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YOKAI MONSTERS 100 MONSTERS

妖怪百物語 / *Yōkai hyaku monogatari* / *One Hundred Spook Stories*

Original release date: 20 March 1968



CAST

Jun Fujimaki Yasutaro
Miwa Takada Okiku
Sei Hiraizumi Takichi
Mikiko Tsubouchi Osen
Shinichi Rookie Shinkichi
Takashi Kanda Reimon Tajimaya
Ryūtarō Gomi Hotta-Buzennokami
Yoshio Yoshida Jūsuke
Kōichi Mizuhara Tōbei
Jun Hamamura Gohei
Saburō Date First Ronin
Shōsaku Sugiyama Bannai Ibaragi
Ichirō Yamamoto Second Ronin
Ikuko Mōri Ronin's Wife
Teruko Ōmi Otorā
Keiko Koyanagi Ōkubi
Kazue Tamaoki Village Headman
Shinobu Araki Old Priest
Shōzō Nanbu Old Town Counselor

CREW

Directed by **Kimiyoshi Yasuda**
Written by **Tetsurō Yoshida**
Produced by **Eiji Nishizawa**
Planning by **Yamato Yahiro**
Photography by **Yasukazu Takemura, Shōzō Tanaka**
Special Effects Photography by **Yoshiyuki Kuroda**
Edited by **Kanji Suganuma**
Music by **Chūmei Watanabe**
Lighting by **Sadakazu Itō, Hiroshi Mima**
Sound Effects by **Yō Kurashima**
Sound Effects Engineer **Eiichi Kusumoto**
Sound Recording by **Masao Ōsumi**
Art Directors **Yoshinobu Nishioka, Shigeru Katō**
Assistant Director **Akikazu Ōta**

The movie poster for 'Yokai Monsters Spook Warfare' features a central, large, blue, multi-headed monster with a long neck and a large, open mouth. It is surrounded by various other yokai, including a large, brown, bird-like monster with a long beak and a small, white, ghost-like figure. The background is a dark, stormy sky with lightning. The title 'YOKAI MONSTERS SPOOK WARFARE' is written in a stylized, yellow, outlined font at the top. Below the title, the Japanese title '妖怪大戦争 / Yōkai daisensō / The Great Yokai War' and the original release date 'Original release date: 14 December 1968' are printed in white.

YOKAI MONSTERS SPOOK WARFARE

妖怪大戦争 / *Yōkai daisensō* / *The Great Yokai War*
Original release date: 14 December 1968

CAST

Akane Kawasaki Chie
Yoshihiko Aoyama Shinhachiro Mayama
Osamu Ōkawa Iori Ōdate
Asao Uchida Dainichibo
Gen Kimura Saheiji Kawano
Takashi Kanda Hyōgo Isobe
Hanji Wakai Gate Guard
Kenji Wakai Gate Guard
Hinode Nishikawa Lower Officer
Tokio Oki Yasuzo
Gen Kuroki River Monster
Ikuko Mōri Long-Necked Monster
Kisao Tobita Kappa's voice
Hiromi Inoue Shinobu
Chikara Hashimoto Daimon
Mutsuhiro Tomura Narrator

CREW

Directed by **Yoshiyuki Kuroda**
Written by **Tetsurō Yoshida**
Produced by **Akihiko Murai**
Planning by **Yamato Yashiro**
Photography by **Hiroshi Imai**
Edited by **Toshio Taniguchi**
Music by **Sei Ikeno**
Special Composition **Sadanori Tanaka**
Lighting by **Hiroshi Mima**
Sound Effects by **Yō Kurashima**
Sound Effects Engineer **Eiichi Kusumoto**
Sound Recording by **Tsuchitarō Hayashi**
Art Directors **Seiichi Ōta, Shigeru Kato**
Assistant Director **Toshiaki Kuniyara**

YOKAI MONSTERS ALONG WITH GHOSTS

東海道お化け道中 / *Tōkaidō obake dōchū* /
Journey with Ghosts Along Tokaido Road
Original release date: 14 December 1968



CAST

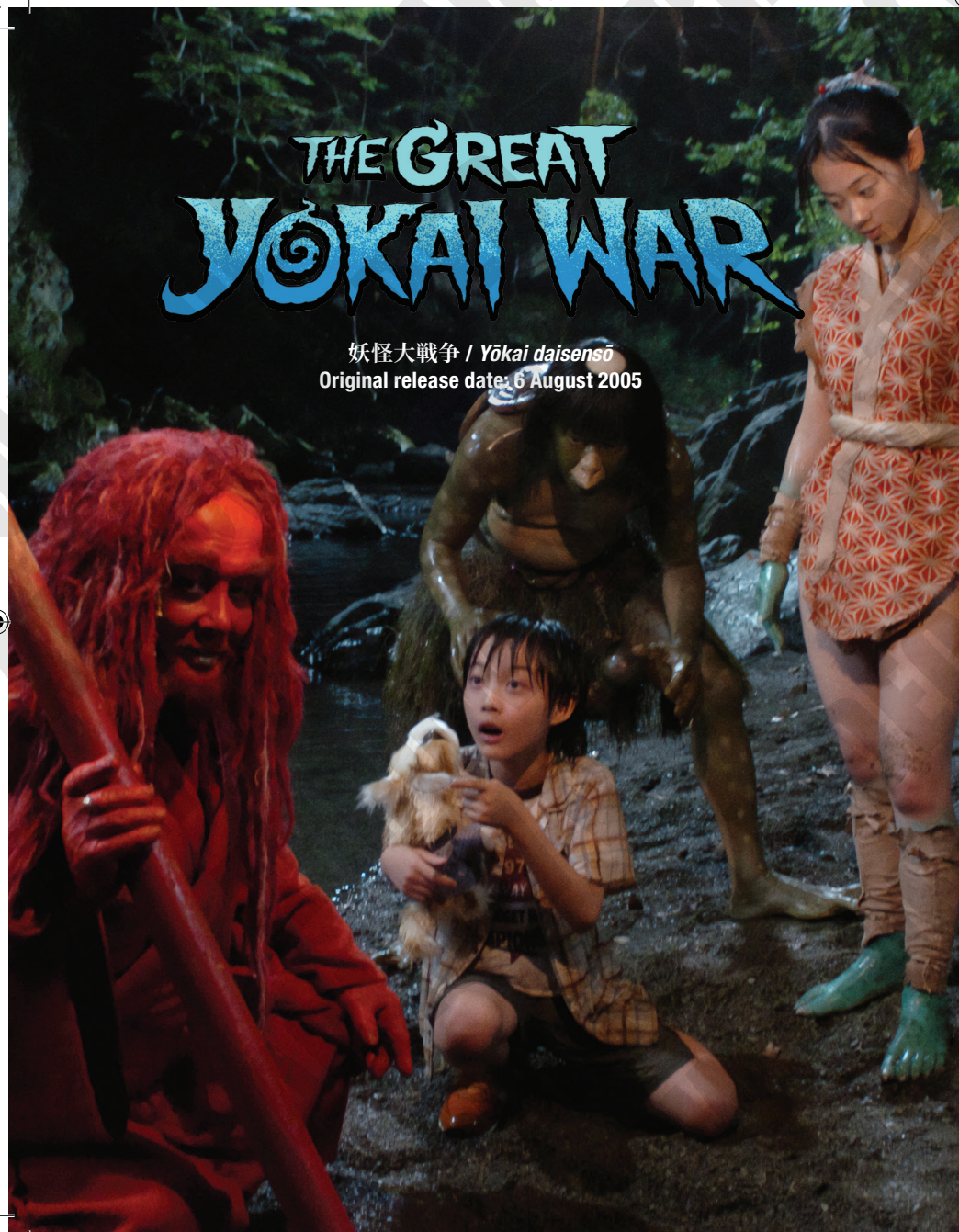
Masami Burukido Miyo
Kōjirō Hongō Hyakasuro
Pepe Hozumi Shinta
Rokkō Toura Saikichi
Mutsuhiro Toura Sakiichi
Yoshindo Yamaji Higaruma
Bokuzen Hidari Jinbei
Saburō Date Ushimatsu
Ryūtarō Gomi Gonkurō Tawara
Kazue Tamaki Nibei
Kōichi Uenoyama Gorokichi
Ichirō Yamamoto Monta
Shinjiro Akatsuki Chōsuke

CREW

Directed by Kimiyoshi Yasuda, Yoshiyuki Kuroda
Written by Tetsurō Yoshida, Shōzaburō Asai
Produced by Hiroshi Ozawa
Planning by Yamato Yashiro
Photography by Hiroshi Imai
Edited by Toshio Taniguchi
Music by Hiroaki Watanabe
Lighting by Toshiji Kurokawa
Sound Effects by Yō Kurashima
Sound Effects Engineer Eiichi Kusumoto
Sound Recording by Yukio Kaihara
Art Director Mitsuaki Tsuji
Assistant Director Toshiaki Kuniyara

THE GREAT YŌKAI WAR

妖怪大戦争 / *Yōkai daisensō*
Original release date: 6 August 2005



CAST

Ryūnosuke Kamiki Tadashi Ino
Hiroyuki Miyasako Sata
Masaomi Kondō Shōjo
Sadao Abe Kawatarō
Mai Takahashi Kawahime
Chiaki Kuriyama Agi
Takahashi Okamura Azukiarai
Naoto Takenaka Aburasumashi
Kiyoshirō Imawano Nurarihyon
Bunta Sugawara Shuntaro Ino
Etsushi Toyokawa Yasunori Kato

CREW

Directed by **Takashi Miike**
Written by **Takashi Miike, Mitsuhiko Sawamura, Tsuyohiko Itakura**
Producer **Fumio Inoue, Tsuguhiko Kadokawa**
Photography by **Hideo Yamamoto**
Edited by **Yasushi Shimamura**
Production Design by **Takashi Sasaki**
Music by **Kōji Endō**
Sound Effects **Kenji Shibasaki**
Sound Mixer **Jun Nakamura**
CGI Director **Kaori Otagaki**
CGI Producer **Misako Saka**
Lighting Director **Tadahiro Kimura**



A DIVERSE TRILOGY OF TERROR: DAIEI'S CLASSIC YOKAI FILMS

by Stuart Galbraith IV

What's in a name? To English-speaking ears, *yōkai*, *yūrei*, *obake*, and *oni* all appear synonymous with "Japanese ghost," but there are subtle differences in their meaning, just as *kaidan eiga* ("ghost story") has, for Japanese audiences, a different connotation (suggestive of Edo period folk tales) than *kowai hanashi* ("frightening story") and *horaa* (modern horror films like *Ring* [1998] and *Ju-On* [2002]).

