tied together, and a "round tray or the lid of a wooden rice container" to balance on top. The setup was simple and did not require uncommon materials. Three or four people could participate at once, and each would kneel around the apparatus and place their hands gently on top (85).

To summon the spirit, one of the group would begin an approximately ten minute-long invocation, whereafter the divination process would begin. Requesting that the spirit tilt the apparatus in a particular direction by lifting one leg of the tripod, the participants would know whether or not they were successful in summoning a spirit when the specific action they requested did or did not occur. Should the process be a success, any of the group would then be able to ask questions to the spirit (85). The specifics of the process

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[1] The game *kokkuri* is believed to have come from the West, its foreign nature a part of the reason for its popularity (Foster, Pandemonium 91).

were not delineated and varied between different areas, but the general idea remains the same.

The name itself, *kokkuri*, is written in each of Japan's three writing systems at different times; sometimes in *hiragana*, sometimes *katakana*, and sometimes in *kanji*. *Hiragana* tends to be reserved for words native to Japan, in contrast to *katakana* which is usually reserved for words borrowed from other languages and modified to fit the Japanese phonetic syllabary (although in more recent times *katakana*'s usage has been modified such that it is often used in advertisements as a stylistic choice for words that would normally be written in *hiragana* and/or *kanji*). "*Kokkuri*" is "an onomatopoetic expression referring to the action of tilting or nodding" and is a possible source of the game's name (Foster, Pandemonium 88).

When written in *kanji*, the characters for *kokkuri* allow one to see essential connections the public made with the game. Usually written as 狐狗狸, 狐 refers to a fox (*kitsune*), 狗 refers to a dog (*inu*), and 狸 refers to what is most often translated as a racoon dog (*tanuki*). Each of these animals has specific yōkai connections. The fox (*kitsune*) and racoon dog (*tanuki*) are both well-known for their ability to transform as they please. The character used for dog here (狗) is actually the same character used in *tengu* (天狗), which translates literally to "heavenly dog" (Foster, Pandemonium 89). There are various deities and demons associated with the dog, but the *tengu* is a particularly notable example for its strong presence in the world of yōkai. In fact, all three of these creatures were well-known yōkai at the time, lending the game *kokkuri* a powerful quality of mystery.

Of course, regardless of its widespread popularity it was not able to convince all who attempted it that something otherworldly was at work, or at all involved. Those who were predisposed to beliefs in yōkai were more likely to accept that it was indeed some type of spirit, as well as those who were less educated (Foster, Pandemonium 88). Its popularity and the common belief in its mystery are evidenced by the fact that there exists literature from the Meiji period that addresses possible explanations for the mysterious events people would reportedly experience.

In line with the widespread efforts of the Meiji government to further science, Inoue Enryō relied on science and scientific reasoning to disprove the beliefs people had in these supernatural events (Foster, Pandemonium 96). Inoue considered fox-possession an "example of mental illness" (Figal 97). His stance on what was often thought to be the result of intervention by yōkai is clear. Relying on the knowledge science provides, he offers alternative possibilities to replace the beliefs in the supernatural.

Kokkuri did not escape Inoue's attention, which is hardly surprising considering how far it spread during the Meiji period. Inoue identified multiple factors that, when combined, could easily result in the tilting of the apparatus used in the game, which was the signifier for a spirit taking possession of said apparatus. The participants, who have their hands placed gently on top, would eventually get tired and even a small movement could result in it tilting. The tray itself was balanced delicately, making it that much easier for a single movement to have a significant, and most importantly, visible effect (Foster, Pandemonium 99).

In his investigation of the reason for the discrepancy between the much higher rates of success in summoning a spirit during *kokkuri* for the uneducated and the much

lower rates for the educated, Inoue takes an approach heavily focused on science. Relying on physiology for his explanations, he addresses "unconscious muscular activities" and "expectant attention,"[2] both of which prevent a person from being in total control of all their actions. Unconscious muscular activities are those actions that occur without a person having to think about it, meaning they are automatic, like breathing and blinking. Expectant attention is somewhat more complicated and involves the expectations people have, a spirit appearing in the case of *kokkuri*, and actions that occur as a direct result of these expectations. "'Expectant attention occurs when one believes in advance that something should be thus, and so all expectations are focused in that one direction'" (Foster, Pandemonium 100). If the participants believe beforehand that the apparatus will tilt, then their actions will unconsciously reflect this and cause it to move.

