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**THE UNNATURAL WORLD: ANIMALS AND MORALITY TALES IN  
HAYASHI RAZAN'S *KAIDAN ZENSHO***

A Thesis Presented

by

ERIC D. FISCHBACH

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

February 2015

Asian Languages and Literatures - Japanese



**THE UNNATURAL WORLD: ANIMALS AND MORALITY TALES IN  
HAYASHI RAZAN'S *KAIDAN ZENSHO***

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Approved as to style and content by:

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Amanda C. Seaman, Chair

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Stephen Miller, Member

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Stephen Miller, Program Head

Asian Languages and Literatures

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William Moebius, Department Head

Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

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## ABSTRACT

### THE UNNATURAL WORLD: ANIMALS AND MORALITY TALES IN HAYASHI RAZAN'S *Kaidan Zensho*

FEBRUARY 2015

ERIC D. FISCHBACH, B.A., BARD COLLEGE  
MA, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Amanda C. Seaman

*Kaidan* is a genre of supernatural tales that became popular during Japan's Edo period. In 1627, Hayashi Razan translated numerous supernatural tales from China and collected them in five volumes in a work known as *Kaidan zensho*, the "Complete Collection of Strange Works." Hayashi Razan was an influential Neo-Confucian scholar and was instrumental in establishing Neo-Confucianism as a dominant ideological force in Tokugawa Japan. As his teachings and stories reached a wide audience, and the government was supportive of Neo-Confucian ideas in Japan, his *Kaidan* tales, which contained subtle didactic elements, enjoyed success. However, *Kaidan zensho* was never translated into English.

Many of the tales within the *Kaidan zensho* expressed didactic messages by using supernatural depictions of animals as narrative devices. The animals usually were caricatures of a person or group, and were furthermore depicted in a negative fashion. These animals were shown to be unable to act in a moral manner, so their purpose in

these tales was to highlight the moral decisions made on the part of the stories' protagonists.

Chapter one of this thesis introduces the *kaidan* genre, provides context for 17<sup>th</sup> century Japan, and how Neo-Confucianism influenced Tokugawa government and culture. Chapter two analyzes the *Kaidan zensho* tales for their use of animals, grouping the stories by theme – benevolence, ingratitude, fear of women, and impermanence. It explains what the animals represent and how they highlight the moral of the story. Chapter three is my original translation of fifteen tales focusing on animals found in *Kaidan zensho*, with notes to provide context to the stories.

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## CHAPTER 1

### *KAIDAN* AND TOKUGAWA JAPAN

#### 1.1 Introduction

Nearly four-hundred years ago Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604 – 1651), the third *shōgun* of Japan, took ill. Bed-ridden and in dire need of entertainment, a Neo-Confucian physician named Hayashi Razan (1583 – 1657) took it upon himself to entertain the sick warlord. Hayashi Razan was Iemitsu’s *jusha*, who were Neo-Confucian advisors appointed to influential elites in Japan’s burgeoning Tokugawa government. Razan collected supernatural folktales from old Chinese texts, ones he thought he could entertain his *shōgun* with, and translated them into Japanese. In 1627, he completed his work and called it *Kaidan zensho*, the “Complete Collection of Strange Works.” *Kaidan* would soon become a popular genre of supernatural tale in Tokugawa Japan, and this was one of the first appearances of the term in Japanese literary history. Despite this, Hayashi Razan’s versions of these stories were never translated into English. Considering this work was instrumental in the development of the *kaidan* genre in Japan, I attempted to rectify this by providing my own English translation.

However, the language employed in *Kaidan zensho* quickly proved to be nigh insurmountable. Five volumes in length, the collection of strange tales was written in a mixture of Chinese characters, known as *kanji*, and a syllabic system of writing called *katakana*, all while using a grammatical system that is wildly different from modern Japanese. Much of the difficulty in translating this text comes not from the complexity of the stories, but from parsing the older Japanese language – pronunciations, verb conjugations, and grammar are so different that one must take special classes to even

begin comprehending these tales. Furthermore, some of the *kanji* characters used in text are no longer commonly used, with some incapable of being rendered on modern computers, all of this adding to the difficulty of translation.

Readers of Japanese may know that modern Japanese employs three separate writing systems used in tandem: *kanji*, pictographs that come from Chinese, and *hiragana* and *katakana*, which are simpler syllabaries derived from *kanji*. Modern Japanese usually uses a combination of *hiragana* and *kanji* to form most sentences, with *hiragana* used primarily to provide grammatical components. *Katakana*, in contrast, is normally reserved for foreign loanwords and names, so a document that mixes only *kanji* and *katakana* undoubtedly looks strange. Prior to the Japanese script reforms of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, texts incorporating both *kanji* and *kana*, known as *kanji-kana majiribun*, frequently used *katakana* instead of *hiragana* for grammatical purposes.<sup>1</sup> While this system of writing certainly gives the text a classical feel, I have not attempted to simulate archaic speech by adding superfluous “ye olde” English phrases or spellings in the translation. Rather, I sought to replicate the language as I read it: short, simple, and disarmingly perfunctory.

When one reads Razan’s work, a couple of themes become apparent. The first is that many of the tales feature animals in some capacity, be it an animal wearing a human disguise, an animal acting strangely, or a human transforming into an animal. The second is that most of these tales contain some form of moral. As Hayashi Razan was an instrumental figure in institutionalizing Neo-Confucianism as a major ideological force in

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<sup>1</sup> Frellesvig, Bjarke, *A History of the Japanese Language* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 157.

Tokugawa Japan, it should come as no surprise that the stories he translated have embedded morals that uphold Confucian ideals. Putting these two elements together, it becomes apparent that the animals are used in a symbolic fashion, which is to say they usually represent a type of a person or a group of people. However, the moral messages embedded within these stories use the animals as a narrative device to explain what a human should not do – characters who act in an immoral fashion are sometimes transformed into animals as punishment, or are shown to have been animals all along. The animals are portrayed as innately immoral, so it is from the actions of the human protagonists that each tale gains moral potency. The moral messages in these *kaidan* tales, as they are translated by a scholar with a vested interest in propagating Neo-Confucian values, thus mark the *kaidan* stories as inherently didactic. Since the morality applies only to the human characters, the strange animals, which are the supernatural elements that defines these stories as *kaidan* supernatural tales, exist only to reflect the darker side of human morality.

With this as the basis, Chapter 1 of this paper provides context for Japan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when *Kaidan zensho* was first printed. This chapter first explores how the Tokugawa government reformed and used Neo-Confucian ideas to provide legitimacy for the samurai in power. Hayashi Razan was instrumental in the development of Neo-Confucian thought during the Tokugawa period, and his teachings helped to maintain the social stability of the Tokugawa government. The stories he translated from China had moral messages that supported his Neo-Confucian teachings. Razan's teachings reached members of elite social classes and commoners alike, through his lectures and through professional storytellers. Additionally, advances in printing technology in the 17<sup>th</sup>

century helped the spread of written works like *Kaidan zensho*. The rest of Chapter 1 focuses on the history of the *kaidan* genre in particular: what the term *kaidan* actually means, what its use is in modern day Japan, and how it became popular in Japan through a mutation of the Buddhist ritual *hyakuza hōdan*.

Chapter 2 analyzes the *kaidan* stories that I translated in Chapter 3. These stories are found within *Kaidan zensho* and use animal motifs. This chapter analyzes these tales and groups them according to story theme. The chapter first explores how benevolent actions are rewarded, as human characters showing benevolence towards animals usually garner divine rewards. The next theme explored is punishment for ingratitude, in which the ungrateful party is subsequently punished. The following stories focus on a fear of women, and how the woman and the animal are equated. The final stories analyzed in Chapter 2 focus on ants and how they represent impermanence, serving as a warning against ambition. Each discussion explains what the animals are symbolic of, and how they serve the moral message of each tale.

Chapter Three contains my English translation of fifteen stories from *Kaidan zensho*, with notes to aid in the understanding of these tales. These stories represent approximately half of the thirty-two stories found in the five volumes of *Kaidan zensho*. These stories were selected to illustrate the use of animals as moral devices.

## 1.2 The Tokugawa *Bakufu* and Neo-Confucianism

Hayashi Razan, also known by his posthumous name Hayashi Dōshun, translated *Kaidan zensho* from Chinese folk tales in 1627. At such an early date, *Kaidan zensho* is a pivotal work in that it was one of the first books to feature the term *kaidan* in Japan's literary history.<sup>2</sup>

“One of the earliest examples of literature bearing the name of *kaidan* is an exemplary amalgamation of oral and literary tradition. The work, entitled *Kaidan* and more popularly known as *Kaidan zensho* (Complete Works of Strange Tales), was a translation completed around 1627 of strange and mysterious Chinese tales written in classical Chinese. Hence the foundation of the work is literary. However, the author, Hayashi Razan (1583-1657), a Confucian physician of the third Shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604-1651), wrote the book to entertain the Shogun while he was ill. The author knew his audience intimately and could gauge his stories accordingly, just as in an oral tradition.”<sup>3</sup>

The collection of stories is Razan's Japanese translation of Chinese folktales. This might prompt some readers to wonder what value there is in “translating a translation,” translating Razan's Japanese tales into English instead of starting from the original Chinese. However, as this work is one of the first instances of the term *kaidan* appearing in Japan, it is important as it lays a literary foundation for Chinese supernatural tales in Japan. As we shall see in certain stories like “Junu Fun 淳于棼,” the original Chinese tale faded to the background while a new, wholly Japanese version of the same story took its place. As *Kaidan zensho* was responsible for marketing the tales in easily digestible print form to a wide audience, the work itself was influential on the development of traditional Japanese *kaidan* stories.

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<sup>2</sup> Reider, Noriko T., “‘The Appeal of *Kaidan*,’ Tales of the Strange,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 59, no. 2 (2000): 275.

<sup>3</sup> Reider, Noriko T., “The Emergence of ‘*Kaidan-shū*’ The Collection of Tales of the Strange and Mysterious in the Edo Period,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 60, no. 1 (2001): 81.

Reider notes that the work was published by a bookseller in Kyoto in 1703, forty-one years after Razan's death. This version was marketed to the public and enjoyed considerable success, boosted by the popularity of the *kaidan* genre at the time.<sup>4</sup> However, to understand why this work enjoyed success during the Edo period, one must first examine the political climate of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century was a major turning point in Japan's governmental structure. In the year 1600, the warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543 – 1616) won the battle of Sekigahara, the last major battle of the *Sengoku* (Warring States) period of Japan. The *Sengoku* period officially dates from 1467 to 1573, as 1573 is when the *shōgun* Ashikaga Yoshiaki (1537 – 1597), the prime military commander-in-chief of Japan, was driven out of his capital in Kyoto. However, the period between 1573 to 1600 was tumultuous with de-facto power of the country changing hands frequently. This started with the famed warlord Oda Nobunaga (1534 – 1582) taking control after ousting Ashikaga Yoshiaki. After Nobunaga's death in 1582, power passed to his successor, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537 – 1598). Hideyoshi died sixteen years later, allowing Tokugawa Ieyasu to seize control of the country. Finally, Ieyasu's success at the battle of Sekigahara marked the destruction of the last credible threat to Tokugawa's power, paving the way for him to become *shōgun* in 1603. This is why the battle of Sekigahara is considered the last battle of the warring states period, despite the fact that it officially ended in 1573 with Oda Nobunaga driving Ashikaga Yoshiaki out of Kyoto.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 95.



One problem that arose in the wake of warfare was legitimizing and stabilizing the new Tokugawa government, called the *bakufu* (幕府 literally “tent office”). After years of warfare, the *bakufu* needed to succeed at multiple difficult tasks. First of all, until this point in time the samurai class had been primarily a warrior class. With the last great battle occurring in 1600, the samurai simply had no more wars to fight and thus needed a new identity to legitimize their position as the upper class. Secondly, the *bakufu* also needed a way to stabilize their rule on ideological grounds. This is where Neo-Confucianism proved to be an ideal solution for the burgeoning government.

Fujiwara Seika (1561-1619) was a Neo-Confucian scholar and an acquaintance of Tokugawa Ieyasu before the *bakufu* had been established, and it is through Seika that Razan was introduced to Ieyasu. Using their influence over the Tokugawa family, Seika and Razan worked to convince the *bakufu* to support Neo-Confucianism in Japan “in the form of an officially favored think tank. In 1630 the *bakufu* provided funds for their buildings, centered on a ‘Sages Hall’ to honor Confucius that opened in 1633. In 1670, the Hayashi academy was officially recognized as a *shogunate* university.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, Neo-Confucianism gained considerable power in the Tokugawa regime. Neo-Confucian thinkers, the *jusha*, were appointed as advisors to the *daimyo* that governed the prefectures throughout Japan under the *shōgun*, just as Hayashi Razan himself was the Neo-Confucian scholar appointed to the *shōgun* in 1608.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gordon, Andrew, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 36.

<sup>6</sup> Blomberg, Catharina, *The Heart of the Warrior: Origins and Religious Background of the Samurai System in Feudal Japan*, (Sandgate, Folkestone, Kent: Japan Library, 1994), 157.

The reason Neo-Confucianism was more palatable to the *bakufu* than other religious ideologies, such as Buddhism and Shinto, is because Neo-Confucian scholars applied its teachings to secular ends. Andrew Gordon notes the following:

As secular scholars, the Hayashi came into conflict with Ieyasu and Iemitsu's Buddhist advisors. They disapproved of promoting Confucian learning beyond their monasteries. The Hayashi scholars succeeded in challenging the intellectual primacy of monasteries, but from the outset they faced challenges themselves from rival secular scholars and academies. In this process, much scholarship in Japan was brought into a secular realm in which the students were not only samurai but also well-to-do commoners. The Hayashi scholars and their rivals stressed the practical value of knowledge as they used Confucian ideas to support the state.<sup>7</sup>

There are two crucial elements to extract from this section. This first is that Razan and his followers used Neo-Confucianism to help solidify Tokugawa rule. The most striking way Neo-Confucianism did this was by implementing the idea of the “four categories of the people” into Japan's social structure. Timothy Brook, a sinologist and professor of history at the University of British Columbia notes that in China, “The hardship of trade was made heavier by the negative attitude toward commercial gain that Confucianism voiced. To be a merchant was to be in the bottommost and least respected of the ancient ‘four categories of the people’ (*simin*), which descended from gentry (*shi*) to peasant (*nong*) to artisan (*gong*) to merchant (*shang*).”<sup>8</sup> These four categories, which placed merchants at the bottom of the social hierarchy, laid the foundation for Japan's new social hierarchy, called the *shi nō kō shō* (士農工商) system. Each character represents one of the four major social classes listed in order of their social standing: *shi* 士

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 36.

<sup>8</sup> Brook, Timothy, *Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 72.

represents the samurai at the top of the hierarchy. Beneath them are *nō* 農, the farmers. *Kō* 工 represents the artisans, and *shō* 商, the merchants, are on the bottom. Merchants, the class that had most of the wealth, were technically the least influential of the four classes – the farmers and artisans were given higher positions in the hierarchy as their trade was based on creation and sustenance, not marketing. Importantly, this system solidified the samurai class as being the top of the social hierarchy. In equating the samurai class with the Chinese gentry, the system also effectively rebranded the samurai class – the former warrior class was now to become a moral and educated social elite. This idea is cemented in Razan’s adage that, “No true learning without arms and no true arms without learning,”<sup>9</sup> thus equating the warrior with the educated.

The second important element to extract from Gordon’s passage is that Neo-Confucian teachings did not limit themselves to only the upper class, as “well-to-do-commoners” were also the beneficiaries of Neo-Confucian education.

Contrary to the opinion of some scholars, Tokugawa Neo-Confucianism was not a teaching reserved only for the samurai class or limited in its appeal to that group alone. Rather, it spoke across class barriers to the needs of various groups in the society newly emerging into a peaceful era. Nor can Neo-Confucianism be summarily dismissed as merely an ideology of the elite designed to keep others in their place. Though some saw in it a means of buttressing a hierarchical order, Neo-Confucian teachings were not simply imposed by a higher authority. Instead, they developed on many levels of the society for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the appeal of the teachings themselves.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Blomberg, *The Heart of the Warrior*, 158.

<sup>10</sup> Tucker, Evelyn, *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism: The Life and Thought of Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714)*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 19.

While this passage downplays the elements of Neo-Confucianism that supported the Tokugawa regime, one should not take this to mean that these elements were not present. Instead, this passage shows that Neo-Confucianism had wide appeal, both supporting the new governmental structure while at the same time offering commoners such as merchants “a language with which to conceptualize their intellectual worth in terms of universalistic definitions of ‘virtue.’”<sup>11</sup> As a result, this meant that Hayashi Razan’s teachings and stories reached a wider audience than merely the Tokugawa elite.

