

*Momotarō*, or the Peach Boy: Japan's Best-Loved Folktale as National Allegory

by

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## **DEDICATION**

To Chisato, for walking together on the journey.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF APPENDICES	viii
CHAPTER	
<b>INTRODUCTION: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND FOLKTALES IN JAPAN 1</b>	
<i>MOMOTARŌ</i> RESEARCH	16
CONCLUSION	19
<b>I. WRITING ORAL TALES IN THE EDO PERIOD (1600-1868):     READING <i>MOMOTARŌ</i> THROUGH VERBAL AND VISUAL TEXTS 20</b>	
YANAGITA AND ORAL TALES	25
DATING ‘ORAL’ TALES	27
WRITING ‘ORAL’ TALES	33
TEACHING WITH TALES	44
VISUAL CONVENTIONS: DRESSING THE HERO, COMPOSING THE SCENE	51
CONCLUSION	64
<b>II. CHILDREN’S LITERATURE AS NATIONAL ALLEGORY IN IWAYA     SAZANAMI’S <i>MOMOTARŌ</i> (1894) AND BEYOND 67</b>	
NATIONAL ALLEGORY AFTER JAMESON	68
NARRATING THE NATION TO CHILDREN	70

TROPES OF EMPIRE IN IWAYA SAZANAMI'S <i>MOMOTARŌ</i> (1894)	73
<i>KŌENDŌWA</i> IN TAIWAN	82
CONCLUSION	85
<b>III. AKUTAGAWA RYŪNOSUKE'S PARODY <i>MOMOTARŌ</i> (1925)</b>	87
REWRITING FOLKTALES WITHIN A COLONIAL DIALOGUE: FROM TOKYO TO SHANGHAI AND BACK	89
HERO WORSHIP IN THE NATIONAL IMAGINATION	100
AKUTAGAWA RYŪNOSUKE'S <i>MOMOTARŌ</i> (1925): THE HERO AS VILLAIN	109
CONCLUSION	117
<b>IV. FOLKTALES AND THE FORMATION OF YANAGITA KUNIO'S <i>MINZOKUGAKU</i> IN THE EARLY TO MID 1930S</b>	119
FROM <i>KYŌDO KENKYŪ</i> TO <i>MINZOKUGAKU</i>	123
<i>MOMOTARŌ NO TANJŌ</i> (1933)	133
<i>MUKASHIBANASHI SAISHŪ TECHŌ</i> (1936)	139
CONCLUSION	144
<b>V. MAKING FOLKTALES LOCAL THROUGH <i>KYŌDO KENKYŪ</i> LOCAL STUDIES) AND <i>KYŌDO KYŌIKU</i> (LOCAL EDUCATION)</b>	146
<i>KYŌDO KYŌIKU</i> : MAKING EDUCATION LOCAL	152
FROM FOLKTALE ( <i>MUKASHIBANASHI</i> ) TO LEGEND ( <i>DENSETSU</i> )	159
LOCAL EDUCATORS, ETHNOGRAPHERS, AND ADMEN	168
REWRITING LOCAL IDENTITY AFTER 1945	178
CONCLUSION	188
<b>VI. ANIMATING ALLEGORY IN <i>MOMOTARŌ NO UMIWASHI</i> (1943) AND <i>MOMOTARŌ UMI NO SHIMPEI</i> (1945)</b>	190

<i>MOMOTARŌ AS NATIONAL ALLEGORY</i>	193
FOLKTALES AS NATIONAL ALLEGORY FROM THE LATE 1930S TO EARLY 1940S	195
ANIMATING FOLKTALES	201
CONCLUSION	209
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	210
APPENDICES	213
BIBLIOGRAPHY	227

## LIST OF FIGURES

### FIGURES

1. Opening illustration to Nishimura Shigenobu's <i>Momotarō mukashibanashi</i>	34
2. Second illustration from Nishimura Shigenobu's <i>Momotarō mukashibanashi</i>	36
3. Chinese zodiac	38
4. Scene from <i>Momotarō hottan setsuwa</i> , text by Santō Kyōden and illustrations by Katsushika Hokusai	41
5. Actor Ichikawa Danjūrō II in a dramatic <i>mie</i> pose characteristic of <i>aragoto</i> style kabuki	54
6. Gate scene from <i>Akahon Momotarō</i>	54
7. Scene from Kōkū Koku's <i>Momotarō emaki</i>	58
8. Scene from Kanō Masanobu's <i>Momotarō emaki</i>	59
9. Illustration of Momotarō at the <i>oni</i> gate from Nishimura Shigenobu's <i>Momotarō mukashibanashi</i>	60
10. The final scene from Kōsū Koku's <i>Momotarō emaki</i>	63
11. Scene from Kanō Masanobu's <i>Momotarō emaki</i>	64



## LIST OF APPENDICES

### APPENDIX

A. <i>Momotarō</i> tale found in 1 <sup>st</sup> edition of Japanese School Reader, 1887	213
B. Ki no Tsurayuki's Kana Preface to the <i>Kokinshū</i>	215
C. <i>Iwami Jutarō</i> by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke	216
D. <i>Momotarō</i> by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke	222
E. Folklore related fieldwork guides issued by Yanagita Kunio	226

## INTRODUCTION

### National Identity and Folktales in Japan

It has been a very long time indeed since the Momotarō tale first took root in the Japanese soil, and it seems as if the very first form has long since withered away. The original form of the Momotarō story (one might say the myth [*shinwa*] rather than the folktale [*mukashibanashi*]), ... no longer exists in our popular culture.<sup>1</sup>

As the Japanese people moved inland toward the mountains, they began to believe that spirits came down from heaven, to the tops of the mountains, and that they would occasionally come down from the mountains to visit the human world. It is not surprising that they conceived of a spirit entering our world floating down a mountain stream.<sup>2</sup>

Yanagita Kunio, *Momotarō no tanjō* (1933)

What are folktales? When did they originate and what do they mean? It was through these questions that Japanese folklorist Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962) framed the discipline of *minzokugaku*, or Japanese ethnography, in the first half of the 1930s. Searching for the means to describe Japan's "national character and distinctiveness," Yanagita researched folktales in general and the *Momotarō* tale in particular in his works such as *Momotarō no tanjō* (1933, *The Birth of Momotarō*), quoted above.<sup>3</sup> The story of a boy born from a peach, *Momotarō* was by far Japan's most famous tale in the modern

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<sup>1</sup> Yanagita Kunio, *Yanagita Kunio zenshū*. Vol 6 (Chikuma Shobō, 1998) 248.

<sup>2</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 257.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald Morse. *Yanagita Kunio and the Folklore Movement: The Search for Japan's National Character and Distinctiveness* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1990) 1-5.

period.<sup>4</sup> For Yanagita, it was also an ancient tale that represented deep truths about the Japanese people. In his view, the peach that came bobbing down the river and gave birth to the boy hero was not just a narrative element pleasing to children. As Yanagita suggests in the second quote above, if one only knew how to look carefully enough the peach held within it the very movements of the Japanese people as they settled into their homeland and revealed traces of their spiritual communications with the gods.

Although he considered dozens of Japanese tales in detail, Yanagita elevated *Momotarō* to the status of being representative of both tales in general and the Japanese people as a whole. Multiple versions of the tale existed during the Edo period, as I show in my first chapter, but by the 1890s a single dominant version was disseminated through both Japanese national language readers (*kokugo tokuhon*) and children's literature. The plot details are quite simple.<sup>5</sup> There was once an old couple. The old woman goes to the river to wash clothes, the old man goes to the mountains to cut firewood. Finding a giant peach floating down the river, the woman takes it home to her husband. As he moves to cut into it, the fruit splits open by itself to reveal a healthy baby boy. The couple raises the boy into his teenage years and then he goes to fight *oni*, or ogres, who have been attacking his village. He sets off after first asking his father's permission to go and then receiving millet dumplings from his mother as provisions. En route he enlists a dog, a monkey and a pheasant as retainers and after crossing the ocean he reaches *Oni* Island.

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout my dissertation, I will place *Momotarō* in italics to refer to the tale in general, and Momotarō in unmarked text to designate the main character and hero of the tale. In cases where the tale's name is part of longer titles, such as *Momotarō no tanjō*, it will be italicized with that longer title rather than placed in quotes. I will not italicize Momotarō when it is used in quotes, regardless of whether it refers to the tale's title or the main character.

<sup>5</sup> The version of the story I give here is based on both Japanese national language readers (*kokugo tokuhon*) from the 1890s and Iwaya Sazanami's 1894 adaptation "Momotarō." While no single version can be truly representative, a translation of an 1887 version of the tale as included in a widely circulated school reader is included as Appendix A on pages 213-214.

Defeating the *oni* there he takes their treasure and returns home to his village and his parents. In Yanagita's capable hands this simple tale became seminal to Japanese folklore studies.

Yanagita was a talented polymath with a nearly inexhaustible curiosity about traditional Japanese lifeways, a poet's skill for the well-turned phrase in his writing, and a penchant for successfully networking both up and down in society.<sup>6</sup> He wrote extensively on such widely varied topics as educational reform, language matters, dialect, agricultural and forest policies, tourism, and all manner of folklore studies. But it was his research into oral tales that allowed him to found the academic discipline of *minzokugaku*, which is the accomplishment for which he is best known. *Momotarō no tanjō* is thus felicitously named for it refers not just to the birth of the main character in the story but is at the same time a self-conscious allusion by Yanagita pointing to the birth of a newly nationalized folklore studies with himself as its father.

This discipline was born when he gradually shifted the name of his research from *kyōdo kenkyū* (local studies) to *minzokugaku* from roughly 1934 to 1936. Surprisingly, this field's name change in the 1930s and its ramifications have not been considered before in English-language scholarship. Instead, his 1910 work *Tales of Tōno* (*Tōno monogatari*) is often designated as the starting point for the field in representative scholarship on Yanagita. In *Discourses of the Vanishing* (1995), for example, Marilyn Ivy describes in nuanced detail how nostalgia in the modern age must continually emphasize the very absences it ostensibly laments. She notes that it was at the moment of

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<sup>6</sup> The biographical details of Yanagita's life are too well known to recount in detail here. Ronald Morse's *Yanagita Kunio and the Folklore Movement* and Kawada Minoru's *The Origin of Ethnography in Japan: Yanagita Kunio and his Times* are both recommended, with Kawada in particular focusing on the details of Yanagita's early career.

the *Tales of Tōno*'s republication in 1935 that it became read as foundational to folklore studies in Japan. Ivy's reading of the dynamics of nostalgia at work in folklore displays great finesse. But at the same time her analysis is radically de-contextualized because she only brushes over events in the discipline after 1910 in two or three paragraphs.

Ironically mirroring the very dynamics she is studying, Ivy elides the twenty- five years when folklore studies was most intensely developing and growing in favor of reaching back to an imaginary starting point. This omission is problematic because for all of her brilliance in exploring the psychology of nostalgia at work she fails to explain why folklore studies was such an important discourse in defining Japanese identity in the pre-war period. Ivy notes that "Yanagita and his folklore studies (for there was no doubt that it was his discipline) contributed to the chauvinism and cultural nationalism of the wartime period."<sup>7</sup> But like most studies of Yanagita she has been less clear on the details linking folklore research and nationalism at work in Japan. What is needed then is a clearer explanation of what actually happened in the early 1930s that led to the founding of *minzokugaku*.

Folklore studies in modern Japan developed out of the contested relations between the three fields of *kyōdo kenkyū*, *kyōdo kyōiku* (the local education movement), and *minzokugaku*. It is only by bringing these three movements into a single field of vision that any one of them emerges clearly. *Kyōdo kenkyū*, or local studies, was the name by which Yanagita and others organized their early research. While there is not a clear starting date to mark this term's debut, it was in prominent use by March 1913 when he and fellow folklore researcher Toshio Takagi (1876-1922) published their first

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<sup>7</sup> Marilyn Ivy. *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 94.

issue of the folklore journal “*Kyōdo kenkyū*.” Already in the inaugural issue of this journal, he criticizes *shigaku* (史学) or document-focused studies that were largely focused on documenting historical facts of an area but not connecting them to a larger interpretive framework that explained how the past had given rise to and continued to inform the present.<sup>8</sup> He then decries the kind of folklore studies that consisted of “just taking elementary school children around to famous local ruins.”<sup>9</sup> To understand this remark it is important to keep in mind that folklorists from the 1910s onward were often schoolteachers or involved in disseminating their research for the benefit of school audiences.

Folklore studies developed in tandem with the modern education system. Teachers often served as local folklorists and their *kyōdo kenkyū* research fed directly into classrooms from the beginning. Just before 1930, local studies gave rise to *kyōdo kyōiku*, which was an educational movement that sought to integrate the results of local studies into the classroom as a formal part of the school curriculum. *Kyōdo kyōiku* coalesced into a self-conscious movement as early as 1927.<sup>10</sup> The Ministry of Education provided funds to promote *kyōdo kyōiku* in 1930 and 1931 even as the educational budget was generally being cut.<sup>11</sup> It was officially made part of the curriculum by law in 1931 at a time when the worldwide depression was hitting Japan’s rural areas especially hard. Against this background, national bureaucrats and local educators alike pinned their

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<sup>8</sup> Ito Junro. *Kyōdo kenkyū undō no kenkyū* (Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1998) 242.

<sup>9</sup> Ito 242-243. Ito and others note that some date the beginning of folklore studies in Japan to the founding of this journal in 1913. It would be more accurate to note that *Kyōdo kenkyū*, or local folklore studies begins with this journal’s publication and *minzokugaku*, or national folklore studies coalesces around 1935.

<sup>10</sup> Kimata Kiyohirō. *Chiiki ni nezashita gakkō-zukuri no genryū*. (Bunri Kaku Shuppan, 2007) 3.

<sup>11</sup> Kimata 3-7.

hopes on *kyōdo kyōiku* as one means to revitalize local areas by deepening local identity while at the same time promoting stronger patriotism toward the nation as a whole.

It was in reaction to these events that Yanagita adopted the new name of *minzokugaku* for his folklore studies from 1934 to 1936. This mirrored a shift in his thinking in which research into local areas went from being an end in itself to a means to assembling a view of the national culture as a whole. At least partly, it was the influx of schoolteachers pursuing local folklore studies from 1930 onwards that pushed Yanagita into reasserting his own disciplinary authority over the field. In a November 5, 1932 speech in Yamagata to the Yamagata Local Studies Association (*Yamagata kyōdo kenkyū kai*)—a group composed almost entirely of schoolteachers—he sharply criticized local research that only took into account a single area. Although not yet using the term *minzokugaku* he suggested that the goal of his folklore research was “not to just research a local area, but to use the local area as the means of researching something” (*kyōdo wo kenkyū shiyō toshita no de naku, kyōdo de aru mono wo kenkyū shiyō toshite ita no de atta*).<sup>12</sup> This shift in which the local area went from being an ends to a means is clear in the original Japanese in which the *kyōdo* goes from being marked with the direct object marker “*o*” to the location of an action marker “*de*.” At the heart of folklore studies in the early 1930s was this tension over whether the local area was to be the means or the ends of research.

This tension is at the center of my dissertation research in which I study the formation of *minzokugaku* in my third chapter and consider *kyōdo kenkyū* and *kyōdo kyōiku* in the fourth. In Chapter Four I am guided first by the question of how and why

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<sup>12</sup> Ito 6.

folktales became the focus through which *minzokugaku* took shape. Tales offered several advantages to Yanagita's project. As narratives they were inherently suited to retelling; variants from across Japan could be easily compared; and most importantly Yanagita believed they were a key to an ongoing Japanese identity. The problem was how to organize them into a seemingly unified whole. I demonstrate how Yanagita established the disciplinary means of defining folktales in theory and practice through examining two of his works. First, *Momotarō no tanjō* prescribed how tales were to be read through a national framework that endowed them with certain predetermined meanings. Second, his *Mukashibanashi saishū techō* (Collector's Handbook for Folktales) of 1936 put this theory into practice by guiding local folklore researchers in how they were to conduct their field research. These methods linked folktales more closely to an imagined Japanese nation and I consider what this meant for the field's connection to a burgeoning cultural nationalism.

At the same time that *minzokugaku* was defining folktales from a single national perspective, from the 1930s onward *kyōdo kenkyū* and *kyōdo kyōiku* were producing new narratives to reinforce local identities. These narratives are the subject of my Fifth Chapter. The continuing depth and vibrance of Japanese regional identity in the modern period is not an accident or some immanent aspect of the Japanese character. Instead it is the result of deliberate cultural choices that have led to concrete discourses working to promote local identity. For example, Japanese scholar Sekido Akiko notes that an important appearance of the term *kyōdo* in print traces back to the 1891 Law Governing Elementary Schools (*Shōgakkō kyōsoku ōami*), which mentions that study of both geography and history shall start with a consideration of the local region, or *kyōdo*, in



which a school is situated.<sup>13</sup> Sekido and affiliated scholars have noted how Japanese nationalism was so effective in part because it started with direct observations of local cultural and geographical phenomena and then slowly traced outwards to the regional, prefectural and eventually national levels. Abstract or even imaginary ideas like the emperor system were guaranteed a real emotional hold on the lives of young students because they were anchored to local festivals and folklore that were at the center of their communities. The identities created by *kyōdo kenkyū* and *kyōdo kyōiku* drew strongly on local traditions but they were also read through the perspective of the nation, albeit in relatively complex and varied ways. But how were the local studies and local education movements able to imagine hometown identities that were already read through the nation? Unlike *minzokugaku* they focused on a wide range of both tangible and intangible phenomena including geography, dialect, customs, tales, traditions and almost anything else that was associated with a specific local area.

I have chosen to focus largely on how these two movements used folktales, because it allows for comparison with Yanagita's own project. These movements have continued to significantly define local identity (read indirectly through the nation) after 1945, so I will follow them into the postwar period as well. They flourished in many places throughout Japan, notably including the prefectures of Yamagata and Shiga. In addition, I will focus on Okayama prefecture and northern Shikoku where the *Momotarō* tale was an important part of discourses framing local identity.

In the case of the *Momotarō* tale, the two contrasting approaches of folklore from a national versus an ostensibly local perspective are represented in the very different lives

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<sup>13</sup> Katō Masahirō. *Kyōdo: hyōshō to jissen* (Kyoto: Sagano Shoin, 2003) iii.

and works of Yanagita and Hashimoto Sentarō (1890-1940), an elementary school teacher and local researcher in rural Shikoku. In the summer of 1932, Yanagita was in Tokyo finishing up the last of nine essays that would be compiled into book form and published the following year as *Momotarō no tanjō*, a work that would help to found a newly national folklore studies. That same summer in the small town of Kinashi in northern Shikoku, Hashimoto published *Kinashi densetsu Momotarō-san onigashima seibatsu* (*Kinashi's Legend Momotarō: Expedition to Onigashima*). In his book he argued that his hometown of Kinashi was the real origin of the *Momotarō* tale. Linking over two hundred local sites to the tale, Hashimoto's work proved tremendously popular in the region and was republished twenty-two times in quick succession.<sup>14</sup> As both a folklore researcher and a schoolteacher, Hashimoto suggests through his activities how the local studies and local education movements tended to blend into one another.

A nationally renowned figure like Yanagita and an unknown schoolteacher would at first seem to have little in common. It was likely that Yanagita never heard of Hashimoto. Yet, whether working in the center of the nation in Tokyo or in a small, rural town like Kinashi, both men were united in the use of tales as a key medium to imagine Japanese identity, be it national or regional. For Yanagita, *minzokugaku* was a means to integrate Japanese culture into a meaningful whole. This was accomplished through the careful comparison of variations in tales that had been collected from all over the nation. For Hashimoto, *kyōdo kenkyū* gave him the means to tie an important national tale to his hometown, bolstering local identity. In both cases the relationship between national and local identity was overdetermined; the one was always read in relation to the other.

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<sup>14</sup> Kahara Nahoko. "Mirai e muketa dentō tsukuri—'Momotarō densetsu chi' Okayama no keisei." *Momotarō wa ima mo genki da* (Okayama: Okayama Momotarō Kenkyūkai, 2005) 108-149. See pages 127-128.

Yanagita's *minzokugaku* was an academic project of painstaking detail that was built upon a network of hundreds of quasi-professional informants scattered across the entirety of Japan. It was only this army of unnamed local researchers tied together through a nationwide infrastructure of both transportation and social networks that made *minzokugaku* possible. In contrast, *kyōdo kenkyū* had no one center or leader. Quite often the local studies of schoolteachers and amateur historians were ostensibly limited to their own hometowns or regions. Still, as in the case of Hashimoto, these local areas were already read through the nation in multiple ways. In Kinashi, *Momotarō* formed an appealing topic precisely because it was so well known all over Japan. Hashimoto himself recalled that the catalyst for his research was an offhand comment by the famous statesmen Okuma Shigenobu when he passed through the town.<sup>15</sup> Giving a speech there while on a regional tour, Okuma noted that Kinashi (鬼無), which literally means 'no *oni*' (ogres), reminded him of the *Momotarō* tale.

Folktales were central to *minzokugaku* and *kyōdo kenkyū* but also predated them with a history and politics all their own. Although Yanagita in particular was invested in defining tales as oral products of rural culture, during the Edo period (1600-1868) they were equally a product of written, urban culture. In my first chapter I consider the origins of the *Momotarō* tale during the Edo period in order to recover an alternative to Yanagita's depiction of folktales. During this time *Momotarō* was less a single definitive story than a cluster of elements from which authors chose freely. Takizawa Bakin, Santō Kyōden and dozens of other authors created substantially different versions of the tale.

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<sup>15</sup> Saito Jun. "Dōwa misemono no tanjō: Momotarō densetsu no seiritsu ni miru kosho bungei no kankō-ka ni tsuite." *Tabi no bunka kenkyū jō no kenkyū hōkoku*. 6 (March 1998) 37-56. See pages 37-38.

Throughout the Edo period, oral and written versions of the tale were interacting as authors and groups were already pressuring it to represent a variety of competing values. Didactic uses of the tale flourished as it was used by the quasi-religious *Shingaku* movement to promote the value of hard work, in kabuki plays and affiliated media to envision a lower-rank samurai identity, or in certain *emaki* to imagine a higher-class samurai identity.

As part of a consideration of the tale's origins in Chapter One, I also consider its likely age. Just as historians have called into question the ostensible age of national traditions, literature scholars have recently revised the estimated age of the *Momotarō* tale downwards. Until after 1945 most scholars believed the tale reached at least as far back as the Muromachi period (1333-1568), with certain elements dating as far back as the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> But the consensus of newer Japanese scholarship on the tale is that it likely began coalescing in the early Edo period (1600-1868).<sup>17</sup> A careful consideration of written versions of the *Momotarō* tale during this time describes a tale that varied widely, was already being pressured to narrate a variety of messages, and was just one of many popular tales.

It was only from the 1890s when the tale was incorporated into both Japanese national language readers (*kokugo tokuhon*) and children's literature that a single version became completely dominant. While *Momotarō* was just one of many popular tales during the Edo period, from just before the turn of the century it clearly became Japan's most popular tale. In Chapter Two, I argue that this is at least partly because of how elements within the story itself allowed it be read as national allegory. Iwaya Sazanami's

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<sup>16</sup> Namekawa Michio. *Momotarōzō no henyō* (Tokyo Shoseki, 1981) 2-9.

<sup>17</sup> Ann Herring. *Edo jidō tosho e no izanai* (Kumon Shuppan, 1988) 155.

1894 adaptation “Momotarō” was both an important milestone in Japanese children’s literature and the most prestigious literary iteration of this tale in the modern period. From around the time of Iwaya’s version, *Momotarō* gradually came to be read as a national allegory for an expanding Japanese empire. National allegory is a term that has attracted continued attention and controversy, much of it focusing on Frederic Jameson’s 1986 article “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism.” In a recent edition of the journal *Positions*, Margaret Hillenbrand has argued for the enduring importance of what she terms “national allegorism,” which is “the act of interpreting a text as if it were indeed “about” the particular nation-state to which its author owes some kind of ethno-emotional allegiance.”<sup>18</sup>

Unlike other tales, the story elements of *Momotarō* were easily reinterpreted for the purposes of national allegory. In an age that valued the family, patriarchy, and service to the nation, this tale was interpreted to imagine an idealized community. From the 1890s onward, *Momotarō* quickly became a quintessential modern myth, seamlessly weaving together stories of personal, cultural, and national nativity into a single narrative thread. Through the story Japanese were linked both backwards to memories of their own childhoods and outwards to a national imagination constructed through shared cultural knowledge. At the heart of this tale is the trope of birth, which is central to the idea of the nation, as seen in its lexical roots of ‘natal’ and ‘nascent.’ *Momotarō* is a fine analogue for the nation, for he is reborn with each new retelling of the story, but the story—like the

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<sup>18</sup> Margaret Hillenbrand. “The National Allegory Revisited: Writing Private and Public in Contemporary Taiwan.” *Positions* 14.3 (2006) 633-662. See page 636.

nation—gains much of its credibility through a genealogy that purportedly extends back for centuries.<sup>19</sup>

In my second chapter, I consider how three specific tropes of national allegory were read into *Momotarō* in particular and children's literature generally. These three recurring themes were: the hero's home is attacked first, he wins by virtue of his connection to the imperial institution, and the location of the battle is imagined as an overseas area that is available to colonization. Except for the first case of the hero's home being attacked first, these were not ways in which the tale was understood during the Edo period. But the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 proved to be a powerful new context against which Iwaya's adaptation and the tale in general was read. By means of these three tropes, children's literature formed a kind of latent political education for children inculcating distinctly Japanese ideas of empire. It was only from the Sino-Japanese War that these new political meanings began to be read into the *Momotarō* tale, but by the 1920s they were firmly established as the tale became increasingly synonymous with Japanese nationalism and militarism.

Just before and after the year 1930, Proletarian authors penned several parodies of the *Momotarō* tale but for these most part these adaptations were politically shrill and quickly forgotten. As I consider in Chapter Three, it took the narrative talents of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to craft a satisfying critical and artistic response to the tale's use as national allegory. Focusing on the intersection of narrative consumption and politics, Akutagawa perceptively noted in his 1924 essay "Iwami Jutarō" that it was the continuous reiterations of stories across time that gave popular heroes a "life force"

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<sup>19</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983) 4-5.

(*seimei*) that resonated with the public. His essay offers a series of insightful criticisms of prewar Japanese nationalism centered on a critique of the power of popular narrative over its audience. Basing his argument in a distinctively Japanese cultural setting, Akutagawa suggests that the functions of national identification—filled by novels and the literature of realism in the West—are served by folktales and popular literature in Japan. To this end, the essay branches out to consider Japan’s founding myths including the *Kojiki*, the *Momotarō* tale, and samurai movie (*chanbara*) heroes, linking all three to a kind of imagination that supported aggressive Japanese colonial policies.

Akutagawa put this critique in fictional form in his 1925 short satire, “Momotarō,” which remains one of the most biting criticisms of Japanese militarism to this day.<sup>20</sup> Parody has both comedic and critical functions and Akutagawa exercises both of them brilliantly in this work. Linda Hutcheon has defined parody as “a form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity.”<sup>21</sup> She goes on to note that there is often a “tension between the potentially conservative effect of repetition and the potentially revolutionary impact of difference” as contained within the parody.<sup>22</sup> In his essay, Akutagawa recognized how the “potentially conservative effect of repetition” gave popular fictional characters a “life force,” one that in the case of *Momotarō* was used to create a hegemonic discourse supporting Japanese colonialism. His parody was an attempt at a critique which possessed the “potentially revolutionary impact of difference.” Hutcheon notes that “ironic inversion is characteristic of all

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<sup>20</sup> The continuing power of this story both to shock readers and appeal to creative artists is attested to by graphic artist Terakado Masayuki’s 2005 large-format picture book edition “Momotarō” featuring his own illustrations matched with Akutagawa’s text. Terakado re-imagines Momotarō dressed in a pink tutu wantonly dining on the blood of his victims.

<sup>21</sup> Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Parody: The Teaching of Twentieth Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985) xii.

<sup>22</sup> Hutcheon xii.

parody.”<sup>23</sup> By telling the story from the *oni* perspective, the tale’s hero is seen from a new angle and turned into a brutally violent colonial invader.

It was in part the fame that the tale had gained as national allegory through the adaptations of Sazanami, Akutagawa, and many others that made it a well-known and thus appealing object of study for Yanagita. At the same time, Yanagita discouraged easy readings of the tale as propaganda as he sought to establish more authentic versions preserved in the rural countryside. But in the process of narrating a version of the tale’s early history, he could be read as giving accidental support to authors making specious links between *Momotarō* and the *Kojiki* (712), Japan’s earliest history, and by extension the imperial institution.

For Japanese who experienced World War II, the tale is most strongly remembered for its use as an explicit metaphor for imperial Japanese militarism. In my final chapter I consider the tale’s zenith as propaganda. From the late 1930s until 1945 numerous short stories reimagined the tale as a call to war and cultural purity. These eventually culminated in the first full-length animated films made in Japan, *Momotarō no umiwashi* (1943, *Momotarō’s Sea Eagles*) and *Momotarō umi no shimpei* (1945, *Momotarō’s Divine Ocean Warriors*). The former imagined the attack on Pearl Harbor as ordered by Momotarō and carried out by his cute animal retainers. In the latter, Momotarō defeated the British in Singapore after educating native South Sea Islanders to aid the Japanese cause.

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<sup>23</sup> Hutcheon 6.



## *Momotarō* Research

Yanagita was only one of dozens of thinkers to consider this tale. Across roughly the last two hundred years *Momotarō* has attracted sustained scholarly attention, generating at least eleven major treatises between 1811 and 2005.<sup>24</sup> These works suggest the importance of the tale, and folktales generally, to understanding Japanese identity. Generations have returned again and again to the question that guided Yanagita: what are folktales? When did they originate and what do they mean? Researchers' answers to these questions have often revealed as much if not more about their own positions regarding Japanese culture as they did about folktales. The earliest commentators, including Bakin and Kyōden, gave fragmentary accounts of the tale, seeing it as entertaining but not considering it as particularly revealing about Japanese identity. It was only in the modern period through folklore studies, on both the local and national levels, that tales became constructed as uniquely revealing about Japanese identity.

The tale has continued to attract attention in the postwar period and my own research builds on the work of children's literature scholars including Namekawa Michio (1981), Torigoe Shin (1983), and Nomura Junichi (2000). The first and most detailed of these studies is Namekawa Michio's 622-page tome *Momotarōzō no henyō* (1981, *Changes in the Image of Momotarō*). Namekawa outlines and excerpts from more than fifty of the most significant versions of the tale from the last 130 years, bringing

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<sup>24</sup> These include chapters about *Momotarō* by Takizawa Bakin in his *Enseki zasshi* (1811) and Santō Kyōden in his *Kottōshū* (1813), as well as *Hinanoukegi* by Kamo Norikiyo (1841), *Momotarō no onigashima seibatsu* by Hashimoto Sentarō (1927), *Momotarō no tanjō* by Yanagita Kunio (1933), *Kiki no shinwa to Momotarō* by Ino Kōju (井乃香樹) (1941), *Momotarō no haha: hikaku minzokugakuteki ronshū* by Ishida Eiichirō (1956), *Momotarōzō no henyō* by Namekawa Michio (1981), *Momotarō no unmei* by Torigoe Shin (1983), *Shin Momotarō no tanjō* by Nomura Junichi (2000), and *Okayama no Momotarō* by Ichikawa Shunsuke (2005). Hashimoto and Ichikawa were local researchers. The remaining men were either well-known authors or scholars at major universities.

tremendous strength of detail to *Changes*. Wartime and militaristic versions of the otherwise well-catalogued tale are conspicuously lacking though, which is surprising considering how extensively *Momotarō* was used as propaganda. Namekawa's omission fits with his purpose for writing—rehabilitating the tainted image of *Momotarō* in the postwar period. He criticizes an insipid 'good boy philosophy' (*yoikko-shugi*) of child-raising which he feels has left contemporary Japanese youngsters ill-equipped to conquer the difficulties they will face in the real world and feels that somehow *Momotarō* may be the remedy.<sup>25</sup> With its extensive resources, including a 38-page compendium of 581 different published versions of the *Momotarō* story, *Changes* is an indispensable source but functions more as a reference work than a sustained analysis of the tale's position in society.

Just two years later, Torigoe Shin published *Momotarō no unmei* (1983, *The Fate of Momotarō*), which considered the hero as a 'child of the times' (*jidai no ko*) and tracked changes in the tale's political and cultural meanings. He moves chronologically, considering *Momotarō* within the contexts of imperialism, children's literature, class struggle, military expansion, and popular literature. Torigoe's is the best of the three works in Japanese and in many ways anticipates my own project, although my own study differs from his in my focus on folklore studies, which surprisingly he does not consider.

Finally, Nomura Junichi's *Shin Momotarō no tanjō* (2000, *The New Birth of Momotarō*) builds upon the work of both Namekawa and Torigoe. The title itself is a playful reference to Yanagita's *Momotarō no tanjō*. Nomura spends the bulk of his work analyzing regional versions of the tale as a way of reminding us that the standardized

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<sup>25</sup> Namekawa 564-565.

version of the tale known today is a modern creation. His most interesting section is his consideration of the use of the tale as part of a strategy to promote regional identities and boost tourism in the Tōno region of Iwate and Okayama city.

English-language scholarship has mainly focused on the extensive use of the tale as World War II propaganda in movies and other forms. Eminent historian John Dower's *War Without Mercy* (1986) devotes several pages to this subject within a larger discussion of Japanese and American racist propaganda during the Pacific War.<sup>26</sup> Dower situates the story within the Japanese paradigm of the pure self and the demonic other, represented by *Momotarō* and the allied powers, respectively. His only drawback is in presenting too narrow a picture of the tale, as he can be read to imply that it was only widely used in the modern period as part of World War II propaganda. For example, he writes that the tale, "was included, with color illustrations, in the basic textbook for elementary language instruction issued by the Ministry of Education between February 1941 and September 1945."<sup>27</sup> In fact, it was universally included in Japanese textbooks from the 1890s onwards.

In contrast to the responsible scholarship of Dower, German folklorist Klaus Antoni has reductively asserted that through its 'devil island' (*onigashima*) theme, *Momotarō* reveals an unchanging Japanese hostility to the foreign across several centuries. His linking of Japanese nationalism and *Momotarō*, through the tale's inclusion in textbooks, is solidly argued and well documented. The problem is the questionable genealogy he constructs for the tale as part of an argument that sees Japanese militarism of the twentieth century not as distinctively modern but as growing out of an expansionist

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<sup>26</sup> John Dower. *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986) 251-257.

<sup>27</sup> Dower 252.

strain within Japanese culture that dates back to the Yamato court. Antoni writes that “a direct line of tradition leads from Yamato Takeru by way of Yoshitsune and Tametomo directly to Momotarō.”<sup>28</sup> He explains,

The comparison between Tametomo and Yoshitsune indicates that both figures—as prototypical Japanese heroes—not only traveled to the foreign regions on the borders of the known Japanese world, which were conceived of as uncultivated and existing outside of human existence, and thus were demonic, but also conquered them and brought them under Japanese control.<sup>29</sup>

Antoni implicitly links eighth, twelfth, and twentieth century Japanese aggression without a sufficient sense of historical difference, presenting a skewed view of the tale’s history.

### Conclusion

It is important to recognize how the meanings of tales have changed with time. Even the category “folktales” is in many ways a modern invention of Yanagita’s folk studies project from the 1930s. Answering questions about what folktales are, when they originated and what they mean requires careful historical contextualization to grasp how their discursive construction changed with time. In modern Japan, folktales have been used both to support and criticize Japanese colonialism as well as to define both national and local identity. What remained constant among these different discourses in the modern period was the sense that folktales were revealing of Japanese identity and that the *Momotarō* tale was among the most important folktales to consider. But the faith in *Momotarō* as a single, unified tale with a long history and containing didactic values was itself a modern conceit. And so I begin in my first chapter by deconstructing this conceit.

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<sup>28</sup> Klaus Antoni. “Momotarō (The Peach Boy) and the spirit of Japan: Concerning the Function of a Fairy Tale in Japanese Nationalism in the Early Showa Age.” *Asian Folklore Studies* 50 (1991) 155-188. See page 179.

<sup>29</sup> Antoni 185.

## CHAPTER I

### Writing Oral Tales in the Edo Period (1600-1868): Reading *Momotarō* through Verbal and Visual Texts

*Akahon* have artifice as their seed and produce a myriad of human laughter. The warbler that sings in the bamboo grove has its tongue cut for eating the starch and the crab that lives in a hole has its shell broken by a persimmon. The old woman's spite moves the pack on her shoulders without effort, Momotarō's great exploits stir the emotions of invisible spirits and gods, the mouse bride brings harmony to relations between men and women, and *akahon* calm the hearts of children. *Akahon* go back to Otohime of the eternal heavens and the monkey's raw liver (is wetted by the heaven's rain) and to the exploits of the rabbit which made a boat for the *tanuki* out of the ore-rich earth, thus encouraging good and punishing evil. ...by Urashimtarōtsuki

Santō Kyōden, preface to *Momotarō hottan setsuwa* (1792, *Origins of the Momotarō Tale*)<sup>1</sup>

Santō Kyōden's (1761-1816) parodic preface alludes to the *Kokinshū*'s (c. 920) kana preface by likening several *mukashibanashi*, or old tales,<sup>2</sup> to the Japanese poetry extolled by Ki no Tsurayuki. Parodying Tsurayuki's claims about the efficacious power of court poetry to talk about tales told by commoners, Kyōden produces a delightful comic bathos by bringing high and low genres together. He refers to eight tales that are still widely told today along with two more possible references to tales that cannot be

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<sup>1</sup> Kyōden 37. Kyōden writes under the parodic guise of an author named 'Urashimtarōtsuki.' I have taken slight liberties with the translation of Kyōden's preface in order to make it read parallel to McCullough's translation of Ki no Tsurayuki's preface as found on page 3 of her *Kokin Wakashū: the first imperial anthology of Japanese poetry* (1985). Kyōden's original Japanese is attached as Appendix B for reference.

<sup>2</sup> *Mukashibanashi*, literally old tales or old stories, was a term that was popular by at least the middle of the Edo period. I will generally translate *mukashibanashi* as 'tales,' 'old tales,' or 'popular tales' although from the 1930s onwards the conceptual framework of how they were viewed changed and 'folktales' becomes the best translation. I will sometimes translate them as popular tales rather than old tales because for many Edo period authors the salient fact about them was not their presumed age but their great popularity.

identified.<sup>3</sup> Today all of these stories would be labeled as folk tales (*mukashibanashi*) or orally-transmitted literature (*denshō bungei*), but Kyōden calls them *akahon*. *Akahon* were illustrated books for children that often were based on tales and were one of the four basic Edo genres listed by Takizawa Bakin in 1834.<sup>4</sup> This book category named for its red covers reached its golden age during the Kyōhō era (1716-1736), several decades before Kyōden was writing.<sup>5</sup> He may be labeling these tales as *akahon* for lack of a better term, although the term *mukashibanashi* was already in use by this time. Kyōden's audience would have known these tales orally from hearing them told and from written sources as well. In this sense there is at least one connection between *mukashibanashi* and the court poetry redacted by Tsurayuki: both were genres caught between speech and writing. We can read poetry silently but it only comes to life when it is recited out loud. Tales were told orally but they were also a part of the urban literary culture of the Edo period. As Kyōden's preface reminds us, tales developed through ongoing negotiations between oral and literate cultures, between *mukashibanashi* and *akahon*.

But today the eight or more tales Kyōden references would all be classified as oral tales and associated with rural culture. The wide degree to which tales circulated through the written works of urban culture has largely been forgotten or ignored. This is partly

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<sup>3</sup> Tales referenced include *Shitakirisuzume*, *Saru-kani gassen*, *Momotarō*, *Nezumi yome-iri*, *Otohime*, *Hachikazuki*, *Saru no nama kanzo*, and *Urashimatarō*. References to the “old woman (whose) spite moves the pack on her shoulders” and “children” (*Okosamagata*) also likely point to tales but cannot be precisely identified.

<sup>4</sup> In Bakin's *Kinsei mono no hon: Edo sakusha burui* (1834) he lists the four primary genres as *akahon*, *yomihon*, *chūbon*, and *sharebon*. Literary genres flourished in profusion during the Edo period. Out of twenty literary genres that cover the Heian period to the end of the Tokugawa, Leon Zolbrod notes that “fifteen of these refer to fiction of the late Tokugawa period alone.” (Zolbrod 485) I will not go beyond rudimentary considerations of genre here and follow J. Scott Miller's assessment that more often than not genre categories of the Tokugawa period “tend to lure us away from literary issues into the labyrinth of historical debate.” (Miller 133)

<sup>5</sup> Seta Teiji. *Ochibo hiroi* (Fukuinkan shoten: 1982) 91. This is an excellent and accessible history of Edo period children's literature; in particular see pages 77 to 158 on *akahon*.

because access to many of the Edo-period tale manuscripts was very hard to come by during much of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> It is also because these tales are aimed at exclusively at children today rather than both children and adults as they were originally. Perhaps the most important factor is the modern view that sees tales solely as an oral form. This view was most authoritatively elaborated by Yanagita Kunio during the founding of the field of nativist ethnography (*minzokugaku*) during the 1930s.

Yanagita's research and Kyōden's parody may seem to be worlds apart but they share a common theme—the search for the origins of tales and the use of the *Momotarō* tale as the focus of this search.<sup>7</sup> Yanagita most directly considers origins of tales in his 1933 work, *The Birth of Momotarō* (*Momotarō no tanjō*). Yanagita and Kyōden were hardly alone in taking up this query. From the nineteenth century the question of where tales came from and what they meant has aroused great curiosity. As the most popular tale in Japan since at least the 1890s, *Momotarō* has often become the focus for this question. Generations of scholars and amateurs alike have framed the question of the origins and meaning of tales as ‘Where does the *Momotarō* tale come from and what has it meant across time?’ At least eleven book-length treatises published between 1811 and 2005 have been devoted to answering just this question.<sup>8</sup> The sheer level of sustained

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<sup>6</sup> Tokugawa period fiction has suffered from a reputation that is at best “shifting and insecure” and at worst “dismal” (see Peter Kornicki, “The Survival of Tokugawa Fiction in the Meiji Period, 1981, especially p. 461 and p. 466.). Availability of what we now consider to be children's literature is even more limited. In *Edo no dōwa kenkyū* (Kyūzansha: 1992), which is an edition that puts into type three handwritten Edo-era manuscripts, Kami Shōichirō mentions that many of these manuscripts were put into type only in the early Taisho period. But many more have either been lost or not typeset because of the difficulty of deciphering the writing. And as works for children they were often treated roughly by children and destroyed or not saved because they were deemed as culturally unimportant. Kami 3-7.

<sup>7</sup> Of course the search for origins is a hallmark of the modern, and the earnestness of Yanagita in this matter marks his modernity.

<sup>8</sup> These include chapters about *Momotarō* by Takizawa Bakin in his *Enseki zasshi* (1811) and Santō Kyōden in his *Kottōshū* (1813), as well as *Hinanoukegi* by Kamo Norikiyo (1841), *Momotarō no onigashima seibatsu* by Hashimoto Sentarō (1927), *Momotarō no tanjō* by Yanagita Kunio (1933), *Kiki no*

interest in this question across the last two centuries implies that more is involved here than just explaining a single tale. Studies of *Momotarō* quickly go beyond an individual story to touch upon the presumed nature of the Japanese people and culture. Being taken up so often as a topic of research and commentary, *Momotarō* has become a kind of cultural fetish representing Japanese folktales and folklore generally.

Yanagita's *The Birth of Momotarō* is the single best example of how the tale was canonized to represent tales as orally transmitted products of rural Japanese culture. This book distills the invaluable research by Yanagita and his followers who traveled across Japan and transcribed rapidly disappearing oral tales. It was one of two or three works by Yanagita that helped to establish the idea of folktales in Japan as an oral art to be mined for folk wisdom. Unfortunately it almost completely ignores written versions of tales and thus produces a skewed picture. To understand how tales have been used in the modern period to imagine the nation of Japan we must first recover written versions that were ignored in the drive to create folktales.

Tales like *Momotarō* were not just orally transmitted but were the result of ongoing negotiations between oral and literate cultures, as Kyōden's preface suggests. While Yanagita and allied researchers largely ignored written and illustrated versions of tales during the Edo period, a new generation of scholars in Japan including Torigoe Shin, Ann Herring, Kami Shōichirō and Ōta Shōko have begun to reconsider these texts and to write them back into the discussion of "oral" tales. For example, considering the *Momotarō* tale Herring writes, "This may be an example where we can see that orally

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*shinwa to Momotarō* by Ino Kōju (井乃香樹) (1941), *Momotarō no haha: hikaku minzokugakuteki ronshū* by Ishida Eiichirō (1956), *Momotarōzō no henyō* by Namekawa Michio (1981), *Momotarō no unmei* by Torigoe Shin (1983), *ShinMomotarō no tanjō* by Nomura Junichi (2000), and *Okayama no Momotarō* by Ichikawa Shunsuke (2005). Hashimoto and Ichikawa were local researchers. The remaining men were either well-known authors or scholars at major universities.



transmitted literature (口伝文学) has been influenced by written literature (文字による文学).”<sup>9</sup> She points out that while we think of *Momotarō* as a product of rural culture it was equally determined by metropolitan, literary culture.

When we think of the phrase “Once upon a time” (*mukashi mukashi*) and the Romanticism or German Idealism it conjures up then tales (*mukashibanashi*) seem to be decidedly simple and a product that bear the aroma of the country mud. But the *Momotarō* story during the Edo period was actually very much a polished literary product of city culture.<sup>10</sup>

Building upon the research of Herring and others, in this chapter I will explore print and illustrated versions of the *Momotarō* tale from the Edo period to problematize the modern view of folktales as espoused by Yanagita. Looking at tales in verbal and visual texts allows us access to a history that the lens of folktales or oral tales misses. Tales were not just a repository for the unselfconscious values of the folk. As Kyōden implies in his preface, they shone with the “artifice” (*shukō*) of the leading authors and artists of the age, including Kyōden himself, Takizawa Bakin and Katsuhika Hokusai among others. And unlike oral tales, tales in the form of printed media still bear the traces of the class and ideological conflicts that shaped them.<sup>11</sup>

A brief review of the work of Yanagita in the 1930s helps to explain both the standard modern view of tales and why recovering illustrated and written versions of tales from the Edo period is a needed corrective. For example, Yanagita’s suggestion that *Momotarō* dates back to the middle of the Muromachi period and was only influenced by printed versions from the 1890s is still influential today. But recent scholarship that takes into account non-oral forms of the tale argues that the tale was composed after the

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<sup>9</sup> Herring 155.

<sup>10</sup> Herring 154.

<sup>11</sup> Oral tales may also have been the site of similar class or ideological tensions but the traces of these conflicts are largely unrecoverable now.

Muromachi period and suggests the value of considering tales through a variety of media. Additionally, printed versions of tales and commentaries on tales show first that Yanagita's project was less original than he suggests, and second, that oral and literary versions of tales co-existed well before the Meiji period.

The primary media I will consider are verbal and visual texts. After a survey of printed editions of the tale, I will consider versions by Santō Kyōden, Takizawa Bakin, and Nakazawa Dōni among others. Already by the opening of the nineteenth century, authors were pressuring the tale to comment upon the Japanese people and their character; these pressures foreshadow the use of tales to imagine the nation. Tales were taken up not only for entertainment but as a part of the didactic discourses of *kōshōgaku*, *hyōdenki*, and as parables employed by *Shingaku* adherents.<sup>12</sup> And even more than through solely linguistic texts, tales were widely distributed through illustrations and visual culture. Edo era readers were keenly aware of visual conventions—how a character's dress advertised their social status for example—that we can no longer 'read' as easily today. Through a close analysis of two of the visual conventions associated with the *Momotarō* tale I explore both the ideological tensions to which the tale gave expression and how it existed within a complex web of art forms including *yoruri* and kabuki theater.

### Yanagita and Oral Tales

Currently, origins of tales are usually studied as part of *denshōbungaku*, defined by the authoritative *Kōjien* dictionary as being the same as *kōshōbungaku* which is,

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<sup>12</sup> *Kōshōgaku* (考証学) were investigations into things and their origins, *hyōdenki* (評伝記) were commentaries on things. *Shingaku* (心学) was a syncretic religion of the Edo period that I consider in greater detail on pages 44-45.

Literature (*bungaku*) that arose before written literature and was orally transmitted through speech or song. It continued after the use of writing as a people's literature (*minkan no bungaku*). In its widest sense it includes people's sayings and songs, but mainly it refers to *shinwa* (myths), *densetsu* (legends), *setsuwa* (popular tales), *mukashibanashi* (old tales), *minyō* (folk songs), or spoken stories. Also known as *denshōbungaku* (orally-transmitted literature), *kōhi* (oral legends), or *kōshōbungei* (oral literature).<sup>13</sup>

Research into *denshōbungaku* and *kōshōbungaku* traces its roots to Yanagita's *minzokugaku* which was begun in the 1930s. Yanagita was the most authoritative scholar to study the Momotarō tale and he considered it to be a kind of *mukashibanashi*, or folk tale. In 1933, *The Birth of Momotarō*, a founding work of *minzokugaku*, inaugurated the modern comparative study of folktales in Japan. Yanagita's special fondness for the *Momotarō* tale may be in part because he saw it as an especially authentic, and thus revealing, product of the Japanese people. His study of the tale is highly insightful even though his drive to read the tale as a product of the Japanese people produces certain distortions, which I explore in detail in my fourth chapter. Here I wish to look at his approach to the origins of *Momotarō* and other folk tales.