Yōkai, on the other hand, are *not* spirits in the usual western-world sense, but earth-bound monsters with supernatural abilities seen throughout the Japan countryside, more akin to goblins or nymphs of myriad variety, from playfully mischievous to vengeful and malevolent. *Yōkai* are derived from Japanese concepts of animism and religions like Shinto that believe god-like spirits reside not just in animals but in all things, from trees and rocks to plants and buildings... and even paper umbrellas.

Yūrei are specifically spirits of the deceased, ghosts tied to a particular person and place, while *obake* is a subset of *yōkai*, those preternatural creatures capable of shapeshifting and other ethereal transformations.

Daiei-Kyoto Studios' *Yokai Monsters* series – *100 Monsters* (1968), *Spook Warfare* (also 1968), and *Along with Ghosts* (1969) – was specifically inspired by a mid-60s "yōkai boom" in Japan following the publication of *manga* created by Shigeru Mizuki and, to a lesser degree, Kazuo Umezu.

A noted historian as well as *manga* creator, Mizuki (1922-2015) debuted in the latter category in 1957, and in 1960 he adapted a *kamishibai* (a kind of street theater storytelling using illustrated boards) called *Kitaro of the Graveyard*, a *manga* series that eventually evolved into *GeGeGe no Kitaro* in 1967, when it was first adapted as a television anime. (Sponsors insisted on the name change, feeling "graveyard" in the title would frighten away viewers.)

In response to all this renewed interest, Daiei reissued Kenji Misumi's 1959 film *Yotsuya kaidan* and Kazuo Mori's 1961 feature *The Old Temple Well* (*Kaidan kakuidori*, aka *Ghost Story of Kakui*) in July 1967 to good box-office, but Daiei's eye on the growing "yōkai boom" really peaked with the runaway success of the TV version of *GeGeGe no Kitaro*,

the Toei Animation adaptation that aired on Fuji-TV beginning on January 3rd 1968. A tremendous hit, the series was subsequently revived no less than six times (most recently during 2018-20, again to socko ratings), racking up hundreds of episodes and prolific merchandising, including a popular line of guidebooks identifying the myriad monsters.

Like the TV show, Daiei's market for its *yōkai* films was, primarily, children. The first, *100 Monsters*, was released as one half of a double bill with director Noriaki Yuasa's *Gamera vs. Viras* on March 20th 1968, timed for the spring break vacation, the Japanese school year traditionally commencing in early April. This "Special Effects Double Feature," coupling the artistry of Daiei-Tokyo and Daiei-Kyoto, was unmatched even by rival Toho and it performed exceptionally well at the box office, at a time when Daiei had few hits. Daiei employees noted the strong positive reaction to both movies by this core audience of children, prompting studio executives to request Yuasa ramp up production of the *Gamera* movies to three per year, a practical impossibility, and so work instead began right away on *100 Monsters*' follow-up, *Spook Warfare*. Yuasa, meanwhile, did helm that entry's co-feature, the low-budget but wildly atmospheric *The Snake Girl and the Silver-Haired Witch*, a black-and-white haunted house mystery with supernatural elements. That double-bill premiered on December 14th 1968, timed for the New Year holiday. The final entry, *Along with Ghosts*, was released the following March 21st, again coinciding with the spring break holiday, this time on a double-bill with Yuasa's *Gamera vs. Guiron*.

As with the company's earlier *Daimajin* trilogy of 1966, the films play to the Daiei's brand identity, its métier of churning out unpretentious *chanbara* and *jidai-geki*. With the studio already in dire financial straits by this point, the series could rely on pre-existing and interchangeable backlot and soundstage sets, props, wigs, contract players, and so on. Moreover, they were movies that didn't rely on a big-name (read: expensive) top-tier star like Shintarō Katsu or Raizō Ichikawa. Indeed, most of their casts and crews were cobbled from Daiei-exclusive talent that had previously worked on the *Daimajin* films.

The screenplay for *100 Monsters* was influenced by a folk tale of the same name popularized by *rakugo hanashika* ("storyteller") Shōzō Hayashiya (1781-1842), said to have been the first to popularize such stories in *rakugo* form. (Shōzō Hayashiya IX, b. 1962, carries on the tradition, his work branching out into TV dramas and anime voice characterizations.)

Another influence on the series was *Seven Mysteries of Honjo* (*Honjo nanafushigi*, 1937), a production of Shinko Kinema, one of the companies absorbed into Daiei during World War II. Featuring many of the same *yōkai* that would later appear in *100 Monsters*, this pre-war film was directed by Rokuhei Susukita and starred Sumiko Suzuki and Omenosuke Ichikawa. Shintoho remade it in 1957 as *Ghost Stories of a Wanderer at Honjo* (*Kaidan Honjo nanafushigi*), a 55-minute black-and-white second feature directed by Gorō Kadono. Those productions (as well as the first TV version of *GeGeGe no Kitarō*) had

all been in black-and-white and 1.37:1 standard frame, while Daiei's series would be in blazing color and anamorphic DaieiScope, ingeniously utilized in all three movies.

Writing the screenplays for all these *Yokai* films was Tetsurō Yoshida. His 45-feature career based almost exclusively at Daiei-Kyoto, Yoshida's best-known credit is *Zatoichi Meets Yojimbo* (*Zatōichi to yōjinbō*, 1970), the movie pitting the blind swordsman played by Shintarō Katsu against a variation of Toshirō Mifune's *yōjinbō* character. However, at Daiei-Kyoto, Yoshida was more the go-to guy for the studio's occasional forays into juvenile *chanbara* fantasy. In the 1950s, he wrote scripts for the company's *Suzunosuke Akado* series starring Masaji Umeiwa as the eponymous kendo master, Yoshida penning seven short features each running about an hour. In 1966 he wrote all three *Daimajin* scripts. As with that series, the monsters in the first *Yokai Monsters* picture are mostly confined to the last-third of the story, possibly a conscious attempt by the struggling Daiei to keep costs down.

Also from the *Daimajin* series, director Kimiyoshi Yasuda and special effects director Yoshiyuki Kuroda between them helmed the entire *Yokai Monsters* trilogy, Yasuda directing the first one with Kuroda handling the special effects, Kuroda directing the middle film solo, while on the third they are jointly credited as directors. Whereas Noriaki Yuasa was pretty much a one-man band on the *Gamera* films, directing both the live-action first unit as well as the special effects scenes, the Yasuda-Kuroda combo was closer in spirit to the Toho collaborations of director Ishirō Honda and effects master Eiji Tsuburaya on their *kaiju eiga*. Yasuda, famous for his meticulous pre-production planning in the form of detailed, hand-drawn storyboards, and Kuroda, a perfectionist the equal of Tsuburaya in terms of ingenuity and vivid imagery, remain criminally underrated in the fantasy film field.

Uniquely diverse in his talents, Yoshiyuki Kuroda (1928-2015) had been a child actor for Shinko Kinema Studio in the 30s, a mathematics teacher at a girls' school as a young man, a cinema production teacher as an old man and, in between, freely alternated at Daiei between directing the company's special effects unit in Kyoto, working as an assistant to other Daiei directors, and directing standard live-action features on his own. For instance, the same year Kuroda worked as the chief assistant special effects director on *Buddha* (*Shaka*, Kenji Misumi, 1961), Daiei's huge production shot in Super Technirama 70, he also debuted as full director on the modest period melodrama *The Trip Has Sex Appeal* (*Tabi wa o iroke*).

But even before that film, Kuroda had been dabbling in the field of special effects, often in association with childhood friend Fujio Morita. Together they worked in this capacity on the Japanese-American co-production *Flight from Ashiya* (1964), starring Yul Brynner and Richard Widmark, producing blue-screen matting effects. At first, the American team assumed Kuroda and Morita were shirking, they were using so little film stock, only later realizing they were producing excellent effects, but in the Japanese fashion of wasting little film.

Kuroda parlayed his experience on that film to convince Daiei to invest around \$28,000 to purchase blue-screen equipment for use on *Daimajin*. The outstanding results, arguably superior even to Eiji Tsuburaya's Oxberry matte printing work at rival Toho, combined with Kuroda's daring in-camera multiple exposure work and flawless blending of miniature and full-scale effects, won him the Japanese Film Press Gold Award in 1967, for his work on all three *Daimajin* films. After Daiei's collapse, Kuroda continued working in a variety of fields, directing the last of the *Lone Wolf & Cub* films, *White Heaven in Hell* (*Kozure ōkami: Jigoku e ikuzo! Daigorō*, 1974), and episodes of Shintarō Katsu's *Zatoichi* TV show, while also helming episodes (and contributing to the special effects) of programs like *Mirrorman* and *Jumborg Ace* for Tsuburaya Productions. In his last years he was a lecturer and close confidant to a younger generation of filmmakers at Kyoto Technoscience Center.