Additionally, the Tokugawa period heralded remarkable change in Japanese book culture. Namely, printing technology had advanced to the point where books were becoming commercially viable during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

While printing was at first an avocation of the rich, commercial printing emerged with the adoption of inexpensive block printing. This commercial printing flourished because of the growing interest of the samurai class in cultural and educational topics. Such interest was by no means restricted to the samurai, however, for the townspeople (*chōnin*) contributed significantly to the rise of a popularly based culture.<sup>12</sup>

As books could now be printed and mass produced at reasonable cost for public consumption, new genres of literature emerged beyond purely religious texts. Fiction, parodies, and drama found a place within this new commercial market. One particular genre that was important to the Tokugawa regime was instructional primers. The term used to refer to these educational texts is *ōraimono*, which first appeared in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. However, “The number, variety, and scope of these texts increased throughout the Tokugawa period, indicating an ongoing expansion of education beyond the narrow

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 20.

circle of nobility and warrior elites to commoner classes.”<sup>13</sup> Moral guides and instructions for proper living, especially among commoners, must have been an attractive genre for the *bakufu*, who could now rely on printed text to provide societal structure.

Tocco mentions that:

In the early Tokugawa period, Japan’s moral texts for women owed a large debt to Chinese Confucian didactic classics. In both China and Japan, such texts included moralistic biographies and novels. Japanese authors adapted popular Chinese-language Confucian texts used to teach morals and ethics to Japanese boys into vernacular editions directed at a female audience.<sup>14</sup>

While Tocco is primarily concerned with educational texts as they apply to Tokugawa women, we also see that these texts applied to members of both genders across multiple classes. However, it would be a disservice to dismiss the feminine educational element too readily, as here we can see a connection to Razan’s *Kaidan zensho*. Asai Ryōi (1612 – 1691) compiled one of the most famous collections of *kaidan* stories, called *Otogi bōko* (Hand Puppets) in 1666. The preface from *Otogi bōko* states: “Generally, [sages] do not talk about the supernatural; however, if it is unavoidable, [they] narrate and write about it in order to show a model...[The tale] will make women and children mend their ways and will become an expedient means [for ensuring] correct behavior.”<sup>15</sup> His collection of *kaidan* stories is thus also a form of Tokugawan educational primer. In the same way, Hayashi Razan’s translation of stories in *Kaidan zensho* is an educational primer on Neo-Confucian morality.

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<sup>13</sup> Tocco, Martha, “Norms and Texts for Women’s Education in Tokugawa Japan” in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 198.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Reider, “The Emergence of ‘*Kaidan-shū*,’” 85.

Razan's translations of supernatural Chinese tales encode messages of morality and offer instruction in proper modes of living through enjoyable fiction. Many of the later *kaidan* tales come from Chinese Buddhist stories, such as Asai Ryōi's *Otogi bōko*, but it's important to understand that, as a leading figure in the development of Neo-Confucianism, Hayashi Razan's *Kaidan zensho* tales have a Neo-Confucian basis and morality. Because the tales do not seem ostensibly didactic, this may have made them more palatable to the growing consumer market for literature during the Tokugawa period. Furthermore, books from China were considered to be in vogue in this period:

During the Edo period, Chinese books were a major element in a secular intellectual expansion unmatched in any previous period of Japanese history. No doubt this is partly due to the fact that the Tokugawa government adopted Neo-Confucianism as the official ideology to buttress its political control. Kōda Rohan writes that with the appearance of Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728), an influential Confucian scholar, the influence of Ming Confucianism became extremely popular, to the extent that some Japanese adopted Chinese names. Similarly, Yamaguchi Takeshi states that 'Chinese culture and books were revered [in the Edo period]...For the people living in Edo Japan, China was unknown, profound, and remote. There was a general feeling that China's many mysteries were not easily rationalized or comprehended by Japan's standard of reality.'<sup>16</sup>

While Chinese books were popular and held an exotic appeal, not everyone in Tokugawa Japan was literate. One assumes that illiteracy would limit the available market for Chinese stories, but the rise of popular entertainment in the Tokugawa period also created demand for an entertainment service industry – professional storytellers performed the tales, allowing even the illiterate to be exposed to literary culture. *Kaidan* tales in particular held considerable appeal: "As storytelling grew in its popularity, it became integrated with popular events, including village gatherings and religious events such as

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<sup>16</sup> Reider, "The Appeal of *Kaidan*," 274.

funerary watches and a ritual named *kōshinmachi* 庚申待, a nightlong vigil during which no one should sleep. Tales about the strange, weird, and/or frightening – *kaidan* – served to keep people awake particularly well on these occasions.”<sup>17</sup>

These factors all contributed to *Kaidan zensho*’s popularity and acceptance in the Tokugawa period – both on a popular level and on a governmental level. The rise of Neo-Confucianism as a dominant ideological force in the 1600s contributed to *Kaidan zensho*’s success. It was popular among commoners for several reasons: Chinese tales were in vogue, and even the illiterate could enjoy the stories through the performances of professional storytellers. Because *Kaidan zensho* tales encoded moral messages with a Neo-Confucian basis, the commoners who accepted Neo-Confucian teachings as a means to validate and guide their lives could use the *kaidan* tales as a kind of Confucian moral primer. This aspect was important for acceptance among the *bakufu* – seeking to establish stability, the *bakufu* embraced Neo-Confucianism as it offered both secular, practical teachings and a way to legitimize the samurai’s high social standing while rigorously separating the commoners into clearly defined, rigid social classes. As the *Kaidan zensho* Neo-Confucian morality tales enforced these ideals, there was little reason for the *bakufu* to impede its propagation in society. Thus, Razan’s *Kaidan zensho*, likely the first literary work to feature the word *kaidan* in Japan’s history, laid the groundwork for supernatural *kaidan* stories in Japan.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 267.

### 1.3 *Kaidan* and *Kaidan zensho*

The term *kaidan* and its translation offer some room for debate. While it is possible to translate *kaidan* as a Japanese form of “ghost story,” this would not be a wholly accurate representation of the genre – ghost stories as we know them often inspire fright in the listener with tales of supernatural phenomena, frequently featuring ghosts as the main vehicle for inducing fright. *Kaidan* often contain many of the same elements as ghost stories such as depictions of *yūrei* (ghosts), but it would be difficult to identify these stories as frightening. Noriko T. Reider of Miami University translates the term *kaidan* as “narrative of the strange,”<sup>18</sup> and one must note the emphasis is on the strange instead of the frightening. These stories often eschew traditional narrative devices, such as the three-act structure. Instead, they offer snippets of the strange and unusual, often omitting explanations or motivations for the characters’ actions in the stories.

The term *kaidan* remains in modern usage owing largely to the works of Lafcadio Hearn, a European-born American writer who originally came to Japan on a newspaper commission, but eventually became a professor of literature at the Imperial University in Tokyo.<sup>19</sup> In 1903, Hearn drafted *Kwaidan*, a collection of Japanese folktales he had gathered across the country. Masaki Kobayashi adapted Hearn’s tales into the award winning 1965 movie of the same name, helping to solidify the term as a link to the classically strange. While these popular *kaidan* works are products of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the history of *kaidan* stretches farther back than that. As previously discussed, *Kaidan*

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<sup>18</sup> Reider, “The Emergence of ‘*Kaidan-shū*,’” 80.

<sup>19</sup> “Lafcadio Hearn,” *Encyclopedia.com*, [http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Lafcadio\\_Hearn.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Lafcadio_Hearn.aspx) (accessed September 8, 2014).



“emerged as a distinct genre only during the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868).”<sup>20</sup> There is a hint of *kaidan*’s age found in the Romanization (rendering Japanese characters for *kaidan* in Latin script). The “w” in the Romanization of Kobayashi’s movie and Hearn’s collection of stories is pronounced silently and it comes from the archaic system of Japanese spelling. In *hiragana*, one of Japan’s two phonemic orthographies, this is classically spelled “くわいだん (*kuwaidan*),” with the “ku” and “wa” contracted together to produce a “ka” sound. In modern Japanese orthography this is rendered as “かいだん (*kaidan*),” but the titles of Hearn’s book and Kobayashi’s film retain the classical rendering of the name. Both of these works are from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the spelling indicates that the tales themselves are ostensibly products of Japan’s premodern period. Kobayashi’s spelling of the term with a “w,” even after the Japanese script reforms, was surely an intentional move to evoke the feeling of a classic tale.

While *kaidan* are popularly known today thanks to the influential media mentioned above, its emergence in Tokugawa Japan owes itself to many factors. As we have already discussed, the genre became popular alongside commercial book printing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with a little help from professional storytellers. Additionally, it may have gained popularity thanks in part to a Buddhist practice. The game *hyaku monogatari kaidankai* (百物語怪談会, *meeting of a hundred strange tales*) was one of the triggers that led directly to the development of *kaidan*’s popularity in Edo Japan. This game came into vogue during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A group of people would sit in a room lit with one hundred candles. Each player in this game would take turns telling a

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<sup>20</sup> Reider, “The Emergence of ‘*Kaidan-shū*,’” 86.

*kaidan* story and extinguish one of the candles in the room. *Hyaku monogatari kaidankai* was functionally similar to a séance; after one hundred stories had been told and one hundred candles had been extinguished, the snuffing of the final candle purportedly invited supernatural activity. The origins of this game are unknown, but Reider identifies a likely source. “These gatherings may have originated during the medieval period in *hyakuza hōdan* (one hundred Buddhist stories), a practice of telling one hundred Buddhist stories over one hundred days, which was widely believed among Buddhists to induce miracles.”<sup>21</sup> Thus she suggests that Japanese *hyaku monogatari kaidankai* was likely an adaptation of a Buddhist practice, with the intent switched from producing religious miracles to evoking supernatural phenomena.

Using *hyaku monogatari kaidankai* as the vehicle to tell scary stories, the popularity of *kaidan* stories began to blossom in the Tokugawa era alongside the burgeoning print market. Many of the first *kaidan* stories told in Japan were not actually Japanese in origin. As previously mentioned, the tales of *Kaidan zensho* itself originated in China. While *kaidan* and many such strange tales may have been consumed as a product of entertainment, one must take into account that these stories weren’t merely written with the intention to amuse. As they were often translations of Chinese morality tales, they had an element of didacticism. For example, let us examine once more Asai Ryōi’s *Otogi bōko*, in which his preface states the tales have didactic purpose.<sup>22</sup> Asai Ryōi included this preface because “he was a passionate proponent of Buddhist

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 88.

teaching,”<sup>23</sup> and thus it reveals the original didactic purpose of the Chinese *kaidan* tales – to enforce virtue and encourage women and children to “mend their ways.” A focus on enlightening women is particularly interesting. One sees that some of these stories reprimand female ghosts for their behavior as a means of encouraging good conduct. For example, in the story “*Botan dōrō*” (Peony Lantern), a priest summons the two female ghosts and punishes them for their behavior.

“A powerful Taoist summons the officials of the underworld and has them bring the ghosts before him. After being flogged, each ghost writes a confession of his/her wrongdoings. The Taoist then makes a long speech on the handing down of divine punishment to wrongdoers before promptly sentencing them both to hell. The ethical or moral aspect of the Chinese tale is thus unquestionable.”<sup>24</sup>

This story, known as “*Mudan dengji*” in Chinese, with its focus on condemning the actions of the morally unjust, here serves as an example of the moralistic themes found in the *kaidan* genre. This story shows that the original Chinese supernatural tales served as models for human behavior.

However, Reider asserts that the original Chinese *kaidan* translations had their original didactic purposes excised in the Japanese versions as “supernatural tales, in effect, became secularized as they became increasingly available to the masses.”<sup>25</sup> Upon reading Hayashi Razan’s *Kaidan zensho*, this assessment appears superficially true at first glance. Razan’s collection of tales do not read like didactic stories at all: they are often written in a terse, matter-of-fact manner detailing who does what and where, but without the context of “why,” and they lack explicit moralizing. Since many of the original

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 87.

Chinese tales translated into *kaidan* were more obvious in religious morals, such as with the ghost whipper in *Otogi bōko* described earlier, one might argue that the didactic purpose of *Kaidan zensho* tales was lost in the translation process. However, while Razan has retained many elements of the original Chinese story, such as retaining their names and locations (albeit written using Japanese pronunciations), by stripping the stories to their basic elements he has made them more universal, and thus more palatable for both his immediate audience (a sick, bed-ridden *shōgun*) and his eventual readers.

Despite the stripped-down nature of the translations, it would be incorrect to say that the didactic elements have been completely excised. They merely require interpretive analysis and some comparison with other versions of the same tale to extract the moral message hidden between the lines. One must also remember that one of the reasons Neo-Confucianism attained such influence in Tokugawa Japan is because of how its teachings could be applied to secular ends. To that end, the stories could not appear to be too heavily entrenched in the religious realm: if they appeared to concern themselves only with matters of the spirit, they would have less practical use to Tokugawa readers. Thus, the stories seem not to be didactic, but once one attempts to extract these meanings, one discovers certain patterns in the stories Razan has translated: these stories use animals as narrative tools to illustrate human moral messages using a Confucian basis. The next chapter discusses the use of animals as a tool to convey moral messages in *Kaidan zensho*.

## CHAPTER 2

### ANIMALS AS MORAL DEVICES

#### 2.1 Animals as Lesser Beings

To understand the use of animals to convey moral messages in *Kaidan zensho*, one must first understand that animals in these stories are ultimately considered lesser beings than humans. In his essay arguing that Confucian modes of thought are inherently speciesist, Dennis Arjo argues:

“The moral development that was identified with human development above can only occur within a thoroughly human world, a shared social and cultural world in which opportunities to develop human relationships is paramount. Simple facts of biology give us *prima facie* reason to think that our relationships with other humans will be overwhelmingly more important and substantial—more constitutive of who we are—than any relationships we might form with other animals. Our degree of psychological interpretation will surely be greater among other humans, and our need to be able to forge relationships that are mutually beneficial and productive will likewise point to our common humanity. As Confucius himself said, ‘We cannot run with the birds and beasts. Am I not among the people of this world? If not them with whom should I associate?’ Together these claims provide a *prima facie* reason for us to see humans beings in a unique moral light vis-à-vis other animals.”<sup>26</sup>

As a preeminent Neo-Confucian scholar himself, it is no surprise that the stories Razan translated highlighted the moral inferiority of animals when compared to human beings. By understanding that animals are considered inferior moral beings in the context of these stories, one understands that animals are used in one of two deliberate narrative choices.

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<sup>26</sup> Arjo, Dennis, “The Confucian Self and Our Duties to Animals,” (Paper presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> National Meeting of the Asian Studies Development Program, Nashville, TN, 2006), 14.

First of all, there are stories that feature animals that either pretend to be human in some way, or are merely content to act like themselves.

“Whether serpents or other creatures, non-human animals are beings familiar enough to people to make for intelligible and engaging storytelling, but at the same time different enough to be endowed with a strong symbolic potency. This symbolism sows a deeper meaning between the lines of the tales, and often functions in a didactic way.”<sup>27</sup>

Koopmans-de Bruijn claims that animals are already imbued with symbolic meaning inherent to the culture and that the reader can draw from this to understand the story. In practical terms, this means that animals that appear in *kaidan* stories are usually symbolic representations of certain types of people or groups of people. For example, Koopmans-de Bruijn focuses on serpents in her work, which she says “function as potent symbols of fertility,”<sup>28</sup> which is to say the serpent is often used as a symbol of the female, which we shall see evidence of later.

If the animal in the *kaidan* story is not disguised as a human, then the animal often appears in the story after a human is transformed into one. The transition from human to animal is always a loss of status, and is frequently used as punishment for immoral behavior.

However, the most crucial aspect of animal use in these stories, aside from inherent cultural understandings as to what the animal may represent, is how they serve to contrast the human characters in the same story. As the reader understands that animals are morally inferior creatures compared to humans and they are not expected to

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<sup>27</sup> Koopmans-de Bruijn, Ria, “Fabled Liaisons: Serpentine Spouses in Japanese Folktales,” in *JAPANimals: History and Culture in Japan’s Animal Life*, ed. Gregory M. Pflugfelder and Brett L. Walker (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan, 2005), 81.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 80.

act in moral ways, the moral crux of the story lies in the actions of the protagonist, usually a human male. In this way, the animals themselves, the supernatural elements in *kaidan* stories, serve as foils to convey moral messages.

Unlike Asai Ryōi's *Otogi bōko*, Hayashi Razan's *Kaidan zensho* does not include any preface that explicitly details the purpose of the work. However, one may glean its instructional qualities through the content itself, which is the focus of the remainder of Chapter 2. The next sections will show that animals exist to show a contrast between human conduct and animal conduct. While the animals are representative of certain types of people, the actual human characters are the ones to which one looks for proper moral conduct, and are thus the conduits to the story's moral. To explore these concepts, the following sections will focus on four particular moral themes that emerge in the *kaidan* stories: the positive act of benevolence, the negative act of ingratitude, the danger of women with power, and the acceptance of impermanence.