Kokkuri provided a means to frame the power of yōkai, just like the encyclopedias of the Edo period, but it simultaneously had the effect of controlling people by taking a firm hold of their curiosity and demanding their attention, thus reinforcing the power of yōkai. This clear duality that represents the trends of both the Edo and Meiji periods makes it a unique representation of the cultural changes occurring as the government tried to shift focus away from yōkai during the years of the Meiji period. In Meiji fashion, Inoue fought against the lighthearted ascriptions of mysterious events to yōkai, using the knowledge gained from the West in crafting his own argument to convince people that it was far more likely that *kokkuri*'s movements were actually related to the participants' own movements. Whereas Inoue's argument was directed at those who were already

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[2] Both "unconscious muscular activities" and "expectant attention" are based on work done by the American scientist William Carpenter, whose work includes an explanation of table-turning, another divination game to which *kokkuri* is often compared (Foster, Pandemonium 100).

under the spell of yōkai, the Ministry of Education attempted to resolve the issue at the root by specifically addressing children, informing them that such beings do not exist in the first place.

The prominence of the encyclopedic mode used to categorize yōkai during the Edo period along with the playful nature of the games that revolved around yōkai played an important role in removing some of what makes them *fushigi*. Their mysteries were slowly beginning to be explained, either by the act of categorizing and describing based on available knowledge or by the scientific efforts of such people as Inoue Enryō to explain that what people often refer to as "yōkai" is usually a natural, explainable phenomenon. Games like *hyaku monogatari* and *kokkuri* were but some of the first versions of the numerous depictions of yōkai present in today's media. They retained their sense of mystery and captivated their audiences but were mostly meant for entertainment purposes. Gone are the didactic messages and warnings so commonly found in early tales like "Lump Off, Lump On" and "Fox Arson." The power they previously exerted over people lessened to the point that they could be conquered by humans. What remains is the thrill of the unknown, its value as pure entertainment and that is what today's media focuses on when it employs the theme of yōkai.

Part 3: The 20th Century and Onward

The 20th century saw yōkai undergo drastic transformations, almost as swift as the fox spirit that turned into a human to burn down a house only to disappear immediately after in "Fox Arson." Alongside the modernization of Japan, people pushed yōkai into entertainment media, often ignoring or freely changing the individual history of each to suit their needs. Even though Toriyama Sekien created some brand new yōkai in the Edo

period, he did not alter any of the previously known ones. Rather he was simply trying to collect and record each one to the best of his ability. Particularly since the latter half of the 20th century, people have created and modified yōkai at will to fit whatever role they desired for them. This has played a large part in allowing yōkai to survive in an era of constant foreign exchange and adoption of foreign knowledge and techniques. Despite the changing landscape of Japan, yōkai have thus been able to endure by submitting themselves to the creative minds of artists, authors, and the like.

War-time Japan and Momotarō

Scarcely anyone would have had thoughts about the "ideological function" of such material, which looks so unpolitical and child-like. And yet this fairy tale leads to the very heart of Japanese nationalistic ideology and the war propaganda of the 1930s and 1940s. (Antoni 165)

Just before yōkai were adapted widely into popular culture, they were used as a means of Othering Japan's enemies during the first half of the 20th century when Japan was at war. This was accomplished through the use of one story which all of Japan would come to know, the story of *Momotarō*, the "peach boy." Prior to the Meiji Restoration, the people of Japan had been accustomed to thinking "in terms of small spatial categories," preventing them from feeling any sense of belonging to the nation of Japan. Following the Meiji Restoration, government messengers were sent to inform these peoples that they were, in fact, members of a larger community called Japan and that there existed an emperor who ruled over its entirety (Antoni 158). The messengers were,

in effect, telling them that those areas they had considered foreign up until then were now no longer foreign and that they existed as members of the same group.

Geography of Japan

Japan is an island nation comprised by four main islands: Hokkaidō, Honshū, Shikoku, and Kyūshū; as well as thousands of other, much smaller islands. The Ryūkyū Islands, of which Okinawa is a part, lies to the southwest of Kyūshū. During Japan's long history, its borders have expanded. For example, Hokkaidō and Okinawa were not always part of the Japan known to everyone today. They were yet foreign territories, inhabited by unfamiliar peoples with their own cultures and peculiarities. It makes sense then that they would be ascribed the role of foreigners by the Japanese who lived on Honshū, Shikoku, and Kyūshū. Making use of the story of *Momotarō*, Antoni shows how the Japanese government used these foreigners at home to demonize the foreigners from afar in order to instill a nationalist attitude in the Japanese citizenry.

Momotarō

The story of *Momotarō* is about a boy named Momotarō and his adventure to *Onigashima*, "Devils' Island." He is not alone in his journey, as he has a dog, a monkey, and a pheasant for companions. At the end of his journey, after he has conquered the *oni* of the island, in exchange for their lives, Momotarō receives some of their treasure along with their promise that they will no longer bother humans (Antoni 163). This summary covers the basic points of the story as it was told to school children.