While he suggests that many Japanese tales had foreign roots, Yanagita singles out *Momotarō* as originating in Japan. Emphasizing the theme of the *chiisako*, or a baby of propitious birth who was born from inside unusual objects such as peaches, bamboo, melons and the like, he sought to shed light on Japanese religious folk belief. In *The Birth of Momotarō*, he writes that as the Japanese people moved inland from the coasts they came to believe that spirits sometimes came down to the mountaintops. Thus a peach, or some other unusual object, floating down a mountain river might have been seen as having some connection with those gods.<sup>14</sup> In Yanagita's reading the tale evolved along

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<sup>13</sup> Kōjien, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 257.

with the Japanese people and their collective movements.<sup>15</sup> Sifting through transcriptions of oral tales from all around the country convinced Yanagita that the tale had changed across the time. Specifically, Yanagita believed that in an earlier and more authentic version of the *Momotarō* tale the hero took a wife,<sup>16</sup> and that, “only in the standard fairy tale version [*hyōjun otogi*] of *Momotarō* has this element been removed.”<sup>17</sup> In his view more recent written versions of folk tales, made for children and popularized by authors like Iwaya Sazanami from the Meiji period onward, are corruptions of older and thus more authentic oral versions. Yanagita asserts that this contamination of oral tales by written versions only became significant from around the 1890s onward.

### Dating ‘Oral’ Tales

But were oral versions of tales only impacted by written versions after the beginning of the Meiji period? And how far back does *Momotarō* in its various forms go? A review of the accepted dating of the tale argues for the importance of considering not just oral forms of tales. In Yanagita’s view *Momotarō* originated in the middle of the Muromachi period (1333-1573) and was passed down orally from generation to generation.<sup>18</sup> This dating has become the orthodox view and is echoed with slight variations by more recent scholars. Namekawa Michio, among the most respected of those to study the tale, suggests that it arose in the late Muromachi period.<sup>19</sup> The problem

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<sup>15</sup> Yanagita saw *Momotarō*’s birth from a peach as a remnant of folk belief in contact between the human and the spirit worlds. His emphasis on the *chiisako* theme allowed him to read a connection between several popular tales including *Momotarō*, *Urikohime* [*Melon Princess*], *Kaguyahime* [*Bamboo Princess*], and *Issunbōshi* [*Japanese Tom Thumb*].

<sup>16</sup> See my fourth chapter.

<sup>17</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 259.

<sup>18</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 257-59.

<sup>19</sup> Namekawa i-ii and 2-3.

is the basis for this conclusion. In Yanagita's case there is a certain *a priori* quality to his opinion in that he assumes *Momotarō* arose in the Muromachi period because so many other tales can be dated to that age. His argument implies that since oral tales were passed down through generations in rural communities they were largely unaffected by influence from the publishing activities in Kyoto, Osaka, and later Edo. He asserts that it was only during the Meiji period that the authentic local versions of these tales began to be strongly impacted by versions found in textbooks and through fairy tales mass published in Tokyo. But this view is tenuous, relying more on educated guesses than on any direct evidence found within the tales themselves.

It is certainly possible that *Momotarō* arose during the Muromachi period. The problem is that this cannot be established based on historical evidence and so remains a supposition that is not strong enough to support the weight of Yanagita's broad generalizations about the Japanese folk. Yanagita's assertions about the nature of the Japanese folk based on oral tales thus constitute fascinating and often insightful reading but cannot be positively verified. Yanagita believed that the earliest versions of the tale were oral versions, preserved in rural Japanese communities, so research for him into the origins of the tale meant a train trip outside of Tokyo to remote villages or reports from others who carried out such research. While he was aware of early research into the tale by Edo-period literati such as Takizawa Bakin, for the most part Yanagita fails to consider it relevant. In point of fact, however, the first commercially produced edition of the tale that we have has been dated to 1723, and there were possibly earlier versions that have not survived. This means that by the time Yanagita's fieldwork into oral tales began in the 1930s, written versions had circulated through Japan for over two centuries.

What, then, can written and other forms of tales tell us about dating? As mentioned above, the consensus among scholars such as Yanagita and Namekawa is that *Momotarō* and most other tales date back to the middle or late Muromachi period, roughly the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. But the first tangible evidence for the tale's existence in Japan dates back to 1614, the first written edition is from 1723, and multiple editions of the tale only begin appearing from around the 1750s.

The earliest reference to the tale that can be positively dated is not in written form, and this argues for the need to be attentive to the wide variety of media that tales can take. The first possible reference takes the form of a decorative carving at a shrine. Kehi Shrine in Fukui prefecture had a three-panel carving showing elements similar to the *Momotarō* tale and dating to 1614 or earlier.<sup>20</sup> Shrine tradition asserts that the shrine was founded in the age of the legendary Empress Suiko (554-628). During the Heian period, Kehi was the head shrine (*ichinomiya*) for the Echizen domain and prospered greatly. Toward the end of the Muromachi period in 1570 it was burned down but it was rebuilt in 1614. During this rebuilding process the three panel carving was installed under the eaves of the shrine's main hall toward its front side.<sup>21</sup> Why the peach motif was chosen and whether it is actually connected to the *Momotarō* tale is not known. While the panels were lost to fire due to bombing during World War II, a photograph remains of one section of the panels. It depicts a closed peach blossom on the left side and a kimono-

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<sup>20</sup> Ichikawa Shunsuke. *Okayama no Momotarō*. (Okayama: Nihon Bunkyo Shuppansha, 2005 b)14. There is one possible earlier reference that should be noted. In the *Inryōken nichiroku* (1492, 蔭涼軒日録), a record by a Buddhist monk of the Sorin school of Zen Buddhism in the Muromachi period, there is mention of a monk ordering his servants to prepare "Japan's number one millet dumplings." Ichikawa Shunsuke (2005 b, 13.) suggests this may be an early reference to the *Momotarō* tale, but major scholars including Namekawa and Nomura have ignored this reference, viewing it as circumstantial and insignificant.

<sup>21</sup> Each panel measures 30 centimeters high, 60 centimeters wide, and 25 centimeters thick. It is not known if the panels predated the rebuilding or not.

clad, adult male standing in the middle of a peach fruit that is three-quarters open. He is clearly a high status person, clothed in multiple layers of kimono and with a martial bearing.

Scholars have suggested affinities between *Momotarō* and other tales that date back thousands of years. These have included references to the peach thrown by *Izanagi no mikoto* in the *Kojiki* (c. 712), the *Saiyūki* (Journey to the West), the Ramayana tale (between 500 BCE and 100 BCE) of India, and even to Greek myths.<sup>22</sup> But all of those links are circumstantial at best. While the Kehi shrine panel does not prove the tale's existence, it does demonstrate that elements similar to the tale were likely in place by the early Edo period.

The oldest extant written version of the tale dates from 1723 and is simply titled *Momotarō* (もも太郎).<sup>23</sup> It was likely printed by Fujita Motohide (藤田素秀) but otherwise relatively little is known about this edition and the last extant copy was lost to fire after the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923.<sup>24</sup> But perhaps as noteworthy as the tale's appearance in 1723 is its absence from Shibukawa Seimon's collection of twenty-three Muromachi era stories, *Otogi bunko*,<sup>25</sup> which likely appeared between 1688 and 1730 and included tales such as *Urashimatarō* and *Issunbōshi*.<sup>26</sup> *Momotarō*'s exclusion certainly does not mean that it was not well known during this time, but it does imply that as late as 1700 or so the tale was not widely popular.

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<sup>22</sup> For possible early sources of the *Momotarō* tale see Namekawa 2-5.

<sup>23</sup> Ichikawa (2005 b) 15.

<sup>24</sup> Kami 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> See Barbara Ruch's entertaining 'Origins of The Companion Library: An Anthology of Medieval Japanese Stories,' in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, no. 3 (May, 1971), pp. 593-610.

<sup>26</sup> Ruch 593.

A survey of printed editions of *Momotarō* by Kokubo Tōkō shows that multiple editions of the tale only began appearing from the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Kokubo catalogues a total of 82 different editions of the tale between 1772 and 1912.<sup>28</sup> His numbers paint a picture of gradually increasing interest. The tale gets off to a slow start with a thirty-year period between the first appearance in 1723 and the next appearance, in three editions, in 1753. After this it appears regularly with new editions every year or two, until another slow period from the 1820s to 1850s, followed by an explosion of interest from the 1860s. Even assuming that some early editions did not survive, the overall picture of increasing interest remains intact. The spike in numbers during the 1860s can be explained both by an increase in overall publishing activity and even more by historical conditions that allowed the tale to be read as an allegory for a Japanese nation facing formidable overseas enemies in the guise of the Western maritime powers.

This gradual increase in published editions of the *Momotarō* tale is especially significant when compared with the more steady publication numbers of other tales. To explain this contrast it is helpful to remember that tales are of widely varying ages. The *Urashimatarō* story is one of the oldest and has similar elements to *Manyōshū*-era

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<sup>27</sup> Kokubo Tōkō. *Momotarō wo sekai e* (Mizuki Shobō, 2004). Kokubo notes, “Today the extant picture book versions of the tale are most common from the An’ei and Tenmei eras (1772-1789) and after that the Kansei and Bunka eras (1789-1818), when the tale entered a golden age. As far as my research has shown, there are copies of the tale dating to 1723 (one edition), 1753 (three editions), 1772-1781 (eight editions), 1781-1789 (seven editions), 1789-1801 (seven editions), 1801-1804 (one edition), 1804-1818 (seven editions), 1818-1830 (one edition), 1830-1844 (two editions), 1861-1864 (one edition), 1864-1868 (43 editions), and 1868-1912 (21 editions, including three in either English or French).” Kokubo 40.

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that he is not including purely print versions, such as those by Tamenaga Shunsui, Nakazawa Dōni, Kurozawa Okimarō and others which would probably increase the total by around ten or so. Namekawa also includes a list of 82 versions of the story during the Edo period, although Kokubo’s and Namekawa’s lists differ slightly. Namekawa 22-37.



legends, meaning it may date back to the eighth century.<sup>29</sup> Parts of the *Shitakirisuzume* story can be found in the *Konjaku monogatari* and so likely date back to the twelfth century. While editions of these tales also increased during the Edo period (especially around the 1790s to 1810s), the overall picture is of fewer editions without the sharp increase demonstrated by *Momotarō*. Herring suggests that the *Momotarō* tale only appeared from the early Edo period but quickly gained acclaim. The great popularity of the *Momotarō* tale during the latter half of the Edo period may have blinded later researchers to its relative youth. For example, along with *Shitakirisuzume*, *Saru-kani gassen*, *Hanasakajisan*, and *Kachi-kachi yama*, *Momotarō* was part of the so-called *Godai otogi*, or ‘Five Most Popular Tales’ of the Edo period.<sup>30</sup> But unlike during the Meiji period when *Momotarō* was clearly the most popular of all Japanese tales, during the Edo period it was simply one of many well-known tales.

To summarize, the tale was first widely reprinted from the 1750s and then experienced significant spikes in popularity between the 1790s and the 1810s and from the 1860s onward. Its first widespread popularity coincided with its debut on the kabuki stage, which was first recorded in 1764.<sup>31</sup> The initial spike marked the tale’s first

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<sup>29</sup> Herring 151-152.

<sup>30</sup> *Shitakirisuzume*, or “The Tongue Cut Swallow,” tells of a swallow that rewards a kind old man who looks after the bird with treasure but punishes his greedy wife who cut out his tongue after eating her starch. *Saru-kani gassen*, or “The War between the Monkey and the Crab,” tells how a monkey injured a crab by throwing a persimmon at it. The crab’s friends (in the form of a chestnut, a mortar and a bee) then take revenge upon the monkey, either killing it or making it promise to be good. *Hanasakajisan*, or “The Old Man Who Made Flowers Bloom,” tells of how a merciful old man is blessed with wealth and fame via his dog, a mortar and ashes made from the burnt remains of the mortar and how his greedy neighbor is cursed when trying to take advantage of the same things for himself. *Kachi-kachi yama*, or “Crackling Mountain” tells of the revenge a rabbit takes upon a raccoon that killed a kindly old farmer’s wife (by disguising the wife as the raccoon and deceiving the farmer into eating his wife). The tale is rather mean-spirited and follows the rabbit as it tortures the raccoon by setting it on fire, burning it with a spicy paste applied to its wounds from the fire, and finally drowning it by coaxing it into a boat made that mud that promptly sinks.

<sup>31</sup> Ōta Shōko. “Edo no Momotarō imeeji.” *Bunka no kōsō*. (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003): 322-351. See page 338.

extensive use as a metaphor in didactic teachings as I will explore through several close readings in the next section. The second spike was related to the tale's use to imagine Japan in a newly widened world surrounded by hostile overseas powers. By the 1890s *Momotarō* was singularly Japan's most popular tale. But only by recovering written versions do we discover these trends. The picture that emerges is one in which oral and literary versions of the tale were interacting long before the 1890s and story elements and their perceived meanings varied widely.

### Writing 'Oral' Tales

So how did tales migrate into written media? And how did changes in media affect the content of the narrative itself? Ōta Shōko notes that the *Momotarō* tale first appeared in *akahon*, followed by *kibyōshi* (yellow-backed pictorial novels popular toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century), and only after that in *emaki* (illustrated narrative scrolls).<sup>32</sup> *Akahon* flourished in the 1720s and 1730s and were often illustrated versions of tales. Similar to the printed media of Elizabethan England, this genre grew with strong ties to the dramatic arts. Presenting sections of *yoruri* and later kabuki plays within the text itself, *akahon* sometimes resembled scripts and often employed complex visuals that moved between multiple levels of narration. For example, the first illustration of the early to mid-eighteenth century *akahon* titled *Momotarō mukashibanashi* by Nishimura Shigenobu is a framing narrative featuring two children observing three adults. [See Fig.

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<sup>32</sup> Ōta 326.

1] This kind of opening scene (*tobira-e*) was a convention in *akahon*.<sup>33</sup> The dialogue is as follows:

- Momotarō is interesting
- A long time ago, an old man went to the mountains to cut firewood...
- After this one, I want to hear about the exploits of the rabbit
- Be quiet and listen<sup>34</sup>



Figure 1: Opening illustration to Nishimura Shigenobu's *Momotarō mukashibanashi*.<sup>35</sup>

In this illustration, Nishimura's written text both explicitly acknowledges the oral tradition and provides an example of how that tradition found its way into writing. Conditions of the oral narration shown are notably different from both the modern practice of parents reading tales to children and from Yanagita's presumption that tales were most authentically a rural phenomenon not connected to writing. From the men's

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<sup>33</sup> Seta 154-55.

<sup>34</sup> Seta 123.

<sup>35</sup> Seta 123.

fashionable kimono and the room itself, appointed with a charcoal brazier and decorative *byōbu* screens, we can surmise that the scene is set in a prosperous house, possibly in an urban setting. Three adults at the center of the page face each other with the children as a seemingly incidental audience. The children sit on the *engawa* verandah outside the room itself but their interjections show that they are keenly interested. Still, the tale is not primarily for the children's benefit. Telling tales was an adult activity that could include children. The illustration's composition imagines this activity of telling tales in visual form through its three centers: the two children at the bottom, the three adults in the center, and the screen behind the adults at the top that is decorated with mountains and forest. As the story begins, "A long time ago, an old man went to the mountains to cut firewood", the decoration on the screens can be read to visually depict the tale and to begin the shift in narrative levels to the story within the story that is shown beginning with the next illustration. [See Fig. 2]

*Akahon* often presented a version of the *Momotarō* tale that differed from the standard modern version. Nishimura's edition, like most *akahon* including the contemporary *Mukashi mukashi no Momotarō* (むかしむかしの桃太郎) by Fujita Motohide,<sup>36</sup> depicted Momotarō being born not directly from a peach as is the case today, but being born from his mother after she ate a peach and was returned to youth. Namekawa notes that these two forms of birth in the tale are called the "direct birth from a peach" (果生形) and the "return to spring (youth)" (回春形).<sup>37</sup> The earliest versions of the story featured the old woman and man magically returned to youth after eating peaches (the woman picks up two).

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<sup>36</sup> Fujita was also responsible for earlier, different edition of the tale in 1723.

<sup>37</sup> Namekawa iv.



Figure 2: Second illustration from Nishimura Shigenobu's *Momotarō mukashibanashi*.<sup>38</sup>

By the late eighteenth century when *kibyōshi* versions were flourishing it was more common for the woman to pick up a large peach from which a child was born directly. Namekawa has suggested that the change occurred because this later version was more appropriate for young children.<sup>39</sup> But why children, or their parents, grew more sensitive during the course of the eighteenth century is unclear. Considering the tale's move from *akahon* to *kibyōshi* suggests an alternative answer. *Kibyōshi*, even more than *akahon*, were geared toward adults, so consideration of children seems an unlikely reason for the change. But during the tale's migration through these two genres the influence of kabuki was increasingly important. A childbirth scene was unlikely to be popular in the theater. But a child bursting from a large stage prop peach has continued to be a tremendously popular part of the kabuki repertoire even to the current day.<sup>40</sup> The change to direct birth

<sup>38</sup> Seta 124.

<sup>39</sup> Namekawa 47-49.

<sup>40</sup> The most popular kabuki actor active today, Nakamura Kanzaburō XVIII, debuted in 1955 playing the part of Momotarō and bursting from a giant peach, which is a common way for young sons of famous kabuki families to first take to the stage. Black and white footage from the 1955 play was broadcast to open the January 2005 performance in which he officially took his new name of Kanzaburō XVIII. The 2005

from a peach came to predominate in written versions of the tale just as *Momotarō* moved onto the kabuki stage in the 1760s. Thus it seems most likely that influence from the kabuki stage gradually fed back into written versions. If so, then dramatic adaptations of the tale may have influenced first written versions and eventually oral versions as well.

Another convention begun with *akahon* versions was depicting the three animal retainers as regular animals upon their first meeting with Momotarō and in later scenes as anthropomorphized figures, clothed in armor and carrying weapons. This may have been driven by kabuki-influenced versions that dressed the animal retainers as warriors as well as by a tradition of whimsically placing animals (especially rats and cats) in human situations.<sup>41</sup> There has been much guesswork about what the animals—a dog, a monkey, and a pheasant—signify within the story. Many scholars have suggested that they represent the values of loyalty, intelligence and bravery, respectively.<sup>42</sup> It has also been suggested that they represent the hero traveling away from his home and human surroundings and into the unknown at both metaphorical and literal levels. Dogs lived in and around human settlements, monkeys could be found close by their edges, and pheasants lived deep in the mountains far from humans. More abstractly, Takizawa Bakin first noted that these three animals also represent a direction within the Chinese zodiac.<sup>43</sup> [See Figure 3] On a circular representation of the Chinese zodiac they occupy positions clustered around the Northwest to Southwest.<sup>44</sup> The opposite direction to this, Northeast,

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play was an updated, satirical version of *Momotarō* in which the now middle-aged and flabby hero must first get back into shape before overcoming *oni*.

<sup>41</sup> This tradition of depicting animal anthropomorphically dates back to at least the twelfth century *chōjū-giga* scrolls (Scrolls Depicting Frolicking Birds and Animals). See Okudaira 73-76.

<sup>42</sup> Namekawa 40-42.

<sup>43</sup> Namekawa 12.

<sup>44</sup> The positions were as follows: dog (戌) at the Northwest, bird (酉) at the West, and monkey (申) at the Southwest.

is considered the unlucky gate to *oni* (ogres or demons), and so the three animals were symbolically well-positioned to fight off evil.

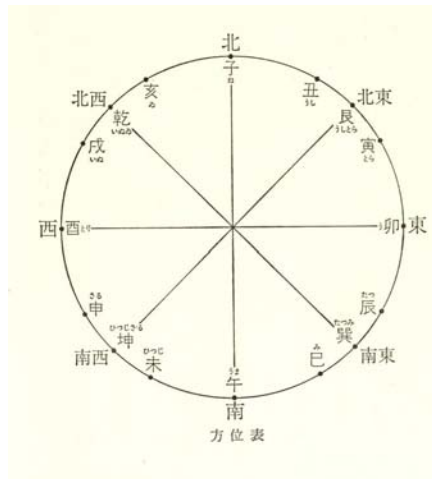


Figure 3: Chinese zodiac.<sup>45</sup>

At the level of narrative, the number three is often found in children's tales and therefore appropriate. However, the animals become a kind of Rorschach test that support a wide range of interpretations.<sup>46</sup>

The tale continued to change as it was incorporated into *kibyōshi*, which first appeared in the 1770s and continued until the first decades of the nineteenth century. *Kibyōshi* were named for their yellow covers and were comprised of five double pages making one booklet with several booklets together often forming a single volume. While they often took up the happenings of the pleasure quarters, tales were also a popular theme. Extant *kibyōshi* manuscripts of the *Momotarō* tale outnumber *akahon* by roughly three to one, so it seems that retellings of the tale continued to gain in popularity. It was

<sup>45</sup> Namekawa 41.

<sup>46</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century local researchers made sincere if academically dubious attempts to link the tale to their home region by suggesting that the animals in the tale were based on historical persons. Hashimoto Sentarō in the 1930s and Kokubo Tōkō in the 1980s and 1990s asserted that the animals were originally based on warriors or places in and around the Okayama region of Japan. For example, Hashimoto supposed that the dog (*inu*) represented the legendary warrior *Inukaitake-no-mikoto* (犬養健彦命), the monkey represented *Sasamori-hiko-no-mikoto* (楽々森彦命), and the pheasant represented *Tometamaomi-no-mikoto* (留玉臣命), an ancestor of the *Torikaibe* (鳥飼部) clan. In each case, Hashimoto linked the animals to semi-legendary warriors or clans based on similar sounding names. See Namekawa 42-43.

also during the peak of *kibyōshi* versions of the tale, during the 1790s to 1810s, that didactic uses of the tale began to flourish.

The meanings assigned to the tale were almost as varied as the narrative elements of the tale itself. While it is safe to say that almost all versions referred to some kind of peach imagery, an old couple, and three animal retainers, the other story elements were in constant play. In various editions the hero demonstrated his strength by lifting a rock over his head, by carrying a huge *tawara* (woven straw barrel of rice), or by wrestling with either a bear, a *tanuki* (Japanese badger) or even a large snake.<sup>47</sup> The animal retainers were always depicted as a dog, a monkey and a peasant, but only sometimes were they personified as human, wearing clothes and carrying weapons. The most varied elements of the story, for which it is safe to say there was no standard treatment, were the journey to fight the enemy, the enemy's location, the treasure gained, and the final scene. Often scenes suggesting a journey were left out. In *kibyōshi* the enemy's location was most often implied to be in the mountains rather than on an island. It was only later in *emaki* versions that boats and to a lesser degree references to an island location began to be included. Similarly in *kibyōshi* versions the climactic battle was on land and often focused on the scene in which the hero was poised to break through the enemy's wood and iron gate. However, *emaki* versions often featured a climactic scene in which the hero fought standing on a small boat. Similarly the treasure gained from the fight varied widely, sometimes being omitted altogether or involving a variety of items including a magical hammer, a cloak or hat to make one invisible, valuable scrolls, coral or jewels. The final scene often featured the hero greeting his parents just outside his home, but

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<sup>47</sup> My account of the tale's elements in this section is based on Ōta's chart comparing narrative elements of different versions of the tale (Ōta 345-348), Namekawa's comments on the tale (Namekawa 38-51), as well as my own notes from archival research.



sometimes he approached their house from afar, was greeted by villagers, or the scene was omitted altogether. Even into the early Meiji period, the *Momotarō* tale was a story in flux with authors and illustrators choosing from a variety of different narrative elements and visual styles.

One of the more creative and well-known retellings was Santō Kyōden's 1792 work, *Origins of the Momotarō Tale*, hereafter referred to as *Origins*. Kyōden is best remembered as the illustrator and author who developed the *sharebon* genre but like many of his contemporaries he also penned both retellings of and commentaries on tales. *Origins'* parodic preface, which opened this chapter, sets the tone for a work that is funny, irreverent, and aimed at a reader with at least a passing knowledge of the Japanese classics. *Origins* is essentially a prequel to the *Momotarō* tale that includes elements from *Momotarō*, the Tongue-Cut Swallow Tale, and the story of the tenth century poet aristocrat Fujiwara Sanekata (藤原実方, d. 988).<sup>48</sup> [See Figure 4] Sanekata was a courtier who, after an arguing over poetry in the presence of the emperor, was punished by being



Figure 4: Scene from *Momotarō hottan setsuwa*, text by Santō Kyōden and illustrations by Katsushika Hokusai.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Kyōden 37-58.

<sup>49</sup> Kyōden (Vol 3) 40.

sent to the distant province of Michinoku (present-day Fukushima) to serve as its governor. He died at age forty after living in the province just three years. Kyōden sets his retelling in Michinoku where an honest old couple, who keep birds and other animals, including a dog, monkey and pheasant, live next to a greedy old woman. Almost dying of hunger, Sanekata approaches first the greedy old woman for help and lodging but is rebuffed. The honest old couple come to his aid but all they can feed him is a peach. Soon after this he dies but his spirit enters into one of the eggs of the swallows the old couple keep and he is reborn. He is raised happily by the old couple until he eats the washing starch of the woman next door and she cuts off his tongue. Later, in accordance with the karma of their actions, the old couple is rewarded with riches from the swallows while the old woman is carried away by the *oni* who are released upon her by the swallows. Still greedy, the woman leads the *oni* in a raid and steals the honest old couple's newfound riches. As the story ends, Sanekata visits the now poor-again old couple in a dream and promises to pay them back for their kindness by sending them a peach to help them produce a boy who will one day reclaim their lost wealth from the *oni*.

Several things distinguish Kyōden's version from the many other contemporary retellings of the tale. Direct addresses by Kyōden to his audience of children gauged their interest or tried to cajole them into agreement with the story's moral. Kyōden's storytelling skill permeates the narrative in its unforeseen twists and turns. This includes the clever conceit of placing his retelling before the original story starts rather than after as every other extant variation of the tale does. Kyōden showed that the tale appealed to both adults and children and set a precedent, often followed into our own day for well-known authors to try out their skills on a retelling of this famous tale.

Kyōden's most creative addition to the story was the inclusion of the poet Sanekata in place of Momotarō. This added historical interest to a pastiche that gleefully mixed real and imagined places and persons while constantly juxtaposing court poetry with topical puns. References to Sanekata's own poetry, the *Hyakunin isshu* and the *Uji shūi* played on the adult audience's presumed familiarity with the classical poetic canon. Including these disparate forms tends to undermine the idea of *mukashibanashi* as a distinct genre at this time. It also makes for a mildly ambiguous politics vis-à-vis the imperial institution. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nationalist versions of the *Momotarō* tale would strongly ally it to the emperor and Japanese colonial expansion, as I will show in Chapter Six. In the Edo period, the tale generally expressed no relationship, either good or bad, to the emperor. But through Sanekata, there was a displaced relationship that offered not criticism as much as disappointment in regards to the imperial institution. Sanekata's journey down from the capital to Michinoku was seen as a kind of censure. This was made more poignant by his death in the province just three years later. His disappointment in failing to receive a better appointment from the emperor was said to have taken the form of a flock of swallows. Kyōden offers us a melancholy hero and the suggestion that good will be rewarded but not right away, or even within one's natural lifetime.

After *kibyōshi* versions of the tale, of which Kyōden's was just one of dozens, came *emaki*, or picture scrolls. *Emaki* were one of the more popular forms of *Yamato-e* (Japanese painting) and flourished between the tenth and sixteenth centuries but were produced later as well.<sup>50</sup> As a genre, *emaki* often emphasized illustrations and many

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<sup>50</sup> Okudaira i-ii and 44-76.

contained no written exposition at all, although others balanced written poetry or narrative with illustration. Even after more modern forms like *ukiyo-e* (Pictures of the Floating World) began to be cheaply mass produced by woodblock printing, *emaki* continued to be painted by hand using expensive materials, making them one-of-a-kind artistic objects whose possession was limited to the wealthy. Extant *emaki* versions of *Momotarō* are part of the reason that Yanagita presumed that the tale dates back to the Muromachi period. Namekawa also follows this logic although admits it is only conjecture. More recent scholarship by Torigoe and Ōta, which is based on better archival research, has shown that the earliest *emaki* version of *Momotarō* only dates back to the middle or late eighteenth century.<sup>51</sup> This supports the idea that the tale is considerably younger than originally thought and some scholars, notably Herring, have even suggested that the tale likely arose in the early Edo period.<sup>52</sup>

The tale's migration through the three genres of *akahon*, *kibyōshi*, and *emaki* demonstrate how tightly related the arts of the Edo period were. Stories and topics were constantly recycled among dramatic, literary and visual works. The *Momotarō* story found its way into tales (*mukashibanashi*), recitation (*katari*), *yoruri* theater, *emaki* illustrated works, and the illustrated literary forms of *ukiyo-e*, *gokan*, *kibyōshi*, *kurobon*, *aobon*, and *akahon*.<sup>53</sup> This extensive penetration of the story into related art forms and its resultant widespread recognition made it an ideal teaching vehicle and helps to explain the boom from the 1790s onward in its use for didactic purposes.

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<sup>51</sup> Ōta 338.

<sup>52</sup> Herring 152.

<sup>53</sup> Ōta 325.

## Teaching with Tales

*Momotarō* and other tales were widely used to illustrate the teachings of *shingaku* (心学). Robert Bellah has suggested that *shingaku* was one of the greatest influences “on the morality of the common people during the Edo period,” especially among the urban merchant class where it found its deepest support.<sup>54</sup> *Shingaku*, a syncretic religious movement that combined elements of Buddhism, Confucian thought, and Shinto, was started by Ishida Baigan (1685-1749) in 1729.<sup>55</sup> As the movement spread it sought to reach not only the merchant class but also the literate samurai class as well as commoners. To reach the greatest number of people with the clearest message, *shingaku* often employed *dōwa*, or parables. Jennifer Robertson notes,

Much of the lecture rhetoric was phrased in the form of *dōwa* (parables), which derived from proverbs and common-sense precepts. ... The basic strategy of *dōwa* was to ‘direct by appearing to clarify.’ The parables, by virtue of their normative quality, enunciated social problems and simultaneously proposed solutions for them. Their folksy familiarity proved to be a key source of credibility for the Shingaku movement among the illiterate and non-literary persons.<sup>56</sup>

Often short vignettes were thought up to serve as metaphors to be used in *dōwa*. Tales were even better for this purpose since they were both familiar and easily remembered. Kami Shōichirō notes that when trying to spread their message adherents of *shingaku* wanted to reach,

residents of even the poorest *nagaya* tenements in Osaka, Kyoto, or Edo or the peasants of rural villages. Then, even more than Taira Kiyomori or Kusunoki Masashige, these people would be familiar with *Momotarō*, *Urashimtarō* or *Hanasakajiichan*, so these characters inevitably appeared in their lectures.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Robert Bellah. *Tokugawa Religion* (1985) 133. See pages 133 to 177 for an overview of *shingaku*. Also, Robertson’s *Rooting the Pine*, which focuses on Teshima’s institution building.

<sup>55</sup> Later Teshima Toan (1718-1786) developed the movement’s institutions and Nakazawa Dōni (1725-1803) served as one of its most able proselytizers. Its three pillars were lectures for edification, meditation (*kufu* or *seiza*) and leading a frugal lifestyle. Activities were centered around *kōsha*, or lecture halls, and eventually 180 of these were built all around Japan, although the movement’s center remained in Kyoto. Bellah 151 and 167.

<sup>56</sup> Robertson 321.

The most prominent example of the *Momotarō* tale in *shingaku* is by Nakazawa Dōni in his collection of parables *Dōni oki dōwa* (道二翁道話, 1795 to 1814). The text takes the form of a lecture by Dōni and begins by explaining his reasons for using *mukashibanashi*:

Today...I'm going to give you all an interesting talk by comparing it to something you really know well and can remember easily, a metaphor using *mukashibanashi*. If I talk in flowery words, you won't be able to feel my message in the pit of your stomachs and you won't understand at all.<sup>57</sup>

He then retells *Momotarō* in cursory fashion.

Well now, a long time ago, there was a brave young man named Momotarō and when he decided to go to *onigashima* (ogre island) to get treasure, a dog, monkey and pheasant appeared and asked him where he was going and he replied that he was going to *onigashima*. When he asked them if they would come with him they all answered that yes they would. They asked him what he had in the bag at his waist and he replied these are Japan's number one millet dumplings and in this way they said they would accompany him if he gave them one, so he gave them one each and they wolfed it right down. After this they took up formation with him and crossing over to *onigashima* they saw a fearsome rocky cave, with a black iron gate tightly shut and red and blue *oni* (demons) guarding it. So Momotarō took a position in front of the gate, drew out a great iron rod (金剛力を出して), smashed the iron gate into smithereens, charged inside and began beating the *oni* to death. And then taking their treasure he returned to his hometown (故郷) and gave the treasure to his old mother and father. The treasure included an umbrella and cloak to make one invisible, a magic mallet [to stamp out gold coins], and rounded coral treasures. And from these treasures the city prospered, as even children know.<sup>58</sup>

Dōni's retelling is somewhat haphazard in its ordering and inclusion or exclusion of story elements but this is hardly a problem since his audience presumably knows the story well. In his recitation three points stand out. First, he devotes considerable attention to how Momotarō secures his three animal retainers by giving them food. This will become significant in his commentary on the tale, as given below. Second, his version focuses on

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<sup>57</sup> Kami 10.

<sup>58</sup> Kami 10. In this and the following two block quotes I will reproduce the section dealing with *Momotarō* in its entirety.

<sup>59</sup> Kami 10-11.

the “black iron gate tightly shut” and on how “Momotarō took a position in front of the gate, drew out a great iron rod, [and] smashed the iron gate into smithereens.” The scene of Momotarō crashing through the iron gate disappeared after the 1890s but was a major focus of illustrated versions of the tale during the Edo period. From this we can surmise that his audience was familiar with the tale through illustrated versions as well as oral versions, and that illustrated versions seem to have found their way into oral and written versions. Third, in Dōni’s ending Momotarō returns to his hometown and gives his parents the treasure, but it is “the city [that] prospers” (市が栄へた). Modern versions of the tale uniformly depict a village (村) as the hero’s home place, thus associating the tale with the rural landscape. Addressing a metropolitan audience, Dōni mentions a city (市), giving the tale a vaguely urban connection. All of this becomes more understandable when we see Dōni’s didactic use of the tale.

This story (*hanashi*) has been passed down and told from long ago. So I’m going to use this story to talk with you about not letting yourselves be distracted (放心). Well, this young man named Momotarō was so named because when the old woman went down to the river to do the washing she picked up a peach and he was born from it. The old woman followed the yin (陰) and went down to the river, the old man followed the yang (陽) and went up to the mountains to cut wood; both of them followed the correct paths (道) for them and so Momotarō with whom they were blessed grew to be strong and brave; and in addition they raised him in accordance with Confucian duty and the Shinto way (義と道) so he became great. And also consider these awful *oni* on *onigashima* who had gathered the world’s treasure and who were hoarding it for themselves. But it wasn’t that the *oni* had stolen the treasure; rather people had given it to them freely. Why you ask? It is because when you look it is taken from you and when you listen it is taken from you (見ては取られ、聞いては取られ) and because you want what you want, and because you worry about what will you do in the spring, or in the summer, and you think this is pleasant and that is unpleasant, and each time you utter this or that, more and more your treasure is taken from you by *oni*. Just like the villagers in the story you have had your treasure taken by *oni*. And, ... after you have had your treasure taken it is too late. From now it would be better to depend on Momotarō (桃太郎を頼んで) and devise a plan to get your treasure back. Well, a dog, a monkey, or a pheasant is just an animal, but after receiving a millet dumpling from him they worked for him. So listen carefully. Even animals, after receiving a millet dumpling as

recompense, gave their all in loyal service without being distracted. So much more should we, as humans, do the same.<sup>60</sup>

*Shingaku*'s syncretic nature is easily seen in a lesson that incorporates a variety of loosely connected moral teachings. Dōni shows the religion's merchant roots through starting by warning against *hōshin*, which means letting oneself be distracted from a task or not fully dedicating oneself to a job at hand. Adherents to *shingaku* were encouraged to work hard to build up a family's fortune. Spiritual and economic success was seen as completely compatible. Confucian influence is seen in the suggestion that appropriate societal and gender roles be followed, and Dōni weaves a new layer into the Momotarō story by asserting that the old woman followed the *in* (*yin*, or dark, female principle) in going down to the river while the old man followed the *yō* (*yang*, or bright, male principle) in going up to the mountains. The phrase 'correct paths' (正しい道) is nicely ambiguous, referring both to a physical trail and a course of proper moral action.

Dōni touches on the heart of *shingaku* thought when he asserts that people gave up their treasure to the *oni* willingly. In this case, treasure (*takara*), meaning something valuable but intangible, illustrates the *shingaku* ideal of *honshin* (本心), or original heart. *Honshin* was a state gained through study, meditation and frugality in which adherents recaptured an original pure state of being in the world. *Momotarō* is an ideal hero and model for emulation in this case because he is able to recapture his treasure, here read as *honshin*, from the *oni*, here understood as the distractions caused by worldly desires.

Dōni was only one of many to use the tale as part of *shingaku* discourse.<sup>61</sup> But Kami Shōichirō notes an interesting change in the tale's didactic use over time. Earlier

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<sup>60</sup> Kami 11.



*shingaku* commentaries featuring the tale assumed that there was no moral inherent in *Momotarō* and acknowledged that they were merely using it as a teaching tool. Kami notes that the earliest recorded use of the tale as a *shingaku* parable, in 1788, was the indicatively named *Kojitsuke Momotarō banashi* (古事付桃太郎噺). The Japanese verb *kojitsukeru* means to force a meaning on something or to apply a distorted or strained interpretation. In naming this work the author explicitly acknowledged that he was reading moral lessons into the tale that were not originally there. Reading a wide variety of lessons into the *Momotarō* tale, *Kojitsuke Momotarō banashi* influenced later *shingaku* commentaries, including Dōni's. But as time passed, both *shingaku* adherents and other commentators increasingly assumed that certain moral lessons were actually original to the tale.

In addition to *shingaku*-related commentaries, there was a boom in what we would today call ethnographic studies of folktales from the 1790s to the 1810s. It was toward the end of this period that the most famous study of the tale during the Edo period was published by Takizawa Bakin (1767-1848) in 1811.<sup>62</sup> Bakin's *Enseki zasshi* (1811,

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<sup>61</sup> Two other significant *shingaku*-related commentaries that embodied this trend were *Momotarō no hanashi* by Yokoyama Mitsuo (1790-1854) and *Hinanoukegi* by Kamo Norikiyo (加茂規清, 1799-1861). Both of these combined elements of *shingaku* with *kōshōgaku*, a branch of study originating in Ch'ing dynasty China that investigated the origins of things. And in searching for the origins of *Momotarō* both of these works linked the tale to the *Kojiki* heroes Izanagi and Izanami, perhaps revealing influence from contemporary *kokugaku* or national studies, in making this link.

<sup>62</sup> The other widely noted Edo commentary was Santō Kyōden's *Kottōshū* (1813, *Curios*). Tales were a recurring interest for Kyōden and it was twenty-one years after he wrote his retelling of *Momotarō* that he took it up as an object of study as part of this collection of essays. *Kottōshū* was part of the *hyōdenki* genre that comprised commentaries or material histories of social and natural artifacts, especially of city life in Edo. Among a wide range of topics, Kyōden touches on *Momotarō* and several other tales, although his comments are mostly general and have attracted rather little critical attention by later generations. *Kottōshū* was a work in progress and Kyōden constantly revised it until the time of his death. Martin gives 1805 as its publication date, which is when it likely first appeared in some form. (Jo Nobuko Martin, *Santō Kyōden and his Sharebon*. Diss. University of Michigan, 1997. See page 22.) I follow Kami Shōichirō who dates it at 1813 when a later more complete edition came out, which is likely closer to the version we have today. (Kami 6) Compared to Bakin, who famously dashed off works, Kyōden was painstaking in his writing. This was especially the case with *Kottōshū* which he worked on for over a decade. Bakin went so far as to

*Swallowstone Miscellany*) was a composite of fictional short stories and ethnographic essays including comments on *Momotarō* and several other popular tales. Commentaries in *Enseki zasshi* were divided into sections on heaven, earth, plants, and people, and in addition to tales he considered such things as famous cherry trees, *tanuki* (Japanese badgers), and a wide range of various folk beliefs. Bakin's most influential assertions regarding the tale were that the hero was based on the famous warrior Minamoto no Tametomo (1139-1170), that the animals had symbolic meaning in relation to the Chinese zodiac, and that the image of the peach revealed Chinese influence. Since Tametomo was exiled to Oshima Island after fighting on the losing side of the Hōgen rebellion in 1156, Bakin asserted that this became the model for the hero's journey to *onigashima* in the *Momotarō* tale. As mentioned before, Bakin detailed how the hero's animal retainers, a dog, monkey, and pheasant, were clustered around the western direction of the Chinese zodiac, roughly opposite the unlucky northeastern direction from which calamity or evil spirits were thought to come. Thus they were symbolically appropriate for a fight against evil. Finally, Bakin noted how in China the peach was a magical symbol with the power to drive away evil, or in the context of *Momotarō* the power to drive away the ravages of old age.

Bakin's critique was the most well known of early writings on the tale and it is the only Edo period commentary to which Yanagita refers. Yanagita's distaste for Bakin's interpretations comes through clearly in a passage of his 1933 work, *The Birth of Momotarō*.

By citing many references to peaches in religion and folklore in his *Gendō*

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suggest that working on it pushed Kyōden towards his death, although historical records indicate a late night of drinking and the heart attack it induced were the direct causes. Martin 23.

*hōgen*,<sup>63</sup> Takizawa Bakin made an attempt to explain those origins of the myth of the boy born from a peach. As a great man like Bakin made this suggestion, it seems there have been many who have believed his explanation. [それに推服した人も折々あったようだが] But even if these theories regarding peaches are true, it really doesn't matter that much. After all, the mysterious child in these tales didn't always come from a peach. The *Urikohime* tale existed at the same time as Momotarō and was found all over eastern Japan and in some places in the west.<sup>64</sup>

Yanagita's dismissal is highly revealing of the distinctly different emphases these two men place on the tale. By suggesting that the tale's hero was based on a warrior from the military aristocracy, Bakin was linking the tale to the elite elements of society. This was natural for Bakin, as he experienced the tale as part of urban literary and theater culture. But this reading clashed with Yanagita's drive to see the tale as reflecting rural values. More problematic still was Bakin's assertion of Chinese influence in the symbolic meaning of several of the tale's narrative elements. Even as Bakin was writing in the Edo period, "China" was a shifting signifier, at times denoting the foreign, at times denoting a nativized tradition. Bakin openly connected several elements of the tale, such as the meaning of the peach and the animals (in their meaning read through the Chinese zodiac) with Chinese lore. By the mid-1930s when Yanagita was writing, however, any hint of Chinese influence in Japanese folk tales was problematic and had to be disregarded. Two different visions of Japanese culture drove these men as they interpreted tales and is clear even in the structure of their studies. Bakin's grab bag of essays on different topics pictured Japanese culture as an amalgam of widely varying elements that were often casually rather than causally related. In contrast Yanagita strove to produce a unified system through his own works even as he conceived of Japanese folk culture as a unified

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<sup>63</sup> Yanagita had access to the section of Bakin's writings on tales through a different compilation that was titled *Gendō hōgen* (玄堂放言, 1818), which came out seven years after the *Enseki zasshi*.

<sup>64</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 256.

whole that was immune from both foreign and urban influence. In each man's case, their view of tales was driven by their ideas about the nature of Japanese culture.

### **Visual Conventions: Dressing the Hero, Composing the Scene**

Just as the tale was driven by its interactions with written retellings and didactic commentaries, illustrations also fundamentally rewrote the tale. Illustrations formed a sometimes distinct narrative that interacted with the oral and written narratives of tales. The verbal text added detail to the story but it was the illustrations that were often primary in importance and first to be registered by readers.<sup>65</sup> Illustrations were more important than the verbal text in most of the literary genres of the Edo period. A book could consist of only illustrations with no written text but with the exception of *yomihon* the opposite was less likely to be the case. Through their choices artists often said as much or more about stories than authors did without writing a single word. Clothing suggested character. Composition of a scene spelled out relationships and action. Even as they were specific, illustrations also afforded the benefits of ambiguity. In the face of occasionally strict censorship, pictures could suggest subversive meanings that could not be spelled out directly in the text itself. It is well known how political pressure from the Tokugawa government caused playwrights to consider contemporary problems under the guise of distant historical incidents. This same pressure meant that class tensions were also displaced into visual culture when they could not be expressed more directly through verbal texts. The implied political critiques, carefully limned from visual texts, were then read back into the written texts and changed a work's overall received meaning.

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<sup>65</sup> Ōta 327.

As soon as an illustrator took up his brush he faced politically significant decisions in how to depict characters and scenes in tales. While the large number of illustrated tales makes a comprehensive study prohibitive, a close examination of two of the visual conventions of the *Momotarō* tale reveals the contested choices that artists faced. The first regards dress. As I will explore below, the details of how the hero was outfitted cast him as either an upper or lower status samurai and thus allied him more closely with either the ruling samurai class or the merchants and townsmen reflecting one of Edo's political schisms. A second visual convention concerns the scene in which the hero stands poised to break through the enemy's iron gate. The composition of this scene reveals strong connections between *Momotarō* and the arts of kabuki and *yoruri*.

Descriptions of dress clearly demonstrate both tensions and similarities between oral, written, and illustrated versions of tales. Oral tales as recorded by Yanagita rarely if ever mention details of characters' clothing. What did *Momotarō* or other characters wear in oral versions of tales? For the most part we do not know because this information was rarely included. Individual storytellers may have expanded on tales to include this information but they almost never did for Yanagita and his informants. So for the most part we can conclude that information about dress was relatively unimportant to them. The contrast with written and illustrated versions of tales is stark. While clothing did not function as an important signifier in oral tales, it was one of the crucial signs for reading meaning in illustrations. There are at least two immediate reasons for this. The first reason is material: illustrators could not omit this information. Artists could only draw scenes after having chosen how to clothe their characters. These choices had

political implications because in choosing attire they were also advertising a character's social and class status. Farmers, merchants, and warriors were each recognizable by the clothing that inscribed their position within society. In deciding how to clothe Momotarō or other characters, illustrators identified with some status groups against others. The second reason relates to reader expectations derived from the conventions of Edo period writing and theater. Commenting on Santō Kyōden's *sharebon*, Jo Nobuko Martin notes that his work is characterized by "the painstaking description of garments (worn by characters): the color and design, the type and style, the fabric, the tailor, the shop where they were bought, etc."<sup>66</sup> Edo readers' expectations of detailed descriptions of dress were conditioned by the lavish costumes of kabuki and *yoruri* theater. The dominant stock character of the Edo period, the *tsū*, or gentleman patron of the demimonde, was characterized by his sartorial fashion and wit. Martin goes so far as to list the first characteristic of the *tsū*, even before ability with jokes or "aptness of expression," as "elegant dress."<sup>67</sup> Within this context Martin notes that "description of clothing serves a specific characterizational role."<sup>68</sup>

In the case of the *Momotarō* tale depictions of the hero borrowed heavily from the kabuki stage. A comparison of a print of actor Ichikawa Danjūrō II and several illustrations from different versions of *Momotarō* show the striking similarities. [See Figures 5 and 6]

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<sup>66</sup> Martin 67.

<sup>67</sup> Martin 135.

<sup>68</sup> Martin 140.



Figure 5: Actor Ichikawa Danjūrō II in a dramatic *mie* pose characteristic of *aragoto* style kabuki.<sup>70</sup>



Figure 6: Gate scene from *Akahon Momotarō*.<sup>69</sup>

Ōta reads the images of Momotarō as found in *akahon* as follows.

The image we see of Momotarō in *akahon*, with [the hero's] long front bangs hanging to the left and right of his face, with a coat of chain mail over a thick cotton *tanzen* cloak fastened with a rope belt, with his hands in a dramatic pose, with armored shin guards, wearing an oversize *Ōtachi* sword at his waist, all of his costume and gestures perfectly overlap with the *mie* (static poses) and *roppō* (walk/dance) familiar from the *aragoto* style [of Kabuki] and [Kabuki's] distinctive *shosa* (dances and gestures). In the scene where he stares down the *oni*, and the scene in which he gets on his horse,<sup>71</sup> in each of these scenes the way in which the sleeves of his *tanzen* cloak flare out like a butterfly, [Momotarō] looks just like he was taken from an actor's print of Danjūrō posing in a dramatic *mie*.<sup>72</sup>

Clearly this is a warrior image taken from the social imaginary of the kabuki stage rather than the actual samurai class itself. The oversized *ōtachi* sword was barely manageable by one person, making it more stage prop than weapon, and only with the help of *kuroko* stage hands could the actor's costume be deployed to its improbably large size. Similarly

<sup>69</sup> Namekawa 12.

<sup>70</sup> Ōta 334

<sup>71</sup> In many Edo-era versions Momotarō rode a horse during his journey, or in one case he rode a large dog like a horse.

