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**THE EVOLUTION OF *YŌKAI* IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE JAPANESE HORROR  
GENRE**

A Thesis Presented

by

ADAM J. JOHNSON

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

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2015

Japanese

**THE EVOLUTION OF *YŌKAI* IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE JAPANESE HORROR  
GENRE**

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## **DEDICATION**

To my loving family and friends who showed me what education is all about. Thank you for lending me your love and support throughout this three-year process. I have at last earned my freedom.

## ABSTRACT

### THE EVOLUTION OF YŌKAI IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE HORROR GENRE

MAY 2015

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In 2007, popular mystery author Kyōgoku Natsuhiko attempted to adapt a collection of random stories known as the *Mimi bukuro* or *Tales Heard* into *kaidan*, tales of the strange and mysterious for today's readership. The writing experiment ended with Kyōgoku questioning his own writing abilities and publishing his small collection of adapted stories into a book that was not considered very frightening. Although the experiment failed, Kyōgoku's efforts raise the question, "if not *kaidan*, what is frightening in the twentieth century?"

The reason why *kaidan* are no longer frightening is because their central characters, *yōkai*, have been displaced from the horror genre. Today the *yōkai* that were once popular in the Edo period have been "cutesified" for businesses, films, and children's shows. What is frightening today is no longer the Edo period monster, but rather aliens, ghosts, scientific monsters, and serial killers that represent a fear of the unknown. While the unknown has been a fear of man since the beginning, how it is symbolized and interpreted changes over time based on society and individual experiences.

Chapter one traces the development of *yōkai's* transformation from traditional horror story icons to children's characters and role models. Chapter two

analyzes and compares four of the original stories from the *Mimi bukuro* to Kyōgoku's adaptation to understand what was scary during the Edo period, and what Kyōgoku deemed frightening in modern times. Chapter three analyzes three different monsters and explains why they were frightening and what problems or unknown situations each monster represented for modern audiences.

## TABLES OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	iv
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER	
I. THE HISTORY: HOW DID THIS CHANGE HAPPEN? .....	11
II. THE MIMI BUKURO COMPARISON: WHY THIS DID NOT WORK.....	35
III. NEW FACES OF HORROR .....	59
CONCLUSION .....	82
APPENDIX: SELECTED TRANSLATIONS AND NOTES .....	87
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	112

## INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s Kihara Hirokatsu and Nakayama Ichirō studied a collection of supernatural encounters from the Edo period (1603-1868) called *Mimi bukuro* or *Tales Heard*. The two men were inspired by the process of collecting strange stories that people claimed to have happened, so they wanted to continue the storytelling tradition. Kihara and Nakayama compiled new stories and published their version of scary storytelling based on an old storytelling game called *hyaku-monogatari* in 1998 called *Shin mimi bukuro* or *The New Tales Heard*. The popularity of the first book launched a new wave of ghost stories, film adaptations, TV programming, manga, and a new book series that contributed to the *yōkai* boom.<sup>1</sup> Seeing the success of these ghost stories, popular mystery author Kyōgoku Natsuhiko decided to explore the roots of this literary tradition of sharing supernatural encounters in the original *Mimi bukuro*. Upon reading these Edo-period supernatural encounters, Kyōgoku realized that the stories were not scary, and merely miscellaneous entries that would probably not appeal to today's readership. In order to make the stories entertaining for readers, Kyōgoku tried an experiment and attempted to adapt the original *Mimi bukuro* stories into *kaidan*, "tales of strange and mysterious, supernatural stories known for their depictions of the horrific and gruesome."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ten additional volumes have been published due to the success of the first book known as, 第一夜新耳袋 or *First Night of the New Stories Heard*. Each book contains ninety-nine short horror stories based on the experiences of modern day people. A television series began in 2003 with episodes containing several stories lasting five minutes each. This series lasted for five seasons up until 2007. In the same year a new series developed where the individual stories lasted for one hour. These ten films were broadcasted on television and then released to DVDs from 2007 to August 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Noriko T. Reider, *Tales of the Supernatural in Early Modern Japan: Kaidan, Akinari, Ugetsu Monogatari*. (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002) 1.



Kyōgoku published several of these stories in his magazine *Yū* or *Ghost* from 2004 to 2007 until he asked the chief editor for permission to discontinue the project. This was because Kyōgoku believed he could not write an effective ghost story or *kaidan* for today's audience. Kyōgoku's experiment in adapting the *Mimi bukuro* into scary stories ended and so he published his combined adaptations in a book called *Furui kaidan mimi bukuro yori* or *Old Ghost Stories From Tales Heard* in 2007. While this appears to be the case of an author's poorly executed literary experiment that ended in questioning his own writing ability, Kyōgoku's results raises the question: "If not *kaidan*, what is frightening today?"

From the large number of *kaidan* written and shared since the Edo period, one can assume that the Japanese were superstitious and feared the unknown. They were afraid of darkness, and anything from weird sounds to mysterious figures cloaked in shadow. The central characters in *kaidan*, *yōkai* were used as an explanation for the weird phenomenon people experienced such as: missing persons, vanishing items, strange and sudden erratic behavior in family members.<sup>3</sup> These monsters represented people's fears primarily during the early periods of Japanese history, but eventually became displaced from the horror genre. As time passed, social situations changed, society developed and the fear people had towards *yōkai* was viewed as irrational.<sup>4</sup> The monstrous creatures that inspired such fear found in the Edo era *kaidan*, the *yōkai* have been "cutesified." Due to

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<sup>3</sup> These are just a few of the incidents that were blamed on *yōkai* in Natsuhiko's book *Furui kaidan mimi bukuro yori*.

<sup>4</sup> In his work *Bon sugi medochi dan* of 1932, translated as *After the Bon Festivities: Tales of Medochi*, Yanagita Kunio discusses his degradation theory in how as society evolves, their fear towards *yōkai* deteriorates until the *yōkai* become merely used for entertainment and stories of old times.

society's progression and intended use of these creatures for entertainment purposes, comedy, and children's shows, *yōkai's* once terrifying image has been nullified. The transformation these cultural monsters underwent from terrifying beings to child-like television characters raises the question: if *yōkai* are out of the picture, how do we define the Japanese horror genre today?

What seems to be frightening in horror today is no longer the mysterious *yōkai* of the Edo period, but new monsters representing the unknown and that are beyond control or understanding. While the unknown has been a fear since the early days of Japanese history, this fear transforms and takes new shapes and adapts to one's social background and experiences. As a result, aliens, ghosts, scientific monsters, serial killers and the potential violence within humans are all the new faces of horror that people fear because they are all connected by unknown variables. Some of these unknown factors are: life after death, whether or not extraterrestrial life on another planet exists, what would happen if a flesh-eating virus were to spread with no cure, and the possibility of another World War involving the use of nuclear weapons. These are concepts and questions that no one has answered yet, and the monsters that appear in comics, horror stories, and films are the physical manifestations of these unknown fears. Simply put, *yōkai* are no longer frightening and these new monsters have taken center stage in the horror genre because they symbolize current unknown variables man has yet to discover or understand. This fear of the unknown that has been around for centuries has evolved and taken a new form that spreads terror into the hearts of people who live in an era where people depend on technology.

In order to understand why *yōkai* are not scary anymore, it is necessary to first define horror. In general, the horror genre in film and literature possesses the potential to frighten readers, providing a sense of anxiousness, concern, or even goosebumps. Horror is a reflection of an audience's social anxieties, assumptions, theories, beliefs, and desire to understand their environment.<sup>5</sup> Since horror is dependent on the reader's environment and cultural upbringing, it seems natural for Americans and Japanese to have a different opinion regarding what is frightening. Nevertheless, regardless of environment, horror must change and reinvent itself in order to stay appealing to audiences. If horror keeps providing the same kinds of fears, audiences will lose interest as shown in the following case study.

American audiences were originally frightened by a scene from the film *A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master*, when Freddy Krueger orders a pizza with toppings shaped in the form of his victims' screaming faces. The audience found it disgusting and horrific at first, but as they watched the same scene three additional times, its horrific impact weakened and audiences began to call the scene campy and comical.<sup>6</sup> In order to avoid this effect of deteriorating horror, the genre must evolve and reinvent itself as the audience's experiences and expectations change. Following the natural cycle of how horror adapts to reflect the anxieties of audiences, it makes sense that *yōkai* should end up eventually becoming displaced from the horror genre.

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Gixti, *Terrors of Uncertainty: the Cultural Contexts of Horror Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1989), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Richard Fahy, *The Philosophy of Horror* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 2.

Before I continue any further, it is necessary to define and categorize the terms I will be using in this paper since scholars believe these words overlap. The main issue is distinguishing and categorizing *yūrei* and *yōkai*. *Yōkai* is comprised of two kanji, 妖 and 怪. The first kanji 妖 means bewitching, attractive, calamity and the second, 怪 means suspicious, or mystery, apparition.<sup>7</sup> Based on these words, a *yōkai* is a bewitching mystery or apparition. Today, *yōkai* is defined as an umbrella term that describes Japanese monsters, ghouls, sprites, goblins, spirits, ghosts, demons, strange phenomenon, paranormal activity, and inanimate objects. There are different types of *yōkai* and they can be malevolent or bring good fortune to those who encounter them.<sup>8</sup> *Yōkai* are known to possess shape-shifting abilities and create illusions, but those that do possess shape-shifting abilities are also known as *obake* or *bakemono*, literally meaning a thing that changes or changing thing. *Yōkai* only exist in Japan so it would be inappropriate to categorize Frankenstein or the Invisible Man as a *yōkai*.

*Yōkai* are often limited to haunting one location, so it is possible to avoid them altogether as long as people know these dangerous areas. Even if a person were to accidentally enter the *yōkai*-infested territory, they may not see anything since these monsters prefer the limited hours of dawn and dusk. There are several theories surrounding these creatures as scholars continue to debate about their behavior and existence to this day. An example of one of these discussions is how

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<sup>7</sup> These definitions were taken by looking at each individual character and the English words attached to it. Since a Japanese character's meaning can change based on the second kanji it is attached to, it is necessary to look up and provide all of the possible words.

<sup>8</sup> There are several *yōkai* that bring good luck such as the *Chōpirako*, a *yōkai* that brings luck to the user as long as it remains in the home, but disaster follows as soon as it leaves. Yoda Hiroko, and Matt Alt. *Yōkai Attack! The Japanese Monster Survival Guide*, (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2008).

folklore researcher and anthropologist Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962) believes *yōkai* are fallen deities who are no longer worshipped. Meanwhile Folklore Professor Komatsu Kazuhiko, believes that *yōkai* and deities are one in the same. For example, a water deity is worshipped for providing the rains for a good harvest, and despised as a *yōkai* for bringing drought to a city.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike *yōkai* that are limited to Japan, *yūrei* do not have to be Japanese, and can appear anywhere in the world. *Yūrei* is made up of two kanji, 幽 and 霊. The first character 幽 means faint or dim. The second character 霊 is defined as soul or spirit. Based on these definitions, a *yūrei* is a faint spirit or dim soul, which is often translated to ghost. In the traditional sense, *yūrei* are ghosts that have been barred from the afterlife. Similar to *yōkai*, *yūrei* are sometimes good and other times not. In Japanese tradition, it is believed that all living beings possess a *reikon* or soul. When a person dies, their *reikon* is released from their body and waits in purgatory for the proper burial rites to be completed before they may enter heaven. After completing this cycle, the spirit of the deceased becomes a guardian who watches over the family and returns to the land of the living during the month of August to receive thanks during the *Obon* Festival.<sup>10</sup> But when a person is killed violently, or harbors a lot of negative energy or resentment at the time of their death, they return to the world as a *yūrei* and are doomed to remain on earth and haunt people until their anger subsides or until the proper burial rites have been performed.

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<sup>9</sup> Komatsu Kazuhiko, *Yōkaigaku shinkō: Yōkai kara miru Nihonjin no kokoro* (Shōgakukan, 1994), 33-40, 162-173.

<sup>10</sup> Tim Screech, a Professor of Japanese Art History at the University of London provides a nice analysis of *yūrei* and *yōkai* on his website: <http://www.hauntedtimes.com/japanese-ghosts>

It was during the Edo period (1603-1867) when *yūrei* began to take shape and develop specific features in *kaidan* and theatre performances that made them easier to identify. Some of the common attributes of a *yūrei* include white clothing or a burial *kimono* that was used during the Edo period, long black hair that was never tied in burials and a floating appearance lacking legs. The first *yūrei* was drawn in 1750 by *ukiyo*e artist Maruyama Ōkyo. His painting is called “The Ghost of Oyuki,” and contains all of the features of a traditional ghost.

Similar to *yōkai* is how *yūrei* have more than one type of category depending on how the person died. For example, if the person was brutally murdered, committed suicide, or harbored resentment during their death, the person returns to the living world as an *onryō* or vengeful ghost. If the person died at sea, they were known as a *funayūrei*. *Ubume* is a type of ghost of a woman who died during childbirth, and *jikininki* is a corpse-eating ghost with connections to Buddhism.<sup>11</sup> No matter what kind of ghost the person is dealing with, the only way to dispel them is to fulfill their wishes, perform a burial service, or wait out their wrath. However, *onryō* were known to linger for a long period of time even after the proper rights were performed and their killers were brought to justice.

In the scholarly world of *yōkai* studies, there is an ongoing debate as to whether or not *yōkai* and *yūrei* are the same, since *yōkai* is typically used as an umbrella term to describe Japanese specters and includes *yūrei* in its definition. American scholar of *yōkai* and folklore Michael Dylan Foster leaves the definition

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<sup>11</sup> In Lafcadio Hearn’s *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things* (1904), a young man encounters a *Jikininki* who says he was turned into a corpse-eating monster as punishment for living a selfish life as a priest and only being concerned with his money and clothes his work brought him.

open-ended in his books since the “history of *yōkai* is very much the history of efforts to describe and define the object being considered.”<sup>12</sup> Yanagita took a different approach and believed that the two were separate entities. His reasoning is that unlike the *yōkai* who wish to be seen during dawn and dusk, *yūrei* appear during “*ushimitsu*, the third quarter of the hour of the ox when night was at its darkest around 2:00-2:30am.”<sup>13</sup> Another observation distinguishing these two is that the *yūrei* haunt a particular victim or location associated with its death, while *yōkai* target the masses and typically remain in one location. As a result, it is easy to escape a *yōkai* by leaving its territory while escaping the wrath of a *yūrei* is difficult since it is mobile and will haunt the victim until its rage or desire is fulfilled. Finally, *yōkai* are fallen gods who desire to be worshipped and remembered whereas *yūrei* are fallen humans.

I agree with Yanagita in that *yōkai* and *yūrei* are completely different entities, but my reasons are different. Unlike *yūrei*, one of *yōkai*'s primary abilities is shape-shifting and creating illusions such as the *kitsune*, *tanuki* and the *tsukumogami*. While there are some *yōkai* who resemble humans such as the *nopperabō*, *rokurokubi*, and *kuchi-sake-onna*, they lack a personal connection to victims. *Yūrei* were originally living people and they had a name such as “Bob” or “Adam”. They had a life that came to an abrupt end, and are probably remembered personally by their friends and community. These connections and former relationships is what

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Dylan Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yōkai* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2009), 49.

<sup>13</sup> Yanagita, Kunio, “*Yōkai dangi*” in *Teihon Yanagita Kunio Shū* (Chikuma shobō, 1970), 4:292-293.

separates *yūrei* from *yōkai* that were never human in the first place, but a fallen deity or just simply a monster from the shadows.

Yanagita's argument is justified when he states that *yūrei* and *yōkai* appear at different times and behave differently. While *yūrei* prefer darkness and choose their victims, *yōkai* have no real target and prefer the time of little light during the dawn or dusk. Yanagita and Foster fail to point out that nowadays people are most active during the time of dusk and dawn. Everyone is commuting to school or work in the morning and are returning home as the sun sets. The *yōkai* choose these times that provide lots of shadows, so they can hide, ambush and frighten their audience, but also when these areas are most populated. This is on purpose so they can be seen, recognized, and remembered. On the contrary, *yūrei* prefer the darkness and do not wish to be seen by anyone other than the person they are haunting.

The last reason I have for distinguishing these two entities is because *yōkai* are living monsters and are not usually associated with death, but symbolize people's fear. The monster is the physical representation of someone's fear and imagination that has come to life in the worst way imaginable. The boogeyman is an example of this where children imagine a monster or some creature hiding under the bed, when in reality they are actually afraid of the dark. *Yūrei* are the form of someone who has passed on into the next world, but are prevented from doing so, and they are associated with death. Since death is a common fear even today in the twenty-first century, *yūrei* continue to be frightening whereas their *yōkai* counterparts eventually lost their frightening power. As a result of these differences, *yōkai* and *yūrei* will be considered as two separate entities.



Furthermore, since *yūrei* is often translated as “ghost,” and ghosts are known across the world, I will be referring to this entity as “ghost” throughout the rest of this paper. The next chapter will trace the history of *yōkai* from their glory days as horror icons starting in the Nara period (710-794), and their gradual transformation into children’s icons by the twenty-first century. By looking at this gradual transformation, we can obtain a better understanding as to what people fear today and why these once terrifying monsters were viewed as role models and ideal characters for children’s animated television programs.

## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORY: HOW DID THIS CHANGE HAPPEN?

In order to explain the Japanese horror genre today, I will take a step back and introduce the history behind *yōkai*, and provide context as to how these monsters devolved from creatures used in the horror genre to cute mascots in today's media. In both Kyōgoku and Kihara and Nakayama's work, the main characters are *yōkai*, an umbrella term for ghouls, monsters, ghosts, demons, spirits, goblins, weird phenomenon, supernatural events and the unexplainable. Although *yōkai* would one day lose their position as a horror icon, they have developed into a thriving academic field of study, and new *yōkai* are still created today through literature, cinema, social gatherings and academic research. Over the course of history, the *yōkai's* appearances, abilities, purpose, and usage changed from scary monsters to child-friendly creatures. *Yōkai's* original portrayal as terrifying monsters began during the Nara period (710-794).

Although the word has roots in China dating back to the first century, *yōkai* first appear in Japanese literature in the eighth century (year 772), when it was stated in the *Shoku Nihongi*, a mythohistorical text, that Shinto purification ceremonies were carried out at the imperial court due to a *yōkai*, inferring a strange or unfortunate occurrence.<sup>14</sup> Even before this entry, the legends of monsters and heroes that vanquished *yōkai* started appearing as early as the year 712 in the *Kojiki* and 720 in the *Nihonshoki*, two ancient texts that contained Japan's oldest stories, folklore, mythology, and ancient history since the eighth century. An example of one

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<sup>14</sup> Aoki Kazuo, Inaoka Kōji, Sasayama Haruo, and Shirafuji Noriyuki, *Shoku Nihongi*, Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei 16 (Iwanami shoten, 1998), 5:33.

of these stories is the legend of Susa-no-O the Dragon Slayer. Susa-no-O was the younger brother of the Japanese sun goddess, Amaterasu. After being banished from the realm of the gods, Susa-no-O meets a family who is tormented by an eight-headed dragon known as Yamata no Orochi. The description of the creature leaves plenty of room for the imagination since “his length is such that he spans eight valleys and eight mountain peaks. If you look at his belly, you see blood oozing all over it.”<sup>15</sup> In return for slaying the monster, Susa-no-O requests to marry the family’s remaining daughter. To accomplish this daunting task, Susa-no-O combines wit and strength by tricking the monster into drinking eight barrels of sake (one for each head). Once the creature falls asleep, he proceeds to decapitate each head. This kind of story is an example of *yōkai taiji* or “tales of vanquishing *yōkai*” where the brave hero goes on a quest to rescue a damsel in distress or liberate his city from an evil *yōkai*. In these stories *yōkai* are depicted as an antagonist threatening to disrupt society, and possibly destroy the world. They are beings of darkness that dwell in mountains, forests, and other locations man has yet to cultivate, and so the hero must venture outside the safety of his home to conquer the monster.

*Yōkai*’s identity as horrific monsters bent on destruction was also formed by the daily superstitions of the Japanese during the Heian period (794-1185). One example is how some people believed it was dangerous to travel outside at dusk due to the possible encounter with a *hyakkiyagyō* or a “night parade of one hundred demons.” This phenomenon was written in Heian-period texts that describe a large group of dangerous creatures passing through the Heian capital (present day

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Dylan Foster, *The Book of Yōkai*, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015) 35.