Momotarō's conquest of the *oni* results in the receipt of treasures. In simpler terms and those more applicable to war-time Japan, a Japanese boy conquers foreigners and the lives of all Japanese are better for it. In the story, they are free from the torment

of the *oni* following the submission of the *oni* to Momotarō. The Japanese do not have to continue worrying about their safety at home because the foreign *oni* have been bested by one of Japan's own.

The story of *Momotarō* was included in primary school texts in a version that made use of simplified sentences and easily understood content (Antoni 163). Just like the ethics textbook that declared that *tengu* do not exist, once again, young school children were made the audience for messages intended to not only spread across Japan but to maintain their power in the hearts of these children as they grow older. Whereas in the declaration denying the existence of a type of yōkai, this time the government used yōkai to show the superiority of Japan over foreigners.

This story and the use of it as an attempt to instill a nationalist attitude in the Japanese citizens is a response to the actions of the Western powers at the time. Fearing that it may be subjected to foreign rule in the future, the "so-called Meiji Oligarchs" set in motion plans that would enable Japan to beat the West "at its own game" (Antoni 159). *Momotarō* was of course but one piece of this plan.

The *oni* present in the story are residents of a foreign land who, as understood through implication, have tortured the Japanese. The *oni* who were once capable of exerting their own power over Japan are shown to be unable to stand against the might of Momotarō on his quest to subdue the foreigners. In this way, Momotarō is portrayed as a hero who conquers an enemy that was once undefeated by the Japanese. It is this message, of a Japanese overcoming a foreign enemy, that the government used to instill a nationalist ideology in Japanese children. The foreigner is a "seemingly superior enemy, who, in an analogy to the fairy tale, is a devil" (Antoni 165). The clear connection

between foreigners and *oni*, those detestable and fearsome creatures, bolstered the nationalist attitude the government was trying to inspire.

It should be noted that *Momotarō* is not the only story in the history of Japan that tells of Japanese conquering foreigners using the theme of *Onigashima*. For example, in *Hōgen monogatari*, it is said that in 1165 Minamoto no Tametomo arrives at *Onigashima* whereupon he subdues the *oni* inhabitants (Antoni 168). In a later version of the story, Tametomo visits what is today referred to as the Ryūkyū Islands (169). Similarly, he annexes the area, bringing it under Japanese rule. He subdues the foreigners close to home and makes them part of that home. In the story of *Momotarō* encouraged by the government, however, while the *oni* are subdued, they are not made into a part of the Japanese nation. That would convey a misleading message to the children when their primary concern was to ensure that the children of Japan understood that the foreigners were a threat to their home. It is significant that the story the government chose is a parallel to stories told even in 1165. Just under 800 years later, the theme was still relevant to the Japanese people. This reflects the lasting power of the yōkai image, if not yōkai as a whole.

What followed in the last half of the 20th century would represent a drastic change in the way people used yōkai. Harking back to the playful attitude of the Edo period, one untainted by government ambition, manga artists, authors, filmmakers, and so forth all took up these mysterious entities and turned them into a profit. This commodification of yōkai would result in the stripping away of much of their mystery in the minds of the people and simultaneously form an indelible impression.

Contemporary Sources

The adoption of yōkai by popular culture and their consequent adaptation to fit the norms of this setting resulted in somewhat sporadic branching out. Themes, depictions, traits, settings, everything that was previously known about them underwent changes. Depending on which artist depiction of a particular yōkai one looks at, while they may retain key visual characteristics, the rest is likely to differ significantly. Manga is an easily identifiable medium in which yōkai are a fairly common element. Indeed, many manga series will incorporate them without making them the central focus. They may offer only a supporting role or perhaps even less than that, receiving but a brief mention or allusion. There are other series, however, that take the theme of yōkai and create an entire world around them. The manga medium offers an abundance of examples, but it is by no means limited to manga. Video games sometimes employ the theme of yōkai and even restaurants are not free from its influence. Yōkai have found their place in Japan's modern landscape through its popular culture.

Nurarihyon no Mago

In the manga *Nurarihyon no Mago* (ぬらりひょんの孫)[3], "The Grandchild of Nurarihyon," everything revolves around yōkai. The plot sometimes revolves around the interactions *within* the yōkai realm and sometimes around the interactions *between* the yōkai realm and the human realm. The main character, Rikuo, is one-quarter yōkai, allowing him to assume his yōkai form after the sun sets. When the sun rises, he returns to his human form and becomes unable to use all of the abilities that come with his yōkai form.

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[3] In the U.S. the title is *Nura: Rise of the Yokai Clan*, published by Viz Media.

Rikuo lives in a house full of yōkai, as his grandfather is the leader of the Nura clan of yōkai. Since he is part human, Rikuo bridges the gap between the two realms easily, taking part in each. He eventually takes his grandfather's place as the leader of the clan, which necessitates that he gather powerful yōkai under his command. The term "*hyakki yakō*" appears in the manga explicitly, a term used to describe a group of 100 yōkai that follow one leader. Rikuo is told that he needs to make his own *hyakki yakō* to be seen as a strong commander (Shiibashi 129). This word is simply another reading of the characters for *hyakki yagyō* (百鬼夜行), as discussed in Part 2. They are written with the same *kanji* but with a different reading for the last one.