<sup>72</sup> Ōta 334.

the *roppō* style of walking and dance was a dramatic gesture intended to suggest the strength of the actor, especially used when exiting the stage via the *hanamichi* walkway that extended out through the audience. Both knees were strongly bent and both feet were at an angle to the ground. The left leg was raised, anticipating the actor's stamping it strongly on the floor. In an age of poor lighting, kabuki routinely exaggerated characters' clothing, makeup, and gestures. This was especially the case with the *aragoto*, or rough style, of Kabuki plays.<sup>73</sup>

Illustrators seeking an appropriate way to depict Momotarō drew on the warrior figure available in the *aragoto* kabuki pioneered by Danjūrō I and widely popularized by his son Danjūrō II. Images of Kintoki, familiar to modern day Japanese as the children's tale of Kintarō, were also widely used in early versions of the *Momotarō* tale. Momotarō was often shown lifting a large rock over his head as a childhood show of strength or fighting a bear—both narrative elements drawn from the Kintarō tale.

*Aragoto* was well known for representing the class tensions of the Edo period.

Martin writes,

Class antagonism during the late Edo period existed largely between the samurai and townsmen. The practice of *kirisute gomen* (cutting down at will) forced the townsmen to be cautious in making jokes about the samurai class. All the same, samurai provided a popular object of laughter in life and in literature.<sup>74</sup>

Townsmen found frustrated social aspirations vicariously satisfied through the stock hero of *aragoto* plays, the *yakko* (奴). *Yakko* were samurai, but lower ranking samurai often

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<sup>73</sup> Writing about the genesis of *aragoto* Laurence Kominz writes, “*The aragoto* style of acting was introduced to kabuki by Ichikawa Danjūrō I 初代市川團十郎, 1660-1704. The term *aragoto* is in fact a contraction of *aramushagoto* 荒武者事 (“wild warrior business”), which first appeared in accounts of the actor's early career, although it is not known whether the word was invented by the actor himself or by his fans.” Kominz 388. Laurence Kominz “Ya no Ne: The Genesis of a Kabuki *Aragoto* Classic,” in *Monumenta Nipponica* 38.4 (Winter 1983): 387-407.

<sup>74</sup> Martin 54.



viewed as renegades motivated more by a personal sense of honor than by loyalty to their lords. They sometimes sided with commoners, thus becoming sympathetic characters for the townsmen. In the early Edo period, as actual *yakko* became scarce during a time of rigid social control, their image grew larger in the social imagination via *aragoto* kabuki.<sup>75</sup> *Aragoto*'s social sympathies with the townsmen against the samurai were also expressed in the *roppō* dances. Writing about the origins of *roppō*, Earle Ernst notes,

The word is said to be derived from *roppō kumi* 六方組 or *roppō shū* 六方衆, which were organizations of proud commoners ready to assert themselves against the retainers of the Shogun.<sup>76</sup>

Depicting Momotarō as an *aragoto* style hero, or *yakko*, was an artistic choice implicit with political meaning. This visual convention was found universally in the *akahon* and *kibyōshi* produced for and consumed by the merchants and commoners of Edo.

The *kibyōshi*, however, was not the only warrior image available, and the *emaki* (picture scroll) form imagined the Momotarō hero in a distinctly different style. Unlike cheaply mass-produced forms, each *emaki* was painted individually by hand on high quality materials using expensive paints and sometimes decorated in gold. They were commissioned by *daimyō* feudal lords, members of the Tokugawa bakufu, and the imperial family.<sup>77</sup> Considering their elite audience it follows that the image of Momotarō within *emaki* would also change. Ōta summarizes as follows:

So how about the case of *emaki*? To begin by stating my conclusion, what we see is a process in which the *yakko*-style hero is gradually swept away. And what appears, in contrast with the rough and ready 'Yakko Momotarō', is the new image which is precisely the one transmitted to modern versions [of the tale], that of the brave young samurai warrior.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> This phenomenon parallels the process by which the image of the samurai class itself grew increasingly important even as their actual function as warriors diminished to almost nothing.

<sup>76</sup> Earle Ernst. *The Kabuki Theater* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974). See page 99.

<sup>77</sup> Ōta 336.

<sup>78</sup> Ōta 335.

Ōta bases this analysis on six extant *Momotarō emaki* dating from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. Arranged from the earliest to the most recent and named for their presumed artists, the scrolls are as follows: Kōsū Koku (高崇谷), Ryūun (龍雲), Enshū (円洲), Kanō Naganobu (狩野栄信), Kita Busei (喜多武清), and Kanō Masanobu (狩野雅信).<sup>79</sup> They can be divided by visual similarities into two groups: the earlier Itchō line and the later Kanō line. The Itchō line scrolls include the first three scrolls listed and were all likely painted by disciples of artist Hanabusa Itchō (英一蝶) from around the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Itchō school artists illustrated both kabuki prints and *emaki*, so it is hardly surprising that this group of *emaki* have some visual similarities to both kabuki prints and to *akahon*, although there are differences as well.



Figure 7: Scene from Kōsū Koku's *Momotarō emaki*.<sup>80</sup>

Ōta describes the hero as seen in an illustration from the Kōsū Koku scroll [See Fig. 7] from the Itchō line:

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<sup>79</sup> Ōta 345-348.

<sup>80</sup> Ōta 338

The depiction of Momotarō himself within Itchō line scrolls does not have the thick cotton *tanzen* jacket seen in *akahon*; we could dare to say that he looks like a young man undergoing martial training (武者修行の若風). Above black traveling clothes he wears infantry style armor (胴丸ふうの鎧), a sleeveless garment, and a striking red colored *Ōtachi* long sword.<sup>81</sup>

While there are certain similarities to *akahon* illustrations, such as the oversized sword, for the most part this is a more realistic illustration, coming closer to what a young samurai might actually wear during travel. The mood is subdued or even somber in the way that the hero sits with one leg propped on his knee (in contrast to the *roppō* style stance always adopted in *akahon*) and his expression is calm as he faces the dog.

The later Kanō line scrolls by Kanō Naganobu, Kita Busei and Kanō Masanobu gradually eliminated the influence of *akahon* and kabuki style visuals. Painted in the mid-nineteenth century, the visual style is restrained and the emphasis seems to be on depicting the hero with dignity rather than drama. The dramatic grimaces, stylized *roppō* stance of the feet, and exaggerated costumes of *akahon* are completely replaced by subdued expressions, a mostly natural stance, and clothing appropriate to higher ranking samurai. The Kanō Naganobu scroll depicts Momotarō as a youthful high status samurai; the other two *emaki* show him as a son of the aristocracy (公達). In the Kanō Masanobu scroll Momotarō wears “a pale blue *kariginu* robe and *kyahan* pants, and an *ayaigasa* hat decorated with a strip of red cloth.”<sup>82</sup> [See Fig. 8] The overall impression is of a high status figure far removed from the dramatic hero drawn from the kabuki stage.

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<sup>81</sup> Ōta 337.

<sup>82</sup> Ōta 341. *Kariginu* were worn as everyday clothing of the aristocracy, *kyahan* pants had raised hems or were tied up making them appropriate for travel, and an *ayaigasa* was a hat woven of aromatic *igusa*, or rush leaves, with a silken lining on the inside.



Figure 8: Scene from Kanō Masanobu's *Momotarō emaki*.<sup>83</sup>

As *Momotarō* was imagined visually in the genres of *akahon*, *kibyōshi*, and *emaki* in each case it was slowly tailored to reflect the social image most acceptable to the status group for which that genre was produced. For townsmen this meant the dramatic *yakko* hero with whom they were familiar with from *aragoto* kabuki. As the tale migrated into the *emaki* form it slowly traded this image for one of an upper status samurai or even a member of the aristocracy. Interestingly, it was the upper status *Momotarō* of *emaki* that most clearly influenced modern illustrations of the tale from the 1890s onward.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to the hero's clothing, a second widely found convention in illustrations of the tale was the inclusion and composition of certain iconic scenes. For example, picture books often illustrate the woman spotting the peach but rarely show her carrying it home. To produce in visual form everything recorded by the words of a story would make a tedious visual narrative. So illustrations tend to distill the story down to certain iconic scenes that were usually included regardless of which artist was involved. In the Edo period the most celebrated of these was of *Momotarō* standing in front of the *oni* gate, poised to break it down. [See Fig. 9]. The conventionalized staging of this

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<sup>83</sup> Ōta 340.

<sup>84</sup> Ōta 342.

scene, with the hero adopting a *mie* from the *aragoto* style shows the influence of the Kabuki theater on the tale.

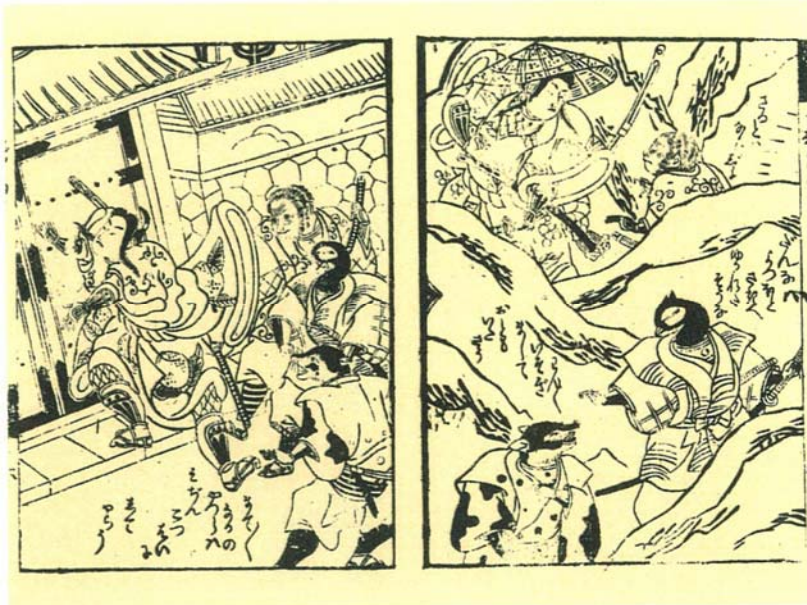


Figure 9: Illustration of Momotarō at the *oni* gate from Nishimura Shigenobu's *Momotarō mukashibanashi*.<sup>85</sup>

It also hints at the possibility of a half-hidden subversive charge that was read into the tale, as I will suggest below. Nearly all illustrated versions during the Edo period included this scene, although it was eliminated from some *emaki* versions and by the 1890s it had disappeared from all new versions.

Children's literature scholar Torigoe Shin focuses on this scene in which the hero breaks down the *oni* iron gate immediately before engaging in battle. Looking at thirteen different editions of the tale from 1736 through 1820 he carefully details the visual depiction of this scene, deliberately ignoring any accompanying text.<sup>86</sup> In each depiction the hero stands in front of the gate, just on the verge of breaking it down. The scene radiates with energy so it is easy to see why it has become a highlight of the story. The

<sup>85</sup> Seta 125.

<sup>86</sup> Torigoe Shin. *Momotarō no unmei* (NHK Books, 1983) 212-215.

tension before the battle is greater than that of the battle itself. This is especially true when it is expressed in a static art form that can only allude to movement rather than directly present it.

Certain visual elements of this scene became rigidly conventionalized while others varied from edition to edition. In all of the thirteen versions the hero stands to the right of the gate with his three retainers behind him and the gate to his left. This shows that contrary to the Western practice of scanning language and by extension works of art from left to right, this illustration is to be scanned by the eye from right to left. The hero is poised to break down the gate and move forward, that is to the left. The method of breaking through the gate varies from illustration to illustration. Sometime the hero crashes through it with one hand, two hands, a log, or a steel bar. His three animal retainers are generally shown but not always. When they do appear it is usually well behind Momotarō, which shows the influence of *aragoto* style kabuki, which even more than most kabuki, focused on a single main actor to the detriment of supporting characters. The surrounding landscape and the hero's *oni* opponents seem to be among the least important elements in the scene and vary almost completely in composition and number.

After the hero, the central element of the scene is the gate. Torigoe suggests that this scene demonstrates influence from the story of Asahina Yoshihide, a historical warrior of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century who went on to become a larger-than-life hero often taken up within fiction and drama in Japan.<sup>87</sup> The third son of Wada Yoshinori, he fought with his father in a revolt against the Hōjō clan in 1213. One of his semi-legendary

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<sup>87</sup> Torigoe 214.

exploits was breaking through enemy fortifications represented by a gate. Considering how widely the Asahina story circulated during the Edo period, this seems to be a likely source for the gate but does not completely explain why the scene became iconic during the Edo period, but disappeared after the 1890s.

In all of the illustrations, the gate was a large, double-doored construction of sturdy beams with a tiled roof that was almost a building unto itself. Having explored how the townsman audience might have viewed and shaped the attire of the hero, we can now ask how would they have viewed the gate. At a literal level, where would they recognize it in their daily environment, and what symbolic connotations would it carry? At both levels it would be strongly attached to the samurai class. Only the samurai and upper classes were allowed to build gates for their large compounds in the city, and these gates were the only parts of the compounds that most commoners saw. A *yakko* style samurai breaking through one of these gates carried a subversive charge against the ruling order of the day with the powers that be re-imagined as *oni*.

This reading becomes increasingly plausible when we consider how the location of the enemy *oni* was suggested in Edo-period versions of the tale. Standard versions today often include a scene of the hero traveling by boat to *onigashima* (ogre island). But early *akahon* versions rarely included scenes of the hero at sea, only of him breaking through the enemy's gate. Thus the location of the enemy was at first left vague. Later genres specified the enemy's residence but in different locations. Analyzing three *kibyōshi* and five *emaki* retellings, Ōta found that all of the *kibyōshi* versions had the hero journey not overseas but into the mountains. All five of the *emaki* versions included a boat scene suggesting that the enemy was overseas. And one of the *emaki* broke with

tradition and eliminated the gate scene altogether. Since *akahon* and *kibyōshi* retellings placed the enemy somewhere within Japan itself, it would have been easier to read a subtly subversive anti-establishment charge into the gate scene. *Emaki* clearly placed the residence of the enemy overseas, thus diminishing the plausibility of such a reading. The gate scene was a case where distinct social classes and their values impacted the evolution of the tale's narrative elements and visual depiction as it moved through different genres.

In addition to one scroll deleting the gate scene entirely there were additional changes in *emaki* versions that suggest the impact the values of the ruling class had on the tale. The final illustration of the Kōsū Koku scroll departs from the usual ending of having the hero meet his parents in the outdoors. Instead it shows him approaching his parent's house, while his parents are inside praying, presumably for their son's safety, at the family's Buddhist altar. [See Fig. 10] Ōta reads the *emaki* versions, in sharp



Figure 10: The final scene from Kōsū Koku's *Momotarō emaki*.<sup>88</sup>

distinction with *akahon* versions, as promoting patriarchy, allegiance to the family, and loyalty to the country.<sup>89</sup> In this scene the hero is shown not just returning to his parents but to the family, which stretches across generations as signified by the Buddhist altar used to venerate ancestors. An even more striking example is the Kanō Naganobu scroll,

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<sup>88</sup> Ōta 339.

<sup>89</sup> Ōta 338.



which includes one of the first instances when the nation was read into the *Momotarō* tale. While early illustrations rarely included recognizable landmarks, Naganobu included a scene of victorious Momotarō and his retainers returning by boat to a Japan in which Mt. Fuji dominated the landscape. [See Fig. 11]



Figure 11: Scene from Kanō Masanobu's *Momotarō emaki*.<sup>90</sup>

Already by this time Fuji functioned as the national signifier par excellence. With Naganobu's innovation, the hero was now clearly returning to the nation of Japan and by extension had fought overseas against a foreign enemy.

### Conclusion

The modern view that tales during the Edo period were primarily an oral phenomenon either misses or ignores how they evolved as they migrated through successive waves of literary genres. The *Momotarō* tale's journey through *akahon*, *kibyōshi*, and *emaki* was a contested voyage as groups of differing social statuses sought to fashion a hero sympathetic to their own social identities. During this process written versions of tales did not corrupt oral versions because there was no standard version at

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<sup>90</sup> Ōta 344.

the time. Instead the modern standard version owes as much or more to verbal and visual texts as it does to oral traditions. The move to imagine tales as oral relics of rural culture was driven by the desire to empty them of ideological conflict in order to imagine a unified Japanese culture rooted in the countryside. But verbal and visual depictions of tales were forged in the crucible of conflict between the townsmen and samurai of Edo. While commoners preferred a kabuki inspired hero, higher status groups consumed images of the hero as an elite samurai or even an aristocrat. Recovering these written and illustrated retellings of tales restores a more accurate picture of tales generally and of the *Momotarō* tale in particular.

Scholars may have been insensitive to this process of change in tales during the Edo period because after the 1890s a standard version was established through the tale's inclusion in children's literature and elementary school readers. This meant that any variation in the tale's narrative elements was stamped out as a national, standardized version was promulgated through best-selling versions of the tale like Iwaya Sazanami's 1894 adaptation. But even as the tale's narrative elements and language were standardized, new political meanings were being rapidly read into the tale as it became a kind of national allegory for a rapidly expanding imperial Japan as I consider in my next chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### Children's Literature as National Allegory in Iwaya Sazanami's *Momotarō* (1894) and Beyond

On the evening of February 26, 1916, speaking before members of the Japanese colonial government of Taiwan, Iwaya Sazanami delivered a talk entitled “*Momotarō-shugi*” (*Momotarō-ism*) in which he exhorted Japanese to develop a strong national character.<sup>1</sup> This was his first day of a three-week speaking tour of Taiwan on what was his first of three visits to the island across the years. Earlier that same day he had performed a dramatic recitation (*kōendōwa*) of the folktale for hundreds of gathered school children. His use of the tale to speak to both school children and government leaders suggests its importance to him as an allegory to address the Japanese character. Iwaya's public association with the tale began nineteen years earlier in 1894 when he published his adaptation, *Momotarō*. With time, his retelling went on to become the single most famous written iteration of the story and an iconic work for which he was well known. At the time he first published it—on the eve of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895—numerous versions of the tale were appearing and some adapted the story to contemporary political situations. At least two versions by other authors explicitly identified Taiwan as the enemy stronghold of *Oni* Island. Nearly two decades later interest in *Momotarō* was as great as ever. But, rather than identifying Taiwan as an

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<sup>1</sup> Yu Peiyun. “Iwaya Sazanami no Taiwan angya.” *Shokuminchi Taiwan no jidōbunka* (Akaishi Shoten, 1999): 34-59. See page 39.

enemy location, the story was used to narrate Japanese identity for Japanese settlers, Chinese residents and native Taiwanese. These two expressions of the tale, in 1894 and 1915, first in writing and later as performance, suggest the flexibility, the durability and the capacity of *Momotarō* to convey a range of ideological messages to a variety of audiences.

Of course, didactic uses of the tale were nothing new. As I showed in the previous chapter, during the Edo period it was employed by the quasi-religious *Shingaku* movement to deliver homilies, enacted on the Kabuki stage, used in illustrated *emaki* scrolls for the military aristocracy, and adapted in a myriad of written forms for adults and children alike. In these forms, the *Momotarō* tale exhorted merchants to work for success, entertained the urban masses, illustrated the journey of a samurai, and humored children. In the modern period, however, there was a simultaneous quantitative and qualitative change in its use. Beginning around the time of Iwaya's adaptation, iterations of the tale began appearing with increasing frequency while the lessons read into it were now delimited to pressing questions of national character or national policies. Iwaya's continuing relationship with the tale throughout his adult life raises provocative questions and leads to sometimes surprising answers as to how children's literature functioned, in writing and performance, to produce a distinctly Japanese national allegory.

### **National Allegory after Jameson**

Like the *Momotarō* tale itself, national allegory as a productive critical concept has demonstrated a surprising durability. Much of the debate around this term in the last twenty-five years has been in response to Frederic Jameson's controversial 1986 article,

“Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism.” In it he asserts that, “All third-world texts are necessarily ... allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*.”<sup>2</sup> Aijaz Ahmad was the first and most famous to criticize Jameson for a condescending Eurocentrism that imagined “a binary opposition between a first and third world” in which “national allegory is the primary, even exclusive form of narrativity in the so-called third world.”<sup>3</sup> The timing of Jameson’s article partly explains the vehemence of his critics’ backlash against it. Jameson’s Marxist-influenced definition of “third world literature” came in the middle 1980s just at the moment when post-colonial studies was coalescing. In retrospect, criticism of Jameson’s article was not just anger against an individual analysis, but a declaration of independence for a new field seeking liberation from more purely materialist approaches.

In spite of this, Jameson’s basic assertion—that postcolonial texts used the story of the individual to tell the story of the nation—has remained an influential approach to theorizing the relationship between artistic production and the nation. Margaret Hillenbrand is the latest in a string of Asian studies specialists to recuperate national allegory while acknowledging the need for nuance in its application.<sup>4</sup> Hillenbrand rejects hierarchies in which allegory will always be seen as naïve or lacking in sophistication. In her view national allegories often hold open competing visions of identity. She asserts that, even though relatively few critics would choose to label their objects of study as “allegories,” what she terms “national allegorism” forms a dominant approach in literary studies today. For Hillenbrand, “national allegorism” is “the act of interpreting a text as if

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<sup>2</sup> Fredric Jameson. “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism.” *Social Text* 15 (1986) 69-88. See page 69 (italics from the original text).

<sup>3</sup> Aijaz Ahmad. “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory.’” *Social Text* 17 (1987): 3-25. See pages 5 and 8.

<sup>4</sup> Hillenbrand 633-638.

it were indeed “about” the particular nation-state to which its author owes some kind of ethno-emotional allegiance.”<sup>5</sup>

I believe Hillenbrand’s critique is valuable both for how it points out the continuing broad appeal of allegory and the variety of ways in which allegory can function. But like Michael Sprinkler, I reject Jameson’s position that we can monolithically evaluate how allegory works based on its national context alone.<sup>6</sup> In the case of Japan, it is clear that some stories, like *Momotarō*, flourished in large part due to their ability to be read as national allegory. But this was not the case for most tales, which could not be read as national allegory but also maintained popularity into the modern period. To the degree that Jameson’s argument relies on a clean split between first and third world settings (how would allegory function in second world contexts?), the case of Japan, seemingly both first and third world at the same time in the prewar period depending on what other nation it was compared with, would also seem to frustrate the desire for clear dichotomies that can be broadly applied. Instead we must consider each case on its own merits and, perhaps unsurprisingly considering the degree to which both nations pursued the imperial endeavor, certain limited comparisons between British and Japanese children’s literature can be fruitful.

### **Narrating the Nation to Children**

The function of British children’s literature in narrating empire offers insights into the case in Japan. In the edited collection *Empire’s Children* (2000), Jo-Ann Wallace

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<sup>5</sup> Hillenbrand 636.

<sup>6</sup> Michale Sprinkler. “The National Question: Said, Ahmad, Jameson.” *Public Culture* 6 (1993): 3-29.

points out that “the emergence of what has been called the ‘golden age’ of English children’s literature” was “coincident with ... the rise of nineteenth-century colonial imperialism.”<sup>7</sup> This golden age extended roughly from 1860 to 1930. During this time children’s literature formed a basic education that communicated distinctive British values of empire to children. Wallace goes on to assert that,

Children’s texts, often ignored by literary critics, form a crucial part of any such national allegory: children are the future of any society, and the literature adults write for them often is more obvious and insistent about appropriate dreams and desires than the texts they write for themselves.<sup>8</sup>

Echoing this sentiment, Patrick Brantlinger notes that, “much imperialist discourse was ... directed at a specifically adolescent audience, the future rulers of the world.”<sup>9</sup> This is not to suggest that children’s authors intended to indoctrinate their readers. Rather, while literature for adults often problematizes society, one of the main functions of children’s literature is acculturation. Stories for children taught unspoken but foundational hierarchies of race and national identity. This was accomplished by means of recurring tropes that structured British children’s understanding of their own nation and its foreign relations.

In the British context, *Coral Island*, a popular early children’s story written in 1858 by R.M. Ballantyne, deploys these tropes in a tale of three boys shipwrecked on a deserted island. *Coral Island* displays three fundamental and recurring themes of British children’s literature: specific overseas settings, resourcefulness, and strength of character. First, although the British empire spanned the globe, India, Africa and the occasional

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<sup>7</sup> Jo Ann Wallace. “De-Scribing the Water Babies, The Child in Post-Colonial Theory.” *Describing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 172.

<sup>8</sup> Wallace xiii.

<sup>9</sup> Daphne M Kutzer. *Empire’s Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children’s Books* (New York: Routledge, 2000) xiii.

deserted island predominated as the primary settings in British children's fiction.<sup>10</sup> These settings allowed for the greatest contrast—along lines of race and technological development—to be drawn between British adventurers and local inhabitants. Second, even more than material advantages or technology, resourcefulness was key in these stories.<sup>11</sup> The three boy heroes of *Coral Island* have only a knife and an iron-bound oar but carefully exploit these resources to overcome the natives they encounter. Lastly, strength of character was most often established not through religion, even though the values of 'muscular Christianity' infused many stories, but rather through the ability to demonstrate self-government or through ties to an implied civil tradition.

In the Japanese context, the *Momotarō* tale came to embody three of the fundamental tropes that were repeated again and again in the nation's children's literature: the hero's home is attacked first, the setting is an overseas location implied to be open to colonization, and victory is obtained by moral virtue tied to the imperial institution. In contrast to the case of British children's stories, Japanese heroes are almost always shown to be responding to foreign aggression. In the *Momotarō* story, no reason is given for the *oni* attacks. We can simply assume that aggression is in their nature. In the modern period this conveys a political understanding of the world in which foreign powers were always hostile to Japan. The second trope suggested a depopulated area that was thus open to Japanese settlers. When Iwaya's story was first published this location was largely unspecified. Later it would increasingly come to be identified with the South

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<sup>10</sup> Kutzer 1.

<sup>11</sup> The classic text to examine this resourcefulness is Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which was first published in 1719. Karl Marx analyzed Defoe's story in regards to the value of labor. Later, in *Emile*, Rousseau famously wrote that *Robinson Crusoe* was the one and only book he would allow Emile to read. Multiple critics have noted how this work is symbolic of "the relationship between childhood, colonialism and education." Wallace 175.



Seas (*nan'yō*).<sup>12</sup> The final trope at the heart of children's adventure fiction is the hero's ultimate weapon. This is neither resourcefulness nor technology although both of these were important. Instead, it is a morality derived from an imperial subject's connection to the emperor. Through these three tropes, children's literature, and the *Momotarō* tale in particular, were able to function as a national allegory that educated its audience with distinctively Japanese ideas of empire. This process is well represented in Iwaya's adaptation of the tale and his lifelong connection to it.

### **Tropes of Empire in Iwaya Sazanami's *Momotarō* (1894)**

Loved by generations of children as 'Uncle Iwaya' and 'Uncle Fairy Tale,' Iwaya Sazanami (1870-1933) was a pioneer of modern children's literature in Japan. He is credited with the genre's first story, *Kogane-maru* (1891), in which the eponymous main character, an adventurous dog, eventually defeats the tiger that killed his father.<sup>13</sup> Part of the prestige of children's literature at this time was based on the fact that the dominant literary coterie of the day, the *Ken'yūsha*, of which Iwaya was an important member, freely wrote literature for both adults and children.<sup>14</sup> In a scholarly three-page preface to

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<sup>12</sup> *Nan'yō* as a setting is somewhat counterintuitive because the bulk of Japanese imperialism did not take place in the South Seas but on the Asian mainland. But there were advantages to using the Southern Pacific as a setting, as I will argue later in this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> Children's literature scholars generally posit the beginnings of the genre either with Iwaya's *Kogane-maru* in 1891 or with Ogawa Mimei's (1882-1961) *Akai fune* (1911, *The Red Ship*). The difference of opinion rests with the question of the 'realistic' portrayal of children, meaning the portrayal of children as characters with depth who grow and develop, which only became popular from around 1911. Those favoring the later date tend to see an epistemological break between modern children's literature and writings produced during the Meiji period. (Karatani Kōjin. "The Discovery of the Child." *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*. Duke UP: Durham, 1993. See page 114.)

<sup>14</sup> The *Ken'yūsha* (Friends of the Inkstone) were later eclipsed by the Naturalist school of authors who wrote stories for children much less often. With the rise of the Naturalist school a clearer division was established between authors writing primarily for adults and those writing primarily for children. As such, the prestige of children's literature eroded somewhat with time. In addition to Iwaya, the de facto leader of the *Ken'yūsha*, Ozaki Kōyō, published a parody titled *Oni Momotarō* in 1891 that reimagined

the story, he christens this new genre as *shōnen bungaku* (少年文学), noting that the language lacks a proper term for what he is writing.<sup>15</sup> The story was a critical and popular success, but over time it was his second story, *Momotarō* (1894), which most strongly came to define the author. The latter was published as the first volume of the *Nihon mukashibanashi* (日本昔伽) series.<sup>16</sup> This series was originally scheduled for 12 volumes but popular reception of the series quickly led to an expansion to 24 volumes, which were published between 1894 and 1896 by Hakubunkan.<sup>17</sup> The commercial success of this work helped to create the idea that children's literature was a lucrative market for publishers and paved the way for later series aimed at children.<sup>18</sup>

Iwaya's contribution to the tale lay not in inventing or changing plot details. By the time that Iwaya was writing, the tale's inclusion in national language readers from around 1886 had already helped to popularize a singular version. His adaptation was identical in plot details to the story carried in language readers. The appeal of his retelling was due to a combination of his prose style and the added details that gave depth to the

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*Momotarō* as an *oni* seeking revenge. The story was highly imaginative but was not well received and has garnered relatively little critical attention.

<sup>15</sup> Iwaya explains that this term is derived from the German "Jugendschrift", or "juvenile literature" (both terms are given in Western characters). Influences from both Europe and Japan are cited, including Goethe's story *Reineke Fuchs*, the Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Andersen, *Maerchen*, and Japanese tales including *Momotarō*, *Kachi-kachi yama* (Burning Mountain), the *Konjaku monogatari* and the *Uji shūi*. Iwaya Sazanami. *Kogane-maru*. (Kindai Bungakukan, 1968) See pages 1-4.

<sup>16</sup> The choice of folktales for this series was significant in that, like the Brothers Grimm in Germany, Iwaya was excavating the cultural past in order to construct a useable present. His rewriting of Bakin's *Shin hakkenden* (1898) featured eight young boy's journeying to a South Seas island and eventually ruling over it. In both the case of Bakin's *Shin hakkenden* and Edo-era *Momotarō* iterations, the earlier versions could be understood within the framework of *kanzen chōaku* (punishing evil, rewarding good). Iwaya's versions took on modern political overtones, however, as I subsequently explore in the remainder this chapter.

<sup>17</sup> Already in 1894 Iwaya's name value was recognized in the very handsome pay he received for the series: 5 yen each for volumes 1-12, doubling to 10 yen each for volumes 13-24. The series was marketed to children and their parents, but the volumes included various introductions by Meiji literary luminaries, including Mori Ogai and Tsubouchi Shōyō. As the name of the genre implies, *shōnen bungaku* was aimed at young people but cultivated literary pretensions. See Torigoe 13-15.

<sup>18</sup> Namekawa 62-64.

standard plot elements. Iwaya wrote in *bungo-tai*, which he thought sounded more melodious for recitation and would be easier for children to understand, even though this older form of Japanese was already losing popularity as a literary style.<sup>19</sup> While the tale had been retold too often to be permanently associated with any one author, the elegance and appeal of Iwaya's version meant that his retelling was highly influential. He also added language, which the textbook versions of the story lacked, that identified the tale with the emperor and militarism.

One of the most prominent of these passages occurs when the young hero petitions his father to give him leave to fight the *oni*.

「お暇と申してもしばしの間、程なく帰って参ります。」  
「シテそれは何処へ行く気ぢや？」  
「仔細を申さねば御不審は御道理。元来此日本の東北の方、海原遥かに隔てた所に、鬼の住む嶋が御座ります。其鬼心邪にして、我皇神の皇化に従わず、却って此の蘆原の国に仇を為し、たみくさを取り食ひ、宝物を奪い取る、世にも憎くき奴に御座りますれば、私只今より出陣致し、彼奴を一挫に取て抑え、貯へ、置ける宝の数々、残らず奪い取て立ち帰る所存。何とぞ此儀御聞届けを偏へに御願ひ申します。」<sup>20</sup>

[Momotarō:] This leave for which I humbly ask you will be only for a short while, after which I will promptly return.

[Father:] Just where is it you wish to go?

[Momotarō:] Your question is only natural, since I haven't told you the details. For some time now, to the northeast, in the unlucky direction, and far across the seas there is an island where the *oni* live. Not only have these awful creatures chosen not to follow our august imperial majesty but have made themselves enemies of our country, killing the people and taking their valuables. So I shall go on an expedition to conquer them and retrieve all of the treasure that they have taken from the people. Please grant my request.

Hearing this *Momotarō*'s father is impressed with his courage and thinks that in any case

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<sup>19</sup> A few years later Iwaya rewrote both *Kogane-maru* and *Momotarō* in more modern Japanese using *desu* and *masu* endings and republished both stories.

<sup>20</sup> I have included the Japanese in this case to highlight both Iwaya's melodious *bungo-tai* style and to note the difference in the father's speech, which is quite casual, and *Momotarō*'s rather grand diction. Iwaya Sazanami. *Nihon mukashibanashi*. (Heibonsha, 2001) 18.

this child was given to him from heaven (何を云うにも天から授かった代物), so it is not his place to stop this adventure. He tells him to go off and help to establish the peace for this imperial country (皇国の安寧を計るがよい).

The language in this passage, in which the hero repeatedly references not his village but the country, is a clear departure from Edo period versions considered in Chapter One. Momotarō's speech in this passage suggests the elevated status of a samurai and as he starts his journey military terms abound. When his parents produce millet cakes, or *kibi dango*, for him to take on his journey, they are called military rations (*heiryō*, 兵糧), instead of just provisions (*kate*, 糧), as found in Edo versions of the story. Both his journey, called an expedition (*seibatsu*, 征伐) and his victorious return (*gaisen*, 凱陣) are referred to in terms often used in representing the conflict with China, which formed a powerful subtext for reading Iwaya's story. In some cases, such as with the term for rations or the mention of the imperial nation, the references did not exist in previous iterations of the tale. In the cases involving the hero's expedition and his victorious return similar phrasings had been used before but their meanings changed when judged against contemporary historical events. "Expedition" was now read in the context of Japan's military action against China. "Victorious return" now conjured images not of a solo hero's voyage home, but of the anticipated successful homecoming of Japanese military forces.

The passage from the story quoted above nicely embodies the first and third tropes I have posited: the hero's home is attacked first and he gains virtue through connection to the imperial institution. In Iwaya's version, as in most adaptations of the tale, the first reference to the *oni* is when *Momotarō* asks for permission to go fight them. Their attacks

on the village, let alone any reason for them, is rarely if ever given. John Dower's work on the role of the "Pure Self" and the "Demonic Other" in *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986) gives us some clue as to why this may be.<sup>21</sup> Specifically considering the *Momotarō* tale, albeit in the context of the late 1930s until 1945, he observes that "whereas racism in the West was markedly characterized by denigration of others, the Japanese were preoccupied far more exclusively with elevating themselves."<sup>22</sup> Japanese texts such as the *Kokutai no hongī* (1937, Cardinal Principles of the National Polity) grounded the idea of the pure self in early mytho-histories like the *Kojiki* (712). *Momotarō* served so often as an embodiment of this pure self that Dower refers to "the *Momotarō* type," which "represented the good Self that existed within each Japanese."<sup>23</sup> It goes without saying that the pure self, or the *Momotarō* type, is blameless for the enemy's attack and is merely responding in self-defense. This represented, in stories for children, the view that Japan was under constant threat of colonization by foreign powers and thus even foreign wars of aggression were actually taken in national self-defense. Similarly, this pure self was pure because of the virtue bestowed by being an imperial subject, as suggested by the language in the excerpted passage.

Iwaya's *Momotarō* goes on to gather his three animal retainers but then Iwaya introduces a small but telling new detail to his story: the animals hesitate at the water's edge. The ocean is described in foreboding terms as a huge expanse in front of them, "without even small islands to stop the eye's progress" across it.<sup>24</sup> "Umi" in Japanese can refer to both sea and ocean, and Iwaya is clearly distinguishing the vast expanse of the

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<sup>21</sup> Dower 250-257.

<sup>22</sup> Dower 204-205.

<sup>23</sup> Dower 257.

<sup>24</sup> Iwaya (2001) 21.

Pacific Ocean from other seas, for example Japan's Inland Sea. In many Edo period versions of the *Momotarō* tale, the hero journeyed into the mountains to fight the *oni* rather than going overseas. But from the 1890s all extant versions of the tale, including Iwaya's, featured an overseas journey. It is easy to see how crossing the ocean served, in the Meiji period, as a trope for venturing to foreign lands. Writing about the Japanese empire, Mark Peattie notes,

In the mid-1880s Japan was a decade away from its scramble to compete in the imperial contest for lands and spheres of interest on the continent, yet Japanese abroad on the high seas, standing on a warship's deck beneath a rippling ensign of their nation's young navy, understandably felt the first stirrings of imperial acquisitiveness.<sup>25</sup>

And, while the ocean journey in the Edo-period versions of *Momotarō* was vague as a geographical reference, from the 1890s the setting came to be read as specific locations connected to Japanese control and colonization, like Taiwan.<sup>26</sup> Daphne Kutzer writes that “real geographic places on the map, often functioned as fantasy lands and magical kingdoms in children's fiction.”<sup>27</sup> This process was not limited to children's fiction but inflected adult's understanding of the world as well, as the warm southern islands, such

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<sup>25</sup> Mark Peattie. “The Nan'yō: Japan in the South Pacific, 1885-1945,” (172-210) Eds. Peattie and Ramon H Myers. *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) 172-210. See page 176.

<sup>26</sup> Later the setting increasingly came to be identified with *nan'yō*. *Nan'yō* was a somewhat flexible term but most specifically referred to Japan's colonial holdings in the Micronesian island chain from 1914 to 1944. While totaling just over 800 square miles, these islands had strategic importance because they allowed the Japanese navy to project power across the Pacific. (Peattie 173) This area exercised a pull on the Japanese imagination disproportionate to its size. Compared to China, Korea, and Taiwan, the population of the Micronesias was “technologically primitive, comparatively docile, and widely scattered.” (Peattie 172) Japanese imperialists, like their Western counterparts, found comfort in recourse to the old canard of an unpopulated land, a *terra nullius*, and imagined the South Seas as open to settlement in spite of its population of native peoples. All of this meant that *nan'yō* formed an ideal and idealized setting for children's adventure fiction. This was especially the case in contrast with the heavily populated Asian mainland whose ancient cultural traditions and influence on Japan were difficult to dismiss even for children.

<sup>27</sup> Kutzer 1.

as Taiwan, with exotic flora and fauna were an enticing setting for both children and adults.

In Iwaya's adaptation this second trope of a location open to Japanese colonization is still undeveloped. An island to the northeast is mentioned because this was the traditionally unlikely direction from which malign influences might come. However, in other contemporary adaptations both the settings and the political meanings being read into the tale were more clearly spelled out. For example, Kyō no Warabe's (京の藁兵衛) 1895 story "Ima no Momotarō" (Momotarō Now) begins by stating, "This is a not a story about long ago, but about our current divine age (当聖世, read as いまのよ).<sup>28</sup> Kyō (a pen name, real name unknown) authored *rakugo* compilations and his retelling of *Momotarō* is marked by his sense of humor. As the story opens, the old man and woman are opening peach-shaped sweets that were souvenirs from Tokyo.<sup>29</sup> They find a small bugle in the first one, a Japanese flag in the second, and Momotarō emerges from the third. Later he goes to conquer *Oni* Island which is specifically identified as Taiwan, control of which Japan assumed in 1895. The *oni* offer Momotarō a sweet liquid made from the sugar cane that was one of the island's chief products and the story puns that the hero named the island "Taiwan" (大椀, big cup). Kyō's emphasis on sugar and sweets puts Japan's colonial expansion in terms easily appreciated by children.

Kyō's version was quite mild compared with some of the retellings which expressed messages of colonialism, militarism and racism quite openly. The inaugural issue of the children's magazine "Yōgakusei" featured a short anonymous article titled "Momotarō no hanashi no gūi" (The Moral of the Momotarō Tale) which reads in part as

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<sup>28</sup> Namekawa 233.

<sup>29</sup> The origins of these souvenirs is not explained.

follows.

Because Japan is an island nation surrounded by oceans, if we are to conquer foreign countries (*gaikoku wo seibatsu*) then we must build military ships and set out on the waterways ... Just like *Momotarō* we must build up retainers, set out on ships, conquer foreign countries and be ready to take much foreign treasure. Really there is no other tale that gives us such spirit as Japanese than *Momotarō*. All of you young readers, as you get older, set out upon the seas like *Momotarō*, cross south of the equator to the islands near Australia and find even better places to conquer than *Oni* Island, and conquer the dark natives (*kokudo*) who are like *oni* and be ready to bring back to the home country (*honkoku*) treasures like coconuts and pearls.<sup>30</sup>

As children's literature scholar Namekawa Michio notes, there was a spike in nationalist interpretations of the *Momotarō* tale around both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.<sup>31</sup> Still, whether Taiwan or Australia were specifically mentioned, the general setting was understood to be in the oceans to Japan's south.

But even more striking than the identification of particular settings was the nationalization of the tale's meaning. During the Edo period, the tale was most often understood within the pull and fray of competing interests within Japanese society. Iwaya's version entered a discursive field flooded by accounts of the Sino-Japanese war. This was Japan's first media war, in which a large percentage of the Japanese population at home, including children, followed the details of the fighting closely. Owen Griffiths describes the connections between war, printed media and children at this time:

The manner in which the Sino-Japanese War was fictionalized and presented as entertainment for children became the prototype for constructing a manly, martial ethos throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the Sino-Japanese War was the first to be "textualized" specifically for children.<sup>32</sup>

As a modern phenomenon, this conflict ushered in a new age of war as entertainment, with children among its most avid fans. Wars would occur only at intervals in Japan's

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<sup>30</sup> Namekawa 236.

<sup>31</sup> Namekawa 233.

<sup>32</sup> Griffiths, Owen. "Militarizing Japan: Patriotism, Profit and Children's Print Media, 1894- 1925." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*. (September 2007) January 1, 2009. <[www.japanfocus.org](http://www.japanfocus.org)>



modern period, but stories of war and adventure were a constant in building up how children imagined their nation and its place in the world. New magazines for children, like *Shōnen sekai* (Youth World), edited by Iwaya and published from 1895 to 1914, provided a constant stream of adventure stories that frequently touched on war. Iwaya was also indirectly influential in this field through his introduction of Oshikawa Shunrō (1876-1914) to the publishing house of Hakubunkan. It was through this introduction that Oshikawa was able to publish *Kaitei gunkan* (1900, *Submarine Battleship*), which properly initiated the genre of *bōken shōsetsu*, or adventure fiction.<sup>33</sup>

From the Meiji period until the end of World War II, *bōken shōsetsu* was one of the dominant strains of children's literature in Japan.<sup>34</sup> Filled with brave young heroes, overseas conquests and the technological wonders that made successful adventures possible, this genre delivered a richly imagined form of imperial fantasy to its audience of school age children. These stories gave boys a means to vicariously taste the glories of empire until they were old enough to experience the real thing for themselves.<sup>35</sup>

While Iwaya did not write *bōken shōsetsu* per se, the three tropes found in the *Momotarō* tale were central to that genre as even the briefest of surveys shows. For example, *Kaitei gunkan* features a Japan that is attacked by numerous foreign

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<sup>33</sup> *Kaitei gunkan* is the tale of how former Japanese Naval Officer, Captain Sakuragi, uses his secret weapon, the *denkōpan*, to protect Japan against its numerous foreign enemies including the Russians, French, English and the U.S. The *denkōpan* is a submersible battleship that can also fly, is armed with torpedoes and a ramming device. The story has echoed into numerous retellings continuing into the postwar period.

<sup>34</sup> Owen Griffiths translates *bōken shōsetsu* as the adventure novel. (See "Militarizing Japan: Patriotism, Profit, and Children's Print Media," 2007) I choose adventure fiction to suggest the wider range of narratives that fall into this category, including shorter children's stories. *Bōken shōsetsu* is a rather wide genre that could include as subgenres within itself *rekishi shōsetsu* (historical novels), *guntai shōsetsu* (military novels), *kyōyū shōsetsu* (heroic novels), and *aikoku shōsetsu* (patriotic novels).

<sup>35</sup> This was a genre written for boys and female protagonists were rare. Contemporary Japanese children's literature scholar Yoshida Morio has explored how girls were a very central audience for the Meiji genre of *kagaku shōsetsu*, children's literature intended to deliver scientific knowledge.

countries and responds with naval victories mostly occurring in the South Seas. And, although the battleship is central to the action, care is taken to assert that victory is a result of virtue that is the result of being imperial subjects. This pattern is seen later as well. Yamanaka Minetarō (1885-1966) is an interesting case in that he served as an intelligence officer for Japan on the Asian mainland and found success with the story *Tekichū ōdan sanbyaku-ri* (1931, 750 Mile Journey Behind Enemy Lines), which was set on the Asian mainland. But even more representative of his work was *Ajia no akebono* (1932, *Dawn of Asia*) with his recurring hero Hongo Yoshiaki. Western powers were depicted as inherently hostile to Japanese interests and, while the setting often changed at a frenetic pace, secret island bases in the South Seas were a popular locale. Futuristic weapons abounded in these stories, yet in the climactic battles Hongo dispatched his enemies man-to-man and references to his status as an imperial subject were frequent. Super weapons, especially in the form of invincible battleships, often appeared in adventure fiction, although technological references were always a two-edged sword as Japan's technological superiority over its Asian neighbors induced insecurity in relation to an often technologically superior West. While Iwaya's *Momotarō* is not often considered with stories like *Kaitei gunkan* or *Ajia no akebono*, the basic tropes of empire employed within these three stories, and indeed in much of *bōken shōsetsu* were variations on the same themes.

### ***Kōendōwa* in Taiwan**

As much as the details of the story itself, it is the extra-textual positioning of the *Momotarō* tale by Iwaya that marks the tale as a kind of performative imperial fantasy. In

addition to his authorial activities, Iwaya was an active promoter of tales generally and the *Momotarō* tale in particular. Across much of his career his public recitations of tales, known as *kōendōwa* (or less commonly *jitsuendōwa*) were highly popular not only with children but adults as well.<sup>36</sup> These performances drew on the traditional Japanese verbal art forms of *rakugo* but the repertoire was taken from the new genre of children's literature. Iwaya first experimented with this form of public storytelling in Kyoto in 1896 and began regular performances from 1898 in Tokyo.<sup>37</sup>

From the turn of the century Iwaya's performances became widely popular. In addition to traveling to recite his work to audiences all over Japan, Iwaya made multiple speaking tours to Manchuria, Taiwan, Karafuto, and even Hawaii. His three trips to Taiwan, in 1916, 1925 and 1931 are representative of how both the *Momotarō* tale and the form of *kōendōwa* were used to actively narrate Japanese identity in an age when mass media was still limited to print. Each trip lasted between two and three weeks and was filled with a tight schedule of speaking before schools, civic groups and patriotic associations. By his own account, during his first trip to Taiwan lasting seventeen days Iwaya gave fifty-five performances reaching an estimated audience of over 30,000 people.<sup>38</sup> His appearances often included both dramatic readings of children's stories and exhortations about educational values or policy. Iwaya noted that he saw his *kōendōwa* as a mixture of entertainment and "social education" (*shakai kyōiku*).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Performance of *kōendōwa* flourished from the Meiji period and were known as *otogi no kōen* from the early Taishō period. They attracted both adults and children and only died off with the advent of radio. The three great names in the field were Iwaya, Kurushima Takehiko (1874-1960) and Kishibe Fukuo (1873-1958). Yu 34.

<sup>37</sup> Yu 35.

<sup>38</sup> Yu 39.

<sup>39</sup> Yu 52.

During his first tour of Taiwan, Iwaya's speeches drew liberally on the content of his *The Momotarō Principle in Education (Momotarō-shugi no kyōiku)*, published a year earlier in 1915.<sup>40</sup> In this work he argues that “the future of educating Japanese citizens should follow the principle of *Momotarō*,” which he went on to explain as a positive, experiential-based education that developed strong personal character in young learners.<sup>41</sup> Early in the work he goes so far as to suggest that every school should have a bronze statue of *Momotarō* in front of it and that there should be a school holiday named after the folktale hero (“*Momotarō no hi*”). He also suggests that the dog, monkey and pheasant respectively represent the virtues of loyalty, intelligence and martial virtue. The majority of the text focuses on ideas for school reform initiatives suggested by Iwaya, mostly relating to the theme of building resolute moral character.

As mentioned at the opening of this chapter, on his first day in Taiwan on February 26, 1916 he visited an elementary school for Japanese students to recite tales for the students in the morning. That evening he spoke before the Japanese government of Taiwan delivering a speech entitled “*Momotarō shugi*” (*Momotarō-ism*).<sup>42</sup> In this speech he drew from the book, suggesting that Japan needed to develop a national character that was less hesitant and citizens who could say yes or no with confidence even in front of Western foreigners. Iwaya's use of the tale suggests in practice how the tale appealed both to children and adults, as pure entertainment and as a vehicle to push specific values for the nation. The major result of Iwaya's first tour of Taiwan was the founding of

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<sup>40</sup> This was first issued by the publishing house Tōadō. It was reissued by Kenbunkan in 1931 under the new title *Momotarō-shugi no shinkyōikuron* (The New Educational Plan of *Momotarō*-Principled Education) but without major changes to the content. It was issued again under the new title by Bunrindō in 1943, again without any major changes. See Torigoe 44-46.