Kyoto). It was rumored that to witness such a ghostly procession would result in a gruesome death.<sup>16</sup> The danger *hyakkiyagyō* posed to the populace grew to the extent that *hyakkiyagyō* forecasts were provided by the capital's Bureau of Divination, staffed by a particular group of wise men known as *onmyōji*. These men practiced the art of *onmyōdō*, a divinatory and geomancy practice with roots in Chinese yin-yang philosophy and the five elements.<sup>17</sup> Due to their divination skills, the *onmyōji* were rumored to be powerful sorcerers possessing the ability to summon demons, exorcise evil spirits and curse their enemies. The speculation behind the *onmyōji*'s powers added to the populace's growing fears during the time.

The Heian period was a time of impermanence. *Mappō*, the Buddhist belief that the end of mankind was near plagued the minds of the imperial court and the general populace.<sup>18</sup> This idea of inevitability combined with the transition of power from an imperial court to a military regime, civil war, and the famine and disease that was rampant across the country, provided several reasons for people to fear the worst. The legends of these creatures, the *onmyōji*'s beliefs and the chaotic times reinforced *yōkai*'s existence as dangerous monsters that posed a threat to society. These monsters were a manifestation of people's own fears, but it is important to note that they were also invisible. Most of the *yōkai* phenomenon that was recorded during the Heian period were known as *mononoke* or "the changing thing." It is important to note that it was "not the tangible 'thing' as it means in modern

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<sup>16</sup> Helen Craig McCullough, trans, *Ōkagami, the Great Mirror: Fujiwara Michinaga (966-1027) and His Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 136.

<sup>17</sup> Hayashi Makoto and Matthias Hayek, Editors' Introduction: "Onmyōdō in Japanese History," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40, no. 1 (2013): 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth G. Henshall, *A History of Japan* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 27.

Japanese, but its very opposite...something unspecifiable, without a clear form, and therefore extraordinary, strange, to be feared, as an outside force.”<sup>19</sup>

The Heian period was not a time where a wide variety of *yōkai* shared the spotlight in stories. In fact, most of the stories involving *yōkai* were limited to four types: *oni*, *tengu*, *kitsune* and *tanuki*.<sup>20</sup> Obtaining a small understanding of these creatures will better enable us to see how much of a role *yōkai* played in the lives of the Japanese and why they were considered frightening.

The first *yōkai* I will introduce is the *oni*, translated to an “ogre” or “large demon.” In general, *oni* were described during the Heian period as a fierce, demonic, violent horned creature resembling a human.<sup>21</sup> *Oni* was used as a general description for *yōkai*, “invoked as generic signifiers for all sorts of frightening or unknown monsters. It wasn’t until after the tenth century when the Japanese character for *oni*, 鬼 grew in popularity in literature and that *oni* developed its own identity as a horned monster that is commonly seen in tales of *yōkai*.<sup>22</sup> If a person were to encounter an *oni*, the chances for survival were slim since it was believed these “*oni* could consume a human within a single gulp.”<sup>23</sup> Despite their large size, *oni* supposedly possessed the power of invisibility and could shape-shift into other humans. It was also believed that when an *oni* appeared, the air reeked of blood,

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<sup>19</sup> Doris G. Bargen, *A Women’s Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of Genji* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 19.

<sup>20</sup> Komatsu Kazuhiko, “*Yōkai no genshō*,” *Zusetsu nihon no yōkai* (1990), 22.

<sup>21</sup> Chiba Mikio, *Zenkoku yōkai jiten* (Shōgakukan, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Noriko T. Reider, *Japanese Demon Lore: Oni From Ancient Times to the Present* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2010), 7

<sup>23</sup> Mizuki Shigeru, and Murakami Kenji. *Nihon Yōkai Daijiten* (Tōkyō: Kadokawa Shoten 2005), 74.

thunder roared in the distance and the once gorgeous afternoon turned immediately into night.<sup>24</sup>

During the Heian period, *oni* appeared in literature, journals, and hearsay. One of the most famous stories involving *oni* is the legend of Shuten Dōji, where the great samurai warrior Raiko destroys a monster that resides on Mount Oē near the edge of the Heian capital, Kyoto. In *yōkai taiji*, *oni* were depicted as kidnappers, cannibals and carriers of disease.

Up until the Meiji period (1868-1912), some Japanese villages associated illnesses with *oni*. During a plague outbreak, people believed smallpox was caused by the wrath of an evil spirit or *hōsōkami*.<sup>25</sup> In order to prevent smallpox, the villagers used a variety of remedies such as wearing straw sandals, presenting offerings, and even creating straw-dolls in the shape of humans which were used to trick the *oni* into infecting the doll or to drive them away.<sup>26</sup> In Kyōgoku's adaptation of the *Mimi bukuro*, there are several stories involving plagues. One example is how two samurai encounter a plague spirit on a dark and stormy night.

The next type of *yōkai* that garnered a lot of attention was the *tengu*. *Tengu* literally means celestial dog and first appeared in the *Nihonshoki* in an entry dating back to the year 637. During the Heian period, *tengu* were often viewed as mysterious, invisible creatures of the mountains, forests, and heavens, kidnapped children, caused illness and war.<sup>27</sup> Although the *tengu* were known to grant special

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<sup>24</sup> Reider, *Japanese Demon Lore*.

<sup>25</sup> Iwai Hiromi, and Kondō Masaki *Zusetsu nihon no yōkai*. (Tōkyō: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2000), 84.

<sup>26</sup> Kozaka Hiroshi, "Ekijin okuri," *Zusetsu nihon no yōkai* (1990) 84.

<sup>27</sup> M.W. de Visser, "The Tengu," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 36, no 2. (1908) 48-50.

abilities to those who believed in *tengu-dō* or “the way of the *tengu*,” these were often false powers and were for people who failed to achieve Buddhahood.<sup>28</sup> *Tengu* are “often characterized as a ‘mountain goblin’ with birdlike characteristics and superlative martial arts skills often associated with Buddhism and mountain aesthetic practices.”<sup>29</sup> Within this general description, older *tengu* were known for their large noses, red skin, and giant appearance. Meanwhile younger *tengu* tend to have beaks and resemble crows causing them to be called ‘*karasu tengu*’. In the *Mimi bukuro*, *tengu* are associated with a phenomenon called *kami kakushi* or being spirited away by a heavenly deity. One of the stories in the collection involves a *tengu* spiriting away a boy who decides to devote his life to Buddhism.<sup>30</sup>

The *kitsune* is the most cunning of the Heian period *yōkai*. A *kitsune* or ‘fox demon’ was infamous for tricking people through creating illusions, soul possession, and pulling pranks on unsuspecting humans.<sup>31</sup> A *kitsune*’s illusion could be a friend, a large animal, or an everyday object, and the most skilled *kitsune* could even make a dilapidated home appear as a mansion. Although *kitsune* were masters of shape-shifting, it was believed that the younger *kitsune* could not create illusions or shape shift. It took an average of three-hundred to eight-hundred years before a *kitsune* could master these techniques. As I will show in the next chapter, a clear indication that a person has been visited by a *kitsune* is if the person does not remember the

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<sup>28</sup> Haruko Wakabayashi *The Seven Tengu Scrolls: Evil and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy in Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012) 13-19.

<sup>29</sup> Foster, *The Book of Yōkai*, 130.

<sup>30</sup> Kyōgoku Natsuhiko, and Negishi Yasumori, *Furui kaidan: mimi bukuro yori*. (Tōkyō: Media Factorī, 2007), 74.

<sup>31</sup> Mizuki, *Nihon Yōkai Daijiten*. 115.

visitor's clothing upon departure. This is due to the fact that *kitsune* do not wear anything, so even their clothing is an illusion.

The last of the four common *yōkai* that appeared in the Heian period is the *tanuki* or “raccoon dog.” *Tanuki* are raccoon-shaped *yōkai* also known for their shape-shifting abilities similar to the *kitsune*. One of the distinguishing differences between the *kitsune* and *tanuki* is the latter's overly large scrotum, which is used as their source of power for shape-shifting. Another difference is the degree of seriousness between the two when it comes to the art of shape-shifting. Unlike the *kitsune* who transforms into an attractive member of the opposite sex to seduce and take advantage of their victims, the *tanuki* as you will see in the *Mimi bukuro*, prefers to shape-shift into an old man or beggar.<sup>32</sup>

All four *yōkai* listed above are often the central characters in *kaidan* stories and were depicted as malevolent beings capable of tormenting and in some cases, killing humans. Due to the popularity of *kaidan*, the populace began to develop their own *yōkai* stories for entertainment. These stories fed the people's fear towards the supernatural and these *kaidan* were told in samurai gatherings as a test of nerves.<sup>33</sup> It was during the Edo period (1603-1868) when the weird and supernatural became popular and *yōkai*'s portrayal as iconic figures of the horror genre reached its peak.

The popularity of *yōkai* in the horror genre was no longer formed by *yōkai taiji* and rumors of *hyakkiyagyō*, but rather by the development of storytelling traditions with *yōkai* as the central character who wreaks havoc on the daily lives of commoners. The development of new *yōkai* storytelling began during the rule of the

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<sup>32</sup> Foster, *The Book of Yōkai*, 187.

<sup>33</sup> Foster, *The Book of Yōkai*, 44.



eighth Tokugawa *Shōgun*, Tokugawa Yoshimune in 1716. During this time *honzōgaku*, the study of medicinal herbs and *hakubutsugaku*, the study of natural history were entering new stages of development. In order to help a struggling economy, Yoshimune started a new project to develop Japan's own medicinal studies. During the Edo period, Japan was trading large amounts of gold and silver to obtain high-quality medicine. In order to become self-reliant, from the year 1720-1753, Yoshimune ordered experts in the field of medicine to travel across Japan and collect data on the country's herbs and resources.<sup>34</sup> This project, however, had a side effect, and in the process of asking locals across Japan about plants and herbs, people developed an interest in national history and Japan's national identity. By 1757, groups of academic specialists, enthusiasts and business owners were organizing pharmaceutical meetings to show off their findings and other possible rare items they had discovered. At the same time, the strange and mysterious was also being fetishized by the mid Edo period. People searched for rare trees and strange rocks, collected singing insects, cultivated bonsai, and raised goldfish, turtles, frogs and even fleas to showcase at these conventions.<sup>35</sup> Participants usually had a story behind their latest discovery and it was within this time of cataloging, and sharing travel stories that *yōkai* often became a topic of discussion. It was common for people to share and exchange stories so new *yōkai* encounters began to spread across the country. As more and more *yōkai* stories were shared, people started to develop their own ghost stories for entertainment and to show off

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<sup>34</sup> Nishimura Saburō, *Bunmei no naka no hakubutsugaku: Seiyō to nihon* Vol. 1. (Kinokuniya shoten, 1999) 129-133.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew L. Markus, "The Carnival of Edo: Misemono Spectacles From Contemporary Accounts," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45, no 2. (December, 1985) 499-541.

their bravery. It was during this period of desire to see the strange and unusual that another forum of popular entertainment developed which provided an opportunity for people to immerse themselves in the supernatural and experience the unusual bordering on the impossible called *hyaku-monogatari*.<sup>36</sup>

Translated as “one hundred Stories,” *hyaku-monogatari* is a party game usually played with a large group of people at night. Participants would bring a story “they had experienced themselves, something they had heard, something they had collected for the gathering from here or there, or something they had made up.”<sup>37</sup> According to a 1718 text the game is played as follows: “First light one hundred lamps (wicks) with blue paper around them, and hide all weapons. Now, for each frightening tale, extinguish one lamp (candle)... When all one hundred flames have been extinguished, a monster [*bakemono*] will appear.”<sup>38</sup>

A person unfamiliar with this practice might ask “why one hundred? What makes this number so special?” The significance of the number one hundred supposedly came from a *yōkai* during the Kamakura period (1185-1333) known as *tsukumogami*, common household objects with arms, legs, and a life of their own. It was believed that “when an object reaches one hundred years, it transforms, obtaining a spirit [*seirei*], and deceiving [*taburakasu*] people’s hearts; this is called *tsukumogami*.”<sup>39</sup> The word *tsukumogami* is a play on words with *tsukumo* symbolizing the number ninety-nine and *gami* (*kami*) referring to the hair of an

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<sup>36</sup> Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, 52.

<sup>37</sup> Komatsu, Kazuhiko. *Hyaku-Monogatari Kaidan to yōkai kenkyū*. In *Shtendōji no kubi*. (serika, shobō, 1997), 251.

<sup>38</sup> Takada Mamoru, Michio Hara, and Kiyoshi Tachikawa. *Hyaku-monogatari kaidan shūsei* (Tōkyō: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1995), 354.

<sup>39</sup> Komatsu Kazuhiko, *Hyōrei shinkō ron* (Kōdansha gakujuutsu bunko, 1994), 329.

elderly woman. This belief that after one hundred years, an object or person transforms into a *yōkai* was a popular story element that was used in numerous collections of *setsuwa* or short narratives, and painted scrolls.<sup>40</sup> The *tsukumogami* even appeared in accounts of *hyakkiyagyō* or night processions of one-hundred demons.

The superstition behind the number one hundred and its relationship to *tsukumogami* carried over into the Edo period and was applied to *hyaku-monogatari*. The number one hundred was viewed as a qualitative description for objects. It was assumed that “after a certain point—after the one hundredth story—you were in a space in which the mundane and the normal could be transcended.”<sup>41</sup> The idea of conjuring a monster after telling a certain number of stories and slowly enveloping the room in darkness was the perfect environment for *yōkai*. In a sense, the game *hyaku-monogatari* can be compared to a supernatural spell to conjure a monster. It was believed that to participate in such a game proved one’s bravery, and so people most likely took pride in creating the scariest story possible to frighten their audience.<sup>42</sup> After all, people probably used the game as an opportunity to brag by retelling their tale of bravery or narrow escape from death. If the other participants were too afraid to handle one’s story, the storyteller was likely considered to be the bravest in the room. It was a combination of the desire to show off one’s bravery and partake in the scariest ritual imaginable of summoning a monster that made *hyaku-monogatari* such a popular activity.

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<sup>40</sup> Komatsu, *Hyōrei shinkō ron*, 329-32.

<sup>41</sup> Foster, *The Book of Yōkai*, 44.

<sup>42</sup> Foster describes this type of game to samurai as *kimo-danshi* or “challenge of the liver.” Foster, *The Book of Yōkai*, 44.

The appeal of *hyaku-monogatari* allowed *yōkai* stories to increase in popularity and led to the eventual creation of new *yōkai*. The success of *hyaku-monogatari* and the tradition of exchanging stories also led to the written form of this event. Participants gathered the stories and wrote their own collection of *hyaku-monogatari* to be published. While most of these collections contain fewer than one hundred stories, they provided access to *yōkai* stories for people of all ages. Eventually the oral tradition of *hyaku-monogatari* died out by the mid-1700s and people turned towards the written version of *hyaku-monogatari* for entertainment. Despite this change, the popularity of both the written and oral version of *hyaku-monogatari* shows how popular *yōkai* were to the people and that “certain experiences were attractive precisely because they were rife with ambiguity and fear.”<sup>43</sup>

The tradition of *hyaku-monogatari* established a forum and community for *yōkai* stories to be exchanged, collected and adapted. As these ghost stories were shared, altered, and spread across Japan, little-known *yōkai* became popular and developed recognizable features and behaviors.<sup>44</sup> Due to the combination of an audience’s changing tastes in horror and the rise of commercial publishing, *yōkai* reached a new level of terror once they were drawn in an encyclopedia. The stories and features well known by storytellers and audiences gave artists free domain to bring people’s nightmares to life through art. One of the most famous depictions of

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<sup>43</sup> Komine Kazuaki. “*Yōkai no hakubutsugaku.*” *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 41, no. 4 (March 1996): 80-87.

<sup>44</sup> Komatsu, *Hyaku-monogatari*, 251

*yōkai* is the series of *yōkai* encyclopedias created by a priest named Toriyama Sekien (1712-1788).

While little is known about his life, Toriyama was born in Edo and studied the *Kanō* School of Painting. Although painting was originally a hobby for Toriyama, his “artwork exerted an influence that reached beyond their own moment of production and continues to resonate in present-day conceptions and images of *yōkai*.”<sup>45</sup> Toriyama’s four encyclopedias, *Gazu hyakkiyagyō* (1776), *Konjaku gaku zoku hyakki* (1779), *Konjaku hyakki shūi* (1781), and *Hyakki tsuzure bukuro* (1784) included written and artistic descriptions of *yōkai* with sources and hearsays of their encounters.<sup>46</sup>

These four encyclopedias catalogue over two-hundred *yōkai*. Although earlier scrolls of *yōkai* have been around since the Muromachi period (1337-1573), Toriyama’s encyclopedias stand out since he dedicated a single page for each *yōkai*. The earliest encyclopedia, *Gazu hyakkiyagyō* contained three volumes and a total of fifty-one *yōkai* that already had well-established reputations. In the later volumes Toriyama included more text in his descriptions and combined puns with lively images of never before seen *yōkai*. These entries appear to be the product of Toriyama having fun with his *yōkai* project, and as many as eighty-five of these horrific *yōkai* or half of the collection could have been the creations of Toriyama.<sup>47</sup> What is significant about Toriyama’s work is that this is the first time in history when *yōkai* are treated as its own category of study. Each *yōkai* has an image

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<sup>45</sup> Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, 31.

<sup>46</sup> Each of these four texts are reproduced in Inada Atsunobu and Tanaka Naohi, eds., *Toriyama Sekien gazu hyakkioniyagyō* (Kokusho kankōkai, 1999).

<sup>47</sup> Tada Katsumi, *Hyakki kaidoku* (Kōdansha, 1999), 20

associated with it, and their features and traits have been explained for the general public.

The scrolls of Toriyama helped increase *yōkai's* popularity as a horror icon in two ways. First the creation of new *yōkai* assisted storytellers in the development of new horror stories and people who experienced strange phenomenon could relate it to these new *yōkai*. Second, the encyclopedic cataloging of these creatures gave these monsters credibility and placed them on the same level as living creatures in the minds of the people. It was this continuous development of new *yōkai* and a culture of monsters driven by an evolving horror genre that led to the creation of the *Mimi bukuro*.

Just as Toriyama's life was coming to an end, an official named Negishi Yasumori began compiling stories of strange phenomenon that eventually led to the production of the *Mimi bukuro*. Negishi Yasumori (originally Izō Anjo) was born in 1737, the third son of a low-ranking samurai family. Since Izō was the third son, he was unlikely to receive his father's inheritance. Despite this scenario, Izō's luck turned around when he met Negishi Mori, a mysterious man who was dying at age thirty. There is little to no historical record of Negishi Mori, but since he had no sons to succeed him, he asked Izō to become his successor. By age twenty-two, Izō changed his name to Negishi Yasumori in honor of his benefactor and received one hundred fifty *koku* of rice per year as a part of his inheritance.<sup>48</sup> During the same year, Negishi started working as an accountant and quickly rose through the ranks. In 1782, Negishi was transferred to Sado Island where he worked as a town

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<sup>48</sup> A *koku* is about one hundred fifty kilograms and enough to feed one person for an entire year.

inspector and began talking to locals about the strange stories they experienced or heard. It was these conversations with the local villagers on the island that inspired Negishi to begin writing the *Mimi bukuro*. Through his hard work and dedication, Negishi eventually became chief inspector and earned the title, *Hizen-no-kami*.

Negishi was later retransferred and promoted to Minister of all Southern Edo. If one were to compare this position to modern times, it would be the same as working as the city's governor, presiding judge, head of the fire department and superintendent general of the metropolitan police all in one role.<sup>49</sup> Negishi worked as the minister for a total of seventeen years where he wrote most of the *Mimi bukuro*. Negishi kept compiling his stories up to his death in 1814 and was a few stories short of 1000 by the time he reached his tenth and final scroll. As you will see in the next chapter, several of the stories in the *Mimi bukuro* involve *yōkai* and reflect the fears Japanese had towards the unexplainable. Although *yōkai* still operated as characters within a mysterious horror genre to the Japanese, these creatures become displaced through science and technology during the Meiji period (1868-1912).