The act of gathering yōkai under one's command is similar to the act of collecting and categorizing yōkai that was so popular in the Edo period. The *hyakki yakō* is more akin to an army of yōkai than an encyclopedia of them, but the idea is the same, to gather numerous yōkai and establish a well-defined unit. A clear result of the commodification of yōkai is the fact that there exists a *Nurarihyon no Mago* character data book. Whereas a normal manga volume contains mostly the story chapters and material directly related to the story, a character data book is a standalone book that offers more in-depth background information on characters alongside pictures. Toriyama Sekien's *Gazu Hyakkiyagyō* is an obvious influential factor in that the very form of this data book calls to mind Toriyama's work from the Edo period. Be it encyclopedia or *hyakki yakō*, they are both accumulations of often unrelated yōkai. In the story, the gathering of a *hyakki yakō* is considered integral to Rikuo's success as the leader of the Nura clan, as the collective strength of those in his *hyakki yakō* is a representation of his own strength and capability as a leader.

The strength of a yōkai in *Nurarihyon no Mago* lies in its "fear," which refers not just to its physical strength but also to its unique ability. This idea of "fear" as central to a yōkai's strength is not without parallel in older stories. In the stories of fox spirits, those who lacked caution when dealing with them met with harsh consequences. The punishments in these stories relate to the reader the appropriate fear of the fox spirit one should have. The greater the fear a yōkai can inspire in a person, the greater its strength. In *Nurarihyon no Mago*, when yōkai fight each other, they rely on fear. The one with the greater fear has an advantage in the fight.

Of all the manga that involve yōkai, *Nurarihyon no Mago* is one of the few that so successfully represent them as a sort of halfway point between what was once common knowledge about them and what is now common knowledge. It represents yōkai with not only much of their traditional characteristics intact but it also blends these characteristics with the modern needs that are present in nearly all forms of popular media today. The *kappa* in *Nurarihyon no Mago* is not an overtly harmful creature although certainly capable in battle. He loves cucumbers, which is one of the *kappa*'s original traits, and his fighting abilities revolve around the use of water. It is in his visual features where modern needs come into play.

Likely in an effort to appeal to readers, the author made the *kappa* look startlingly little like one. While he retains a dish of some sort on top of his head, it is far larger than in the descriptions of *kappa* one would find during the Edo period. His clothing is like that of a ninja and aside from webbed hands, he is largely humanoid, making him far more relatable to readers than more traditional representations. *Nurarihyon no Mago*'s *kappa* retains water as the source of his fear just as the *kappa* of the Edo period's fear

was heavily reliant on water, and the dish on top of the head is still present, albeit in a drastically altered form. These characteristics are in line with what one would normally expect of a *kappa*, but as yōkai have become commodified their appearances have changed greatly. The *kappa* in *Nurarihyon no Mago* appears more human than anything, even going so far as to wear ninja clothing when older *kappa* tales did not even mention it wearing any clothing at all. If one were to judge based solely on his appearance, one would likely come to the conclusion that he is harmless, which would never happen if one looked at older depictions. The *kappa* character is a combination of the traditional *kappa* characteristics and the demands present in modern entertainment, which allows him only to keep some of that which makes him identifiable as a *kappa*.

      Nurarihyon no Mago is published in Weekly Shōnen Jump on a weekly basis. Shōnen Jump is one of the biggest names in the manga publishing industry and has a large reader base. One can generally assume that any manga published in Shōnen Jump is fairly popular, as they are very selective when it comes to choosing which series to publish. What this means is that almost every week, many readers are exposed to yōkai and their stories. In an increasingly technological landscape, yōkai still have considerable influence. They represent what is seen as almost an impossibility in modern Japan, a world that the Japan of today can no longer reach in daily life. Through the commodification of yōkai, however, they can remain a part of Japanese life. By virtue of being yōkai, they exist forever linked to all the stories that have existed and still exist about them, and their inherent mystery as well. The mysterious events in both the older and more modern stories work together in that the older ones inform the more recent, and the more recent work to reinforce this mystery.