<sup>41</sup> Iwaya Sazanami. *Momotarō kyōiku shūgi no hanashi*. Iwaya Daishi, ed. (Hakubunkan Shinsha, 1984) 3.

<sup>42</sup> Yu 40.

numerous Children's Tales Study groups (*dōwa kenkyūkai*). The purpose of these groups was less study, however, than reading, memorizing and sometimes performing favorite tales in Japanese (*kokugo*) and their membership consisted mostly of Japanese subjects (*naichijin*) living in Taiwan.

Iwaya returned to Taiwan nine years later. Sponsored by the major Japanese language newspapers of the island and Japanese educational groups, his second visit in 1925 was even better publicized than the first, making the front page wherever he went. This second visit tied in with his membership at the time on a Ministry of Education committee considering issues of language reform, especially with regard to making Japanese easier to learn for colonial subjects for whom it was not a native tongue. Perhaps influenced by this role, he clearly stated his intentions to reach out to the native Taiwanese (本島人) and he increasingly spoke, always in Japanese, to native Taiwanese audiences of schoolchildren. On his third and final visit in 1931, he also made a point to visit sites beyond the major Japanese population centers in order to reach native audiences. His final visit likely reached the largest audience yet as it was broadcast via the Japanese-run radio station in Taiwan, JFAK. This medium of radio that allowed him the greatest reach also spelled the gradual death of *kōendōwa* around this time in the early 1930s.

### **Conclusion**

Children's adventure fiction entertained its young audience with stories that fundamentally shaped their views of the world. The *Momotarō* tale in particular was influential in conveying fundamental lessons about Japan's relations with foreign nations.

The basic tropes implied were that Japan was a victim of attack but young heroes would journey overseas and find victory through the virtue gained as imperial subjects. This fundamental message was echoed again and again from the 1890s until the end of World War II and formed a political education that struck close to the heart and through which contemporary political events would be read by generations of Japanese.

As recognition of the tale's role as national allegory increased, it became a contested marker as authors sought to intervene in the political messages carried by the tale. Between 1929 and 1931 multiple Proletarian authors adapted the tale to criticize capitalism and militarism from a Marxist perspective, but the politically shrill tone of their short stories ensured that they were quickly forgotten. The most accomplished attempt to recast the tale was Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's 1925 short story *Momotarō*, which not only succeeds artistically but also critically by pointing out the connections between narrative consumption and politics. But how was it that the non-political Akutagawa succeeded in his criticism of Japanese imperialism when later critiques by Proletarian authors largely failed? The answer lies, as I show in my next chapter, in his 1921 journey to China and his intellectual encounters there.

## CHAPTER III

### Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's Parody *Momotarō* (1925)

When I met Professor Zhang Binglin in his home in Shanghai in the French Concession, we talked of Sino-Japanese relations in his study where he had a stuffed crocodile on the wall. The words that the professor spoke at that time are still ringing in my ears. “The Japanese that I hate most of all is Momotarō who conquered *Oni* Island. And the Japanese who love him should also feel some remorse over him” He was truly wise. So often I hear foreigners scorning Duke Yamagata or praising Katsushika Hokusai or denouncing Viscount Shibusawa. But of all the ‘Japan experts’ (*nihon-tsū*) I have heard, none of them has sent a single arrow of criticism toward Momotarō born of a peach. But Zhang’s point has more truth in it than all of the glib pronunciations of the Japan experts. Momotarō is also long lived. If we say he is long-lived, we might think of some future when 5 or 6 *oni* stand in the blue evening light on the shore of *Oni* Island and lament how long ago their homeland still had treasures like an invisible cloak and invisible hat—well, before I touch upon the colonial policies of the Japanese government I should finish dealing with Iwami Jutarō.

Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, “Iwami Jutarō” (1924)<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1921 when Akutagawa interviewed prominent intellectual Zhang Binglin (章炳麟, 1869-1936)<sup>2</sup> at his home in Shanghai, he was surprised to hear political criticism of Japan that centered on a folktale hero. Rather than denouncing Japan’s best-known military leaders or industrialists, Zhang attacked the mythical Momotarō character. It took Akutagawa some time to digest this criticism for it is not mentioned in his original account of the interview as reported in *Shanghai yūki* (*Shanghai Journey*), his serialized travelogue published in the *Osaka Mainichi* newspaper shortly

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<sup>1</sup> Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. “*Momotarō*.” *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke zenshū* Vol 11 (Iwanami Shoten, 1996) 196-205. Pages 199-200. Akutagawa is recalling an interview with Zhang held three years earlier in 1921. For a full translation of “Iwami Jutarō,” please see Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> I will follow the majority of English scholarship in referring to him as Zhang Binglin (Sho Heirin in Japanese), but he is also sometimes referred to by the alternate name Zhang Taiyan (章太炎).

after his four-month-long stay in China. But in his 1924 essay, “Iwami Jutarō,” in which he considers the importance of popular heroes to politics, he not only mentions the criticism but also acknowledges the truth of Zhang’s insight. Akutagawa was evidently deeply impacted by the interview, for three years after the fact he wrote that Zhang’s words “are still ringing in my ears.” Later in the same year that he published his account of the interview, Akutagawa went on to write a parodic retelling of the *Momotarō* tale that turned it into a stark protest of Japanese imperialism punctuated with graphic imagery linking it to war, genocide and bestial rape.

Akutagawa was known for a certain social consciousness but he was clearly not a part of the highly political Proletarian movement and scholars have rarely seen him as a predominantly political writer. However, after returning from his experience in China, he penned a series of surprisingly subversive political satires that form a significant but ignored vein within his oeuvre. As part of this thread in his writing, “Momotarō” re-imagined Japan’s most famous folk hero as a brutal imperial invader motivated not by love of country but by rapacious greed.

But of all the possible sites from which to criticize Japanese imperialism, why did these two men, a respected Chinese intellectual and one of Japan’s more celebrated authors, focus on a folktale? Akutagawa’s journey to China traced a circuit from Tokyo to Shanghai and back that was at the same time a complex colonial encounter that raises several questions. What was it that drew him to Shanghai and what did his trip to China mean? What was Zhang’s critique of Japan and how was this argument taken up and further developed by Akutagawa? And finally, how was it embodied in his parody of the *Momotarō* tale?



## **Rewriting Folktales within a Colonial Dialogue: From Tokyo to Shanghai and Back**

Akutagawa had long been drawn to China as a literary tradition, and he finally gained the chance to see the country for himself as a special overseas correspondent for the Osaka Mainichi newspaper in 1921. But what did his time there mean for his intellectual positions and subsequent writing? Literary histories dealing with the author often downplay the importance of this trip or consider it in terms of the sickness it brought upon him.<sup>3</sup> Almost immediately after arriving in Shanghai on March 30<sup>th</sup>, Akutagawa required three weeks of convalescence in a local Japanese-owned hospital for a severe case of inflammation of the lungs (dry pleurisy). But this sickness, both in terms of Akutagawa's personal situation and as the conventional reading of the meaning of his trip to China, is symptomatic of underlying tensions with China that afflicted not just the author but Japan itself. China, both old and young, as literary tradition and political problem, was an increasingly complex signifier that was fraught with conflicting meanings in the interwar period. Intellectuals of Akutagawa's generation, steeped in the Chinese classics during their youth but living in a Japan that increasingly despised China's backwardness, felt this tension keenly. Akutagawa reported relatively little of the criticism he heard about Japan while he was there and later scholars have criticized his decision to elide political observations even though he toured China during turbulent times. But I will argue that Akutagawa's experience there produced a significant change in him and his later writing. By reading the political dis-ease between Japan and China

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Seiji Lippit does not mention Akutagawa's China trip in his chapter, "Disintegrating Mechanisms of Subjectivity: Akutagawa's Last Writings" (2002) and Yu Beongcheon mentions it only briefly in his monograph, *Akutagawa: an Introduction* (1972). Yasuyoshi Sekiguchi, in *Tokuhain: Akutagawa Ryunosuke* (1997), notes that sickness has been one of the main interpretations of the meaning of Akutagawa's trip (Sekiguchi 86-87).

back into Akutagawa's journey, I want to explore the ways in which his encounters there were productive both in his literature and critical writings vis-à-vis Japan.

But what was this critique that Akutagawa brought to bear on the Japanese nation? In his essay "Iwami Jutarō," Akutagawa argues that hero worship and the consumption of narrative are central to the national imagination in Japan. Iwami Jutarō, a semi-legendary medieval hero whose martial feats were constantly being retold, serves as the central figure through which Akutagawa analyzes politics through the lens of narrative. Even today, Akutagawa's argument remains a highly compelling interpretation of the nation and in some ways anticipates the scholarship of Benedict Anderson. Basing his argument in a distinctively Japanese cultural setting, Akutagawa suggests that the functions of national identification that are filled by novels and the literature of realism in the West, are served by folktales and popular literature in Japan. To this end, the essay branches out to consider Japan's founding myths including the Kojiki, the Momotarō tale, and samurai movie (*chanbara*) heroes, linking all three to a kind of imagination that supported aggressive Japanese colonial policies.

He put this critique in fictional form in his short parody, "Momotarō," which remains one of the most biting criticisms of Japanese militarism to this day.<sup>4</sup>

Akutagawa's parodies have been considered before, most recently by Seiji Lippit, but their political charge has been largely ignored.<sup>5</sup> In reading "Momotarō", I will consider the political and literary possibilities of parody as a literature of resistance, specifically in

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<sup>4</sup> The continuing power of this story both to shock readers and appeal to creative artists is attested to by graphic artist Terakado Masayuki's 2005 large-format picture book edition "Momotarō" featuring his own illustrations matched with Akutagawa's text. Terakado re-imagines Momotarō dressed in a pink tutu wantonly dining on the blood of his victims.

<sup>5</sup> Akutagawa's politically charged parodies and satires include "Shōgun" (1922, "The General"), "Kamigami no bishō" (1922, "The Smiles of the Gods"), "Saru kani gassen" (1923, "The Feud between the Monkey and the Crab"), "Momotarō" (1924), and, arguably, "Kappa" (1927). Lippit 48-49.

Japan and with reference to folktales. Of all the possible sites for criticizing the Japanese imperial project both Akutagawa and Zhang singled out the *Momotarō* folktale. But what advantages do parodies of folktales have over realist literature in critically re-imagining the nation? Through both his essay “Iwami Jutarō” and his parody “Momotarō”, Akutagawa suggested that folktales were crucial to imagining the nation in Japan, in ways that were analogous to the role of the novel in the West. This was an insight whose origins lay in his trip to China and so it is there that I begin.

Like many educated members of his generation, China had long called to Akutagawa, first as a literary tradition and later in his short life as a physical destination.<sup>6</sup> In August 1920, during the time that he was actively contemplating a trip to China, he wrote in an essay titled “Impressions of my Favorite Reading” (*Aidokusho no inshō*) that, “Of my favorite reading during my childhood, *Journey to the West* was number one...taken as allegory even the West has nothing that stands up to this. Bunyan’s famous *Pilgrim’s Progress* is no match for *Journey to the West*.”<sup>7</sup>

While many Japanese received an education in such classics, few modern authors put that education to such prominent or acclaimed use as Akutagawa. The growing prestige of Western literature and a new vernacular Japanese literary style increasingly popular from around the 1890s meant that *kanbun* and *kanshi* lost prestige within the quickly changing modern literary canon. But Akutagawa was well known for adapting

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<sup>6</sup> For hundreds of years, at least a cursory knowledge of *kanbun* (Chinese classics) and *kanshi* (Chinese poetry) was necessary to be considered well-educated in Japan. Coming from a family of modest means but one that valued culture, Akutagawa learned how to read and compose *kanshi* from elementary school. From his youth, he was enamored of Chinese literature, poetry and ink painting and avidly read classics like *Journey to the West*, *The Water Margin*, and *Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*. For the most part he read these three works, known respectively in Japanese as *Saiyūki*, *Suikoden*, and *Sangokushi* in Japanese although he owned Chinese editions of them as well.

<sup>7</sup> Sekiguchi 21.

short stories from classical sources, be they Japanese, Western, or Chinese. As Seiji Lippit notes, “The majority of his works can be traced back to one or more sources in either classical Japanese texts (such as the *Konjaku monogatari* or *Uji shui monogatari*) or a wide range of American, Chinese, and European works.”<sup>8</sup> Out of these, Chinese tales were one of Akutagawa’s richest resources. An inventory of his possessions after his death listed 188 Chinese books and 1,177 Chinese soft-bound editions in his personal library.<sup>9</sup> The *Ryōsai shii* (聊齋志異), a Chinese collection of short, fantastic stories from the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Pu Songling (蒲松齡, 1640-1715) was an especially fertile source from which he adapted several stories.<sup>10</sup> While Japanese authors had worked with Chinese source material for centuries, Akutagawa fashioned that material into thoroughly modern retellings.

For most of the time that the Chinese literary tradition had been in Japan, travel to China itself simply was not feasible for the average person. But by the time Akutagawa was a young man, the journey from the Japanese port of Moji in northern Kyushu to Shanghai took only two days and a night by ship. For the first time, travel between the two countries was safe, relatively quick, and available to even the moderately wealthy. This meant increasing tensions between the Chinese literary tradition in Japan, which had long been domesticated, and the actual country itself. Stefan Tanaka has argued that the idea of “China as a troubled place mired in the past” was useful in creating the idea of “Japan as a modern Asian nation.”<sup>11</sup> One solution at the level of popular discourse was to

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<sup>8</sup> Lippit 42.

<sup>9</sup> Sekiguchi 24.

<sup>10</sup> Sekiguchi 41-44.

<sup>11</sup> Tanaka Stefan. *Japan’s Orient*. (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press, 1993) 4. Tanaka’s contention about the role of China in constructing Japanese identity would seem to be borne out in how later

identify China by the neologism *Shina*, an often derogatory term that referred only to modern China and elided reference to the classical civilization. Akutagawa was certainly aware of this tension as he made preparations for his trip to China and was thrown a farewell party by other Tokyo literati.

Farewell parties were a common practice among the literary establishment at this time, as well as an object of social interest, and the April edition of the literary gossip magazine *Bunsho kurabu* includes a short article titled, “Akutagawa’s Farewell Party for his China Trip.” With his trip plans finalized, the *bundan*, or Tokyo literary establishment, met at the famous Seiyōken restaurant near the Ueno section of Tokyo on March 9<sup>th</sup> to fete the author before his journey.<sup>12</sup> Befitting Akutagawa’s renown on the literary scene, roughly forty people attended and offered parting toasts, some of which gave insight into their views of China.<sup>13</sup> Satomi Ton was reported to have said, “China used to be a great country. Even if it has greatly declined now, because it was great in the past, one would expect certain relics of that greatness to exist even today.”<sup>14</sup> The tension between old and young Chinas was obvious in speeches made at Akutagawa’s farewell party. Implicit here was the idea that the literary and cultural tradition of old China was worthwhile but its modern culture was of little value. Kume Masao noted that while he did not have the courage to travel there, he thought Akutagawa was great for

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generations have viewed the meaning of Akutagawa’s trip to China. As I mention in footnote 34, sickness has been one of the main interpretations of his trip, although I am arguing that his trip there was not just significant for the sickness he contracted or his pursuit of classical Chinese culture, but for the very modern political education it gave him via meeting with Zhang, as I discuss in the next few pages.

<sup>12</sup> Sekiguchi 79.

<sup>13</sup> The prestige of this banquet was reflected not so much in the number attending, as 40 was mid-size for these affairs, as in how well the literary establishment was represented with Kikuchi Kan, Satomi Ton, Kume Masao, Toshima Yoshio, Osanai Kaoru, Kubota Mantarō, Yamamoto Yūzō, Murō Saisei, Suzuki Miekichi, Yosano Akiko and her husband Yosano Tekkan in attendance among others.

<sup>14</sup> Sekiguchi 80.

“determinedly setting off for China,” suggesting perhaps that travel there was somehow daunting.<sup>15</sup>

Three weeks after the banquet, an announcement in the Osaka Mainichi newspaper on March 31<sup>st</sup> introducing Akutagawa’s forthcoming “Impressions of China” (*Shiina inshōki*) column also bore signs of the tension between young and old Chinas. It reads in part,

“Impressions of China” by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke : New China reflected through the eyes of a newcomer’s eyes; to begin serialization in this newspaper soon. As a mystery of the world, China is one of the most fascinating countries. Even while China lays fallen on the ground like an ancient tree, young shoots of life come blooming forth from the new China.<sup>16</sup>

The striking image of China as a great tree, fallen on its side and presumably rotting could hardly be a more vivid evocation of a classical civilization now dead. Still, the image of young shoots springing up from out of the fallen tree suggests an ambivalent attitude toward the country. Even while granting interest in the new life represented by the new shoots, the image suggests that while China had towered over Japan in the past, now Japan was the greater culture. What ran through both the comments at the farewell banquet and metaphors in the newspaper announcement was the idea of a rupture between China’s classical and current civilizations. In the view of critic and author Kikuchi Kan, artifacts of greatness from the past remained but bore little connection to

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<sup>15</sup> Sekiguchi 80. It is also worth noting that another guest implied the ulterior motive for the journey. Kikuchi Kan, the banquet’s organizer and Akutagawa’s co-worker at the Osaka Mainichi newspaper at the time, declared, “I had children almost immediately after getting married. But because Akutagawa only became a father after two or three years of marriage he was able to fully enjoy being a newlywed. In that case, Akutagawa’s luck was quite good.” (Sekiguchi 80) This statement rings with a not so subtly veiled irony because part of Akutagawa’s reason for traveling to China was to get away from Hide Shigeko, the married woman with whom he had accidentally fathered a child who was born earlier that year. In contrast to the good luck of the case with his wife, in which it took multiple years to have a child, his bad luck of fathering a child with his mistress after only a few months together was evidently something of an open secret.

<sup>16</sup> Sekiguchi 78.

contemporary China. In the Mainichi Osaka newspaper's preview article, China's classic civilization provides only cultural compost for its new creations.

Much to the chagrin of Susukida Junsuke, the assistant editor of the arts at the Osaka Mainichi who helped arrange the author's China trip, Akutagawa was only able to begin submitting his account roughly a month after returning to Japan. Published under the title *Shanghai yūki*, Akutagawa's fame ensured the success of the series in spite of its delayed publication.<sup>17</sup> Critics have been lukewarm toward *Shanghai yūki*. While individual sections can be captivating as lyrical evocations of place, the development of overall themes throughout the work is largely lacking, making the sum less than the parts. Akutagawa visited numerous cities in China, but his focus is on Shanghai and Beijing. Although most of his time was spent in Shanghai, he is overwhelmingly negative towards the city and paints a much more positive picture of Beijing. While he mentions the strikes, riots, and the anti-Japanese sentiment evident at times in letters home to friends, for the most part Akutagawa did not report these observations in *Shanghai yūki*.

Akutagawa has sometimes been criticized for not bringing political observations more clearly to bear since he was an observer in China during a time of turbulent political upheaval.<sup>18</sup> Certainly if the goal of his trip was political reporting, then it was a failure by those standards. His columns are almost as much about his own impressions as they are about the people and places profiled, and this was just what Susukida had been hoping for. But in the years after his return to Japan there were clear signs that Akutagawa had gained a heightened political consciousness that could at times be critical of Japanese

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<sup>17</sup> Akutagawa was in China from March through July. *Shanghai yūki* was serialized in the Osaka Mainichi shimbun August 24 through September 5, 1921.

<sup>18</sup> The May 4<sup>th</sup> movement of 1919 protesting territorial concessions forced on China after the end of World War I had contributed to the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai on July 1, 1921 but Akutagawa makes no reference to these events.

nationalism. He most directly casts Japanese militarism in a negative light in his 1924 work, *Shogun* (The General), which criticizes the Russo-Japanese war hero Nogi Maresuke.<sup>19</sup> Akutagawa drew upon his own experiences in China to write this story, including noting that the prostitutes approached him with the phrase ‘*Saigo*’, which he took to be a mispronunciation of ‘*Sa, ikō*’ (Let’s go) that they had heard from sexually predatory Japanese soldiers.

This critical consciousness is also seen in his 1924 essay “Iwami Jutarō”, which owes its inspiration to Zhang. This essay offers a series of insightful criticisms of prewar Japanese nationalism centered on a critique of the power of popular narrative over its audience. Unlike scholarship that seeks to find nationalism imagined through the novel, Akutagawa gives special attention to popular narratives including popular heroes like Iwami, the folktale hero Momotarō and figures from early Japanese histories.

In Shanghai, Akutagawa met with Chinese intellectuals, including Zheng Kōshō (鄭考晉), Li Renjie (李人傑) and Zhang. He was attracted to these men’s knowledge of classical Chinese culture, but as intellectuals they were also deeply involved in the politics of their day. All of them were at least somewhat negative toward Japan, meaning that Akutagawa sat through repeated criticism. He had multiple meetings with Zheng and Li, evidently finding a kind of connection with them at the personal level. Akutagawa wrote of his nostalgic feelings upon meeting Zheng based on their mutual knowledge and love of Chinese calligraphy. In contrast, Zhang was by far the most renowned intellectual of the three, but Akutagawa only met with him once. In *Shanghai yūki*, Akutagawa mentions that Zhang went on and on with political arguments during their meeting. A

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<sup>19</sup> This story observes the dispatch of Japanese soldiers to certain death during the siege Port Arthur from the perspective of low ranking soldiers on the battlefield who are disparaging of their leaders and the absurdity of war that produces so much death.



Japanese acquaintance through the *Osaka Mainichi shimbun*, Nishimoto, translated for the men. Akutagawa noted that Zhang lamented China's present condition but made no mention of any criticism he might have heard of Japan. Akutagawa focused his account of the meeting on a stuffed crocodile hanging on the wall and his own uncomfortable coldness. He mentions that Zhang was dressed warmly and sitting with a blanket, while he was only wearing a thin coat and sat shivering in the drafty study.

Zhang Binglin went on and on with his explanations all the time gesturing with his long hands tipped with long fingernails. I, I was just sitting there shivering. . . . While still half listening to him, I occasionally looked up at the stuffed crocodile on the wall. And after he was done going on about Chinese politics, I suddenly thought, it must be that the crocodile once enjoyed the smell of lotus blossoms, the warmth of the sun, and warm waters. If this was the case, that crocodile was best poised to truly understand my present coldness sitting there. Dear crocodile, stuffed as you are, you are truly the happy one. Have pity on me. Still sitting here alive in this cold.<sup>20</sup>

This highly sardonic account suggests that, in addition to his discomfort, Akutagawa felt some animus toward Zhang, especially considering his positive accounts of meetings with Zheng and Li. Omitting any reference to the content of his conversation with Zhang, Akutagawa focuses almost solely on the chilly atmosphere.

Zhang's fame meant that Akutagawa's readers would have been familiar with him. His importance in establishing the Chinese nationalist and anti-Manchu consciousness that helped pave the way for the 1911 Republican revolution meant that he has often been seen as second in importance only to Sun Yat-Sen in that era.<sup>21</sup> By the time that he met Akutagawa in 1921 he was 52 years old, had acquired widely respected status, and had somewhat retired from active involvement in politics.

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<sup>20</sup> Akutagawa (Vol 8) 34-35.

<sup>21</sup> Kauko Laitinen notes that "Zhang Binglin has become the most researched of all the 1911 revolutionaries, with the sole exception of Sun Yatsen." (*Chinese Nationalism in the Late Qing Dynasty: Zhang Binglin as an Anti-Manchu Propagandist* (London: Curzon Press, 1990) 3) and that he was known as one of the "Three Elders of the Revolution" (革命三尊) (Laitinen 5). He is also known for having helped create an early phonetic system for reading Chinese.

Akutagawa's second account of the same meeting with Zhang, which serves as the opening epigraph for this chapter, was published just under three years later in "Iwami Jutarō." Again Akutagawa recalls the stuffed crocodile on the wall but more importantly he remembers Zhang's criticism that "The Japanese that I hate most of all is Momotarō who conquered *Oni* Island. And the Japanese who love him should also feel some remorse over him."<sup>22</sup> This time Akutagawa is seemingly more positive toward Zhang and affirms the truth of his criticism of Japan. Akutagawa notes that so-called "Japan experts" (*nihon-tsū*) from abroad often criticize Japanese military or political leaders, but that "Zhang's point has more truth in it than all of the glib pronunciations of the Japan experts."<sup>23</sup> He then goes on to make Zhang's implications clear by elaboration that the real topic at hand was "the colonial policies of the Japanese government."<sup>24</sup>

But what was Zhang specifically arguing here, and where did this argument fit within his larger scholarship? Like many of the Chinese leaders of his day, Zhang had an intimate but complex relationship with Japan that grew increasingly critical over time. At three different times in his life, Japan had provided Zhang a refuge from political persecution in mainland China. This refuge helped enable Zhang to formulate his philosophy of national learning that was rooted in his *kaozhengue* studies (考証学).<sup>25</sup> Following the failure of the Reform Movement in 1898, Zhang fled first to Taiwan and then a year later to Tokyo. While in Taiwan, he was introduced by his friend, the poet Yamane Torao to the then civil governor Gotō Shimpei. Zhang and Gotō were known to

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<sup>22</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 199.

<sup>23</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 200.

<sup>24</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 200.

<sup>25</sup> *Kaozhengue* (*kōshōgaku* in Japanese), or documentary scholarship, began in Ch'ing era (1644-1912) China and investigated the origins of things, especially through consideration of the shifting meanings of specific Chinese characters across time.

be on close terms and Zhang wrote in the Chinese section of the *Taiwan nichinichi shimpo* newspaper for six months.<sup>26</sup> Up until this time, he saw Japan as both a model and an ally for China's modernization and anti-imperial efforts.<sup>27</sup> From Taiwan, he journeyed to Tokyo, which from 1901 to 1907 "became the virtual center of the Chinese revolutionary movement" driven by a population of young Chinese students and activists numbering from the hundreds to low thousands.<sup>28</sup> He returned to China after only a year in Tokyo, but fled there again in February 1902 for three months after his anti-Manchu writings and the defiant public act of cutting off his queue forced him to flee once more.<sup>29</sup>

In 1903, having returned to Shanghai, Zhang's anti-Manchu writings in the revolutionary journal *Subao* (The Jiangsu Journal) caught the attention of the Chinese government, which pressured the International Settlement to try him and five others for slander.<sup>30</sup> The lengthy trial became a focal point around which the revolutionary cause crystallized. In May 1904 Zhang was sentenced to three years of hard labor, which was commuted after the death of a fellow defendant in prison. Upon being released in June 1906, he went directly from the gates of the municipal prison to the docks, where representatives of Sun Yatsen were waiting to whisk him to Tokyo by ship.<sup>31</sup>

Zhang's writing and activism was primarily concerned with building up an idea of Chinese nationhood based in history (and excluding the Manchus) and a national consciousness at least partly based in race. Wang Hui writes that "in Zhang's thinking

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<sup>26</sup> Laitinen 64-66.

<sup>27</sup> Laitinen 59-62.

<sup>28</sup> Laitinen 49.

<sup>29</sup> Laitinen 81.

<sup>30</sup> Laitinen 90-104.

<sup>31</sup> Laitinen 107-108.

there was no more important practical mission than [the] construction of a collective national identity.”<sup>32</sup> Zhang’s writing was central to building up an invented ‘Chineseness’ resting upon a Han race that was traced back to the mythical Yellow Emperor. Oftentimes his writings were concerned with valorizing historical figures, men who could serve as role models for the kind of national consciousness needed to support a nationwide uprising like the 1911 Revolution. As such, he was keenly aware of the importance of heroes and their influence in swaying popular consciousness. This was likely one of the backgrounds for his criticisms of the *Momotarō* tale that Akutagawa reported. Having spent a total of over two years in Japan and her colonies, he may have judged the tale to have supported an attitude favoring Japanese colonial expansion. Zhang’s criticism of hero worship clearly informed Akutagawa’s own critique that he elaborated in the essay “Iwami Jutarō.”

### **Hero Worship in the National Imagination**

“Iwami Jutarō” (hereafter “Iwami”) was one of the three essays that comprised *Hekigen* (*Subjective Portraits*), a recurring feature published in the magazine *Josei kaizō* (Ladies Reconstruction) between March and August of 1924.<sup>33</sup> *Hekigen* was intended to capitalize on Akutagawa’s literary fame and allowed him the freedom to choose a figure to expound upon in each installment. His first and last essays in the *Hekigen* series, “Saitō Mokichi” and “Kimura Kenkadō”, follow this mold closely, commenting on the

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<sup>32</sup> Wang 234. For Zhang’s role in promoting Chinese national identity see Wang Hui’s “Zhang Taiyan’s Concept of the Individual and Modern Chinese Identity,” (231-260) in *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond*. (University of California Press: 2000)

<sup>33</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 406-407.

literary and artistic activities of these men.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, “Iwami” focuses on the connections between narrative, the act of imagination, and politics. Iwami Jutarō was a semi-legendary figure reported to have fought in Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s service and died in the siege of Osaka Castle in 1615. But whatever the real history of Iwami Jutarō may have been, it slowly became lost within the Iwami Jutarō of popular tales, as all kinds of wonderful and outlandish feats were attached to the warrior and endlessly retold in oral storytelling, the kabuki stage, and books. The tale is less well known today but was still highly popular in Meiji Japan. Tayama Katai (1871-1930), in *Tokyo no sanjūnen* (1917, *Thirty Years in Tokyo*), places tales of Iwami among the most popular reading material in circulation during his childhood in the 1890s which he lists as follows:

Chinese poems, the works of the eight representative writers of the T’ang and Sung Dynasties, *waka* poetry, novels by Disraeli, *Kaijin no kigu*, English books, Bakin’s works, Shunsui’s works, the legend of Iwami Jutarō, *Eisai shinshi* (a children’s magazine), and a mixture of them all.<sup>35</sup>

By the teens, the tale had moved into film as the character was portrayed on the screen in shorts by the famous actor Matsunosuke Onoe in 1913 (“Iwami Jutarō ichidaiki”) and 1914 (“Iwami Jutarō”).

Akutagawa begins by comparing Iwami to his historical contemporary, Nagatsuka Masaie. Masaie was also a renowned warrior who supported Toyotomi Hideyoshi but he had not been continually reinterpreted and placed into new stories. He had thus been slowly forgotten. Akutagawa is insinuating that the Japanese love of Iwami may have more to do with the retellings of his story than with any actual connection to the historical

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<sup>34</sup> Saitō Mokichi (齋藤茂吉, 1882-1953) was a psychiatrist and tanka poet. Akutagawa favorably reviews Saitō’s poetic collection *Shakkō* (*Red Lights*) first published in 1913. Kimura Kenkado (木村兼葭堂, 1736-1802) was widely studied in Dutch, Latin, and natural history, left behind numerous collections including calligraphy, and was in close contact with artists and writers of his day. Akutagawa reminisces on Kimura’s calligraphic collection that he saw displayed in a museum in Kyoto.

<sup>35</sup> Tayama Katai. *Tokyo no sanjūnen* (Nihon Tosho Sentaa, 1956) 25.

figure himself. This is a crucial point to which he returns to repeatedly. In essence, he is arguing that telling a story is less important than retelling it, again and again. Later in the essay he argues that a semi-legendary figure like Iwami is more valued in the popular imagination than the actual architects of Japan's modern age, such as Gotō Shimpei. And he suggests that Toyotomi Hideyoshi was loved more than Tokugawa Ieyasu not so much because of any difference between their respective accomplishments but because the former had been enshrined in repeated editions of picture books for children, while the latter had not. Repeated appearances by a character in different publications across time gave that character a "life force" (*seimei*), as well as a kind of power over consumers of narrative. Akutagawa writes,

First of all, Iwami Jutarō is someone who is much more full of life than any actual historical figure. For evidence of this, consider his contemporary of the same historical age, Nagatsuka Masaie, who was one of the five famous warriors of Osaka. The figure of Jutarō setting out to start his martial training appears so real before all of our eyes. But I am unclear even as to whether Masaie was a large or small man. This makes clear the reason why Jutarō dominates our emotions ten times more than Masaie. If we saw an advertisement in the corner of a newspaper that read, "Nagatsuka Masaie, sick with a chronic illness, medicine is having no effect" it would not really move me that much. But what if there was a special edition of a newspaper or something reporting on Jutarō's mortal illness? Kikuchi Kan put this hero through great travails in his play "Iwami Jutarō," but reading such a report even someone as dispassionate as Kikuchi couldn't help but be moved. This is the power of Iwami, who not only lives in our feelings, but more than that, dominates our wills. Of course young children playing tag impersonate Iwami. And even when I have to compose a long piece of writing, I imagine myself attacking it with the eagerness of Iwami slaying the terrible Orochi serpent.<sup>36</sup>

The life force of Iwami Jutarō was the product of the cumulative retellings of his story. This made narrative consumers feel that he was real and allowed them to picture him in their mind. Such was his reality that Akutagawa imagines the details of his illness reported in a modern daily newspaper. The rhetorical conceit of imagining a medieval hero's sickness reported in the newspaper is at once both nonsensical and deeply

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<sup>36</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 197.

suggestive. Iwami died centuries ago, so he belongs in history books not newspapers. But he is such a loved character that he has come to life in people's minds. They have made him a part of their own time frame. In this gesture, Akutagawa calls to mind the scholarship of Anderson who argues that the national imagination is structured through the newspaper and the novel, both of which help to constitute a common time frame that citizens of a nation imagine themselves moving through together.

Anderson's great insight into the newspaper is that it makes connections between largely unrelated facts simply because they happened on the same date.<sup>37</sup> Akutagawa develops this argument by pointing out that even though a newspaper's chronological time frame may seem entirely objective, it will be inflected differently by each national community. For Japanese readers, who are used to reading historical fiction serialized in newspapers, tales of medieval heroes and sword-fighting samurai were not out of place directly below new articles detailing factory openings or industrial progress. Iwami's life seemed to continue in the present because the details of his life and adventures were continually unfolding in serialized newspaper fiction. Here I am suggesting a different inflection of Anderson's argument on simultaneity, which generally means how the different but contemporary parts of the nation can be imagined together in "empty, homogenous time."<sup>38</sup> Through serialization in newspapers, characters from pasts (fictitious and otherwise) seemed to be incorporated into and live in the present. This was achieved through the continual unfolding of a character through a single iteration (of a story or series), in which events in characters' lives seemed to occupy the same time frame as events in the readers' lives. It could also happen across multiple iterations of a

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<sup>37</sup> Anderson 32-36.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson 22-26.

single story. As a character was recycled into numerous retellings by different authors, each author portrayed the character in a slightly different light (one author imagined Momotarō as a hero and another as a villain, etc.), even as people re-imagine who they themselves are at different stages in their own lives. This is not to suggest that any one portrayal is more real, although some may be more convincing than others based on their artistic quality or popularity. What is important is that each iteration is consumed simultaneously (serialized to large audiences) and that more iterations are forthcoming across time.

This made Iwami real to readers as they imagined him into existence. Akutagawa writes that “the figure of Jutarō setting out to start his martial training appears so real before all of our eyes.” Implicit in Akutagawa’s argument is the criticism that this figure is in fact an illusion. But the power of this illusion cannot be denied. He continues, “This makes clear the reason why Jutarō dominates our emotions ten times more than Masaie.” And it was not just the emotions of the readers that were affected, for he goes on to write “This is the power of Iwami, who not only lives in our feelings, but more than that, dominates our wills.” The suggestion here is that readers not only enjoy narrative but are influenced or even controlled by it to a degree that is easily underestimated. In the case of Kikuchi Kan, who wrote a play featuring Iwami, Akutagawa suggests that even a creator is sometimes controlled by his creation since “Kikuchi couldn’t help but be moved” by Iwami’s travails even though Kikuchi penned them himself. By extension, even as citizens imagine the nation they are also imagined, and controlled, by it.

This power is rooted in the processes of imagination that Akutagawa explores in detail through a comparison of Iwami with a recent governor of Tokyo, Gotō Shimpei



(1857-1929).<sup>39</sup> His explanation suggests why a legendary figure might be more attractive than a real person.

Second, Iwami Jutarō is a person who breathes the same air we do—for example compared to Viscount Gotō, Iwami has much more life force. Of course Viscount Gotō is one of the political heroes given birth to by modern Japan. But even a hero the likes of Viscount Gotō Shimpei—a man of stout figure, with his glasses sliding down his nose, and given to occasional fits of laughing out loud—anyway, he is a figure whose characteristics are clearly fixed. The Gotō that person A sees will not have one more eye than the Gotō that person B sees. At least in this sense the figure is totally accurate; at the same time this is what makes it extremely boring. ... But Iwami Jutarō, the hero Iwami Jutarō framed in his warrior's dress for martial training, this is not the case with him. His status is like a rubber band that can stretch or shrink rather freely. The Iwami that A and B see is not always the same. It is in this that his image is quite inexact. At the same time this makes the image quite free. ... This is not just the case for physical characteristics but for psychological attributes as well. For example, for those who extol bravery as a moral virtue we could go around and around questioning the quality of Viscount Gotō's bravery, just as we would have to question our own bravery. In fact, of all the brave men who actually exist, none can really match the legendary Iwami. Because of this it's much easier for Jutarō to control our passions than it is for Gotō. We cannot help feeling nervous for Iwami as he fights a swarm of enemies at Amanohashidate. But when Gotō takes the speaker's stand in the House of Representatives to debate the opposing party we can only greet him with the smallest sense of concern.<sup>40</sup>

There could hardly be a better representative juxtaposition between the real and the imaginary in interwar Japanese politics than the one Akutagawa makes using Iwami and Gotō. As a semi-legendary figure who had died centuries ago, Iwami would at first glance seem to be completely beyond the realm of political action despite his popularity in the media. By contrast, Gotō was one of the primary architects of modern Japan and its empire. The epitome of the successful Meiji man, he held some of the top posts in the Japanese government both inside Japan proper and in the Japanese empire.<sup>41</sup> And across

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<sup>39</sup> It is an interesting coincidence that Akutagawa chose Gotō since Zhang and Gotō were on close terms in Taiwan.

<sup>40</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 197-198.

<sup>41</sup> Gotō trained as a medical doctor and became head of the Nagoya Medical school at the age of 25 years old. He entered the powerful Home Ministry in 1882 and was sent overseas to study in Germany in 1890. Helping supervise the demobilization of Japanese troops returning to Japan through Hiroshima in 1904, he then served under Kodama Gentarō as the civilian head of the Japanese colonial administration of Taiwan. He pursued policies that were successful in slowly restricting opium use there while reinforcing Japanese

his decades in service at the highest levels of government, Gotō consistently espoused a policy of aggressive colonial expansion.

But while Gotō was one of the more capable architects of the Japanese empire, he was hardly suited to be a symbol of it. Akutagawa mildly pokes fun at Gotō by suggesting that he was somewhat overweight “with his glasses sliding down his nose, and given to occasional fits of laughing out loud.” By contrasting Iwami and Gotō, Akutagawa is making the two related points that one, real politics is boring and, two, politics will thus tend to be imagined through symbols that inspire greater narrative interest and allow for flexibility in interpretation by individuals. Even today we see that one of the greatest barriers to democratic participation is simply lack of interest. Akutagawa writes that the Japanese public could only greet Gotō with “the smallest sense of concern” when he engaged in debates in the Diet over Japan’s future direction. People think of the nation more through imaginary symbols than through details of governmental policy and procedure. The nation is imagined through symbolic figures, like Iwami, who can paper over difference by allowing each reader or consumer to read their own preferences into that symbol. By necessity these symbols will be hollow of any real history. This recalls Anderson’s contention that the ubiquitous monuments to Unknown Soldiers in the modern period are useful to the national imagination “precisely *because* they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them.”<sup>42</sup> In the case of Iwami, and other literary characters, both their physical features and psychological

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control of Taiwan. From 1906 to 1908 he served as the first president of the Southern Manchurian Railway, which was central to Japanese control of Manchuria. Returning to Japan he served as Minister of Communications in 1908, director of the Japanese Government’s Colonization Bureau in 1912, Mayor of Tokyo in 1920, and Home Minister in 1923. As Home Minister he oversaw the massive and successful rebuilding of Tokyo after the devastating Great Kanto earthquake of September 1, 1923.

<sup>42</sup> Anderson 9. Italics original.

makeup will be left up to readers to define, at least within certain limits. Iwami and Momotarō were both understood to be symbols of heroism, although Akutagawa sought to alter this perception, as I will explore later in this chapter.

Literary characters can serve as useful symbols through which to imagine the nation. But the kind of characters and genres through which the national imagination will be channeled will necessarily vary by cultural context and Akutagawa recognizes this in his essay.

The sense in which we cannot look down on Iwami Jutarō is the sense in which we cannot look down on any fictional characters. When I say fictional characters I do not only mean legendary characters. I also mean to include the fictional characters created by those manufacturers of modern legends whom we more commonly call artists. It is fine to look down on Kaiser Wilhelm. But it is a mistake to look down on Faust reading a book on alchemy by the light of a candle. His contract paper that he signed cannot be found in any museum, but even now Faust is drinking a beer in the corner of a bar somewhere in Berlin. It's fine to look down on Lloyd George. But it is a mistake to look down on Macbeth as he stands before the three witches and asks them about fate. Macbeth's dagger can be found in no museum. But he sits, just as he always does, in the room of a private club somewhere in London puffing away on a cigar. We have to be more careful with these fictional characters than with historical figures or even the people of our own times. In fact, these characters have a more real and a longer life than the geniuses who created them. In the year 3000 AD Europe may have forgotten the great name of Ibsen. But surely Peer Gynt will still be looking down on the bright straits. The destitute Chinese zen masters Kanzan and Jittoku are even now wandering the misty mountain crags.<sup>43</sup> But as for the forgotten genius who created them...well, even the footsteps of the tiger that Chan master Bukan rode are now lost among the fallen leaves at Mt. Tendai.<sup>44</sup>

Implicit in Akutagawa's argument here is that the importance of fiction in imagining the nation will vary by cultural context. Anderson has famously argued that the novel was central to imagining the nation in the Americas and Europe.<sup>45</sup> But what of Japan? Certainly there has been a tendency to read canonical Japanese novels for their

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<sup>43</sup> Kanzan (寒山, 'cold mountain') and Jittoku (拾得, 'foundling', as he was supposedly found as an orphan) were semi-legendary figures within Chinese Buddhism and a highly popular subject of Chinese ink painting. Standard depictions featured Kanzan holding a scroll and Jittoku holding a broom. They are sometimes regarded as incarnations of the Bodhisattvas Monju and Fugen.

<sup>44</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 198-99.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson 24-36.

importance in defining the nation. Brilliant works, like Michael Bourdagh's recent monograph, *The Dawn That Never Comes: Shimazaki Toson and Japanese Nationalism* (2003), appraise early canonical novels primarily with regard to their importance in imagining the national community. Still, it is important to remember the impact that popular forms, such as folktales, had on the popular imagination of Japan. Recalling his reading during the 1890s, Tayama Katai mentions not a single Japanese novel by name. Similarly, Akutagawa, though he was well read in both Japanese and European fiction mentions no Japanese novels in his essay. In the quote above, Akutagawa lists some of the most influential literary characters from the national literatures of Germany, England, Sweden, and China. Europe is represented by protagonists from drama or literature: Faust, Macbeth, and Peer Gynt. China is represented by two popular figures from the tradition of ink painting on scrolls. Japan is not mentioned in the paragraph, but in light of the rest of the essay Iwami Jutarō, and to a lesser degree the other heroes mentioned, including Momotarō and Susanoō-no-Mikoto, would be the natural representatives for Japan. The novel form in Japan was being pioneered by a small elite of writers from the 1880s to 1890s and literary histories often cite Futabatei Shimei's *Ukigumo* (1887, *Drifting Clouds*) as the first modern Japanese novel. But the novel's dissemination in Japan—and by extension its importance in imagining the national community among the population—lagged behind its dissemination in the West.

In his essay Akutagawa suggests that the symbols that command power over the public's emotions include legendary heroes like Iwami, the folktale hero Momotarō, and a figure from the *Kojiki*, Susano-o-no-Mikoto. Popular heroes like Iwami become more important than protagonists of novels in imagining the nation in Japan. Akutagawa writes

that Iwami “dominates our emotions” and that “This is the power of Iwami, who not only lives in our feelings, but more than that, rules our wills.” Throughout his essay, Akutagawa cautions that we should not ‘look down on’ (*keibetsu*) characters such as Iwami. That is to say we should not underestimate the power that popular literature, or even folktales, had on defining the national imagination.

Much of Iwami’s power, and the power of popular heroes generally, lie in their seriality. Certain well loved stories in Japan—including Iwami and *Momotarō*, to name just two—have reached a critical mass and are constantly retold and recycled among manifold media. Akutagawa’s essay implies that it is stories that warrant constant retellings that will help the population to imagine the nation. What is crucial then is not complexity so much as repeated retellings of the story across time. It was this serial quality to the *Momotarō* tale, with new versions of basically the same story constantly finding new iterations, that made it crucial in imagining the nation.

### **Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s *Momotarō* (1925): The Hero as Villain**

While relatively unknown among Akutagawa’s writings, *Momotarō* has been published multiple times, most recently in 2005. Its short length allowed it to be first published as a single installment in the *Sandai Mainichi* (Sunday Mainichi) supplement of the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper on July 1, 1924.<sup>46</sup> Then it was quickly republished in December 1925 in book form as part of the collection *Shiroi budō* (*White Grapes*), edited by Tatsuno Yutaka. After this it languished in relative obscurity, only being republished as part of Akutagawa’s collected writings. Finally, in 2005 it was republished

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<sup>46</sup> I have appended a translation of the story in its entirety to the end of this chapter for reference.

in a large picture book format with Akutagawa's text accompanying illustrations by graphic artist Terakado Masayuki.

While Zhang's criticism implies the role of this folktale in Japanese imperialism, Akutagawa makes the connection explicit in his retelling.<sup>47</sup> Momotarō is recast as a brutal invader as Akutagawa carefully deconstructs the ideology that had been read into the tale. Akutagawa does this by means of a carefully constructed parody. Linda Hutcheon has defined parody as "a form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity."<sup>48</sup> Parody often directs its criticism not at its ur-text but something completely different. In Akutagawa's case, the target was not so much the *Momotarō* tale as the way that the tale had become connected to Japanese militarism and imperialism.

Hutcheon goes on to note that there is often a "tension between the potentially conservative effect of repetition and the potentially revolutionary impact of difference" as contained within the parody. In his essay "Iwami Jutarō," Akutagawa clearly recognized the life force (*seimei*) that resulted from the continuing work of renarration, which was conservative in that it slowly turned the subject of its narration into a more hegemonic

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<sup>47</sup> Akutagawa's thorough reimagining of the tale is the most successful attempt to parody the tale. But given the tale's importance in Japanese culture it is not surprising that Akutagawa was not the only author to refashion it into a political parody. Proletarian writer Sakanishi Mitsuo came out with a short version in July 1929 in the proletarian journal *Shōnen senki* (Children's Battle Flag) that shared certain similarities to Akutagawa's retelling.<sup>47</sup> Sakanishi's story, *Sono ato no Momotarō* (*Momotarō After Onigashima*) picks up after he has returned from *Oni* Island. He dismisses his retainers in order to avoid paying their wages, but calls them together once more in order to make an expedition to the Dragon Palace under the sea. His retainers then meet and issue a declaration of several points, including that they will no longer fight in foreign wars, expect proper wages for their labors, and that they will not participate in kidnapping a princess with whom they have no quarrel. Sakanishi's introduction of the *Urashimatarō* tale into the *Momotarō* tale is clever and his list of the retainers demands is more charming than it is shrill. But the tale still has a somewhat heavy-handed feel and the lack of greater storytelling skill limits the appeal of his retelling.

<sup>48</sup> Hutcheon xii.

discourse. With his parody “*Momotarō*,” he sought to intervene in this process and find “the potentially revolutionary impact of difference.”

Akutagawa’s parody is divided into six short sections, with the opening and closing sections made up of a newly added frame story that explains the origins of the peach in the traditional tale.

Long, long ago, really long ago, in a deep mountain valley stood a single giant peach tree. Just calling it giant doesn’t really do it justice. Its branches spread above the clouds and its roots reached down to the very underworld of Yomi itself. Since the very opening of heaven, when Izanagi no mikoto fended off the hags of Yomi who were chasing him by throwing a peach at them; that very peach from the age of the gods gave rise to this tree.

Since the dawn of the world, this tree flowers once every 10,000 years and bears a single fruit once every 10,000 years. Its flowers are like a crimson silk umbrella with a golden tuft trailing from it. Its fruit isn’t actually that large. Even more mysteriously though where the peach pit should be the fruit swells with a baby inside of it.<sup>49</sup>

This is an entertaining and logical addition because one of the obvious questions about the tale is where did the peach flowing down the river come from? Akutagawa connects the peach in the story and the legends recorded in Japan’s earliest mythical histories, the *Kojiki* (712) and the *Nihon shoki* (720). Just as Momotarō and Susanoō-no-Mikoto were mentioned together in the essay “Iwami Jutarō,” here the folktale hero is linked to Izanagi no Mikoto, who in a sense becomes Momotarō’s progenitor since he threw the peach that grew into the tree from which Momotarō sprang. Connecting the folktale to ancient histories allows Akutagawa to write in the somewhat archaic and magisterial style appropriate to matters of the *Kojiki*, and then to puncture that inflated style with his own trivial asides. This bathos marks Akutagawa’s basic comedic mode in this parody.