Towards the end of the Edo period, Commodore Perry forced Japan to trade with the West through the Convention of Kanagawa in 1854. During the Meiji period, the capital was moved from Kyoto to Edo and renamed Tokyo, and the samurai class was abolished. Japan tried to emulate the West and progressed under the slogan *bunmei kaika* "civilization and enlightenment." Japan welcomed foreigners from abroad to study Japan and Japan sent their own people abroad to

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<sup>49</sup> Kihara, Hirokatsu, and Nakayama Ichirō *Shin Mimi Bukuro Dai Ichi Ya*. (Tokyo: Kadokawa Bunko, 1998), 298.

learn from the West. *Kimono* were later replaced with western style suits and the Japanese written and spoken language was united through the *Genbun'itchi movement*. Western technology, ideology, medicine, and commerce influenced the Japanese so much that Japan wanted to rise in power with the goal of one day overpowering the West. It was this nationwide movement to advance and improve that inspired men like Inoue Enryō (1858-1919) to encourage Japan's development through the elimination of anything associated with traditional Japan, particularly *yōkai*. The work of Inoue Enryō during the Meiji period caused *yōkai* to lose their horrific effect and become displaced from the horror genre. This was merely the first step for *yōkai* as they transformed from horror icons into eventually children's icons.

Born in 1858 to a family of Buddhist priests, Inoue had different values, which conflicted with his family's beliefs. After casting aside his priest heritage, Inoue studied philosophy and science for a number of years at Tokyo University. Inoue applied his philosophy studies and knowledge of Buddhism to his goal of improving Japan. He believed his studies "was a path toward an essentially religious awareness of the ultimate reality of the universe."<sup>50</sup> He believed that if false beliefs in such superstitions such as *yōkai* could be disproved, then it was the first step people could take in becoming enlightened and understanding the truth around them. In 1893, Inoue founded *yōkaiology*, literally translated to monsterology or the study of monsters to "rationally explain away supernatural beliefs so that Japan

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<sup>50</sup> Gerald A. Figal, *Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 41.



could become a modern-nation state competitive with the West.”<sup>51</sup> In his study, Inoue redefines *yōkai* and argues against the popular discourse people had towards these mysterious beings. In *yōkaiology*, Inoue argues that *yōkai* is a synonym for *fushigi*, “mysteriousness.” Since people describe *yōkai* as the unexplainable and beyond reason, Inoue asks the question “what is reason today?” Inoue divides all supernatural phenomenon such as classical apparitions, strange dreams, telepathy, and madness into two categories called “the material” and “the mental.” Next, he uses psychology and science to reveal the supernatural’s true form and rationally disprove the existence of *yōkai*.

One example of Inoue’s literary criticisms of *yōkai* can be seen in his work *Yōkai hyakudan* or *One Hundred Yōkai Stories*. This was the opposite of *hyaku-monogatari*, where Inoue told a ghost story or weird scenario involving *yōkai* that seemed unexplainable. The second half of each story contained scientific evidence, proving how *yōkai* did not exist and that the monster was a fabrication of the human mind. Inoue’s explanations “spill over from the text, making the seemingly supernatural seem natural, sometimes even comical, and inspiring readers to disenchant any phenomenon they might encounter in the real world.”<sup>52</sup> By having his fellow countrymen laugh at their own misguided fears, the terrifying power *yōkai* had over Japan began to weaken.

During the development of Inoue’s *yōkaiology*, a number of factors contributed to the end of *yōkai*’s association with the horror genre. The imports of western medicine introduced hundreds of new terms and ideas to the medical field

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<sup>51</sup> Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, 27.

<sup>52</sup> Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, 81.

that the Japanese had never considered. Following in Inoue's example, "the state builders of Meiji Japan programmatically worked, particularly through the ideological apparatuses of nationalized education and medicine, to redirect the spiritual sentiments of the masses away from local beliefs in the supernatural."<sup>53</sup> This was a process that involved the elimination of spirit healers and shamans and forced the common people to trust common medicine and western science.

An example of such action is the government's attitude towards fox possession or *kohyō*, which was used to describe someone's strange or uncanny behavior that could only be cured by shamans. But by diagnosing fox possession as a mental illness, the state police became involved and caused the shamans or priestesses who were a part of the folklore world of *yōkai* to be dispensable. Furthermore, the government built asylums for those diagnosed with mental illnesses and made the work of shamans and priestesses illegal. By the end of 1905, Inoue collaborated with the Ministry of Home Affairs to create a new law decreeing: gossipers, fortune tellers, exorcists, the distribution of talismans and any activity that inhibits the progress of common medicine is subject to criminal punishment.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the government's active stance against folklore and the old traditions of Japan towards the supernatural, electricity helped disprove strange phenomenon and make sense out of ghost stories. By November 1882, Ginza's shopping district's electric lights were turned on for the first time. In 1883 the first electrical generating company was founded in Tokyo and began generating power

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<sup>53</sup> Figal, *Civilization and Monsters*, 199.

<sup>54</sup> Figal, *Civilization and Monsters*, 199.

publically in 1887.<sup>55</sup> As candles were replaced with electricity, the *yōkai* once feared during the Edo Period became mere shadows in corners and deemed figments of an old Japan long lost to modernization. The development of Japan's first train by 1906 marked the beginning where once unsettled lands would be cultivated and the *yōkai* of the past would have no mysterious home to call their own. It was at this point in history when the people started using *yōkai* for their own selfish purposes outside of the horror genre.

After *yōkai*'s reputation as terrifying monsters came to an end with the development of technology and modernization, people took liberties in using these monsters in other genres and commentaries outside horror. One example is how *yōkai* became the tools of artists and the government to spread political messages and propaganda to the masses. An example of this transformation can be seen in Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's 1927 literary classic, *Kappa*. By analyzing how *yōkai* are used in this work of literature, we can see how far *yōkai* have become separated from their original role in horror stories.

The story focuses on Asylum Patient #23 as he describes his adventures in Kappaland to his doctor. Kappaland coincidentally parallels Japanese society through similarities such as the *Kappanese* language, music, and the social commentary on political issues during the 1920's. During this time, the Japanese government was imposing censorship on literature, and writers were forced to write positively about the government sanctions (which made for really poor sales), be quiet, or rebel and risk imprisonment. Akutagawa Ryūnosuke wrote *Kappa* in

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<sup>55</sup> Shimokawa Kōshi and Katei sōgō kenkyūkai, eds., *Meiji Taishō kateishi nenpyō 1868-1925* (Kawade shobō shinsha, 2000), 130-132.

response to the Japanese government censorship on novels, and some of the issues within Japan can be seen in the text. An example of the text mirroring the artists' struggle for literary freedom is when Tok, an anarchist *kappa* says "the arts should not be controlled by anything or anyone: it's a case of art for art's sake."<sup>56</sup> This is viewed as a radical idea in Kappaland, similar to the Japanese government's viewpoint since they were punishing freethinkers who dared to question the government's actions.

It should be known that a *kappa* is a type of water-*yōkai* famous for its violent tendencies to drown humans. Tok and other *kappa* characters depicted as civilized members of society listening to music and pondering the meaning of free speech, is a far stretch away from the horror genre. There is nothing signifying that the *kappa* were once feared monsters during the Edo period. Although *kappa* were still used in the horror genre at times and viewed as a frightening entity, Akutagawa's characters is evidence of *yōkai*'s gradual departure from the horror genre. This is just one sample of how *yōkai* would later be taken out of their original horror setting and used for individual purposes. *Yōkai* were still used as propaganda tools throughout World War II and were depicted as an enemy of Japan.

In World War II the Japanese government combined folklore and technology to demonize foreigners during times of war. Japan launched what many scholars call the *Momotarō* Paradigm, where Japan incorporated a famous folktale legend into its films to inspire citizens to fight in the war. *Momotarō* is a children's story of a young boy born from a peach named *Momotarō*, who with the help of a dog,

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<sup>56</sup> Akutagawa, Ryūnosuke, and Seiichi Shiojiri, *Kappa* (Tōkyō: Hokuseido Press, 1949), 67.

monkey, and a bird saves his home from the ruling *oni* on Demon Island. Due to *Momotarō* “being himself youthful, vigorous, positive, and unwavering in his determination to bring about justice by subduing the forces of evil,” he was frequently used in schools and influenced Japanese society.<sup>57</sup> Realizing the strength the *Momotarō* story gave to the people, as well as its similarities to the invasion from the West, the Japanese government created stories for the war effort paralleling the *Momotarō* legend in films.

In the first film, *Momotarō and the Sky*, *Momotarō* saves penguins in the South Pole from an American eagle. In 1942, the Japanese government continued the *Momotarō* film series with the release of its first full thirty-minute cartoon, *Momotarō and the Eagles of the Ocean*. The story has *Momotarō* and his three vassals command warplanes and travel to *Onigashima*, an island that resembles Hawaii. This film is a reenactment of the Battle of Pearl Harbor where actual clips from the battle were inserted and the American forces are depicted as unintelligent *oni*. The belittlement of the American forces as *yōkai* reached its peak in Japan’s last *Momotarō* film. The content reflected Japan’s hatred of American and British forces throughout the war, but also portrayed Japan in a false superior position. In reality, by the release of the final film, Japan was losing the war.

Shōchiku Productions and the Japanese Navy’s collaboration to produce *Momotaro’s Divine Sea Warriors* in 1945, depicted *yōkai* as an outsider and enemy of Japan. In the 74-minute animated film, *Momotarō* and his three servants are the prophesized warriors from the East destined to save the creatures of Southern Asia.

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<sup>57</sup> Dower, John W. *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 252.

*Momotarō* symbolized the strong, righteous Japanese warrior, while the wild and unclothed animals represented the other Asian countries in Japan's East Asian Co-Prosperity sphere. The Co-Prosperity sphere was a political propaganda term created by the Japanese Government as an ideology where Japan was conquering surrounding countries under the idea they were liberating the East from Western influence and that all of Asia should follow the Japanese way.

The *yōkai* in the film are a mix between an *oni* and a human, "rendering the monsters as the British 'demons with a human face' who surrender to the pure hearted hero."<sup>58</sup> The *yōkai* have pale-faces with the signature *oni* horn at the top of their head that allow them to be recognized as the demons from the original *Momotarō* legend and the ghouls from the Heian period. The *oni* in the film also speak in incomprehensible, stuttering English and grovel before *Momotarō*.

Instead of maintaining *yōkai's* identity as terrifying monsters, *yōkai* are perceived as an outsider and invader of Japan in the eyes of the Japanese. This use of *yōkai* reflected the Japanese fears of foreign invasion and possibly losing the war. While *yōkai* are once again being attached to an antagonizing image similar to the one depicted in *yōkai taiji*, they are conveying a growing fear of foreign invasion that has been in place since the Meiji period.

The Japanese developed a fear of the frightening potential of technology in the hands of the wrong people after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945. Once the Japanese witnessed the destruction of two of the most major cities within seconds, the fear of uncontrollable technology at the hands of

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<sup>58</sup> Papp, Zilia. *Anime and its Roots in Early Japanese Monster Art*, (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2010), 133.

enemy humans took center stage in the horror genre and influenced the works of writers and filmmakers for years to come. By April of 1966, *yōkai* were used in media to promote peace and to show the atrocities of war. Mizuki Shigeru's *manga*, *Yōkai daisensō* translated as the *Great Yōkai War* was published in the weekly *Shōnen Jump* magazine, and featured *yōkai* as the soldiers of Japan fighting the invading armies from the West. In this issue the half human, half *yōkai* named Kitarō, and his companions fight Dracula, the Mummy, Frankenstein and other Western monsters in a battle for Vietnam. Although this may seem like a meaningless comic to entertain children, there are references to the hydrogen bomb tests from World War II and the invading American forces.

One example of these anti-war messages is seen when the Western monsters attempt to create a demilitarized zone with Kitarō and his forces. One of the monsters explains the logic in creating a DMZ and says, "Hey Kitarō, we don't want to fight another meaningless war, like Vietnam."<sup>59</sup> The narrative also emphasizes the importance of being a 'pure-blooded' *yōkai*, and how the Western monsters are unclean. As a result, the *yōkai* used in this narrative are the heroes of Japan and protagonists who view western monsters as the embodiment of foreigners and this new fear towards murderous humans. The story ends with the Western monsters being engulfed in a fireball that is reminiscent to the clouds created from the atomic bomb.

For the first time, *yōkai* are depicted as keepers of the peace and the guardians of Japan. Their horrific side has been replaced with Japan's image of an

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<sup>59</sup> Papp, *Anime and its Roots in Early Japanese Monster Art*, 139.

ideal hero who rights the wrong and stands up for the weak. It is this kind of comic that symbolizes *yōkai*'s displacement from the horror genre and their evolution from horrific ghouls to child role-models and country heroes. This trend where *yōkai* become figures for children to look up to and emulate continued on through the Heisei period (1989-present). The 1980's were a thriving time period for *yōkai* due to what some scholars call the "*yōkai* boom." A combination of videogames, films, television shows, novels, academic study and the creation of new *yōkai* made these monsters extremely profitable to corporations. Up to 2015, there have been a large number of *yōkai*-related products that depict these monsters as anything but horrific. The characters in Mizuki Shigeru's *Gegege no Kitarō* in the comic and television industry portrayed the *yōkai* as defenders of Japan that should be respected and emulated. This "good-guy" appeal of *yōkai* continued through the development of *Pokémon*, a story that "cutesified" *yōkai* into tiny creatures or *Pokémon*, "pocket monsters" that could be controlled by humans to do battle against other monsters. While this new portrayal of *yōkai* was not frightening, the game and cartoon show was in a sense, a tribute honoring the *yōkai* of the Edo period. In the world inhabited by *Pokémon*, players receive a *pokédex* cataloging each of the one hundred and fifty monsters that lists certain characteristics, specific habitats, and behavior that is very similar to the *yōkai* encyclopedias of Toriyama.<sup>60</sup> The only way to win the game is to master all of the facts and collect all of the monsters.

As this boom was taking place, new *yōkai* were being created through films, comics, and videogames, but most of them were depicted as childlike and not

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<sup>60</sup> Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, 214.



terrifying. An example of this is the popular *Gakkō no Kaidan* series or *School Ghost Stories* produced in 1995 that inspired three more films and anime adaptations that received international recognition. While *yōkai* were sometimes used in horror films, they were mainly “drawn in modern settings with contemporary technology.”<sup>61</sup> *Yōkai* are merely the messengers or hosts in a film focusing on larger issues such as humanity turning against itself and technology that grows beyond human control.

As *yōkai* evolved from mysterious creatures of the night to children’s heroes in media, their terrifying image disappeared. These once horrifying monsters represent an historical Edo period-Japan overtaken by Western influence and technology. The new *yōkaigaku* founded by Kazuhiko studies the roles of *yōkai* over the years and approaches these monsters from different fields such as psychology, anthropology, history, art, and film. While horror is one of these research fields, it is only a small part of what *yōkai* have become today: a cultural symbol of Japan that is used for businesses, academic study, and entertainment. *Yōkai* could perhaps return to its horrific roots, but it would probably take a real monster to appear before that happens. Keeping in mind the new identity of *yōkai* as a cute character in children’s literature, films, and games, I will now analyze some of Kyōgoku’s *Mimi bukuro* adaptations to understand not only how *yōkai* were used in the horror genre, but also why his experiment did not work.

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<sup>61</sup> Foster, *The Book of Yōkai*, 72.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MIMI BUKURO COMPARISON: WHY THIS DID NOT WORK

The transformation of *yōkai* from horror icons to child-like characters in the media was complete with the production of children's television programs and corporations selling *yōkai* related products. The *yōkai* boom has given *yōkai* more attention than ever in history, but has ultimately made these monsters into versatile characters used in several different genres. For the sake of this study on horror, this chapter will be dedicated to analyzing original Edo-period *yōkai* stories from the *Mimi bukuro*. It is important to understand how and why these monsters were feared in the past in order to see the differences between the horror genre of Edo and today.

In this chapter, I will compare four stories from the original *Mimi bukuro* and their adaptations written by Kyōgoku Natsuhiko. For each story, I first provide a brief synopsis of the plot. Since these stories were adapted, shared, and created for events such as *hyaku-monogatari*, I will search for horrific elements a storyteller possibly used to frighten the audience. This will enable us to understand certain rules and tricks used in crafting a horrifying *yōkai* story during the Edo period.

Next I will explore how Kyōgoku adapted these stories for modern audiences. By examining the differences between the two versions, I will not only identify what Kyōgoku thought was terrifying for audiences, but I will also consider how these different versions reflected audiences' ever-changing tastes in horror. Then I will frame each of Kyōgoku's stories in how they would be perceived today and suggest why they were unsuccessful. Picking apart this author's experiment is another step

in understanding how horror has changed over time. Lastly, I will show what the stories share and what this says about how Kyōgoku adapted the stories. The results will provide the basis for my third and final chapter explaining what is frightening today in the twenty first century by analyzing successful horror icons and what fears they represent.

The first story I will analyze is the first story in Kyōgoku's book *Furui kaidan mimi bukuro yori* and from the fourth scroll of the original *Mimi bukuro*. It is a dark and stormy autumn night. A retired samurai by the name of Mr. Ushioku receives an emergency summons from his lord. As he walks to headquarters with a fellow samurai, they encounter what appears to be a distraught female by the side of the road, crouching with her head lowered towards the ground. Due to the heavy rain and lack of light, it is difficult to discern the shape of the figure, and whether or not she has no raincoat or even an umbrella. As Mr. Ushioku examines the shape and appearance of the crouching woman, he wonders if the figure is perhaps not a woman at all, but a monster. The two decide to ignore the crouching woman and continue towards the outpost until they encounter two samurai on patrol. The four men return to the location where Mr. Ushioku saw the woman, but to their surprise, she is gone. Bewildered by this, the group separates and Mr. Ushioku and his partner finally arrive at headquarters. Upon entering however, Mr. Ushioku and his fellow retainer come down with a case of malaria. The two are bedridden for twenty days and wonder if their illness was connected to their encounter with the crouching figure, thinking that it was possibly the spirit of malaria in a physical form.

This is an appropriate story for a *hyaku-monogatari* session since it is short, and contains several horror elements that could frighten audiences when most of the candles are extinguished. The first element of horror is the story's setting. It is late at night, cold, windy, and raining. While these are less than ideal elements for a human, they are perfect for an animal or monster that roams in the wilds. In addition to the terrible conditions, the perfect time for a ghost to appear would be around the late hours between 2:00 and 2:30am when night is at its darkest, so already we have an ideal setting where the audience expects something mysterious or creepy to happen.<sup>62</sup> Next, the use of darkness and the environment puts the characters at risk. It is so dark and violently raining that Mr. Ushioku and his retainer have to be careful not to have their lights blown out or be lost in the wilderness with no light in the middle of a terrible storm.<sup>63</sup> The men are no longer in the safety of their homes, but in the outdoors surrounded by darkness and the unknown, common fears of the people during the Edo period.

The second horror element is the use of the crouching figure of a woman in the darkness. Women were classic figures in Japanese ghost stories, especially in tales of vengeance or *urami hanashi*, so her presence already establishes a set of expectations and genre rules for this story.<sup>64</sup> Some expectations include how the woman or figure is a spirit returning to the living world due to emotions, and unfulfilled dreams. She may also wish to cause harm to innocent victims out of rage

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<sup>62</sup> Foster, *The Book of Yōkai: Mysterious Creatures of Japanese Folklore*, 23.

<sup>63</sup> 途中で燈が消えてしまったりしたら大ごとである。7.

<sup>64</sup> Marak, Katarzyna. *Japanese and American Horror: A Comparative Study of Film, Fiction, Graphic Novels and Video Games*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2014), 61. Jay McRoy, *Japanese horror Cinema*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 3.

or jealousy. By having a woman as the focus of the story, the audience will start to believe that this character is a ghost.

Her description would also grab audience's attention due to how uncanny and out of place she is. She appears to be wearing some kind of raincoat, but the protagonist cannot confirm the identity of the character due to the lack of light. Also her crouching demeanor makes her appear more feral than human. These factors would invite the reader into the story and have them guess whether or not the mysterious figure was a monster.

The third element is the mystery behind the figure. Keeping the identity of the dark figure a mystery throughout most of the story is part of the tension. The audience becomes a part of the story and will use their imagination to create the worst scenario possible. Next, audiences would probably insert themselves in the scenario and pray that the main character makes the right decision (avoiding a possible monster). If one were to compare this scenario to modern times, this would be that point in the film when the audience yells helplessly at the television telling the character to turn around or not enter the dark, creepy basement.