Nurarihyon no Mago depicts yōkai in many of their variations. There are purely malevolent yōkai who exist only to kill people, there are those who love to have fun and are generally mischievous, and there are those whose purpose is to protect humans. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but is instead meant to show how yōkai are presented in this contemporary manga and how different this is compared to what one finds in Edo tales. The malevolent and mischievous ones speak to the commonly shared stories of yōkai before the 20th century. The ones who actually protect humans rather than harm them speak to the process of adaptation yōkai went through when they entered into popular culture in the 20th century and beyond. Japanese cute culture, which became prominent in the last half of the 20th century, has been a powerful phenomenon for decades now and its effects on popular culture have been far-reaching. Manga like *Nurarihyon no Mago* are created under the influence of this context of cuteness in that they address a similar audience. That *Nurarihyon no Mago* uses some yōkai that are more peaceful and loveable is not surprising. The combination of all of these elements, cute culture, traditional yōkai stories, and creative invention on the part of the author, not only place it in its modern context but give it that aura of mystery so necessary to captivate an audience.

Otogi

While not as popular as *Nurarihyon no Mago*, the video games *Otogi: Myth of Demons* and *Otogi 2: Immortal Warriors*[4] use a similar combination of elements to create their own curiously captivating mystery. They make use of traditional yōkai stories and the developer's creative invention but take it a step further by incorporating historical

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[4] Both titles were released for the Xbox platform exclusively.

Japanese events as central points in the story. In *Otogi: Myth of Demons*, both the protagonist whom the player controls and the antagonist whose defeat is necessary to beat the game are modified versions of historical figures. The player takes the role of Raikō, an undead warrior, to ultimately do battle with and defeat a man-turned demon called Michizane (Otogi). Examining any one part of *Otogi* will reveal a rich and complex background submerged in history and yōkai lore.

Before Raikō is able to face off against Michizane, he must fight his way through hordes of demons. The game is split up into stages, returning the player to a menu after each. In this menu, when selecting a stage to play, the player has the option of choosing to see which enemies he will encounter. Each enemy is given its own "page" on which there is an artist's depiction of it and a brief description along with its name. Every single enemy in the game has one of these and they are all individualized.[5] Like the *Nurarihyon no Mago* character data book, this is clearly reminiscent of Toriyama Sekien's *Gazu Hyakkiyagyō*. The inclusion of a name, a description possibly containing origin information, and a pictorial representation is exactly like what Toriyama did. This is one way in which *Otogi* links itself to all that came before it, contributing to its rich historical background.

The protagonist, Raikō, and the antagonist of the original *Otogi*, Michizane, are historical figures well-known largely for their inclusion in numerous tales of yōkai. The name Raikō is a reference to Minamoto no Yorimitsu, also known as Minamoto no Raikō (948-1021) (Reider 55). Raikō was a famous general who, according to many tales of his adventures, came to have "four heavenly guardians," referred to as *shitennō* (31):

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[5] *Otogi 2: Immortal Warriors* also provides this same information on its own enemies.

Watanabe Tsuna (953-1025), Sakata Kintoki (ca. 10th century), Usui Sadamitsu (954-1021), and Urabe Suetake (?-1022) (Reider 187). All four of these guardians do not appear until the sequel, *Otogi 2: Immortal Warriors*, in which they are playable characters (Otogi 2), and although the details of Kintoki's history are less certain, each character is based off of a historical figure. According to the information available, these were real people, and not just something the game developer decided to create to make things more interesting.

Raikō and his *shitennō* were involved in many well-known stories, like the story of *Shuten Dōji*, in which they travel to Mt. Ōe to defeat a heinous *oni* known as Shuten Dōji who has been kidnapping maidens whom he plans to later dismember and ingest (Reider 187). Also among their great deeds is their conquest of the earth spider (98), or *tsuchigumo*. Aside from being a well-known group of warriors, they are notable as individuals.

As a child, Kintoki went by the name Kintarō. His mother is said to have been a *yamauba* (also written and pronounced as *yamamba*), a type of *oni* (Reider 160). *Yamauba* are believed to be a terrifying type of female *oni* who live in the mountains and feed upon children, often leading lost travelers to their huts solely so that they can devour them. Kintoki was considered a "super-child," possessing great strength (62). As for historical records of Sakata Kintoki's existence, there are few, which allowed "playwrights and authors writing about Kintoki greater latitude for imagination" (73). By the time *Otogi* was made, Kintoki had already experienced superscription, even receiving a fictional son named Kinpira (73). With this "greater latitude for imagination" and a thousand years to use it, creative minds have had plenty of opportunity to modify him. In

Otogi 2, Kintoki is a burly man who wears a bamboo hat that covers his face and wields a large axe for his weapon. Unlike the other playable characters, Kintoki is also able to grab an opponent with his bare hands and throw them great distances, without regard for size, which is in line with the idea of the "super-child" Kintarō.

While alive, rather than being some sort of warrior like Raikō, Michizane was a high-ranking court official. His full name was Sugawara no Michizane. *Otogi's* Michizane is identifiable as this particular historical figure based on some key similarities presented in the game's story to the historical records and posthumous yōkai tales involving a man called Sugawara no Michizane. In *Otogi: Myth of Demons*, it says that Michizane was banished from the court, after which he became a malevolent entity who sought revenge on those who pushed him out.