## 2.2 Benevolence Rewarded

First among the four themes, we shall here examine the concept of benevolence in *Kaidan zensho*. This is a key element in Razan's work and one of the four sprouts of moral virtue found in Confucian thought, introduced by the Confucian philosopher Mencius (4<sup>th</sup> Century BC).<sup>29</sup> Benevolence here is used as an overarching term to describe the positive way in which one acts towards one's lessers. The beneficiary, the lesser, is most often represented by an animal while the benefactor may be a king or governmental worker in a high position. One may question why compassion towards animals is considered a virtue, so one must look towards the teachings of Mencius for a possible explanation:

Exemplary persons grudge and show concern [*ai* 愛] for living things, but they do not enter into associated humanity with them. They enter into associated humanity with the general population [*min* 民], but they do not feel family affection [*qin* 親] for them. They feel family affection for their family members, but only associated humanity for other people [*ren* 人]. They show associated humanity for other people, but are only sparing and concerned [*ai*] with living creatures. (*Mencius* 7A:45)<sup>30</sup>

In this section, Mencius does say that while it is true that only humanity can engage in “associated humanity” with itself, all living things including animals, are deserving of a measure of concern. Therefore, in these *kaidan* tales characters who act in compassionate ways are usually rewarded with provincial government positions, or they become kings whose line rules for generations. Kings in *kaidan* stories are less interesting from a morality standpoint because they are often wise and just by default,

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<sup>29</sup> Arjo, “The Confucian Self and Our Duties to Animals,” 10.

<sup>30</sup> Behuniak, James, *Mencius on Becoming Human* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 156.



likely as a result of their divine origins. Two stories in my translation of *Kaidan zensho* center on kings, “Kitsufun” (Chapter 3.2, pg. 70) and “King En” (Chapter 3.5, pg. 77), and both monarchs in these stories have supernatural origins.

### 2.2.1 “Kitsufun” and “King En”

“Kitsufun” (Chapter 3.2, pg. 70) focuses on Emperor Jingen (Tuoba Liwei), the first emperor of Wei.<sup>31</sup> A celestial maiden bestows a child on a man and says, “Your line shall reign as emperors for generations.” This tale doesn’t explain what Emperor Jingen accomplished, yet he did eventually become ruler of the Northern Wei dynasty, which was geographically comprised of Hohhot, Datong, and Luoyang. One must conclude that the reason for his long lasting line and his eventual success was owed to his divine origin. This story implies that kings and others are in positions of power simply because it is the natural way of things – that they are somehow divinely chosen.

One should view this idea in the context of Neo-Confucianism of 17<sup>th</sup> century Japan. Towards Neo-Confucianism, “The interest of the shoguns was mostly in attaining some semisacralization or mythologization of their status.”<sup>32</sup> One can see elements of this in a story like “Kitsufun,” in which kings have attained “semisacralization” through no action of their own. Stories like this directly benefitted the governing powers of Japan at the time by justifying their lofty positions as both divine and natural.

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<sup>31</sup> Chen, Sanping, *Multicultural China in the Early Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 185.

<sup>32</sup> Eisenstadt, S. N., *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 198.

Similarly, “King En,” (Chapter 3.5, pg. 77) also known as King Yen, shows us the origin of a king born from an egg. The story in *Kaidan zensho* is disarmingly short and leaves much of his history unknown. Instead, the story seems to focus more on King En’s dog Kokusō, whose name uses the character for swan, *koku* (鵞). Kokusō finds an egg in a river and brings it to an old woman to hatch. The egg hatches, and King En is born from the egg. After many years, Kokusō dies and is revealed to be a dragon in the disguise of a dog.

One sees the connection between the dog and the egg – the dog is acting as the “swan” that hatches it. Although Razan’s version of this tale uses the Japanese character for “swan” in the dog’s name, it is a little different in the original Chinese, but one still sees the same connection being forged. “The name of the dog, Ku-ts’ang, which means Wild Goose in the Blue Sky, connects the dog ornithologically with the divine egg, a connection with divinity, too, when the dog metamorphoses into a dragon, a creature of the skies.”<sup>33</sup> The dragon is a mythical, divine figure, and as it acted as a caretaker for King En as a wild goose does for its eggs, the origin of King En is linked inexorably to the divine, thus also establishing a divine origin.

As a result of this, Kokusō represents an anomaly in our investigation of animals in *kaidan* stories. This dog is one of the only animals that does not seem to represent a human in some way. The other animal stories feature an animal that transforms into a human, a human that transforms into an animal, or an animal that has some form of human characteristic. This dog, however, is a dragon disguised as a dog which is an

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<sup>33</sup> Birrel, Anne, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 126.

animal-to-animal transformation. Therefore, one must argue that the dog does not represent a kind of human, but instead serves primarily to forge a connection between King En and the divine. However, while the dog does not represent a human, its presence in the story still exists to highlight the moral actions of our male protagonist.

Crucially, and most relevant to our analysis of compassion in Razan's *kaidan* tales, after its death King En respectfully buries Kokusō, showing a degree of compassion toward the animal. It may be argued that he was only showing the proper respect for a divine being, but the stories surrounding King En imply that his compassion played a large role in his success as king. Unfortunately, this element is obscured in Hayashi Razan's translation: the version he presents does mention King En "grew to be both just and wise with a compassionate heart," but his version of the tale ends when Kokusō dies. Other versions of King En's legend expand on his actions after that event:

"When King Yen had established his kingdom, his mercy and justice became well known. He conceived the idea of making a journey by boat to the sovereign state [of Chou], so he cut a watercourse between the states of Ch'en and Tsai. While the canal work was in progress, they found a scarlet bow and a scarlet arrow. He considered this to mean that he had won special favor from Heaven. So he took as the name of his reign Kung [Bow] and proclaimed himself King Yen of Hsu. The nobles of the Yangtze and Huai river areas all submitted to his authority."<sup>34</sup>

It is thus implied that the reason the heavens took favor on him and all the nobles submitted to him was because of the compassion he displayed – favor from the heavens most likely the result of his honoring one of their members via respectful burial. The moral message of King En's tale thus becomes more transparent from the expanded version of this tale – benevolence leads to rewards, both divine and worldly.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 127.

### 2.2.2 “I Shikuken”

Showing compassion for dogs is an element that is replicated in another story in *Kaidan zensho*, “I Shikuken,” (Chapter 3.6, pg. 78). In this story a man wisely shows compassion to a canine that is able to stand upright, while securing himself privileged status. The dog acts like a human and walks on two legs in Shikuken’s household. The other members of his home urge him to kill the dog, saying it is an ill omen. However, he counters by claiming, “It is not misfortune to act like a man.” Later, the members of his household find the dog wearing Shikuken’s *kamuri* cap, also interpreting that as bad luck. The fact that a dog behaving in this manner is seen as a sign of ill portent likely has its roots in another short story found in the *Sōushénjì*, a Chinese compilation of supernatural tales from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and one of the texts Razan translated from for *Kaidan zensho*. Here I shall quote the full story, “Dog Wearing Cap Runs Trough the Palace Gate (*Jué yāo gǒu guān chū cháo mén* 厥妖狗冠出朝門)” before returning to Razan’s translations.

#### Dog Wearing Cap Runs Through the Palace Gate (6,129)

In the time of Chao-ti, the Prince of Ch’ang-yi, Liu Ho, saw a great white dog with no tail wearing a *fang-shan* cap. During the Hsi-p’ing reign period, they used to make sport in the palace by putting a cap and a seal-ribbon on dogs. One of these burst forth from the palace and ran into the Capital Construction Offices. All who witnessed it were startled severely. Ching Fang says in his *Commentary on the Changes*: “If the ruler be not upright or his ministers contemplate sedition, a dog wearing a cap running out of the palace gates will be the baleful sign.”<sup>35</sup>

While the final quotation by Ching Fang at the end of this tale indicates that “a dog wearing a cap indicates lazy officials,” is the only moral to be extracted from the story,

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<sup>35</sup> Gan, Bao, *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 71.

this deserves further analysis. On a surface level, the dog wearing an official's cap is a problem that arose due to the ministers' negligence: because the ministers were goofing off instead of attending to business, they dressed up the dog, representing a waste of time. The dapperly dressed canine is a symbol of them shirking their duties. However, it is no accident that a cap-clad dog is the primary visual motif of the story. As Ching Fang warns, "If the ruler be not upright or his ministers contemplate sedition, a dog wearing a cap running out of the palace gates will be the baleful sign."<sup>36</sup> The dog he mentions is metaphorical - the dog in an official's cap represents the officials themselves. Ching Fang is warning that negligent officials are no better than dogs in human clothing. Thus, in our discussion of animals as representations of humans, the dog in this case is used to portray foolish leadership and a lazy bureaucracy.

This is likely the tradition the members of the household in "I Shikuken" are basing their fears on. While I interpret the dog wearing a cap to be a metaphor for incompetent government officials in that story, it appears the characters in "I Shikuken" merely interpret a dog acting strangely and wearing hats as simply a bad omen without regard to the social context. In a story about a dog acting like a human, the strangest part is how Shikuken reacts to the supernatural. When the dog stands on two legs, Shikuken explains it away by saying, "It is not misfortune to act like a man." When the dog is found wearing a cap, Shikuken claims he must have "accidentally brushed against his *kamuri*," putting no blame on the dog itself. Most incredibly the dog attempts to cook in the kitchen and Shikuken justifies it by saying how the dog must have seen all his household hard at work in the fields, so it tried to cook in their place. This final remark

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

must have been an example of willful ignorance on Shikuken's part. While the other two incidents may have been explained as happenstance, the final act is too mysterious to disregard wholly. Since all his household was clamoring for the dog's death, attempting to explain away the dog's actions as natural shows an act of conscious will to show compassion for the dog, as this was the only way he could keep the dog from being killed.

The ending to the story gives the events context and meaning, but this is also where the meaning changes in different versions of the story. Razan's translation has a small epilogue to explain the events: "From the *Fūzokutsū* (風俗通). In the words of the ancients it is said, 'Should you encounter something unnatural that makes you suspicious, leave it to its own devices and it will end on its own.'" The moral therefore explains that it is proper for a man in an important position to disregard matters of the supernatural. The epilogue asserts these matters will sort themselves out and thus are not worth the time or attention of a learned man. This mirrors Asai Ryōi's earlier claim that, "Generally, [sages] do not talk about the supernatural; however, if it is unavoidable, [they] narrate and write about it in order to show a model."<sup>37</sup>

However, when one compares Razan's version to other versions of the story, the intended message convolutes slightly. Here we compare Razan's tale, taken from the *Fūzokutsū*, to another version of the tale found in the *Sōushénjì*. Before the concluding paragraph, Razan's version of the story contains the following: "After some time had passed, the dog passed away from natural causes. No curse befell the Shikuken household in the end. As everyone expected, Shikuken rose in status." However, the version from the *Sōushénjì* reads as follows: "A few days later the dog suddenly dropped

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<sup>37</sup> Reider, "The Emergence of *Kaidan-shū*," 88.

dead. While it lived and afterward, Li Shu-chung's household never had the least trouble with anomalies."<sup>38</sup> Noting that Li Shu-chung is I Shikuken in Razan's version, the difficulty comes in the phrase "While it lived and afterward, Li Shu-chung's household never had the least trouble with anomalies." For this I have written "No curse befell the Shikuken household in the end," which in the classical Japanese is *tsui ni tatari nashi* (ツ井ニタヘリナシ), which may be also translated simply as "There was no curse in the end." However, this translation does not capture the same meaning as DeWoskin and Crump's translation from the *Sōushénjì*: for them, leaving the dog alone was a meritorious action that earned a supernatural reward. Because Li Shu-chung acted in the correct manner, his household was spared from any sort of supernatural phenomena from then on, which is to say the dog's death protected his household from curses. In Razan's version, however, it is implied that the dog itself was the curse and when it died, the curse was finally lifted. While it is true that I Shikuken's status was raised after the incident, and it is implied that it was his wisdom in dealing with the supernatural that merited his climb up the social ladder, the version of the story found in the *Sōushénjì* included a supernatural reward as opposed to a secular one. The final line from the Razan's version also implies that the moral is to ignore supernatural events and they will resolve themselves, but one may see the version from the *Sōushénjì* shows the protagonist's kindness toward the dog protected him from supernatural events.

Linking "I Shikuken" to the notion of benevolence, much like King En before him, I Shikuken treated the canine with compassion. When the other members of his

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<sup>38</sup> Gan, *In Search of the Supernatural*, 226.

household clamored for the dog's death, he did not give in. The key lies in the actions of the dog: in each incident, the dog attempted to act as a human. For the final event, the dog attempted to cook which I Shikuken explains as a means of helping out the household. Importantly, the dog took no action that impeded the humans in any way. In fact, it looked as though the dog was attempting to help his human compatriots. Thus his actions link to the concept that the dog was either trying to be human, or trying to serve humans. As Shikuken himself explains, "It is not misfortune to act like a man." Shikuken recognizes that the dog is a lesser animal, and furthermore, he believes that the dog realizes it is a lesser being. This is why it seeks to improve itself by "becoming human," an act Shikuken believes is meritorious. The other members of Shikuken's household are disconcerted by the animal's desire to cross species, but judging by Shikuken's actions, he finds it completely natural that a beast would want to better itself to the level where it becomes human. Comparing Shikuken to the dog, Shikuken is a "human." Not only in the literal sense, but in the comparatively superior sense as well: He already is a wealthy man with his own household complete with servants. The dog is an "animal," which in this case is equal to an inferior.

Metaphorically speaking, the dog is a person that perceives his own lack and attempts to remedy it. The story implies it is only natural for "animals," that is low-ranking have-nots, to emulate their betters. Shikuken is sympathetic to this desire, and for his sympathy, he is rewarded with further prestige. It is important to note that the animal character gets no such prestige – its only reward is the release of death. This is because the story is not about the dog at all: it is about recognizing the meritorious compassion displayed by I Shikuken and showing that such behavior is to be rewarded.



### 2.2.3 “Fish Clothes”

Similar to “I Shikuken” in its message of showing compassion towards lessers is the tale “Fish Clothes,” (Chapter 3.12, pg. 90). In this story, a civil servant named Setsu I magically and mysteriously transforms into a fish on a hot day. His human body remains at home in a comatose state and fellow coworkers tend to him. Though he is only partially aware of his transformation, he sets out on a whirlwind tour of the world in a dream-like haze. After some time has passed, he grows hungry and his animal instincts conflict with his human knowledge. Chō Kan, a fisherman who fishes near Setsu I’s office, dangles tempting bait. Setsu I muses, “I am a public official, and even if I did swallow the bait, there’s no way Chō Kan would kill me.” Considering Setsu I is currently in the guise of a fish, the reader can clearly see Setsu I’s flawed thinking: there is no way the fisherman will recognize the civil servant as human. However, Setsu I’s thought process establishes a baseline for the important characters in this story.

The narrator himself is a public servant, as are the many people who care for him. He believes his status as a public servant is eminently recognizable by even fishermen and that it places him in a position of superiority. However, despite his position, he is fished up by a fellow human who fails to recognize him since he is in his piscine form. In Razan’s translation, much confusion springs from copious name dropping, including Chō Kan, Chō Hitsu, I Satsu, Sū Hō, and Rai Sai, without any attempt to explain who these characters are. Another version of the tale, this one from a Japanese collection of Children’s stories from China compiled in 2003, helpfully explains that these characters are actually fellow civil servants and a Setsu I’s acquaintances, whom are also the same

ones taking care of his human body.<sup>39</sup> In a darkly humorous chain of events he is carried back to his place of employment and gains a fish-eyed view of the events that transpire there when the public servants believe no one is looking.

“We entered a gate, and I saw that those inside were playing a game of ‘Go,’ but when I called to them I received no reply. I heard someone say, ‘The fish has arrived!’ After that, we climbed a set of stairs and I saw Sū Hō and Rai Sai in the middle of gambling. I Satsu was eating a peach. Everyone seemed glad that their fish had arrived.”

The public servants are playing *go*, an old Chinese game of strategy, gambling, and are generally loafing off and enjoying themselves. Throughout the entire scene the narrator makes frenzied proclamations asserting his humanity which fall on the deaf ears of his coworkers. Finally his head is chopped off by the cook which causes the narrator’s spirit to return to his human body. The narrator conveys his story to those gathered, and a quick epilogue highlights the karmic results of each character’s action.