The fourth element in this story is the progression from finding a woman in the rain to the realization that the figure was likely a spirit of disease in a physical form. After Mr. Ushioku abandons the figure by the side of the road, he eventually returns with additional men, but his suspicions and the audience's become confirmed when they see that the figure has vanished. What is even more creepy is how there was nowhere for the woman to run since it was a one-way road. The figure's disappearance would play on the people's fear of the unexplainable, and

fulfills their expectations that the crouching figure was no woman, but a monster that could have attacked the protagonist. Realistically, no human could disappear without a trace, and so the figure's vanishing act adds an additional layer as to what is expected in Japanese ghost stories. To clarify, layers are the event horizons of the storyline that keep being replaced by one another as the audience gets more details on the characters and the plot. Stories with several layers incorporate twist endings, and the buildup from the rational to irrational is gradual.<sup>65</sup> The audience was gradually led within a short time from an everyday story of a man reporting for duty to a weird and unexplainable scenario. The mysterious figure's disappearance is a common element in *yōkai* stories where the monster escapes.<sup>66</sup>

The last horrific element that connects everything is the twist ending revealing the identity of the mysterious figure. Contrary to the audience's speculation that the woman was either a monster or a really fast sprinter, the main character concludes that the figure was the spirit of malaria in the form of a woman that cursed him and his partner to become ill for three weeks. It is this suggestion that settles most doubt in audience's minds as to whether this being was a *yōkai*. The ending is suitable for this horror story because the Japanese up to the Meiji period associated disease with *yōkai*.<sup>67</sup> By incorporating this ideology into the storyline, the storyteller could gradually frighten his audiences and confirm their greatest fears through its creepy ending.

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<sup>65</sup> Marak, *Japanese and American Horror*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>67</sup> Iwai Hiromi, and Kondō Masaki *Zusetsu nihon no yōkai*. (Tōkyō: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2000), 84.

After all, anyone can run into a mysterious figure in the rain, a familiar scenario that would grab the audience's attention and make this kind of story a success at *hyaku-monogatari*. What makes this story so spooky is how the characters came across a spirit associated with death and almost made the mistake of approaching it. Disease was a common problem during the Edo period, so for the main characters to survive an encounter with a monster and its curse would likely be considered creepy. The narrator and audiences are convinced that the figure was in fact a monster. Because of this the question remains: what would have happened if Mr. Ushioku got too close?

Kyōgoku's adaptation follows the same plot, but focuses on a different aspect of the story that he assumed was frightening for twenty-first century readers. The first difference is the protagonist's deduction as to whether or not the figure was a woman. Kyōgoku takes the reader into the mind of Mr. Ushioku and his process as to why he doubted the figure was a woman. As soon as the main character passes the figure, he realizes he cannot discern the top-knot hair style, or the shape of whether it was a samurai, commoner, or a priest. In fact, he never says it was a monster, but since the figure was crouching by the side of the road, it was probably not human because "a woman crouching by the side of the road in the middle of a rain storm is strange."<sup>68</sup>

The second difference in these two stories was Kyōgoku's choice to mention the woman's crouching or *uzukumarū* several times in the text. By focusing on the image and behavior of the figure, he alienates the figure from the average human,

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<sup>68</sup> 嵐の夜に女性が道端にうずくまっているというのはおかしい。From *Furui kaidan mimi bukuro yori*. 8.

and emphasizes that the figure is not of this world. This is a different approach from the original text that only referenced the figures' crouching once. The image of a woman crouching by the side of the road also makes readers uncomfortable. While the figure appears to be a woman in the shadows, its awkward shape leaves the main character disturbed, a familiar feeling for audiences today who play horror games such as *Silent Hill*. In this game, players experience the story of Harry Mason as he fights monsters in the town of Silent Hill while searching for his missing daughter. The creators of the game mention how none of the monsters in the game are human, but they share human characteristics, which makes viewers feel uncomfortable when they encounter the monster.<sup>69</sup> Kyōgoku probably wanted his readers to feel curious and uncomfortable since human beings normally would not behave in such a manner. When something unnatural is present, it causes people to sometimes cringe either in fear or disgust.

The ending of the story is where Kyōgoku deviates from the original version. While he includes the possibility that the spirit of malaria cursed the men, this suggestion comes from Mr. Ushioku's retainer, and the main character denounces this notion saying his fellow samurai is a fool. The disagreement with the original ending is almost as though Kyōgoku is acknowledging that plague spirits are no longer frightening to modern audiences. To add a psychological approach to the story, Kyōgoku adds a new ending through logic and makes audiences consider what is frightening today. The story ends with Mr. Ushioku saying his long adventure in the cold autumn rain caused his illness. However, he and his retainer

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<sup>69</sup> Marak, *Japanese and American Horror*, 137.



were told by their rescuers that they were originally mistaken for monsters since they were also crouching in the rain. Mr. Ushioku then laughs at this as he finishes sharing his story with Negishi.

This ending makes the story open-ended and shows how fear of the unknown is subjective and thus different to each person. A mysterious figure is creepy because there is always a lingering fear of “what if it’s not human.” The figure represented a different fear for each person and shows how darkness and the unknown make people create the worst possible image or scenario in their mind. For Mr. Ushioku, the crouching figure represented the fear of the unknown. For Mr. Ushioku’s retainer the figure represented disease and death. While to the guards at the outpost, Mr. Ushioku and the retainer’s crouching demeanor was a representation of the general fear of monsters and the creatures of legend. This new ending shows that fear is a part of our imagination, and we create our own nightmares when something is unclear or shrouded in darkness.

Although the adaptation does deviate a little from the original version and has an ending allowing room for audiences to think about what is horror, the story is out of place today. People no longer fear death gods, monsters, or plague spirits, and it is common sense not to be out in the rain. While this story could be frightening today due to people using their imaginations to understand the mystery or darkness in front of them, it needs to be retold in a modern context. Instead of having the mysterious figure represent a plague spirit, it should represent a modern-day fear people have today, a ghost known to the main character with the potential to kill. While the same concept of terror still exists today, the identity that

people give the darkness changes over time and should thus be taken into consideration when adapting horror.

The second story in Kyōgoku's book and also from the fourth scroll of the original *Mimi bukuro* is about a doctor named Furubayashi Ken'i and his house call to a wise old friend. After the checkup, the two engage in pleasant conversation, but they are interrupted by the sudden appearance of a peculiar man who gives off an air of importance. Being the polite host, the old man brings out a *botamochi* sweet for his new guest. The visitor thanks the old man for his hospitality, but acts strange. He uses no chopsticks and instead eats directly off the plate like a wild animal. Seeing that the hour was late, the old man suggests the visitor departs before it gets dark. After he departs, the doctor expresses his concern for the visitor since the journey from Osaka to Fuji Forest is long and potentially dangerous in the darkness. The old man reassures the doctor by explaining that their visitor was in fact a *kitsune* in disguise. The proof of the *kitsune's* visit is how the doctor cannot remember the visitor's clothes. This is because the clothes of a *kitsune* are hard to distinguish.

This story also incorporates various characteristics of the horror genre that would make it a suitable tale worthy for *hyaku-monogatari*; the first of which is the setting. Dusk, the period right before the world plunges into darkness is usually the time when *yōkai* appear. This is a period when shadows play tricks on the minds of people, and what appears to be human can actually be something much more terrifying.<sup>70</sup> Similar to the previous story's setting where night at around 2:30am is

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<sup>70</sup> Foster, *The Book of Yōkai*, 23.

the ideal time for ghosts, dusk is the time of *yōkai* and *hyakkiyagyō*. Due to the different times pertaining to ghosts and *yōkai*, the timing of the stories likely corresponded with the passing of time during a *hyaku-monogatari* event. If the storytelling began at dusk, stories with this kind of background would be told first. As the night progressed into darkness and more candles were extinguished, the stories told would perhaps be set in a darker setting where visibility was minimal and people could use their imaginations to create monsters in the dark.

Another factor that helps in establishing the creepy setting is the fact that the story takes place on Sanada Mountain in Osaka. Mountains are associated with the habitat of *yōkai* and what makes things worse is how this mountain was the battlefield for the Siege of Osaka Castle in 1615. The story basically takes place on a graveyard of one of the well-known battles in Japanese history, the perfect place for restless spirits.

The next horror aspect is the gradual build up from the normal everyday life to the obvious indication that the men's houseguest is in fact a monster. The two men's pleasant evening is interrupted by the sudden appearance of a strange man wearing rather extravagant clothing. Audiences will likely be suspicious due to timing of his appearance at dusk, so they will already have some kind of expectation that the event or creepy part of the story will revolve around him. Next, this expectation is met with the visitor's intention of traveling to Fuji forest from Sanada Mountain which would normally take a number of days to travel on foot, so this is already suggesting the man is either delusional or not of the human world. The story's creepiness is taken to a whole new level by the behavior of the houseguest

when he eats face first off his plate like an animal. At this point, the audience's assumptions are met and will start to assume the guest is a *yōkai*.

What is effective with this story is how the visitor is in a human form the entire time, and there are no details one would see in fantasy films where the monster has a tail sticking out, or long claws. The visitor's disguise is flawless, and since its appearance is human, it raises the possibility in the audience's mind that anyone they encounter on a normal day could in fact be a *yōkai* in disguise. This visitor and his peculiar behavior would possibly cause audiences to question any strange behaviors of their friends or acquaintances, which makes the story relevant to their lives.

The last horrific element of this story is a similar use of the twist ending, but it provides evidence of a supernatural presence. The wise man is able to prove to the doctor that the visitor was a *kitsune*, since the doctor cannot remember the man's clothes upon departure. Also the fact that *kitsune* do not wear clothes makes their disguises and clothing as well a complete illusion. While this ending is surprising, it is familiar to the audience because it suggests that there may have been times in people's lives where they forget a particular detail due to the presence of a *kitsune*. Since a *kitsune* could shape-shift into anything, this idea that illusions could be proved by a person's poor memory would perhaps raise certain fears in the audience. When a person is no longer in control of their surroundings and is unable to distinguish truth from the world around them, this is frightening and thus this story would be appropriate for a *hyaku-monogatari* story session.

Kyōgoku's version follows the same story but focuses more on the reactions of Doctor Ken'i. The most alarming part of the story is the doctor's inability to remember any details of the man's clothing even though he was impressed by the man's outfit and spent so much time staring at the man while he was eating. Even after so many years, the doctor still cannot recall the man's clothes, "let alone the fabric, color and quality."<sup>71</sup> What appears to be terrifying in this story to Kyōgoku is how we can no longer trust our eyes and senses. The contradiction between the guest's extravagant, refreshing clothing and his polite speech is so different from his table manners that no one would even consider him to be a monster other than his peculiar eating habit. What is possibly frightening to Kyōgoku is how even tiny details and things we consider normal, could in fact be terrifying underneath. The horror is when the very person you're talking to or just seeing is actually a terrifying being, and that you just experienced a brush with the supernatural.

The reason why this story was likely not considered frightening today was mainly due to the presence of the *kitsune*. *Yōkai* are not feared as they once were back in the Edo period. An example of *yōkai's* transformation is how the common image associated with the *kitsune* is Vulpix, a cute female fire-type Pokémon from a children's television show. The other issue is that the villain poses no real threat to the men and the only victim of this story was the *botamochi* sweet. If the story were to be considered frightening today, the explanation for the visitor's animal-like behavior and disguise should be attributed to an entity people still fear today. If another terrifying monster that shared similar behavior such as the werewolf were

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<sup>71</sup> 衣服の柄はおろか、色も品質も、何もかも、まるで覚えていない。From *Furui kaidan mimi bukuro yori* 17.

used, it would inspire greater fear since people are afraid of wolf-men and the idea that someone next to them could become a monster as soon as the moon is full. The worst part is, there would be no way to identify the werewolf or shape-shifting monster until it was too late, since it would already be transforming right in front of you. By not relating the story to modern-day fears and faces of horror, the story loses its potential impact due to society's depiction of foxes and *yōkai* in general.

This story was probably considered surreal during the Edo period because people most likely had guests over at certain points in time during the day and night. These people could be servants, relatives or even strangers. It is the kind of story with a moral lesson, it is important to be wary of your guest. People who hear this kind of story can relate, and if they have a houseguest acting peculiar, they will consider the possibility that their visitor is a *kitsune*. Nowadays however, strange behavior such as eating face-first from the plate would be either considered bad manners or diagnosed as a mental disorder. The challenge with making these stories work is how they do not take into perspective how modern-day people would react to similar situations.

The third story I will analyze contains the greatest number of differences between the two versions and attempts to prove the existence of an actual monster through images. This story was taken from the first scroll of the *Mimi bukuro* and is one of the few stories in the original version to be accompanied with an actual drawing of a *yōkai*. The story begins with the rumor that a *kappa* was shot, killed, and preserved in salt in the house of a *daimyō* or feudal lord. Matsumoto Izu-no-kami brought the drawing to the narrator, saying that a person who had witnessed

the incident had told him about it (and apparently drew the picture that was in the original *Mimi bukuro*). The narrator then asked Matsumoto for the details and was told that children were drowning in a moat next to a storehouse in the middle of August. A group of people decided to dam the moat and find the source of the problem. Upon doing so they discovered a strange creature that could move through the mud as quick as the wind. Believing the creature was responsible for the children's deaths, they shot it. During this conversation, Magaribushi Kai-no-kami, who just happened to be sitting next to the narrator, remarked how the image of the dead *kappa* resembled a *kappa* picture he once saw down to the last detail.

While the story lacks a spooky setting, it makes up for the actual appearance of a monster. This is the first story in Kyōgoku's collection that involves a *yōkai* that kills children. The presence of the *kappa* itself was enough to frighten audiences since people during the Edo period feared these turtle-like *yōkai*. *Kappa* were rumored to possess enough strength to easily drown people in the water and could rip a man's intestines out through their rear end.<sup>72</sup> By using a *kappa* as the antagonist from the beginning of the story, audiences are already going to expect the worst and will instantly enter the story with a frightening image. Depicting the *kappa* as a murderer of children in a moat by drowning them feeds the people's fear of this *yōkai*, and continues to build the infamous reputation of this monster. If one were to compare the *kappa* to modern times, I would say it is the "Big Foot" or "Loch Ness Monster" of the Edo period. It is a notorious *yōkai* that has been seen by so many people and yet no one has actually killed one or provided evidence of its

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<sup>72</sup> Hiromi Iwai and Kondō Masaki. *Zusetsu nihon no yōkai*. (Tōkyō: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2000), 44.

existence. Therefore, the possibility that a man killed this famous *yōkai* would gather the attention of participants in a *hyaku-monogatari* session.

The story also associates drowning with being pulled under by a monster. The *kappa* in this story is the physical representation of the fear of drowning. People drown all the time supposedly by accident in rivers and irrigation canals, so this fear is constantly on the minds of people during the Edo period and even today in the twenty-first century. This kind of story where a monster is blamed for the drowning of children raises the possibility that similar deaths by drowning were caused by a monster. By framing the story and this possibility, *kappa* are given a new kind of life and in a sense can be viewed to live among people today.

The ending of the story is what would most likely cause the greatest amount of thrill amongst audiences since it proves the desired or feared suspicion that *kappa* exist. This scenario is similar to how people compare photographs of flying saucers and Big Foot in the hope of providing substantial evidence that these legendary beings exist. In this scenario, two men from different provinces compare their *kappa* stories using the image as a basis for comparison. What's disturbing is how the stranger sitting next to the main character of the story mentions how the *kappa* image he saw matched the *kappa* preserved in Sendai down to the last detail. Two different people sharing very similar experiences and an identical image of a *kappa* would be very rare during the Edo period and just as exciting during modern times. This unlikely coincidence while supposedly proving the existence of *kappa*, gives other stories surrounding these monsters credence, and suggests that there really are monsters in the world.



The adaptation of this story is different and begins with the introduction of Negishi Yasumori's relative and his experience at a social gathering of the elite in society. The scene is reminiscent of the pharmaceutical meetings and *hyaku-monogatari* gatherings. One of the topics of discussion is whether or not *kappa* exist. A few men in the narrative believe that *kappa* should be considered a living animal, while others do not. Kyōgoku probably included this introduction since he was debating himself like I was that perhaps *kappa* were mistaken for large animals such as turtles due to their shells.

The main character of this adaptation is a skeptical man named Mr. C who believes that *kappa* do not exist. He once saw an image of a *kappa*, but argues that the artist could have done whatever he liked, even adding eyes or enlarging the mouth. Much later after Mr. C's logical explanation, another person named Mr. M, an associate of Negishi Yasumori, takes out an image in his possession of a *kappa* that was shot and killed in Sendai. The narrative then explains the background as to how Mr. M acquired the image, but the exciting moment is when the once skeptical Mr. C freezes and says how the image of the *kappa* and the one he had seen are identical down to the last detail. This confirms that the person who showed Mr. C the image was telling the truth and that *kappa* most likely exist.

Judging from the narrative and how the focus is on the skeptical Mr. C, it seems that audiences today require substantial evidence that something exists. By having the stubborn Mr. C suddenly change his mind after seeing the picture of the *kappa*, readers could possibly think that both images are identical enough to the extent of spooking him, and thus both stories must be true. Even if readers do not

see physical evidence such as a dead body, they can make judgments based on the emotions of characters and how people react to secondary evidence such as pictures.

The reason why this story is not as effective today is because nowadays it is known that *kappa* are fictional characters. There are signs throughout Japan of *kappa* and they are still depicted in some situations as terrifying creatures, but the *kappa* is also taken out of its horror context. An example of this is the children's anime *Kappa no kaikata* or *How to Raise a Kappa*, where the *kappa* in the story is a man's pet and is depicted as a toddler and harmless. There is also not enough proof to justify the existence of this creature, which is why this story is likely not as effective today. Personally, it would have been more frightening if the culprit behind the drowning were a glowing alien, the Loch Ness Monster, or a ghost reaching from the water's surface to drown its victims. The story is already frightening due to the drowning of children and the mystery behind the deaths until the very end. If Kyōgoku wants to frighten audiences, he would have probably had better success if he reframed the stories for modern times and focused less on psychological horror. Another suggestion is that Kyōgoku should have used these stories for inspiration, but not stick to the original storyline.

The final story I will analyze is also from the first scroll of the *Mimi bukuro* and is one of the longest stories. This was probably the most frightening for readers during the Edo period and today, so I consider this story to be relatively successful in Kyōgoku's adaption experiment despite some problems. Unlike most of the original stories, this involved Negishi Yasumori and a fellow employee. In 1781,

Negishi was leading a river improvement project across the six regions of Kanto. He brought two of his employees and together they traveled from village to village each night. One night, the three were forced to stay in different houses since the village was overcrowded. Hanada, one of Negishi's servants, spends the night in a terrible room that was cut off from the rest of the house and in desperate need of repair. Once the sun sets and Hanada tries to go to sleep, strange things start happening. A loud 'crash' resounds in the room as though the roof had caved in. But when Hanada opens his eyes, there is nothing wrong, and the ceiling is perfectly fine. As Hanada turns over to go back to sleep, he sees a blind priest sitting at the foot of his pillow. Just as Hanada reaches for his sword however, the priest vanishes without a trace. It is strange because there is nowhere for the priest to run since Hanada locked the door and the room is empty. Hanada tries to stay awake and falls asleep, but as he opens his eyes a second time, the blind priest from before is still there and this time extends both of his arms wide as if to attack. Just as Hanada picks up his sword, the priest vanishes right before his eyes within seconds. The hauntings stop once Hanada lights a torch, and stays awake. The following morning Hanada tells his story to Negishi, and wonders if the priest was perhaps a *kitsune* or *tanuki* playing tricks.

There are several reasons why this story would be considered frightening during the Edo period and appropriate for a *hyaku-monogatari* session. The first horrific aspect is how the setting is ideal for a ghost story. The protagonist is forced to spend one night in a worn down inn with a thicket growing in the backyard. The

story also takes place in the middle of the night, and it is raining. All of these elements combined create the perfect environment for a *yōkai* or ghost to appear.

The next and most effective storytelling aspect of the horror genre, is the gradual haunting of the room, which becomes more dangerous as the story progresses. Hanada first hears a loud, thunderous crash as though the roof was on the verge of collapsing and despite this, nothing happens. The sounds could have had nothing to do with the hauntings, but it is the possibility that they could be connected that raises concerns for audiences. The tension builds as he suddenly sees the blind priest or *zatō* in the same room. Although the priest seems harmless at first, the main character feels vulnerable and his predicament would be relatable to all audiences regardless of time period since he has been disturbed while trying to sleep. People are most vulnerable when they sleep because they are unconscious and unaware of their surroundings. When that private and personal space is violated by the sudden presence of the uncanny, it is disturbing and makes people check the room twice before going to bed. This is probably one of the reasons why children's stories involving the Boogiemán or a monster under the bed were so frightening. It is when people are completely defenseless, and surrounded by darkness that the realm of the unknown, spirits, and *yōkai* pose the greatest threat.