Sugawara no Michizane (849-903), the historical figure, fell victim to the "slanderous tongue" of his rival, Fujiwara no Tokihira, and was demoted from his position as Minister of the Right to the position of chief administrator in Kyūshū. Having been removed from the imperial court and having lost a tremendous amount of face, he died in Kyūshū without clearing his name and regaining his position. As a result of his death while in exile, "[h]is dead spirit became Daijō-itokuten (Heavenly Great Merits) whose dependents, one hundred sixty thousand evil spirits (*akushin*), were said to cause various natural disasters," going so far as to cause "lightning to strike the emperor's residence in 903" (Reider 12). The motivation for his spirit to seek revenge is clear. His exile was a tremendous source of shame for Sugawara no Michizane. *Otogi*'s own Michizane shares a similar reason, but the game does not provide background

information that is quite so detailed. Regardless, the similarities they do share are sufficient to identify him as Sugawara no Michizane.

The title of the video game series itself, *Otogi*, references two different things. One is the term *otogibanashi* (御伽話), which is a sort of fairy tale and is a word that is generally recognizable today by Japanese people. "Fairy tale," however, is a rather broad term. It is also often translated as "bedtime story," which refines its meaning a little, giving it a more playful, less serious feeling. The other reference is to *Otogizōshi* (御伽草子), which is yet more difficult to define. It is a collection of stories from the Muromachi period (1392-1573), the topics of which cover many areas, including yōkai. Thus the game series' title alone carries with it a sense of playfulness and a long history of Japanese culture as well as the yōkai that have inhabited it.

The art and general atmosphere of the *Otogi* titles work to create a feeling of wonder in not just the player but also anyone who may be watching. Traditional Japanese music is sometimes mixed with soft female vocals, placing the player in a more ancient Japanese context while still reminding him that this is a product of the 21st century. The combination of traditional instruments with modern vocals creates a dichotomous relationship in the music. It is undoubtedly the result of commodification in much the same way the rest of the game is.

The art at times retains the well-defined clouds common in traditional Japanese art, but a quick examination of the characters themselves often leads one in the opposite direction. Raikō, for example, is a powerful warrior but his physique is actually fairly slim, which is one of the standards for attractive men in Japanese media. Rather than being bulky and closer to Kintoki in size, he is slim with long black hair, and the small bit

of skin that is revealed from beneath his armor is perfectly pale and smooth, without flaw. By focusing on making him appear stylish rather than powerful, he is able to conform to societal expectations of men in Japanese media.

The *Otogi* series has helped the history and historical yōkai stories survive at a time when seemingly all emphasis is placed on the increasingly prominent role of technology in Japanese society. Rather than featuring high-tech cell phones or powerful computers, *Otogi* looks to the past for inspiration and a source of mystique with which to entrance its audience. In such a setting as current Japan, it might even seem counterintuitive to do so in attempting to create a successful product. The inherent mystery in yōkai and their tales, including the adventure tales of warriors like Raikō who defeat them, is a component that can stand the test of time through commodification. By allowing the player to become involved in this ancient, mysterious world, *Otogi* allows the player to feel as if he himself has moved into the world of yōkai. In this other world, he can take part in Japanese history and interact with historical figures, albeit modified versions of both. The veracity of both are not surprisingly questionable at times, but the mix of this unique Japanese historical culture and the action common in 21st century video games function to nonetheless transport the player to a world outside of his daily life experiences.

Kappa-zushi

When discussing the commodification of yōkai, what could possibly be more appropriate than a *kappa*-themed sushi restaurant? *Kappa-zushi* (かっぱ寿司) is a type of sushi restaurant that is referred to as *kaitenzushi*, where various dishes pass by each table on a conveyor belt and the customer can pull off any and as many as he wishes.

Kappa-zushi is a sushi restaurant chain that is present across the majority of Japan, with the exclusion of Hokkaidō and the Ryūkyū Islands, with the number of shops totaling 359, as of April 21, 2010 (Kappa Create).

In the fall of 2009, while I was participating in a homestay program in Nagoya, Japan, I had the chance to have dinner at a nearby *Kappa-zushi* with my host family. This particular location was located nearly an hour away from downtown Nagoya and was within walking distance from my homestay. We went around dinner time and waited approximately fifteen minutes before we were seated. While I was waiting I saw multiple families with small children, often accompanied by a grandparent who would dote on the impatiently waiting grandchildren. The atmosphere was obviously designed to be family-friendly and the customers eating there that night reflected this.

Among my observations at this time was the sheer number of *kappa* accessories and toys available for purchase while paying one's bill. Phone straps with a *kappa* at the end and other similarly small toys were available, all of which had either a toy *kappa* on it or a *kappa* design. Visiting their website reveals an even wider range of *kappa* products offered, many of them directly aimed at children, like the melody piano (メロディピアノ) (Kappa Create). In making the atmosphere family-friendly, they made it so that everything would be appropriate for children.