“Until the end of their days, Chō Kan never fished again, Chō Hitsu never took another fish, the I Shō office never asked for another one, and Sū Hō, Rai Sai, and I Satsu never ate a fish dish ever again. After he recovered from his illness, Setsu I went on to serve as Kayō’s prime minister.”

What is the reader to make of this epilogue? The barrage of names all refer to the public servants that served a role in the beheading and consumption of Setsu I, the narrator, in his fish form. Each one takes a vow to never act in such an atrocious manner again while the one who underwent the entire ordeal is elevated to a powerful position. At first blush, it makes little sense for the public servants to swear off fishing, asking for fish, or eating

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<sup>39</sup> Matsueda, Shigeo 松枝 茂夫, *Chūgoku no dōwa* 中国の童話 (Machida: Tamagawa daigaku shuppanbu 玉川大学出版部, 2003), 47.

fish. These are all entirely normal activities without any obvious moral implications, so why should the public servants feel guilty for partaking in such activities?

One must first return to Setsu I's earlier comment that he is a public servant that would not be killed by a fisherman. This underlies his belief that, naturally, a public servant is human and in no way would a fellow human kill him. Understanding the fish symbolism proves enlightening for the meaning of the story. C.A.S. Williams in *The Encyclopedia of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives* offers some insight concerning fish imagery: "The fish is symbolically employed as the emblem of wealth or abundance, on account of the similarity in the pronunciation of the words *yū* (魚), fish, and *yū* (餘), superfluity, and also because fish are extremely plentiful in Chinese waters."<sup>40</sup> Between wealth and abundance, the latter proves to be the more relevant symbol for "Fish Clothes." Williams claims the fish is "an important part in the domestic economy of the Chinese. Together with rice it constitutes the principal staple of their daily food, and fishing has for this reason formed a prominent occupation of the people from the most ancient times."<sup>41</sup> The act of fishing itself is representative of the Chinese layperson, which in turn forms the backbone of the Chinese economy. Finally, "According to the Po Ku T'u, fish are compared to a king's subjects, and the art of angling to that of ruling. Thus an unskilled angler will catch no fish, nor will a tactless prince win over his people."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Williams, C A S., *Encyclopedia of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives: an Alphabetical Compendium of Legends and Beliefs as Reflected in the Manners and Customs of the Chinese Throughout History* (New York, NY: Julian Press, Inc., 1961), 183.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 183.

Considering this evidence, one sees that the fish as it appears in “Fish Clothes” serves as symbol for the common Chinese layperson, not merely the animal it first appears to be.

One must therefore interpret “Fish Clothes” as a story about class structure. The human characters are all civil servants, but Setsu I spends time as a fish and travels to the far ends of the earth. In doing so he is accumulating worldly experience that the other servants do not have. One may presume that the fish is representative of the 90% of the Chinese population that were not significantly a part of the civil service examination pool.<sup>43</sup> Civil service examinations were the principal method Chinese citizens could amass influence and rise to positions of status. As a method of class distinction, those employed in civil service were placed higher in the social hierarchy than their commoners, and in this story, that divide is made clear between human and non-human, civil servant and fish.

In his piscine guise, Setsu I cries for help and asks the civil servants to listen to him. None can hear or understand him. His plight is exacerbated by the careless manner in which the civil servants seem to enjoy themselves through their gambling and games. Not only can they not hear Setsu I and not only is the lifestyle between human and animal completely unequal, the civil servants unknowingly commit murder. This story is a criticizing fable, a warning to those with power against negligence. The upper class cannot hear the plight of the lower classes, represented by Setsu I, the fish who travelled far and wide in his dream-haze. The civil servants’ carefree attitude indirectly causes the

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<sup>43</sup> Elman, Benjamin A, “Civil Service Examinations,” in *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China*, ed. Linsun Cheng (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2009), 405

death of the fish and therefore metaphorically causes the death of the lower classes. Thus, the lower classes suffer through the negligence of the upper class.

This story in particular served as a model for behavior for the upper class. When the story proclaims the civil servants never “ate, asked, nor angled for fish” ever again, it likely means that the civil servants did not take the lower classes for granted as they had previously. Setsu I, on the other hand, spent an extended amount of time in metaphorical “fish clothes,” i.e. in the shoes of the lower class. He experienced their plight and felt their powerlessness, and he experienced the danger inherent in tasks he had originally taken for granted, such as securing a meal. He ascends to a position of provincial power in the epilogue of the story, indicating there is reward inherent in having an empathetic viewpoint. His journey in fish clothes thus granted him the wisdom to be a meritorious leader, and the story implies it is the newfound compassion he has earned that garners him a higher social position. Compassion and understanding towards the animal, the lesser, is the morally correct action valorized by this tale. Stories in which the upper class behaves in a morally proper manner must have been attractive to Hayashi Razan. One of his tasks in establishing Neo-Confucianism in Japan was to successfully transition the samurai class from warriors to learned elites. Stories like “Setsu I” illustrate proper behavior for Razan’s students.

One key point in regards to the human/animal interaction in *kaidan* stories is that while it is true the animals are often clear representations of types of humans, they also serve the important functions of clearly dividing human behavior from animal behavior. The reason the civil servants were “punished” in this story – a term used loosely since they escaped most consequences, but were not rewarded like Setsu I – was because they

acted in a manner unbefitting their position. Setsu I displayed compassion towards the fish, which is to say the lives of the underclass, and thus was rewarded with a class position. This also holds true for I Shikuken and King En: in all of these stories, the human superior was rewarded for showing compassion to their animal inferiors.

However, the animals are an entirely secondary focus in these stories. The focus of the tales and the morals are all centered on the human characters. As a fish, Setsu I engages in appropriately piscine behavior, such as swimming around the various corners of the world and taking bait, an unavoidable action because it falls within the boundaries of animal nature. Setsu I cannot be blamed for exhibiting poor judgment for taking the bait at this point because he acted appropriately for a fish. Instead, the blame falls on the fisherman himself and the rest of the characters who unthinkingly prepare the fish for their meal. These stories thus serve to criticize unthinking behavior while applauding Setsu I's eventual compassion, and thus in effect serve as a moral guide for readers. In "I Shikuken" and in "King En," both of the male protagonists show compassion to animals, by not killing them in Shikuken's case, and by burying them respectfully in King En's case, which grants them rewards. Therefore the supernatural element of the story, the animals, exist only for the human characters to display how a human ought to act.

## 2.3 Punishment for Ingratitude

### 2.3.1 “The Wolf of Chūzan”

Here we move on from stories about showing compassion to stories about ingratitude. Responding to benevolence with ingratitude is severely punished in several *Kaidan zensho* stories. The first story we shall examine exhibiting this theme is “The Wolf of Chūzan” (Chapter 3.11, pg. 86). This tale illustrates how ingratitude is punished, and how ungrateful behavior clearly delineates animal and human morality.

In this story, a professor meets an injured wolf on the road and saves him from a hunter by hiding him in his book sack. While the wolf is grateful to be saved, he also wishes to eat his savior to save himself from starvation. The professor manages to fend the wolf off for a while, presumably owing to the wolf’s injured state, but quickly realizes that he’ll have to find a way out of this predicament before sundown, as the wolf will surely call his allies. The professor decides to trick the wolf by saying, “As a rule, we should talk with an elder to dispel all doubt,” presumably referring to whether it is morally proper to be eaten to save the wolf from starvation. The two journey together, and speak to an old tree and an old ox. Both non-humans argue that the wolf should eat the professor, citing their past grudges with humans as their evidence. Before the wolf can eat the professor they happen across an old man and decide to ask his opinion as well. The old man argues that the professor should not be eaten, because doing so would be too ungrateful an act on the wolf’s part. The wolf counters by explaining how miserable he was hiding inside the sack, so the old man tells the wolf to show him by re-enacting the scene. When the wolf jumps back in the sack to demonstrate his discomfort, the professor and the old man swiftly kill the wolf while saying, “This wolf has betrayed

your kindness and intends to eat you. Although one might say dying this way is an act of compassion, that would be folly.”

It is perhaps obvious that the wolf is representative of ungrateful people in general, but it helps us to understand the story’s meaning when we consider that this story is based on a particular incident. Tian Yuan Tan, a professor at the SOAS University of London, argues that this story may have been written in response to an incident between two scholars, Kang Hai (1475-1541) and Li Mengyang (1473 – 1529) in the sixteenth century.<sup>44</sup> The details of their interactions are not well known, but it is believed that Kang saved Li from a prison yard, which is analogous to the professor saving the wolf. But afterward, “Kongtang (Li Mengyang) in return brought harm to Duishan (Kang Hai) out of jealousy. An informed person then wrote “Zhongshanlang zhuan (*The Wolf of Zhongshan*)” to satirize Kongtong.”<sup>45</sup> While it is unknown if Kang Hai wrote the story himself, or if it was written by another who was familiar with the incident, Kang Hai did provide his own commentary by way of a poem:

In my love for living things, I do not make reckonings.  
How would I therefore remember that I once saved this wolf?  
You laughed at me because I saved the wolf, and it bit me.  
[But] it’s all right that animals and human beings each have their own sentiments  
and intentions.<sup>46</sup>

One is reminded of the parable of the scorpion and the frog: a scorpion enlists a frog’s help to ford a river, but midway through the journey the scorpion stings his companion

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<sup>44</sup> Tan, Tian Yuan, “The Wolf of Zhongshan and Ingrates: Problematic Literary Contexts in Sixteenth-Century,” *Asia Major, Third Series* (Academia Sinica) 20, no. 1 (2007): 107.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 108.



while riding on its back. When asked why he committed the two of them to a watery grave, the scorpion replied “Because it is my nature.” Kang Hai, in much the same way, does not seem to begrudge the wolf for “biting” him - in other words, rebuking his kindness. Instead, he shows understanding because “animals and human beings each have their own sentiments and intentions.” The wolf turns on its benefactor because that is merely its nature.

However, there is an additional layer of criticism heaped upon Li Mengyang by portraying him as a wolf. By doing so, Kang Hai is also claiming Li is subhuman. He does not begrudge the man, but this elicits an element of condescension: Li rejected the kindness shown to him, but this is only natural – he is nothing but an animal, after all. In the “Wolf of Chūzan” we see the protagonist adopt a similar attitude to Kang Hai. He balks at killing the wolf, but his companion tells him it is only proper for him to kill the ungrateful. Through the professor’s kindness, one sees he does not blame the wolf for his inclinations. Indeed, the compassion he displays toward the wolf mirrors I Shikukun, King En, and Setsu I, and it displays one of the four sprouts of moral virtue Mencius praised. He is unmotivated by any sense of revenge, and through his journey he has understood that the wolf, much like the tree and the ox, are merely acting upon their natural inclinations. However, it is through this that the story highlights that which separates man from beast. Other variations of the story make this even more explicit:

“The beast is so ungrateful and you still cannot bear to kill it,” the old man said, laughing. “You’re indeed a humane man but also extremely stupid. Going down a well to save a man or giving your clothes to a friend to save his life is good, but you should not endanger yourself in the process, should you? You belong to this

kind. A superior man certainly will not consider it right to push humaneness to the point of stupidity.”<sup>47</sup>

This is a variation of the tale “Wolf of Chūzan” translated from the original Chinese by Conrad Lung from the *Tung-t’ien wen-chi* (*The Prose Writings of Tung-t’ien*), compilation of stories written collected by the Ming censor Ma Chung-hsi (1446-1512)<sup>48</sup>. When comparing Hayashi Razan’s translation with this one, one can see certain elements of the story have changed. Razan’s version of the tale truncates many details found in Lung’s translation, a pattern that holds true for most of his stories. Razan’s version makes no mention of the moral explicitly outlined in the *Tung-t’ien wen-chi* – “a superior man does not push humaneness to the point of stupidity.” Furthermore, the old man appeals directly to Mencius’ passage when he says “You belong to this kind,” meaning humanity. Thus, it is not proper for a human to sacrifice himself for animals. While this message still remains intact in Hayashi Razan’s version, it takes on a slightly different guise: “This wolf has betrayed your kindness and intends to eat you. Although one might say dying this way is an act of compassion, that would be folly.” The passage from *Tung-t’ien wen-chi* makes its moral clear by explicitly stating what a superior man is supposed to do. Razan’s passage does the inverse by saying that it is incorrect to be eaten by a wolf out of compassion, because “that would be folly.” The explanation and motivation behind the old man’s words are thus lost in Razan’s version.

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<sup>47</sup> Lung, Conrad, “The Chung-shan Wolf,” in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, ed. Y W Ma and Joseph S M Lau, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1978), 121.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 584.

The moral that emerges from this tale is that the will of humans is naturally superior to that of the beast. While the wolf, the ox, and the tree make reasonable arguments as to why the wolf should eat the scholar, the logic employed by the humans eventually wins out. This is not because there was a flaw in the wolf's thinking: it is merely because the wolf's ingratitude toward a human, his superior, overrode all other matters. The needs and wants of a beast are shown to be unequal to those of a human. Furthermore, this works in reverse – a human who shows his ingratitude puts himself on the level of a beast, as Kang Hai accused Li Mengyang. In this collection, a man shown to be a beast is always a way to insult or punish that figure.

“The Wolf of Chūzan” shows one must not show leniency to those who have no gratitude for benevolent actions, as those who act in such a manner are no better than beasts. When the will of humanity confronts the animal kingdom the burden to enact correct moral choice falls upon the human. Failure to do so results in punishment by having one's humanity stripped away, as we shall see in the next story.

### **2.3.2 “The Horse-Headed Girl”**

The story of “The Horse-Headed Girl,” (Chapter 3.7, pg. 79) features a human transforming into an animal as a result of her ingratitude. In this tale, a young woman misses her absentee father, so her mother makes a proclamation that the man who finds her husband shall have her daughter's hand in marriage. The family horse hears this and wastes no time in tracking down the missing parent and bringing him back home. However, once he arrives the father proclaims, “That is a pledge made for people, not horses. How can livestock wed humans? Ridiculous!” and kills the horse. In retaliation, the dead horse whisks the girl up into the sky.

The girl is transformed into a silkworm goddess, marking this tale as a supernatural origin for sericulture in China. Even though her mother was the one who made the pledge to marry her to her father's rescuer, and her father was the one who broke that pledge, it is the girl who is punished for her parents' ingratitude. Transforming into a silkworm goddess is how she atones for the sin of ingratitude, one passed down through the father.

Other versions of the tale place the blame for ingratitude more directly on the daughter as opposed to her parents. The version in the *Sōushénjì* shows that the daughter herself makes the proclamation to marry, the mother figure is completely absent, and the daughter further torments the dead horse by saying "You're just a domestic animal, yet you wanted a human as your wife, eh? It's all your own fault you've been butchered and skinned, so why should you feel sorry for yourself..."<sup>49</sup> Thus, when she is eventually taken to the heavens and transformed, it is more obvious that "the metamorphosis of the girl is again a punishment, for she reneged on her trickster promise to marry the horse and also tormented him in his desire."<sup>50</sup> However, by virtue of the fact that the girls' parents made and broke the promise, yet the girl instead is punished in Razan's version of the tale, there appears to be a predisposition for casting blame upon the female character. This concept will be further explored in the following section.

Comparing this story to "The Wolf of Chūzan," both stories punish the ungrateful party. In the first story, because the wolf is an animal and animals have no capacity to change their nature, he must be killed by the protagonist. In "The Horse-Headed Girl,"

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<sup>49</sup> Birrell, *Chinese Mythology*, 200.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 199.

the ungrateful party is a human female, and thus she is transformed into animal form as a method of punishment to reflect her ungrateful nature. Just as the wolf cannot show gratitude, the daughter's humanity is revoked showing that she is no more than a beast. These stories show that gratitude must be respected in all instances: the animals in these stories are shown to be incapable, which serves to emphasize the choices the human characters take.

## 2.4 Woman: The Deceiving Animal

As we have seen in “The Horse-Headed Girl,” some animal tales concretely equate the female with the animal. Females are rarely depicted in a positive light; indeed one detects a palpable fear of the feminine inherent in many of these tales. There is much evidence to show a disparity in the social inequality between men and women in China in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when many of these supernatural tales were collected. For example a tale found in the *Sōushénjì* entitled “A Woman is Transformed into a Man” explains through dualistic Chinese cosmology that, “when a woman becomes a man, it is called ‘yin-prospers,’ and a common man will become king. If a man becomes a woman, this is called ‘yin victorious over yang,’ and its augury is ‘loss.’”<sup>51</sup> A woman becoming a man is considered good fortune for the female, while it is a “loss” if a man becomes a woman. An old poem from the *Shi Jung* (The Book of Songs) from the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC) reveals long ingrained beliefs on the nature of women:

A clever man builds strong ramparts: a clever woman overthrows them.  
Beautiful is the clever wife, but her heart is as cruel as that of the owl’s,  
Women with long tongues are harbingers of evil,  
Disasters are not sent down from Heaven -  
They originate in wives.  
The wise do not let their wives meddle in public affairs,  
They keep them to their spinning and weaving. (*Book of Songs*, No. 264)<sup>52</sup>

This song shows polarity between men and women related to the concepts of *yin* and *yang* referenced in the *Sōushénjì*: men, the *yang*, are the builders, creators, and buttresses of order. Women, the *yin*, are the destroyers of that order. Originally, “The two were conceived of as complementary, but in the course of time they came to be placed in a

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<sup>51</sup> Gan, *In Search of the Supernatural*, 66.