Kimiyoshi Yasuda, meanwhile, was a typical Daiei journeyman, though not at all in the disparaging sense of the word. Virtually all Japanese directors of Yasuda's generation reliably brought a kinetic energy and painterly visual sensibility to early post-war Japanese cinema, especially following the introduction of color and scope photography, of which the Japanese at that time had no peers. Yasuda (1911-1983) joined Nikkatsu Studios in Kyoto at the age of nineteen, working as an assistant to such pre-war masters as Sadao Yamanaka, Hiroshi Inagaki, and Santarō Marune. When Nikkatsu's studio absorbed into Daiei during the war, Yasuda went along for the ride, making his directorial debut in 1944 with *Horse of 770,000 Stones* (*O-uma ha nanajūnanaman-goku*). Though he spent most of his long career at Daiei-Kyoto, Yasuda concurrently worked in television, and his services were occasionally loaned out to other companies like Shintoho and Takarazuka. He peaked during the 1960s, directing six of the best *Zatoichi* films (and, later, episodes of the TV series), *Sleepy Eyes of Death* (*Nemuri Kyōshirō*) entries, and *The Hoodlum Priest* (*Gokuaku bōzu*, 1967), among others.

He directed Shintarō Katsu more than any other Daiei star, and favored Akira Ifukube to write his films' scores. Around the Daiei-Kyoto lot, Yasuda had a reputation not unlike Alfred Hitchcock, as a director meticulously prepared, having worked out every scene well in advance of production, drawing detailed storyboards that he expected his cinematographers and art directors to replicate precisely on film.

100 Monsters follows the tropes of myriad Daiei *chanbara*, as well as the *Daimajin* films, with its story of a corrupt lord greedily determined to tear down a local shrine and tenement house to increase his wealth and power, local peasants be damned. Unlike the *Daimajin* trilogy, the script peppers *yōkai* throughout the narrative, though it saves the onslaught of varied critters – maybe not quite one hundred but certainly scads – for the big climax. When all the colorful creatures at last make their appearance, the effect on 1968 movie audiences had to have been akin to western audiences seeing the Mos Eisley cantina sequence in *Star Wars* in the summer of 1977: so many exotic creatures all at once that it becomes a uniquely delirious sensory overload.

Jun Fujimaki and Miwa Takada, stars of the original *Daimajin*, were the nominal leads. From a theatrical family, Fujimaki (b. 1936) had been part of the famed Haiyu-za Theater company prior to signing with Daiei, joining its 11th New Face Program. Debuting onscreen in 1956, Fujimaki was part of its stable of dashing if utility leading men, balancing movie roles with TV work, famously starring on the TBS network's *Tokyo Guard Man* (*Guardman: Tokyo yōjimbō*), a six-year, 350-episode series that spawned several movie spin-offs. In his spare time Fujimaki, famous for his physical dexterity, sometimes doubled other actors in sword fighting scenes.

At 21, Miwa Takada (b. 1947) likewise came from a family of actors (her father was Kokichi Takada, star of Kenji Mizoguchi's *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemums* [*Zangiku monogatari*] in 1939) and was already a movie veteran herself, *100 Monsters* being her 31st and penultimate film for Daiei. She joined the company when she was just fifteen years old, making an auspicious debut opposite established star Kazuo Hasegawa in Kenji Mizumi's *Demon of Aoba Castle* (*Aoba-jō no oni*, 1962). Headlining period and modern features, in both types of films she epitomized the beautiful, proper, and dutiful daughter. Wisely, she bailed from the studio at just the right time, establishing herself in similar roles on TV dramas, becoming a fixture of that medium throughout the 1970s. However, Takada shattered her squeaky-clean image and then some in 1982, headlining an ambitious Nikkatsu Roman Porno called *Lady Karuizawa* (*Karuizawa fujin*). Like Shintarō Katsu and many other Daiei stars, Takada also enjoyed a thriving recording career, mostly for the Columbia label from 1964 to 1969, including what became her signature hit, "Pray for My Love to the Stars," a duet she sang with Mitsuo Kaji.

A highlight of *100 Monsters*, quite unlike anything in all of western cinema and invariably leaving viewers nonplussed, is dim-witted Shinkichi's playful encounters with the *kasa-obake*, or "umbrella ghost." With its single eye, drooly red tongue and single, sandaled foot, it's brought to life here by an impressively articulated marionette, initially introduced via cartoon animation. What sells the strange beastie is the actor playing his human playmate, a lively performance by self-taught comedian Rookie Shinichi (1935-1980). After winning a radio manzai competition with his brother, "Let's Go" Masako, Rookie soon came to be regarded as one of Japan's top comedians. However, soon after the release of *100 Monsters*, his life crumbled under a series of scandals – arrested in October 1968 on suspicion of blackmail and assault, bankruptcies, chronic alcoholism, a wife arrested for fraud – contributing to his untimely death at age 44.

And while Ryūtārō Gomi plays the main bad guy, stealing every scene he's in is the actor playing his ruddy-faced enforcer-assassin, Yoshio Yoshida (1911-1986). Typecast in such roles, Yoshida was a former junior high art instructor who, first at Toei in the 1950s and at Daiei in the 60s, became a *chanbara* villain archetype, yet surprisingly popular with children, who flooded him with fan mail. Indeed, by the 1970s Yoshida was practically beloved, becoming a semi-regular in Yoji Yamada's *Tora-san* (*Otoko wa tsurai yo*) film

series, typically spoofing his tough-talking bad guy in those films' pre-titles dream sequences, and in the main stories appearing as the elderly leader of the downtrodden traveling acting troupe Tora-san occasionally encounters.

Finally, the film affords western viewers the somewhat rare opportunity to see and hear English-subtitled *rakugo* storytelling courtesy of Kyokai master Hikoroku Hayashiya (1895-1982), whose very name Beat Takeshi regarded as "synonymous with the crispy old man's storyteller." Hayashiya's methodical, carefully enunciated style was often imitated.

Unlike the repetitive nature of the *Daimajin* trilogy, for the first follow-up to *100 Monsters*, *Spook Warfare*, the filmmakers admirably moved in a radically different direction. Instead of teasing audiences with a handful of eerie subplots until a showy climax, *Spook Warfare* is a *yōkai* movie positively teeming with spooky spirits from beginning to end. And... they talk! Indeed, the garrulousness of these spooks likely influenced the direction of rival Toho's Godzilla film series: for their next entry, *Godzilla's Revenge* (*Gojira-Minira-Gabara: Ōru kajū daishingeki*, 1969 aka *All Monsters Attack*), Toho likewise gave voice to Minira, the Son of Godzilla (already a pretty *yōkai*-like creature to begin with), much like the chatterbox spirits seen here.

Indeed, it's one of the *yōkai*, a kappa, a lime-green amphibious water imp, that becomes *Spook Warfare*'s de facto protagonist, rather than any of the mostly ineffectual human characters. Despite being such a major part of the story, the actors playing him largely went unacknowledged, but it's known that "big room" Daiei *chanbara* player Gen Kuroki actually wore the uncomfortable-looking kappa costume, while Kisao Tobita provided his cartoony voice. Tobita, a former child actor from the late silent era (including a role as the boy with typhoid in Akira Kurosawa's *A Quiet Duel* [*Shizukanaru kettō*, 1949]), was active from at least 1930 until 1982, most of it spent as a Daiei-exclusive actor, though surprisingly he was not active in the field of anime voice-over work.

The human actors hardly matter here, doubtlessly a disappointment for top-billed Yoshihiko Aoyama (also from *Daimajin*) and, making her screen debut, Akane Kawasaki. Aoyama (b. 1943), the son of classical Japanese dancer Juraku Hanayagi II, started out acting in television but almost concurrently got into films, debuting with *You're Only 17 Years Old Once* (*Jū nana-sai wa ichidodake*, 1964) in the starring role. Typecast as a juvenile lead, he appeared in around two dozen Daiei features, later working in television, but he found the grind unrewarding, and in later years taught acting at Meiji-za Academy.

The daughter of cameraman Shintarō Kawasaki, Akane Kawasaki (b. 1948) was a student of the traditional arts in Japan (dance from the age of six, the *shamisen*, etc.) and snapped up by Daiei when she graduated from high school. She did the usual ingenue fare as Daiei began collapsing around her, but then scandalously appeared semi-nude in one of the

studio's last features, *Kumo no Yuna* (1971). When Daiei went bankrupt, Shochiku quickly snapped up her services but Kawasaki left after just one year, moving instead to TV work, where she's been employed steadily ever since.

In the wake of the Rookie Shinichi scandal, for *Spook Warfare*'s comedy relief the filmmakers brought in a *manzai* (double act) team, "Wakai Hanji • Kenji" (Hanji & Kenji Wakai), brothers affectionately known as Han-chan and Ken-chan. Born into a showbusiness family (older brother Hanji literally so, in a Kyoto dressing room), the act was popular but, like hapless Rookie, short-lived, with Hanji dying of cancer at just 42, and Kenji in a 1987 car accident at 52.

Visually quite stunning with its especially impressive opening scenes, an orgy of vividly realized special effects, *Spook Warfare* is notable for its peculiar air of nationalistic pride, played out when the traditional *yōkai* square off against a – gasp! – *foreigner*, Daimon, from ancient Babylonia, no less. Not remotely Babylonian in appearance – Daimon lacks the singularly rectangular-shaped, extravagantly curled beard of such people, as depicted in myriad statuary – it's nevertheless a nightmarish mishmash of features: vampire-like teeth, reptilian scales and feet, with feather highlights. Played by Riki Hashimoto, the pro baseball player-turned-actor who had memorably portrayed Daimajin, Daimon is rather Majin-like himself, with similarly glowering, bloodshot and unblinking eyes, the actor enthusiastically cast once again by director Kuroda.