The restaurant's *kappa* design shares much of its physical features in common with Toriyama Sekien's depiction of the *kappa* in his *Gazu hyakkiyagyō*. The hands and feet are webbed, a small dish sits atop the head surrounded by hair, and it has a shell-like object on its back. In contrast, it does not have a beak-shaped mouth and has a much smaller body.

Whereas Toriyama's depiction shows it as a somewhat frightening, potentially dangerous creature, *Kappa-zushi*'s *kappa* is a miniature, smiling one. On their website, it waves at visitors on the homepage. Their *kappa* appears to want nothing more than to be friends with people. Of the two sibling *kappa* on their website, both have two buttons on their bellies, almost like a snowman, and one has a collar and the other wears a bowtie. They even wear nametags. There is no sense of danger or murderous tendencies around these *kappa*. They are friendly, family-appropriate playpals.

The *kappa* the restaurant uses is nothing like the *kappa* that would molest a woman's buttocks or drag people into a river to take their liver and leave them to die. In fact, this *kappa* is entirely removed from this context. Other than sharing the name "*kappa*," it is as if it is a unique existence. When looking at their products, it is easy to forget the long history of the *kappa* that they have modified and incorporated whenever possible into their restaurant.

Japanese cute culture is an apparent source of influence for *Kappa-zushi*'s mascot. In this cute culture, popular anime and manga characters are frequently transformed into miniature versions of themselves. This is a process of taking what is known about something and boiling it down to its core elements in the form of a tiny body with short limbs, a large head, and exaggerated facial expressions. Looking at the *kappa* mascot reveals a very similar process leading to the mascot's current form. Rather than looking to one particular popular source for material, this mascot is a derivation of the *kappa* and its extensive history in Japanese culture. It has many of the more frequent *kappa* characteristics, but they are contained within a small body with short limbs and a large head.

This *kappa* is a harmless being, made so by human creativity. It is a *kappa* without power. For this reason it is an appropriate image to attach to a company's own image. Had they used a *kappa* like Toriyama's, its efficacy would certainly be greatly reduced, if not eliminated entirely. Whereas *Nurarihyon no Mago* and *Otogi* took yōkai and commodified them while retaining at least some of their fear and mystery, *Kappa-zushi*'s mascot abandons such things, opting for a manifestation largely unique from its historical counterparts, and many modern ones as well.

Commodification: Making the Unknowable Knowable

All three of these contemporary applications of yōkai are for commercial purposes. To market them, specifics are necessary. The creators behind *Nurarihyon no Mago*, the *Otogi* series, and *Kappa-zushi* needed concrete images in order to appeal to people. Modern Japanese society is a commercial one and the use of concrete images is one of the most direct ways to advertise a product effectively. Therefore, to market anything related to yōkai requires that one identify what the product deals with first. This process of identifying mysterious, unknowable entities involves removing at least enough of the mystery to make them knowable, and is a process altered on a case-by-case basis.

Yōkai pervade contemporary society by slipping into its pop culture, sometimes stealthily and sometimes blatantly. *Kappa-zushi* takes a more stealthy approach. While the mascot they use is obviously a part of yōkai lore, their version of the *kappa* is different enough to not necessarily make people recall its more terrifying manifestations. In this way the *kappa* is able to remain in the cultural consciousness without fear of fading into oblivion. *Nurarihyon no Mago* and *Otogi* are blatant in their use of yōkai. In *Otogi*, the enemies are all yōkai and the protagonist(s) are fighting to rid the world of

their malicious presence. *Nurarihyon no Mago* blurs the line between good and evil in the context of yōkai by maintaining that the enemy is yōkai but not *all* of them. Rikuo, the main character, is one-quarter yōkai himself, and leads a group of them as he battles against those yōkai who commit evil acts. *Otogi* shows yōkai as the enemy, *Nurarihyon no Mago* shows them as not necessarily evil, and the mascot of *Kappa-zushi* shows one type of yōkai as a harmless, amicable creature.

The commodification of yōkai had a significant effect on their manifestations and renderings. Following the end of World War II, as Japan prepared for its economic boom, people began to strip yōkai of their power, asserting their own creative power over them, and transforming them as they wished. The power of yōkai was placed inside the frame of popular culture. Beyond this frame, it could not extend far for very long.

Conclusion

Yōkai are an ever-evolving topic, never sitting still long enough for anyone to pin them down. Looking at the *kappa*, at the same time that contemporary examples of it as a harmless creature exist, there are also other examples of it popping up that show it as it was once believed to be, a terrifying, murderous water goblin. Toriyama Sekien's encyclopedic collecting and categorizing of yōkai may have seemed like a step toward demystifying them by identifying them through more scholarly means, but in the larger context it was but one instance in yōkai history.