<sup>52</sup> Sand, Elin, *Woman Ruler: Woman Rule*, (San Jose, CA: iUniverse.com, 2001), 421.

hierarchy in which *yin* was lower than *yang*.<sup>53</sup> In equality among the sexes was a motif that appeared not only in Chinese literature, but in the moral guides appearing in Tokugawa Japan as well.

Many moral guides centered on women's education were printed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as *The Great Learning for Women*, which is based on the teachings of Kaibara Ekken (1630 – 1714).<sup>54</sup> These moral guides encouraged readers to fit into hierarchical roles while respecting superiors.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, "Because Tokugawa-era moral texts prescribed a subordinate position to women in the family and in politics, many historians have used them to argue that women's position in society was lower than in any other period of Japanese history."<sup>56</sup> As a result, the Tokugawa political climate was particularly unfriendly towards women, especially those who displayed a measure of power. The following stories from *Kaidan zensho* all emphasize a fear of women. Equating them with animals is one way these texts justify gender inequality.

#### 2.4.1 "Ryokyu," and Others

First, let us examine "Ryokyu," (Chapter 3.4, pg. 75) to illustrate how the feminine is treated with ferocity. In this tale, a man is travelling by boat to Kyoka Lake. When he arrives, he is approached by a woman who was "gathering reeds and was clad

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<sup>53</sup> McLaren, Anne E. and Menglong Feng, *The Chinese Femme Fatale: Stories from the Ming Period*, (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 6.

<sup>54</sup> Tocco, "Norms and Texts for Women's Education," 199.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 200.

all in lotus leaves.” He immediately recognizes that she isn’t human and shoots her with an arrow, revealing that she is in fact an otter in disguise. He meets an older woman a little later, an acquaintance of the otter he killed. He recognizes that she too is an otter, and immediately shoots her.

The epilogue of the story does not explain Ryokyu’s violence toward the otters. The only explanation given at the end of the tale is “All the locals in the area tell a story. They say, ‘Around these parts there are girls that gather plants. Because they are so much more beautiful than ordinary people, occasionally they are known to lure men to wed them.’” This explanation is telling of the values being presented: the fact that the women are not who they appear to be is a crime deserving of death. Ryokyu is not chastised in any way for killing them. As the story only explains that otter women attempt to seduce men, the story implicitly approves Ryokyu’s actions. The manner in which Ryokyu deals with them certainly is extreme, as one cannot say that the otters meant him any ill will nor did they pose any danger to him.

This not the only story in Chinese folktales in which an otter disguises itself as a human to seduce men. Many other tales aside from the ones collected in *Kaidan zensho* follow the same theme. The *Sōushénjì* includes a tale about a woman holding a black umbrella. She chases after an officer in the rain, but a gust of wind takes hold of her umbrella. “Turning back and looking at the woman, he discovered she was in fact an otter spirit clothed in lotus leaves and carrying a lotus leaf umbrella. The spirit had taken on the form of a woman and had many times seduced youthful humans.”<sup>57</sup> The story ends on this line, so it is left unclear if the officer killed the otter like Ryokyu did in his

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<sup>57</sup> Gan, *In Search of the Supernatural*, 226.



story, but this story also implies women and animals are equated and are to be treated with suspicion. In the case of Ryokyu, disingenuous behavior is met with corporal punishment.

The examples in which animals disguise themselves as women and try to seduce men are numerous enough to form their own sub-genre. Another story that fits with this theme is “The Man from P’eng-ch’eng,” found in *T’ai-p’ing kuang-chi* (978 AD). The man from P’eng –ch’eng takes a wife that he is not particularly attracted to, so he lives outside his house. Every night his wife supposedly comes out to meet him for a romantic encounter, but his wife claims the woman he sees every night is in fact some sort of goblin. Later that night, he encounters a woman “in the guise of his wife” and he demands to know why she comes every night. She responds, “You have been having an affair with the girl in the house to the east. In dismay I invented the story of the goblin, hoping the wedding oath would keep you from having an affair.”<sup>58</sup> The reader is thus led to believe one of two possibilities: that this woman is the goblin making up a lie to save itself, or that this is actually the man’s wife, who made up the story about goblins to keep the man from having an affair. Since the man does not deny her claims and then sleeps with her, it must hold true that he actually was having an affair with the girl to the east. After lovemaking, he shines a torch on the woman and “she began to shrink, bit by bit, and when she was visible he beheld her. It was a carp, about two feet in length.”<sup>59</sup> This ending makes it seem as though the first of the two possibilities was the correct

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<sup>58</sup> Kao, Karl S Y, *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 61.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

assumption: the girl was just a fish masquerading as the man's wife. However, upon closer inspection, since this fish knew about the man's affair with the girl in the eastern house, a claim he does not deny, one might come to the conclusion that this person actually is his wife, and his wife also happens to be appearing as a fish. This conclusion fits with the other fact mentioned in the story, namely that he "does not like his wife," by providing motivation for his feelings – she is and has always been a changeling, and thus he has reason to be disgusted by her. The morality expressed in the tale does not concern itself with the male protagonist's propensity towards infidelity: this is merely treated as a matter of course. Instead, the element designed to shock the reader is the woman is not who she first appeared to be. The story is implying that the reason the man encountered misfortune is not due to his philandering, but it is because he was not careful enough in choosing his romantic partner, leading to an unhappy marriage with a fish.

A similar example is the story of "The Turtle Woman." This story serves as an excellent counterpart to "Ryokyu," as it takes the central concept of that story but excises the protagonist's violence. A man named Chang Fu takes a journey on the waterways of Ying-tse county, and at night comes across a woman in a tiny boat who desires to bunk with him as she is "terrified of tigers," who presumably stalk the country when night falls. He invites her to sleep with him in his boat, but in the middle of the night, "the rain ceased and the moon began to shine brightly. Fu looked down at the girl, only to discover a big sea turtle lying there with its head pillowed against Fu's arm."<sup>60</sup> His attempt to detain the creature is met with failure as it darts back into the water. To his

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 107.

astonishment, the boat the turtle/woman rode in on is actually “the rotten remains of a log raft, a little over ten feet long.”<sup>61</sup>

This story shares much in common with “Ryokyu” – both feature aquatic creatures disguised as women in order to get romantically close to men. Most of these stories of animals transforming into women seem to feature water in some way. Roel Sterckx notes that in Chinese tales “water is a transforming agent. With water being part of the natural environment of metamorphosing animals such as piscines, reptiles, and amphibians, frequent reference is made to the transformations induced by contact with water.”<sup>62</sup> Additionally, one can make an argument that water is symbolically and specifically linked to feminine transformation if one takes the *yin* and *yang* cosmology into account, “The *yin* was associated with receptivity and passivity and was symbolized by such things as darkness, water, the moon, moisture and clouds.”<sup>63</sup> It is therefore likely that the numerous examples of water motifs appearing in women transformations stories come from *yin-yang* modes of thought.

In “Ryokyu,” the romantic intention is explained in the epilogue of the story, wherein the narrator states that all the locals know that otters are trying to seduce men and trick them into marriage. “The Turtle Woman” is less explicit about the turtle’s intention. While she claims that she seeks protection from tigers prowling in the dark, the scene in which she has her head nestled in Chang Fu’s arm suggests that some

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Sterckx, Roel, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 175.

<sup>63</sup> McLaren, *Chinese Femme Fatale*, 6.

manner of romantic interaction occurred in the time between scenes. Furthermore, the transformations extend even to each creature's respective craft: the otters of "Ryokyu" magically disguised seaweed to look like a boat, while the turtle's boat turned out to be a log. This implies that the possessions of women must also be regarded with suspicion: just as the boats of the turtle woman and the otters in Ryokyu, and the otter's umbrella in the *Sōushénjī* story, were in fact disguised leaves and logs, the possessions of females must also be scrutinized as they may too prove to be disguised implements dangerous to the male protagonists. These stories indicate that nearly everything associated with women is to be treated with suspicion.

#### **2.4.2 "Shō Kaku"**

One also sees evidence of this in the *Kaidan zensho* story "Shō Kaku," (Chapter 3.10, pg. 84). This story does not make the woman-animal connection as transparently as the other stories described above, but the feminine motifs are there nonetheless. In this tale, a traveler spies a snake with a distended stomach. The snake eats a leaf, miraculously curing its stomach ailment. Kaku, the traveler, reasons that the leaf must be a medicine that cures tympanites, a gastro-intestinal disorder. After taking some samples of the leaf, he discovers that a fellow traveler at the inn where he is lodging exhibits similar symptoms. Kaku gives the man the leaf thinking it will cure him, but comes back the next day to discover that the man has melted from the inside. The leaf turns out to be an alchemical compound known for dissolving human flesh, and the snake was using it to dissolve the human baby in its stomach.

Feminine serpent imagery occurs a few times in Razan's collection, but never in a positive light. Ria Koopmans-de Bruijn has written the following concerning the serpents' role in Japanese folktales:

“As we have seen, the narrative in each of the five tale types analyzed above centers around a liaison – or in some cases, a thwarted attempt to form a liaison – between a human and serpent character. Yet in terms of didactic function, the serpent character may be read more accurately as a symbolic representation of another human or, more specifically, a human mate who is unsuitable for partnership from the point of view of prevailing social and communal norms.”<sup>64</sup>

The imagery of the snake in “Shō Kaku” exhibits feminine motifs: its belly distended with a baby inside depicts an image of pregnancy, linking the snake to the world of the feminine. Eating the leaf, which turns out to be a *Zantedeschia aethiopica* plant or “calla lilly,” is an abortive act for the snake in that it dissolves the child inside her. In effect, Shō Kaku attempted to use a tool that belongs to the domain of animals and the feminine to cure a human male, a mistake which had fatal consequences. Just like the otters' leaves and the turtle's log, all feminine/animal implements are shown to be deceptive – the morally correct action for Shō Kaku was to investigate the plant or leave it alone. His negligence is punished by subsequent years of guilt.

Above all, the focus of the tale is not on the snake itself but on the horrible mistake Shō Kaku made when trying to help out a fellow traveler. The snake itself is a secondary figure in this tale. It exists to introduce the leaf to the protagonist and to deceive him into thinking it might be beneficial to mankind. The moral of the tale rides solely on Shō Kaku's inappropriate actions – although he was motivated by good intentions, he did not display the wisdom necessary to carry through with those actions.

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<sup>64</sup> Koopmans-de Bruijn, “Fabled Liaisons,” 82.

Furthermore, the tale also implies that Kaku's fellow traveler died because Kaku stooped to using feminine tools on a fellow male.

### 2.4.3 “Li Kan”

The female serpent connection Koopmans-de Bruijn alludes to applies most directly to the story “Li Kan,” (Chapter 3.9, pg. 82) which is also known in modern Japanese alternatively as “The Woman of *Hōseien*,”<sup>65</sup> or “The Strange Smelling Woman.”<sup>66</sup> In this tale, a man travelling west on business is bewitched by a reclusive and beautiful woman riding in a cart. Instead of continuing to his destination, he instead decides to send a messenger in his place so he can spend a night with the woman. The next morning his messenger returns and the two take their leave, but on the way back Li Kan succumbs to a rapid and horrifying illness which separates his head from his body. As with a few stories in *Kaidan zensho*, the epilogue offers a quick explanation to the events that transpired:

“Men like Li Kan are sometimes tricked by snakes taking the guise of women. When the men return home they are laid low by illness. While they lie in their *futons*, their bodies will freeze and disappear even while in the middle of speaking. If a person should hang the bedding for inspection, he will see nothing but a pool of water, with only the victim's head left behind.”

One may compare this scene to the end of “Ryokyu.” Both explain that the female character was actually a disguised animal, but this story differs in that the liaison has deadly consequences for the male. It is no accident that the victim's head is split – his night of passion was a deadly lapse in critical judgment. The rending of his head from

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<sup>65</sup> *Hōseien no onna* 奉誠園の女, huameizi.tripod.com.

<sup>66</sup> *Ikyō no onna* 異香の女, home.att.ne.jp/red/sronin.

his body was perhaps symbolic of the idea that he had taken leave of his wisdom, thinking with his body instead.

As we have seen with the otters of “Ryokyu,” the snake of “Li Kan,” or the aquatic polymorphs from other Chinese tales such as the turtle woman and the fish mistress, there exists a strong undercurrent of fear associated with the female, specifically the “unmarriageable female” Koopmans-de Bruijn alludes to. All of these creatures exist solely to seduce men, and the white snake even murders them. A key theme that emerges is “poor romantic decisions.” If we take it as true that the man from P’eng-ch’eng has taken a fish wife, this is representative of him making a poor marriage decision. The fact that the wife is secretly a fish is the key to his unhappy marriage, and this story speaks to the danger of a man marrying a “cold fish,” so to speak. Even if the goblin is not actually his wife, the story still takes on a judgmental tone, but one must wonder if this tone is meant to condemn a man who does not abide by his marriage vows, or simply if it condemns him for not checking his partner thoroughly enough under the torchlight. Similarly, the protagonist in “The Turtle Woman” invites a strange woman into his bed only to be shocked at her terrapin transformation. Finally, the snake woman in “Li Kan” actually manages to kill her romantic partner. One could read his death as a warning about romantically transmitted diseases, but I also interpret the story in a way that punishes the man for failing to carry out his job. Not only has he engaged romantically with a woman he knows nothing about, other than her captivating smell, but he has also shirked his duty in order to pursue this amorous opportunity.

Perhaps it is that quality that leads to the biggest difference between the “Li Kan” story and the three other stories, “The Man from P’eng-ch’eng,” “The Turtle Woman,”

and “Ryokyu.” In the latter three stories, danger is a missing element – “Li Kan” is the only one that ends fatally for the protagonist, while the other stories merely present the fact that the male protagonist’s love interest is an animal as punishment enough. In the latter three stories, the main character’s transgression was merely romantic in nature. In “Li Kan,” the protagonist foisted his duty off on another and it is perhaps this that means he is deserving of death, unlike in the other stories where the man’s crime was adultery. This offers a lens into a society that not only devalues the female, it also accuses them of being less than human. For the men whose crime was having an affair, their punishment was the fact that the object of their affair was not as beautiful as they had originally thought.

#### **2.4.4 “San Rōshi”**

All of these stories allude to a fear of the female getting the upper hand through deception in a male-female relationship. This is made most explicit in the story “San Rōshi,” (Chapter 3.15, pg. 97) in which an unmarried business woman magically transforms men into animals and sells them for profit. It differs from the aforementioned tales a little in that our primary supernatural antagonist, San Rōshi, is not an animal taking on the guise of a woman but rather a human witch. Carrie Reed explains the typical way a Tang supernatural story unfolds:

“When the first sentences of the story describe the male protagonist approaching an inn and meeting a female innkeeper, the Tang dynasty Chinese reader would have recognized these as formulaic plot elements. He would anticipate the following: A young man travels away from home and, in the evening, he comes to a building of some sort. Later that building will likely turn out to be a fox burrow or a broken down grave. He meets a gorgeous young woman and feels desire for her. He will probably have a brief yet deeply passionate sexual experience with her. Sometime after the encounter, the young man will discover that the woman is not what he had thought – perhaps she is actually an animal such as a fox or a



tiger, or even a ghost or demon who has temporarily taken on a living human form.”<sup>67</sup>

Cursory examination proves this analysis to be true simply by examining the tales discussed above. The description matches “Li Kan” accurately if one substitutes a snake burrow for a fox’s den. Additionally, similar elements can be found in a later story found in *Kaidan zensho* “I fu,” wherein the protagonist marries an ant princess and lives with her for several years, only to find out their home was actually the tree he kept in his backyard. “San Rōshi,” also known as “Bangqiao San niangzi” in the original Chinese, takes many of these qualities and flips them around. While the titular San Rōshi is not a disguised animal to begin with, over the course of the story she is eventually transformed into a donkey and back again by the end of the tale.