The fear level in the story intensifies with the continuous disappearance of the blind priest who appears to harass the hero. Even though Hanada slices at the intruder, his blade hits nothing but air as the priest vanishes. He locks the door and checks his belongings to ensure nothing was stolen, but when the priest appears a second time, that is when the main character starts losing it. At this point in the

story, the hero and audience would probably feel helpless to the powers of the supernatural since, they cannot conquer it through sheer force. After failing to kill the intruding *yōkai*, Hanada lights a torch and stays awake, but to his surprise, there is no sign of any forced entry. At this point in the story, the storyteller would have used the audience's fear towards uncanny sounds and the unexplainable, which is what makes this story frightening. When people cannot explain or provide an answer for the supernatural, and especially one that is malevolent and poses a possible threat, they are terrified and feel vulnerable. What's even more frightening is how the mysterious priest managed to disappear and is thus still at large. The monster is able to cause chaos to not only the hero, but the audience as well, a typical feature of *yōkai* stories I explained earlier in this chapter.

The end of the story justifies everyone's fear when the main character suggests that either a *kitsune* or *tanuki*, two *yōkai* known for their shape-shifting abilities, were behind the hauntings. These two *yōkai* were ideal antagonists since they were both feared during the Edo period and were used frequently in *kaidan*. By incorporating them into this story, audiences would likely sympathize with the protagonist's experience, since he experienced the wrath of one of the most famous *yōkai* in existence. The incorporation of having a direct contact with an infamous *yōkai* likely gathered favor for some stories in *hyaku-monogatari* sessions.

Kyōgoku's adaptation deviates slightly from the original story by focusing more on the psychological health of the main character and his attempts at understanding the intentions of the visitor. After being startled by the sudden appearance of the priest, Hanada wonders if the priest is a burglar, or perhaps a

blind priest who lost his way and entered the wrong room. Hanada's process of guessing the intentions of his bedside visitor is very similar to the first story I introduced where the main character debated whether or not the mysterious figure in the rain was a woman or a monster. As the possibilities are eliminated one by one, Hanada, very similar to Mr. U in the first story, is possessed by a fear of the unknown and what he would do if the man states he is not a priest. It is this fear of the unknown that causes Hanada to defend himself.

The last part of the story is different from the original and offers the audience a chance to use their imaginations. Kyōgoku eliminates the suggestion from Hanada that the priest was an illusion caused by a *kitsune* or *tanuki*. Instead, the real fear for Hanada is that "if it wasn't a blind priest, what was it?" This ending and choice of words is interesting since it suggests that the interpretation behind hauntings has changed over time, but remains a common scenario. The story follows a typical pattern of a modern ghost story. The spiritual presence is small and is limited by causing electrical disturbances, a chill in the air or making weird sounds. As the night progresses, the ghost takes a physical form and poses a threat to the main character. Despite all of these similarities in both versions, the protagonist in the original version interprets the hauntings as the work of a *kitsune* or *tanuki*, while the protagonist in the new version is open to interpretation and cannot imagine what it was.

This adaptation had the greatest success in my opinion since the background of a haunted house is relatable to modern audiences. Kyōgoku also kept his audience in mind and allowed the reader to come up with their own interpretation

for the ghost. The ghost of a previous home owner? A wandering ghost? When audiences can relate to the cause of the supernatural, it makes the story spooky since it makes readers wonder if it will happen to them. More importantly, the similar backgrounds suggest that hauntings have been around since the Edo period and are a universal concept to all audiences.

There are several qualities all of these adaptations have in common with one another that reveal qualities about today's horror genre. First, the stories in Kyōgoku's version are written similar to the *Shin-mimi bukuro* style that was connected to *hyaku-monogatari* through its short stories and use of character names. The stories in Kyōgoku's adaptation eliminated the names of the characters. For example, Mr. Uzumaki is replaced with Mr. U. While today this could be seen as a form of respect to ensure the privacy of those involved in the story, this would also allow anyone to insert themselves and anyone they knew in the story so they could adapt the tale and make it their own. This would then cause the story to spread and become a popular tale to tell at story gatherings.

Also of note is how the story titles were changed completely by Kyōgoku for entertainment purposes. The original *Mimi bukuro* was written in the form of a *zuihitsu* and Negishi supposedly wrote and collected the stories as he heard them. As a result of this writing style, the titles are straightforward in the original such as "*Kappa Story*" and "*The Incident Where a Man Couldn't Remember the Clothes of a Beast.*" It is likely that Kyōgoku changed the titles to not only make them entertaining, but to highlight a certain element of the story he wanted audiences to notice. For the first story, he emphasized how the woman was *Crouching*. The

second was titled *Couldn't Remember* to highlight the doctor's inability to remember the visitor's clothes to this day. The third was how the two drawings of *kappa* were *Identical to the Last Detail* and lastly how *If He Wasn't a Priest* then the bedside-visitor was some *yōkai* or monster that was frightening to Mr. H. All of these stories are connected to the monster in some way and provide clues to the reader as to what is important in the story.

The adaptations are also much longer than their original versions. This is probably because Kyōgoku wanted to add more content to the story regarding the character's beliefs and personality, but it also served to slowly build the narrative. The *yōkai* are not encountered in most of these stories until the middle or even the end and they serve as an obstacle to the character. We also have Kyōgoku's use of what I like to call "the surviving narrator." Kyōgoku's narrative is sometimes interrupted by the storyteller as he recalls the events and reflects on them. This does prove that the storyteller survived the encounter, but it also shows the lasting impact these stories made on people during the Edo period.

Another characteristic of Kyōgoku's works is how he robs his characters of their freedom and makes them feel helpless. This feeling of helplessness could be connected to their sense of sight, hearing, or touch, but the characters are forced to question their surroundings and whether or not the person standing before them is real. The first story made the man question what he saw in the dark, the second story forced the doctor to question his sight, the third story questioned what people see in images, and the fourth story made the protagonist doubt almost all of his senses to the point of insomnia. Based on this observation, Kyōgoku seems to



believe that not being in control mentally and physically of one's surroundings is frightening, and so he incorporates this idea in all of his stories.

Each of these stories could have been unsettling or spooky today.

Encountering an oddly shaped figure in the dark, a man behaving like an animal, a mysterious creature seen and confirmed by two people, and a ghost sitting next to your bed are all scenarios that have been included in twenty-first century horror stories. What makes these stories unappealing is how the monsters identified as the source of the hauntings are no longer considered frightening today. Plague gods, foxes, and *kappa* are no longer frightening today or on the minds of a majority of the populace. There are monsters and ghosts people fear today that share similar qualities, and they should be substituted to make the adaptation appeal to modern audiences. The biggest challenge in passing down stories and adapting them is matching the appropriate villain of the time period that will carry the same weight as the original version's face of horror. The next chapter will introduce and analyze of a few of these modern day icons of horror and discuss how and why they are considered frightening in literature and films.

### CHAPTER III

#### NEW FACES OF HORROR

By the end of the twentieth century, the world became interconnected through the Internet, televisions, phones, and digital cameras that could send information across the globe within seconds. Since people could turn to films and television programs as a form of escapism, storytelling in a dimly lit room and the horror stories centering on original Edo-period *yōkai* died out and became associated with a nostalgic Japan before the cultural influence of the West. Television programming became the main source of entertainment for people around the world, and local films and television programs from other countries, soon became accessible worldwide. As a result, horror stories of monsters, urban legends, viruses and supernatural phenomenon told in literature, film, and television were no longer limited to one region, they could be adapted and shared on the world stage. It was during this technological boom that new monsters developed that distinguished themselves from *yōkai* and reflected the concerns and fears of the consequences of having an interconnected world with an increasing dependency on technology.

In this chapter I will introduce three new monsters that were deemed frightening by modern Japanese audiences during the twentieth century and are still considered horror genre icons to this day. For each monster I will provide a brief history about its development and current status in the genre and society. After providing a historical context, I will argue why these new monsters are frightening and what this says about the changes in the horror genre in the twenty-first century. By studying and comparing characters used in horror stories from the Edo period

up to today, we can understand how society has changed since horror is a reflection of society's concerns and fears.

The first monster that I will introduce is a classic icon of Japanese films from the 1950s and developed during Japan's economic recovery after World War II, *Gojira*. Known to Americans as the "Godzilla the King of the Monsters," *Gojira* inspired a new kind of film for the Japanese horror genre called *kaijū eiga* or films starring gigantic monsters that destroy all life. Even though *Gojira* is a fictional monster created for film, he served as a reminder of Japan's devastation during World War II. Ever since the end of the war, a large number of Japanese people advocated the disarmament of nuclear weapons. The tension between America and Japan reached a new level on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1954, when the United States military detonated a fifteen-megaton hydrogen bomb on the Bikini Atoll in the Southern Pacific. Although the test was carried out on open water, the bomb was measured to be almost one-thousand times more powerful than the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>73</sup>

Unfortunately, a Japanese fishing vessel known as "The Lucky Dragon No. 5" with a crew of twenty-three men strayed too close to the blast and was covered in white ash. Even though the crew returned safely to shore, doctors soon discovered that the men and the tuna they had caught were afflicted with radiation poisoning. Japan believed this was an attack and millions of Japanese (including the emperor) were afraid to eat any of the fresh fish due to the possibility of radiation sickness.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Tsutui, William. *Godzilla On My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 18.

<sup>74</sup>Ralph Lapp, *The Voyage of the Lucky Dragon* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958).

A few weeks later, a desperate filmmaker named Tanaka Tomoyuki in an attempt to save Toho Studios from financial collapse, came up with the idea of *Gojira*, and a film star was born.

When most people hear the name *Gojira*, they are likely to think of the cheesy disaster movies about a latex-suit monster that destroys Tokyo, New York, and several other cities. The American adaptation's fake-oriental accents, poor dubbing, inaccurate and often nonsensical translations made audiences view the *Gojira* series as comedies rather than horror. For the purpose of this paper, I will be focusing on the first and original Japanese *Gojira* film produced in 1954 that was part of the horror genre.

The film begins with the testing of America's latest hydrogen bomb, which unfortunately destroys a fishing vessel named "Glory No.5," an unsubtle reference to the accident involving the "Lucky Dragon No. 5" earlier that year. In the film, several Japanese ships search for survivors, but end up suddenly vanishing out in the ocean. The mystery behind the disappearing ships comes to an end when a survivor is discovered on a nearby island called Ōdo. The survivor tells his rescuers that a large monster was responsible for the disappearing ships. Upon hearing this, the village elder of Ōdo Island claims it was *Gojira*, a legendary sea monster from Japanese folklore. In hopes of appeasing the monster and saving their village from the wrath of the beast, the community on Ōdo Island performs an exorcism. But the combined efforts of the villagers prove futile as *Gojira* rises from the sea that very night and attacks.

After the incident, a paleontologist named Dr. Yamane leads an expedition to Ōdo Island in hopes of finding clues about what happened. When he discovers a gigantic footprint, his Geiger counter detects a startling amount of radiation, suggesting that *Gojira* absorbed a large amount due to nuclear weapons testing. Dr. Yamane returns to Tokyo and explains to parliament that *Gojira* is a creature from the Jurassic period (over one hundred and forty five million years ago). The nuclear weapons testing by the American forces likely disturbed *Gojira's* slumber and caused him to absorb a large amount of atomic radiation, which resulted in his astonishing height of over fifty meters. Aside from the monster, a love triangle blossoms between several characters whom while fighting for the girl of their dreams, stand on opposing sides debating whether to kill or study *Gojira*. Later in the film, Tokyo is overwhelmed by the onslaught of *Gojira* and thousands of people are killed in the wake of its destruction. The monster is eventually defeated by the ingenuity of Dr. Serizawa who develops a new weapon capable of mass destruction called the Oxygen Destroyer. Serizawa uses the Oxygen Destroyer to kill *Gojira* along with himself in order to protect the secret of his weapon and thus saving Japan from any future threats involving weapons of mass destruction.

The film originally received mixed reviews due to its content on nuclear weapons, which caused several people to walk out of the movie theater in tears.<sup>75</sup> Although the message advocating against the use of weapons of mass destruction in war was clear, Japan was still sensitive towards any reminders of World War II and the deaths by atomic bombs. As time passed, the film eventually rose in popularity

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<sup>75</sup> Tsutsui, *Godzilla On My Mind*. 33

and experienced enormous success from its localized versions overseas, causing an additional twenty-six films to be produced. The latest *Gojira* film was produced in 2014, proving that the monster's popularity still continues today.

*Gojira's* legacy of films, toys, and adapted stories across the world proves how successful the monster was in the film industry, but that the monster also has several characteristics that label him as a horror icon. The first reason why *Gojira* is viewed as terrifying is his overall appearance. *Gojira's* reptilian shaped-body, sharp teeth the size of houses, large spikes protruding from his back and large tail make him appear as a new type of gigantic Frankenstein. Continuing from his imposing presence, *Gojira's* destructive capabilities make him extremely dangerous to large populated areas. *Gojira's* large size allowed him to make a peaceful ocean become violent, cause the earth to shake with every step, and destroy buildings by just walking through them. His fire ability posed a great danger to the Japanese community since most of the Japanese homes were still made of wood and highly vulnerable to fire.<sup>76</sup> With all of these abilities and his potential to bring cities to ruin and end thousands of lives, *Gojira* is arguably the most dangerous monster the world has ever seen, even though he is a film character created in the twentieth century.

*Gojira's* appearance and destructive potential is frightening by itself, but it also symbolizes the Japanese populace's modern day fear of Mother Nature and not knowing when she would strike. Japan lies along the Pacific Ring of Fire next to the edge of numerous continental and oceanic tectonic plates. This area is responsible

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<sup>76</sup> Tsutsui, *Godzilla On My Mind*, 16.

for 90% of the world's earthquakes, thus putting Japan in an area of frequent seismic activity.<sup>77</sup> The Japanese have an old proverb "*jishin, kaminari, kaji, oyaji.*" meaning that the four most fearsome things for a Japanese person are "earthquakes, thunder, fire, and fathers."<sup>78</sup> *Gojira's* ability to make the earth shake with each step, his deafening roar and his fire breathing are all representations of disasters that Japanese people experience throughout their lifetime. In this way, *Gojira* is the physical manifestation of the Japanese populace's fear towards Mother Nature and how they are subjected to its instability.

The destructive potential of nature represented through the creation of *Gojira* was only one symbol the monster represented. The birth of *Gojira* was in fact the result of a sudden "what if" scenario as a film producer was staring out over the ocean during his plane flight. Tanaka and Toho studios were aware of the growing trends of monster movies such as the 1952 rerelease of *King Kong* and the 1953 Blockbuster, *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*.<sup>79</sup> It was during this time of large movie monsters and economic desperation that Tanaka came up with the unknown scenario in his mind, "What if a dinosaur sleeping in the Southern Hemisphere was awakened and transformed into a giant by the bomb? What if it attacked Tokyo?"<sup>80</sup>

In my opinion, *Gojira* also symbolizes a curiosity and fear in the minds of filmmakers of unknown monsters. Even today, society does not have all the answers behind the Jurassic period and cannot possibly identify every fact about the

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<sup>77</sup> "Earthquake Glossary - Ring of Fire." Earthquake Glossary - Ring of Fire.  
<http://earthquake.usgs.gov/learn/glossary/?termID=150>.

<sup>78</sup> Tsutsui, *Godzilla On My Mind* 16.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>80</sup> Tanaka Tomoyuki quoted in John Burgessm "Godzilla Rises Again," *Washington Post*, December 19, 1984.

animals during this time. As a result, there is always room for speculation and imagination. For example, when *Jurassic Park* (1993) was filmed, Steven Spielberg depicted the velociraptors as tall, swift hunters with large claws. This was a man-made creation that would have been entirely false if not for the later 1991 discovery of the Utahraptor, which coincidentally resembled Spielberg's movie raptors in size and gave them credibility.<sup>81</sup> If one makes a close inspection of *Gojira* they will notice that the monster was "formed from a fossil-record-be-damned fusion of a Tyrannosaurus rex, Iguanodon, and Stegosaurus."<sup>82</sup> This is a fusion of three different monsters from the Jurassic period and the imagination of filmmakers, which could one day prove to be an accurate creation if a similar dinosaur is discovered. The creation of *Gojira* is an example of this creative process where imagination combines with the frightful curiosity of what kind of dangerous animals existed millions of years ago before dinosaurs were wiped out. When the monster appears in the film, audiences will possibly wonder, "what if there were once dinosaurs that resembled *Gojira* long ago?" In a sense, *Gojira* is the physical representation of mankind's fear towards the unknown in trying to understand what kinds of dinosaurs existed and the consequences of atomic energy.

*Gojira* is frightening not only through his sheer destructive capabilities and monstrous appearance, but because he symbolizes the fear of nuclear weapons, science run amok and the unknown question, "What will happen when society can no longer control technology?" In the original 1954 film, *Gojira* was originally a dinosaur that survived from the Jurassic period, but was disturbed from his natural

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<sup>81</sup> Duncan Jody, *The Winston Effect*, (London: Titan Books, 2006) 175.

<sup>82</sup> Tsutsui, *Godzilla On My Mind*, 23.



habitat due to the testing of nuclear weapons. No one could have foreseen that this rare animal would absorb so much radiation and grow to become over fifty meters tall. Humanity's mistake in developing weapons of mass destruction is emphasized throughout the film. The opening scene is an indirect reference to "Lucky Dragon No. 5," suggesting that the testing of atomic bombs causes a nearby Japanese fishing vessel called the "Glory No. 5" to sink. Parliament and the characters in the love triangle debate whether to kill *Gojira* or study him for the future of science. The destruction of Tokyo is also similar to the devastation of the atomic bomb, and *Gojira* is only destroyed after a new atomic weapon is developed. The danger of nuclear weapons served as the background for *Gojira's* story and was able to deliver the message that "nuclear war and the uncontrollable horrors within the atom were to be avoided at all costs."<sup>83</sup> The director of *Gojira*, Honda Ishirō even admitted in an interview that he hoped the production of *Gojira* would inspire audiences around the world to stop producing nuclear weapons since they could awaken a new unforeseen danger.<sup>84</sup> *Gojira* is the man-made creation of society's fear towards nuclear weapons and the terrifying consequences that could follow.

Another fear that *Gojira* represents is the possibility that Mother Nature could one day take revenge and destroy mankind. With humanity's desire to improve technologically and keep evolving, nature and the environment becomes an afterthought and is often the victim of such selfish desires. In the twenty-first century, nations are trying to combat global warming and limit the amount of

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<sup>83</sup> Tsutsui, *Godzilla On My Mind*, 33.

<sup>84</sup> Stuart Galbraith IV, *Monsters are Attacking Tokyo: The Incredible World of Japanese Fantasy Films* (Venice, CA: Feral House, 1988) 49.

greenhouse gases released into the air. A common fear today is the possibility of earth becoming uninhabitable. All of these problems with the ice caps melting, and the fluctuations in temperature are due to the disregard mankind has for the environment. *Gojira* is the terrifying scenario where an animal of Mother Nature becomes a monster born from our technology and takes revenge against society. To Honda, *Gojira* was a tangible form of the “unspoken fears of the Bomb, nuclear testing, and environmental degradation.”<sup>85</sup> In both the film and real life, humanity is as much to blame for its own destruction as the monster born from uncontrollable technology.

The next monster I will introduce is a horror character developed in the 1970s that is a cross between a human and a monster. On December of 1978 in the city of Gifu, a young woman in her mid twenties or thirties was rumored to be following children home from school. The woman wore a brown trench coat and donned a surgical mask that concealed her face. The woman would tap students on the shoulder and ask, “Am I pretty?” If students said, “Yes” out of courtesy, the woman would respond, “How about now?” and rip off her mask revealing a hideous mouth slit from ear to ear. The woman was known as *Kuchi-sake-onna* or in English, The Slit-Mouthed Woman.<sup>86</sup>

Within three months the legend of *Kuchi-sake-onna* spread across Japan all the way to Hokkaido and Okinawa, and there were reported sightings of the monstrous woman in every prefecture. The story changed over time and rumors

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<sup>85</sup> Honda Ishirō quoted in Galbraith, *Monsters*, 49.