The film's us-versus-them storyline has been read as nationalistic, but it seems less concerned about the "foreign threat" and more a validation of Japanese traditions. Indeed, Daiei's approach to selling their movies abroad, both on the festival circuit and in wider sales distribution, was anchored in this often-misguided notion of oriental exoticism, going back to the early days of *Rashomon* (1950), *Gate of Hell* (*Jigokumon*, 1953) and *Ugetsu* (*Ugetsu monogatari*, 1953), two of these featuring supernatural elements.

For *Along with Ghosts*, once again the approach radically shifts. Gone are the garrulous ghosts with a new set of *yōkai* unexpectedly getting less screen time than ever and almost incidental to the plot. This outing revolves around a little girl, Miyo, on the run from the Higuruma Gang while searching for the father that abandoned her, a ramblin' and gamblin' lost soul named Touhachi, believed to be hiding out in Yui, near the base of Mt. Fuji.

Offsetting its fewer *yōkai* set pieces is a more story-driven (and more coherent) narrative, albeit an amalgam of genre conventions: adept swordsman hero (Kōjirō Hongō, sporting an impressively shaggy topknot wig), mysterious *yōjinbō* assassin (Ryūtarō Gomi), a life-or-death roll-of-the-dice gambling scene (very effectively played here), a plot twist involving one of the main characters. And, inevitably, a *manzai* act brought in for comedy relief. In this case it's the combo of towering Yonosuke Shimada (1915-1985) and diminutive Kitayo Ima

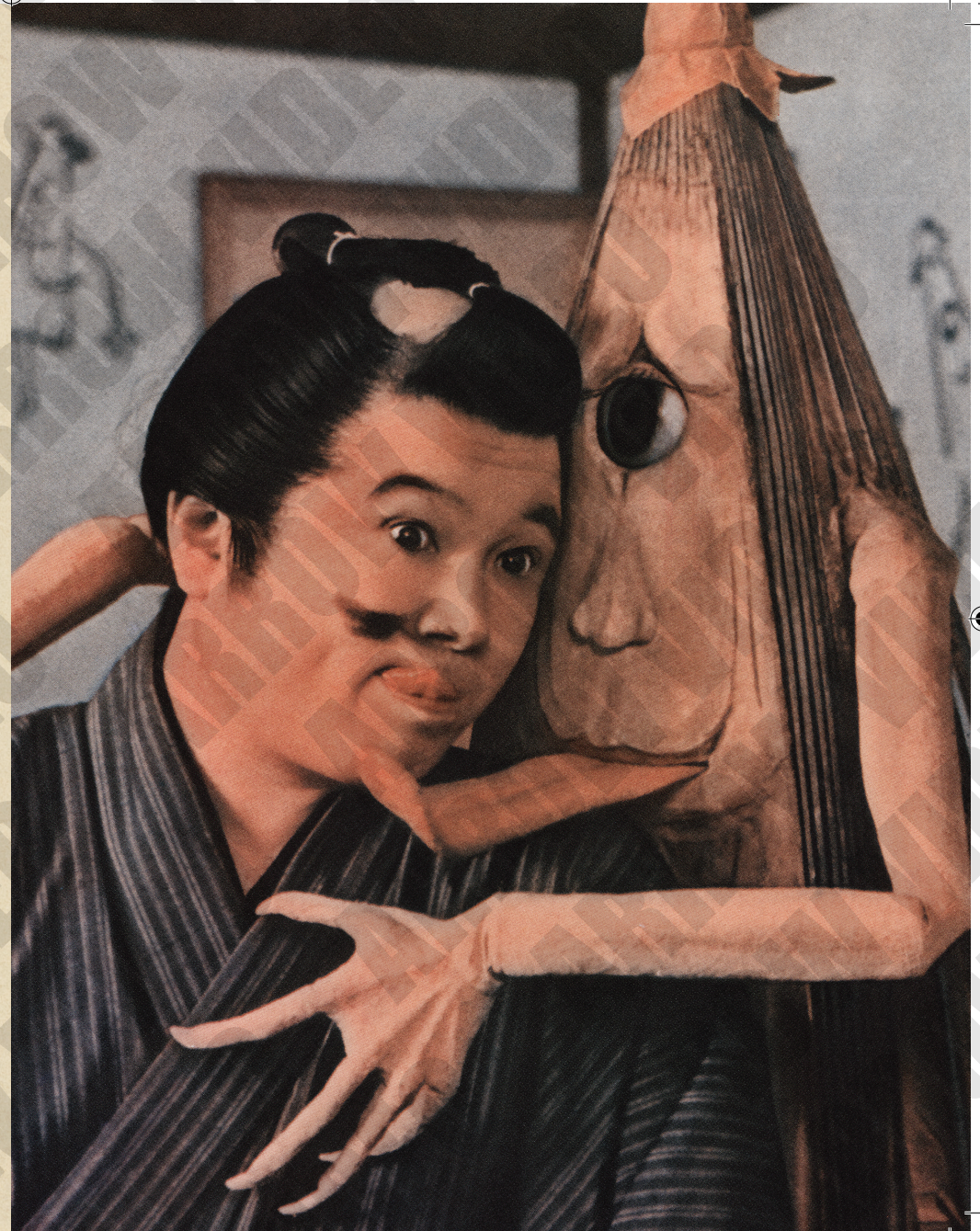
(1926-2011), lending aid to runaway Miyo, as they pioneer the *manzai* subgenre of bickering married couples. Also of note is the spaghetti Western-influenced musical score of Chūmei Watanabe (b. 1925), a prolific composer whose credits include several “Starman” films, Nobuo Nakagawa’s notorious *Jigoku* (1960), *Band of Assassins* (*Shinobi no mono*) and *Sleepy Eyes of Death* entries, and innumerable Toei-produced superhero TV shows.

The nominal star of *Along with Ghosts* was hard-working Kōjirō Hongō (1938-2013) who, like Fujimaki, functioned as a leading player at Daiei in the company’s program pictures, a name actor but not quite in the scintillating media star league of a Raizō Ichikawa or Shintarō Katsu. Born to yet another theatrical family, the son of actor Sōjirō Hongō and husband of Takarazuka actress Miyako Koshiro, Kōjirō was studying English literature at Rikkyo University when, as a member of the judo club, he was virtually drafted into Daiei as an heir apparent to earlier stars of such fighting films as Susumu Fujita and Kenji Sugawara. Hongō, who never watched Japanese movies, found the whole experience bewildering at first, but after debuting in 1959’s *The Sun Rises to Kodokan* (*Kōdōkan ni yō wa noboru*, Katsuhiko Tasaka), studio head Masaichi Nagata decreed: “Make that man a star!”

And so Hongō was indeed Hot Stuff for his first several years with the company, starring as Siddhartha in Daiei’s first 70mm release, *Buddha* (1961), filmed in Super Technirama, and prominently featured in their next epic, *The Great Wall* (*Shin no shikōtei*, Shigeo Tanaka, 1962). But quickly other actors like Katsu and Ichikawa far eclipsed Hongō on the popularity charts, and he was reduced to playing second-fiddle to the company’s special effects creations in movies like *Gamera vs. Barugon* (*Daikaijū kettō: Gamera tai Barugon*, Shigeo Tanaka, 1966), *Return of Daimajin* (*Daimajin ikaru*, Kenji Misumi, 1966), *Along with Ghosts*, and *The Falcon Fighters* (*Rikugun hayabusa sentōtai*, Mitsuo Murayama, 1969), Hongō becoming Daiei’s equivalent of Toho’s once-youthful star Akira Kubo. Post-Daiei, Hongō had better luck playing Inspector Tachibana on the long-running police drama *Special Investigation Forefront* (*Tokusō saizensen*). He returned to the special effects genre one last time, cameoing in *Gamera the Guardian of the Universe* (*Gamera: Daikaijū Kūchū Kessen*, Shūsuke Kaneko, 1995), ironically sharing a scene with... Akira Kubo.

Legendary monster-suit maker Masao Yagi worked on all three films uncredited, via his company, EXProduction. Some of the *yōkai* costumes still survived until the year 2000, but their rotted remains made that final journey to the dumpster when Yagi’s company was relocated, nearly 30 years after Daiei-Kyoto Studios itself had gone bankrupt and its stages razed.

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ALONG WITH GHOSTS: VISITING THE YOKAI MONSTERS

by Raffael Coronelli

A sleek specter blasts through the central Japanese countryside like a non-corporeal apparition. It follows an ancient road, well worn by travelers both contemporary and long-dead, through a land haunted by a storied history of countless real-life struggles and supernatural folktales alike. Its trajectory stretches from an ultramodern city to one whose character lives on from a different era.

The Tokaido line Shinkansen is the primary means of travel between the Kanto region (home of the greater Tokyo metropolis) and Kansai to the southwest. The world's longest-running high speed rail line, it's become a staple of Japan's infrastructure over the course of more than half a century – carrying travelers along with ghosts of a much older road.

This very road is in the title of the third film in Daiei Studios' *Yokai Monsters* film series, produced in the late 1960's as part of the studio's wave of combination *jidaigeki* (period drama) / *tokusatsu* (special effects) productions that also included the three *Daimajin* films (Kimiyoishi Yasuda, Kenji Misumi, and Kazuo Mori, 1966), and *The Snow Woman* (*Kaidan yukijorō*, Tokuzō Tanaka, 1968). While these films can be enjoyed by anyone as well-crafted pieces of cinema with great special effects and compelling characters, the influence of their period settings – time, place, and storytelling traditions – allow for a more comprehensive understanding of what exactly the films are about.