San Rōshi herself is a childless, husbandless woman around thirty years old. She sets up a shop that sells assorted goods, offers lodging for travelers, and she is also suspiciously rich in donkeys to sell. As the story progresses, the reader finds out she is magically transforming the male guests who lodge with her into the animals whom she then sells to turn a profit. San Rōshi is a threatening figure for the male Tang readership for several reasons. First of all, she is an unmarried businesswoman, and a successful one at that. This is a far cry from the women harmlessly kept “spinning and weaving,” alluded to in the *Book of Songs*. In addition to having financial power she also has magical power, which she uses specifically against men. She transforms the men into

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<sup>67</sup> Reed, Carrie, “Plowing in the Bedroom, Braying at the Table: Competition and Control in the Tang Tale ‘Bangqiao San niangzi,’” in *Tamkang Review* (Graduate School of Western Languages and Literature, Tamkang University) 43, no. 2 (2013): 9.

donkeys, and then sells them for profit. Thus, she is profiting directly from female subjugation of men.

The donkey is a beast of burden. It has a distinct purpose within the human world, and that purpose is to be used for transportation of people or goods. The reason San Rōshi appears extremely threatening as a character to the Tang readership is because of the gender-play inherent in the male transformation. As we have seen in all of the stories up until this point, animals are considered lesser beings compared to humans. In addition to this, among these animals the donkey is special – it is not a wild animal like a wolf or a fish, it is more subservient because it specifically serves human needs. Thus when San Rōshi uses her powers to transform her male guests, the story hinges on a gendered power play. The true strangeness of the tale comes not from the magical transformation of human into animal, it comes from San Rōshi flipping the power structure. Eventually, the narrative of the tale has the male protagonist trick her into transforming herself into an animal. He then uses her for his own purposes and rides her over the course of several years as punishment.

For the audience of the story, this action corrects a grievous wrong – the female who has held power in the story up until this point finally meets her comeuppance and is reduced to the level of an animal. While this story differs from the other animal women stories in that San Rōshi herself was a woman first and an animal second, the sense of the tale is that transforming her into a beast is the morally correct action and therefore should be considered her natural state.

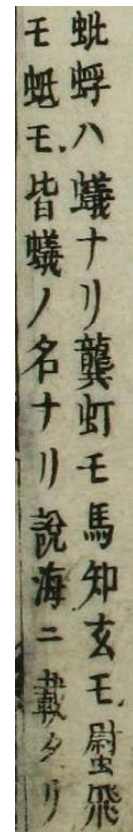
## 2.5 Impermanence: Dwellers in an Ant Heap

The final theme to cover in this paper focuses on the idea of impermanence, and the importance of not being overly ambitious. To illustrate these ideas, *Kaidan zensho* presents a couple of stories featuring insects, an unusual animal choice considering the fish, wolves, and snakes that have come before. Both “I Fu” (Chapter 3.13, pg. 93) and “Jun Ufun” (Chapter 3.3, pg. 72) are stories about men having miraculous interactions with the ant kingdom.

### 2.5.1 “I Fu”

“I Fu” (Chapter 3.13, pg. 93) tells of a scholar, Jo Genshi, who is afflicted by ant spirits. They emerge late at night and mistake Genshi’s possessions as part of the natural world. They are depicted not as ants, but as tiny people clad in armor. For example, they believe his ink stone is a pond and attempt to fish from it. They are also under the impression that his carpet is a swamp of some sort. One of the spirits, clearly belonging to high rank owing to his purple clothing and attending procession, explains he is a prince and attempts to make Genshi his retainer. In response, Genshi lights up the room, causing all the spirits to disappear.

Later, he is brought to the prince’s father to be disciplined for displeasing the prince. A bizarre series of events results in various members of the king’s court being killed, spurring the other members to wave documents around officiously and securing higher positions in court. A rainstorm fills the king with a terrible fear and he sends Genshi



**Figure 1:** The names of the characters in the story “I Fu” make intentional use of the character for “insect” (虫)

home. Genshi realizes why the king was afraid of the rainstorm and finds a massive ant hole under his window. He destroys it and is freed from the ant spirits. The epilogue of the story explains the wordplay in the written form of the story: the names of the various characters in the story use the Chinese character for “insect” or have names related to bugs, cluing the reader into their actual identities (See Figure 1).

### **2.5.2 “Junu Fun” and “The Dream of Akinosuke”**

Before analyzing this, it may be helpful to compare it to the other story featuring ants in this collection, “Junu Fun,” (Chapter 3.3, pg. 72). The titular protagonist falls asleep by a Pagoda Tree outside his home. He is brought into the kingdom of the tree by a mysterious envoy. In quick succession, he meets the king of this land, marries his daughter, and has several children. Additionally, he is given the right to govern a section of the king’s land.

After twenty years, Junu Fun’s wife dies of illness. At this time, he is sent back by the king to mourn, while his children are kept under the care of the king. However, at this time he wakes as from a dream and discovers that all the people he met and the kingdom he lived in are in fact the network of trees by his home and the ants that inhabit them. Razan’s version of the tale ends when a rainstorm causes all the ants disappear.

Readers of *kaidan* fiction may know this story by another name, “The Dream of Akinosuke.” This version is found in Lafcadio Hearn’s *Kwaidan* and makes several changes to the Chinese tale. First of all, names were localized, with the protagonist becoming Akinosuke, and the names of locations and characters following suit. Furthermore, one of the characters in Hearn’s version of the tale says,

“We also saw something strange while you were napping. A little yellow butterfly was fluttering over your face for a moment or two; and we watched it. Then it alighted on the ground beside you, close to the tree; and almost as soon as it alighted there, a big, big ant came out of a hole, and seized it and pulled it down the hole. Just before you woke up, we saw that very butterfly come out of the hole again, and flutter over your face as before.”<sup>68</sup>

One of Akinosuke’s companions posits the butterfly was Akinosuke’s soul escaping his physical body. This element that did not exist in the original Chinese. Adding this element provides context for the story and explains *why* the protagonist goes on this journey – because his soul escaped and was captured by an ant. “Jun Ufun” is unconcerned with the why. By not providing a reason for the journey, the tale allows the reader to focus more on the message it is trying to convey. Since Akinosuke is a more clearly defined character, and because his journey is given an explanation through his soul being captured by an ant, his character is less of a universal archetype than someone who goes on this journey for supposedly no reason.

When comparing these two stories, one sees that the ants form organized societies. The Chinese character for ant (蟻) may hold a clue for the ants’ orderly depictions. Wolfram Eberhard writes, “The second component of the Chinese word for ‘ant’ – yi – is phonetically close to the word yi meaning ‘virtue’ (the words differ only in tone), and this is probably the reason why the ant figures as a symbol of right conduct and of patriotism. It also symbolizes self interest.”<sup>69</sup> The latter point requires more explanation than Eberhard has given, but C.A.S. Williams corroborates this account:

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<sup>68</sup> Hearn, Lafcadio, *Kwaidan*, (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1941), 210.

<sup>69</sup> Eberhard, Wolfram, *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought*, (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 15.

The composition of the written symbol for the ant denotes that it is the *righteous* (義), *insect* (虫), in reference to its orderly marching and subordination. The ant is the emblem of virtue and patriotism, but at the same time it symbolizes self-interest, and striving for filthy lucre, as evidenced in the metaphorical expression: ‘Ants cling to what is rank smelling’ (羣蟻附羶), which has this significance.”<sup>70</sup>

The above translation of 羣蟻附羶, “ants cling to what is rank smelling,” is particularly appropriate considering in English “rank” carries both connotations of “putrid smell” and “social position.” The desire to climb to a social position is most obvious in “I fu,” when the king’s court tries to benefit from the ant that died and ascend to his position by waving documents around. This scene strikes one as highly critical of bureaucracy and the striving for status that occurs in it.

This criticism applies to all of ant society, and there are a few interpretations of what the ants symbolize that work with this criticism. In her interpretation of “Nanke Taishou zhuan” (the Chinese name of Junu Fun), Carrie Reed compares the story to another tale written by Duan Chengshi in the ninth century.

The basic narrative structure is similar to many Tang tales, including “Nanke taishou zhuan”: the protagonist starts in normal China, moves on to a liminal/Other state, through marriage he becomes part of that realm, and in the end, returns back to his own normal world, leaving part of himself behind in his half-human children. On one level, the story directly refers to relations with foreigners and in particular with Japanese, since the land of shrimp (*xia* 蝦) is denoted by a Tang name for Japan, “Fusang.”<sup>71</sup>

In this tale, the shrimp are representative of the foreigner, or the Japanese specifically.

While many of the animal tales in *Kaidan zensho* identify individual animals as

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<sup>70</sup> Williams, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives*, 18.

<sup>71</sup> Reed, Carrie, “Messages from the Dead in ‘Nanke Taishou zhuan,’” in *Asian Folklore Studies* (Nanzang University) 59, no. 2 (2000): 123.

caricatures of certain human beings or types of humans, the ants are presented as a large group. Like the shrimp, they too are to be interpreted as a large group of people, or the foreigner in this case. In “I Fu,” the ant spirits seek to have the protagonist join them, but fail. They then attempt to punish him for refusing to join, but fail in this endeavor as well. Furthermore, their fear of the rain shows how delicate their power base is: they run the risk of being completely destroyed due to the whim of nature. In “Junu Fun,” the ants seek out the protagonist, who is a foreigner to their realm, and give him power and the King’s daughter’s hand in marriage. While this is a windfall in Fun’s fortune, after his wife Yō Hō dies, Junu Fun is sent back to his own world, while the King keeps Fun’s progeny with him. This makes it appear as though the king of the ants recognized Fun’s inherent superiority as a human, used him to help rule, and then took his half-human half-ant children when he decided Junu Fun would be too distraught to be useful any more. The ants in both stories likely symbolize the foreign other that try to sway the native Chinese human to their side, but in the first story their efforts are met with failure and result in ineffective revenge, while in the latter story the ants successfully use the native Chinese human to their own ends and eventually discard him. These stories all warn the reader of the foreigner: the foreigner, such as the Japanese, are weak when left to their own devices, so take care not to lend them too much power.

Additionally, both stories center on the idea of impermanence. The ant soldiers in “I Fu” live in fear of rain as it could easily destroy their entire society. The protagonist shows how easy it is to completely destroy them by setting fire to their home. For “Junu Fun,” the theme of impermanence is much clearer in the original Chinese tale. The author of the tale, Li Gongzuo, had this to say about the story:

“Believing it to be genuine, I have compiled this tale for those who are curious. Although it deals with strange supernatural things and unorthodox affairs, it is intended mainly as an admonition to the ambitious. Let future readers not regard this tale lightly as a mere series of coincidences, and let them beware of taking pride in worldly fame and rank.”<sup>72</sup>

Junu Fun enjoyed much prestige and had a prosperous twenty years in the ant kingdom, and by the end of the story that prestige and prosperity was taken away in such a manner that the reader is left wondering if the even happened at all. While Razan’s tale ends with the narrator saying all the ants disappeared after a storm, the original Chinese ends with this poem to send the message:

Noblest is his official position and rank,  
Overwhelming is his power in the capital,  
And yet, in the eyes of wise men,  
He is not much different from the dwellers in an ant heap.<sup>73</sup>

The ants in these stories are therefore symbols of fragility. There is credence to the idea that they may represent a group of foreigners, and the tales mock their insubstantiality when compared to the human figure, representative of China. However, the primary concern of both tales is to warn the readers of the dangers of ambition. As Li Gongzuo attests, the kingdoms of the mighty and proud, such as the ants, may fall easily at any time and without any warning. Thus the reader should extract a lesson from the nature of impermanence: one should not be overly proud or concern himself too much with amassing power and wealth, as it can all be taken away in an instant. The lesson therefore is one of humility and finding contentment with one’s life.

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<sup>72</sup> Wuji, Liu, *An Introduction to Chinese Literature*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1966), 144.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



This lesson strikes one as odd in view of the many Chinese stories which end with the protagonist being rewarded with prestige or rank, of which many can be found in Razan's collection. However, it is important to recognize that those stories bestow rank and prestige as a reward for the character's innate goodness: for example, I Shikuken rose to a high rank because he treated the strange dog in his house kindly. As a result, prestige is something that is naturally granted to the morally righteous, rather than something that an individual seeks out. This message of being content with one's lot must have been particularly attractive to the Japanese Tokugawa authorities. Andrew Gordon writes, "From diverse sources in the first century of Tokugawa rule, there emerged broad agreement on several core ideas concerning the proper political and social order. First, hierarchy is natural and just."<sup>74</sup> Considering the Japanese social hierarchy during the Edo period was strictly regimented, and those who occupied the upper echelons of the hierarchy were usually born into the role, the samurai class must have been supportive of Chinese tales that discourage the readers from trying to advance in rank while simultaneously legitimizing the role samurai were born into as morally just.

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<sup>74</sup> Gordon, Andrew, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 35.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Hayashi Razan's collection of *kaidan* stories shows a predilection towards animal stories. As a collection of strange stories, the appeal of these tales lies in how strangely these animals behave. In some cases they transform into humans, like the snakes of "Li Kan," and in others humans transform into animals like in "San Rōshi." Some animals act like humans instead of animals, such as the "Wolf of Chūzan" or the dog of "I Shikuken." Despite the bizarre happenings with animals in all of these stories, the animals are merely stand-in characters, narrative straw men that represent the exaggerated characteristics of lowly types of human beings. The fish in "Fish Clothes" represent the powerless masses, the snakes of "Li Kan" and the various other reptiles and aquatic beasts found in stories like "The Turtle Woman" and "Kitsufun" are all representative of dangerous and unmarriageable women. Even San Rōshi, from the story of the same name, is an unmarriageable woman whose intelligence was too clever by half, so the story rights a wrong by transforming her into a donkey.

The fact that these animals are not animals but metaphors for humans is not the most interesting thing about these stories: it is that the animals are narrative devices to serve the stories' inherent didactic messages. The animals and their behavior are portrayed in each story in order to clearly separate that from proper human behavior. If the human protagonists act in morally proper ways, they are rewarded, such as in the stories "Fish Clothes" or "I Shikuken." When they act in improper ways, the stories punish the characters through death, like in "Li Kan," or by transforming them into animals like in "Horse Headed Girl," or by erasing their fortunes in an instant, like in "Junu Fun." While the Confucian-based moral messages are initially harder to locate in

Hayashi Razan's translations, by referencing some of the original Chinese tales and analyzing the motifs that appear, one sees that each story still retains its message magnified and elucidated through the nature of beasts.

## CHAPTER 3

### TRANSLATIONS OF SELECTED TALES FROM *KAIDAN ZENSHO*

#### 3.1 Bōtei

Betsu Rei was a man from Keikoku<sup>75</sup>. He died and his body floated down the river, but resurfaced and came back to life. He set off towards the Shoku<sup>76</sup> region. There, he met with the King of Shoku, King Bōtei.

As Betsu Rei was no ordinary person, the King bestowed upon him a high rank and gave him the position of prime minister. Eventually Betsu Rei ousted Bōtei to become king, and Bōtei abandoned his kingdom.

After his death, Bōtei transformed into a bird. The name of that bird was the *Tō* Cuckoo, also called the *Token* Cuckoo. When the cuckoo lays an egg, the chick is raised by other birds. This was the spirit of the old king of Shoku, so the transformation was in respectful commiseration.

The *Token* is also said to put its eggs in other birds' nest and made them raise the chick. (From *Shoku ō honki* 蜀王本記. This is what was written about in the *waka* poem of the cuckoo in the nightingale's nest.)

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<sup>75</sup> Keikoku is an administrative district of the Han Dynasty of China, located downstream of the Yangtze River

<sup>76</sup> The state Shu-Han

### 3.2 Kitsufun

Takubatsu Kitsufun was a man from northern China. One day he went off to hunt near a mountain stream. When he arrived, he saw a carriage descending from heaven carrying a beautiful woman. “I am a maiden of the heavens,” she said, and the two talked together.

The next day, they met again and she said, “It is by the will of heaven that I have come here. In one year’s time, you shall meet me again.” So saying, the two parted.

Keeping his promise, Kitsufun once again returned to that very spot. The maiden descended from heaven and bestowed upon him a young boy. She said, “This is your child. Your line shall reign as emperors for generations,” and then she returned to the heavens. She disappeared and the young boy grew up to become a king known as Jingen<sup>77</sup>.

And so in all the legends, people murmured, “Emperor Kitsufun has no in-laws, and Emperor Jingen has no mother.” This was the most mysterious event ever to have occurred.

Emperor Jingen went on to become the first emperor of Gi<sup>78</sup>. He divided all under heaven into two: Kōnan<sup>79</sup> became the Southern Dynasty, and Kōhoku<sup>80</sup> became the Northern Dynasty. In the beginning, the Northern Dynasty was known as Northern Wei.