<sup>86</sup> Saitō Shūhei, “Uwasa no fōkuroa: Kuchi-sake-onna no denshō oboegaki,” *Kenkyū kiyō* 7 (March 30, 1992): 90.

claimed that *Kuchi-sake-onna* started carrying shears or a hand scythe. Others said she was once an Olympic athlete and could sprint one hundred meters within three seconds. Some people said the only way to escape was by answering, 'so-so' to her question or not saying anything at all. Another rumor was that *Kuchi-sake-onna* was fond of a hard candy known as *bakko ame* and would stop chasing you if you threw it at her. Alternative methods of escape included running into a record shop or reciting the word 'pomade' three times, to make her disappear. Several backstories also developed behind the legend such as *Kuchi-sake-onna* was once a beautiful woman who underwent a failed surgery. A different version claimed there were three *Kuchi-sake-onna* created from different accidents. The first was the result of a botched cosmetic surgery, the second from a traffic accident and the youngest sister, who after seeing her two sisters' hideous faces, went insane and cut her own mouth open.

Due to the rumors and supposed sightings of *Kuchi-sake-onna*, children were frightened to walk home from school at dusk, so extra police were hired to patrol the area and escort children to safety. According to a survey conducted in June of 1979, 99 percent of children knew of the infamous *Kuchi-sake-onna*.<sup>87</sup> The reason why her legend spread so quickly across Japan was due to the media coverage and interest adults had in the story. Newspaper articles on *Kuchi-sake-onna's* appearances, television programs following the latest rumors, and late night radio programs and dramas continued to build the legend and sometimes confirmed the

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<sup>87</sup> Kinoshita Tomio, "Gendai no uwasa kara kōtōdenshō no hassei mekanizumu o saguru: 'Kuchi-sake-onna' no uwasa o daizai toshite," in *Ryūgen, uwasa soshite jōhō: Uwasa no kenkyūshū taisei*, ed. Satō Tatsuya (Shibundō, 1999), 14.

children's stories. The legend inspired the song "Catch *Kuchi-sake-onna*" and she even made appearances in sports magazines. The *Asahi Shinbun*, one of Japan's national newspapers even designated *Kuchi-sake-onna* as a buzzword in 1979.

By the beginning of 1980, *Kuchi-sake-onna's* media popularity peaked and the attention surrounding her story slowly died down. In the twenty-first century, *Kuchi-sake-onna* has garnered international recognition in Korea and America, and film producers adapted the story for American audiences. The film, *Slit-Mouthed Woman in L.A.* had its first screening at a film festival in Santa Monica this past November. Although the film is centered on *Kuchi-sake-onna*, other *yōkai* and zombies appear in the story. Due to the extensive media coverage and wide spread popularity of the legend, *Kuchi-sake-onna* has recently become a topic of study and debate for *yōkaiologist's*.

A question on the minds of many *yōkaiologists* is "why *Kuchi-sake-onna* was so frightening to people during the 1970s?" The reason why her reign of terror is questionable is because she is basically a human with a hideously cut mouth. She has no horns, several eyes, or a tail, indicating she is a monster or *yōkai*. *Kuchi-sake-onna* is arguably an average wanna-be stalker who hopelessly chases after children and is never able to capture or kill them. Although *Kuchi-sake-onna* is one of the few horror figures who resembles a human, she represents several fears of modern day society.

The first reason why *Kuchi-sake-onna* was so frightening was due to her ability to inspire fear in the hearts of children through her appearance and abilities. This is similar to the *yōkai* of the past that were so prominent during the Edo period

because of their appearance, and abilities that posed a threat to anyone unfortunate to encounter them. *Kuchi-sake-onna's* cut face is disgusting and would likely cause children to assume she is a monster. Furthermore, the stories saying that she cuts the mouth of any child who encounters her is enough to frighten anyone who is walking home alone from school when they are most vulnerable. The children's parents are gone, they do not have any ability to defend themselves and so they become the ideal target for a deranged lunatic.

*Kuchi-sake-onna* was frightening because she represented the danger of a stranger chasing children at dusk. The fear of having your mouth cut open from ear to ear, and being forever scarred for life, if not killed, is enough to frighten a large number of children and adults. These concerns were apparently enough to summon police escorts for children back in 1979 and teachers warned their students to stay away from women wearing white surgical masks.<sup>88</sup> This mass panic towards one human being signifies how the monsters of society changed and how society did not fear the *yōkai* of the past, but rather the dangers of other people in an overcrowded city. Stalkers, psychopaths, serial killers, and pedophiles are the new fears of city dwellers since they are surrounded by thousands of people who could pose a threat at any time. What is perhaps even more frightening is *Kuchi-sake-onna's* ability to blend in and appear in several locations at once. Despite being seen by so many children, she fits the common trait and fear the *yōkai* of the past possessed that allowed them to be so frightened: a constant threat to society since no one has officially killed or captured this imaginary *yōkai*.

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<sup>88</sup> Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, 186.

*Kuchi-sake-onna* is also the Japanese version of the popular American slasher film from the 1970s and 80s. Her weapon of choice is the scythe, a new variation of the typical knife or machete used in horror films. The monster wears a white-surgical mask to hide her identity from her victims and the authorities, and allows her to blend in with her surroundings to attack freely. She also has several abilities such as super-human speed and the ability to grow in strength with every rumor. *Kuchi-sake-onna* follows the typical formula of how the killer stalks their victims and attacks as the sun sets and when their target is alone with nowhere to hide. Finally, no matter how many times the victim escapes, *Kuchi-sake-onna* reappears in several locations and keeps coming back almost as though she were immortal.

Continuing off of this fear of strangers and the similarities to horror films, the way children encounter *Kuchi-sake-onna* is similar to a ghost tale from *hyaku-monogatari*. Students are having a normal day returning from school, until they are stopped by a beautiful woman wearing a white surgical mask. There is nothing odd about this situation since Japanese people wear white surgical masks when they catch a cold or if they are trying to avoid becoming sick. The students are caught off guard by the sudden question of the woman, "Am I pretty?" and perhaps out of kindness, the student will give a polite answer hoping to end the encounter and continue. However, the encounter does not end, and the climax of the story takes place when the woman removes her mask and reveals a shockingly horrific mouth cut from ear to ear. Consumed by fear at this hidden monster, the child runs away fearing for his or her life, but rather than leaving the woman behind, the child notices that the monster is pursuing them down the lonely street. It is the revealing

of the monster behind the mask that makes this story so frightening. Students realize that anyone wearing a white mask is a possible threat, thus making even the normal parts of everyday life take on a frightening possibility. Similar to the *kitsune* who could blend in by shape-shifting, this monster has her own disguise allowing her to blend with the general public and stay hidden until she sets upon her victim.

Another reason for *Kuchi-sake-onna's* effective reign of terror was the speed at which her stories spread and how she suited the needs of the storyteller similar to the stories shared in *hyaku-monogatari*. The one factor that all of the “*Kuchi-sake-onna*” stories have in common is how they are rarely fully wrought or logical: they are always contextual, a tidbit of experience, or a personal memory recalled informally.”<sup>89</sup> The narratives changed over time adding new parts to the story or ways to dispel *Kuchi-sake-onna*. These new variations added to *Kuchi-sake-onna's* story, and gave her not only a backstory, but new abilities such as being able to outrun a motorcycle. With each new adaptation, the legend behind the monster grew in strength adding to children’s fear and belief in this imaginary monster.

As terror spread amongst school children and new variations of the legend were told, people took liberties with the story by adding their own regional details to make the story more personal. The legend’s adaptability and relevance to those living in the city and countryside allowed it to spread quickly across Japan through the help of the media and word of mouth. The speed of which this legend spread throughout the country is similar to the *hyaku-monogatari* stories of the Edo period that gained fame and recognition as they were told and passed on. The

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<sup>89</sup> Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, 184.

incorporation of technology combined with the overactive imaginations of children allowed this story to be introduced to people of all ages and social classes. There was no escape from the stories or rumors of *Kuchi-sake-onna*.

*Kuchi-sake-onna* is terrifying through her appearance and incorporation of media to reach large audiences and maintain a presence in daily life, but she is also the physical manifestation of sociological and economical fears people have during the twenty-first century. One of these fears is the fear of forgetting one's cultural roots and heritage. During the 1950s and 1960s Japan experienced a period of substantial economic growth. Thousands of young, motivated people flocked to the cities for job opportunities, causing a brain drain from the countryside. Seeing how the countryside was facing a depopulation problem, in 1972 Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei expressed his concern that "it would be difficult to pass on the excellent nature and traditions of the Japanese people to our youth."<sup>90</sup> To combat the problem, the government encouraged people to explore the abandoned countryside, and rediscover traditional Japan. One of these remedies was Japan National Railway's campaign in the 1970s advertising the wonders of the country, followed by their second campaign called *Exotic Japan* in the 1980s. *Kuchi sake onna* appeared during this time when the Japanese were becoming reconnected to their cultural, hometown roots.<sup>91</sup>

According to Foster, the timely appearance of *Kuchi-sake-onna* and her costume symbolizes a connection between the city and the nostalgia of *yōkai* from the countryside during the Edo period. Her sudden appearance during this time

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<sup>90</sup> Tanaka Kakuei, *Nihon rettō kaizō ron* (Nikkan kōgyō shinbunsha, 1973) 1-2.

<sup>91</sup> Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade* 187.



when the government attempted to convince the masses to visit their historical roots is almost like a warning or cry for attention to remember the countryside and the Edo period heritage surrounding the *yōkai* of the past. What is also worthy of note is how her weapon of choice is a scythe associated with the countryside and not a lead pipe or some other weapon associated with an industrial city.

Another fear that *Kuchi-sake-onna* symbolizes is the unknown consequence of urbanization and destroying the environment. During the 1970s, the media began to report a disturbing number of mercury and cadmium poisonings as a result of industrialization. The government created the Environmental Agency to respond to civilian issues and several children started wearing masks to and from school. *Kuchi-sake-onna's* slit mouth is a symbol of the destruction of the environment and that something is wrong within the city. The innocent white of the mask reveals a startling truth that the environment is suffering as a result of the greed of corporations.<sup>92</sup> In the desire for economic recovery and strength, the inner beauty of the city is sacrificed, similar to her once beautiful face. This does not mean that everyone will turn into *Kuchi-sake-onna* if society does not address the issue, but this monster's white mask represents how the government's actions in building power plants, factories, and skyscrapers was impacting the daily lives of the populace.<sup>93</sup>

The last monster I will be analyzing is Sadako from the popular novel and film series *Ringu*, translated as *The Ring*. Published in 1991 by Koji Suzuki, *Ringu* is

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<sup>92</sup> Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, 198.

<sup>93</sup> Esashi Akiko, ed., *Shashin, kaiga shūsei Nihon no onnatachi: Jidai o ikiru* (Nihon tosho sentā, 1996), 1:155.

the story of newspaper journalist Kazuyuki Asakawa and his investigation of a peculiar case where four students, one of which was his niece, died at the same time by a stroke. Kazuyuki's investigation eventually leads him to a mountain resort where the group of four students spent their last time alive together. While searching the resort, he discovers a mysterious tape the students supposedly watched containing strange and disturbing images that warns him at the very end: "any person who sees this tape will die in seven days if they fail to do the following..." Unfortunately for Kazuyuki, the method to lift the curse was taped over by his niece. Kazuyuki is forced to collaborate with his high school friend Ryūji Takayama, an alleged psychopath and university professor in order to lift the curse within seven days or die trying. In the process of searching for the cure, the two learn that the tape is a psychological virus mixed with smallpox created by Sadako, a young girl and hermaphrodite who possessed psychic powers and had the ability to print psychic images on film.

After contracting the smallpox virus from being raped, Sadako was thrown down a well by her rapist and miraculously survived. Filled with anger and rage, Sadako's emotions fused with her psychic powers and created a tape containing the last memorable moments of her seven days trapped in the well. By the end of the story, the two confront Sadako's rapist and uncover her remains from the well, but this does not satisfy Sadako's spirit. Ryūji is killed by the virus and Kazuyuki discovers that he was cured long ago. The cure for the virus is to make a copy of the film and have someone watch it, thus spreading the virus like a plague, a never-ending circle of death.

Suzuki's literary work was such a success in Japan that five additional novels were written to make the story into a series. A straight to video adaptation of the book was produced in 1995, but was only aired once on television. It was in 1998 when a second film adaptation of the novel was produced where Sadako eventually grew into a cult horror icon. The film differed in many ways from the book: the sex of the main characters switched from male to female, Sadako's identity as a hermaphrodite was taken out, and Sadako was portrayed as a ghost who kills people by entering their homes through television sets after seven days. Other adaptations of Suzuki's novel include two television mini-series, one made-for-TV movie, six manga adaptations, and one popular Korean film remake. The film and television series were popular enough to cause film studios to produce more films for the series lasting up until 2013, the latest titled *Sadako 3D 2*. American film studios also produced two additional remakes based on Japan's popular film series and surprisingly, the American adaptation achieved greater success in Japan than the 1998 Japanese film adaptation of the novel. Sadako's fame due to *The Ring's* success possibly rivaled the international recognition *Kuchi-sake-onna* received.

While Sadako is a fictional character in the novel and film series, she is terrifying as a reminder of death and the unknown behind it. The first piece of evidence is her appearance in the films as a ghostly specter reminiscent of Japanese horror stories from the Edo period. Sadako is the ideal character for an *urami hanashi*, where a character, mainly female, returns from the dead to exact vengeance upon those who wronged her. Sadako's appearance is also taken from *kaidan* of *Noh* plays and *Kabuki* theatre where the "prominent features associated with the woman

as 'avenging spirit' include long black hair and wide staring eyes."<sup>94</sup> Sadako's face is almost never seen in the film since her long black hair almost reaches the floor and she wears a white gown, which is also associated with the female ghost in *kaidan*. The way Sadako crawls out of the televisions in the films makes her appear more like an insect than a human or levitating ghost. Her soaking-wet appearance and creepy walk is enough to make the audience's skin crawl, so already she has the power to disgust audiences.

Sadako's process of killing her victims after they watch her tape is terrifying since it serves as a reminder and a calling card that unbeknownst to people, death can be horrific. The entire process of the victim being inflicted with her curse is centered on death. First, Sadako's calling the victim and saying "seven days" is a form of warning that the viewer has no chance of survival and that their remaining time on earth is limited. Since the characters in the film only believe that the stories behind Sadako's videotape are a rumor, they are unlikely to believe that they will die. Sadako's phone call, makes the rumor a reality and terrifies the viewer and target of wrath since they will start to wonder if the killer tape is real and that they are scheduled to die a terrible death. No one knows what happens after death, so imagining the possibilities of this unknown would be terrifying. After seven days have passed, the victims are not merely stabbed or shot as many people have died in modern times. Instead, Sadako permanently disfigures them by contorting their face and jaw in an unnatural state. When they are discovered by police, they are disgusting to look at and appear as though they were frightened to death. Those

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<sup>94</sup> McRoy, *Japanese Horror Cinema*, 3.

who discover these victims will be afraid of the unknown force that caused such a gruesome death, and that death may not be entirely peaceful, but a living nightmare that never ends.

Sadako's virus also represented how audiences feared technology growing out of control and turning against them. While *Gojira* was born from nuclear weapons, Sadako is the embodiment of modern technology turning against society, with her as the messenger. When victims are cursed by Sadako for watching the tape, a symptom they experience is how their faces become blurred in photographs. No matter how many photos are taken from different cameras, the victim's face is contorted and hidden from view. In this sense, Sadako possesses the ability to deprive people of their individuality in photographs, but it represents a larger problem of how "media technologies seemed to pose to the autonomy and integrity of the individual subject."<sup>95</sup>

When we take a photograph, we capture a moment in time and the people or items captured in the photograph become an object. The distorting of faces in the photographs represents how people lose their individuality, image, and become marked for death. The victims slowly transform from being the subject of the photograph to being an object, a simple object soon to be wiped from the world.<sup>96</sup> Sadako's ability to begin her victim's transformation from human to ghost through the distortion of images alludes to the possibility that photos could one day turn against people. A blurred photograph takes on a new meaning since it could

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<sup>95</sup> Kristen Lacefield, *The Scary Screen: Media Anxiety in the Ring*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 40

<sup>96</sup> Lacefield, *The Scary Screen*, 41.

symbolize the impending death of its subject. The blurred image also resembles the final appearance of the victims as they die, blurred and beyond recognition.

Another reason Sadako had such a horrific impact was because her virus involved media technologies people used on a daily basis: telephones, VHS tapes, cameras and televisions. Since audiences experience the film through the same technology required to watch Sadako's film, audiences are left wondering at the end if they will receive a phone call notifying them of their impending doom. By having a ghost utilize and infect the same media that audiences depend upon, the story becomes personal. Audiences begin to feel intimidated by their own television screens and especially by static, which marked the beginning of Sadako's film. Even if it is an accident, pictures that become blurred or out of focus take on a whole new meaning, and phone calls that could be Sadako announcing one's inevitable doom inspire fear into those who have watched the film.<sup>97</sup> While the films gave life to Sadako and made her an international J-horror icon, they simultaneously caused audiences to fear that the very technologies they created could one day turn against them. This fear allows reality and fiction within films to merge and make it appear as though Sadako is alive in this world.

Sadako is also frightening since she is a modern day virus that cannot be stopped. The effectiveness of Sadako's virus depends on the ability of the victims to copy the tape and have someone watch it, thus spreading and infecting others. The virus is like a parasite that requires a new host every seven days. It becomes stronger as more copies circulate throughout the populace, thus increasing the

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<sup>97</sup> Foster, *The Book of Yōkai*, 206.

chances of infection and eventually infecting an entire region. Since most households have a television, a virus that spreads through film and then kills you by having a ghoul-like woman crawl out of your own television is frightening. For the first time, a source of entertainment and escapism for people turns against them, and poses a new threat they cannot escape.

Even worse is how physical force cannot stop the virus. The American adaptation of the film addressed this issue when Rachael, the main character, rips out the film from the VHS tape and burns it, but proves useless since her lover is killed and the virus is still in existence due to the amount of copies already in circulation by previous victims. Sadako's curse is a super-virus that cannot be stopped unless every tape or source of the virus is destroyed and those contaminated die with it. The curse or virus of Sadako is one humanity has never dealt with before, and would become a frightening reality if it actually existed, which is why Sadako became so popular. Rather than haunting one landscape that could be avoided, Sadako haunts the everyday technological items people possess and can multiply depending on the number of people infected. The combination of an unstoppable virus and technology turning against humanity and leading to an almost unpreventable death is one society is not yet prepared for and one of the reasons Sadako remains feared today.

The damage done from World War II scarred Japan and summoned a new fear towards nature, technology, and the humans wielding such destructive force. Japan was able to recover from the war and grow as an industrial and financial powerhouse, but old scars remained. New monsters developed separating most if

not all connections to the Edo period and represented Japan's new fears of the consequences of uncontrollable technology, human greed, and violence within cities. The *yōkai* from the Edo period are no longer frightening to audiences, but the fear of death remained since it was still an unknown factor. The new monsters created such as *Gojira*, *Kuchi-sake-onna*, and *Sadako* were mobile, adaptable, and haunted several locations and technology tools people depended on daily which is why they were frightening. Although these three characters were created from entertainment and rumors, they are the new generation of monsters that have continued to be successful horror movie characters today due to the horrors and mistakes of mankind they represent. Mankind is no longer afraid of demons, plagues, or foxes. Instead, they fear the unknown consequences of growing technology, economically and socially draining the countryside, and what dangers lurk when a virus utilizes the very tools people use on a daily basis. These new fears are all related in one way or another to unknown scenarios people do not know how to counter. People may encounter a frightening monster or scenario, but the explanation and interpretation changes over time and is frightening for different reasons depending on the mind of the individual.



## CONCLUSION

*Yōkai* evolved in literature and media from terrifying monsters to role models in children's programs. In the Nara period *yōkai* were originally entities associated with strange phenomenon occurring in the capital and later horror characters used in *yōkai taiji* as an outside force from the wild invading the countryside or capital. This antagonizing portrayal of *yōkai* was formed during a period of economic hardship, famine, warfare and the Buddhist idea that that world was coming to an end, *mappō*. The *yōkai* stories told during the Heian period represented people's fear of death and associated these imaginary creatures with the chaotic activity that was occurring in the capital. While there were only a few types of *yōkai*, they were all viewed as dangerous due to their shape-shifting abilities and potential to cause psychological damage to their victims.

By the Edo period, *yōkai's* popularity and identity as a horror genre figure reached new heights through the storytelling tradition of *hyaku-monogatari*. Villagers, samurai, merchants, and nobility each had a strange tale to tell in the darkness, and took pride in creating the best story to scare their audiences and prove their bravery. The creation of *kaidan* and the fictional stories centered on *yōkai* allowed the already existing *yōkai* to take on more definitive characteristics and eventually new *yōkai* were born. The stories were flexible in that any storyteller, regardless of location, could add certain details to make the story their own, and justify their bravery in front of an audience.