Much like the film series itself, our journey begins at one end of the Tokaido Road – Tokyo, before the name “Tokyo” existed. During the eponymous Edo period under the Tokugawa Shogunate, the city of Edo grew into a massive city. During the Meiji Restoration of 1968, the government renamed the city Tokyo to better suit their vision of a future Japan, removed from the Tokugawa's feudal version of Edo.

Kimiyoishi Yasuda's *100 Monsters* (1968) contains several stories-within-the-story that take place around Japan. The film's opening segment about a man's encounter with a Tsuchikorobi takes place in Gifu prefecture, far from Edo in the Kansai region. Some of these spoken stories occurring in far-flung places away from the main plot give them more of a tall tale nature – and indeed, are presented as such until the *yōkai* begin to show up in Edo proper.

The feudal system of the Edo period plays heavily into the film's plot, following the struggle between residents of a *nagaya* (traditional tenant house) and the landlord who wants to tear it down to build an *okabasho*, an Edo period red light district establishment. *Okabasho* (basically translating as "side-eye place") were sanctioned by the shogunate during the period, especially in Edo's historic Yoshiwara red light district. It would've been realistic for a landlord to be able to build such a lucrative business on whichever of his properties he liked if he had permission. Like in Yasuda's *Daimajin*, the common people call upon supernatural intervention to combat their feudal persecutor.

The now-defunct Yoshiwara district, the area of which is part of Tokyo's Taito ward, contained numerous temples and shrines alongside its more illicit establishments. In the film, one such shrine is a means for the tenants to call upon the help of the resident *yōkai*. As the film progresses, the tall tales of faraway spirits begin to move into the reality of the Edo-set drama, escalating to a special effects creature feature climax.

The *yōkai* themselves are not as strange to Japanese culture as they appear in the west, where such outlandish creatures feel completely alien without the necessary context. In Japanese folklore, *yōkai* are apparitions of various alignments and purposes, often representing aspects of mundane life in a divine form. An anthropomorphic umbrella, a woman with an extending and constricting neck, and a creature able to display live images on its stomach like a television are all *yōkai*. Several thorough attempts to catalogue and categorize them have been undertaken, but the uniting theme is that they're all folkloric creatures that contain an element of the divine. External, non-*yōkai* entities threatening their order form the basis of the movie series' villains – a destructive landlord, or an invading apparition from a different mythology altogether.

A separate mythology is indeed the origin of Daimon, the Babylonian demon who invades Japan in the second film, *Spook Warfare* (1968). Upon first landing in Edo, Daimon encounters a singular, memorably heroic *yōkai* – a Kappa. Kappa are delightful turtle-like humanoid creatures, and the character in the film is a fantastic depiction with a fun costume and lots of personality. However, its presence in Edo and one of the movie's thematic threads share some ideological similarities to a prominent Tokyo attraction dating to the Edo period.

Sōgen-ji, also called Kappa-dera, is a Buddhist temple built in Edo in the 16th century. Today, it remains open and operational in Tokyo's Kappabashi neighborhood. Kappabashi is likely named after "kappa" raincoats, but the name has led to a folktale about an actual Kappa *yōkai* helping to construct an irrigation system to stop the temple and surrounding area from flooding. In honor of this legendarily helpful Kappa, a Kappa shrine was erected inside the temple.

This folktale and the resulting shrine create an interesting dissonance in belief systems. *Yōkai* are traditionally associated with Shintoism, and more broadly, traditional Japanese folktales. The temple, however, is Zen Buddhist. Prior to the Meiji Restoration, the combination of Buddhist temples with Shinto shrines was not a taboo practice. Many pre-Meiji temples contain Shinto torii gates as a prominent fixture. Similarly, Kappa-dera's inclusion of the shrine didn't cause any disharmony in the period in which it was built.

In *Spook Warfare*, the *yōkai* apparitions (starting with the Kappa) wage an all-out war with the invading Daimon. At the same time, Buddhist monks at a nearby temple enact several attempts to perform an exorcism on the evil spirit to be rid of him. These competing attacks from the *yōkai* and the Buddhist monks form a playful running gag, at one point leading a Buddhist spell to accidentally trap several of the *yōkai* and require other characters to rescue them.

Kappa-dera shows this clash of belief systems in a more harmonious way, as the shrine remains a well-loved part of the temple. The surrounding Kappabashi neighborhood sells all manner of Kappa-themed merchandise, which will likely be of interest to *Yokai Monsters* fans.

Before leaving Tokyo, it's worth mentioning that Daiei ran roughly half of its production facilities in the city at the time the films were made. While the *Yokai* films were produced at Daiei's Kyoto studio and not their Tokyo one, an interesting anecdote has emerged from someone who worked on a film at Daiei Tokyo at the time. Carl Craig, child star of *Gamera vs. Viras* (*Gamera tai uchū kaijū Bairasu*, Noriaki Yuasa, 1968), claimed in an audio commentary on Arrow Video's release of the movie to have glimpsed the production of "a really weird samurai movie" while he was filming *Gamera vs. Viras* in Tokyo. The production of that film would have lined up exactly with the production of *100 Monsters*, which was actually shown as a double feature with *Viras* in Japanese cinemas in 1968. It's unclear if Craig was remembering seeing *Yokai Monsters* filming partially in Tokyo instead of its main production center in Kyoto, or even just production elements being shipped to the other studio. Nonetheless, it's an interesting point to consider.

The series' third installment, *Along With Ghosts* (1969) has the benefit of falling into a different genre than the other two – a road movie. The film takes place along the aforementioned Tokaido Road, which today can be experienced on the Shinkansen – but its route travels a middle portion of the road from west to east.

Along With Ghosts' action is set entirely within Shizuoka prefecture, just to the west of Mt. Fuji. Its first recognizable stop is the coastal city of Hamamatsu, still a mid-sized city today. In the Edo period-set film, it's hardly the place you'd see if you visited, but that's thanks to the elaborate sets built at Daiei's Kyoto studio.

Location camerawork shows the massive form of Mt. Fuji looming in the distance, a specter representing the destination of the protagonists. Mt. Fuji is indeed ever-present on that stretch of the Tokaido line – you may miss it in the clouds, but on a clear day its majestic, landscape-dominating shape is visible from the train. In the film, it stands beyond Yui, a town in Shizuoka that today is part of Shizuoka City.

A lengthy scene involving *yōkai* deviates to another mountain, as the characters flee from Hamamatsu and into the forest. Immediately, they come upon a “Mt. Yatsuga.” The real Yatsugatake mountains lie to the west of Fuji, as in the film, but are much further north than as depicted and are not walking distance from Hamamatsu. It’s possible that the filmmakers borrowed this name for a fictional mountain – one on which they could stage an elaborate *yōkai* haunting scene without having to explain that the real Yatsugatake mountains are not actually haunted.

The modern experience of the Tokaido line is obviously very different from walking the road on foot like in the film, but there are stretches of the ancient road that are preserved, dotting its considerable length. The fact that the entire film takes place in one prefecture shows just how much longer it would have taken in the Edo period than it now takes to blast through on the Shinkansen.

After our stop in Shizuoka, our journey takes us to the western end of the Tokaido Road – the ancient former capital of Japan, Kyoto. This is where the films were actually produced, at Daiei’s Kyoto studio. It’s no coincidence that the studio’s *jidaigeki* films were placed in the hands of the Kyoto branch – the preserved traditional architecture of the city clearly informs the atmosphere and craftsmanship of the productions.

Besides the Kadokawa-Daiei studio where filming took place, which you can visit from the outside, Kyoto has another prominent *yōkai* attraction – Yokai Street. Somewhat in contrast with the traditional nature of the city, Yokai Street is a modern invention, but has become a popular tourist attraction and a creative activity for the local residents. Original *yōkai* are created by shop owners and displayed as statues or even food items. This modern continuation of the *yōkai* tradition shows the true nature of *yōkai*. While they do have their roots in ancient folklore of Japan, they’re also part of the roots of the culture’s fascination with inventing strange and fun creatures.

It’s perhaps unsurprising that the series went unreleased in the west until DVD. They may have simply been seen as too culturally esoteric for western moviegoers of the late 60s. Modern fans of *tokusatsu*, however, have latched onto the films with a cult following – one that likely includes you, if you’re reading this essay!

Regardless, the *Yokai Monsters* movies were hits in Japan, proving again what the *Daimajin* trilogy did a few years before – that Daiei could produce *tokusatsu* films in both Tokyo and Kyoto simultaneously and release them to great box office success in rapid succession, a feat that even Toho was unable to replicate. With Gamera’s rogues’ gallery terrorizing modern Japan from their series’ production base in Tokyo, the Kyoto studio was able to build on its more traditional *jidaigeki* roots and create a wholly unique set of films that are still utterly unlike anything else in the genre.

Drawing from folklore and their historic settings, the three Showa-era *Yokai Monsters* films are immersive and transportive experiences as much as creature-filled spectacles. They remind us of some of Japan’s most storied traditions, and instill a wondrous sense that if you wander a bit off the main road and find yourself at an old shrine, you should keep your wits about – you might be about to meet some spooks.

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THE TALES OF SHIGERU MIZUKI

by Jolyon Yates

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The key figure in the popularity of *yōkai* in modern Japan is Shigeru Mizuki (1922-2015), manga artist, scholar, and the Great Yokai Elder seen at the climax of *The Great Yokai War*. Prior to his own fascinating life come centuries of folktales passed down through various storytelling means, a rich and sometimes tenuous history that has survived to this day. (How delighted Mizuki-san would have been to see his beloved friends capering at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics of 2021!)