National myths in the style of the *Kojiki* require a third person omniscient narrator whose power and moral certainty, exercised on behalf of the national community, find their

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<sup>49</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 158.

voice in a stately linguistic register that sometimes exploits the best a national language has to offer and sometime even creates that language if it does not already exist. Examples in the West include the Aeneid and the Odyssey. The first and third sentences in Akutagawa's opening, narrating a towering tree in a deep mountain valley or branches that spread above the clouds and roots reaching down to the very underworld, is a good example of this style. But sandwiched between these confident descriptions is a most inappropriate doubt. The narrator writes, "Well, just calling it big may not really be saying enough." Ending his sentence "(I'm) not really sure if it's saying enough" (いひ足りないかもしれない), the narrator suggests his own doubt with his opening proclamation in the previous sentence. At a lack for words, the narrator exposes his own lack of power to fully describe, and thus control, the situation. In doing so he not only parodies Momotarō but also the confident style of the early national histories, a style that supports a confidence in the identity being narrated into existence. Still, the overall thrust of this section is to identify the *Momotarō* tale with the *Kojiki*, which had become a foundational myth of Japanese identity.

In the second section, Akutagawa continues to systematically question the usual narrative logic of conventional versions of the tale by ascribing a very base motive to explain Momotarō's quest to conquer *Oni* Island. Rather than love of country and family ties, the hero's impetus for his quest is revealed to be personal greed. The narrator notes, "Momotarō, born from a peach, began to think about conquering *Oni* Island. As for why he began to think about it, it was because he did not want to go and work in the fields or the rivers or the mountains like his mother and father did." In light of the widespread migration of Japanese from the countryside to urban centers, the reinterpretation of the



story that this passage offers makes perfect sense. The motive of the hero is economic advancement, which can best be achieved by fleeing the drudgery and economic stagnation of agricultural work. This suggestion of economic motives is brought out more starkly a few sentences later in the description of how Momotarō makes a retainer of a dog he encounters by giving him a millet dumpling.

Akutagawa wrote that as a child his mother bought him copies of Iwaya Sazanami's famous twenty-four volume series *Nihon mukashibanashi* (Japanese Folktales), which began with the *Momotarō* tale.<sup>50</sup> He also would have read the *Momotarō* tale at school in his primary school reader. These two iterations of the story constituted the most widely distributed versions and were almost universally known by school children. These versions both referred to the animals serving Momotarō as retainers, thus invoking and extolling feudal values of loyalty. In Akutagawa's version, however, when the dog finally submits to serving Momotarō in exchange for only half a millet dumpling, the story notes, "So as it goes with all business, the 'havenots' were forced to obey the will of the 'haves.'" The phrasing is a good example of one of Akutagawa's wonderfully concise ironic asides. It also borrows from the language of leftist economic criticism of Japanese society and recasts the lord-retainer relationship not as one of human values, but of adversarial economic negotiation.

The third section contains Akutagawa's most creative intervention into the story: he leaves the standard narrative progression altogether and re-focalizes the story through the perspective of the *oni* turning the normal perspective of the story upside down. As Hutcheon notes, "ironic inversion is characteristic of all parody" and "the imagery is the

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<sup>50</sup> Sekiguchi 16. See Chapter Two for a discussion of Iwaya Sazanami's adaptation of the tale.

same but the context is inverted.”<sup>51</sup> The narrator reveals that, “*oni*, from the very beginning of their existence as a race (*shuzoku*) were much more peaceful than us humans” and describes *Oni* Island as a tropical paradise. The change in point of view reverses the usual colonial travel encounter on a number of fronts. It has now become common in criticism to speak of the dominating power of the gaze in travel writing as well as that gaze’s power to construct a subject. In Akutagawa’s story several of the standard tropes of this kind of writing are undercut by the narrative move to imagine *Oni* Island existing before and independently of Momotarō.

First is the suggestion that the colonial space exists independently of a colonial gaze or presence and does not need this presence in order to be narrated into existence. By establishing that the world’s idea of *Oni* Island as a “barren, rocky island” was wrong, the narrative opens the way to suggest that other misconceptions are at work as well. Recounting other tales about oni in the Japanese tradition, the narrator spins each story to suggest these villains were actually just misunderstood. Even the fearsome Shutendōji, who abducted and ate the court women of Kyoto, is recast. Conflating the narrator with himself for comic effect, Akutagawa suggests that maybe we should not believe the women’s version of things and that the famous hero Raiko was maybe just crazy with “female worship” (*josei sūhai*).

Second, in this section an *oni* grandmother tells her grandchildren that if they are bad they will be sent off to the Island of Humans. There is a notable shift in the tone of the story here, from light comedy to serious criticism. Parody has both comedic and critical functions; in this section the focus of the work begins to shift from the former to

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<sup>51</sup> Hutcheon 6.

the latter. At first the grandmother details how horrible humans are, at least by *oni* standards. She recounts how they are awful “creatures with no horns” and “pale white hands and feet.” There is the suggestion, couched in light comedy, of the relativism of values. Humans come up deficient when judged by the standards by which *oni* are considered normal. But the tone then turns harsh when she recounts that humans “tell lies, are greedy, harbor jealousy, are deeply prideful, kill their fellow men, commit arsons, commit robbery and are just totally out of control.” The reader recognizes these as crimes and recognizes that people are indeed prone to them. This change in tone to serious criticism of human failings continues in the next section where these faults are summed up in Momotarō’s sudden appearance on the island in the guise of a colonial invader.

This continuing change in tone in the fourth section is dramatic and also central to the political criticism inherent in the parody. Up until this point the humor has been largely politically inoffensive in nature and has been self-effacing, directed at the cost of the narrator rather than the moral authority of Japan’s imperial project. But now Momotarō’s invasion of *Oni* Island is unmistakably cast as a brutal slaughter. The narrator could hardly paint the actions of both Momotarō and his retainers in a more unattractive light, especially the monkey’s actions in which sexual brutality culminates in murder.

Momotarō delivered unto these innocent *oni* greater terribleness than has been seen since the foundations of the country. Dropping their steel clubs, the *oni* scrambled away trying to escape, screaming “the humans are coming”, while fleeing to the left and to the right of coconut trees as they ran away.

“Forward, forward, as soon as you find an *oni*, kill them all, do not let a single one escape.” With his peach-emblazoned flag in one hand, closing and opening his Rising Sun fan in the other, he ordered his three retainers forward. Maybe the three animals didn’t get along very well. But there are none more qualified to be loyal and brave soldiers than desperate, hungry animals. They chased after the fleeing *oni* like a storm.

The dog mauled young *oni* to death with a single bite. The pheasant drilled its sharp beak all the way through young *oni* skulls. The monkey—in keeping with its nature as a close relative of mankind—satisfied its lust by raping *oni* daughters before strangling them to death.<sup>52</sup>

With this passage we have the transition to open, direct criticism linking symbols of Japan, specifically Momotarō and a rising-sun fan with greed, murder and sexualized violence.

But it is not just the violence inherent in colonial conquest that is condemned here, but the logic justifying it as well. In traditional versions of the story, the hero is motivated to act in order to deter marauding *oni* who have threatened his home village. But given that the focalization of the story through the *oni* has established their innocence, this reason clearly does not work here. Instead, in Akutagawa's retelling we are given the following passage.

After touching his head to the ground again, the *oni* chieftain looked up in trembling and asked Momotarō, “We understand that it is because of some offense that we have caused upon you that you have come to this island and punished us. If you could only tell us what injury we have committed we would certainly understand much more.”

Momotarō coolly nodded and said, “Having assembled my three faithful retainers, I, Japan's number one, came to *Oni* Island and conquered it.”

“So, why was it that you called these three retainers together?”

“Desiring in my heart to conquer *Oni* Island I called them together. How about it? If you still say you don't understand, then I'll just kill every last one of you.”

Surprised, the *oni* chieftain jumped back a couple of yards, and finally bowed again respectfully.<sup>53</sup>

The gap between the logic of the *oni* chieftain and Momotarō is striking. The *oni* chieftain is seeking out a logical reason for the colonial invasion, ascertaining what injury the local population committed. Momotarō can only answer that in essence he followed the narrative familiar to him. When the *oni* chieftain continues a logical line of inquiry and restates his questions about that narrative, the colonial hero can only answer with the

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<sup>52</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 163-64.

<sup>53</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 164-65.

threat of violence. There is the suggestion here that the reasoning of the colonial narrative does not stand up to logical inquiry and when challenged can only answer back with brute force.

In the final section of the story we return to the framing story and this return is essential because it takes us back to Japan's founding myths. But now our perspective on these myths has been fundamentally changed from positive to negative based on the events of the story. Akutagawa writes, "the prodigies (*tensai*) of tomorrow sit sleeping in their fruits in unknown numbers. What branch would the Yatagarasu bird alight upon this time? Ah, how many future geniuses lie sleeping in those fruits?"<sup>54</sup> In another context, the promise of "the geniuses of tomorrow" in their "unknown numbers" would seem to hold the hope of progress. But in light of Momotarō's actions the progress of modernity seems to hold more threat than promise.

### Conclusion

At the heart of Akutagawa's critique is the importance of re-narration in endowing stories with power. This point is also central to understanding how the tale was used by both national and local folklore studies as I consider in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, respectively. While both Yanagita and local researchers would claim to be merely uncovering the Momotarō tale's importance to the Japanese past, they were at the same time contributing to its power during the interwar period through their own iterations of it. Of all the re-narrations either of or regarding the tale in the modern period, Yanagita's was the single most influential in interpreting its meaning, as I show in the following

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<sup>54</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 166. The Yatagarasu bird is mentioned as guiding emperor Jimmu in some early myths.

chapter. Akutagawa's critique is helpful when considering Yanagita's project because it points out attention toward the ideological work of renarration and how narratives gain power and a 'life-force' (*seimei*) from repeated retellings. While Akutagawa was likely thinking in terms of serialized fictional versions of the tale that were constantly being retold, Yanagita's study of the tale made even greater contributions to its legitimacy as a symbol of the Japanese folk.

## CHAPTER IV

### Folktales and the Formation of Yanagita Kunio's *Minzokugaku* in the early to mid 1930s

It was exactly ten years ago now that on a bright spring morning as I strolled through an art museum in Florence, I found myself standing in front of Botticelli's renown painting *The Birth of Venus*. And while standing there I enjoyed a pleasant noon daydream, imagining that at some point in time, people in my own homeland of Japan could newly discover the birth of Momotarō as an issue and similarly reflect upon it.

Yanagita Kunio, *Momotarō no tanjō* (1933, *The Birth of Momotarō*)<sup>1</sup>

Yanagita opens *Momotarō no tanjō* with a comparison between a classic Italian painting and a Japanese folktale. At first glance the analogy seems forced. More than the different cultural (or national) contexts, the difference in medium and authorship would seem to prevent any meaningful correspondence here. What are the affinities between an oil painting by a European master and an oral tale handed down through generations of Japanese? Botticelli's work, a product of the Italian cultural elite, more immediately draws to mind Japan's own fine arts, such as the gilded paintings of the Momoyama age. Yanagita's rhetoric is not without purpose however. Dissonance inherent in the comparison provokes certain questions. Such as, if *The Birth of Venus* is art, what are Japanese folktales? And if Botticelli's painting is hanging in an art museum in Florence, where do oral tales exist?

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<sup>1</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 241.

The connection he is drawing lies of course in the natal theme. Birth is one of the most basic artistic subjects and both works center on it. But while the birth of Venus is a single (narrative) event in the painting, in Yanagita's usage the birth of Momotarō immediately implies three distinct references. First is the main plot event of the *Momotarō* story, the birth of a boy from a peach. Second is the title of his work that was derived from this plot event. Third, and most important, is a self-conscious allusion to the birth of a new academic field—the disciplinary consolidation of *minzokugaku* that he himself was leading at the time. By 1933, the “some point in time” when Japanese could “newly discover” their own folktales had arrived. Laying claim to the paternity of this field, Yanagita recalls that he had dreamed of this moment ten years earlier when he was in Europe serving as one of Japan's delegates to the League of Nations. Whether the sight of Botticelli actually brought Japanese folktales to his mind at the time is perhaps beside the point. By bringing together a treasure of Italian art and *Momotarō* Yanagita is insisting upon the value of Japanese folktales and the need to look upon them with new eyes.

Still, why folktales? How and why folktales became the focus around which *minzokugaku*, or folklore studies,<sup>2</sup> took shape is the primary question that guides me in this chapter. One reason is that while Yanagita was interested in all aspects of rural culture, he saw oral tales as a particularly effective means of gaining access to the inner worldview of the Japanese folk. Types of oral tales that he studied included strange tales or ghost stories (*kaidan*), myths (*shinwa*), local legends (*densetsu*), tales (*setsuwa*), and

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<sup>2</sup> In translating *minzokugaku* [民俗学、later 民族学] as folklore studies I am following the precedent set by Ronald Morse in *Yanagita Kunio and the Folklore Movement*. The wide range of topics studied by Yanagita allow for other possible translations including anthropology, ethnology, nativist ethnology (favored by Marilyn Ivy), ethnography, or even Japanese cultural studies.



folktales (*mukashibanashi*). He was particularly drawn to strange tales and ghost stories in the 1920s and folktales from the 1930s.<sup>3</sup> Writing about folklore studies, Ronald Morse concisely notes, “if there is one unifying theme to Yanagita’s work it is the search for elements of tradition that explain Japan’s distinctive national character.”<sup>4</sup> Folktales imagined this national character more effectively than studies of local dialects and architecture or farm practices and mountain villages could. This is partly because unlike these other aspects of rural culture that Yanagita studied, folktales are inherently narrative vehicles and thus suited to retelling. It is also because variants of the same folktales were scattered across the nation. Thus while local dialects emphasized difference, even to the point of mutual incomprehensibility, folktales evoked a recognizably shared cultural heritage. Folktales also sutured over the rural-urban divide. City dwellers were linked to the countryside by stories that continued to be a part of their daily lives, even after local dialects, village festivals, or other rural customs were long left behind.

The study and understanding of folktales were shifting during the 1920s and 1930s and this engenders a second question: what were the disciplinary means of defining folktales? Folklore of all kinds was widely popular during the Taishō era and filled quasi-academic magazines like *Tabi to densetsu* (Travel and Legends). City dwellers with leisure and money reported on their travels to the countryside as they incorporated local tales or sites into their own travel writings. And teachers at schools located in more rural areas often researched the areas in which they were living. Yanagita

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<sup>3</sup> Yanagita’s interest in strange tales in the 1920s was an overlooked aspect of his career in English-language scholarship until Gerald Figal’s *Civilization and Monsters: Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan* (Durham: Durham, 1999). Especially see Chapter 4, “Modern ‘Science’ and the Folk.”

<sup>4</sup> Morse xvi.

benefited from this great interest by both groups but also felt the need to discipline it. He did this through a series of theoretical writings on folktales that put the grounding principles of *minzokugaku* into place. His major works in this vein included *Momotarō no tanjō* (1933), *Minkan denshō ron* (1934, *A Theory of Orally Transmitted Tales*) and *Mukashibanashi to bungaku* (1938, *Folktales and Literature*). In order to guide practice in the field, Yanagita and his colleagues also issued a series of eight different fieldwork manuals from 1936 to 1939. [See Appendix E] The unifying argument in all of these studies and guides emphasized the need for comparison, which is what makes his opening rhetoric with Botticelli and *Momotarō* so apropos. Oral tales from different regions and even times were to be held together for comparison. Stitching together tales that were unrelated or only loosely related, folklore studies created a newly coherent whole. Just as railroads linked the country physically, folklore studies was one force effecting this change at the cultural level.

Following one tale reveals the details of this process most clearly. I have picked *Momotarō* because it is the most popular of Japanese folktales and the one that Yanagita spends the most time considering. For this study, I will focus on *Momotarō no tanjō* and *Mukashi banashi saishū techō* (1936, *Folktale Fieldwork Guide*). The former more authoritatively theorized folktales in Japan than anything written prior to it. The latter, a kind of field manual of 100 representative tales, provided concrete guidance for researchers active in the field and showed Yanagita's principles in practice. Taken together these two works helped to define folktales in theory and practice and formed the conceptual lens through which they would be viewed. This was a selective filter that

allowed certain stories through, rejected others, but shaped them all in subtle but profound ways.

The picture that came into view through this lens was significant because interest in folktales was both a product of and a factor in the resurgent cultural nationalism in Japan from the 1930s to the end of World War II. This leads me to a third and final question: how did *minzokugaku* and its methods link folktales more closely to an imagined Japanese nation? In light of Homi Bhabha's works, we may view all nations as being narrated, but the details of how and what is narrated will be specific to each case. In the case of Japan, scholars have long debated whether the political charge of Yanagita's folklore studies was conservative or liberal.<sup>5</sup> With the *Momotarō* tale, however, the connection between Yanagita's scholarship and the politics of Japanese nationalism is surprisingly direct, as the tale was used extensively in war propaganda as I show in Chapter Five. In this chapter I will consider how Yanagita laid the groundwork for later uses of *Momotarō*, and folktales generally, by focusing on the connections between tales from across the country and imagining local tales as national tales. This re-imagining of tales began with a name change for folklore studies.

### **From *Kyōdo kenkyū* to *Minzokugaku***

From roughly 1934 to 1936 Yanagita shifted the name by which he identified his overall research from *kyōdo kenkyū* (local studies) to *minzokugaku*.<sup>6</sup> This change was

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<sup>5</sup> Victor Koschmann's analysis of the political implications of Yanagita's project is excellent but quite nuanced and resists an easy summary. See his, "Folklore Studies and the Conservative Anti-Establishment in Modern Japan," (pp. 131-164) in the edited collection *International Perspectives on Yanagita Kunio and Japanese Folklore Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1985).

<sup>6</sup> Considering the great amount of scholarly attention paid to Yanagita in both the US and Europe, it is surprising that this name change has not previously been considered in English-language scholarship.

less related to his increasing focus on folktales than to the rising popularity of folklore studies and how this broad interest was redefining the term *kyōdo kenkyū*. The term *kyōdo* had long been associated with education. One of its earlier appearances in print was in the 1891 Basic Elementary School Guidelines Law (小学校教則大綱) where it appeared twice.<sup>7</sup> Coming a year after the more famous Imperial Rescript on Education (*Chokugo engi*), the 1891 law spelled out basic principles governing how subjects were to be taught in elementary schools across the country. It decreed that Japanese Geography (*Nihon chiri*) was to begin with observations of the *kyōdo*, meaning the surrounding local area. Similarly, Japanese History was to begin with historical stories from the local area. At the pedagogical level this reflected the strong emphasis on learning through direct observation. At the practical level, this made often abstract national ideologies real to schoolchildren by grounding them in the details of their immediate communities, as we will see later in this chapter.

Among the first recorded academic uses of the term *kyōdo* was that by the educator and statesman Nitobe Inazō (1862-1933) for his Local Studies Group (*kyōdo kai*) that ran from 1910 to 1918.<sup>8</sup> Trained in agricultural economics, Nitobe published *A Theory of Agriculture (Nōgyō honron)* in 1898; here he considered local areas under the category of *jikata gaku* (地方学), which he later identified as the precursor of the term *kyōdo kenkyū*. Yanagita was the most prominent member of Nitobe's group and began to chart a more independent direction from March 1913 when he and fellow folklore researcher Toshio Takagi (1876-1922) first published the inaugural issue of the journal

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<sup>7</sup> Sekidō Akiko, ed. *Kyōdo: hyōshō to jissen* (Kyoto: Saganoshoin, 2003) v.

<sup>8</sup> Sekido iv.

“*Kyōdo kenkyū*.”<sup>9</sup> As with the formation of the field of *minzokugaku* many years later, Yanagita developed *kyōdo kenkyū* through an oppositional rhetoric. In the inaugural issues of *Kyōdo kenkyū* he criticized the dominant approach of *shigaku* or documentary research, which established the facts of a local area but did not take the extra step of constructing a larger interpretive framework out of them that described local lifeways.

The need to research local areas meant that Yanagita, who was based in Tokyo, either journeyed to the countryside himself (which he often did), relied on others to make the journey, or used teachers working at rural schools as informants. This meant that he was constantly in close contact with educators all over the countryside. These relationships were often fraught with tensions. For example, in a 1918 article Yanagita wrote about his desire to use schoolteachers as informants to investigate local customs.<sup>10</sup> But he lamented that teachers had often been posted from outside the local areas and only possessed a cursory knowledge of those areas; this led Yanagita to sometimes depend on local youths for his research instead. Through much of the early 1920s he insisted that if teachers were from outside of an area they needed to put down roots in the community where they were teaching in order to better understand their students.<sup>11</sup> He also urged them to do local research in order to compile supplementary materials to the nationally produced textbooks that gave relatively little mention of the very communities in which students lived. From the first half of the 1930s onward this research was often compiled in the form of *kyōdo tokuhon* or Local Readers. Ironically it was just as *kyōdo tokuhon*

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<sup>9</sup> Ito 242.

<sup>10</sup> Ito 240.

<sup>11</sup> Ito 235-239. This was another center-periphery tension inherent in Yanagita’s research. He wanted teachers to be deeply versed in local knowledge, both for the benefit of their students and so the teachers could be helpful to Yanagita in his own research. But he did not want to these teachers to conduct their own research independently of Yanagita and his guidance.

began to flourish that Yanagita began to most intensively criticize local studies and the local education movement.

Both Yanagita's sometimes contentious relationship with local educators and the shift in his thinking regarding the proper function of local studies is well represented in a speech titled "Local Studies and Local Education" (*Kyōdo kenkyū to kyōdo kyōiku*) he gave to the Yamagata Association for Local Studies (*Yamagata kyōdo kenkyū kai*). Speaking on November 5, 1932 in Yamagata City to a packed house of over six hundred people—composed almost entirely of educators—Yanagita expounded on the uses and abuses of local research for just over two and a half hours, in effect criticizing his audience in fairly direct terms.

Our local studies (*kyōdo kenkyū*), in contrast to how other people use the term, has at least two very major differences. The first one is, we did not take the local area (*kyōdo*) as our object of research. In contrast to this, all of you are saying that you will research the local area. But we did not mean to use the word 'local studies' in this way. We did not mean to study the local area (for itself); we meant to take the local area as a place to study something. If we ask what that 'something' that we want to study is specifically, it is the lifeways of the Japanese (*nihonjin no seikatsu*), in particular the past history of this race group. Our plan was to tie together our studies by looking at the case in each local area and working through the distinctive affect (*ishiki kankaku*) of people in particular areas. And our second point, which we did not anticipate at all, is the speed with which (local researchers) would take the results of their researches in various local areas, apply them right away to their own fields of teaching, in particular to teach morals to young children, as well as the optimism with which they embraced this and the speed with which they carried this out. We did not at all embrace this bold hope. This is another big difference (between my thought and that of local researchers). ... In each local area, data is gathered by each insular observer and this data is not compared (to other local research) or integrated, and does not spur any cross-pollination of ideas between local areas. If local studies is pursued this way I doubt whether it can have any good effect. Even now this mistaken approach (to local studies) is being pursued.<sup>12</sup>

Always a master rhetorician, Yanagita starts by invoking "our local studies" (*wareware no kyōdo kenkyū*), a move linking him to membership in a community of scholars to

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<sup>12</sup> Ito 4.

which his audience is clearly not a part. This serves to emphasize his authority in the field before he begins to chastise his listeners for the two errors of only researching a single local area and then taking this research almost immediately into their own classrooms. Yanagita's comments are all the more striking considering that the assembled teachers passed the morning discussing their own local research only to spend the afternoon listening to him criticize it in his speech. At the heart of his critique is his insistence that the local area is a means, not an ends. He asserts, "we did not take the local area as an object of research," and says instead that "we meant to take the local area as a place to study...the lifeways of the Japanese." Comparing research on local areas from across the nation did allow for a broader perspective and provide deeper insights to Japanese culture as a whole. But it also disallowed the value of local research that had not been tied into a national network and considered only a single locale. In effect it posited that local identity was only legible through national identity. As I will show later in this chapter, this same dynamic was at work in the framework through which Yanagita interpreted tales generally.

At this point in 1932 he was still identifying his folklore studies as *kyōdo kenkyū*, although he mentioned in his Yamagata speech that the term "has a good feeling to it but is slightly less than adequate academically" (*kanji wa nakanaka yoi da ga gakujutsuteki no go toshite wazuka fukanzen da*).<sup>13</sup> There were hints of a name change already. In an article titled "*Kokumotsu to shinzō*" (Grains and the Heart) in the January 1932 edition of

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<sup>13</sup> Ito 4.

*Shinano kyōiku* (Education in Shinano), Yanagita mentioned that he looked forward to the day when “the new field of *minzokugaku*” could “prosper on Japanese soil.”<sup>14</sup> He only directly addressed the topic of the name change retrospectively, four years later and after the change had taken place. He did this in a series of five lectures titled “*Kyōdo kenkyū to minzokugaku*” given across a span of seven months in 1936.<sup>15</sup> In his first lecture on April 20<sup>th</sup> he notes:

Up until now the name *kyōdo kenkyū* was widely used and not just by me. Recently the word *minzokugaku* has increasingly come to be used. One can imagine it [this research] like a larva growing into a mosquito, but in point of fact it is the same thing. Or you could explain by saying that in three years a baby grows into a three-year old. The name has nothing at all to do with it. ... there are practical reasons for this [name change]. One of them is that the word *kyōdo kenkyū* has become just too plain (*amari ni futsū*).<sup>16</sup>

The term *minzokugaku* had already been around in Japan since the Meiji period and was well established in scholarly circles. So why the change at this point and not earlier? In saying that *kyōdo kenkyū* had become “just too plain” (*amari ni futsū*) he hints at the reason. In addition to increasing participation in the field by local educators, there was a surge in popular interest in folklore studies by city dwellers that presented both a challenge and an opportunity for Yanagita. But to understand his response we must first consider the nature of this growing interest in folklore.

This ethnographic impulse among Japan’s growing urban middle class during the 1920s easily fit into Japan’s centuries long tradition of pilgrimages to holy places, journeys to local hot springs, and the genre of travel writing (*kikōbun*).<sup>17</sup> What was new

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<sup>14</sup> Ito 5.

<sup>15</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 383-404. He delivered them to the Hizen Historical Society (肥前史談会) and they were serialized in the Society’s gazette from April to October.

<sup>16</sup> Yanagita (Vol 6) 382-3.

<sup>17</sup> A boom in amateur ethnography by the Japanese middle class was enabled by the increasing penetration of the countryside by railway networks and the expansion of easy domestic tourism that this enabled. As



were the large numbers of people traveling and the discursive terms in which they were casting their writing. Many of these people became amateur anthropologists and sought to publish notes of their travels in the popular and semi-academic journals of the day. Yanagita himself noted in an article on travel for a popular audience that his research could also be called “*ryokōgaku*” (the Traveling Study).<sup>18</sup>

A glance at folklore-related journals of the day reveals how tenuous the distinction was between tourism and folklore or anthropological research. *Tabi to densetsu* (*Travel and Legends*), published between 1923 and 1944, was one of the most successful of these semi-academic magazines. It featured numerous glossy black and white plates of Japanese shrines and temples, accounts of travels to hot springs or mountains, train schedules, and advertising for tourist sites. The increasing interest in folklore studies that supported these magazines drove Yanagita to reassert the distinction between amateur and professional. Changing names was part of his effort to discipline a field that had become “just too plain,” that is to say overwhelmed by amateur participation.

Reading Yanagita’s prose one is constantly reminded of his origins as a poet. He clearly delights in language. Here the naturalizing rhetoric that the name change is like “a larva growing into a mosquito” or “a baby grow[ing] into a three-old” serves his purpose well. In each case clearly one grows out of the other. In addition to suggesting the continuity of his research, he is insinuating that the change is merely an organic development. Of course it would be more accurate to note that he is responding to the

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much as leisure, a new urban middle class was seeking to discover and enjoy markers of rural identity during their travels.

<sup>18</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 29) 183. From *Ryokō no jōzu heta* [Tips for Traveling Well] originally published May 1, 1934 in *Fujin no tomo*. The connection between anthropological (or folklore) research and travel has been well explored in contemporary scholarship.

developments in the field. As the term *kyōdo kenkyū* gained favor among the public at large, it was simultaneously losing favor to the term *minzokugaku* among more academic circles. This trend is seen in the titles of folklore journals. For example, the journal *Kyōdo kenkyū* ran under Yanagita's direction from 1913-1917. Other folklore-related journals were *Minzoku to rekishi* (1919-1923, Ethnos and History), *Minzoku* (1925-1929, Ethnos), *Minzokugaku* (1929-1933, Folklore Studies), and *Minzokugaku kenkyū* (from 1935, Japanese Journal of Ethnology). As evidenced by journal titles, from the late 1920s the term *minzokugaku*, which denoted a more academic, Western-inspired approach to folklore and ethnological studies, was gaining popularity.

One reason for this change lies in the differing implications that the two kanji compounds carry. For example the last half of each term, *kenkyū* and *gaku*, both mean study but in very different senses. The former implies a freedom that the latter denies. *Kenkyū* is best translated as research and can be carried out by individuals on almost any topic and with almost any approach that the investigator chooses. When applied to an academic discipline, *kenkyū* is well rendered as “studies,” as seen in the relatively young fields of gender studies, American studies, Television studies and so on. *Gaku*, attached as a suffix, suggests an academic field with a defined topic and methods. Ology, related to the Greek root Logos, and seen in biology, geology, and so on is the best counterpart for *gaku* in this sense. In embracing the name *minzokugaku*, Yanagita is asserting that folklore studies must now become a rigorous discipline and that researchers in the field must all follow similar procedures. In the lecture series he notes:

We [researchers] are by no means doing this research as a hobby or for fun. And in this way, by considering our research as an “ology”[*gaku*] we want to renew our understanding and prevent disunity [*futōitsu wo*

*samatageru*] of [the field].<sup>19</sup>

Unity of the field was Yanagita's overriding concern and he sought to achieve this unity through his theoretical writings and field guides, which I will discuss in the latter half of this chapter.

An even greater difference is implied in changing the object of study from *kyōdo* to *minzoku*. As used by Yanagita, *kyōdo* implied a local area and its culture, both material and nonmaterial. More important than a geographical distinction of area, however, was the link between people, place and culture that *kyōdo* implied. In practice the term always referred to rural areas where these connections had been deepened across many generations. In this schema it would be impossible to use *kyōdo* to refer to Tokyo or other modern Japanese cities where change rather than continuity was the norm. Birth was also a crucial aspect of *kyōdo*, both in the sense of one's native place of birth and as the place and culture that gave birth to a person's distinctive value system. *Minzoku* [民俗] were the traditional social customs and mores of a people. Later, with the move to the homophonous but different compound *minzoku* [民族], the object of study became the Japanese race itself.<sup>20</sup> Substituting *minzoku* for *kyōdo* meant moving the focus from individual local areas to the intangible culture of the Japanese people as a whole. In theory, *minzoku* could be used to refer to the folklore of only a single area. In practice, however, the goal was to describe the Japanese collectively. Yanagita elaborates as follows.

That is to say, our object of study is the very lifestyles of the Japanese themselves. Therefore, our object is not the study of a single county or a single village. ...I am very deeply attached to my native place

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<sup>19</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 390.

<sup>20</sup> In the subsequent discussion my references to *minzoku* denote the first term [民俗].

[*kyōdo*] where I grew up, but on the other hand my consciousness of being a Japanese is also very strong. Under the local studies that my colleagues and I are doing, we want to view local areas [*kyōdo*] through our collective feelings as Japanese [*nihonjin toiu kyōtsū no kimochi*]<sup>21</sup>

Implications here for how folklore studies operated before and after the name change are clear and profound. Folklore studies as *minzokugaku* needed an object of study that allowed it to imagine the customs, lifestyle, and values of the Japanese people throughout the entire country. Given this change it seems more than accidental that study of folktales gained prominence around this time over other studies, such as of local dialects, architecture, farm practices and so on. Folktales allowed “the study of a single county or a single village” to find resonance with and give insight into “our collective feelings as Japanese.” Ironically this was largely because by the time Yanagita was working in the 1930s, a single, standardized version of these tales was known throughout Japan by means of textbooks, and to a lesser degree children’s literature.<sup>22</sup> This move, from studying individual areas to making generalizations about the Japanese people as a whole, was in part the result of the accumulation of research that Yanagita and others had access to by the 1930s. It meant that Yanagita shifted his focus during this decade to begin comparing data at his disposal and adding a theoretical superstructure to the field to govern subsequent research. At the same time, it had implications for how folklore studies imagined the nation. Pieces of research that could be fit into a picture of an integrated nation would be cited, remembered and promoted. Culture that could not be fit into this larger picture would be passed by or even forcefully reinterpreted within the new framework. This process as it worked on the *Momotarō* tale is well illustrated in Yanagita’s 1933 *Momotarō no tanjō*.

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<sup>21</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 29) 384.

<sup>22</sup> See my second chapter.

### *Momotarō no tanjō* (1933)

The changes of name and academic approach evidenced in Yanagita's 1936 lecture series were the result of his turning to work on folklore research full time from around 1930. As is well known, Yanagita had many different careers in the course of his life, working at the highest levels of the bureaucracy for the Department of Agriculture throughout the 1910s, as Chief Secretary of the House of Peers from 1914 to 1919, and as a journalist for the *Asahi shimbun*.<sup>23</sup> Ronald Morse makes the interesting point that had Yanagita died before around 1930 he would not have been remembered as the founder of *minzokugaku* in Japan. It was only from the 1930s that he began to erect the theoretical structures that governed *minzokugaku*. His 1933 work is important as one of the first of his major works in this vein.

From April 1930 to July 1932 Yanagita wrote the series of nine essays on folktales that were collectively published in 1933 as *Momotarō no tanjō* (hereafter *Tanjō*).<sup>24</sup> Partly in response to the increased interest in folktales that *Tanjō* drew, he began his Thursday meetings (*mokuyō no kai*) for students and scholars involved in folklore research. Moreover, the flood of increased information submitted by informants from around the country led him to issue several field manuals, including one on folktales

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<sup>23</sup> For biographical material on Yanagita's life and career Ronald Morse's 1990 book *Yanagita Kunio and the Folklore Movement: The Search for Japan's National Character and Distinctiveness* is excellent. Especially see his first two chapters.

<sup>24</sup> *Momotarō no tanjō* has a somewhat tangled publication history. The 1933 book was a compilation of nine separately published articles, written over a roughly two-year span between April 1930 and July 1932. Six of these were published in the quasi-academic journal with which Yanagita had close ties, *Tabi to densetsu*, one was put out by Iwanami publishing, one appeared in the journal *Kyōdo kenkyū*, and one was carried in the prestigious intellectual journal *Chuo kōron*. The first and last chapters were written together in June and July of 1932; rhetorically these serve as bookends to his argument, summarizing it and giving clarity to what is otherwise a very eclectic consideration of many different folktales. My own consideration focuses primarily on his opening and closing chapters.

in 1936. Beginning in 1936 and continuing through 1939 folktales would be Yanagita's primary focus as he traveled around the country collecting them and sorting through submissions of collectors from around the nation. It was only after the war in 1948, however, that the authoritative archive listing Japan's folktales, *Nihon mukashi banashi meii* (*Glossary of Japanese Folktales*), was published. The academic understanding of folktales that guided it was put in place by 1933 with *Tanjō*.

While an organized taxonomy of terms for oral tales would only emerge later in Yanagita's thought, *Tanjō* is striking in its newly systematic and comparative focus on tales. Yanagita stresses the relationships between both tales from Europe and among different Japanese tales themselves. Up until this point his articles mainly connected tales to the locality from which they were collected, a method more appropriate to *kyōdo kenkyū* than to *minzokugaku*. In *Tanjō*, where he considers around a dozen Japanese tales, his first move is to compare several of them to well-known European tales. In the first of nine chapters, his prime example is the Cinderella tale, considered as follows.

In England it is known as Cinderella, as told by the Brothers Grimm. In Japan it is known by such names as *Nukabuku komebuku*. Although at least one thousand years have passed since it arrived in our country, it has changed very little.<sup>25</sup>

He goes on to posit the Cinderella story, with its element of magical change in appearance, to be an inspiration for the numerous *ubakawa* [old woman skin] stories and even the famous *otogizōshi* (a genre of popular medieval tales) *Hachikatsugi hime* (*The Princess with the Bowl on her Head*) and *Ochikubo monogatari* (*The Tale of the Lady Ochikubo*). This is a rather puzzling assertion for it suggests foreign influence at least as

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<sup>25</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 243.

far back as the Heian period and not from continental Asia but rather Europe. More typically he goes on to write,

There is an ancient variety of folktale [*mukashi banashi*] that is quite common in Europe called *Le Mort Reconnaissant*. One variation is called *The Singing Bones*, in which a skeleton will sing of his past. In Japan, this kind of spirit tale [*reiki*, 靈異記] has been passed down in relatively unchanged form since as far back as the *Nihon ryōiki*. Judging from this, it seems that this kind of tale [*setsuwa*] must have changed to a work of art, rather than something to be believed literally, before it arrived in Japan.<sup>26</sup>

This passage is exemplary of how Yanagita holds up Japanese and European cultural heritage side by side. He is not suggesting that the *Nihon ryōiki*, a 9<sup>th</sup>-century Buddhist collection, came from Europe but no mention is made of Asian origins either. By constantly comparing the two he suggests that Japan's proper partner for comparison is Europe. Yanagita only mentions a few cases, such as the *Tongue-Cut Swallow* tale (*Shita kiri suzume*), in which there may have been possible Asian influence, in this case from Korea.

Comparison both between sets of Japanese tales and between Japanese tales and European tales are a constant throughout the book. The latter set of comparisons are the result of Yanagita's familiarity with the Western corpus of folktales and relative lack of knowledge or interest (until his later years) in Asian folktales. The practical result of this is a kind of *datsua*, or de-Asianization, as Japan's cultural heritage is reinterpreted so as to make it analogous with a dominant West. While Yanagita largely ignores possible Asian sources, he is constantly suggesting European origins for ancient Japanese folktales. Of course he was hardly alone in this move. In the field of literary studies, the most famous instance of *datsua* was fifty years earlier with Tsubouchi Shōyō's mapping of

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<sup>26</sup> Yanagita (Vol 6) 245.

Japanese literary forms such as *shōsetsu* onto the Western novel in his seminal literary treatise *Shōsetsu shinzui* (1885-1886).

In both cases what was to be gained was needed prestige for a newly organized field. What was de-emphasized in Yanagita's case, however, was the sense of these tales as distinct products of a local culture, and their possible Asian connections. In presenting a vision of tales evolving thematically—gaining or losing story elements across time—and migrating geographically within Japan he was ahead of more conservative scholarship that saw oral cultures as fundamentally unchanging. At the same time this meant that local culture was to be understood through the larger nexus of national culture. Analyzing a tale now came to mean comparing it with other variants collected from around the nation and through time. Local culture became seen as one puzzle piece in the larger picture of nationwide culture. While these pieces (tales) could be viewed in and of themselves, the new comparative focus implied that this reading was missing a bigger picture.

In addition to comparing Japanese tales to European tales, Yanagita links a cluster of Japanese tales together by means of the *chiisako* theme. The *chiisako*, or tiny baby, was a product of a propitious birth and possibly of a supernatural heritage. He compares the *Momotarō*, *Urikohime* [*Melon Princess*], *Kaguyahime* [*Bamboo Princess*], and *Issunbōshi* [*Japanese Tom Thumb*] tales and notes that they involve children born from or associated with unusual objects, such as peaches, melons, bamboo and the like. In his opinion the main purpose of these objects is to graphically demonstrate to the listener the small size of the child who could fit inside of them. The *chiisako* theme does connect the several tales mentioned above and is obviously a central part of the *Momotarō* tale. In



making *Momotarō* representative of Japanese tales generally, Yanagita sees the peach as important for demonstrating the *chiisako* theme but tends to downplay any symbolism specific to the peach itself. In this respect he differs significantly from other scholars, both before and after him, on the importance of the peach as a symbol. He notes:

By citing many references to peaches in religion and folklore in his *Gendō hōgen*<sup>27</sup>, Takizawa Bakin made an attempt to explain those origins of the myth of the boy born from a peach. As a great man like Bakin made this suggestion, it seems there have been many who have believed his explanation. [それに推服した人も折々あったようだが] But, even if these theories regarding peaches are true, it really doesn't matter that much. After all, the mysterious child in these tales didn't always come from a peach. The *Urikohime* tale existed at the same time as *Momotarō* and was found all over eastern Japan and in some places in the west.<sup>28</sup>

Yanagita acknowledges that earlier scholars, in this case the famous Edo-era author Takizawa Bakin had focused on the peach's symbolic meaning in the tale.<sup>29</sup> But while Yanagita acknowledges the peach's uniqueness he also downplays its significance. Instead he chooses to emphasize the *chiisako* theme as central and relates it to the Japanese system of religious belief. What light does this tale shed on religious folk belief? Yanagita continues,

As the Japanese people moved inland toward the mountains, they began to believe that spirits came down from heaven, to the tops of the mountains and that they would occasionally come down from the mountains to visit the human world. It is not surprising that they conceived of a spirit entering our world floating down a mountain stream.<sup>30</sup>

In Yanagita's reading then, the tale evolved along with the Japanese people and their collective movements. He is suggesting that *Momotarō*'s birth from a peach reflected a

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<sup>27</sup> Bakin's *Gendō hōgen* (玄堂放言, 1818) was a collection of essays considering aspects of folk life including the *Momotarō* tale, famous cherry trees, tanuki, and a range of folk beliefs. It was divided into sections on the heavens, earth, plants, and people. I will consider it in an earlier chapter.

<sup>28</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 256.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapters One and Four for more detailed analysis of the meaning of the peach imagery within the *Momotarō* tale.

<sup>30</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 257.

folk belief in contact between the human and spirit worlds. Yanagita's approach to the tale is both provocative and original. His understanding here seems very plausible although it must remain speculation of course and has not been taken up in subsequent scholarship.

More problematic is his consideration of the tale's ending and change over time.

It has been a very long time indeed since the Momotarō tale first took root in Japanese soil, and it seems as if the very first form has long since withered away. The original form of the Momotarō story (one might say the myth [*shinwa*] rather than the folktale [*mukashi banashi*] ), like that of "The Snake Bridegroom" [*hebi muko iri*], no longer exists in our popular culture.<sup>31</sup>

For example, consider the goal of the expedition in Momotarō. As we might expect, Japanese folktales [*mukashi banashi*] have been simplified. The journeys of European 'Momotarō' figures often consisted of much more than just gaining a treasure and bringing it back home. The treasure was often used as a means of obtaining a wife, home, and children, and securing a happy future. Here in Japan only *Urikohime* (The Melon Princess) has this kind of happy ending, but in the West there are many examples where a male adventurer finds some treasure and is then able to marry a princess. It seems likely that this portion was deleted on purpose from the modern Momotarō story [*hanashi*], not only because it has a child as its protagonist but also because its audience was made up of only children.<sup>32</sup>

Here Yanagita suggests that in an imagined original, and thus more authentic, version of the tale Momotarō took a wife. Indeed, he assumes that the purpose of Momotarō's quest was to find a female partner. In the first passage quoted above, he uses comparison with another early tale, "The Snake Bridegroom," to bolster his argument. In the latter passage he uses comparison with European tales to make his case. He goes on to note that "it is only in the standard fairy tale version [*hyōjun otogi*] Momotarō that this element has been removed."<sup>33</sup> In his view more recent versions of folk tales, which are found in textbooks or literature for children and popularized by authors like Iwaya Sazanami from the Meiji period onward, are corruptions of older and thus more authentic versions. This is a

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<sup>31</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 248.

<sup>32</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 258.

<sup>33</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 259.

somewhat logical result of stressing the *chiisako* theme in the tale. However, it is unsupported by the evidence that Yanagita himself helped collect from around the country. Of the hundreds of recorded versions collected, only a handful include gaining a wife as part of the tale and these versions have been judged by later scholars as actually being a mix of *Momotarō* with other tales. Why then Yanagita's insistence that *Momotarō* go looking for a wife? The answer may lie with his arrangement of the *Mukashibanashi saishū techō* of 1936.

### ***Mukashibanashi saishū techō* (1936)**

Coauthored by Yanagita and his contemporary Seki Keigo, the *Mukashibanashi saishū techō* (hereafter *Techō*) was self-published on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1936 and distributed to folktale researchers across Japan.<sup>34</sup> The size of a small Japanese paperback book (*bunko bon*), it contained one hundred representative stories. Each example was listed on the right side of the page while the facing left page was left blank. Folktale collectors listening to local tales were expected to compare any stories they heard with the examples and write down the story opposite the tale it most closely matched. For completely new or unrelated stories there was story number one hundred, labeled as “Additional Stories” (*hatenashi (no) hanashi*).<sup>35</sup> This hundredth story was one found only in the Nagoya area.<sup>36</sup> When researchers found other tales that were similarly only known locally and did

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<sup>34</sup> It was published by the *Minkan denshō no kai*, which was the group Yanagita led to investigate orally transmitted tales. It was funded by donations of wealthy patrons.

<sup>35</sup> A more literal translation of *hatenashi (no) hanashi* would be “stories without end.”

<sup>36</sup> This is a rather dreary story of a rat that leaves its village and starts to cross the sea to reach another land where there may be more food. At the midway point in his journey he meets another rat who is doing the same thing. Recognizing the hopelessness of their situation the rats throw themselves into the sea and drown.

not correspond to tales one through ninety-nine, they were to be written down next to this final tale.

While this was just one of eight manuals published by Yanagita [See Appendix B] it reflected wider trends toward a formalization of research methods than were evident in journals in the field up until four to five years earlier.<sup>37</sup> For example, Yanagita singled out for praise the journal *Tabi to densetsu*, noting that it was becoming more professional in the early 1930s. This was primarily reflected in the continuing effacement of the researcher within the written narrative. Until the early 1930s, articles in this journal were written as travel narratives that included not only the tales collected or the sites visited, but a wealth of personal information about the author. Generally, they began with accounts of the train journey out of Tokyo: leaving out of Ueno station at such and such a time, traveling for so many hours, and where the person changed trains. Details of how the author felt, the nature of his interaction(s) with local people, how much things cost and so on are all usual parts of these articles. There is a marked shift in the mid 1930s with more formalized accounts of tales (or local customs and culture) in the journal that forego all of the above-mentioned information. They flatly state the author's name, the place and time of research and very little else. The marked loss of the author's positionality, in Spivak's usage of the term, was the price for formalizing accounts of tales. Some of the earlier articles in this style were submitted by Yanagita and later copied by others, likely through his influence. The fieldwork manual, then, was just

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<sup>37</sup> Researchers wrote their names on the books and they dates they collected the stories but otherwise their personal information regarding the circumstances under which they came to hear the tales was largely dropped. This is in contrast to the norm of earlier accounts, published in popular folklore journals, in which the research would include a narrative of their journey that could include their train route to their destination, their personal feelings and observations along the way, and so forth.

formalizing changes that were already taking place in some of the major journals of the day.

Still, the fieldwork manual created wide repercussions beyond just the way that people reported their research. The most obvious effect was that it immediately created a canonical set of tales.<sup>38</sup> More important than what this new canon included however may have been what it excluded. A researcher using this book to collect tales in rural areas was given license, in the form of blank pages, to write about ninety-nine standard tales that were known throughout the country. Tales that were unknown to this system were at a disadvantage. Of course researchers could simply write them down on the blank pages provided at the end of the notebook or continue in their own notebooks. But through this action tales known only locally were already pushed beyond the margins (quite literally) of Yanagita's folklore project.

The contrast with the conditions under which Yanagita himself wrote down tales roughly twenty-seven years earlier for what became *The Tales of Tōno* (*Tōno monogatari*, 1910) is quite instructive. Yanagita collected stories from an informant named Sasaki Kizen and later in the Tōno region quite freely.<sup>39</sup> Using the *Techō*, however, none of the tales that fill *Tōno monogatari* would have been acceptable. This should not be surprising because the tales of *Tōno monogatari* are nearly all *seken banashi*, or contemporary tales.<sup>40</sup> Notable features of these tales are that they often claim to be literally true and the

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<sup>38</sup> Before this the 'five famous tales' (*godai otogi: Momotarō, Kachikachiyama, Shitakirisuzume, Hanasakajisan, and Sarukani gassen*) were the best-known grouping of tales. These were known as such from roughly the middle of the Edo period.

<sup>39</sup> The relationship between Yanagita and his famous first informant, the young Sasaki Kizen from the Tōno region in Iwate has been often considered in scholarship on Yanagita. One of the more concise and eloquent summaries is in Figal page 106 to 112.

<sup>40</sup> *Seken banashi*'s best English equivalent may be 'urban legends,' but it is important to keep in mind that the Japanese term suggests only contemporary tales and both urban and rural settings are well represented.

narrator is often either the originator of the tale or he claims personal knowledge of the events told. This kind of tale is exactly what Yanagita was constantly warning against during the 1930s as being unsuitable for folklore studies. In both Japanese- and English-language scholarship *Tōno monogatari* came to be considered an originary point for Yanagita's research after it gained fame upon its republication in 1935. But I would suggest that Yanagita's warnings against collecting strange tales and oddities were at least partially a warning against his own *Tōno monogatari* and the method that it implied. That is to say that *Tōno monogatari*'s popularity in 1935 and after was not because it represented Yanagita's project but rather because it offered a romantic vision of freedom for the researcher that was rapidly being closed off within *minzokugaku* as a field.