Every example of yōkai does little on its own to address the issue of their unknowable nature, but when looked at comprehensively they draw a timeline that is marked by a state of flux, particularly since the Edo period, when people brought yōkai into popular culture. Prior to the Edo period, prior to the frequent exchanges of

knowledge across vast distances over Japan, yōkai were not a part of popular culture so much as they were simply a part of folk culture. That is to say, before yōkai were sold they were still acknowledged but it was not a topic for play.

The creation myth contained in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* was a historical recording meant to be a part of a legitimizing record for the Japanese emperor's rule. Contained within this creation myth is a story of the warm benevolence and terrifying malevolence of the gods that gave birth to Japan. The horrifying image Izanagi sees when he breaks his promise with Izanami, who has already become unable to leave the land of the dead, reflects the nature of yōkai as that which should not be known or looked upon. The *ikiryō* in *The Tale of Genji* is an evil spirit that cannot be known. To the end, Genji does not realize that it is the cause of so much of his misfortune in life. It is *fushigi* and unknowable.

Supernatural events and beings, such as deities and yōkai, have long been incorporated into Japanese culture. The forms they take and the media which they inhabit may have changed, but their presence is an enduring one. When they took up residence in popular culture during the Edo period, it marked one of the most effecting changes in their history. They were no longer relegated solely to spooky stories and tales of mysterious happenings. They gained a new role at this time, one of entertainment. That which makes them mysterious made them entertaining. Sharing stories in a *hyaku monogatari* session revealed them as mysterious and unidentifiable, but also as something that could be applied for a specific purpose, to have fun with other people.

Not all would join in the fun, however, and the Meiji government and scholars of the time, rather than attempting to identify and solidify them, directed their efforts at

dispelling belief in yōkai. This change of objective with yōkai took the work of people like Toriyama Sekien and essentially labeled it as unnecessary and misleading in that it encouraged belief in them. This trend would not last long before the government itself found a different way to deal with them.

The almost constant change in yōkai themselves and around them is a necessary characteristic of them. Just as a yōkai disappears before one can identify it, so do yōkai in the cultural consciousness change before they are restricted to any one role. Before they could completely be transformed into playthings, the introduction of Western science in the Meiji period led to an encouraged rejection of yōkai, which caused them to partially change from being a plaything to unnecessary cultural baggage. Once again, in war-time Japan in the 20th century, *oni* became an easily applied label and image for Japan's enemies, clearly marking for all Japanese citizens who they were fighting. In attributing the characteristics and history of the *oni* to Japan's opponents, they both amplified and magnified the threat felt by the people.

In contemporary popular culture, the effects of the Edo and Meiji periods are apparent. The playfulness that marked the Edo period and the scientific logic of the Meiji period contributed to the creation of modern versions of yōkai, which people do not often believe exist but will unquestioningly accept as entertainment nonetheless. Their function is akin to, yet more broad than the monstrous beings in horror movies. Horror movies often rely on the unknown to inspire fear. Both look to darkness as a source of infinite mystery. No one can know what lies in wait in the darkness. There could be nothing at all, but people are still unable to remove their gaze from it. Within it lies mystery without boundary. The limitless nature of darkness is like that of yōkai. One can glean a certain

amount of information without seeing it clearly, but cannot know definitively. The representations of yōkai that people see in entertainment like *Otogi* and *Nurarihyon no Mago* offer clear depictions of many yōkai, but when placed in the larger context of yōkai as a whole, they remain just as elusive as always, for they are inconsistent and inconstant.

Always changing, never sitting still for long, yōkai in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have shown that the introduction of and development of new types of media have given them an abundance of opportunity to appear and disappear more quickly than ever before. As one image of a yōkai appears, another that is contradictory pops up right next to it. This repeats over and over, creating a cycle that absolutely denies the possibility of one ever being able to identify and "know" yōkai. They are elusive, holding tightly to their mystery even today.

Their ability to constantly evade definition is a large part of what makes them so appealing in modern Japan. Despite the radical differences between ancient Japan and the current Japan, yōkai have not only found a place to exist but also a role to fulfill for the Japanese citizens. Foster writes, "in the end, it seems, the space of yōkai is not an other*world* but an other *Japan*" (Foster, Pandemonium 212). As Japan has modernized, the desire for this other Japan has increased, leading people to search for it and engross themselves in stories about it. There is no shortage of material for these people, as artists, authors, and the like continuously create new yōkai stories and retell old ones. Thus far, yōkai have proven themselves to be a lasting and unique part of Japanese culture, persevering through even direct opposition from the government. As that which cannot be known and exists in a state of flux, how will the next major change manifest itself?

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