WHAT IS A YŌKAI?

The word *yōkai* is formed from the *kanji* for “bewitching” and “mysterious.” *Yōkai* can be a broad term for all supernatural beings and monsters, or Japanese creatures in particular. Other catch-all terms are *kai genshō* (“bizarre phenomenon”), *mononoke* (“spirit of a thing”), *bakemono* (“changing thing”), and *obake* (also “changing thing”), reminding us of the mutability of the world. They can be malign or friendly, grotesque and/or cute, sometimes embody natural threats or punishment for transgressions, and tend to be free of the repressions of normal society.

Since *yōkai* are creatures of the animist Shinto culture, many of them are non-human objects, which are referred to as *onbake* (“grateful spirit,” an object so adored by humans it comes to life) and *tsukumogami* (“mourning attachment deity,” an object which acquires a haunting spirit after a hundred years of use). This belief has been dated to the Muromachi Period (1336-1573).

Japan itself has been infused with *yōkai* for much longer. According to *The Kojiki*, the “Record of Ancient Matters” compiled in the early 8th century by Ō no Yasumaro, Izanagi (one of the last of seven generations of primordial deities) ventured into the *Yomi-no-kuni* (the Underworld) to see his sister-wife Izanami, with whom he had created the archipelago that became Japan. She was so enraged by his seeing her in her corrupted state that she sicced Yakusa-noikazuchi-no-kami (‘Eight Thunders God’) and Yomotsu-shikome (‘Underworld Hag’) upon him. Izanagi escaped, declared he was now divorced, and took a bath. Amaterasu the Sun Goddess sprang from his left eye, Tsukuyomi the Moon from his right eye, and wild man Susanoo the Tempest God from his nostrils. The water dripping

from Izanagi soaked into the land so that, with the necessary concentration of the right energy, a *yōkai* might spring forth from anywhere and anything.¹

Those which appear to be humans, albeit with unruly hair denoting an abandonment of mortal niceties, are closer to the Western idea of vengeful ghosts and are known as *yūrei* (“otherworldly spirit”). *Yūrei* can also be referred to as *bōrei* (“deceased spirit”) and *shiryō* (“death spirit”). Peak *yūrei* viewing time is The Hour of the Ox, in the early hours after midnight. If a person’s spirit is unable to join their ancestors because of a botched funeral or trauma, it becomes a *yūrei*. As *kaidan* (“tales of the strange”) became more popular in the 17th century, *yūrei* took on more features distinguishing them from the living, such as being dressed in white (the color of purity as in the world beyond ours), then missing legs in the 18th century, showing their disconnectedness from the spirit of the Earth. Once the proper rites have been observed, or vengeance exacted, the *yūrei* finds peace.

A lethal spirit can even originate from the living, with or without that person’s knowledge. Such is the fury of The Lady Rokujo in the early 11th century story “Genji Monogatari” that it becomes an *ikiryō* (“living spirit”) and kills two of Genji’s wives, carrying her grudge even after the anger has left her. On the other hand, a spirit born of vengeful anger reaching from beyond death is an *onryō* (“grudge spirit”, as in Takashi Shimizu’s *Ju-on* franchise of 1998 onwards). The *onryō* is written of in the historical record *Shoku Nihongi* completed in 797 AD.

YŌKAI IN ART

Perhaps the earliest illustration of *yōkai* is the *Gaki Zoshi* (“Hungry Spirit Scroll”) in which greedy humans who have been reincarnated as grotesque creatures (condemned to feeding on corpses, excrement, and spilled water) are saved by the actions of Buddhist priests. The scrolls date from the 12th century, a time of other instructional art such as *Jigoku Zoshi* (“Hell Scrolls”), *Jigokuhen* (“Hell Pictures”), and *Yamai Zoshi* (“Disease Scrolls”). Pictures of Heaven and Hell were displayed at a local temple, Shofukuji, near Shigeru Mizuki’s hometown, and were apparently of great interest to him as a child.

Even more directly influential on Mizuki was the *Hyakki Yako* (“100 Spirit Night Parade”), a procession of *yōkai* led by a *nurarihyon*, a slippery fellow dressed in Buddhist robes and sporting a distended, gourd-shaped head.² The parade was depicted in scrolls as far back as the 15th century. Famous examples include the *Hyakki Yagyō Zu* of the 16th century, now on display in Kyoto, and the 19th century *Hyakki Yagyō* by Kyōsai Kawanabe, shown in the British Museum. The spectacle also appears in book form in the *Gazu Hyakki Yagyō*

¹ In the movie *The Three Treasures* (*Nippon Tanjō*, 1959) Susano and Yamato Takeru are played by Toshiro Mifune, Izanami by Shizuko Muramatsu, and Amaterasu by Setsuko Hara.

² In the *Yokai Monsters* trilogy, the parade is led by another slippery spirit, *abura sumashi* (“Oil Wringer”), the ghost of an oil thief. A *nurarihyon* is one of Kitaro’s enemies in Mizuki’s manga.

by Sekien Toriyama (published in 1776), ostensibly a bestiary of local *yōkai*, although at least eighty creatures are of his own invention and fourteen are Chinese. Mizuki himself has produced several *yōkai* guides, such as *Yōkaiden* (Kodansha, 1985).

In the 17th century, *yōkai* appeared in another format, *Ōtsu-e* (“Ōtsu pictures”), souvenir paintings sold at Otsu, just northeast of Kyoto, to travellers along the Tokaido, the coastal road from Kyoto to Tokyo immortalised in Hiroshige Utagawa’s prints “The 53 Stations of the Tokaido,” which was parodied by Mizuki as “The 53 Stations of the Yokaido.” The route is the setting for *The Ghost of Yotsuya* (*Tokaidō yotsuya kaidan*, Kenji Misumi, 1959) and the third film in the *Yokai Monsters* trilogy. Samurai in the 17th century could test their mettle by taking part in the *Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai* (“100 Strange Tales Gathering”) wherein, as each tale was told, the narrator extinguished one candle and looked into a mirror. Once the final candle was snuffed out, a spirit was said to manifest in the dark. This spooky game soon spread to other classes and can be seen in the first film of the trilogy.

The Edo Period (1603-1868) was also the time when *karuta* (card) games were popular, one version being *obake karuta* where players collected cards illustrated with *yōkai* and the winner was the one with the most ghost lore knowledge and the fastest hand. *Yōkai* playing cards, *menko*, would again appear in the 1960s.

The first half of the 18th century had seen the increase of theatrical presentations of ghost stories, first as puppet shows then on stage in Osaka and Edo, and by century’s end they had become a mainstay of Kabuki and Noh drama, which had arisen in the 14th century. Early *yōkai* films were kabuki scenes, such as two 1899 shorts of the “Two Virgins at Dojo Temple” dance from the *Wake Futatsu Ninin Dōjōji* play first performed in 1835. The oft filmed *yūrei* story by Tsuruya Nanboku IV, “Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan,” was first staged in 1825 at the Nakamura Theatre in Tokyo, and first filmed in 1910 as *Oiwa Inari* (“Oiwa’s Shrine,” Oiwa being the victim and post-mortem persecutor of the villain). *Kaidan Botan-dōrō*, also first filmed in 1910, was adapted for the stage in 1892. Patrick Lafcadio Hearn (see below) recorded the story as “A Passional Karma” in his book *In Ghostly Japan* (1899).

In the latter half of the 18th century, grandmasters of woodblock printing such as Hokusai Katsushika (1760-1849), Ōkyo Maruyama (1733-1795), and Kuniyoshi Utagawa (1797-1861) created some of the best-known images of *yōkai*. In 1814, Hokusai used the term *manga*, a word formed from the *kanji* for “unrestrained” and “picture,” to describe his drawings of everyday life, objects, and whimsy, as opposed to proscribed subjects such as landscapes, warriors, and beautiful women. Manga had been a term for picture books since the 1770s and eventually became synonymous with comics and cartoons around 1930. Hokusai’s *yōkai* manga include a few depictions of *rokurokubi*, people with necks which, like the *kanji* of their name suggests, stretch like those of a clay pot being cast.

The 19th century continued the production and refinement of woodblock printing as well as the adoption of Western technology following the Treaty of Kanagawa in 1854. Magazines illustrated by pen drawings and influenced by Britain's *Punch* and the USA's *New York World* appeared, featuring anthropomorphic animals in cartoons and comic strips. Traditional print artists included Yoshitoshi Tsukioka (1839-1892), infamous for his astoundingly gory series "28 Famous Murders with Verse," also known as the *Muzan-e* ("Cruelty Pictures," 1866-8), a major influence on the *ero-guro* artists to come, although he also created pictures of conventional beauty and two *yōkai* series, *Wakan Hyaku Monogatari* ("100 Stories of Japan & China," 1865) and *Shinkei Sanjuroku Kaisen* ("New Forms of 36 Ghosts," 1889-92).

YŌKAI SCHOLARSHIP

In 1890, the Greco-Irish writer Patrick Lafcadio Hearn moved to Japan. Hearn had already described Louisiana Voodoo and *Some Chinese Ghosts* (1887). Interpreted for him by his wife Setsuko, Hearn's books such as *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894) and *Kwaidan* (1903) brought Japanese tales and folklore to the West as well as recording them for readers of their home country (the Japanese translation was published after Hearn's death in 1905). Four of the Hearn's transcripts were adapted in the film *Kwaidan* (1964), and the *yuki-onna* ("snow woman") story was again filmed as *The Snow Woman* (*Kaidan yukijorō*) in 1968. (There were *yuki-onna* films in 1911 [*Yuki onna*] and 1935 [*Kyōran yukijorō*], but these seem to be lost.)