The theory for this field that Yanagita put into place with *Tanjō* was put into practice with the *Techō*. Local tales were read as part of a larger group of tales shared by Japanese culture across time and throughout the nation. One of the ways that the *Techō* generated these new readings was through its arrangement of tales. Naturally the tales can be read individually. But, as Nomura Jun'ichi insightfully points out, their arrangement also generates a meta-tale found in the story arc when the ninety-nine tales are read together.<sup>41</sup> It begins with birth, moves through childhood, goes on to challenges posed by life and help from animal companions, and concludes with a happy end in the form of marriage and children. This meta-tale was generated by placing tales about birth first, tales about childhood second, and so on. Implicit in this arrangement is the assumption that tales are not just about entertainment but reflect serious thought about the whole cycle of human life. This was, of course, consistent with the meanings that Yanagita was

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<sup>41</sup> Nomura Junichi. *Shin Momotarō no tanjō: Nihon no momo no ko tarō tachi* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2000) 75-91.

trying to read into these tales through the project of *minzokugaku*. As in *Tanjō*, *Momotarō* is also representative of tales generally in *Techō*. *Momotarō* is tale number one in the manual and several other well-known tales are listed as variants of it, including the *Kintarō* and *Chikaratarō* stories. Again following Nomura's lead, we can see that *Momotarō* carries within itself most of the important elements of the meta-tale: birth, childhood struggles and help from animal companions, and eventual overcoming of obstacles. But it lacks the elements of marriage and children.

If we take *Momotarō* by itself this is not a problem. Most commentators on this tale that I have encountered have seen its major themes as birth, youth, and overcoming challenges. But in the context of Yanagita's meta-tale the lack of a wife becomes a major omission. Yanagita's answer was to insist that an earlier, more authentic version of the tale did indeed include searching for a wife (*tsuma-matagi*). This must have guided Yanagita in choosing the rather odd *Momotarō* variant from Iwate prefecture that serves as his example of the story in the *Techō*. In this version, the old man and woman go to enjoy a bento lunch by the riverside, pick up a peach that floats by and take it home. From it the peach boy is born. When he is older a letter comes from a princess trapped in hell. *Momotarō* goes and successfully rescues her. The ogres (*oni*) of hell give chase, but fail when their flaming chariot (*higuruma*) falls into the sea and is presumably extinguished. *Momotarō* then lives happily ever after in his village, returning with a woman and riches.

It is important to note that there was no definitive version of the tale, at least before the 1890s when its inclusion in textbooks led to an increasing standardization, considered in the previous chapter. But even from the middle of the Edo period certain

elements were standard in most reiterations, such as the three animal retainers. These are missing from the variant that Yanagita picked. This, and the new addition of a woman leads Nomura, and myself, to suspect that the *Momotarō* variant Yanagita picked as definitive is actually more closely related to a story popular in Iwate prefecture about an *amanojaku*, a mystical creature famous for deceiving people. But the feature of a woman in this version of the tale makes it ideal for Yanagita's reading, which insists on a marriage-minded Momotarō, which allows the tale to be read as a commentary on life from birth, through childhood exploration, all the way to adulthood and marriage.

### Conclusion

Folktales were one of the central objects of study around which Yanagita organized folklore studies in the 1930s. The change in name of his research from *kyōdo kenkyū* to *minzokugaku* in 1934-36 reflected its growing scale as it sought to consider the entire culture of Japan in one unified vision. Folktales allowed Yanagita to frame this view and comment on Japanese values across the nation and through time. The development of this project was orderly, with theoretical works like *Momotarō no tanjō* followed by field manuals such as *Mukashibanashi saishū techō*. Data collected from around the country was gathered into a picture of Japanese culture as a whole. Tales that fit into this picture were more easily assimilated while tales that were purely products of local culture were pushed to the margins. Resistant and differing tales were never completely ignored, but the drive was to produce an image of a unified cultural whole, which played into the cultural nationalism from the 1930s to the end of World War II. *Momotarō* was a primary focus of this process, representing the ability of Yanagita's



research to read unity out of a huge variety of local tales. But, even as Yanagita's research helped reimagine the tale as national, local researchers, especially in the Okayama area, were, as we will see in the next chapter, using the tale to produce more sharply defined regional identities.

## CHAPTER V

### **Making Folktales Local through *Kyōdo Kenkyū* (Local Studies) and *Kyōdo Kyōiku* (Local Education)**

Today research for local education (*kyōdo kyōiku no kenkyū*) is occurring in locations all over Japan but the organization tying it all together is still rather weak. The headquarters of the *League for Local Education* (*Kyōdo kyōiku renmei*), which was established last year, strives to serve as a clearinghouse for this research much like a radio relay station that passes on a signal. But unlike some other organizations, the focus and center of research for local education is in each local area, it is not in Tokyo with orders going out from the center to each place. We are pleased if we can pass along transmissions by functioning like a relay antenna.

*Kyōdo*, unsigned editorial<sup>1</sup>

Published on November 1, 1930, the inaugural issue of the journal *Kyōdo* (Local Area) put forward an alternative to Yanagita's vision of a folklore studies that was directed from Tokyo. Started as the organ of the *Kyōdo kyōiku renmei* (League for Local Education), this journal and the group behind it sought to organize local studies and local education into a de-centered network rather than a hierarchy. The editorial's central image of "a radio relay station" or "a relay antenna" is suggestive of both the hopes and fears of local researchers across Japan at this time. Local researchers were attracted by the new possibilities of the modern age that would allow them to transmit the results of their studies beyond their own areas and interact with a larger audience. At the same time they were wary of simply being more tightly linked to, and thus controlled by, Yanagita's Tokyo-based folklore studies. While the technology of radio normally implies a logic of

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<sup>1</sup> Ito 180.

one-way transmission, the editorial tries to imagine the possibilities of using it for a more equal exchange. But even a group like the *Kyōdo kyōiku renmei*, which was founded in part to subvert the logic of Tokyo as a dominating center, found it necessary to locate its headquarters and operations there.

This tension between center and periphery in folklore studies was an explicit and well-recognized problem in the early 1930s and leads to my guiding question in this chapter: how did the *kyōdo kenkyū* and *kyōdo kyōiku* movements narrate identities that sought independence from but were still read through the center? Answering this question first requires some consideration of how these two movements were intertwined. *Kyōdo kyōiku* first coalesced as a self-conscious educational movement in 1927 and 1928 and was a nationwide educational craze by 1930.<sup>2</sup> Driven by multiple and sometimes conflicting motives, schoolteachers sought to increasingly ground their curriculum in the details of their own regions. From 1930 onwards, they received strong backing from powerful Ministry of Education bureaucrats who saw a newly invigorated localism as one way to promote nationalism in school youth. This was because, in an era of increasing nationalism, local identities tended to be read through and be supportive of national identity. The rise of the local education movement both grew out of and helped to feed an explosion of interest in locally-focused folklore studies by an army of educators, ethnographers and admen. It was this interest that in part pushed Yanagita to change the name of his own folklore project from *kyōdo kenkyū* to *minzokugaku* as I showed in the previous chapter. In light of this interaction, it is helpful to think of *kyōdo kenkyū* as local folklore studies and *minzokugaku* as national folklore studies.

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<sup>2</sup> Ito 3-8 and Sekido i-iii.

*Kyōdo kenkyū* and *kyōdo kyōiku* oftentimes worked together to narrate local identity. They did this by means of a variety of topics that was as wide as the Japanese islands themselves, including but not limited to natural and man-made history, flora and fauna, geography and climate, and all manner of local customs. It is difficult to generalize about the quality and character of local studies as it sometimes approached Yanagita's own studied professionalism and other times veered toward merely crass commercialism. In this chapter I will focus on how *Momotarō* was used to narrate local identity, primarily in Okayama Prefecture, but also in the Inuyama region in Aichi Prefecture and in Kinashi in northern Shikoku. This process of narrating local identity through tales was especially effective in Okayama.

Today, few Japanese prefectures have branded their regional identity so successfully, a fact that is made manifestly clear to visitors to Okayama city as soon as they step off of the train. Sites and objects related to the *Momotarō* tale are ubiquitous, especially around the main rail station, which doubles as the city's center. Within the station itself rows of shops sell *kibi dango* (millet dumplings), a sweet mentioned in the tale which is now a famous Okayama specialty. Just in front of the station, a large bronze statue of *Momotarō* and his three retainers dominates the central plaza. This plaza opens directly onto the city's main avenue, *Momotarō Ōdōri*, which in the summer is the site of the annual *Momotarō matsuri*, the city's largest festival. During December the plaza is decorated with a large Christmas tree surrounded by decorative signs written in English proclaiming "Momotarō Fantasy." A few blocks away, sporting events are held at the large "Momotarō Arena." His icon permeates the city: on tourist brochures, in shop

windows, adorning manhole covers, and on numerous products for both tourists and local citizens.

While my specific focus is the *Momotarō* tale in Okayama, this case study helps to answer my second main question for this chapter: how were tales used in local research and local education to create new local identities? I find that local identity must work both with and against national narratives. Local identity must resonate with nationally known narrative themes and forms, but it must also offer an appealing difference. What is so fascinating about the *Momotarō* tale in this respect is the remaking of a national symbol into a local one. In order for this to happen, folktales (*mukashibanashi*) had to be reinterpreted as legends (*densetsu*). In the previous chapter I considered how in the early 1930s Yanagita constructed *Momotarō* as a folktale in order to use it to comment upon the qualities of the Japanese as a whole. For the tale to narrate regional identity it would have to be changed from a folktale that belonged to the nation, into a legend that belonged to a single region. As a folktale, story elements, such as *kibi dango* sweets, peaches, and even the identity of the hero himself, were abstract or idealized. As a legend, all of these elements would need to become concrete, quasi-historical references.

In effect, local promoters of *Momotarō* as a legend were saying, you know the folktale, but it actually happened here in Okayama, or here in Inuyama, or here in Kinashi. This was accomplished in the 1930s by a series of social actors including *kyōdo kenkyūsha* (local historians/ethnographers), teachers, artists, activists and advertisers. In Inuyama it was the work of Kawaji Sōichi and graphic artist Yoshida Hatsusaburō. Kawaji conjured a *Momotarō* shrine almost out of thin air and Yoshida put it on the map

(literally) as a tourist attraction. In Kinashi it was school teacher and local researcher Hashimoto Sentarō who sought to explain the area's place names and history. In Okayama it was a series of local researchers, most notably sculptor Namba Ginnosuke and higher school teacher Shiida Yoshihide, both of whom wrote on the connections between the tale and their prefecture. Their efforts provide an interesting counterpoint to the work of Yanagita's national ethnography.

By collecting and comparing versions of the tale from around the country, Yanagita analyzed what *Momotarō* may have recorded about the culture and values of the Japanese as a whole. Working more or less at the same time, these men tied the tale to specific events, products and sites in order to bind the *Momotarō* tale and their home places together. While the connection between Yanagita's *minzokugaku* and Japanese nationalism has been exhaustively studied, what is notable here is the connection between narratives of local identity and the nation.<sup>3</sup> In each of these three areas, emphasis on *Momotarō* as a local legend only began once it was known nationally through inclusion in elementary school textbooks and children's literature. Local versions of the tale were promoted only after the national version was thoroughly known; thus local identity was already imbricated in national identity.

With defeat at the end of World War II, Japanese national identity underwent profound and wrenching shifts as militarism was officially abandoned overnight and values of peace and international cooperation were quickly embraced. These same

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<sup>3</sup> Evidence of this can be found in how some of the most interesting recent scholarship in Japanese is being published not on *minzokugaku* but on *kyōdo kenkyū*. Examples of these works include the edited collection *Kyōdo: hyōshō to jissen* (Saganoshoin, 2003), Uchida Ryūzō's *Kokudoron* (Chikuma Shobō, 2002) and less directly but more popularly the prolific work of Oguma Eiji. Much of the appeal of this work is its specificity, focusing on practices at specific schools, local governments or areas to illustrate how intellectual trends were realized on the ground.

changes were happening at the level of local identity as well, but with telling differences. Although local markers of identity may have been tied to the nation, they were often salvageable after the war through a process of reinterpretation. From the time of the Sino-Japanese war until the end of World War II the local images of *Momotarō* mirrored the prevailing values of the nation: militaristic, proud, masculine and family-centered. In the postwar period, local identity reflected the new national values; ties to militarism and emperor worship that had been read into local versions of the *Momotarō* tale since the Meiji period were actively discarded or simply forgotten. Simultaneously, new values of peace, cooperation through sports, economic prosperity and international exchange were promoted.

In the postwar era, *Momotarō* never again became a prominent symbol of Japanese identity at the national level the way it was in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But its use in Okayama has continued to grow. The movement to build up the prefecture's regional identity around the tale has been a notable postwar phenomenon that was first energetically pursued under Okayama Prefecture Governor Miki Yukiharu in the 1950s and 1960s. It has continued since from both above and below, as a result of municipal campaigns and grass roots work. The success of these efforts can be measured by the fact that, at least in the popular consciousness, no area of the nation is now more strongly associated with the tale. Following this fact, my third and final question in this chapter then is to ask how identities established by *kyōdo kenkyū* and *kyōdo kyōiku* before the war have continued after it.

In the post-World War II era, many Japanese prefectures have sought to establish distinctive regional identities, especially as domestic tourism has grown in importance as

a source of revenue. These efforts often focus on regional delicacies, natural sites, or cultural heritage. In the case of Okayama, they centered on a folktale that everyone agrees did not first arise in the area. So why erect a statue of an imaginary folktale figure in the city center? And why this folktale in this city? Part of the answer lies in how the local research and local education movements defined identity in the pre-war era.

### ***Kyōdo kyōiku: Making Education Local***

The Local Education movement that coalesced in the early 1930s was just one expression of an ongoing push and pull between greater local versus national control in the Japanese educational system in the modern period. Japan's national system of schools was officially started in 1872 with the Education Act (*Gakusei*) that put into place the powerful Ministry of Education.<sup>4</sup> In its first few years, however, Japan's system of universal compulsory education was a reality in name more than on the ground. It was only in the late 1870s and early 1880s that the government school system gradually supplanted the plethora of already existing educational institutions for young people, including temple schools (*terakoya*), clan schools (*hankō*) and private schools (*shijuku*). This is illustrated by a rise in school attendance that was steady but slow. In 1873, 28% of all eligible school-age children were attending government schools.<sup>5</sup> This figure only climbed above the halfway mark ten years later with 51% attendance in 1883. It also took a number of years for the production and selection of textbooks to become more standardized nationwide. The choice of textbooks was at first left to the local level with community boards of education, principals, or even individual teachers picking from

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<sup>4</sup> Hosoya Toshio. *Development of Modern Textbook System in Japan, 1868-1961*. (Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, 1961) 24-26.

<sup>5</sup> Hosoya 24.



a wide array of materials by publishers including Hakubunkan, Shūeisha, Tokyo shoseki, and Osaka shoseki among others.<sup>6</sup> The lucrative nature of the textbook market and decentralized control opened the textbook selection process to widespread problems of graft and outright bribery. It eventually reached the proportions of a nationwide scandal in 1903, prompting the Diet to legislate that textbooks be produced nationally in order to ensure higher standards and eliminate corruption.<sup>7</sup>

By the late 1920s, with national control long established, conservative Ministry of Education bureaucrats saw returning some autonomy to local schools as a means of instilling nationalism while combating individualism and other liberal political ideologies. At a time when rural communities were especially hard hit by the worldwide depression, local education was also seen as a means to revitalize communities economically.<sup>8</sup> The shape of local education came partly from above and partly from below. Ministry officials strongly championed this new pedagogy but only after gathering input from how local education was already being practiced in schools across the country.

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<sup>6</sup> I owe a debt to the very helpful staff of the *Tōsho bunko* (located in northern Tokyo) for the open access to their collection of textbooks and related materials. *Tōsho bunko* (*Tokyo shoseki kyōkasho toshokan*), was founded by the textbook publisher Tokyo shoseki in 1934 as a research library of textbooks and also has large holdings of early *oraimono* (lists of things), *kakezu* (large hanging wall charts) and other premodern or early modern educational materials.

<sup>7</sup> Figal 79-83. While 1903 is well known as the watershed year that ushered in nationally produced textbooks, the long-term trend was leading toward centralized control well before this. From the 1880s a cultural retrenchment led to increasing objections to what was seen as too liberal content and too much foreign influence in textbooks. As part of this trend increasing moves toward national control of textbooks began from this decade. With the Revised Education Statute of 1880, the Ministry of Education compiled a list of textbooks that were deemed inadequate and not to be used. Control was further centralized with the adoption of a textbook inspection system in 1888. Henceforth only textbooks approved by the Ministry were allowed for school use.

<sup>8</sup> Kimata 4-6. How local education was supposed to stimulate rural economies was rarely ever explained. The movement was pushed with slogans including “Breaking up monolithic education” (*kakuitsu kyōiku no dahan*), “Making education practical” (*kyōiku no jissaiika*), and “Localizing Education” (*kyōiku no chihōka*). In many cases it included a greater focus on a community’s products and commerce. It seems likely that local educators felt that by invigorating community identities those communities might be able to better retain talented young people and not lose them so easily to the call of urban areas.

On August 3, 1927 the Ministry sent out a nationwide survey to schools asking them if they practiced *kyōdo kyōiku* instruction as part of their curriculum.<sup>9</sup> Roughly five hundred schools responded. The names that local instruction took varied widely, including “Curriculum covering the Local Area” (*kyōdo-ka*), “Local Studies” (*kyōdo kenkyū*), “Local Geography” (*kyōdo chiri*), and “Curriculum of Direct Observation” (*kyōdo chokkan*).<sup>10</sup> Elementary schools attached to Normal Schools (*shihan gakkō*) tended to be hotbeds for this kind of instruction.<sup>11</sup> Nationally produced textbooks gave only cursory mention to each of Japan’s prefectures and regions. To bring their own communities back into the curriculum in greater detail meant that teachers had to produce their own supplementary materials, either at the prefectural or village level. To encourage the local education movement, the Ministry of Education subsidized the production of materials to teach about local areas with special outlays given to Normal Schools in both 1930 and 1931.<sup>12</sup> This led to a gradual increase throughout the 1930s in the publication of *kyōdo tokuhon*, or Local Readers, which I will shortly discuss.

Teacher enthusiasm for a new curriculum that considered a student’s home prefecture (or even hometown), combined with the active encouragement of the Ministry of Education, meant that local education classes spread quickly from 1930 onwards. First there was a burst of local research (*kyōdo kenkyū*) as teachers became amateur

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<sup>9</sup> Kimata 3-5.

<sup>10</sup> Kimata 5.

<sup>11</sup> For example, *Shiga Prefecture Elementary School, Attached to Shiga Prefecture Normal School (Shiga-ken shihan gakkō fuzoku shōgakkō)* noted in its response to the Ministry that it included 40 hours of instruction in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 80 hours in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 80 hours in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 70 hours in the 4<sup>th</sup>. This included focuses on local historical landmarks, local history and economics, and learning through direct observation. Kimata 5.

<sup>12</sup> This amounted to an outlay of 110,000 yen in 1930 and the substantial figure of 600,000 yen in 1931. The latter sum was to be disbursed across two years and amounted to roughly 5,000 yen per Normal School. Kimata 5.

ethnographers, archaeologists, geologists, and so forth in order to produce material that could be used for classes. Conferences gathering large numbers of educators from a single province together under the label of *kyōdo kenkyū* became more common. For example, in February 1930, Shiga Prefecture embarked upon an extensive “Survey of the Local Area” (*kyōdo chōsa*) lasting several months. This survey was carried out by schoolteachers and their students working in cooperation. In summer of the following year the results were then conveyed to nearly all of the prefecture’s teachers. From August 1 to August 22, 1931 a symposium titled “Meeting for Training about Local Research” (*kyōdo kenkyū no kōshū kai*) was held seven times around the prefecture, each time with the same speakers but at a different elementary school.<sup>13</sup> Of the 3,094 people who attended in all, 2,957 were elementary school teachers. The few in attendance who were not schoolteachers were largely local dignitaries and the occasional invited guest speaker to add prestige to the affair.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, it was this surge in interest that pushed Yanagita Kunio to attempt to re-impose centralized control over the field of *kyōdo kenkyū* and, when this failed, to gradually shift the name by which he identified his own folklore studies project to *minzokugaku*. Two years after the meeting of educators in Shiga Prefecture, Yanagita was invited to speak as the guest of honor at a similar event in Yamagata Prefecture. He inveighed against *kyōdo kenkyū* that took the local area as its sole focus, rather than using a local area as merely a means of research (for larger issues related to the Japanese as a whole). It did not take an intellect as keen as Yanagita’s to sense the shift in what *kyōdo kenkyū* meant. During the two years from 1930 to 1932 the

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<sup>13</sup> Kimata 10-13.

focus of the field was clearly becoming much more decentralized. Yanagita was accustomed to journeying outside of Tokyo to rural areas to do field research. But he was clearly not used to making these trips to participate in symposiums with schoolteachers who expected to be treated as colleagues.

And yet, colleagues they were. Like it or not the center of gravity in the field of *kyōdo kenkyū* was shifting from Tokyo to the provinces as increasing numbers of *kyōdo tokuhon* were produced. Evaluating local readers is a difficult task because they varied widely from an individual teacher's handwritten notes for personal use to carefully edited collections that were distributed to every student in a prefecture. Educational researcher Kimata Kiyohiro focuses on a case study of Shiga Prefecture before 1945 and finds that at least fourteen major local readers, varying from 100 to 220 pages in length, were published there between 1930 and 1943.<sup>14</sup> Topics covered in these readers included notable local persons, industries, lifeways and customs, stories of various kinds, ruins, and so on. The "Hayama Village Local Reader" (*Hayama kyōdo tokuhon*) was representative of this genre. Published in 1933 in Shiga prefecture, it comprised 220 pages organized into 29 chapters. It featured information on local places and origins of place names, temples and shrines, an account of the Meiji Emperor's passage through the village, local legends (*densetsu*) and the like. Unsurprisingly, locally produced textbooks like this one generally proved popular with students because they dealt with material students were familiar with from their daily life experiences outside of school.

A look at the contents of the "Hayama Village Local Reader" offers clues to the source of Yanagita's discomfort with the direction that *kyōdo kenkyū* and *kyōdo tokuhon*

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<sup>14</sup> Kimata 55-70.

were taking. The distinctive features that gave a region its unique identity might not be found anywhere else. Thus a national folklore studies that was highly comparative in its nature was oftentimes in a poor position to describe regional identity that was defined by unique objects that resisted easy comparison. For example, the Hayama Village Local Reader contained two folktales, neither of which was included in Yanagita's list of 99 tales included in his 1936 *Mukashibanashi saishū techō*. Local researchers in Hayama village presumably considered these as being among the area's most important tales, but neither would have easily fit within the bounds of Yanagita's *minzokugaku* project.

Still, Yanagita's work on *kyōdo kenkyū* throughout the 1910s and 1920s had left a positive mark on the *kyōdo tokuhon* that were being produced from the 1930s onward. Unlike earlier *shigaku* (documentary or bibliographic studies) that Yanagita had criticized in the debut issue of his journal "*Kyōdo kenkyū*" in 1913, most local readers were more than merely lists of local information. They marshaled information about a region to describe its distinctive lifeways and customs. But by the 1930s this was no longer enough from Yanagita's perspective; folklore studies needed to describe the Japanese people as a whole and *kyōdo kenkyū* was rapidly becoming too local.

Ironically, Yanagita's folklore studies project, centered in Tokyo, was often less stridently nationalist than the *kyōdo kenkyū* being practiced by schoolteachers in rural areas around the country. The local education movement was always the product of varying motives, including preferences for a pedagogy of direct observation, the desire to build up local identity, and to instill nationalism. The years 1933 to 1934 were a turning point for *kyōdo kenkyū* (as practiced by schoolteachers). As Japan's war on China intensified, the motive of building up nationalism through local identity became

increasingly dominant. For example, Hayama Elementary School's Guidelines for 1934 state "We will pursue the goal of instilling Japanese spirit education (*Nihon seishin kyōiku*) through the curriculum of Morals, National History, National Language, Geography, etc."<sup>15</sup> Doing this from the bottom up often proved more effective than from the top down. Nationally-produced accounts of the imperial institution or instruction about the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education were ideologically important for Japanese nationalism but could be hard for students to grasp or connect to their daily lives. On the other hand, Chapter 25 of the "Hayama Local Education Reader" recounted details of Emperor Meiji's visit to the village in a way that still referred to the emperor in highly deferential language but within a context of well-known local place names and prominent local persons. It was this context that rooted what could be an abstract Japanese nationalism in the lived experience of young students.

Promoting this kind of nationalism was one of the main purposes of the League for Local Education (*Kyōdo kyōiku renmei*), an organization based in Tokyo that promoted local education that would instill a Japanese spirit (*nihon seishin*) in students. As the quotation from their journal *Kyōdo* that opened this chapter suggested, the organization appealed to local educators wanting to network but not be subordinated to a hierarchical folklore studies project centered in Tokyo under Yanagita's direction. Publisher and educational researcher Oda Hōsaku (1894-1944) was central to the group's leadership but otherwise surprisingly little is known about the group's inner workings beyond the positions they took in their journal.<sup>16</sup> Both Tokyo-based researchers and provincial schoolteachers contributed articles to the journal. Ultimately the journal lasted

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<sup>15</sup> Kimata 66.

<sup>16</sup> Ito 170-186.

only from 1930 to 1934 and ran 43 issues, testifying to the difficulties of establishing a nationally-networked project that still gave equal place to members outside of Tokyo. The timing of the journal's demise coincides with the steady rise in publishing of *kyōdo tokuhon* all over Japan. This leads me to suspect that schoolteachers found producing local readers for their own regions more valuable than trying to publish in *Kyōdo* or participate in the League for Local Education.

### **From Folktale (*Mukashibanashi*) to Legend (*Densetsu*)**

In order for *Momotarō* to be useful for building regional identity it had to be changed from a folktale (*mukashibanashi*) into a legend (*densetsu*). As Kahara Nahoko notes, folktales are not specific in their references to place, time or characters.<sup>17</sup> They often begin with the clichéd phrases “A long, long time ago” in English, or with the Japanese counterpart “*mukashi, mukashi.*” The functions of these tales were entertainment and passing down folk wisdom. In an age before our now ubiquitous media, this entertainment function carried an importance that is hard to fully appreciate today. Along with helping pass the time, the *Momotarō* folktale pointed to the importance of children, of continuing a family line, and for boys to venture out into the wider world and prove themselves. An additional role of folktales in the modern period has been building up a common national identity as seen in the folklore studies of Yanagita in the previous chapter.

In contrast, legends are almost always local and tie specific places and characters together. While folktales give us recognizably generic characters and situations, legends abound in proper nouns and quasi-historical events. Entertainment is also an important

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<sup>17</sup> Kahara 108-09.

aspect of legends, but unlike folktales they also serve to pass down local information. This quasi-historical information helped residents to read the landscapes surrounding them, adding interest and explanation to both manmade and natural local features. As refashioned into a legend, the story elements in *Momotarō* became increasingly specific references to local goods, events, and even people. The connections were built up across several decades, sometimes intentionally and sometimes accidentally. While oftentimes these links between the tales and a local area were not directly related to local research or the local education movement, they were a part of the process of creating local identity. In the following section I will trace the progression by which Okayama residents increasingly tied elements of the *Momotarō* tale—including *kibi dango*, peaches, and suggestions as to the actual identity of the hero—to their home region.

The first connection between *Momotarō* and the Okayama region was *kibi dango* (millet dumpling sweets). Standard versions of the tale, as found in textbooks, named them as the provisions the hero's mother prepared for him to take on the long journey. This is ironic as this sweet was originally filled with a center of bean paste and quickly went bad after just two or three days in the summer.<sup>18</sup>

One of the earliest references to the sweet in connection with the Okayama region is through *Kibitsuhiro jinja*, designated as the chief shrine (一宮) for the region from the Heian period. Today it retains pride of place as the prefecture's best-known shrine. During the middle of the Edo period this shrine distributed *kibi dango* as a gift (*O-nōrai*,

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<sup>18</sup> One of the earliest recorded mentions of the sweets dates back to 1491, with a reference to “Japan's number one *kibi dango*” in the *Inryō ken nichiroku* (蔭涼軒日録). This was a diary kept by the head abbot of the Kyoto temple *Kinkakuji* (the Golden Pavilion). The reference indicated that the priest ordered the sweet to be prepared. (Ichikawa Shunsuke. *Okayama Momotarō: Kibitsuhiro no Mikoto no oni taiji*. (Okayama: Okayama Ribingu Shinbunsha, 1988) 88-89.



御直会) to worshippers who visited the shrine during the New Year's season.<sup>19</sup> It seems likely that they were chosen because *kibi* (黍, millet) is also a homophone for the ancient name of Okayama, *Kibi no kuni* (吉備国), and thus makes for pleasing wordplay. The tie is stronger because the ancient provincial name Kibi was actually an *ateji* (a nonstandard applied Chinese character reading) for millet, a product from which the region took its name. The shrine switched to distributing other gifts after only a few years, however, because *kibi dango* were impractical to carry and went bad quickly.

In Okayama, *kibi dango* were sold by local merchants from at least the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Notable among these was sweet maker Kōeido (広栄堂), started by the Takeda family in 1853.<sup>20</sup> They sold *kibi dango* from 1855. During an imperial tour of Okayama in 1886 the Takeda's made a gift of them to the Meiji emperor. When the San'yō rail line connecting Okayama to Kobe and Osaka was completed in 1891, the company began its growth into the region's most popular sweet maker.<sup>21</sup> Up until that time Kōeido's *kibi dango* were mainly a product for everyday consumption. Residents bought them primarily to feed to their own families. But with the increased travel and tourism brought by the railroad these sweets began to be marketed as souvenirs.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ichikawa Shunsuke. *Okayama no Momotarō: Okayama bunko*, 233 (Nihon Bunkyo Shuppansha, 2005 b) 44.

<sup>20</sup> Ichikawa (2005 b) 85.

<sup>21</sup> Takeda Asajirō led this trend by moving Kōeido's main store to the railway station in 1891. From this time he started selling the sweets in wrapped packages with nine pieces to a box.

<sup>22</sup> It is interesting that the two instances of *kibi dango* being mentioned in Okayama were first at a shrine and second at a confectioner marketing them to tourists. In a fascinating cultural history of gift giving in Japan, Kanzaki Nobutake points out that the roots of the term *omiyage* (souvenir) lie first with shrines. The Chinese characters for *omiyage*, land (土) and produce (産), today call to mind famous products of a place. But this reading is an *ateji*. Originally the characters were 宮箭, referring to a shrine and a box and by extension rites that involved giving or receiving gifts at a shrine. (Kanzaki Nobutake. *Kankō minzokugaku e no tabi* (Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1990) 82-87.

There were two requirements in order for a food to be suitable as a souvenir product. First, it had to be recognizably local: anyone who has spent even a few days in Japan and visited a tourist spot will have seen the assortments of sweets whose main selling point is that they are somehow connected to that place. Usually they boast the name and perhaps some image of the place. For the cultured consumer the hunger for narrative compliments a taste for sweets. The logic was not dissimilar in 1891 when the link between *kibi* (黍, millet) and the place name Kibi (吉備) established the sweet as a local product. As the connections grew stronger, eventually the place name supplanted the ingredient name and the stand Chinese characters used for the sweets became 吉備団子.

The second requirement was durability. Travelers needed foods that were good for several days at least, especially because transportation was slower.<sup>23</sup> Takeda solved this problem by reformulating the sweet to last longer. Originally the sweets featured pounded sticky rice (*mochi*) wrapped around a core of bean paste, usually small red beans (*adzuki*). They were often square in shape. Takeda eliminated the filling and turned them into solid rolled balls. With the new-found availability of cheaper sugar from overseas, he was able to sweeten them without using perishable beans.<sup>24</sup> These newly formulated sweets became increasingly popular, both for their taste and as a well-known local product.

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<sup>23</sup> It was because of increasingly fast transportation that the distinction between *meibutsu* (famous products) and *omiyage* (souvenirs) was gradually lost during the Meiji period. Originally *meibutsu* referred to famous local foods that travelers would sample for themselves but could not hope to take home as gifts. *Omiyage* were usually more durable goods like hair combs, good luck amulets, and so on. *Omiyage* were small and light because they had to be carried by the traveler over long distances, usually on foot. With speedy rail travel *meibutsu* foods, like Kōeido's *kibi dango*, would now become *omiyage*. (Kanzaki Nobutake. *Omiyage: Zō to tabi no Nihon bunka* (Seikyūsha, 1997) 195-96.

<sup>24</sup> Sugar was imported into Japan from the 17<sup>th</sup> century so this trend toward increasingly sweet products was really just an extension of a change begun from the early Edo period. Kanzaki (1997) 148.

Takeda's success at the time is attested to by an anecdote from Japanese admiral and war hero Tōgō Heihachirō (1847-1934). It was reported that to Tōgō's bemusement a box of *kibi dango* purchased from Okayama brought aboard ship with him during the Russo-Japanese war lasted three years without going bad. *Kibi dango* were popular with Japanese soldiers during the Russo-Japanese war.<sup>25</sup>

Takeda tailored his advertising to appeal to this market by traveling himself to the Port of Ujina in Hiroshima. Ujina was the central point through which Japanese troops from across the nation both departed to and returned from the fighting. Upon reaching Ujina, Takeda dressed himself in a Momotarō costume and carried a large upright banner reading "Japan's number one *kibi dango*." Up until that time 'Japan's number one' was a vague reference. Younger listeners especially could imagine that it was their own mother's cooking that was the best in the country. But now the phrase was being carefully exploited to advertise a specific store's product.

Takeda appealed to the elated feelings of the victorious returning troops by calling out to them with the following sales pitch: "You victorious Momotarōs have conquered *Oni* Island. As for a souvenir to take home with you, try the *kibi dango* sold at Okayama Station." [*Onigashima wo seibatsu shita, Momotarō no minasama ga, kuni e no omiyage wa, Okayama eki de utteiru kibi dango.*]<sup>26</sup> At the time of their departure for the front soldiers were often given parting gifts and then expected to present gifts in return upon their arrival home. As marketed by Kōeido's Takeda, *kibi dango* perfectly fit the bill. These sweets wove returning soldiers into a narrative of heroes returning triumphantly

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<sup>25</sup> Oka 601.

<sup>26</sup> Kahara 116.

from overseas. While several merchants sell *kibi dango* today, Kōeido remains the biggest and most popular with its main store still standing inside the central rail station. The transformation of *kibi dango* demonstrates how local identity was driven by transportation networks and tourism. By tying into the *Momotarō* tale, Takeda was able to harness both the national recognition of that tale as well its emotional appeal.

Peaches are a second element connecting Okayama to the tale. The region has a suitably mild climate with warm weather and not too much rainfall. Archaeological excavations in Okayama, Yamaguchi, and Miyazaki prefectures have found carbonized peach pits dating to between 300 BC and 200 AD.<sup>27</sup> The small size of the pits indicates that they were probably from wild peach trees.<sup>28</sup> It was only from the Meiji period that peach trees for fruit cultivation were imported from China. One of the earliest imports was by Okayama-born painter Kinugasa Gōkoku (衣笠豪谷, 1850-1897), who studied in Shanghai from 1875-76.<sup>29</sup> Kinugasa had contact with a Japanese agricultural researcher while he was there and perhaps through this influence he smuggled several peach saplings with him upon his return. Through trial and error across the next two decades, the offspring of these trees, and others taken from China, were built up into an important regional industry. During most of the Meiji period Okayama was the number one producer of peaches in Japan. In part because of its early role in spreading peach

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<sup>27</sup> Ichikawa (2005 b) 88.

<sup>28</sup> In China, references to peaches used for both food and medicine date back to roughly 400 BC, as mentioned in an early Chinese document, the *Sankaikyō* (山海經). As I mentioned in my first chapter, peaches were strongly associated with the power to drive away evil. This belief was also prevalent among the early court in the Japanese islands. This is shown by the reference in the *Nihongi* to Izanagi's use of peaches to drive away pursuers from the underworld.<sup>28</sup> Throughout most of Japanese history peach trees were highly prized as garden ornamentals. As the Chinese character for peach suggests—tree (木) and a large number (兆)—it was appreciated for bearing a profusion of blossoms. Peach trees were planted decoratively from as early as the Nara period and by the Edo period there may have been as many as 200 different flowering varieties. See Ichikawa (2005 b) 89.

<sup>29</sup> Ichikawa (1988) 97-98.

cultivation and the development of the white peach as a semi-luxury brand, Okayama is still better known for peaches than other prefectures that actually produce more.<sup>30</sup>

The third, and most important, connection between Okayama and the tale has been the suggestion that Momotarō was actually modeled on the legendary local hero Kibitsu-hiko no mikoto (吉備津命). Kibitsu-hiko is known as the founder of the Okayama area and is mentioned in the *Kojiki*, *Nihongi*, and numerous local legends. The *Kojiki* (712) does not detail his exploits but merely mentions his genealogy. He is said to be the son of the legendary seventh emperor Kōrei (孝靈) by a marriage to Iho-Yamato-kuni-Are-hime-no-mikoto (意富夜麻登玖邇阿礼比壳命).<sup>31</sup> Kibitsu-hiko was also known as Hiko-I-Saseri-hiko-no-mikoto (比古伊佐勢理比古命). Emperor Kōrei later married Hahe-irodo (繩伊呂杼) and she bore him a second son, Waka-take-hiko-no-mikoto (稚武彦命). This second son was also known as Waka-hiko-take-Kibitsu-hiko-no-mikoto (稚武吉備津彦命). Wakatakehiko is important because along with his older brother he would also serve as a suggested model for Momotarō, although in Shikoku rather than in Okayama.

The *Nihongi* (720) expands considerably upon these accounts and records that Kibitsu-hiko was one of the four generals (*shogun*) appointed by the legendary tenth emperor Sujin (3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century, 崇神) who dispatched them to expand the Yamato court in the four cardinal directions. The *Nihongi* states:

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<sup>30</sup> By 1906 Okayama had roughly 440,000 peach trees under cultivation and was also where most of Japan's new breeds of peaches, notably the white peach (白桃), were developed. Its share of national production of the fruit has fallen as peach trees suitable for cultivation in volcanic soils allowed Kanto growers to expand production. Currently Yamanashi prefecture is the leading producer with Okayama ranking fifth or sixth nationwide.

<sup>31</sup> Ichikawa (2005 b) 68.

10<sup>th</sup> year, Autumn, 7<sup>th</sup> month, 24<sup>th</sup> day. He proclaimed to the company of Ministers, saying:--“For the guidance of the people the chief thing is education Now that I have performed the due rites to the Gods of Heaven and of Earth, all calamity has become spent. The distant savages, however, do not receive our calendar because they are yet unaccustomed to the civilizing influences of our rule We will, therefore, select some of our company of Ministers and despatch (sic) them to the four quarters, so that they may cause our Will to be known.”

9<sup>th</sup> month, 9<sup>th</sup> day. The Emperor sent Oho-hiko no Mikoto to the Northern region, he sent Takenu-kaha wake to the Eastern Sea, he sent Kibi-tsu-hiko to the Western road, he sent Tamba no chi-nushi no Mikoto to Tamba. On this occasion he addressed them, saying:—“If there be any who do not receive our instructions, prepare war and smite them.” Having said so, he granted them all alike seals and ribbons, and appointed them as generals.<sup>32</sup>

These acts represent the expansion of the Yamato court’s power over neighboring domains. Kibitsu-hiko’s name comes from Kibi, which is the early name for the districts of Bizen, Bingo, and Bitchu that now make up Okayama prefecture.

Local legends, mostly associated with shrines, elaborated the story to a much greater degree and are notable for focusing as much or more on the defeated party than on Kibitsu-hiko. Local versions of the expanded story are generally similar and two of the earliest accounts are recorded in the *Kibitsumiya kanjinchō* and the *Kibitsumiya engisha*.<sup>33</sup>

*Kibitsumiya kanjinchō* is held by Kaneyama temple in Okayama and was likely circulated in 1583. The document was an appeal for funds for the refurbishment of Kibitsu shrine, of which Kaneyama was a sub-temple. It was a customary part of such appeals to record the history and origins of the shrine concerned. In this case the document notes that Kibitsu-hiko defeated a supernatural creature (*kijin*).

The *Kibitsumiya engisha*, which dates from the Muromachi period, records the story in greater detail. It identifies Kibitsu-hiko’s opponent as being a prince from the

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<sup>32</sup> Donald Philippi, trans. *Kojiki*. (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1968) 155-156.

<sup>33</sup> Special thanks are due to Kaihara Yasuhiro, full time researchers at the Okayama Prefectural (History) Museum, who graciously gave his time to translate the entire *Kibitsumiya engisha* into modern Japanese for me and also answered questions about the document and about other aspects of local history.

Korean peninsula kingdom of Kudara (百済の王子). This prince was also known as the ruler of Kibi (吉備冠者) and as an Ura (温羅). The latter term is halfway between being a title and a term similar to *oni*. Kibitsuhihiko is recorded as entering the area on a mission to bring it under imperial control. Engaging in battle, he fired numerous arrows at the Ura, but each time they were struck down by rocks. So Kibitsuhihiko fired two arrows at once. The Ura knocked down one with a rock, but the other one pierced its eye. The Ura tried to escape by changing its form into a pheasant, but Kibitsuhihiko gave chase by turning into a hawk. The Ura changed into a fish and disappeared beneath the water, upon which Kibitsuhihiko turned himself into a cormorant and swallowed the Ura. But the story does not end with the Ura's death. Even after the Ura's head was cut off it kept crying out. The head was then fed to a dog but it would still not be silent and was buried. Even this did not silence it and it kept crying for the next thirteen years. Finally its spirit appeared to Kibitsuhihiko in a dream and following the spirit's advice he took the appropriate measures to pacify it. This entailed building a shrine above its burial site and practicing an oracle (*kama-uranai*) there based on listening to the sounds of rice being cooked in a very large metal pot.

Local versions of the story are different from the *Kojiki* or *Nihongi* versions of the tale first for their greater length and second in how they betray a certain ambiguity towards the two protagonists, not clearly siding with one over the other. In local versions, more of the tale is devoted to the Ura than to Kibitsuhihiko and especially to the effort to pacify the Ura's crying skull after its defeat. The tale may represent local events involving a settlement of immigrants from the Korean peninsula who were incorporated into rule under the Yamato court after being defeated. These immigrants may have had

superior metal working skills making them formidable rivals to the Yamato court. Their center of power would have been the Korean-style hilltop fortress now known as the *ki-no-jo*, or *Oni Castle*. No buildings survive there now but the foundations of several gates and massive rock walls along the four kilometer-long hilltop can still be seen today. Recently one of the wooden gates has been reconstructed and has been painted with bright colors in the Korean style. The *ki-no-jo* site, a thirty-minute drive north of downtown Okayama city, is one of the thirty or so Korean style ancient fortresses in Japan and is among the largest. It has been suggested that many of the earliest mentions of *oni* in Japan were actually references to settlers from the Korean peninsula.<sup>34</sup> Sites with legends about *oni* often overlapped with early metal-producing regions and *oni* were often depicted as using steel bars (*kanabō*) as weapons.

### **Local Educators, Ethnographers, and Admen**

The *ki-no-jo* site and Kibitsu-hiko would not be connected to the *Momotarō* tale until the 1930s. This was when a variety of local folklorists, historians, teachers, artists, activists, and admen helped knit together their home regions and the *Momotarō* tale. Some of them were interested in uncovering the authentic origins of local place names and history. Many of them were interested in promoting their region, especially economically through tourism. Often these motives, rather than conflicting, overlapped and worked together as they sometimes discovered history and other times simply created it. While Okayama has become best known for *Momotarō* today, in the prewar period Inuyama and Kinashi were actually better known for their connections to the tale.

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<sup>34</sup> Ichikawa (1988) 80-82.



In the Inuyama area, just north of Nagoya, Kawaji Sōichi and Yoshida Hatsusaburō worked together to found a shrine to Momotarō that blurred the lines between tourist attraction and place of worship. In the Kinashi area, near Takamatsu city on Shikoku Island, Hashimoto Sentarō was explicitly motivated by the desire to promote his hometown when he wrote a best-selling book linking Kinashi to *Momotarō*. In Okayama, too, sculptor Namba Ginnosuke and teacher Shiida Yoshihide wrote books linking their prefecture to the tale.

The activity of these five men during the 1930s is best understood against two movements during this decade. First, it was just at this time that an increasingly affluent middle class made use of expanding railway networks to produce a boom in domestic tourism.<sup>35</sup> In each of the three areas mentioned above area residents saw the *Momotarō* tale as a way of promoting their region by drawing visitors. Now that people could travel, they needed interesting places to go to. This meant building up local and regional identities that held appeal and interest for the largest number of consumers possible. Thus railroads not only allowed urban dwellers to consume local identities, but actually helped produce those identities. These identities were marketed toward mass audiences and so they needed to have national appeal even as they insisted on their unique, local quality. As tourism became increasingly important economically, local identity was tied to national identity by the need for the former to be marketed toward the latter. A second phenomenon was the boom in *kyōdo kenkyū* during the early 1930s. This was related to the tourist boom mentioned above, but it also grew from a desire that went beyond money

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<sup>35</sup> While Japanese use trains today mostly for commuting and only occasionally for tourism, Kanzaki notes that in the Meiji period, when railways first took off, just the opposite was the case. Train travel, judging by the numbers of passengers, was more for tourism than commuting. This is likely because tourism destinations predated trains, but suburbs only developed after trains made them possible and thus altered residential patterns significantly. Kanzaki (1997) 191.

to search out local identity. A resurgent nationalism contributed to this movement. So did specific educational policies that encouraged students to think of the world by starting with their own home places and building outwards toward the nation. Japan's rich local identities are in part a product of the long history of the nation, but they are also the result of specific policies in the modern period to stress *kyōdo kyōiku* within the school system. As a result of these trends people all over Japan set out on trains and on foot with their notebooks or even shovels in hand.

In the previous chapter I argued that the abundance of amateur ethnographers influenced Yanagita Kunio. It was during the first half of the 1930s that he changed his focus because *kyōdo kenkyū* had become “just too plain” (*amari ni futsū*)<sup>36</sup>; too many amateurs had entered the field. Looking at the activities of these five men gives us concrete examples of what Yanagita was reacting against and how, at the same time, identity was being constructed at the local level in Inuyama, Kinashi and Okayama.

Inuyama in Aichi prefecture was the first place to be well known for the tale. Thirty minutes north of Nagoya by train and near the border of Gifu Prefecture, the scenic Kiso river has cut a gorge with striking, large rock features. In 1871 a French railroad engineer working in the Inuyama area reportedly likened it to the Rhine river valley near Bonn and the term Nihon Rhine (the Rhine of Japan) was born. With the opening of a spur railway line from Nagoya to the area in the 1920s tourism boomed. Around two hundred flat boats took tourists on the short journey down the scenic parts of the river. Inuyama also boasted dramatic hill-top Inuyama Castle and Inuyama

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<sup>36</sup> Yanagita (Vol. 6) 382.

Amusement Park at its base. The amusement park featured rides, a large flower garden, restaurants and hotels.

It was an ideal area for Kawaji Sōichi (1894-1973) and Yoshida Hatsusaburō (1884-1955) to found *Momotarō jinja* in 1930 as an amalgam of tourist spot and sacred site. The combination was not problematic because traditionally there were not strict lines drawn between secular and sacred attractions and the shrine proved to be tremendously popular. Tourists on day excursions would get off the train at Inuyama Amusement Park and then walk to *Momotarō jinja* as part of a single outing that was very popular throughout the 1930s.

Kawaji's choice of *Momotarō* was not completely *ex nihilo*. From before the Meiji era this area had many place names that could be related to the tale. In nearby Gifu prefecture related place names included Inuyama (Dog Mountain, distinct from the Inuyama in Aichi), Sarubora (Monkey Cave), Kijigatana (Pheasant), Torikumi (Grappling Place), and Katsuyama (Victory Mountain).<sup>37</sup> In the Inuyama area in Aichi, itself, the place name Momoyama (Peach Mountain) brought this tale to mind.

On Momoyama there was a small shrine (*yashiro*) dedicated to a *kodomo gami*, a child-protecting deity, said to be associated with the mountain. Kawaji relocated the shrine a half-kilometer away (for better access to the roads and thus visitors), constructed a large shrine complex with several buildings, and appointed himself the first head priest of *Momotarō jinja*.<sup>38</sup> According to Kawaji's son and current head priest, Kawaji Momomitsu (川治桃光), the enshrined deity is a god associated with the peach thrown

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<sup>37</sup> Kahara 123.

<sup>38</sup> Furukawa Katsuyuki. "Momotarō densetsu chi wo tazunete." *Momotarō wa ima mo genki da*. (Okayama: Okayama Momotarō Kenkyūkai, 2005) 158-204. See pages 175-177.

by Izanagi at his underworld pursuers as mentioned in the *Kojiki*. This deity was then reborn as *Momotarō*.

A visit to the shrine takes the form of walking through the *Momotarō* tale.