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<sup>77</sup> The name uses the kanji characters for heavenly source (神元)

<sup>78</sup> The kingdom of Wei

<sup>79</sup> The region Jiangnan, found south of the Yangtze

<sup>80</sup> The region Jiangbei

Jingen's line served as emperors for twelve generations, protecting Northern Wei for one hundred and fifty years. (Found in both *Gisho* 魏書 and *Hokushi* 北史)

### 3.3 Junu Fun

Junu Fun of the Tō<sup>81</sup> had an old Pagoda Tree to the south of his house. He and his friends got drunk at the base of that tree, but he passed out. His friends returned home.

As though in a dream, a messenger clad in black came to Fun and said, “I am an envoy sent by the king of Kaian<sup>82</sup>. I have come to take you to him.”

Fun rode in a carriage with the envoy and entered an opening at the base of the Pagoda Tree. Inside he found a massive castle. At the gate there hung a plaque with the inscription “The Kingdom of Great Kaian.” A single musician came to greet them and proclaimed, “The Fuba has arrived!” He explained that “fuba” was a title given to those nominated to become the king’s son-in-law. The musician finally brought Fun into the palace. Fun met a man who stepped out wearing white clothes and a red cap. He seemed to be the king himself. Fun bowed to him.

The King said, “I shall wed my daughter Yō Hō to you,” and so saying, dozens of women played music, lit lanterns, and led Fun through many paper doors adorned in gold and jade, one after another, until he found himself in her room.

He found a woman there. She was given the name Princess Golden Branch and she looked just like a maiden descended from the heavens. To be sure, Princess Golden Branch was Yō Hō. They gave expressions of thanks to one another, exchanged vows, and the days passed.

One day the king said, “The district to the South has no governor. I am going to appoint you.” Fun was then appointed to the position and wore fine clothes adorned in

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<sup>81</sup> Tang Dynasty

<sup>82</sup> The kanji used in *kaian*, 槐安, is the same for “pagoda tree”

gold. He assembled his attendants, arranged for a horse-drawn carriage, dressed Yō Hō in fine clothes and had her accompany him. Then, her mother came to send them off. Admonishing Yō Hō, she warned, “Junu Fun is headstrong and enjoys drinking. You are a married couple. Be submissive and meek.”

They finally left the house and arrived in the southern district. People came out to greet them. Fun governed well and there was peace within the district.

Twenty years passed. The king heard of Fun’s success and bestowed upon him high rank. The couple gave birth to five boys and two girls and they wanted for nothing.

Around this time, Yō Hō got sick and died. In his grief, Fun buried her on Hanryō Hill<sup>83</sup>. He called upon the king, his mother-in-law, and the king’s retainers. They all came to mourn and express their condolences. As he was the king’s son-in-law, he was already extremely influential.

At this time the king suddenly told him, “Due to your circumstances, I have made a decision as the king to send you back. You need to meet with your family. The men and women you bore here are now my own children, so may your heart be at peace.” So saying, the king sent two envoys to accompany Fun, and sent him out from the opening at the base of the tree.

Fun awoke from a dream to see a young boy holding a broom and sweeping the garden, and all of his friends sitting on wooden stools. The sun was still in the sky. Fun asked each man to come look at the Pagoda Tree, and they found a single hole. The hole was wide, and in his excitement Fun saw it was big enough for a man to pass through.

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<sup>83</sup> The kanji used for this name means “disc dragon” (盤龍), likely referring to a dragon coiling at rest



Above the hole were many trees, which all looked quite similar to a fortress and palace. There, they found countless ants. One of the ants was a large one with white wings and a red head. It was the king of Kaian.

There was a branch that pointed south that passed through yet another hole, and there were many ants on this as well. This must have been the southern district.

Coiled around yet another hole was something that looked like a snake. It was a mere 30 cm high dirt mound. That must have been Hanryō Hill. Fun, thinking this was suspicious, quickly plugged up the hole. That night there was a sudden rainstorm. At daybreak, Fun checked the hole and all the ants had disappeared, never to be seen again.

(From Chinkan's *Daikai kyūki* 大槐宮記)

### 3.4 Ryokyu

Ryokyu was a man from a place called Touhei<sup>84</sup>. He was known to be a wealthy and handsome man.

He boarded a ship and rode to Kyoka Lake. Enveloped in strong winds, the boat could go no further. The boat came to a rest among the rice plants. Just then, a young girl appeared riding her own boat. Ryokyu saw she was gathering reeds and was clad all in lotus leaves.

Ryokyu asked her, “You aren’t human, are you? Why would you wear lotus leaves?” When he said this, she turned pale with fear.

“I suppose you do not know that our ancestors gathered lotus leaves and made skirts out of them,” she answered. She circled his boat, dipped her oar in the water and was about to take her leave. Ryokyu immediately drew his bow and loosed an arrow, killing her. Just then, she transformed into an otter. Her boat was actually made of the reeds she gathered, arranged into the shape of a boat.

Some time later, he arrived at the opposite bank of the lake. An old woman was there. When she saw Ryokyu cross by in his boat, she asked, “Might you have seen a girl gathering reeds in the middle of the lake?”

He responded, “Yes, she is a little ways behind me,” but then he loosed an arrow at the old woman as well. She then turned into an old otter. Ryokyu grabbed the two otters and lifted them into his boat.

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<sup>84</sup> Dongping County

All the locals in the area tell a story. They say, “Around these parts there are girls that gather plants. Because they are so much more beautiful than ordinary people, occasionally they are known to lure men to wed them.”

(From *Yūmei roku* 幽冥録)

### 3.5 King En

A lady of the court of Jokoku<sup>85</sup> became pregnant and gave birth to an egg. This was taken as an ill omen, and so the egg was tossed into the river.

There lived an old woman who kept a dog in her house. The dog's name was Kokusō. One day, the dog went to the river and came back to show the old woman the egg in its mouth. She thought this to be a stroke of good fortune. Once the egg was warmed, it hatched and a young child emerged. Evidently, this happened while they slept.

The child had no bones, and because it was born while they slept, the woman named it “*En* (bedtime).”

Once the ruler of Jokoku heard of this, he called upon the child and set about raising it. En grew to be both just and wise with a compassionate heart. Eventually, the King appointed En to be his successor and made En administer to matters of state. At that time he was named “King En.”

When Kokusō took ill, he suddenly sprouted horns and nine tails. It seemed that he was originally a dragon that had transformed himself into a dog. King En respectfully buried him. This creature came to be known as the Dog-Dragon.

(From the *Jibun ruijutsu* 事文類聚. When King En served as the Emperor of Shu<sup>86</sup>, he served as a soldier to combat a rebellion and met his end.)

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<sup>85</sup> The state of Xu

<sup>86</sup> Zhou

### 3.6 I Shikuken

When the governor of Keiyū was a young man, he had not yet achieved an official position. In his home there was a dog. This dog stood upright and walked like a man. The people of his home saw this and said, “The dog is an ill omen. Put him down.” Shikuken replied, “This dog is a rarity. It is not misfortune to act like a man.”

Some time later he took off his *kamuri*<sup>87</sup> and placed it atop his chair. The dog took it and ran off. Surprised, the people of the village said, “Put him down!” Shikuken listened to them and replied, “He accidentally brushed against my *kamuri*. It must have been some mistake.”

Another time, the dog came to the kitchen and acted as though he were stoking a fire. Everyone thought this was very odd. Shikuken saw this, and said, “All the people of my house are currently out working the fields. This dog saw the gap left by these people, and tried to cook in their stead.” In every instance he explained how the dog was not strange.

After some time had passed, the dog passed away from natural causes. No curse befell the Shikuken household in the end. As everyone expected, Shikuken rose in status.

(From *Fūzokutsū* 風俗通. In the words of the ancients it is said, “Should you encounter something unnatural that makes you suspicious, leave it to its own devices and it will end on its own.” The truth was indeed just like that.)

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<sup>87</sup> A type of cap

### 3.7 The Horse-Headed Girl

In the country of Shoku, there was a King named Sansō. During the reign of Shōkō<sup>88</sup>, one of the Five Emperors, there lived a girl in Shoku. Her family's name was unknown. Her father was kept far removed from others. Her family also kept a horse.

The girl missed her father so much she could not eat. Her mother grieved for her and proclaimed to everyone near her - "I will give my daughter in matrimony to anyone who finds her father and brings him home." The horse heard this and stomped his hooves, snapped his reins, and set off galloping. In the space of a day the horse found where the father was staying, and the father finally straddled the horse and rode back home. The horse neighed and returned home without stopping to eat.

At home, the girl's mother told her father of her earlier proclamation. The father heard this and said, "That is a pledge made for people, not horses. How can livestock wed humans? Ridiculous!" The horse stamped the ground in agitation. The father grew angry and shot the horse to death with an arrow. He skinned it and set its hide to tan in the garden.

Suddenly, a mighty wind blew the hide from the drying rack up into the air. The hide wrapped around the girl and bounded off. No one knew where the two disappeared.

After roughly ten days had passed, the horse hide returned. It jumped back down and came to rest above a mulberry tree. The girl had transformed into a silkworm and it ate the mulberry tree's leaves and spun its thread. This was the very first time that a silkworm's thread had been made into silk.

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<sup>88</sup> Shao Hao

Some time later, the girl climbed atop the horse's back and the two bounded over the clouds and rode into the heavens. They returned accompanied by ten men and women. She saw her parents on her return and said to them, "So that I may never forget my duty, I have become a celestial being on orders from the heavens. May this set your heart at ease. I have once again returned from the heavens so I might live in the three cities Shūhō, Menchiku, and Tokukyō."<sup>89</sup>

From that point on, people gathered together from North, South, East, and West to pray to silkworms every year. In some places, people created a statue of the girl and wrapped it in a horse hide, giving her the name "The Horse Headed Girl."

(From *Shoku no kuni kei* 蜀の國經)

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<sup>89</sup> Shifang , Mianzhu, and Deyang, respectively.

### 3.8 Kanhō

Kanhō had an attractive wife, but she was taken to bed by King Kō<sup>90</sup>. When the king learned Kanhō was incredibly resentful, he sought to imprison him but in his blinding rage, Kanhō committed suicide.

Secretly, his wife dressed herself in clothes so delicate that they could break apart at any moment. At the king's bidding she ascended a tall pedestal, but suddenly, she struck the king. Everyone around was shocked. When they attempted to pull her down by her clothes, her dress tore in shreds, causing her fall off the pedestal to her death.

When they searched her sash, they found a will expressing her desire for them to bury her corpse with Kanhō. The King was furious, so he dug a separate grave and buried her in that. However, the couple's graves wished to be joined together.

In no time at all, two catalpa trees sprouted, one on each grave. Their roots intertwined beneath the earth while their branches joined above it. This is surely best known as a *renri*<sup>91</sup> tree.

Later, a duck jumped into the tree and wailed in sadness from morning to evening. The people of the time said the bird was Kanhō and his wife's souls joined and transformed.

(From *Sōshinki* 搜神記. Kanhō is also read as Kanhyō)

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<sup>90</sup> King Kang of Zhou

<sup>91</sup> A *renri* tree has interlocking branches, symbolizing romantic relationships.



### 3.9 Li Kan

During the Genna era of Tō, a man named Li Kan came from Eineiri<sup>92</sup> and arrived at the gate to Ankuso<sup>93</sup>. He saw a single carriage passing through on that road - an exceedingly extravagant one adorned in silver and pulled by a white ox. Riding alongside the carriage on two white horses were two beautiful women, also clad in white. Being unfamiliar with the laws of Ankuso and wanting to make them his women, he followed after them.

As night was approaching, one of the women riding the horses said, “You must find us displeasing and unattractive. The one inside the carriage is much more beautiful.” When they said this, Li Kan replied, “I would like very much to see her.” The woman quickly drew her horse close to the carriage and chuckled. She turned her head back to Li Kan and said, “I have already spoken to my lady inside the carriage. You may ride alongside us.” Li Kan followed in his lust.

He caught a whiff of something strange and strong. At sunset they arrived at Hōseien. The woman said, “My lady inside the cart lives here in the East. We will ask you to relax here a while. I will come back to meet you before long.” Li Kan hitched his horse at the side of the road and waited. After some time, a woman stepped out of the gate and beckoned to him. He decided to send a rider ahead of him to Annifu and he spent the night instead.

When night had fallen, an attractive young girl around 15 or 16 years of age, clad all in white, came out to meet him. Li Kan stayed there for one joyous night. At

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<sup>92</sup> Located in the Yuen Long distract

<sup>93</sup> Anhua county

daybreak, he saw the rider he sent ahead had returned and was waiting by the gate. Soon after, he took his leave and set off for home.

On his way home Li Kan suddenly suffered a headache. It grew worse and worse by the minute. He was in the southeast prefecture when his head violently split from his body.

His family was terribly confused. “Just where did he stay last night?” they asked, and one of the men accompanying him explained, “Li Kan said he could smell something strangely fragrant, but all I could smell was some raw stench.” The family quickly followed the man to where Li Kan had stayed the night before, but when they arrived, all they found was a withered Pagoda Tree with evidence that a giant snake had resided inside. They cut the tree down and dug inside, but the giant snake had already fled and could not be found. However, they found many little white snakes inside that everyone beat to death.

Men like Li Kan are sometimes tricked by snakes taking the guise of women. When the men return home they are laid low by illness. While they lie in their *futons*, their bodies will freeze and disappear even while in the middle of speaking. If a person should hang the bedding for inspection, he will see nothing but a pool of water, with only the victim’s head left behind.

(From *Setsuen* 説淵)

### 3.10 Shō Kaku

When Shō Kaku was passing through Senzan<sup>94</sup>, he saw a snake with a swollen belly crawling in the grass. The snake took a single blade of grass in its mouth and bit down, causing the swelling in its stomach to thin out and spread to the snake's lower stomach. Finally, the swelling disappeared and the snake looked normal. The snake then slithered away.

Kaku thought the grass must be medicine that cures abdominal bloating, so he placed some in a box. That night, Kaku stayed at an inn, but he heard sounds of pain from another traveler coming from next door. He went over and asked what was wrong, and the man replied, "My stomach hurts and I'm in pain!" Kaku boiled down his medicine and made the man drink it in one gulp.

After some time had passed, Kaku didn't hear any more shouts of pain. He wondered if the traveler's sickness had been cured. When daybreak came, Kaku heard the sound of dripping water. He called out to the sick man, but there was no reply. Kaku lit a lantern, and saw that the sick man's flesh had completely dissolved and turned to water. All that was left were bones on the floor. Kaku panicked and ran out into the early morning.

The innkeeper came upon this scene at dusk, but had no idea what to make of any of it. The leftover pot Shō Kaku had mixed the medicine in had turned completely to gold. The innkeeper buried the man's bones.

After many years had passed, Kaku sought forgiveness, and so he returned to the inn and told everyone the truth of what had happened.

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<sup>94</sup> Qianshan County

(From *Haru Nagisa kibun* 春渚記聞. The snake had eaten a small child, causing its belly to swell. This grass is a medicine that dissolves humans. Among medical plants, this was known as the *kaikan*<sup>95</sup> plant. It is the kind of plant that is ground into a paste to make gold.)

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<sup>95</sup> *Zantedeschia aethiopica*, also known as the “calla lily”

### 3.11 The Wolf of Chūzan

One day, the high minister of Shin<sup>96</sup>, Chō Kanshi, went hunting in Chūzan. He hunted many beasts there, but there was one wolf that stood on his legs like a human and howled. Kanshi loosed an arrow and pierced the wolf. With the arrow sticking out of him, the wolf turned and fled. Kanshi grew angry and gave chase, but dust blew in dark clouds, enveloping him and his horse, and causing Kanshi to lose track of the wolf.

At that time Professor Tōkaku stored some books in his bag, rode out on a donkey, and met the wolf on the road. The wolf said, “Please help me, Professor Tōkaku! Please let me hide inside your bag.” Professor Tōkaku took his books out, packed in the wolf’s head, bent its tail, and scrunched the wolf’s four legs so it would fit inside his bag. He fastened the opening of the bag and pulled his donkey along the side of the road.

Kanshi came by to ask about the wolf. He said to the professor, “You there! You should know where the wolf is. If you don’t tell me, I’ll kill you!” The professor prostrated himself before Kanshi and replied, “I’m sorry, I do not know.” Kanshi climbed into his carriage and returned home.

When Kanshi was finally far enough away, the wolf said, “Please let me out of the bag. Untie the rope and take this arrow out of me!” The professor opened the bag and let him out. The wolf howled in anger and said, “You may have helped me, Professor, but I am starving. Don’t be so stingy with your body. If you let me eat you, you’ll be saving my life. You aren’t young anymore! Wouldn’t you say being killed by hunters is equal to being eaten?” The wolf opened his mouth, brandished his claws, and

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<sup>96</sup> Jin dynasty

turned towards the professor. The professor panicked and raised his fists to defend himself.