It is fortunate that the Hearn's helped rescue the *yōkai* from obscurity because by this point, native Japanese sentiment had turned against such superstitions and rural folk beliefs in the rush to be seen as modern. Enryō Inoue (1858-1919) dedicated himself to debunking the stories, apparently in order to separate them out from Buddhism and thus legitimise it as the modern state religion. Ironically, in founding the *Fushigi Kenkyūkai* ("Paranormal Research Society") and the *Yokai Kenkyūkai* ("Yokai Research Society"), he became known as "Dr. Yokai" and his cataloguing of the stories remains a major resource for *yōkai* scholars. The very use of the term has been credited to his scholarship (Natsuhiko Kyogoku, *Yōkai to iu kotoba ni tsuite*, pt2).

A few years before Inoue's death during a lecture tour, another influential *yōkai* study was published: Kunio Yanagita's *Tono monogatari* ("Tales from Tono," 1910), a record of folktales from that town in the northeast of Honshu. Yanagita (1875-1962) was concerned with including everyday people and their beliefs in history, and his book spread the local stories of kappa and *zashiki-warashi*. Kappa ("River Child") have many regional variations, but generally look like amphibious apes with a turtle shell, and an indentation in the cranium for holding water without which they cannot survive long on land. They began appearing on screen as early as *Hanawa hekonai kappa matsuri* in 1917. *Zashiki-warashi* ("Tatami Room Child") is a ruddy-faced infant who may be a little mischievous but is good

to have around a home, the moral being that you had better take care of it because if it leaves, disaster follows. On the centenary of *Tono monogatari*, a translated edition was released in the US by Lexington Books, and 29 of the stories were illustrated by Shigeru Mizuki for a Japanese edition from Shogakukan. Mizuki's manga adaptation was released in 2021 by Drawn & Quarterly with translation and an essay by Zack Davisson.

There were numerous *yōkai* bestiaries published in the 20th century, including *Yōkai gadan zenshū* ("Complete Discussions of Yōkai," 1929) by Morihiko Fujisawa, and *Nihon yōkai zukan* ("Japanese Yōkai Picture-book," 1972), written by Arifumi Satō with glorious illustrations by Gōjin Ishihara. And of course, several books and print series by Shigeru Mizuki.

KAMISHIBAI

Kamishibai ("Paper Theatre") is a street performance where the narrator, the *kamishibaiya*, slides a series of illustrated boards into a miniature wooden proscenium, the *butai*, which is mounted on a bicycle and fitted with a satin curtain, and tells the stories as each picture is presented. Notes on the story and suggested dialogue are on the back of the boards, and the *kamishibaiya* is expected to provide sound effects and a variety of voices, much like the *benshi* or *katsuben* who narrated silent movies in Japan well into the 1930s. The storyteller would travel a local circuit, announcing his arrival by clapping *hiyogoshi* sticks. Admission was given via the purchase of treats: roasted sweet potatoes or chestnuts, rice crackers smeared with plum jam, ice cream, and other sticky sweets. The more you bought, the closer you were allowed to the show. The format was generally a funny story or a quiz, followed by a melodrama for girls (*shōjo*) and an adventure for boys (*shōnen*) which might involve superheroes, ninja, robots, dinosaurs, monsters, and/or *yōkai*. Dramas were serials of ten to twenty pictures a day with cliffhangers to be resolved on the next visit.

During the first *kamishibai* boom in the Depression years, a 1933 survey reported there were 83 production companies and 1,265 *kamishibaiya* in Tokyo alone. To feed the demand, writers and artists belonged to a bullpen, called a *kai* ("society"), of up to 200 employees. Dealers (*kashimoto*) rented the artwork in the hope of making a profit from the candy.

To play to the crowd, art was produced with heavy India ink line work, layered with watercolour and tempera, and protected with coats of clear lacquer and rainproof wax. Heroes, often based on screen idols, were rendered quite realistically, with supporting characters drawn more stylised, and backgrounds painted as vivid blurs or carefully constructed drawings depending on the needs of the story. Boys could identify both with the heroes, who were often close to their age but able to drive, fly, and deal out death with swords and guns, and the victims of the mayhem, also often children. At the time, children had freedom in the afternoons, and as dusk settled, the show might also include evening news for adults.

A *yōkai* superhero was one of the most popular characters of the medium. Debuting in 1931, *The Golden Bat* (*Ōgon Batto*), scripted by Ichirō Suzuki with art by Takeo Nagamatsu, was a creepy cross between Lon Chaney's Phantom of the Opera and Superman. Batto gave a chilling laugh as he clobbered arch enemy Nazo and his minions. He leapt to manga in 1948, movies in 1950 and 1966³, records in 1956, and anime in 1967. From 1932, his second artist was Kōji Kata, who studied the montage technique of Sergei Eisenstein. This approach really bore fruit as manga took over from *kamishibai* in the 1940s, intercutting action shots with reaction close-ups and extending certain events over several pages, referred to as "decompression" in the manga-impacted US comics of the 1990s. Like *kamishibai*, manga are written to be taken in at speed; according to an editor of *Shonen Magazine*, each page is read in an average of 3.75 seconds.

As with the pulp magazines and comics of the United States, *kamishibai* was attacked. It was criticised for its lurid colours, the unhealthy sweets passed between unsanitary hands, the crowds which blocked traffic, and its corruption of youth who were being groomed for war. In 1937, the Japanese Home Ministry declared that "*kamishibai* and other amusements for the masses are debasing themselves to the lowest common denominator... social morals are not being heeded." Eight years later, the attacks were more physical; many companies were destroyed by American air raids. However, being a relatively cheap and mobile art form, *kamishibai* revived for a brief second boom during the post-war occupation.

The Civil Information and Education Section (CIE, 1945-1952) under Col. Kermit Dyke succeeded the Information Dissemination Section, itself a successor to the Psychological Warfare Branch. Among the CIE's concerns was "the presentation of unscientific notions," directed mostly at film production, but, arguably, a threat to the depiction of the supernatural in any medium. It also tried to control smut. Pulp magazines known as *kasutori zasshi* ("dregs magazines," the latter word using the *kanji* for "coarse" and "record"), sprang up in late 1946, catering to a populace suddenly freed from repression, opened to American culture and forced into prostitution to survive. An early taboo to fall was kissing, a decadent Western expression unseen during Japan's war years⁴, but *kasutori zasshi* included "pornography, crimes, grotesquerie, and exposés."

These magazines died out quickly but by the end of the decade striptease and *ero-guro* films were on the rise. *Ero-guro* (erotic-grotesque) *nansensu* was a term coined in the 1920s during the urban vogue for Western fashion and jazz, depicted by contemporary

³ There was also a comedic film in 1972, *Golden Bat is Coming* (*Ōgon Batto ga yattekuru*, Katsumune Ishida), and a Korean film in 1992, *Yong Gu and the Golden Bat* (*Young-guwa hwanggeum bakjwi*, Ki-nam Nam).

⁴ With one exception, *Onna Wa Itsuno Yo Mo* ("Women are in Every World," 1931).

cartoonists such as Saseo Ono⁵. *Ero-guro* is applied to the fiction of Edogawa Rampo, the pen name of Tarō Hirai based on "Edgar Allan Poe." Rampo's stories were adapted in many crime, horror, and pink films to come. *Ero-guro* can refer to the erotic, decadent, corrupt, malformed, and deviant, and combinations thereof.

Kamishibai had been dragged into court during the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (1946-8) due to their use in the war effort. A report to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) had noted that in the struggle against the good guys, "the exploits of the evil are too minutely explained, so that children are more deeply impressed with outrageous or immoral acts rather than the fact that the evil are conquered at last," but their potential for propaganda was noted too. Five million people a day gathered at the shows, including adults unable to afford radios or newspapers. In the Kansai and Kanto regions of central Japan, there were 40 production houses and 50,000 *kamishibaiya*. SCAP-approved *kamishibai* were distributed nationally to explain such concepts as democracy and the need to consume goods. Censorial pressure on the industry prompted the introduction of a self-policing regulation committee in 1951, and creators learned it was safer to stick with tales of the fantastic, futuristic, and horrific. However, despite the formation of a *kamishibai* union in 1953, the artform's days as a massively popular entertainment were about to end. The first television broadcasts began that year, and to really twist the knife, not only were they set up in public spaces used by the *kamishibaiya*, they were referred to as "*denki* (electric) *kamishibai*". As society recovered, children's late afternoons were now occupied by cram schools. Artists jumped ship to manga, although educational *kamishibai* continues to this day in schools, and crime and horror shows remained popular throughout the fifties from companies like Nakayoshi-kai.

MURA TO MIZUKI

Shigeru Mizuki was born Shigeru Mura in Osaka on March 8th 1922, the middle son of three, and the family soon moved to Sakaiminato, Tottori Prefecture⁶, on the north coast of Honshu. As shown in his autobiographical manga *NonNonBa* (1990), when he was not drawn into fights with local boys, he loved to spend his time drawing the natural and supernatural worlds, learning folklore from his nanny whose nickname provides the book's title (real name: Fusa Kageyama), eating, and building model ships. His first job was at a printer's, from which he was fired for being too slow, so he enrolled for art studies at the Seika Art School and a trade school in Osaka, but soon quit both and attended middle school until he was twenty.

⁵ And later artists such as Suehiro Maruo. His 2007 manga of Edogawa Rampo's "The Strange Tale of Panorama Island" was published in the US in 2013. The novella had been the basis for *Kyōfu kikei ningen: Edogawa Rampo zenshū* (1969), released on Blu-ray by Arrow Video as *Horrors of Malformed Men*.