Visitors are first greeted by a small pink statue of a baby *Momotarō* bursting forth from a peach. This is located just in front of a *torii* shrine gate that is adorned with a pink peach in its top central crosspiece. Further into the shrine ground, the story elements are laid out including footprints the old woman left behind as she went down to the river to do her washing. Scattered throughout the shrine grounds are painted cement statues of characters from the tale. Before the central shrine building, there is a unique *torii* shaped like a peach itself. Nearby, a shrine museum holds artifacts related to the tale, mostly goods or artistic items bearing *Momotarō*'s image. Perhaps most interesting though are the artifacts related to the *oni*. These include large steel clubs, large tiger-striped pants, and most provocatively multiple black and white photographs of dead, seemingly mummified *oni* corpses. Asked about where the bodies themselves are, Kawaji Momomitsu replied that unfortunately they burned up in a mysterious fire in 1995.

Today the shrine is quite popular during the Boy's Day celebration, when scores of families bring their sons, dress them as *Momotarō*, take pictures and pray for their health. But a visit to the shrine now evokes more irony than wonder and the overall feeling is one of a kitschy, roadside attraction. It did not gain the renewed appeal *Momotarō* reclaimed in Okayama. Until the end of the war, however, the shrine was a major attraction. Photographs from Inuyama in the 1930s show young boys dressed as *Momotarō* by the riverside, apprentice geisha singing a *Momotarō*-related local song, and

two kinds of *Momotarō matsuri* (one on land, one on the Kiso River) associated with the shrine.

These photographs give us some idea of the performative nature of the tale during this time. Children dressed up as the character. Young men and women sang songs at social gatherings focused on the tale. Adults participated in festivals themed around it. And senior citizens told their extended families their own made-up versions of the tale around hearth fires. It was this interactive quality that made the tale so popular for narrating local identity.

Advertising was also a key to this mix. In the case of *Momotarō jinja*, while it was Kawaji who ran the shrine, it was the graphic artist Yoshida Hatsusaburō who helped to popularize it. Billing himself as the “Hiroshige of the Modern World,” Yoshida became well known for his bird’s-eye view maps (*chōkanzu*), a form he helped to popularize. His style echoes Hiroshige’s depiction of landscape but his maps are organized around modern city districts, railway lines, and hot springs resorts. *Momotarō* was something of a favored theme for him and on the cover of his memoirs he represented himself as Momotarō, carrying a large brush rather than a sword. After the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923 he moved to the Kansai region and eventually bought a house in the Inuyama area. Whether he influenced Kawaji in his choice of *Momotarō* for the shrine is unclear, but he was clearly key to promoting the shrine. His maps included *Momotarō jinja* as part of the recommended course when visiting the area for a day outing. The shrine flourished until the worsening of the war in 1941-42 killed off tourism. In the postwar period it has declined into a slightly run-down state but continues to attract large numbers of locals once a year for the *Momotarō matsuri* in April, celebrating boys.

The other area connected to the tale, Kinashi, also featured both a shrine and tourist attraction themed around the folktale. Unlike Inuyama, these two sites were separate. Kinashi, a rural area a ten-minute train ride south of Takamatsu city on Shikoku, is not well known in Japan even today. The area's connection with *Momotarō* began by chance as young local resident Hashimoto Sentarō (橋本仙太郎, 1890-1940) listened to a speech by the famous Meiji statesman Okuma Shigenobu (1838-1922). Commenting upon the area's place name Kinashi (鬼無), which means "no *oni*", Okuma urged the residents to live up to their name and "harbor no *oni* [meaning nothing low or vile] in your hearts."<sup>39</sup> In another example of how local identity is actually read through the lens of national identity, this moved Hashimoto to consider that perhaps his region was connected to the tale.

Hashimoto was already an avid amateur historian and local researcher, often searching old documents for the origins of local place names and even making occasional digs for artifacts. Now he began collecting various local tales about *oni*. First he published a series of articles in the local *Shikoku minpo* newspaper in 1930 under the collective title *Dowa Momotarō no hasshōchi wa Kinashi* ("The Origin of the Children's Story *Momotarō* is Kinashi"). In 1932 he published the book *Kinashi densetsu Momotarō-san: onigashima seibatsu (Kinashi's Legend Momotarō: Expedition to Onigashima)*.

The 1932 book proved tremendously popular and went through 22 printings. While it was not a formal reader in strict terms, Hashimoto was an elementary school teacher and thus certainly exposed to the movement to produce local readers, which

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<sup>39</sup> Saito 2000 b.

likely influenced his own publication. In his book Hashimoto lists over 200 places he believes may be connected to the tale.<sup>40</sup> These included the Honzugawa river where *Momotarō* was “found”, Shibayama (Firewood Mountain), Onigazuka (Oni Mound), where the *oni* were buried and Katsugayama (Victory Mountain), where the hero victoriously returned home. Hashimoto believed that the model for the hero was Wakatakehiko no mikoto, who is mentioned in the *Nihongi* as a son of emperor Kōrei as well as being Kibitsu-hiko’s younger brother.

But Hashimoto focuses more on the *oni* than on the hero. He conjectured that they were actually pirates who were based on the small islands of Megijima (女木島, female tree island) and Ogijima (男木島, male tree island) both located a few kilometers off of Takamatsu. Both islands have man-made caves that might have been used by pirates active in the Seto Inland Sea during Japan’s middle ages.<sup>41</sup> With publication of Hashimoto’s book, Megijima also came to be known as Onigashima and became a popular tourist attraction. Ferries ran between the island and Takamatsu, bringing thousands of tourists a day in the summer. People went to the island’s beach, swam in the ocean and enjoyed exploring the cave which remained cool in the summer heat. Today the island remains a relatively popular summer escape.

In Hashimoto’s hometown of Kinashi, *Kumano jinja* was renamed *Kumano gongen Momotarō jinja*. The official renaming occurred in 1955 but it was popularly associated with *Momotarō* before the war.<sup>42</sup> Today the shrine celebrates a Kinashi

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<sup>40</sup> Kahara 127-28.

<sup>41</sup> The cave on Megijima is especially large with a length of 400 meters and an area of 4,000 square meters. Recent investigators believe that it may have been quarried for stone sometime before 1800.

<sup>42</sup> Furukawa 173-74.

*Momotarō matsuri* with various events focused on children on the first Sunday in April each year.

Unlike Inuyama and Kinashi, Okayama already had certain connections with the tale by the 1930s. The earliest explicit tie was Takeda Asajirō's marketing of *kibi dango* through the tale from 1905 or earlier. But the first to assert in writing that the *Momotarō* tale was actually modeled on events in Okayama was local resident Namba Ginnosuke (難波銀之助, 1897-1973). At nearly the same time Yanagita Kunio was working to identify the tale with the nation, Namba was rooting it in local history. In May 1930 Namba published *Momotarō no shijitsu (A History of Momotarō)*, which opens as follows:

And the Okayama specialty, *kibi dango*, calls to mind the Momotarō tale (*mukashibanashi*). By chance of another hobby I was listening to local legends (*chihō no densetsu*) and oral tales (*kuchi tsutae*), and these *kibi dango* became a kind of opening for me. I continued to research other works, including the *Kojiki*, *Nihongi*, *Bitchu fudoki*, *Kibitsu jinja ki*, *Kibi no chiri* (寸籓乃塵) and carried out local surveys of my own and these have made it clear to me that the *Momotarō* tale accords with [local tales].<sup>43</sup>

Actively engaging in *kyōdo kenkyū*, Namba traveled throughout the prefecture gathering local tales, taking careful notes and photographs of various sites. He came to the conclusion that the *Momotarō* tale was based on the local legendary figure of *Kibitsu no mikoto*. He focused on the *ki-no-jo* (*oni* castle) as a model for the *onigashima* found in the *Momotarō* tale. This is less improbable than it sounds at first. Traditionally *Kibitsu no mikoto* was said to have traveled from the capital to what is now the Osaka area and then by boat to Okayama. This could match *Kibitsu no mikoto's* sea journey with Momotarō's own journey by boat. The *Kibiji* (吉備路), or Kibi road area features

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<sup>43</sup> Ichikawa (2005 b) 91.



numerous small, distinct hills set in a plain that has been made almost tabletop flat by centuries of continuous farming. Low but sharply defined hills are thus often compared to islands rising from the sea. The effect is heightened in the summer when rice paddies are flooded with water and makes for a very scenic effect. Comparing the *ki-no-jo* hill to an island, like *Oni Island* from the *Momotarō* tale, would have been quite natural.

Namba's work is carefully researched and has the appeal of carefully fitting together jigsaw-like pieces of evidence as he matches *Kibitsu-hiko* and *Momotarō* together. But a question arises: if these two tales are 1,300 years old and 400 years old respectively, then why were they only linked together in 1930? If Namba's thesis is right and *Kibitsu-hiko* was the model for *Momotarō*, then the two tales were linked once, but then this link was subsequently forgotten. Given the stability and preservation of oral tales in Japan this seems unlikely. Rather I believe the association of these two tales has more to do with Namba's own historical position. Born in 1897 he was among the first generation to be schooled with new nationally-produced textbooks. As I showed in my second chapter, the tale was well known through its prominent place in children's literature, as well as its inclusion in Japanese language readers. Thus it seems likely that Namba was attracted by the *Momotarō* tale's narrative capital in choosing that tale as an organizing matrix to bring together numerous local legends, place names and events. So, as in the earlier cases, national identity played a strong role in helping to produce local identity.

Next to build upon the connection between the tale and Okayama was Shiida Yoshihide (1876-1946), an instructor in Japanese language and literature at the Sixth Higher School in Okayama. In 1941 Shiida published *Momotarō no gairon* (*An Introduction to Momotarō*), which stressed the connection between *kibi dango* and

*Kibitsu*hiko *jinja*, suggesting that the sweets were first made at that shrine.<sup>44</sup> The work is also notable for suggesting that the *Momotarō* tale was first told in the later Muromachi period, based on carvings, dating to at least 1614, at Kenohi shrine in Fukui prefecture. Beyond this he built upon many of the same points made earlier by Namba.

Both Shiida's and Hashimoto's positions as teachers help to underscore the ties between *kyōdo kyōiku* and *kyōdo kenkyū* research. Sekido Akiko has explored the role of educational policy in pushing local research in support of Japanese nationalism from the 1930s onward.<sup>45</sup> Direct observation of local areas was promoted and applied through subjects including geography, history, science and literature. Local identity was then related to national identity. Supporting this initiative, teachers increasingly became engaged in promoting local identity through publishing journals or books on their research into local legends, place names and history.

### **Rewriting Local Identity after 1945**

After 1945 the tale was transformed from a national allegory into a local symbol. Fundamentally linked with a now discredited militarism and emperor worship, the tale disappeared from prominence across the Japanese nation. It was literally blacked out of children's textbooks and new versions excluded it. Similarly, new children's picture books featuring *Momotarō*, formerly prolific, were scarce until the late 1950s. But the character reappeared prominently in Okayama, largely thanks to the efforts of Okayama Prefecture Governor Miki Yukiharu (1903-1964) who thought it would make an ideal symbol for the region. Miki's great popularity made him something of a legendary figure

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<sup>44</sup> Ichikawa (2005 b) 92-3.

<sup>45</sup> Sekido 5-8.

himself in the prefecture and he is fondly remembered as the ‘*Momotarō* governor’ (*Momotarō chiji*).<sup>46</sup>

Miki was elected governor in 1951 and served four consecutive terms, or a total of just over 13 years before dying in office. He is still widely remembered for orchestrating the renaissance that moved the region from an agricultural to an industrial-based economy.<sup>47</sup> After being elected governor, his well-known slogan was “Industry, education, and health for Okayama Prefecture” (産業と教育と衛生の岡山県).<sup>48</sup> Industry was successfully promoted in the Mizushima Industrial Harbor Zone (水島臨海工業地帯).<sup>49</sup> Local self-governing bodies (自治体) were streamlined and in some cases combined. But while bureaucratic reform and prospering factories could improve the standard of living, they offered relatively low possibility for emotional investment as symbols. Okayama had a strong manufacturing based economy, especially of machine components, cameras, and uniforms, but it had relatively few well-known natural sites or gourmet products. Miki needed something that would represent a hard-working, conscientious ethic to the people of Okayama. And to Japanese from other prefectures it had to be a symbol that exerted at least some lure towards Okayama. After consultation with his advisors and some discussion, Miki decided *Momotarō* fit the bill.<sup>50</sup>

The prewar work of Namba and Shiida had established seemingly plausible connections between the tale and the prefecture. Now government campaigns begun

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<sup>46</sup> *Watashi naki kenshin* 80. Miki got his medical degree from the Okayama Medical University (*Okayama Igaku Daigaku*) in 1929. He then got his law degree from Kyushu Imperial University’s law school in 1934 and entered the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Giving up a promising career in the central bureaucracy he chose to return to Okayama to run for governor.

<sup>47</sup> *Watashi naki kenshin* 207-210.

<sup>48</sup> Kahara 129-30.

<sup>49</sup> *Watashi naki kenshin* 207-225.

<sup>50</sup> Ichikawa, 2005 a.

under Miki—which continue to this day—established this connection in the public mind. Author and former local museum director Ichikawa Shunsuke wrote two works of local history on the tale, the first at the urging of Governor Miki. In an interview, Ichikawa expressed the opinion that it was good that Okayama, through Miki’s efforts “got it [Momotarō] first” (最初に手を付けて).<sup>51</sup> He feels that had Miki not acted first then some other prefecture, probably Kagawa, would have pursued a similar strategy using the tale.

The ephemeral nature of much of the promotional material themed around *Momotarō* means that most of it was not archived and is unrecoverable, except anecdotally from older citizens. However, records from local tourist bureaus and the chamber of commerce give some insight into the nature of the promotional activities carried out. During 1960, the year of the Tokyo Olympics, a large bronze statue of Momotarō was cast and erected in the plaza of the main rail station. This same year, ‘Momotarō Tourist Campaign Squads’ (桃太郎観光宣伝隊) were dispatched to Japan’s major cities to promote travel to Okayama.<sup>52</sup> Wearing matching short *happi* coat jackets with ‘Momotarō’ written on them, they distributed *kibi dango* and pamphlets on the streets in Japan’s major cities. At home in Okayama, images of Momotarō began to increasingly appear on tourist literature and to a lesser degree on government information pamphlets for local citizens.

These efforts gained critical mass in 1962, during the 17<sup>th</sup> annual National Sporting Competition (国民体育大会) held in Okayama.<sup>53</sup> Held two years after the

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<sup>51</sup> Ichikawa 2005 a.

<sup>52</sup> Kahara 132.

<sup>53</sup> *Watashi naki kenshin* 198-200.

landmark 1960 Tokyo Olympics, this competition, known as the *kokutai* for an abbreviation of its Chinese characters, was a sporting event that attracted great public interest from around the nation. For Okayama, it was more than sports: it was the prefecture's moment in the national spotlight. There was great energy devoted to ready the prefecture for the event and various campaigns were undertaken to beautify the prefecture, plant flowers and promote civil courtesy.

The *Momotarō* icon was a recurring theme for *kokutai*-related goods, athlete's uniforms were peach colored, and a totem pole featuring Momotarō and his three animal retainers was erected in front of the rail station. By all measures the *kokutai* was a great success for Okayama, whose regional team took second place in the overall point accumulation, just behind Tokyo.<sup>54</sup> It also was a turning point in narrating disparate elements of the region's identity through a single focus on the *Momotarō* tale. It signaled the redevelopment of the tale away from nationalism and militarism and toward peaceful competition through sports and economic progress. As commentators have noted, *kokutai* is a homophone for both the ultra-nationalistic idea of a 'national body' employed for propaganda during the war and for the National Sports Competition. As of 1962 the transition of *Momotarō* from an association with the old *kokutai* to the new *kokutai* was largely complete in the public mind.

Use of the tale continued after Miki's death in 1963. In both 1972 and 1988 large-scale campaigns focusing on the *Momotarō* symbol were spurred by new transportation networks and the tourist booms that accompanied these developments. 1972 marked the opening of the San'yō Shinkansen rail line through Okayama and a huge spike in travel

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<sup>54</sup> Kahara 130-31.

in the prefecture, especially by Japanese from outside of the province.<sup>55</sup> As in 1960, Okayama actively promoted tourism to the prefecture, this time with a ‘Momotarō Tourist Team’ (桃太郎観光団). On the day the shinkansen line opened, this team traveled to Tokyo 93 persons strong. Wearing matching *happi* jackets and matching *hachimaki* headbands with a peach symbol, they handed out *kibi dango* samples and Okayama tourism pamphlets in and around Tokyo station.<sup>56</sup>

A similar boom was inspired in 1988 by the opening of the Seto Ōhashi bridge linking Honshu and Shikoku.<sup>57</sup> Previously travel to Shikoku from the main island of Honshu was mostly accomplished by either ferry, or to a lesser degree air. The bridge was a technical feat, built over a decade, costing the equivalent of \$7 billion, and actually consisting of eleven different bridges covering over thirteen kilometers. With its completion, Okayama became the front doorway to much of Shikoku and gained increased travel through the city.<sup>58</sup> The bridge’s opening was celebrated with numerous events including the Momotarō Science Museum (*Momotarō kagakukan*), Momotarō Adventure Museum (*Momotarō bōkenkan*), a movie titled in English “Momotarō Forever,” and a graphic symbol of Momotarō that was designed by famous manga artist Tezuka Osamu.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Numbers of tourists using rail service in the province reached 18.6 million. 7.2 million of these were from other Japanese provinces. This was a jump of 140% for intra-province tourism and a 215% increase for those coming from outside. Kahara 132.

<sup>56</sup> The tourist boom inspired by the shinkansen connection proved to be relatively short lived. Economic effects from the oil shock of 1973 dampened domestic tourism overall. And the extension of the shinkansen’s southern terminus to the city of Hakata in Kyushu meant that city displaced Okayama somewhat as a tourist destination.

<sup>57</sup> Kahara 133-34.

<sup>58</sup> Kahara 133. Those traveling on tourism in the prefecture reached 25.7 million with 14.3 of these from outside of the prefecture. This was a 117% increase from the previous year’s figures overall and a 125% jump for travelers from outside of the prefecture.

<sup>59</sup> Kahara 134.

The most prominent, if intangible, presence of *Momotarō* in the prefecture is the Okayama *Momotarō matsuri*, held annually in August. The city's Spring Festival (*Haru matsuri*) begun in 1960 was renamed the Okayama *Momotarō matsuri* in 1976.<sup>60</sup> After absorbing two other festivals, it was moved to the summer time and is currently the city's largest and most important festival by far. The festival was generally held on the city's main avenue that links the famous Kōrakuen garden and the old castle overlooking it to the main rail station just over one kilometer away. It may be unsurprising that in 1984 a contest was held to rename the main street: '*Momotarō Ōdōri*' was the choice selected. To celebrate this new name, 20 small bronzes of peaches, Momotarō's animal retainers, treasure gained from *Oni* Island, and similarly tale-themed objects were placed along the street.

The tale's use in the prefecture shows no sign of slowing down. In the summer of 2005, the Okayama Digital Museum (岡山デジタルミュージアム) celebrated its opening with a *Momotarō*-themed exhibit. Museums play a key role in narrating regional identity. The contrasts between the prefecture's two leading museums embody the changing nature of museums themselves and how they narrate local identity. The city's other main museum is the Okayama Prefectural Museum (岡山県立博物館). This is a traditional institution. Its permanent collection starts with archaeological artifacts from the area's early history and continues until historical events of nearly the present day. It is located near Kōrakuen Park in its own large, two-story building and supports a number of researchers investigating local history. Its onsite storerooms contain many more artifacts

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<sup>60</sup> Kahara 132-33.

than can be shown at any one time. Besides one large temporary exhibit room, its exhibitions rarely change. Although it presents historical documents concerning the Kibitsu-hiko legend, it makes no mention of *Momotarō*.

As its name suggests, the Digital Museum is clearly a new kind of museum. Opened in 2005, it occupies part of two floors of the newly opened NHK building overlooking the north side of the central rail station. It stores no artifacts beyond what are currently on display and employs no staff engaged in research beyond what is required to assemble its ever-changing temporary exhibitions. Floor space is evenly divided between a high-tech permanent collection and its constantly changing exhibitions. But the permanent collection is only open when temporary collections are being staged and clearly the latter are the museum's focal point.

These two museum's offer several insights into how the region is represented. Most obvious is the shortening of the cultural attention span. The Digital Museum's exhibits are highly interactive, constantly changing, and present information in brightly colored, bite-size pieces. At the Prefectural Museum efforts have been made to add interest, such as adding hands-on exhibits to the permanent collection, but the feeling is still overwhelmingly that of a traditional museum. The Digital Museum's primary source of funding is private companies, which are advertised prominently on the museum's homepage.<sup>61</sup> In contrast to the Prefectural Museum, which is fully government funded, the Digital Museum is driven to produce more popular exhibits. Its *Momotarō* exhibition

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.okayama-digital-museum.jp>



reflected this by focusing on toys, games, and local connections to the tale.<sup>62</sup> Little mention or consideration was given to the longer history or wartime use of the tale.<sup>63</sup>

Connected with the Digital Museum's exhibit on *Momotarō* a book was published, mostly focusing on the tale's use in the region. As part of this edited collection Japanese researcher Kahara Nahoko summarizes the tale's current status in the prefecture as follows.

It was around the time just before and after the opening of the Seto Ōhashi bridge that the tale's use exceeded just the area of tourism and its penetration into the city became quite spectacular. Currently Momotarō's image adorns public facilities, kindergartens, *juku* tutoring centers, hotels, restaurants, law firms, senior centers, volunteer organizations and so forth. Those involved with promoting tourism in Okayama note, "We're saturated with Momotarō" and "There are so many different images out there, uniformity can no longer be imposed [統一が取れない]. They are pointing out that as the figure is used in a wide variety of situations it takes on a wide range of meanings and nuances. While the *Mizunohen no Momo kun*<sup>64</sup> bronze was put up to represent 'a bright future for the region' this image also competes with diverging images like the 'Momotarō Hotsprings,' the 'Momotarō Realtors Shop,' and 'Blood Donation Room: Momotarō.' We can say that Momotarō has exceeded simply being the hero of a tale and has now become a representative regional symbol of Okayama.<sup>65</sup>

Just as Kahara notes, either looking through the phone book at business names or just casually strolling through town, one is struck by the great presence of *Momotarō* in store names and advertisements. As Kahara's informants observe, the ubiquitous quality of *Momotarō* images in Okayama is something of a mixed blessing. Their very ubiquity demonstrate the success of tourist campaigns but also threaten to render the images passé.

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<sup>62</sup> See the brochure, *Okayama to Momotarō ten*.

<sup>63</sup> Eliding references to Japan's wartime past and actions is a subtler problem than is sometimes allowed for. As Mr. Ozu, the curator of the *Momotarō* exhibit mentioned to me, these references often become ambiguous. Unless historical references to Japanese militarism are very carefully positioned (to reflect on the past critically), they can unintentionally be read as celebrating past militarism.

<sup>64</sup> This was a bronze statue of Momotarō put up near Korakuen Park in 1991 to celebrate the centennial anniversary of Okayama's incorporation as a city.

<sup>65</sup> Kahara 134.

Amid this profusion of images the single predominant one must be the life-size (?) bronze statue of *Momotarō* and his three animal retainers standing in front of the main rail station. In many ways this statue also encapsulates the postwar history of the tale's use in the region, and beyond. Cast by the local sculptor Okamoto Kinpō (岡本錦朋), it was erected in 1960 and was the first of six statues eventually made from the same mold.<sup>66</sup>

Beyond Japan, it represents the prefecture overseas on three different continents. From the same mold, four more statues have been cast and sent overseas to Okayama's sister cities as gestures of friendship. While *Momotarō* ventured forth to punish Japan's enemies in the prewar days, he now travels abroad as a goodwill ambassador, representing not Japan but Okayama. These travels have taken him to San Noyes, California, Costa Rica, Bulgaria, and the city of Rakuyo (落陽) in Southern China.<sup>67</sup> This last journey is certainly the most interesting historically given Japan's colonization and invasion of China. The statue was donated to the city in 1995 and erected in a prominent place in front of the local art and history museum. Visiting there, Nomura Junichi found that residents realized that it was a gift from a Japanese city but that it drew no controversy.

This demonstrates how successfully *Momotarō* has been changed from a national icon into a regional one. Chinese sensitivity to Japanese incursions and atrocities during World War II remains strong to this day and the *Momotarō* tale was explicitly part of the

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<sup>66</sup> It was first erected under the influence of Governor Miki, who wanted it to be in place for the Tokyo Olympics. In 1972 this first statue was moved inside the main rail station and a second identical statue was put in its place just outside. From 1976 the statue has looked out over the annual *Momotarō matsuri*. And since 1984 it has become the central star in a constellation of twenty other *Momotarō* tale related statues that were put in place that year when the avenue it faces was renamed *Momotarō Odōri*.

<sup>67</sup> Nomura 2-8.

propaganda supporting this, as I will show in the following chapter. Anti-Japanese riots in China in 2004 were precipitated by Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, but grew out of a still deep resentment towards Japanese actions during the war in China. That the Momotarō bronze was accepted by a Chinese city and its residents with no controversy indicates that they saw it as representative of a regional Japanese identity and as unconnected to the war. The response may also reflect the fact that residents were simply unaware of the tale's militaristic past. I would venture to guess that a similar gift of a statue to a South Korean city would provoke a vehement, negative reaction. This is because knowledge of the tale's use during the war is still well within living memory of the older residents.

If the statues have raised no questions overseas, then how about at home? Surely this tale was not the only choice for the prefecture to center its tourism and other efforts on. Even though its story elements of *kibi dango* and peaches fit well with the tale, as did a connection with legendary figure Kibitsuhiko, these were all coincidental in nature. It is a testament to the success of the tourism and other campaigns focusing on the *Momotarō* tale that people now rarely ask, why is that statue in front of the station? But it is not an unreasonable question and local researcher Ichikawa Shunsuke recalls being asked precisely this by a certain Professor Ikeda, a visitor from Tokyo University, in 1978.<sup>68</sup> Ichikawa headed the Orient Art Museum at the time and went with Professor Fujii Shun to meet Ikeda at the station. As the three men left the station for a conference focusing on the region's early history, Professor Ikeda, seeing the bronze statue, asked about the

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<sup>68</sup> Ichikawa 2005 a. I have not been able to track down the specific professor Ikeda that Mr. Ichikawa recalled, so his recollection remains uncorroborated but significant as an anecdote nonetheless.

connection between *Momotarō* and the prefecture. Ichikawa and Fujii were caught off guard and admitted they did not know if there really was any authentic connection.

Later, at Fujii's urging, and in the tradition of Namba and Shiida's prewar work, Ichikawa eventually produced two books on the topic, *Okayama Momotarō* (1988) and *Okayama no Momotarō* (2005). Both works are interesting for acknowledging that the tale was not original to the area, but ironically at the same time they bolster the connection between *Momotarō* and Okayama. The best example of this is when Ichikawa recounts the legend of Kibitsu-hiko. After mentioning Kibitsu-hiko's name he constantly inserts *Momotarō*'s name in parenthesis, linking the two implicitly. In an interview, Ichikawa recounted that he started the project seeking to more strongly establish the connections between the tale and the prefecture, but that he ended up realizing the circumstantial nature of the connection. His stated goals were to build up a peaceful local identity through the *Momotarō* character. Interestingly, he still has certain reservations toward the tale, as is perhaps understandable for someone who lived through its use during World War II. Toward the end of the interview he expressed the concern that if the tale were reintroduced into children's reading textbooks, it would certainly be a sign that Japan was once again heading down a road toward militarism and war.

### **Conclusion**

Standing in front of the bronze *Momotarō* statue in Okayama one is struck by the forms that narratives of local identity can take on. Like the bronze itself, many of these narrative forms could only be produced by modern means but take ancient themes for their subjects. The *Momotarō* tale existed from over 400 years ago but it was only turned

into a local legend in the modern period. Its popularity for narrating local identity was predicated on its nationwide recognition, which gave it tremendous narrative capital. It is easy to imagine this statue as representing a direct link to elements of the region's history. The reality is much more complex though and includes detours through foreign wars and domestic propaganda, booms in tourism, *kyōdo kenkyū* and *kyōdo kyōiku*.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, it was through the lens of the nation that local identity came into focus in this case, as folktales (*mukashibanashi*) were developed into local legends (*densetsu*). This was accomplished by local activists, artists and admen, and especially schoolteachers acting in their free time as local researchers. These men worked hard to promote their communities, either through tourism or by building up local identities that residents could be proud of. These identities were neither truly authentic nor falsely 'invented traditions' but recast local stories and sites into new configurations. Because these local identities had been created with an eye toward national narratives, when the nation of Japan drifted toward militarism from the 1930s these local identities were that much more strongly pulled along. This was especially true for the *Momotarō* tale, which was vigorously used to support ideas of Japanese expansionism, militarism and empire as I will explore in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER VI

### **Animating Allegory in *Momotarō no umiwashi* (1943) and *Momotarō umi no shimpei* (1945)**

But in the spring of the year of Japan's defeat, an unexpected masterpiece suddenly appeared. "Momotarō's Divine Ocean Warriors", a full-length feature of nine reels. Its director was Seo Mitsuyo and its production costs were 270,000 yen. ... It was quite a spectacle. Above all it was a Japanese animation (*kokusan dōga*) that embodied the total talents available at the time.

But unfortunately, Tokyo and Osaka had already become burnt out fields by this point; Japan was in no shape to be showing movies. First of all, the children who would have been its audience had been evacuated to all over the countryside. [This film] was buried almost without comment.

I was able to watch this from the chilly seats of the Shōchikuza theater which had survived the fires. Watching it I couldn't help but cry. Tears welled up from my depth of appreciation for this film. The entire film was filled with lyricism and a child's spirit. This work poured light into my heart, which had become dried like a mummy and lost all hope and dreams.

"I am going to make animated films (*manga eiga*)," I swore.

"Even if I can only make one film. No matter how much suffering it costs me, I will make my own films and share this same joy with children."

From here my journey to make animated films began.

Osamu Tezuka, *Boku wa mangaka* (1979, *I am a Manga Artist*)<sup>1</sup>

In his autobiography, Osamu Tezuka (1928-1989) traces the origin of his career to a viewing of the big budget animated feature "*Momotarō umi no shinpei* (1945, "Momotarō's Divine Ocean Warriors", hereafter *Shinpei*).<sup>2</sup> Like so many reflections in postwar Japan, this is a personal memory shot through with collective meaning.<sup>3</sup> Tezuka

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<sup>1</sup> Tezuka 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> Tezuka was postwar Japan's foremost *manga* artist and animator and famous for creations including *Tetsuwan atomu* (Atom Boy), *Hi no tori* (Phoenix), and *Shin Takarajima* (New Treasure Island) among dozens of others.

<sup>3</sup> Written decades after the war, Tezuka's memory quoted above demonstrates many of the tropes of postwar autobiography. Tezuka brings a light touch to his memories of the war, witnessing to the horror of the experience with a leavening admixture of comedy where possible. Seeking an audience for his earliest drawings, he secretly posted them in the only space available: a public latrine. At first he was pleased that

recuperates the technological and artistic brilliance of *Shinpei*, while retroactively recasting it as a starting point for his own postwar production. Even within the short space of the quote given above there is a rhetorical repositioning away from the nation and towards the individual. Made with production funding from the Japanese Navy, film historians sometimes refer to *Shinpei* as a *kokusaku dōga* (national policy animation). Tezuka refers to it by a term that is less overtly nationalist, *kokusan dōga* (domestically produced animation). And it inspires him to create *manga eiga* (animated films), a term from which the nation has been completely elided. Tezuka's memory glosses over the political content of the work, exonerating the film's message of militarism through recourse to Japan's own suffering and impending loss. Death, accidental survival, and the promise of new life fill this recollection. In the "spring of the year of Japan's defeat," Tezuka is able to watch *Shinpei* in one of the few theaters that has escaped being burned to the ground. In a liminal moment—when Tezuka is seemingly alone in the movie theater since the other children "had been evacuated to all over the country side"—this work "poured in light" to his spirit which had become "dried like a mummy." Within the ruins of a burned out city and a soon to be defeated nation, Tezuka finds a treasure that will make his own postwar recovery possible.

*Shinpei* marked the *Momotarō* tale's apogee as national allegory and Tezuka's treatment of it in his memoirs can be instructive with regards to how nationalistic versions of the tale have been handled in the postwar period. Even after militarism was thoroughly discredited after 1945, the individual works and discourses that made up that

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people were enjoying his comics enough to take them home. It was only later that he realized wartime shortages of paper caused visitors to use his work for more practical purposes than entertainment. (Tezuka 40-41) For more on how personal and national history mixed in memoirs in postwar Japan, see Gerald Figal's excellent article "How to *Jibunshi*" (1996).

message found surprising new afterlives. Tezuka's reflection on *Shinpei*—marking it as a milestone in his own life and in the genealogy of Japanese animation—is just one of the delayed narrative returns of the tale after the war.<sup>4</sup> For the first decade after the war, *Momotarō* disappeared from the market and teachers even had students paint over it in their textbooks, literally blacking it out.<sup>5</sup> Picture-book versions of the tale for children began reappearing from the late 1950s but the tale never really returned to its prewar national prominence.<sup>6</sup> In Tezuka's case, it was only several decades after the war that he felt free enough to praise what had essentially been a piece of militaristic propaganda. Like Tezuka, postwar commentators on the tale have sometimes mentioned *Momotarō*'s use for Japanese nationalism without criticizing this use. There are several reasons for this. Most importantly, in mainstream postwar Japanese discourse it has generally been established that the war and the militarism that led to it were a mistake and thus there is relatively little need to rehash issues that are seen as already settled. Furthermore, some of the scholars writing about *Momotarō* were so doing in hopes of promoting the tale, now associated with values of peace, to a new generation.<sup>7</sup> Mention of the tale's connection to prewar militarism has sometimes been left out of accounts because unless these references are very carefully and critically situated they can be unintentionally read

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<sup>4</sup> At the time Tezuka was writing, all copies of *Shinpei* were thought lost and a copy was only accidentally rediscovered in a Shochiku vault in 1983. Nornes 195. Even Namekawa Michio, who carefully documented hundreds of versions of the tale including the 1943 animated film *Momotarō no umiwashi* (*Momotarō's Divine Ocean Warriors*), fails to include any mention of *Shinpei* in his 1981 work *Momotarōzō no henyō* (*Changes in the Image of Momotarō*). *Shinpei* can be viewed at the National Film Center in Tokyo.

<sup>5</sup> Namekawa 199-205.

<sup>6</sup> As I explore in the previous chapter, in the postwar period the tale gained great prominence in Okayama Prefecture. This was likely because regional versions of the tale were less strongly connected to Japanese nationalism and thus more easily salvaged for new values.

<sup>7</sup> In *Momotarōzō no henyō*, Namekawa Michio acknowledges that part of his purpose in writing. He criticizes an insipid 'good boy philosophy' (*yoikko-shugi*) of child raising which he feels has left contemporary Japanese youngsters ill-equipped to conquer the difficulties they will face in the real world and feels that somehow *Momotarō* may be the remedy. Namekawa 564-565.



as actually celebrating militarism. But the tale was extensively used as wartime propaganda and the need to account for this remains.

### ***Momotarō* as National Allegory**

In English-language scholarship, John Dower has considered the role of *Momotarō* as a national metaphor through the concept of the “Pure Self” and the “Demonic Other” in *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986).<sup>8</sup> At the core of his argument is the observation that, “whereas racism in the West was markedly characterized by denigration of others, the Japanese were preoccupied far more exclusively with elevating themselves.”<sup>9</sup> Japanese texts such as the *Kokutai no hongī* (1937, Cardinal Principles of the National Polity) grounded the idea of pure self in early mytho-histories like the *Kojiki* (712). *Momotarō* served so often as an embodiment of this pure self that Dower refers to “the *Momotarō* type,” which “represented the good Self that existed within each Japanese.”<sup>10</sup>

As Dower’s schema suggests, the focus on the pure self meant that this image was more carefully elaborated than that of the enemy antagonist, which he identifies as the “demonic other.” While his examples are for the most part carefully analyzed,<sup>11</sup> the translation of *oni* as “devils” or “demonic” is problematic, as he acknowledges.

... the Anglo-American enemy commonly took the form of *oni*, a huge horned creature well known in the folktales of Japan since ancient times and variously rendered in English as “demon,” “ogre,” “devil,” or “fiend.” The *oni* was the most straightforward graphic representation of the demonic Other, ... Even in

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<sup>8</sup> Dower 250-257.

<sup>9</sup> Dower 204-205.

<sup>10</sup> Dower 257.

<sup>11</sup> There are small exceptions to Dower’s accuracy. He notes that “Yanagita Kunio, published a book of over five hundred pages on the Peach Boy.” (Dower 252). *Momotarō no tanjō* does focus largely on that tale in the first chapter, but then takes in turn other major folktales.

and of itself, however, the *oni* was not a simple creature, for in traditional folk belief it also possessed what has been described as “a benevolent, tutelary face as well as a demonic one.”<sup>12</sup>

Both “devils” and “demons” suggests a binary morality grounded in Christianity that is misapplied in this case. *Oni* suggests a more ambiguous morality, stressing the quality of the unknown rather than evil *per se*.

Dower’s snapshot of the *Momotarō* tale in the 1940s is good, but it misses the point that *Momotarō* gained importance in part because of the sheer number of iterations reaching back to the 1890s. He notes that the tale “was included, with colored illustrations, in the basic textbook for elementary language instruction issued by the Ministry of Education between February 1941 and September 1945.”<sup>13</sup> Strictly speaking this is accurate, but as I demonstrated in previous chapters the tale was well known in Japan from the 1890s and its power as national allegory was built up through a variety of different discourses and projects.

Adaptations of the tale as national allegory began as early as the Sino-Japanese war of 1895-1896.<sup>14</sup> Foreign expansion found its way into most versions of the tale simply as a natural context of the times but certain texts mentioned it explicitly. As children’s literature scholar Namekawa Michio notes, there was a spike in nationalist interpretations of the *Momotarō* tale around both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.<sup>15</sup> As I discussed in Chapter Two, much of the tale’s suitability as national allegory arose from three tropes it embodied that resonated with Japanese ideas of empire. These were that the hero’s home was attacked first, that the location of battle is an overseas

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<sup>12</sup> Dower 250.

<sup>13</sup> Dower 252.

<sup>14</sup> For details on two early militaristic versions see Chapter Two, pages 79-80.

<sup>15</sup> Namekawa 233.

location presumed to be open to colonization, and that the hero ultimately triumphs due to the virtue gained through his connection to the imperial institution.

### **Folktales as National Allegory from the late 1930s to early 1940s**

After these two wars, however, it was not until the 1930s that the tale was again used repeatedly and widely as national allegory. From the 1930s the adaptations of the tale branched out to address a wider variety of audiences and bring new interpretations to the tale. For example, Satō Kōroku's (1874-1949) *Momotarō enseiki* (*A Record of Momotarō's Expedition*, hereafter *Enseiki*), serialized from 1933 to 1934, reimagined the tale as allegory in the classical sense with the twist that it was explicitly aimed at a young female readership. *Enseiki* was published in thirteen monthly installments starting in April 1933 in *Shōjo kurabu* (Girl's Club), which boasted some of the top circulation figures in the category of girl's magazines.<sup>16</sup> Satō was well known as one of the more famous and prolific authors for children, frequently publishing in *Shōnen kurabu* (Youth Club) and *Kingu* (King). The tone of his stories often reflected the spirit of the times in embracing Japanese nationalism and *Enseiki* is notable for how explicitly it embodied this spirit.

The story starts in Yamato village where Hachizō and Gankichi, villagers who have just returned from an unidentified Western country, are drunken and aggressive in public. Hachizō reports that in foreign countries one can dance all night, be lazy, steal, tell lies, and more, all with no problem. The villagers are shocked and try to figure out a course of action. Momotarō tells his father that it is not fair to blame the two men and

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<sup>16</sup> Torigoe 139. It is interesting to note, for a story often aimed at a male audience, that *Momotarō enseiki*, the longest extant retelling of the tale, was explicitly written for a young female audience.

that to deal with “this sickness spreading here from the country of *oni*, I must first go to its source and conquer the country of *oni*, I must make them all adopt a Japanese style.”<sup>17</sup> As he sets out on his journey, the reader encounters the one concession for the female readership. The pheasant is depicted as female and Momotarō at first balks at accepting her. When she replies that she is a Japanese bird, ethnicity trumps gender, and she is allowed to join the expedition. Across the year-long serialization, Momotarō and his retainers defeat enemies in the countries of laziness, gluttony, greediness, and modernity. Satō’s tone veers between humor and virulent racism. Momotarō is almost bested by the king of Lazy Country, whose breath makes even the most stalwart person overcome with lethargy. In Modern Country, the foe is “Ego,” a red-haired, blue-eyed fiend who convinced the people of the country to depose their rightful king and adopt democracy, to their terrible regret. Having defeated “Ego” and a host of other foes, Momotarō returns home knowing that Japan is now safe from malign foreign influences.

From the mid 1930s the allegorical function of *Momotarō* grew more explicit and commentaries on the tale moved into new media, like radio. In the summer of 1935, a Tokyo resident by the name of Ōishi Suekichi published a booklet titled *Kyōiku chokugo Momotarō banashi* (*The Imperial Rescript on Education and Momotarō*). This booklet recorded in print form the content of Ōishi’s sixteen related speeches originally delivered via radio. The purpose of the book was ideological rather than commercial, and free copies were distributed to government officials, teachers and community leaders. While this was the work of a single man, the project took shape with support from influential

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<sup>17</sup> Satō 16. (*Shōjo Kurabu*, April 1933). The original Japanese is “鬼の国から流れて来る悪い病は先づ源の鬼の国を征伐して、みんな日本風にしてしまはなければなりません。” The last part of this sentence carries the odd assertion that Momotarō’s reason for going abroad is in order to make all the (Western) foreigners adopt the Japanese style (of culture?).

quarters. Financial backing to publish the booklet was provided by a long list of local Tokyo neighborhood associations and the preface was written by then Minister of Education Matsuda Genji.

The Imperial Rescript on Education, issued on October 30, 1890, defined Japanese people as subjects of the state who were united in loyalty to the emperor. Selling four million copies, the highly nationalistic document became the “basic statement of official educational aims until the end of the Second World War.”<sup>18</sup> Ōishi’s commentary was just one in a long line of explanations of the document. The need for these glosses demonstrated one of the difficulties in using the imperial institution as a medium to bind the country together. The arcane language of the Rescript meant that while it was revered it was difficult to understand, like much of the ritual surrounding the emperor himself. From the first promulgation of the *Kyōiku chokugo*, commentators sought metaphors that would render the document, and its imperial ideology, both understandable and familiar. One of the earlier and more influential of these, the *Chokugo engi* (1891, *Commentary on the Imperial Rescript*) by Inoue Tetsujirō, used a variety of metaphors, including comparing Japanese subjects to cells in a body headed by the emperor.<sup>19</sup> Inoue’s formulation was highly regarded even though his approach was not without critics. For example, Naitō Chisō believed that the authority of the Emperor was absolute and unconditional. Therefore he could not accept Inoue’s rational and theoretical interpretation of loyalty.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Masako Gavin. *Shiga Shigetaka, 1863-1927* (New York: Routledge, 2001) 99-110.

<sup>19</sup> Inoue’s position as a Tokyo University professor and his participation in having helped draft the Rescript gave his commentary added authority.

<sup>20</sup> Gavin 108-109.

Naitō's criticism points to the appeal of non-rational approaches to the *kyōiku chokugo*, like explaining the document with reference to a folktale. The implied message is that the imperial institution, like folktales, is not to be judged on a rational basis. Instead it is simply to be accepted as a part of Japanese culture. There are, of course, similarities here to how *kyōdo kyōiku* worked by linking abstract points of national ideology to concrete facts of local culture, as I showed in Chapter Four. In each case, the logic at work was the authority of the familiar. The authority that village customs had on people was not derived from their logical quality or an appeal to reason but by the weight of a lived tradition that was intimately familiar.

Following this logic, in his opening chapter Ōishi naturalizes the *Kyōiku chokugo* by stating that it contains much of the same wisdom of the *Momotarō* tale, which is “at the root of the Japanese spirit and has so many things to teach us.”<sup>21</sup> This view of the tale, as a distillation of folk wisdom produced outside the competing forces of political interests, echoes that of Yanagita who was working at the same time. A closer study of the tale's development through the Edo period, however, as demonstrated in Chapter One, shows that the tale was already being used for ideological purposes centuries earlier. Ōishi's project suggests how the ideological work of successive interpretations of the tale built upon one another. Yanagita's interpretation of the tale linked it to folk culture. Ōishi's explanation of the *Kyōiku chokugo* with reference to the *Momotarō* tale built upon Yanagita's interpretation of the tale.

Ōishi's simple style suggests the spoken Japanese of the original radio format, in addition to a desire to reach an audience of both children and adults. Throughout the

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<sup>21</sup> Ōishi 5.

work he juxtaposes short sections from the *Momotarō* tale with passages from the *kyōiku chokugo*, using the former to elucidate the latter. In his first chapter, “The Educational Momotarō Tale and our National Spirit” (*Wa ga kokuminsei to Momotarō kunwa*) he quotes the opening of the tale in which the old man goes to cut firewood and the old woman goes to wash clothes to argue for strictly defined gender roles in daily life.<sup>22</sup> Ōishi’s tone, deploring what he sees as the politically radical quality of the times (*hijōji*), asserts the gender stereotypes that men must go outside the home to earn a salary, while women should take care of children and the household. While his formulation of gender stereotypes was modern, his use of the tale to invoke them was not.<sup>23</sup> As noted in Chapter One, Nakazawa Dōni used the tale over 150 years earlier to suggest gender roles in accord with the principles of yin and yang.

For the contemporary reader there is a forced quality to many of Ōishi’s examples in which he strains to reshape the *Momotarō* tale into a close commentary on the exigencies of modern life. In chapter eleven, he suggests that Momotarō’s three animal retainers were like the unemployed of contemporary Japan.<sup>24</sup> Here Ōishi is trying to substitute an alternative to Marxism or other economic theories in regard to employment. He is explicitly arguing that gainful employment came not from economic development but from a worker’s devotion to a beneficent master. Similarly, in chapter thirteen he suggests that the three animals were specialized by nature for their tasks, with the

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<sup>22</sup> Ōishi 14.

<sup>23</sup> Ōishi’s gender stereotypes were modern in that receiving a monthly salary from a company was relatively new and still limited to an emerging middle class for men. There is also the unintended irony that the passage Ōishi uses to support a new domesticity of women staying at home consists of the woman leaving the house along with the man (albeit to do household labor).

<sup>24</sup> Ōishi 41-43.

pheasant playing the role of a bomber, the dog as infantry, and *Momotarō* as the military leader.<sup>25</sup>

Mirroring the general tenor of the times, from the 1940s national allegory exploiting the tale grew increasingly pointed, at times making bizarre historical claims. Authors continued to seek out a wide range of ever more nationalistic understandings of the tale, including linking it to Japan's earliest mytho-histories. In 1941, Ino Kōju published *Kiki no shinwa to Momotarō (Japan's Founding Myths and Momotarō*, hereafter *Kiki*), a 214-page tome attempting to tie the folktale to the *Kojiki* (712). Ino was a prolific author of virulently nationalistic books with over twenty works to his credit.<sup>26</sup> In *Kiki* he makes the astounding claim that *Momotarō* was authored by O no Yasumuro (d. 723), a compiler of the *Kojiki*, and that the old man and woman recorded in the tale were actually based on the Japanese deities *Izanagi* and *Izanami*.<sup>27</sup> To support this claim, Ino marshals thematic similarities between the *Momotarō* tale and the *Kojiki*, specifically the incident in which *Izanagi* throws a peach at the hags from the underworld of *Yomi* as they pursue him. Perhaps most bizarrely, his interpretation makes little place for *Momotarō* himself. Ino's work marks an attempt to link the *Momotarō* tale not with folk culture, as Yanagita did, but with the imperial institution and as a result it distorts the tale almost beyond recognition.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ōishi 54-56.

<sup>26</sup> I have been able to determine relatively little about Ino Kōju, who also published under the name Ino Setsuzō. In addition to frequently publishing books in the period from the 1930s to the early 1940s, he wrote for popular magazines including *Kingu*.

<sup>27</sup> Ino 4-19.

<sup>28</sup> As I will explore in Chapters Four and Five, Yanagita tried to turn *Momotarō* into a folktale (*mukashibanashi*) that commented on the nation while local researchers *kyōdu kenkyūsha* tried to turn it into a legend (*densetsu*) that described local regions. In effect, Ino combined these efforts by trying to turn the tale into a legend, but one that recorded the history of the nation.