Soon, the two fell on the grass and took a moment to catch their breath. The professor knew in his heart that if the day turned to night, the wolf would call his friends and he would most certainly be eaten. He decided to deceive the wolf. “In this situation we should talk with an elder to dispel all doubt. We shall ask him how righteous it would be if you ate me,” he proposed. The wolf gladly went along with him.

The wolf’s tongue hung from his mouth in his hunger and it was about to eat the professor, but then it pointed to an old tree and said, “There. Ask him.”

“But that is just some strange tree! No matter what we ask, it won’t be any help to us,” the professor protested, but the wolf was insistent.

“If you ask him, he will answer.”

And so, the professor asked the tree. The tree had a voice and responded, “The wolf should eat you. I am an apricot tree. A human once planted a seed and from that I grew, but for three years my seeds have not borne fruit. Instead, the humans have taken my seeds back to their families to eat. They have sold my seeds and made a profit from them. Now I am an old tree. Humans come to chop my branches for firewood, or cut my trunk for timber. Although once I was grateful to humans for planting me, now I bear a grudge for the pain they have inflicted in cutting me. Although the wolf may be grateful to you, there is also something more he wants from you.”

The wolf heard this and was about to leap on the professor to eat him. “This is but a tree! We should ask the opinion of a human elder! Do not be so hasty to eat me,” said the professor, and the two set off once again.

The wolf saw an ox and said, “Ask this one.” The professor protested.

“This is just livestock. No matter what we ask, it won’t be any help to us.” The wolf insisted, and they talked to the ox. Once again, the professor gave the details of their situation and asked the ox its opinion. The old ox replied, “The wolf should eat you. Oh, how strong I was in my youth. My master loved me and reared me well. I showed him my strength when it came time to plow the fields. He bound a cart to me, stacked heavy goods on it, and had me pull it. But within one year, all the food I cultivated was given away and distributed for an annual tax, so I was the one who had to pay. And now, seeing how old I am, I have been put to pasture. My bones have become brittle like stone, my tears flow like dew, and it has become difficult to even wipe the drool hanging from my mouth. My fur has fallen out and my wounds do not heal. My master plots with his wife to turn my meat to jerky. They will tan my hide, polish my horns and turn them into cups! And finally, I heard them say they will butcher me. And so, even though I have brought my master success, he intends to murder me. The wolf might be grateful to you, Professor, but he should still eat you.”

The wolf heard this and once again approached the professor to devour him.

“What a rush you are in! Look, here comes an old, gray-haired man walking with a cane. Let us ask him,” said the professor. And so they approached the old man, knelt, and told him the whole story, including what the old tree and ox had said. The old man listened to the story. Afterwards, he beat the wolf’s shank with his walking stick and said, “You are the one in the wrong. It is an evil thing to throw back the kindness a man has shown to you. You should leave right away. If you do not, I will beat you to death with this stick!”

The wolf grew pale and said, “But old man, you still do not know everything! When the professor first rescued me, he bound my legs inside his bag and it was impossible for me to even breathe. Also, the professor exchanged words with Chō Kanshi for such a long time, they surely were badmouthing me the entire time! He must have intended to kill me inside the bag and sell my body in town. That is why I must eat the professor!” The old man listened to this, turned to the professor and said, “If that is how it seemed, than what the wolf has said is not entirely unjustified. I cannot come to a conclusion based on my incomplete understanding of this discussion. Wolf, show me the pain you were in when you were trapped in the bag and I will understand. Go back in the bag.”

The wolf nodded and went back in. Once he was inside, the professor tied the bag up tightly, just like before. The old man whispered quietly to the professor, “Do you have your *hishu*?<sup>97</sup>”

“I have this,” replied the professor, and he produced one. With his eyes, the old man urged the professor to kill the wolf, but this was not something the professor could do easily. The old man smiled broadly and said, “This wolf has betrayed your kindness and intends to eat you. Although one might say dying this way is an act of compassion, that would be folly.” The two of them raised their arms, took hold of the *hishu* together, and plunged it into the wolf. They threw the body to the side of the road and returned home. “*Hishu*” was the name of the professor’s blade.

(From *Sekkai* 説海)

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<sup>97</sup> A *hishu* (匕首) is a small dagger shaped like a spoon. As the ending explains what the *hishu* is, one surmises that the term was relatively unknown in Japanese and Hayashi Razan was attempting to explain the term to his readers.



### 3.12 Fish Clothes

In the second year of the Kengen era of the Tō<sup>98</sup>, there was a man named Setsu I who took ill. On the seventh day of his illness he suddenly stopped breathing and appeared dead. His caretakers repeatedly called his name, but he could not respond. There remained a little warmth in his chest, so his attendants refrained from burying him. Everyone took care of him and protected him.

The twentieth day passed, and Setsu I rose up, fully alive. He turned towards his caretakers and asked, “Just how many days have I been asleep?”

“Twenty days,” they responded. To their questions he said, “In those twenty days you killed a *koi* fish, yes? I was actually that *koi*.” His caretakers were shocked and pressed him for information.

“When I took ill, it was an unbearably hot day. Seeking to cool myself, I set off with a cane in hand. Just by leaving I was already in high spirits. I felt just like a bird leaving the nest. I eventually found myself in the mountains. I laid down on the grass at a riverbank. I loved how cool the water felt, and so I jumped in and began swimming. There was a single fish beside me and we swam together.

“After some time had passed, a being in the shape of a man came riding atop a whale. There were many fish that swam along following him. ‘I am a messenger of the River Chief,’ he said, and together we frolicked in the river. Just then, when I looked at my own body I saw that I had sprouted fins and scales. I already looked exactly like a fish.

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<sup>98</sup> Approx. 759 AD during the Tang Dynasty

“There was no place in any corner of the world that we did not visit. They called me ‘Red Koi of the Eastern Depths.’ All of a sudden, I got quite hungry and decided to have something to eat. At that time I smelled bait on Chō Kan’s lure, and I decided to eat that. However, I had turned back into a man. I had only been a fish temporarily. It didn’t seem right to eat bait, so he discarded the idea and went on my way. However, I was still starving. ‘I am a public official, and even if I did swallow the bait, there’s no way Chō Kan would kill me,’ and so thinking I swallowed the bait.

“Chō Kan pulled me out of the water. I raised my voice in protestation, but he didn’t hear a thing. He bound my jaw with rope and left me hanging among the reeds on the shore. Then, Chō Hitsu came and said ‘The I Shō office would like to purchase a large fish.’ He saw me, the large fish, among the reeds and took me with him.

“We entered a gate, and I saw that those inside were playing a game of “Go,” but when I called to them I received no reply. I heard someone say, ‘The fish has arrived!’ After that, we climbed a set of stairs and I saw Sū Hō and Rai Sai in the middle of gambling. I Satsu was eating a peach. Everyone seemed glad that their fish had arrived.

“Soon after I was sent to the kitchen to be made into a dish. O Shirō came in carrying a kitchen knife and laid me on top of the carving board. I cried out, ‘O Shirō, you’re going to cut into a human being! Why are you going to kill me?’ However, I suppose he didn’t hear me as he then brought the knife down on my neck. And just then, I was born anew.”

All of Setsu I’s caretakers looked at him in astonishment, and they had no words to express their grief. Until the end of their days, Chō Kan never fished again, Chō Hitsu never took another fish, the I Shō office never asked for another one, and Sū Hō, Rai Sai,

and I Satsu never ate a fish dish ever again. After he recovered from his illness, Setsu I went on to serve as Kayō's<sup>99</sup> prime minister.

(From *Sekkai* 説海. It is called *gyōfuku* (fish clothes) when a man transforms into a fish.)

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<sup>99</sup> Huayang prefecture

### 3.13 I Fu

Jo Genshi was troubled by spirits in his house. He loved the many different unusual flowers and trees in the area, and his home there.

One night he was reading a scroll. Just then many hundreds of tiny horsemen emerged and acted as though they were hunting wild beasts on top of the carpet on his floor. Many of the hundreds of horsemen wore swords at their sides and carried bows, while many others carried cooking utensils and bamboo mats. Among them was one man wearing a red hat and clad in purple clothing with many people attending him. They were to the right of his desk. A warrior clad in an iron helm yelled up to him, “His highness wishes to see the fish in the Purple Stone Pool.” The man clad in purple dismounted his horse, and climbed atop Genshi’s inkstone together with the hundreds of retainers under his command. Genshi’s inkstone must have been the Purple Stone Pool.

They pulled open the drapes, spread a bamboo mat on the floor, and drank heartily. They played orchestral music and sang and danced. Genshi thought this odd, and when he peered closely, he clearly distinguished the shape of things. Many were angling for fish in his inkstone. Perhaps they wanted to serve a fish side dish, or needed them for broth.

The man in purple rose his cup and said to Genshi, “I am a worthy man, and will one day climb to the rank of king. You are a poor commoner, and though you have the white hair of a learned man, you look starved. Become my retainer and join our feast.” Genshi quickly took his scrolls and hid them, and then he lit a lantern, but they had all disappeared.

That night, many men clad in armor came to Genshi in his dreams and said, “Prince I Fu was hunting in the Sheepwood Swamp and fishing at the Purple Stone Pool. At that time, your lawless conduct drew the attention of the King’s carriage.” The man who said this was General Kō, and he took a white thread, wrapped it around Genshi’s neck, and took him away. Suddenly, they entered a castle gate.

The man who was king angrily explained, “Genshi, you have angered my son. You are to be disciplined.” When he said this, the ambassador Ba Chigen came forward and balked. “The prince came without permission and began fishing, which was improper. Genshi has done no wrong.” The king grew angry and cut Chigen down.

At this time, it suddenly began to rain heavily. A man named Ki I held up a document and offered his advice. The king’s temper cooled, and he appointed Ki I as high steward, and gave his son, Chi, Ba Chigen’s rank of ambassador, awarding him five hundred strands of silk and three hundred grains of rice. Chi also held up a document and offered an admonition. The king looked upon him with displeasure. The king had a terrible premonition. In fear, he immediately pardoned Genshi and sent him away in his carriage.

Suddenly Genshi saw he was back in his chair, and awoke to find his clothes drenched in sweat. At daybreak, he called together the members of his house to dig a hole in the dirt beneath the west window. After a depth of five *shaku*<sup>100</sup>, they found an ant hole. It looked just like a water jar that could hold up to 3 *goku*<sup>101</sup> in volume. Genshi

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<sup>100</sup> Approx. 150 cm

<sup>101</sup> Approx. 540 liters

suddenly decided to set fire to it, and after setting it alight, there was nothing more to be found. His house was free from misfortunes from that point on.

(I Fu was an ant, as were Kō, Ba Chigen, Ki I, and Chi. All had names meaning “ant.”

From *Sekkai* 説海)

### 3.14 Onmoraki

During the Sō<sup>102</sup>, there was a man from Teijū<sup>103</sup> named Sai Shifuku. He went into a temple on the outskirts of the castle, relaxed inside the lecture hall, and fell asleep. Suddenly he heard a voice reprimanding him. Sai was surprised and when he got up to take a look, he saw the figure of a black crane. Its eyes shone like lanterns, and it cried in a loud voice while it flapped its wings. Sai ran down the corridor in fear, but when he looked back he suddenly could not see it any longer.

The next morning Sai asked one of the temple monks what had happened. “We have no monsters like that here. However, ten days ago a dead body we sent away was returned to us. We have been storing it here for the time being. Perhaps that is the trouble?” he responded.

Sai left for the capital, and told a Shramana monk at the Kaihō temple of what had happened. He replied, “It is written in the Tripitaka that the soul of a newly deceased corpse will transform into something much like this. It is called the *Onmoraki*.”<sup>104</sup>

(From *Seisonroku* 清尊録)

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<sup>102</sup> Song Dynasty

<sup>103</sup> Zhengzhou city

<sup>104</sup> The *kanji* characters comprising the word *onmoraki* are *on* 陰 (shadow), *mora* 摩羅 (hindrance in Buddhist practices), and *ki* 鬼 (spirit). This combination reveals the spirit’s nature as one who rebukes those who fail to properly uphold good Buddhist conduct.

### 3.15 San Rōshi

During the Tō, west of Henjū<sup>105</sup> there lived a woman named San Rōshi who ran a store called the Plank Bridge. She was a widow over thirty years of age and she had no children or family. At the shop she brokered goods and made a living selling food she made. Even so, her house was unusually extravagant and she kept a great number of donkeys. Many travelers and people who did not own carriages would come and buy her donkeys, which she sold for a good price. Many travelers gathered there.

In the middle of the Genwa era<sup>106</sup>, there was a man named Chō Kika from Kyojū<sup>107</sup>. When he decided to go to the eastern capital, he lodged at this shop. There were six or seven travelers already there ahead of him. Chō Kika arrived late at night.

San Rōshi entertained them well. Each and every one drank heartily. Despite not being a drinker himself, Kika mingled with the group. At the stroke of 10 at night, everyone got tired and was quickly asleep.

San Rōshi entered, closed the door and blew out the light. Kika was the only one not yet asleep. He heard the sounds of San Rōshi moving things around through the wall that separated them. When he peered through a gap in the wall, he saw San Rōshi light a fire, pull out a farmer's hoe, a wooden ox, and a wooden doll. Each was about six or seven *sun* long<sup>108</sup>, and she placed each in front of the kitchen and spat on them. The wooden doll began to run and pulled the wooden ox who used the hoe to till a portion of

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<sup>105</sup> Biànzōu in Chinese, now known as Kaifeng city.

<sup>106</sup> 806 AD – 820 AD

<sup>107</sup> Xuzhou.

<sup>108</sup> 18 - 21 cm



earth in front of the floor. Afterward, she pulled a packet of *soba* seeds from inside the box and planted them. Before long, it sprouted into *soba*. She harvested seven or eight *sho*<sup>109</sup> of *soba*. They then ground it up with a tiny mortar. Finally she gathered the wooden ox, the doll, and the hoe together and shut them inside the box. San Rōshi took the *soba* and made six or seven roasted rice cakes.

After a while, dawn arrived. When the many travelers were about to leave, San Rōshi quickly and happily laid the roasted rice cakes upon the floor, and had the travelers eat them. Kika looked on with apprehension. He said his farewells and pretended to leave, but secretly he spied on them from outside the gate. When the travelers ate the roasted rice cakes they collapsed on the floor braying, and finally their bodies changed to a donkey's form. She led all the donkeys to the stable behind her shop and gathered all of the travelers' belongings for herself.

Kika saw everything but told no one. He believed it to be some form of unusual magic. One month later, Kika was returning from the eastern capital. He intended to come back to this shop, but before he did he baked his own *soba* rice cakes, matching the size and shape of the ones he had seen before. He arrived at the Plank Bridge shop and lodged there once more. San Rōshi delightedly entertained him, just as she did the first time.

This night, he told her, "I intend to leave early in the morning. Please prepare the rice cakes."

"That is but a simple matter. Please sleep well," she replied.

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<sup>109</sup> 12.6 – 14.4 liters

Midnight came and went. While Kika quietly spied on San Rōshi, she did the same thing in her room that she did before. At daybreak, San Rōshi offered Kika snacks. She neatly laid many soba rice cakes in rows for him.

When San Rōshi turned around to take some other object, Kida saw his chance. He quickly replaced the rice cake San Rōshi made with the one he had made. When it came time to eat, he told San Rōshi, “I brought some rice cakes as well. I meant to give them to the other travelers, but I saved one for you.” He made sure the cake he held was his own and ate it.

San Rōshi brought him tea. “Please try out the cake I made, ma’am,” he told her.

“Why thank you,” she responded. Kika gave her back her very own rice cake. It looked just like the one he had made, but when she put it in her mouth, she fell to the floor, brayed, and finally transformed into a strong, healthy donkey. Kika sat on top of it and rode her outside.

It is said he took the wooden doll and ox with him, but he did not know the magic to make them work. Kika rode his donkey and journeyed to various places with nary a stumble. He must have made her walk one-hundred *ri*<sup>110</sup> every day.

Four years later, he rode the donkey east of the shrine at Mt. Hua. He met a man on a road that was only five or six *ri*<sup>111</sup> long. The old man clapped his hands, laughed, and said, “San Rōshi from Plank Bridge? Why do you look like a donkey now?” He took the donkey and told Kika, “Surely this woman has sinned greatly, but the shame she has known from meeting you is great indeed. Do you not pity her? Please forgive her

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<sup>110</sup> Approx 400 km

<sup>111</sup> Approx 20 -24 km

from today on.” The old man pulled on the donkey’s snout with both of his hands, tore it in two, and San Rōshi jumped out from inside its skin. San Rōshi was finally back to normal. She offered a prayer to the old man, and when she was done she ran away. She was never seen again.

(From *Sekkai* 説海)

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