The oral tradition of storytelling began to die-out in the late Edo period as people started to print their written *hyaku-monogatari* collections. *Yōkai's*

popularity peaked due to the large number of *hyaku-monogatari* collections available for readers and the tradition of cataloging thanks to the efforts of Toriyama Sekien. By describing *yōkai* in an organized fashion through an encyclopedia with images, puns, and details of their habits, Toriyama brought these once imaginary creatures to life, and created a face to attach with the fears of the populace. Toriyama's encyclopedias allowed these creatures to be acknowledged as wonders of the world. It was during this cataloging of *yōkai* in an encyclopedic format when Negishi Yasumori began collecting *yōkai* stories from the populace and compiled the *Mimi bukuro*. The *Mimi bukuro* was a collection of weird stories people heard, experienced, shared or imagined. They represented the fears and concerns of the populace during the Edo period and even earlier, which is why they were so popular and a few different versions circulated.

Although these stories were popular during the Edo period with tales of various *yōkai* such as the *kitsune* and *tengu*, they were inappropriate for Kyōgoku Natsuhiko's goal in 2007 of writing a horror story collection. This is because *yōkai* had lost their horrific appeal since the Meiji period. Inoue Enryō was determined to force Japan to abandon its traditions of ghost stories and anything that could prevent the populace from adapting to Western technology and ideology. He founded *yōkaiology*, the study of monsters to prove how almost every *yōkai* encounter and rumor could be resolved through science and reasoning. As time went on, spiritual healers, one of the driving forces that kept the world of superstition alive were prohibited from taking clients since the government claimed their practice was false. People who claimed to be the victim of a fox possession or

illusion were viewed as mentally ill and locked up in mental institutions and hospitals. *Yōkai* had become associated with a Japan that was old and weak, so they were no longer feared by the people, and consequently lost their position as horror icons.

Due to Inoue Enryō's efforts, *yōkai*'s horrific impact in horror stories died out since the fears of the populace had changed. New fears emerged such as foreign invasion, so *yōkai* were used as political weapons and propaganda against the enemy in World War II. During this time, *yōkai* were depicted as the allied forces invading Japan. By the end of the war however, Japan had experienced the devastating effects of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Japanese had lost the war, but a new fear grew in the people's hearts: the fear of technology and the people wielding such destructive power. While the traditional *yōkai* of the Edo period were used in comics as teachers and promoters of peace and the disarmament of nuclear weapons, Japan started developing new monsters that represented new fears of Japan's future, the economy, nuclear power, and technology.

During the twentieth century, the world underwent a technological boom with the development of televisions, the Internet, and films. The ability to send information and share it across continents within seconds allowed everyone to be affected by what was once another country's news. At this point, literature was becoming displaced with technology and the stories shared were obtained through different media platforms such as television and online streaming. New monsters such as *Gojira* were symbolic of Japan's resentment towards America's continued

testing of nuclear weapons during the Cold War and the possibility that nature could one day turn against humanity. *Kuchi-sake-onna* represented the dangers of a growing city, depopulating the countryside and the social consequences of destroying the environment. Sadako was a mix of a ghost from the *urami hanashi*, but set in modern times as a form of virus that turns technology into unstoppable weapons of destruction. These new monsters were different from the traditional *yōkai* of the Edo period in that they had almost no cultural and historical background, but represented the new fears inspired from unknown consequences of human actions.

Most of the *yōkai* that were developed in the twenty-first century were a part of the *yōkai* boom where *yōkai* began to take new forms for entertainment and were “cutesified” for children’s shows. While *Gojira*, *Kuchi-sake-onna*, and Sadako are used in the horror genre, they are nothing without the issues they carry: a fear of technology, Mother Nature, the economy, death, and the unknown consequences of human error. The *yōkai* from the Edo period have lost their horrific effect since audiences could no longer relate to the fears they represent. The new faces of horror utilize current issues of society and are antagonists born from the mistakes of mankind. If anything is to be learned from Kyōgoku’s experiment in adapting the old Edo period- *yōkai* stories, it is that caution must be taken in using *yōkai* as antagonistic forces in the horror genre. They must be established in the appropriate background and setting that delivers the message of the storyteller while also reflecting the dangers of the present time period. The horror genre will most likely change again since terrorist groups have grown and can easily attack other

countries through the Internet and multimedia. One's classmate, peer, or role model could be a part of the terrorist cell and the victim would not know until it was too late. On another note, VCR's are seldom used and tapes have been replaced with DVD's. It will just be a matter of time before these technological items also become obsolete and a new aspect of technology or humanity is used as a weapon to terrorize audiences. The scenarios people encounter the strange phenomenon will likely be similar as time progresses, but the interpretation will be different as unknown factors plague the minds and hearts of the people.

## APPENDIX

### SELECTED TRANSLATIONS AND NOTES

#### 番町にて奇物に逢ふ事

#### *The Encounter of Meeting a Strange thing at the Banchō*

##### Original Text:

豫が一族なる牛奥氏壯年の折から、相番より急用申來、秋夜風雨強き夜、一侍を召連番町馬場の近所を通りしに、前後往来も絶る程の大雨にて、挑燈一つを不吹消やう桐油の陰にして通りしに、道の側に女子と見へてうづくまり居りしが合羽やうの物を着、傘・笠の類ひも見へず、睨と女とも見へず、合點行ざる様子故、右の際を行過しに、召連たる侍、「あれは何ならんと得と見可申哉」と言しが、「いらざるもの」、よしを答へしに、折節挑燈を待たる足輕使體の者兩人脇道より來たる故、右の跡に付元來し道へ立戻り、彼様子を見んとせしに、始見し所に何にても不見、四方打ちはなれたる道なれば、何方へ行くべきやうもなし進口ずさみ帰りしが、門へ入らんとせし頃頻りに寒けせしが、翌日より瘧りを煩ひ廿日程なやみしが召連し者も同様寒けして熱病を廿日程煩ひけるとや。瘴癘の気の雨中に形容をなしたるならん。

##### Translation:

This was when my relative, Mr. Ushioku was in his prime years. On a strong and windy fall night, Mr. Ushioku was walking near the riding ground with his servant.

The rain was such that there was nobody around and I had to hide my lamp under the shadow of my rain cape to prevent it from extinguishing. On the side of the road, I saw something that looked like a woman crouching. She was wearing a raincoat, but not carrying an umbrella. I couldn't even see clearly if it was a woman. Because there was something questionable about her, I tried to pass her on the right.

“What exactly is that?” my servant asked.

I snapped back, “none of our business.”

At that moment, two men who looked like foot soldiers bearing torches came from the side road, so we followed them back the way we had come. The group looked around the place where I saw the woman earlier, but we found nothing. Since it was a path isolated in all directions, they went home saying,

“She couldn’t have gone anywhere.”

I felt a chill as we entered the gate. The next day, I suffered a case of malaria for approximately twenty days. I even heard that my servant suffered from the same disease for twenty days. The spirit of malaria must have taken a physical form in the rainstorm.

Notes:

番町 : Banchō. The name for the Western part of modern day Chiyoda Ward in Tokyo.

牛奥氏壯 : Mr. Ushioku belonged to one of the five houses that served the shogunate.

挑燈: chōchin: A kind of paper lantern that is suspended on a short stick or pole.

Passage to describe: 挑燈一つを不吹消やう桐油の陰にして通りしに: In order to prevent the flame from going out, I hid the torch under the shadow of my cape.

桐油:tōyu: An oil used for umbrellas and rain capes.

合羽: Kappa is a rain cape.

足輕: ashigaru: Foot soldier

瘧り : okori: Illness that causes fever and severe chills

廿日: Hatsuka: 20 days

熱病: Netsubyō: High fever and a likely symptom of Malaria

瘴癘: Shōrei: Malaria

Note on the passage:

“瘴癘の気の雨中に形容をなしたるならん。”

This passage describes from the author’s viewpoint that the spirit of malaria took form in the rain. In other words, the evil spirit of malaria took a physical form of a woman. This is implying that because the author and his fellow retainer

searched for the woman, the spirit got them and they became sick. Spirits and illness taking a physical form was a common belief back in the Edo Period.

### **Modern Version in *Furui Kaidan Mimi Bukuro Yori - Uzukumaru***

#### ***Crouching***

Mr. U is an honest, noble samurai and a distant relative of mine (Negishi). He has retired, but during his period of active service, he was the kind of man who didn't complain or make a fuss no matter what kind of work he was assigned. He was always focused and got the job done. All in all, he was a serious man. Mr. U was in his 40s when this event occurred. On that day, due to a terrible and violent storm that began since the evening, Mr. U closed his rain doors earlier than usual. He changed into his nightclothes and was laying out his sheets in preparation for bed. Despite the fact it was night, someone was knocking on his door. Hearing the details of the night's assignment from outside his door, it turned out it was an emergency summons from one of his colleagues who was on duty that night. It couldn't be helped if there was a job, work comes first. Putting his job first before all else, the dedicated Mr. U quickly got dressed and bringing a servant with him, departed the house with great haste.

The rain was quite fierce. The storm was so bad that if you just opened your door a little bit, rain would splash through the inside. If it had not been for this urgent business, Mr. U probably would not have gone outside. People would normally still be walking around at this time, but as expected there was not a single shadow or trace of anyone on the road. Night patrol? Forget that, there wasn't even a single dog.



The fall rain was cold. To make matters worse the wind was getting stronger by the minute, making it so one careless move would cause the lantern to extinguish. Mr. U would have been in big problem if the light went out along the way. Even if he wanted to borrow a light from someone there was no way to do so. Even at the best of times, their footing was unsteady in the wind and rain. Reaching the outpost would have probably been impossible had it become pitch black. As the saying goes “slow and steady wins the race,” it was better to proceed carefully. Mr. U proceeded little by little as he used his oil-plastered paper raincoat to cover his paper lantern. As the two drew closer to the district stables, they saw it....

*It was crouching.*

On the shoulder of the road, a woman was crouching with her head facing the ground. No, Mr. U originally thought it was a woman, but maybe it wasn't. The path was straight and continued ahead of them. The downpour increased in fury so Mr. U was unable to shine his light and get a closer look.

“Therefore I probably couldn't see it too well. But it was no hallucination”  
Said Mr. U.

There was no mistake that something appeared to be crouching. While thinking about this suspiciously, Mr. U walked past the figure with a fixed pace. What was crouching was a woman holding an umbrella, yes that's right, thought Mr. U, but as soon as he passed her, --'wrong' rethought Mr. U. What he thought was a woman wearing a raincoat, *IT* was the shape of someone not wearing a rain hat and not using an umbrella. Mr. U thought it was a woman since he couldn't confirm the top knot hairstyle. It wasn't the appearance of a samurai, villager, or someone who

decided to take the tonsure and become a priest. So to speak, through process of elimination Mr. U thought it was a woman. But no matter how much he thought about it, a woman crouching by the side of the road in the middle of a stormy night is strange. With that being the case, Mr. U didn't look back.

Instead, Mr. U's fellow samurai companion looked over his shoulder. The reason why Mr. U said it was no illusion was because there was another witness.

"Umm..." started the samurai, "What was that? Wouldn't it be best if we went back and got a closer look at it?"

"None of our business" snapped Mr. U.

No, no matter who it was, if it was a distraught person on the side of the road in the middle of this terrible rainy night, they should probably offer aid. Whether it was a villager or someone of lowly status it was the same thing. That's what he thought.

But...

This was a completely different story. It is not a problem of appearance. Something was definitely crouching, but Mr. U had the feeling that whatever was crouching, was not human. Their first priority was arriving at the outpost in one piece, that's what Mr. U decided to concentrate on. As soon as he thought this, two men who appeared to be foot soldiers carrying lanterns emerged from a side road in the distance. The two men held their lanterns, their eyes fixated on Mr. U and asked, "is something wrong?" At that time I had probably had a terrible expression on my face recalled Mr. U.

“This is reassuring. Let’s check it out,” said Mr. U’s companion. With that, Mr. U looked back to where the figure stood... but no one was there. Since it was a straight and narrow path, there was no way for the figure to run past the four samurai. To the left and right there were no houses, so there was nowhere to run or hide even if someone wanted to. Even if she ran in the opposite direction, unless she did not run at full speed there were no footprints and making them disappear was impossible. They went back a little bit and tried to confirm, but as they expected no one was there. There was nothing that looked like a distraught crouching woman, just the endless pouring rain.

Mr. U was baffled by the situation, but it couldn’t be helped. After thanking the foot soldiers for their concern, Mr. U continued towards the outpost. His fellow samurai kept saying how strange the whole thing was as he kept tilting his head to the side in confusion. When they arrived at the front gates of the outpost, Mr. U felt a terrible chill and his consciousness seemed to drift further and further away.

“I had a fever,” said Mr. U laughing.

The fellow samurai who came out to greet us, rushed to our aid and looked after us. But in the end, from the next day Mr. U developed a high fever and became very ill and was told that he was flat on his back in bed for twenty days. It looked as though he had chills.

“It was probably due to running this way and that in the early autumn raid in the middle of the night,” suggested Mr. U.

It was said that Mr. U’s fellow samurai also slept for twenty days.

“My fellow samurai companion you know, says it was the spirit of malaria taken a physical form in the rain. What a bunch of... even now he says this. Well now I wonder. Thinking about it, the story is a bit much isn't it. Saying that a plague god that spreads diseases was crouching in the rain. What do you think? More importantly the samurai who nursed us afterwards kept saying this as though it were a story.”

“We were surprised when we found you that night. For a moment we wondered if you were monsters. At any rate, it was because you two were crouching in front of the gate in the middle of a rainstorm.”

Having said this Mr. U laughed once again, “We were crouching too.”

#### 獣の衣類等不分明事

### The Incident Where The Clothes of a Beast Are Not Clear

大阪に古林見意といへる醫師の在りしが、彼見意が語けるよし。眞田山の邊に學才ありし老人在りしが、行通ひて物など尋問しに、或日人物勿體らしき男、衣服さわやかにて彼老人の許に来る者ありて、老人遠方來し事を尋ねければ、「用事有りて遠國へ參る間、しばしの暇乞に來りし」と云ふ。當時藤森邊に居候ひし趣にて、彼老人召士ふ者に申付、外より貰ひし牡丹餅を盆へ乗せて出しければ、何か禮謝して彼男人體に不似、手又は箸杯にて不取して、うつむきて口にて食しければ、「遠方なれ、早々歸るべし」と、老父のじに隨ひ暇乞ふて立歸りぬる。跡にて、「藤森までは此邊よりは里數もあるに、今日暮に及び歸るといいひしが、夜通しにも歸る事かや」と、見意彼老人に尋しに、「彼者は暮ざる内に歸るべし。實は狐なる」よし。且、「彼ものの衣服は何と見たまふや」と尋ける故、「何にか立派には見へしが品は不覺」よし申ければ、「さればとよ、狐狸の類都て妖化の者の着服は何と申事見留難きもの」、よし、彼老人語りしを見意直々に我が知れる人に語りし由也。

#### Translation:

In Osaka there is a doctor named Furubayashi Ken'i and this is the gist of what Ken'i told me.

There was a wise old man who lived in the area of Sanada Mountain whom I would often go to ask questions about various things. One day, a very impressive looking man, wearing splendid clothing came to the wise man's home. When the old man asked if he had travelled a great distance, the stranger replied,

"I have business in lands far away, so I have come to beg my leave."

The gist of what the visitor had said was that at the time he was living in the vicinity of Fuji Forest. The old man, then ordered his servant, and when he brought a *botamochi* sweet on a plate from outside, the young man expressed some kind of thanks and unbecoming a human, did not use his hands or chopsticks. He looked down and using his mouth, ate directly off the plate.

The old man said, "If you have quite a distance to travel, you ought to be going right about now." The stranger, following the old man's suggestion to take his leave, stood up and left.

Afterwards, I asked the old man, "from here to Fuji Forest is a number of ri and to reach home before dusk is difficult. Does he really think he can make that distance?"

The wise man assured me, "That man will surely reach home for he is actually a kitsune. Moreover, what did you make of his clothes?"

"I saw he was wearing some kind of extravagant clothing, but I cannot recall the exact quality."

When I said this the sage explained, "Well you see, the human clothes of *kitsune* and *tanuki* and all of these kinds of monsters are hard to see in detail."—so the old man said.

This is what a person I knew said that Ken'i told him personally.

**Notes on the passage:**

古林見意: Furubayashi Ken'i. He opened his own practice in Osaka in third year of the Meireki Era 1657, where he taught medicine.

由: yoshi The gist、The point

真田山: Sanada Mountain is in Osaka. It is now a local park, and burial ground.

Sanada Mountain was also the battlefield for the siege of Osaka Castle in 1615.

許: もと その人のところ。 A man's place or home.

暇乞: いとまごい To take one's leave. This is implying that the fox believes he is a retainer for the old man and is asking permission before he begins his journey. (The sage however, already knows this young man is a kitsune).

牡丹餅: Botamochi: A Japanese delicacy made with sweet rice and red bean paste.

里數: rikazu= A number of ri. A ri is an old Japanese unit used to measure distance which is approximately 3.93 kilometers.

狐: Kitsune is a fox yōkai. There are several different types, but most kitsune are known for their shape shifting and illusion abilities. This is one of the four original yōkai with encounters documented in the Heian Period (794-1185).

覚えていない

**I Don't Remember**

Mr. F runs his own private clinic in Osaka. Perhaps it was his great skills, but he had quite a few patients who traveled from a far and a great number of house calls. This story took place when Mr. F traveled far to the foot of Mount Sanada for a house call. Even if it was called a house call, it wasn't the type of call involving a sudden patient or severely ill person. An old man and acquaintance of Mr. F lived alone at Sanada mountain. This man knew many weird facts and was quite knowledgeable. In other words, he was a man of the world. Mr. F used the occasion of a routine physical to visit and was looking forward to speaking with him. At any rate, since his patient was in his later years, Mr. F would perform an examination similar to a physical, but there was no chronic illness and he was very much a

healthy old man. So he carried out a medical examination to the extent of asking questions about his mood.

Since it was a long time since they both saw each other, after the light medical checkup, they sat on the veranda and treated themselves to *botamochi* sweets while discussing various topics. No matter what Mr. F asked, it was common for the old man to smile give a hearty laugh and provide an answer. The two were enjoying a light and pleasant conversation up until dusk, when a man with a flashy presence about him appeared in front of the garden. Mr. F took a look at the fellow and thought how the man's dressy clothing was refreshing. The man passed through the garden and proceeded directly to the old man and said bowing his head to the ground,

"I have urgent business, and since I have a long journey ahead, I have humbly come to ask permission to return home for a short while."

The old man was pleased, "As of course I understand." He clapped his hands, summoned a servant and said, "Bring forth another *botamochi* for our guest."

Next the old man introduced the stranger to Mr. F. The old man mentioned that the visitor resided in the Fujino Mountain Forest, but for some reason did not share his name. Finally, the *botamochi* sweets were brought out on a plate.

The visitor politely expressed his thanks and proceeded to eat the *botamochi* sweet. However, he would not use chopsticks, let alone hands. He was eating face-first directly off of the plate. For one with polite speech and extravagant clothing, his table-manners were really out of character. Mr. F felt really strange and while he

thought it was rude, he couldn't help but stare at the man's behavior. When the visitor finished his *botamochi* sweet, the old man said,

“With your home so far away, it is probably best if you get going right about now.”

The man nodded obediently and said politely, “Thank you for the hospitality.”

After seeing the man off, Mr. F's gut told him that something was wrong. The Fuji forest is in Fushimi, Kyoto, and it is quite a distance from Sanada Mountain. Since it is already very late at night, there is no way he would be able to arrive home unless he intends to walk throughout the night.

Upon asking if the visitor would perhaps stop and spend the night along the way, the old man responded, “no need to worry. That man will probably arrive home at Fuji forest before sunset.”

“No matter what that is impossible” Mr. F. disagreed. No matter how you think of it, no man could travel that far even if he really tried.

“He's fine. After all he is a kitsune.” The old man answered with a calm expression.

Mr. F laughed, thinking it was a joke. He thought perhaps the old man was teasing how strange the man's table manners were. But the old man's face became stern, “No, he really is.” Mr. F said how impossible it was and still disagreed.

“Alright then I'll ask you this. Do you remember the pattern of the man's clothes?” The old man questioned Mr. F.