## Animating Folktales

The tale reached its highpoint as national allegory—artistically, technically, and ideologically—in a pair of animated films, “*Momotarō no umiwashi*” (1943, “Momotarō and the Eagles of the Ocean,” hereafter *Umiwashi*) and two years later with *Shinpei*. These works built upon decades of animation featuring folktales generally and *Momotarō* in particular. Jasper Sharp notes that the earliest Japanese animation was generally “based on tried-and-tested folk stories . . . passed down from generation to generation, and more often than not with a strong moral content.”<sup>29</sup> Animated cartoons are thought to have begun around 1914 in the West and from 1917 in Japan. Folktales found their way into the earliest Japanese animations including “Saru Kani Gassen” (Battle of the Monkey and Crab) in May 1917 and “Urashimatarō” in 1918, both by pioneer illustrator Kitayama Seitarō (1888-1945). Early animators used folktales in their new medium for many of the same reasons that educators drew on them for textbooks. They were already well known stories, therefore much of the narrative diegesis did not need to be included within any given text featuring a folktale. Employing folktales meant that school readers could focus on grammatical points and animated films could spend time on visual gags or zero in on particular parts of a story. Producers were freed of the burden to painstakingly produce cut-outs, or later cels, merely to set up a story or its characters. Additionally, by employing familiar tales, the shock inherent in the radically new media of animation was eased for consumers. A similar dynamic was behind why many of the animations of the late teens through 1945 featured animals rather than humans as their characters. The easily guessed character of different animals, such as kindly bunnies and fierce

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<sup>29</sup> Sharp, “Pioneers of Japanese Animation,” <http://www.midnighteye.com/features/pioneers-of-anime.shtml>.

crocodiles, allowed a diegetic economy for animators in which the audience could easily guess what roles each animal would play.

Both the *Momotarō* tale and other popular folktales had often been adapted for short animated films from the 1930s. *Umiwashi* and *Shinpei* broke new ground for how explicitly they positioned the tale as national allegory, in receiving direct financial support from the Imperial Japanese Navy, and for their length. At thirty-seven minutes for the first work and seventy-four minutes for the second, they are among the first full-length animated features in Japan. Earlier animated versions of the *Momotarō* story included “Nihon ichi no Momotarō” (1929, Momotarō, Japan’s Number One), “Sora no Momotarō” (1931, Momotarō of the Sky), and “Umi no Momotarō” (1932, Momotarō of the Seas).<sup>30</sup>

Of these, “Sora no Momotarō” stands out for how it imagines the hero journeying to the South Pole by airplane to defeat a giant eagle representing the United States. This fourteen-minute short opens with Momotarō sitting at a map table being petitioned by a white duck and penguin to make the 10,000-kilometer journey to drive away a marauding eagle. The hero notes that in order to complete the long journey he will need two refueling points along the way, which the birds agree to provide. The duck is waiting at the first refueling point, standing on top of a turtle floating in the ocean. He tosses a large gasoline barrel into the sky and the monkey catches it. The penguin is waiting at the second refueling point with three gasoline cans on the back of a large whale. As

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<sup>30</sup> “Nihon ichi no Momotarō” was directed by Sanae Yamamoto, one of the better-known earlier animators who was well loved for his numerous comic shorts featuring animals. Yamamoto’s retelling stayed close to the textbook version and did not feature any modern additions (planes, modern ships, etc.). It ran nine minutes. “Sora no Momotarō” was illustrated by Murata Yasuji, directed by Aoji Chuzō and produced by Yokohama Cinema Association (横浜シネマ商会) and ran fourteen minutes. The next year Murata illustrated “Umi no Momotarō”, again with Aoji and the same company. It ran nine minutes. These films are held by the National Film Center in Tokyo. Many of them can also be found online.

Momotarō flies over the whale shoots the cans skyward atop plumes of water from its spout. The confrontation with the eagle, in which Momotarō ropes the bird from his airplane, is quite short. This retelling is notable for how it leaves out the usual element of *kibi dango* and adapts the story to modern times by replacing the millet dumpling sweets with gasoline, suggesting the logistical needs of modern warfare.

Momotarō sometimes appeared with other folktale characters as well. In “Omocha bako shiriizu, #3” (“Toybox Series, episode three”) a variety of animals, children, and characters on a South Seas Island are threatened by a leering Mickey Mouse riding a giant black bat.<sup>31</sup> One of the girls runs for help to a book titled *Mukashibanashi Momotarō* (Folktale Momotarō) lying on the beach. She opens it and Momotarō emerges. The hero gathers most of the recognizable Japanese folktale heroes with him and defeats Mickey.

As Dower’s suggestion of the “Momotarō type” implies, sometimes *Momotarō* formed the recognizable pattern for stories even if they were not ostensibly labeled as an adaptation of the tale. For example, Suzuki Hiromasa’s 1938 animation “Kaikokutarō shin Nihonjima banzai” (Ocean Boy Tarō and the New Japan) featured a young hero assembling animal retainers and going overseas to battle *oni* in what was an adaptation of the *Momotarō* tale in all but name.

*Umiwashi* imagines Momotarō directing the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which is carried out by his animal retainers.<sup>32</sup> Directed by Seo Mitsuyo at the direction of the Japanese Navy and with their financial backing, “in terms of its technical virtues, [it] is

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<sup>31</sup> Nornes 198-200.

<sup>32</sup> For information on *Umiwashi*, see Nornes 191-195 and Namekawa 388-390.

nothing short of a masterpiece.”<sup>33</sup> Completed in 1942, *Umiwashi* opened to the public in March 1943. The film begins with Momotarō in a military uniform standing on the deck of a giant aircraft carrier cutting through the looming ocean swells. A somber mood prevails as he looks out over rows of assembled rabbit crewmen lined up. Pointing to a map of Hawaii fixed to the superstructure wall, he details the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. *Umiwashi* breaks with earlier retellings in that Momotarō no longer participates in the attack directly but merely waits while the planes, each with a monkey, dog and pheasant depart from the carrier. The animation is also a departure in that the attack takes up much of the narrative. Oddly, while the mood in preparing for the attack is somber, the attack itself is cast in almost comical terms. The villain from the Popeye series, Brutus, is cast as an *oni* with horns aboard a U.S. battleship as it is slowly sunk by bombs as sailors scurry this way and that.<sup>34</sup> One of the attacking Japanese planes stops in midair and scores of monkeys form a monkey ladder (probably inspired by toys of the time) down to the ground. Once there they place bombs in parked bombers, blow them up and return to the plane the same way. Ueno Toshiya has suggested that *Umiwashi* suggests a Japanese view of a “topology (*isō*) of the difference of the “other”” within its tripartite hierarchy of Momotarō, animals, and demons. Respectively these three groups represent the Japanese (or the Emperor), people under the Japanese, and enemy people.<sup>35</sup> In *Umiwashi* these differences are immutable, but *Shinpei* suggests more flexible barriers around Japanese identity.

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<sup>33</sup> Sharp, “Pioneers of Japanese Animation,” <http://www.midnighteye.com/features/pioneers-of-anime.shtml>.

<sup>34</sup> The perceived power of Hollywood animation, even deep into the Pacific War, can be read into the animator’s choice not to cast Popeye himself as a villain, likely due to the fear that it might cause mixed sympathies in the Japanese audience.

<sup>35</sup> Nornes 85-86.

The Navy again provided financial backing for *Shinpei* and Seo Mitsuyo directed the animation. Production was finished in 1944 but it was not publicly screened until April of 1945, when a young Tezuka Osamu, among others, saw it. Like *Umiwashi*, one of *Shinpei*'s achievements is how well it naturalizes the horrors of war by couching them in appealing images of animals and nature. *Shinpei* begins by anchoring the war firmly into the fabric of everyday life. After an establishing shot of Mt. Fuji, a dog, monkey, pheasant and a bear (a new addition to the normal trio of animals) return home from the frontlines to an idyllic country village complete with a stream and waterwheel. A group of younger animals sits in front of a fresh-faced monkey in a Navy uniform and ask him about his favorite moment since entering the military. A young rabbit sends a bamboo toy (*taketombo*) spinning aloft and as the monkey catches it he answers that his favorite moment was his first solo flight. Throughout the diegesis the explicit message of trying to recruit young boys into the armed forces is supported with a more subtle linking of children's play and war. The implicit suggestion is that the natural progression is from children's toys, like *taketombo*, to modern fighter planes.

The opening scenes of *Shinpei* also establish its filmic qualities, which were quite pronounced in relation to Japanese animation up until that time. Establishing shots of Mt. Fuji are followed by medium shots of the three animals soldiers returning home and then a close up of the monkey as he sits before the children of the village. The monkey's younger brother steals his Navy cap while he is telling the children about flying. As the younger brother runs off, the perspective slowly pulls back to a medium shot before switching to a close-up of the younger brother who has gone to the river to try on the cap and look at his reflection. The pattern of diegesis through a progression of long, medium,

and then close-up shots recurs throughout the animation, giving it a ‘realistic’ feel to an audience accustomed to movie conventions of editing.

As the younger brother stares into the river at his reflection, his older brother’s navy cap falls into the river and he jumps in after it. The scene cuts back to the older brother who is informed by a swallow of the trouble at the river. There are then several cross-cuts between the younger brother in the river, the older brother who then jumps in and catches up with him, and finally the other animals who arrive just in time to pull the brothers out before they plunge over a falls.

While the narrative explicitly supports a military message there are subtle suggestions of resistance. The river, with its strong current that threatens to sweep the younger brother to his death, suggests both the adventurous appeal of war and its danger, since the younger brother only jumped into the river to chase after his older brother’s Navy cap. Disaster is only averted by the younger animals working together to pull the brothers back out of the river. In the next scene, the Navy bear returns to his house, which is suffused with national symbols: a picture of General Nogi, *koi nobori* (carp streamers) which he hoists aloft, and a stepped dais to display dolls and other decorations. Ironically, among the dolls is a Kintarō doll throwing down a bear to the ground. Kintarō was closely associated with Momotarō and for the bears to have a figure throwing down a bear in their house suggests at the least an ambiguous relationship to the folktale hero.<sup>36</sup>

The scene cuts back to the monkey brothers seated above the village, in the shadow of Mt. Fuji, and enjoying the sunset. As the older brother’s cap blows off again, the younger brother playfully chases after it, as the wind keeps it just out of his reach.

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<sup>36</sup> The Kintarō tale is a popular story of a young boy famous for feats of super-human strength, such as wrestling with a bear. He is often referred to in English as Golden Boy.

The older brother watches individual dandelion seeds lifted into the air by a gentle breeze, closes his eyes and then hears the jarring, extra-diegetic sounds of paratroopers readying for a drop. Dandelion seeds become paratroops floating down to earth in the older brother's view.

In the next scene animals of all kinds are working on a South Sea's Island to construct an airstrip. There is a clear distinction between the uniformed animals, mostly dogs and rabbits, working for the Japanese navy and the wild animals, rhinoceros, elephants, kangaroos, gibbons and others working under direction. While both types of animals work together in the military effort, there is a clear dichotomy with the civilized Japanese animals leading and the foreign, wild animals in a subordinate position. Constructed hierarchies of race and power are naturalized through the implicit suggestion that each type of animal is performing the function best suited to its nature.

These relations are made explicit in the next scene in which a Japanese navy dog attempts to teach the Japanese *katakana* orthography to a class of lions, tigers, alligators and other wild animals. Outside under the palm trees, the teacher dog points at a blackboard while the wild animals frolic and play in their seats, unable to focus on the lesson. The teacher is ready to give up when one of two other Japanese navy dogs watching the scene steps forward and begin to play the harmonica to the tune of a Japanese-style alphabet song.<sup>37</sup> The wild animals catch the tune and join in as the scene shifts to black and white close-ups of each *katakana* syllable as it is sung. With the wild animals removed from the scene, spectatorship devolves back onto *Shinpei*'s audience, presumably of Japanese children. Applying Ueno's reading to *Shinpei* suggests the

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<sup>37</sup> This song, the "a i u e o song" was penned by poet Satō Hachirō, the son Satō Kōroku.

civilizing possibilities of Japanese imperialism, both at home and abroad. As in *Umiwashī* we can read Momotarō as the emperor, the civilized animals as Japanese, and the *oni* as the enemy.<sup>38</sup> The new category of wild animals suggests both Japanese children and non-Japanese natives of South Seas Islands. *Umiwashī* suggests that both of these groups would be civilized by education (in the form of the alphabet song) that was conflated with the military (and the soldier dog who taught the song).

Fifty minutes into *Shinpei* there is a five-minute section that diverges radically from the established diegesis of the rest of the work. In a foreboding style of animation featuring black and white silhouette shadow figures, the fall of the kingdom of the fictional country of Gora is depicted. After a large sailing ship traverses the oceans of a world map, figures understood to be Western sailors-cum-pirate colonialists meet with a native king and eventually take over his land. The European says to the king he only wants as much land as he can fit under a coin he holds in his hand and finds ready assent from the king. Later, the European produces a map of the king's island, places his coin over it on the map, and then claims all of the land.

Planes only take off from the airstrip to head toward the enemy fifty-five minutes into the seventy-four minute animation. And after the Japanese soldiers parachute down, they only engage the enemy—catching card-playing British soldiers by surprise and ruthlessly machine gunning them to death—in the final four minutes.

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<sup>38</sup> One of the striking changes in *Shinpei* is that Momotarō only appears relatively briefly, arriving from a transport plane after the animals have prepared a makeshift runway on the island. In most adaptations, Momotarō is the main character and children identify with him. In *Shinpei*, he could still arguably be called the main character but he is off screen for most of the film. This might reflect Momotarō's new role as standing in for the emperor, meaning that child viewers are being positioned to revere Momotarō (the emperor) but are no longer allowed to view the tale through his eyes (out of respect for the imperial institution).



## Conclusion

National allegory through folktales in Japan worked by a logic of original and copy. When *Shinpei* first appeared in Japanese movie houses, it was a copy that suggested the original of folk culture and the imperial institution. Roughly fifty years later in Tezuka's memory, with all extant copies of *Shinpei* thought to have been lost after the war (and only discovered again in 1983), it became an original in and of itself, reproduced by means of Tezuka's memory of it. In fact, the tale was always mutable and constantly being filled with new meanings. *Kibi dango* treats as rations for the hero's journey became refueling points suggesting the logistics of modern warfare. The hero's animal retainers became Navy pilots or infantry soldiers. Momotarō's wooden sailing ship became a modern fighter plane. *Oni* Island became identified as specific places, like Taiwan, Singapore, Hawaii, or the West generally. And Momotarō, once identified with folk culture, became a stand-in for the emperor himself. National allegory was constantly reimagining the tale, however, and constantly reproducing the tale in new media and new iterations. Even though the tale had become so tainted by nationalism by 1945 that it was suppressed and lost popularity after the war, it began appearing in children's books again by the late 1950s, proving that no one meaning or message could permanently fix the meaning of *Momotarō*.

## CONCLUSION

What are folktales? When did they originate and what do they mean? As I return to the questions with which I began, it is important to remember that these are loaded questions. Implicit within them is the assumption that folktales (*mukashibanashi*) are a pre-existing category, that we can recover an originary starting point for folktales (or any cultural formation for that matter), and that tales contain some kind of stable meaning or values across time. Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's great insight with regard to this line of query, at least as it applied to the *Momotarō* tale, was to call our attention to the ideological work of re-narration. In his essay, Akutagawa suggests that the meaning of the quasi-historical warrior Iwami Jutarō lies not so much in the biographical facts of his life as it does in the constant retellings of his story and the power of that story to continue to move audiences. Akutagawa notes that Iwami's "status is like a rubber band that can stretch or shrink rather freely" and that the "Iwami that A and B sees is not always the same . . . this makes the image quite free."<sup>1</sup> Iwami's fame is not linked to the accuracy of representations of him; in fact it is just the opposite. What Akutagawa calls the "life force" (*seimei*) of Iwami, or any mythic figure, lies in the ability of tales about that figure to generate interest and meaning as they perennially found new iterations.

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<sup>1</sup> Akutagawa (Vol. 11) 197.

Similarly, I have argued that the *Momotarō* tale was one means of defining Japanese identity in the modern period not because of any fixed values inherent to it but because the continuing process of its re-narration. This re-narration occurred both through adaptations of the tale and critical works seeking to define it.

Considered from this angle, folktales have never had a single, stable meaning. For much of its history during the Edo period, the *Momotarō* tale was a cluster of story elements from which authors could choose rather freely. And at least a century before a single version of the tale gained authority over all others in the 1890s, the tale was repeatedly used for a variety of didactic purposes in the 1790s. As I considered in Chapter Two, it was how the tale resonated with ideas of Japanese imperialism by means of three tropes that allowed it to be read as national allegory and continue to gain popularity. And it was similarly valuable to Yanagita, who used the study and comparison of tales as a means for the disciplinary consolidation of his folklore studies project. The irony here, of course, is that what was imagined as a pre-modern fragment could only really be imbued with stable meanings through the hegemonic power of modern discourses, like Yanagita's own *minzokugaku*.

Even during the early 1930s, however, which was in many ways the most intense time of the *Momotarō* tale's re-narration, its meaning was in play as it was contested by multiple authors and discourses. Yanagita's national folklore studies project of *minzokugaku* sought to read the tale as a folktale (*mukashibanashi*) to explain the Japanese race as a whole. Hashimoto Sentarō and other local educators and local researchers turned it into a legend (*densetsu*) to explain local identity. National allegories using the tale to promote militarism abounded even as Akutagawa's 1925 parody was

seemingly forgotten. But *Momotarō* is protean in its meanings and forms. Before the war, nationalistic readings and Yanagita's approach seemed dominant. But today in Okayama Prefecture it increasingly stands as a local legend that is associated with values of peace, sports, and international cooperation.

One of the more evocative sculptural representations of the tale stands in the Tōno region of northern Japan. Titled “We are waiting,” it features the three animal retainers staring expectantly at a peach.<sup>2</sup> To a degree that few other representations of the tale have been able to accomplish, this sculpture focuses our attention on the birth that is about to be revealed. Yanagita and others have noted that *Momotarō* was originally a *mōshigo* tale, recounting the story of childless persons who prayed at a shrine for some kind of supernatural help in conceiving children.<sup>3</sup> This seems apropos because this tale has been wonderfully fecund throughout its history, allowing an unlikely variety of groups and interests to constantly generate new readings out of it. Even today, *Momotarō* retains its popularity and there is no telling what this tale will give birth to next.

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<sup>2</sup> Nomura 22. It was sculpted by Asai Kensaku for a folktale-themed promenade.

<sup>3</sup> In an era of falling birthrates and a steady decrease in the Japanese population overall, one wonders if this early interpretation of the tale will make a comeback.

## APPENDIX A

### *Momotarō* tale found in 1<sup>st</sup> edition of Japanese School Reader, 1887<sup>1</sup>

#### Chapter 26 (First grade level)

A long time ago there was an old man and an old woman.

The old man went to the mountains to cut grass, the old woman went to the river to wash clothing.

A single large peach came floating down the river from upstream. Taking it and looking at it, the old woman saw that it looked delicious and took it home with her to share with her husband.

When the old man returned from the mountains, the old woman immediately showed him the peach. Then just as they were thinking about eating it, the peach split open on its own and gave birth to a charming baby boy. The two were overjoyed. When they picked up the baby boy to wash him, to their surprise he showed his strength by lifting and tossing aside the wooden tub they had prepared for him.

Because he was born from inside of a peach, they named him Momotarō.

#### Chapter 27

Momotarō grew quickly and became very strong.

One day he turned to his parents and said, “I want to go to *Oni* Island to get back the treasure that was taken there.”

His parents were happy to hear this and got up early one morning to make millet dumplings for his provisions. Momotarō put these dumplings in his pack, left home, and crossed over the mountains.

After he had gone a short way, a dog approached him from across a river and asked, “Where are you going? And what is in that sack at your waist?”

“I am going to *Oni* Island and in my sack are Japan’s #1 millet dumplings.”

“Give me one and I will go with you.”

After Momotarō gave the dog a dumpling, it joined him.

After that a monkey and next a pheasant came. They begged in the same way as the dog did and after receiving a dumpling each they joined Momotarō.

#### Chapter 28

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<sup>1</sup> Namekawa 53-55. As found in the Elementary School Reader (*Jinjō shogakkō tokuhon*, as published by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 1887) the story was untitled in the original.

Along with the dog, monkey and pheasant, Momotarō crossed over to *Oni* Island, but the *Oni* closed their gate and he could not get in. Therefore the pheasant first flew over the roof of the gate and then the monkey climbed over the wall and they opened the gate from the inside.

Momotarō and the dog then pushed their way inside the gate and fought through great numbers of *oni*, eventually pushing deep into [the enemy's territory]. At this point the enemy leader, a red *oni*, came at Momotarō with a giant steel club. Momotarō parried the thrust, grappled with him, and eventually tied him up.

Then the *oni* were frightened and begged Momotarō to accept their surrender, giving him treasures like a cloak and hat to make the wearer invisible, a magical hammer [to stamp out gold coins], and coral. Momotarō loaded these onto a cart and hurried his retainers along as they pushed, singing, "Whose handcart is this? It is Momotarō's handcart." He returned to his parents with the treasure as a souvenir for them and he also gave a share to the dog, monkey, and pheasant.

## APPENDIX B

### Ki no Tsurayuki's Kana Preface to the *Kokinshū*

Japanese poetry has the human heart as seed and myriads of words as leaves. It comes into being when men use the seen and the heard to give voice to feelings aroused by the innumerable events in their lives. The song of the warbler among the blossoms, the voice of the frog dwelling in the water—these teach us that every living creature sings. It is song that moves heaven and earth without effort, stirs emotions in the invisible spirits and gods, brings harmony to the relations between men and women, and calms the hearts of fierce warriors. Our poetry appeared at the dawn of creation. But that which survives goes back to Shitateruhime in the eternal heavens and to Susanoo-no-mikoto on the ore rich earth.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted from Helen McCullough's *Kokin Wakashū* (Stanford, 1985) 3.

## APPENDIX C

### *Iwami Jutarō* by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke<sup>3</sup>

It has been said that the hero Iwami Jutarō once took the name Susukida Hayato of the Shoukanesuke.<sup>4</sup> There is no evidence for this outside of the Kōdan storytelling tradition and no scholars attest to this so it may not be true. But even if this is not true, we would be foolish to look down on Iwami Jutarō.

First of all, Iwami Jutarō is someone who is much more full of life than any actual historical figures. For evidence of this, consider his contemporaries of the same historical age, Nagatsuka Masaie, who was one of the five famous warriors of Osaka. The figure of Jutarō setting out to start his martial training appears so real before all of our eyes. But I am unclear even as to whether Masaie was a large or small man. This makes clear the reason why Jutarō dominates our emotions 10 times more than Masaie. If we saw an advertisement in the corner of a newspaper that read, “Nagatsuka Masaie, sick with a chronic illness, medicine is having no effect” it would not really move me that much. But what if there was a special edition of a newspaper or something reporting on Jutarō’s mortal illness? Kikuchi Kan put this hero through great travails in his play “Iwami Jutarō”, but in reading such a report even someone as dispassionate as Kikuchi couldn’t help but be moved. This is the power of Iwami, who not only lives in our feelings, but more than that, rules our wills. Of course young children playing tag impersonate Iwami. And even when I have to compose a long piece of writing, I imagine myself attacking it with the eagerness of Iwami slaying the terrible Orochi serpent.

Second, Iwami Jutarō is a person who is breathing the same air as we are—for example compared to Viscount Gotō, Iwami has much more life force. Of course Viscount Gotō is one of the heroes of politics that modern Japan has given birth to. But even a hero the likes of Viscount Gotō Shimpei—a man of stout figure, with his glasses sliding down his nose, and given to occasional fits of laughing out loud—anyway, he is a figure whose characteristics are clearly fixed. The Gotō that person A sees will not have one more eye than the Gotō that person B sees. At least in this sense the figure is totally accurate; at the same time this is what makes it extremely boring. If A sees the weight of an elephant as ideal, then Gotō, who weighs rather less than an elephant, leaves A unsatisfied. If B finds the height of a giraffe to be the ideal, then Gotō, whose height is somewhat less than that, must be prepared to leave B unfulfilled. But Iwami Jutarō, the hero Iwami Jutarō framed in his warrior’s dress for martial training, this is not the case with him. His status is like a rubber band that can stretch or shrink rather freely. The

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from *Hekigen* (1924, *Subjective Portraits*), Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke zenshū*, Vol. 11, pp. 196-205. Translated by David Henry.

<sup>4</sup> A semi-legendary warrior famous for mysterious strength and driving away fantastic monsters. Shokanesuke would seem to be a title. Birth unknown—died 1615?



Iwami that A and B see is not always the same. It is in this that his image is quite inexact. At the same time this makes the image quite free. For A, Iwami's weight will definitely balance out toward the elephant's weight that is so pleasing to A. And we can expect that B will discover that Iwami's height will fall near that of the giraffe for B, who finds that exact height to be so praiseworthy. This is not just the case for physical characteristics but for psychological attributes as well. For example, for those who extol bravery as a moral virtue we could go around and around questioning the quality of Viscount Gotō's bravery, just as we would have to question our own bravery. In fact, of all the brave men who actually exist, none can really match the legendary Iwami. Because of this it's much easier for Jutarō to control our passions than it is for Gotō. We cannot help but feel nervous for Iwami as he fights a swarm of enemies at Amanohashidate. But when Gotō takes the speaker's stand in the House of Representatives to debate the opposing party we can only greet him with the smallest sense of concern.

The sense in which we cannot look down on Iwami Jutarō is the sense in which we cannot look down on any fictional characters. When I say fictional characters I do not only mean legendary characters. I also mean to include the fictional characters created by those manufacturers of modern legends whom we more commonly call artists. It's fine to look down on Kaiser Wilhelm. But it is a mistake to look down on Faust reading a book on alchemy by the light of a candle. The contract paper that Faust wrote up cannot be found in any museum, but even now Faust is drinking a beer in the corner of a bar somewhere in Berlin. It is fine to look down on Lloyd George. But it is a mistake to look down on Macbeth as he stands before the three witches and asks them about fate. Macbeth's dagger can be found in no museum. But he sits, just as he always does, in the room of a private club somewhere in London puffing away on a cigar. We have to be more careful with these fictional characters than with historical figures or even the people of our own times. In fact, these characters have a more real and a longer life than the geniuses who created them. In the year 3000 AD Europe may have forgotten the great name of Ibsen. But surely Peer Gynt will still be looking down on the bright straits. The destitute Chinese zen masters Kanzan and Jittoku are even now wandering the misty mountain crags.<sup>5</sup> But as for the forgotten genius who created them...well, even the footsteps of the tiger that Chan master Bukan rode are now lost among the fallen leaves at Mt. Tendai.<sup>6</sup>

When I met Professor Zhang Binglin in his home in Shanghai in the French Concession, we talked of Sino-Japanese relations in his study where he had a stuffed crocodile on the wall. The words that the professor spoke at that time are still ringing in my ears. "The Japanese that I hate most of all is Momotarō who conquered *Oni* Island. And the Japanese who love him should also feel some remorse over him" He was truly wise. So often I hear foreigners scorning Duke Yamagata or praising Katsushika Hokusai

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<sup>5</sup> Kanzan (寒山, 'cold mountain') and Jittoku (拾得, 'foundling', as he was supposedly found as an orphan) were semi-legendary figures within Chinese Buddhism and a highly popular subject of Chinese ink painting. Standard depictions featured Kanzan holding a scroll and Jittoku holding a broom. They are sometimes regarded as incarnations of the Bodhisattvas Monju and Fugen.

<sup>6</sup> Along with Kanzan and Jittoku, Bukan and his pet tiger composed the 'four sleepers' (四睡), another standard theme in Chinese ink painting.

or denouncing Viscount Shibusawa.<sup>7</sup> But of all the ‘Japan experts’ (*nihon-tsu*) I have heard, none of them has sent a single arrow of criticism toward Momotarō born of a peach. But Zhang’s point has more truth in it than all of the glib pronouncements of the Japan experts. Momotarō is also long lived. If we say he is long-lived, we might think of some future when 5 or 6 *Oni* stand in the blue evening light on the shore of *Oni* Island and lament how long ago their homeland still had treasures like an invisible cloak and invisible hat—well, before I touch upon the colonial policies of the Japanese government I should finish dealing with Iwami Jutarō.

Repeating the point I made before, Iwami Jutarō is someone who is more full of life than ancient people or contemporary persons and we had better not underestimate him. Well, you could argue that Toyotomi Hideyoshi certainly stands up to comparison with Iwami Jutarō. But truly this is a case of the strength of the legendary heroes of picture books. For example, Tokugawa Ieyasu also performed great events on the stage of history.<sup>8</sup> And people from today who become the target of this kind of naïve hero worship also get halos drawn in above their heads. And it should be obvious that whether it be in the past or today, this hero-making industry flourishes. For example, the good Stephen Zweig who wrote an account of Romain Rolland is an excellent example of this.<sup>9</sup>

It is true that I have looked down somewhat upon Iwami Jutarō. Jutarō is hardly a deep thinker, like one of the stalwarts of the National Essence Club (*Kokusui kai*).<sup>10</sup> For example, Iwami broke out of prison only after his lovely sister O-Tsuji had already been killed, and putting his trust in a dream of premonition, he delayed carrying out his important mission of revenge while he tarried and spent his strength by slaying the giant baboon and the Orochi serpent; he always seems to be rushing around like this with no plan. Well, he couldn’t help being put through these travails by Kikuchi Kan. However, no matter what his faults they are more than balanced by his virtue. Well, it is not always virtue. Rather, it would be better to say that he stands beyond good and evil.<sup>11</sup> Iwami is simply stronger than a real person. (Of course this is also true for the heroes that form Jutarō’s peer group.) Worked up to anger, Jutarō bends thick prison bars apart into a

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<sup>7</sup> Yamagata Aritomo (1838-1922) served as War Minister and Japan’s first Prime Minister, Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) is famous for his ukiyo-e paintings, and Shibusawa Eiichi (1840-1931) was a prominent Japanese industrialist who helped found the Bank of Japan.

<sup>8</sup> Both Toyotomi and Tokugawa were central to the unification of the country after centuries of civil war. But while they both performed great historical deeds, only Toyotomi was loved by the masses, the way that Iwami was. Thus Akutagawa’s implicit argument here is that the popular love for Toyotomi sprang not from his historical accomplishments per se, but from his numerous appearances as a hero in children’s picture books. By comparison, Tokugawa rarely appeared in children’s picture books.

<sup>9</sup> Stefan Zweig (1881-1942) was an Austrian writer who wrote the biography *Romain Rolland: The Man and His Works* (1921), detailing his friend Romain’s stance against World War I among other things. Romain won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1915 for his pacifism and works.

<sup>10</sup> The *Dai-Nippon kokusui kai*, founded in 1919 and active until 1945, was a think tank dedicated to promoting Emperor worship and the national essence. Akutagawa’s tone here belittles the group.

<sup>11</sup> Akutagawa is referencing Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*. A more literal translation would be “He has the characteristic of standing on a line between good and evil.”

(寧ろ善悪の彼岸に立った唯一無二の特色である。 , Akutagawa, Vol. 11, p. 201.) Akutagawa references Nietzsche later in this essay and “*zenaku no higan*” is the standard translated title for “Beyond Good and Evil”, so I have translated this passage in order to make clear the reference to Nietzsche’s thinking.

twisted shape. Just in the nick of time he dispatches the baboon or the Orochi serpent with a single stroke. Rolling the great Chibiki stone is a piece of cake for him.<sup>12</sup> Off the shore of Yui-ga-hama he took a thousand pirates captive in a single encounter. During his fight at Amanohashidate he finished off an army of 2,500 bad guys. Anyway, we have to say that Jutarō's strength has no equal. This kind of strength lodges in our hearts and raises a cheer from us.

A small spirit can criticize anything. After Amatsugami squeezed dewdrops from the tip of his spear that turned into the Yamato Islands, truly our love has come to rest on these great strong men. It has long been these heroes who have rejected ideas of good and evil. But we [common people] have not been able to get our minds beyond a sense of sin. The residents of Azure-blue Nara when it was the capital city thought that it was evil to eat eggs. Modern day residents of Tokyo think just the opposite, that it is bad not to eat eggs. Of course this is not just a matter of eggs. Those of us whose sense of 'self' is weak; we who are eternally weak have inside of us a nature whose character it is to embrace a sense of sin. But heroes are not troubled by a sense of sin as we are. They kick away ethics textbooks and even the teachings of Shinto, the Buddha or the gods with an untroubled laugh. Tossing aside everyday morality without a second thought is the result of their overpowering faith in their 'self.' For example, it is true that in the age of the Gods the hero Susanoo no Mikoto was punished by being forced to make offerings (*chikura no okido*). But even if he was exiled he was not bothered in the least by any sense of sin. If this were not the case then he wouldn't have shown his face again and boldly cut down Ukemochi, the goddess of food, after being cast out from the heavenly plain. We can feel the pull that this tremendous sense of faith in self exerts on us. Or perhaps we feel the appeal of the superior man,<sup>13</sup> that we ourselves would like to become.

Truly we love Iwami Jutarō with a passion and it is hardly strange that we would. But it would be wrong to consider this as only a love for strength. There are many politicians and rich persons who are right now standing beyond good and evil, but this is their ongoing secret. And they have not overcome a sense of sin about this. It is not just enough to blame them for their secret. In times ancient and modern heroes have employed masks to manipulate us and like cattle we have followed. But it is clearly not the job of heroes to be bothered by a sense of sin. But rather than strong it might be better to call them so weak that they are ruled by their desire for power. If you think this is a lie then just lock them up in a jail for three years—certainly they would trade in their Nietzsche for Shinran. These heroes that we love are completely opposite from them [politicians and the wealthy]. Compared to them, there are many heroes of the screen who (even if they don't compare to Iwami Jutarō) still fulfill the requirements to be a superman. Truly we love these movie heroes more than politicians and the wealthy. We can barely stand the scene in which a rich, modern villain beats down Hurricane Hutch.<sup>14</sup> But I have my doubts as to whether these cowardly politicians and powerbrokers are even moved by such a scene.

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<sup>12</sup> In the *Kojiki*, the Chibiki stone was a boulder requiring 1,000 people to move that Izanagi placed at the entrance of Yomi.

<sup>13</sup> Akutagawa is referring here to Nietzsche's idea of the *ubermensch* whose superiority lie in his ability to transcend the dominant morality of his time.

<sup>14</sup> Hurricane Hutch was an action hero film character from US cinema in the nineteen-teens.

I've already talked about how our interest is drawn by tales of Iwami Jutarō's martial feats. But his adventures will mean different things to our own and to future generations. The most interesting points are his jailbreak and his slaying of the Orochi serpent. Breaking out of jail is a crime, just as it is in modern day nation. And rather than just a serpent, the Orochi was the Gozu myōjin who consumed human sacrifices year after year.<sup>15</sup> So we have to say that in breaking out of jail, Iwami Jutarō has rejected the laws of men, and that in slaying the Orochi serpent he has rejected the laws of the gods as well. This is not just limited to Iwami Jutarō but has been a constant of heroes all the way down from Susano no mikoto to Mikhail Bakunin. If we take this a step farther, we can say that this is the sign of the thought of all truly independent persons. These independents reject the fictions of both gods and men. And we can't deny that they will go on rejecting made up conventions in the future. The descendants of the Orochi that Jutarō slayed are still greedily feeding off of the human sacrifices of people today. And jails—jails aren't just limited to Ichigaya<sup>16</sup>. Prisoners who haven't figured out that they are prisoners walk around, husbands and wives, in the prison clothes of the new age, in an unending stream, up and down the Ginza.

Human development is a slow process. It may be even slower than “the slow pace of a bull walking.” But even if it is slow, Anatole France was speaking the truth when he said that “Slowly but surely humanity realizes wise men's dreams”<sup>17</sup> In ancient China, a wise man, while watching a criminal forced to pull carts as punishment and people bowing down to idols of strange, ugly gods (*gyuki dajin no zō*), dreamt of a utopian future (*gyushun no chisei*). (We are always looking for the future in the past. It seems that the eyes of our hearts are formed like the eyes of the frog in the fable.) This paradise he imagined still lies floating in the clouds, beyond our reach. But today the punishment of being chained to cart is no longer used as it once was. And the sculptures of idols are now lined up in museums and curio shops. But even if we can't call a small change like this true progress, then we have to note that the recorded progress of human civilization barely extends to more than a few thousand years. And I hear that it won't be for another six million years or so until human civilization is buried under the glaciers. In this incomprehensible interval of six million years we humans may make great progress. It may be said that to believe in this is foolish. But if this belief is to become reality, then the future must fall into the hands of the superior men who break out of prisons and slay great beasts. It must fall into the hands of our beloved Iwami Jutarō.

I got to know Iwami Jutarō through the Otakekura book lending library at Honjo in Tokyo. Well, not only Iwami Jutarō. I came to know Hagai Isshinsai, Dakki no O-Hyaku, Kokutei Sadaji, Yuten Jonin, Yaoya Oshichi, Kamiyui Shinza, Tawara Kai, Sano Jiro Saemon. It was through a lending library that I came to know all of the legendary heroes created by various geniuses. Even now, I can't forget that tiny cramped store with the western sun streaming in. Under the eaves of the store a tiny glass bell sat unmoving on a windless day. And who knows how many hundreds of old *kōdan* story books stood stacked up against the wall. And in the shadow of an old well out back an old woman,

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<sup>15</sup> *Gozu myōjin*, literally the Bull-Headed God, was an early Indian protective deity in the Buddhist pantheon. In Japan his identity was sometimes conflated with Susano no mikoto.

<sup>16</sup> Ichigaya was the site of Tokyo's central prison.

<sup>17</sup> Anatole France (1844-1924), the French author and humanitarian, gained increased fame in Japan after winning the Noble Prize for literature in 1921.

with a pickled plum stuck on her forehead,<sup>18</sup> sat doing piecework on decorative hair combs. How can I express how truly nostalgic this old bookstore was for me? The place that taught me about literature wasn't a university and it wasn't a library either. It was that humble bookstore. I couldn't exhaust the lessons I've learned from that place in a lifetime. It was also from there that I learned to respect the superior men called anarchists. Well, it was only after reading Nietzsche that I can say that I understood the word 'superior men.' But as for superior men themselves—it was you Iwami Jutarō, standing on top of the mountain and looking down that taught my young heart the great deeds of Zarathustra. That old bookstore has long since disappeared without a trace. But even now, Iwami Jutarō is alive and well inside my heart. Just as always, he stands at the crossroads of life, fanning himself with a folding fan.

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<sup>18</sup> Placing a pickled plum on one's forehead was a folk remedy for a headache and in this passage it adds to the nostalgic quality of the scene because it was a practice that was passing away.

## APPENDIX D

### *Momotarō* by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke<sup>19</sup>

1. Long, long ago, really long ago, in a deep mountain valley stood a single giant peach tree. Just calling it giant doesn't really do it justice. Its branches spread above the clouds and its roots reached down to the very underworld of Yomi itself. Since the very opening of heaven, when Izanagi no mikoto fended off the hags of Yomi who were chasing him by throwing a peach at them; that very peach from the age of the gods gave rise to this tree.

Since the dawn of the world, this tree flowers once every 10,000 years and bears a single fruit once every 10,000 years. Its flowers are like a crimson silk umbrella with a golden tuft trailing from it. Its fruit isn't actually that large. Even more mysteriously though where the peach pit should be the fruit swells with a baby inside of it.

Long, long ago, really long ago, its limbs spread across the valley, heavy with fruit, as this tree sat quietly bathed in the light of the sun. Fruits that blossomed forth once every 10,000 years would then not fall to the ground for another 1,000 years. But one lonely morning, fate took the form of a Yatagarasu<sup>20</sup> and as it lit upon the branch a small fruit fell to the ground. The fruit fell from high among the misty clouds down to a far valley below. It floated down the river across rocky rapids to a land with people in it.

After this fruit, ripe with a baby inside departed from the deep mountains, what kind of person's hand was it picked up by? Of course there is no need to say. At the end of this valley river was the old woman, just as all of Japan's children know, and she was washing the kimono or something or other of the old man, who was off cutting wood.

2. Momotarō, born from a peach, began to think about conquering *Oni* Island. As for why he began to think about it, it was because he did not want to go and work in the fields or the rivers or the mountains like his mother and father did. By the time that his old parents heard this they were already quite fed up with this irresponsible young man so they made ready to send him on his way as quickly as they could, giving him things like a flag, a sword, ojinori and any other thing he would need as quickly as he could ask them for something. And along with this they provisioned him with kibi dango (millet dumplings), just like he ordered.

In high spirits Momotarō set out for *Oni* Island. And then a huge feral dog, flashing hungry eyes at him, addressed Momotarō saying, "Momotarō-san. Momotarō-san. What is that you have hanging there at your waist?"

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<sup>19</sup> 1924. *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke zenshū*, Vol. 11, page 158-166. Translated by David Henry.

<sup>20</sup> A mythical bird mentioned in the *Kojiki*.

“These are Japan’s number one kibi dango,” Momotarō answered proudly. Of course whether or not they were really the best in Japan, he also wondered. Hearing about the millet dumplings, the dog sidled up to him, saying,

“Give me one. I’ll accompany you.”

“I won’t give you a whole one. I’ll give you a half.”

The dog boldly persisted and continued to say “Give me one” for some time. But Momotarō refused to budge and said “I’ll give you half.” So as it goes with all business, the ‘havenots’ were forced to obey the will of the ‘haves.’ The dog, panting hard in anticipation of his half a kibi dango, accompanied Momotarō in exchange for the food.

Later, in addition to the dog, using a half a millet dumpling as bait, Momotarō made a pheasant and a monkey into his retainers. But unfortunately these three hardly got along very well. The dog, with its sturdy canines, made fun of the spineless monkey. The monkey, responsive to the treat of a millet dumpling, made fun of the aloof pheasant. The pheasant, educated in the science of earthquakes and so on,<sup>21</sup> made fun of the slow-witted dog. As these squabbles went on, Momotarō had all kinds of trouble with them even after they became his retainers.

And on top of this, as soon as the monkey’s belly was full, he started grumbling his discontent. The monkey said that accompanying Momotarō to conquer *Oni* Island for just half a millet dumpling was really something he would have to think some more about. Just then the dog began howling and bit the monkey, seemingly intent on killing him. If the pheasant had not stepped in to stop the pair, the monkey might not have been able to go on to become an enemy to the crab, in a later folktale. However, while calming the dog, the pheasant also told the monkey about the virtues of obedience and said they should follow Momotarō’s orders. But since the monkey had climbed a roadside tree to avoid the dog’s attack, he wouldn’t listen to the pheasant so easily. The one who finally convinced the monkey was Momotarō. As soon as the monkey looked up, Momotarō waved his shining Hinomaru (Japanese flag) fan and said coldly, “Fine, fine, don’t come with us. But after we conquer *Oni* Island I won’t give you any share in the treasure.”

The deeply greedy monkey squinted his eyes and said, “Treasure? There’s treasure on *Oni* Island?”

“And not just any treasure. There’s even the famed Kouchide hammer, that stamps out anything you want just by waving it.”

“And if you used the hammer to stamp out more hammers then you could get anything you want in just an instant. That’s music to my ears. Please, take me with you.”

With his companions united with him again, Momotarō hurried on to *Oni* Island.

3. *Oni* Island sat alone in the vast ocean. But it wasn’t a barren, rocky island like the world thought. Actually, it was a beautiful paradise of nature, rising with coconut trees that were filled with the cries of birds of paradise. It was a beautiful natural utopia. The *oni* born of this paradise were of course peace-loving. Well, *oni*, from the very beginning of their existence as a race (*shūzoku*) were much more peaceful than us humans. The *oni* from the story ‘Taking the Wen’, danced all night. It seems that the *oni* in the story of Issunboshi, didn’t consider the danger to himself at all before attempting to rescue the

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<sup>21</sup> In folk tradition, pheasants were thought to be able to predict earthquakes.

princess. Still, the *oni* Shutendoji of Oe Mountain and Ibarakiidoji of Rashomon have been thought of as horrific villains by later generations. But wasn't it because Ibarakidoji loved Sujakuohagi sweets so much, just like we love Ginza today, that he sometimes appeared at Rashomon Gate? Well, as for Shutendoji it is true that he stayed holed up in Oe Mountain just drinking sake. As for it being said that he abducted maidens, setting aside the truth or falsity of that claim for a little while, this is nothing more than an assertion by the maidens themselves. Can we fully believe just something that women tell us---well, this is something that has been bothering me for well nigh twenty years now. Weren't heroes like Raiko and the Shitenno stalwarts just a little crazy with ideas of female-worship?

Living in this tropical paradise the *oni* strummed the koto and danced their dances, recited the poetry of ancient masters and lived an exceedingly tranquil existence. *Oni* wives and daughters worked at their looms and brewed sake, made flower bouquets out of lilies; in short their existence differed not one jot from the lives of our own wives and daughters. And *oni* grandmothers, white-haired with age and with their horns falling out, when tending their grandchildren would constantly tell them tales about the terribleness of humankind.

"If you are naughty, we'll ship you off to the Island of Humans. Once there, you'd certainly be killed, just like Shutendoji. What's that? What are humans like? Humans are creatures with no horns, pale white hands and feet, simply awful, horrible beings. On top of that, when human girls grow up to be women they make their hands and feet even whiter with powder. Well, if that was all that would be one thing. But humans, men and women alike, tell lies, are greedy, harbor jealousy, are deeply prideful, kill their fellow men, commit arsons, commit robbery and are just totally out of control.

4. Momotarō delivered unto these innocent *oni* greater terribleness than has been seen since the foundations of the country. Dropping their steel clubs, the *oni* scrambled away trying to escape, screaming "The humans are coming", while fleeing to the left and to the right of coconut trees as they ran away.

"Forward, forward, as soon as you find an *oni*, kill them all, not letting a single one escape."

With his peach-emblazoned flag in one hand, closing and opening his Rising Sun fan in the other, he ordered his three retainers forward. Maybe the three animals didn't get along very well. But there is nothing more qualified to be loyal and brave soldiers as desperate, hungry animals. They chased after the fleeing *oni* like a storm. The dog mauled young *oni* to death with a single bite. The pheasant drilled its sharp beak all the way through young *oni* skulls. The monkey—as in keeping with its nature as a close relative of mankind—satisfied its lust by raping *oni* daughters before strangling them to death.

After all manners of crimes had been committed, the *oni* chieftan appeared before Momotarō with the few remaining survivors and surrendered to him. It was just as Momotarō willed. *oni* Island was no longer the paradise that it had been just a day before. *oni* corpses were scattered all over throughout the coconut forests. With his flag in one hand and standing before the *oni* chieftan prostrating low on the ground like a spider, Momotarō proudly said, "Out of a special sense of magnanimity, I will spare all of you your lives. In return, you will present me with all of you treasure without holding any of it back."



“Yes, we present it to you.”

“And in addition, you will give me your children as hostages”

“We also accept this term.”

After touching his head to the ground again, the *oni* chieftan looked up in trembling and asked Momotarō, “We understand that it is because of some offence that we have caused upon you that you have come to this island and punished us. If you could only tell us what injury we have committed we would certainly understand much more.”

Momotarō coolly nodded and said, “Having assembled my three faithful retainers, I, Japan’s number one, came to *Oni* Island and conquered it.”

“So, why was it that you called these three retainers together?”

“Desiring in my heart to conquer *Oni* Island I called them together. How about it? If you still say you don’t understand, then I’ll just kill every last one of you.”

Surprised, the *oni* chieftan jumped back a couple of yards, and then finally bowed respectfully again.

5. Momotarō, Japan’s number one, along with his three animal retainers returned triumphantly to Japan with *oni* children hostages pulling their wagon of war spoils. All of Japan’s children know the tale up to this point. But the truth is that Momotarō didn’t live happily ever after. After the *oni* children grew up, they killed the pheasant who was their jailer and quickly fled back to *Oni* Island. Not just this, but the *oni* who were left alive on *Oni* Island may occasional raids across the sea to set fires to Momotarō’s estate and try to kill him as he slept. The rumor was that when they killed the monkey, they thought it was Momotarō.

In the face of these unhappy events piled on top of one another Momotarō couldn’t but help let a sigh escape his lips as he said, “These *oni* are quite persistent.”

“What kind of people are they that they forgot your kindness, master, when you granted the chief *Oni* his life,” offered the dog. He always consoled his master this way.

On lonely *Oni* Island, 5 or 6 *oni* stood bathed in moonlight on the beautiful beach as they made explosives out of coconuts while plotting independence for their island. Absorbed in their work, these young *oni*, with sparkling eyes the size of teacups, had even forgotten thoughts of love or lovely young *oni* girls.

6. Even today just as it was long ago, in a misty far off valley unknown to humans stands a peach tree rising from the clouds and heavy with fruit. Of course the fruit that ripened with Momotarō inside had long since been swept away down the river. But the geniuses of tomorrow sit sleeping in their fruits in unknown numbers. What branch would the Yatagarasu bird alight upon this time? Ah, how many future geniuses lie sleeping in those fruits?

## APPENDIX E

### Folklore related fieldwork guides issued by Yanagita Kunio

1. “Research on Local Lifestyle” (*Kyōdo seikatsu kenkyū*), April 14, 1936
2. “Folktale Fieldwork Guide” (*Mukashibanashi saishū techō*), August 10, 1936; with Seki Keigo.
3. “Vocabulary Related to Weddings” (*Konin fuzoku gōi*), March 10, 1937.
4. “Vocabulary Related to Funerals” (*Sōsō fuzoku gōi*), September 20, 1937.
5. “Vocabulary Related to Clothing” (*Fukusō fuzoku gōi*), May 20, 1938.
6. “Vocabulary of Coastal Villages” (*Bunrui kaison gōi*), December 1, 1938; with Kurata Ichiro.
7. “Vocabulary Relating to Customs of Time” (*Saiji fuzoku gōi*), January 25, 1939.
8. “Vocabulary Relating to Housing” (*Jyūkyō fuzoku gōi*), May, 20, 1939; with Yamaguchi Sadao.

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