Mr. F was literally caught off guard. He didn't remember. He couldn't remember at all. He thought the man's attire was refreshing and that he was well



dressed. More importantly above all else, Mr. F stared and observed the gentleman as he was eating the *botamochi* sweet. Even so, it was as if he couldn't remember the pattern of the clothes let alone the color and quality, anything and everything.

The old man laughed happily and said how the clothing of shape-shifters is something that cannot be confirmed. It is said that on the occasion when *kitsune* and *tanuki* shape-shift into humans, the kind of clothes they wore is something that cannot be recalled. "Well its true isn't it. Since it's a *kistune*, they don't wear anything," said the old man.

Mr. F believed he was being teased, but after introducing this story, he still cocked his head in puzzlement saying, "But I don't remember."

### 河童の事

#### Kappa Incident

天明元年の八月、仙台河岸伊達候の藏屋敷にて、河童を打殺し塩漬にいたし置由、まのあたり見たるものの語りけると図を松本豆州持来り。其子細を尋ねるに、「右屋敷にて子供など故なく入水せしが、怪む事ありて右堀の内淵ともいへる所を堰て水を替へ干けるに、泥を潜りて早き事風の如く（き）ものの有り。漸鉄砲にて打留しと聞及びし」由語りぬ。傍に曲淵甲斐守ありて、「むかし同人河童の図とて見侍りしに、図州持参の図少しも違ひなし」といひぬ。

In the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the first year of the Tenmei Period (1781), the gist of the story is that along a riverbank in Sendai in the storehouse of Daimyo Date, there is a kappa preserved in salt that was shot and killed. The man who saw the beast with his own eyes told me this and brought a picture to Matsumoto Izu. When I asked about the sketch, he basically said,

"Children were drowning on the right of the grounds for no reason. So we dammed the place where people said there was a strange thing deep in the pools on

the right side of the moat. When the water dried up, something quick like the wind was cutting across the mud. I heard at last, someone took a gun and shot it.”

While I heard this story, a guard next to me named Magaribushi Kai-no-Kami said,

“A *kappa* image I saw long ago resembles your picture of the dead *kappa*.

There is no mistaking it, they are the same ones.”

### Notes:

仙台: Sendai. The capital city of Miyagi Prefecture.

河岸: kasha : riverbank

伊達: Date : a lower ranking vassal who later becomes a daimyo. He descended from the Fujiwara family who were very powerful.

藏屋敷: kurayashiki: Store house

河童: Kappa: A kappa is a water type *yōkai* with webbed feet, a disk on its head, and green slimy skin. According to folktales, Kappa love to sumo wrestle and have been known to work for humans if captured. They have also been known to drown humans and kill their prey by ripping out their intestines from the anus.

まのあたり: See before one's eyes

松本豆州: Matsumoto Izu. One of Negishi's fellow colleagues and primary sources for the Mimi bukuro.

寸分違わぬ

### Identical Down to the Last Detail

Mr. C is a close relative of Negishi and a high-ranking samurai. On one occasion when a number of well known people gathered, stories relating to the supernatural became a topic of discussion. As it was, since the group mainly consisted of people in positions of great social influence, even if it was a dry topic, everyone was very cautious and if I had to say, the strong point of these stories was that there were a large number of skeptical opinions. Mr. C was also a member of this skeptical group. However, even if monsters and ghosts were out of the question,

it is quite possible if it were an unknown bird or animal said one man. What he said was quite plausible: in other words, unidentified mysterious animals or U.M.A.

“What about *kappa*?” asked another participant.

Is a kappa a living animal or a monster? No matter how you think about it, the *kappa* that appear in things like folktales, manga and short stories, were not mere animals. They could understand human speech and possessed supernatural-like powers. To make it clear, they were the product of imagination. But with regards to kappa outside of those literary creations, now and then one would hear stories of people actually witnessing or encountering *kappa*. With that, people stated a number of opinions suggesting that animals to a *kappa* may exist. The *kappa* that appear in tall tales and the U.M.A. people saw were two different beings. No, after all they probably mistook it for a turtle or otter said another. Certainly, even if it was a certain animal or an unknown animal, it’s unimaginable that an animal with a plate on its head is residing in all of the country’s rivers. With that, Mr. C said while laughing,

“Long ago I was once shown a picture of a dead *kappa* from this man who said he shot and killed the beast. It was... well... it was the shape of a *kappa* but....”

Everyone present was taken a back. Mr. C. waved his hands and scratched his head laughing, “Nah, anyways it was just something made up. I only saw the picture after all. No matter how realistically you draw it, a picture is a picture. Saying you sketched it naturally the way it was, honestly allows anyone to say anything. There is probably no way to distinguish between a real-life picture from one that was imagined and drawn freely. Increasing the number of eyes or

enlarging the mouth is up to the individual. Even if I was told that's how it was, I wouldn't swallow that load of bull."

Even the illustrations of *kappa* in children's books and creepy picture scrolls are said to be accurate portrayals. Everyone agreed upon the meaning of the pictures. "Even if I were shown a picture, it wouldn't prove anything," concluded Mr. C.

After that a surprising thing happened. A man appeared claiming to have witnessed a kappa preserved in salt at the storehouse of Mr. D (an estate that collected the yearly rice tax) in Sendai Gashi (Eastern banks of Sumida). As one might expect, this man was an acquaintance of Negishi and a samurai working at an important office named Mr. M. He had heard of the rumor of a kappa preserved in salt and heard the following details as he investigated the story and put his suspicions to rest.

Within the vicinity of Mr. D's storehouse, a number of children were falling in the moat and drowning for no reason. It was no accident and since the victim was a small child, suicide was unthinkable. The people couldn't think of anything else except that, something had ***dragged them below***. The men working at the storehouse were dumbfounded as this was mysterious. It was said that due to the incidents, the people decided to drain the moat once and replace all of the water for the time being. If by some chance a large aquatic animal that could pull people below was residing in the moat, it was extremely dangerous. In this first place, the fact that several small children had died made the situation really creepy. By damming up the inner canal of the moat, the water level quickly dropped and at last

the river bottom could be seen. Something was moving in the dried up sludge. It looked like something was hiding itself in the mud. Just as everyone thought, an animal had inhabited the moat. A turtle or a large fish....Just as they were about to capture the beast..... It fled quickly like the wind. This wouldn't be a big deal if it was in the water, but the water was completely dried out.

Judging from its agile movements, it was not a turtle or a fish. Since it was very quick the men gave up trying to capture it and drawing out their guns, fired upon the beast. Due to it being the summer time and a rare living being, it was said that the men decided to remove the mud and preserve the corpse in salt. It's unbelievable that this was the man's story. However, with regards to the question as to whether or not it was a *kappa*, we only have the judgment of the men who saw this creature.

Speaking of Mr. D's home, he was the daimyo of 620,000 koku of rice. Mr. M actually visited the storehouse of Mr. D and wanted to inspect the creature, but due to various circumstances he was unable to go, so he had a witness at the event draw him a picture. Mr. M decided to show everyone the picture. Remembering the previous story, Mr. C bared witness to the photo.

As soon he saw Mr. M's photo, Mr. C became greatly disturbed. "That is identical to the picture I saw earlier down to the last detail," he said with a whisper.

### 妖怪なしとも申難き事

### **The Incident Where It Was Difficult To Say If It Was A Yōkai**

安永九子年の冬より翌春迄、関東六ヶ國川普請御用にて、豫出沒して右六ヶ國を相廻りしが、大貫次右衛門・花田仁兵衛は豫に附添て一同に旅行廻村し侍るに、花田は行年五拾才餘にて數年土功になれ、殊に精身健かにして飽まで不敵の生質

也けるが、安永十丑の春玉川通へ廻村して押立村に至り、豫は其村の長たる平藏といへる者のかたへ旅宿し、外々其最寄の民家に宿をとりける。いつも翌朝は朝速次右衛門・仁兵衛なども旅宿へ来たりて一同伴ひ次村へ移りける事也。仁兵衛其日例より遅く来たりし故、「不快の事も有之哉」と尋しに、「いや別事なし」と答ふ。其次の日も又々豫が旅宿に集まりて御用向取調ける折から、仁兵衛語りけるは、「押立村旅宿にて埒なき事ありて夜中臥り兼、翌朝も遅く成りし」と語りける故、「いか成る事や」と尋ねけるに「其日は羽村の旅宿を立ちて雨もそぼ降りし故、股引草鞋にて堤を上り下り甚草臥しゆへ、豫が旅宿を辭し歸りて直に休み可申と存候處、右旅宿のやうは本家より廊下続きにて少し放れ、家僕など臥り候所よりも隔りける。平成人の不住所哉戸かき「垣」もまばらにて裏に高藪生茂り用心も不宜所と相見候故、戸ざしのメリ等も自身に打ち改臥りけるが、とろ々と睡り候と覺る頃、天井の上にて何か大石など落し候様成音せしに目覺め、枕をあげ見侍れば、枕元にさもきたなげなる座頭の、穢れたる島の單物を着し、手をつき居たりしゆへ驚き、座頭に候哉と聲も可掛とおもひしが、若座頭には無之と申間舗ものにも無之、全く心の迷ひにもあるやと色々考へけれど、兎角座頭の姿なれば、起き上がり枕元の脇差を取あげければ形を失ひしま々、心の迷ひにあるらんと、懐中の御證文などをも尚又丁寧懐中して、戸ざしのメリ等も打改、二度臥しけるが、何とやら心にかかり睡らざるとおもひしが、晝の勞れにて思はずも睡りける哉、暫く過ぎて枕元を見けるに、亦候彼座頭出て、此度は手を廣げおほひかかり居りける間、爰{最}早きまりかねてよぎを取りのけ、枕元の脇ざしを取揚げければまた消失ぬ。依之燈火を搔立、座舗内を改見けれど、何方よりも可這入と思ふ所なきまま、僕を起さんとおもひけれど、遙かに所も隔るなれば、人の聞んも如何と又枕を取侍れど、何とやらん心にかかりて寝られず。また出てもせざりしが、まったく狐狸の為す業ならん」と語りはべる。

In the ninth year of the Rat of the An'ei Era (1780) from winter to the following spring, we were on official business for construction sites around the six regions of Kantō. I appeared frequently and patrolled the right six provinces, and Oonukiji Emon and Hanada Jinbee accompanied me and together we toured and inspected the villages. Hanada was no more than 50 years old and for a number of years had been in the public works business. Above all else he possessed a vigorous work ethic to the end and feared nothing. In An'ei's tenth spring of the ox, (1781) we were inspecting along the Harutama River and stayed at Oshitate village. At the time I was residing in Heizō, the village leader's home. Hanada stayed at a private

inn at a different location, nearby the village. Every morning, Emon and Jinbee came to the inn and all of us together would travel to the next village. For some reason, Jinbee on that day arrived later than usual.

“Did something unpleasant happen?” I asked.

Haneda responded “Nope, its nothing.”

On the next day, we gathered at the inn once more, and we were talking about business when Jinbee said for some reason,

“At the inn at Oshitate something mysterious happened in the middle of the night when you were sleeping which caused me to be late.”

“What happened?” I asked.

Jinbee told us, “On that day I was in the Hamura inn because it was raining and my trousers and sandals were all worn out from walking up and down the dike. So I excused myself to return to the inn and immediately rest. My room located on the right side of the inn was separated from the main area a little ways down the hall. It was even farther than the chamber boys’ resting quarters. I asked myself if this was not the place an ordinary person lives in, because there were hardly any gates or doors. Tall weeds had even consumed the backyard. This was not a well prepared room, but since I was faced with this situation, I closed and locked the door and feeling safer, I went to sleep.

I remember it was when I was drifting off to sleep when I awoke to some kind of sound as though a large stone fell through the roof. When I rose from my pillow and looked around, I was surprised to find right next to my pillow sat a dirty-looking blind priest. He wore a dirty island unlined kimono, and placed both hands

on the ground. I thought I should ask if this guy had the wrong house but, supposing this blind priest was not a servant...my mind swarmed with these thoughts, I stood up and when I took out my short sword from my pillow, he disappeared. I thought to myself it was just my nerves, so I took the documents out of my pocket and gave them a through look over before tucking them back inside, and then checked that the door was locked. I fell asleep a second time and I thought to myself I wouldn't be able to sleep but, due to my exhaustion from the afternoon I fell asleep for some time, and after a short while, I looked to the side of my pillow and the priest from earlier was still there....

This time, I couldn't take it any more when he spread both of his arms out wide. I quickly discarded my bedclothes and when I took out the short sword from my pillow again, he completely vanished. Because of this, I lit up a torch and looked all over the tatami room but, there was no place I thought he could have entered. I thought to awaken a servant, but they were so far away, and I said to myself this was not the kind of thing to ask, so I took my pillow and pondered what to do, so I was unable to sleep. Still, I wondered if it was the work of a *kitsune* or *tanuki* that caused the blind priest to disappear.”

Notes:

関東六ヶ國: 6 areas of the Kantō region. They are Izu, Musashi, Sagami, Kazusa, Shimofusa, and Kōzuke (ueno)

花田仁兵衛: Hanada Jinbee : In the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the Tenmei (1786) period when he was 64 years old, he became an accountant and he died at age 76.

押立村: oshitatemura: Oshitate village. This is present day Fuchū city.

旅宿: ryoshuku = A traveler's inn

土功: Public works



しゆへ: Past tense ki in the Rentaikei plus 故. Note: Yue is not usually spelled yuhe. This means reason/because.

座頭 : ざとう = zatō-san. This is a blind priest who usually specializes in massage, or playing musical instruments.

脇差: わきざし Short sword

狐狸: Kitsune and Tanuki: Two shape-shifting yōkai that are known to play illusion pranks on humans.

### 座頭でないなら

#### **If it was not a Blind Priest**

During the events that transpired, this author (myself Negishi) brought my subordinates at the time, Mr. H and Mr. O with me. Due to a work order for river construction, we spent number of months going around the six regions of Kantō. This is Mr. H's personal experience during the middle of our travels.

Mr. H had just turned past 50-years old and was in the prime of his career. Whether it was due to the number of years he was involved in projects, he was very much pleased with public works, and furthermore, he was a very robust and healthy man. The work was small, but he was daring. Even in tough situations, he did not hesitate or worry himself, he remained calm, and was a capable person one could rely on. This was when the party inspecting the villages along the Tama river, had arrived at the Oshidate village (now the vicinity of the provincial capital). On that day, it was decided we would spend the night in one of the village lodges.

I was permitted to spend the night in the village headmen's estate, while the others we decided would stay at neighboring private homes. Due to the large number of people, were unable to spend the night at the same place. Not wanting to burden the villagers with our numbers, we decided it was best to slit-up and sleep in different homes. Thus we frequently followed that pattern. In the early morning,

Mr. O and Mr. H gathered the others and came to my place. From there we would continue on to the next village. This was our usual procedure everyday. The next morning, for some reason the never late Mr. H was late.

“Everything alright? You’re not feeling good eh?” Upon asking that, Mr. H gave a disheartened look.

“It is nothing really. My sincerest apologies for making you worry.” He inarticulately answered. Since this wasn’t the usual Mr. H, I was worried, but since the day passed smoothly with no mishaps, and Mr. H was carrying out his work as always, I forgot about the incident. Even so, the next day on the occasion of our morning meeting, Mr. H was acting strange.

When I said it looks like Mr. H wanted to say something, he murmured a response. “No, it really is a foolish story so I’m sorry for yesterday, but last night, well... at the lodging I stayed at in Oshidate village a strange thing happened. There was no way I could get any sleep.” It appears it was for that reason that Mr. H was late. When we pressed him as to what happened, Mr. H answered with difficulty, “It’s nothing. I think I was just tired...”

Certainly, after leaving the last place we stayed at in wing village, the journey up to Oshidate village was not easy. In the drizzling rain, we had to go up and down dikes in our working trousers and straw sandals. All of us would have been tired. “After the meeting ended, I returned to my quarters and thought I would get some shuteye but....” And then Mr. H told us his story.

The room that Mr. H was permitted to sleep in was in other words, separated. Tentatively there were people connected to the main room in the hallway, but the

hallway was long, and it was as if the family room was quite distant. The servants' rooms were also far and somehow it seemed as though this was an open room that was not typically used. Seeing how this was the person he asked and generously allowed Mr. H to stay in the home, he did not want to say anything luxurious, but the door and fence were scattered and thin. To make matters worse, a tall thicket was dense and growing thickly in the back yard. Even for flattery, this was not a pleasant room. Mr. H was just going to sleep afterwards. It was the kind of place where as long as it kept out the rain and dew, he did not mind but, the place gave him a really bad feeling. The wary Mr. H securely fastened the door and inspected the room several times. After doing so, he lay down on the floor and went to sleep. As expected, it appeared he was quite tired and drowsiness soon overtook him. Mr. H closed his eyes and felt good dosing off. His consciousness became distant and it was just at that moment when Mr. H was about to fall asleep.

“Bam! What can I say. It was the sound as if a large boulder had smashed through the ceiling. No, I honestly thought the roof had collapsed. This is rude of me to say, but the separate room was made of cheap material, so if there was a large collision that made the noise, it wouldn't have been surprising if the building did collapse. Well I was pretty startled, and I woke up at once. But you know...”

Nothing had happened to the building. Even if he strained his eyes and looked up at the ceiling, there was no hole. Without being able to think is was his imagination, Mr. H was in a bad mood at having been woken up. He turned over and rested his chin on the pillow and looked over at his beside. Thereupon, there was a person at his bedside. Even though he had intended to securely fasten the doors,

just how on earth did he enter? Mr. H's doubts quickly turned into warning signals. He could think of nothing else other than this was a kind of burglar. As soon as he thought to prepare himself on guard, Mr. H for some reason thought this was different. The man was not a burglar. Mr. H's eyes adjusted to the dark, he understood that this was a blind priest. The blind priest flopped down on top of the tatami mat. The blind priest wore a slightly dirty, striped, unlined kimono. He slapped his hands together and looked downwards. No matter how Mr. H looked at the figure, this was a blind priest.

Mr. H was surprised, but there was nothing he could instantly do. This was illogical. Illogical, but there was a blind priest sitting there right in front of him. For a time, Mr. H thought it was best to confirm the man's identity. After worrying himself over it, he gave up.

"The priest looked harmless, what if he had for example mistaken his home, what if he had lived in this separation, anyways I thought he had some sort of business to be sitting here. Therefore I believed I had to confirm first whether or not he actually was a blind priest. If he was a blind priest, his eyes would not be his own and he probably often ran short of money. I had thought that way but..." For whatever reason Mr. H said he couldn't ask him. "The old man wasn't frightening. For example, if I asked where do you belong blind priest, and if, perhaps maybe... if he answered, "I'm not a blind priest." Mr. H wondered what he should do.

If Mr. H was wrong, what exactly was he. If Mr. H's question were to be answered with he is not a blind priest... Mr. H quickly became seized with fear at the possibility of his visitor not being a priest. Finally reaching his limits, Mr. H grabbed

the short sword he had set near his bed. No matter what the situation, he thought it was best to be on the safe side. But...

“The moment I grabbed my short sword, the blind priest disappeared into thin air. For a moment I needed to collect myself. In that gap did he perhaps disappear? This was probably an illusion or my mind playing tricks on me.”

With that Mr. H confirmed the important contracts and drafts one by one. He firmly stuffed them in his pocket, and after checking the lock he once again laid down.

“Well, even if I said I was just seeing things, in no way did it weigh on my mind. I thought for sure this time there was no way I could sleep, but in the end I lost to fatigue. Before I knew it, I was truly asleep. Dear me, I have no idea how long I was sleeping, and as I casually realized this and looked over to my bedside,” the blind priest was still there...

This time the priest suddenly opened both of his arms wide and leaned, looming over Mr. H. Thinking this couldn't be happening, Mr. H brushed aside his bedding, grabbed his sword and was just about to slice him.

“No, he vanished again. When I touched my sword, he wasn't there. I couldn't take it anymore. I lit a lamp, I searched every nook and cranny inside the manor, but nothing was out of the ordinary. The door was once again securely fastened. I was debating whether or not I should wake up the servants and inquire about the issue, but it was already late at night, and I was isolated, so I decided to leave it as it was and stayed up until the morning.”

This did not mean it was scary, but there was no way he could sleep explained Mr. H. Afterwards when he was asked about the old priest, Mr. H said he didn't come out. "No, but that was not a blind priest. I'm not sure whether or not he was a blind priest. But you know he sure did look like a blind priest." But if it wasn't a blind priest, then what was it? For Mr. H, that seemed frightening.

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