⁶ Tottori is known for its dunes, the only ones in Japan. They were the location for *Suna no Onna* (*Woman in the Dunes*, 1964) and the climax of *Lone Wolf & Cub: Baby Cart at the River Styx* (1972). Tottori was the birthplace of Nobuko Otowa, star of *Onibaba* (1964) and *Kuroneko* (1968).

By then it was 1942 and Mura was drafted. In a 2005 interview with Tomoko Otake for *The Japan Times*, he recalled: "You felt death already when you received the call-up papers."

Mura's poor showing as a soldier-in-training landed him a non-combat position in the bugle corps in Tottori. However, he could not play so he was made to run around the grounds. When he asked to be released from his misery the personnel officer asked him, "North or South?" Mura said "South" and found himself a private in the 229th Infantry Regiment, 38th Division, on his way to Rabaul, capital of the Territory of New Guinea⁷. The ship which took him there, *Shinano-Marū*, was sunk with all hands on its way back.

New Guinea had become the battleground between Australia, which had administered the territory since 1920, and Japan, which invaded in 1942, turning Rabaul into a fortified base central to the Southwest Pacific Area. Australia's supplies could be cut off, perhaps leading to its invasion. For many Japanese troops in the early months of occupation, Rabaul was surprisingly delightful, well-supplied with food, drink, and entertainments from home, and thousands of women forced into brothels.

Beyond Rabaul, however, was not so inviting. There was beriberi, dysentery, smallpox, blackwater fever, dengue fever, scarlet fever, and yellow fever. Hookworm, scrub typhus from chiggers, leishmaniasis from sandflies, and malaria from mosquitoes⁸. Japanese trenches filled waist-high with rain, and trench foot was a problem too. New Guinea, the second largest island after Greenland, was hot, wet, and covered in thick jungle. There were only a few miles of roads. Soldiers who scaled the central mountain ranges, over 16,000 feet high, were threatened with hypothermia. Once shipping lanes from Japan were cut off in late 1943, it got worse. Cannibalism by Japanese soldiers was recorded as early as October 1942.

Mura was often beaten for laziness and talking back to officers, and sent on guard duty out in the jungle. On one such night, he was late returning to his unit because he had been watching parrots instead of looking out for enemy ships. His unit was attacked by Australian and Melanesian forces and he found himself one of the few survivors fleeing local villagers. He escaped them (although they might have only been offering help) and swam back to camp. However, once there he was punished for not only losing his rifle, but surviving. Mura was placed in a *kesshitai*, a unit determined to die in a suicide charge. At this point he was felled by malaria and sent to a hospital in the Zungen area. The hospital was then hit by a US air raid, and Mura, up until then a southpaw, had his left arm so badly damaged it had to be amputated on site... badly, as it turned out. He recalls watching maggots feeding on his stump.

⁷ The 1954 film *Farewell Rabaul*, directed by Ishirō Honda shortly before *Godzilla*, blends romance in the city with anti-war sentiments.

⁸ Malaria was even more of a problem for the Allies. Quinine was scarce once the Japanese seized its sole source, Java, in 1942.

While he was recovering, the unit he had been attached to was sent on its final charge. Soldiers were taught about *gyokusai* ("jade shard"): "a man would rather be a shattered jade than be an intact roof tile" (from a Chinese text, "History of North Qi"). Their glorious death was reported, but somehow some of the unit survived. Headquarters ordered them to commit suicide or charge again. This incident would be recorded in Mizuki's 1973 manga *Sōin gyokusai seyo!*, published in the US as *Onward Toward Our Noble Deaths*.

Mura was, like an *obake*, transformed inside and out. He walked the hills around Toma, above Rabaul, sometimes dodging strafing runs from Allied fighters, and came upon a Tolai village. They were hardly friendly towards the Japanese, who had killed a chief, and yet an old woman, Ikarian, returned his smile. In an interview with Dr. Hiromatsu Iwamoto in 2000, he said: "I think now that she just sympathised with me, because I had only one arm." After several visits, Mura was invited to escape the army and stay in the village, where they grew potatoes for him and invited him to become part of Ikarian's family.⁹

When the war ended, Mura was ecstatic even though it meant being a prisoner. He told an army surgeon about his wish to stay in the village, but was told to go back to Japan first, both to ask his parents' permission and to receive proper surgery. When he did so, however, he had a long wait for treatment and a hard scrabble to survive, working as a beggar, a fish monger, a black market rice vendor, at a pedicab company, and as a cinema projectionist. His elder brother, an anti-aircraft artillery officer in the Imphal Campaign in Burma, had been imprisoned for eight years as a Class B war criminal for ordering the execution of prisoners, which cannot have helped. Mura ("Martial Virtue") took a less militaristic pen name: Mizuki, literally "Water Wood," is the wedding cake tree (*Cornus controversa*) native to Japan.¹⁰

MIZUKI IN THE 1950s: "EEK"ING A LIVING

Mizuki attended Musashino Art University, but dropped out in 1949 and fell in with *Golden Bat*'s Kōji Kata, scraping a bit of money in the *kamishibai* market. At the time, his work was painted in a quite naturalistic style, and he illustrated domestic dramas for girls' stories. Contemporaries in the business included others who would go on to manga success,

⁹ Mizuki books on his experiences in the area, including his postwar visits: the manga *Fifty years with Topetoro* (*Topetoro to no gojū-nen*, 2002); his "Showa" series, *Shigeru Mizuki's Rabaul War Memoir* (*Shigeru no Rabaul senki*, 1994); and *Account of War from Father to Daughter* (*Mizuki Shigeru no musume ni kataru otōsan no senki*, 1995). There was also a 2007 NHK TV drama, *Kitaro Saw Gyokusai: Shigeru Mizuki's War* (*Kitaro ga mita gyokusai: Mizuki Shigeru no sensō*). Mizuki vowed to return in seven years but did not make it back until the mid-1960s. A Rabaul road was named after him in 2003.

¹⁰ "Shigeru" might be "thick growth." Around 1950 the artist took a loan from his parents to become landlord of Mizuki Manor in Mizuki Street, Kobe, and adopted the name. Early work with Kōji Kata was produced here.

Sanpei Shirato (*Ninja bugei-chō* [*Band of Ninja*], 1959) and Kazuo Koike (*Lone Wolf & Cub*, 1970). Mizuki also created books for the *kashibon* market, rental libraries which had been around since the Edo Period to provide literature for those who could not afford to buy it. With the coming of more regular libraries and greater, more affordable print runs, *kashibon* went into sharp decline in the early 1960s. Mizuki recalls it being a brutal business for artists, who had to provide 100-150 pages per book, and if their debut failed to sell they were fired. However, with the high turnover and little monitoring from publishers beyond the bottom line, subject matter was wide ranging and sometimes shocking for parents. Similar to the US outcry at the time, there was a “Campaign to Banish Bad Reading Matter” with the slogan “*Uranai Kawanai Yomanai!*” (“Don’t Sell, Don’t Buy, Don’t Read!”) but, dissimilarly, publishers and readers ignored it and comics continued to thrive.

In 1957, Mizuki’s family moved to Tokyo. His father was a translator at the US Embassy and brought home boxes of comics including *Superman* and EC horror titles like *Tales from the Crypt*. Mizuki’s debut book was *Rocketman*, with a painted cover of a superhero¹¹ against a background of a rocket and a flying saucer in space. Other releases in this decade, for which Mizuki supplied the cover art if not also the interior, include *Yūrei Ikka* (“Ghost Family”), *Kyōfu no yūsei majin* (“Horror of the Planet Demon”), *Plastic Man* (looking just like the Jack Cole character), *Kaijū Ravan* (“Monster Ravan,” a giant monster story), *Jigoku* (“Hell”), and *Jigoku no mizu* (“Hell Water”), about a Himalayan water demon.

KITARO

In 1954, a publisher asked Mizuki to continue the *kamishibai* series *Hakaba no Kitarō*, which had first appeared in 1933 in a story about an orphan boy ghost written by Masami Itō with art by Kei Tatsumi. This was based on the Edo Period folk tale “*Ame-kai yūrei*” (“Sweets-buying Ghost”) recorded by Hearn. A thin, pale young woman buys *midzu-ame* (malt syrup) at a sweets shop night after night. The concerned owner decides to follow her but she disappears at a Buddhist temple. The next day he talks to the temple monk, who tells him a pregnant woman was recently buried there. The men decide to open her grave, and inside they find a child eating some candy. The mother is an *ubume* or *kosodate yūrei* (“child-raising ghost”).

Mizuki and Itō created four stories: “Karate Kitaro,” modelled on Mizuki’s elder brother; “Galois”; “Yurei Hand”; and “Snake People,” which introduced Medama Oyaji (see below). Although the revived Kitaro *kamishibai* was not a big hit, Mizuki returned to the story in 1959 with a *kashibon* entitled *Hakaba no Kitarō*. The main character – also named Mizuki

¹¹ *The Adventures of Superman* (1952-8 in the US) was first broadcast on Japanese TV in 1956. The theatrical series *Koketsu No Kyojin* (“Supergiant”) began in December 1957. The first television superhero boom was kicked off by *Gekko Kamen* (“Moonlight Mask”) in February 1958.

– discovers while working at a blood bank that their plasma supply comes from a pair of diseased mummy *yōkai*, who are expecting a child. As the parents die and decompose, their son emerges. Mizuki (the character) detests *yōkai* so when he finds the boy crawling around in a cemetery he hurls it against a gravestone, smashing the baby’s left eye. The father’s decaying body retains enough spirit so that one eyeball pops out, grows limbs and takes up residence in the boy’s empty socket.

This first story, *Okashi-na Yatsu* (“Strange Guy”) continues with the introduction of another Kitaro regular, Nezumi Otoko (“Rat Man”), a smelly, untrustworthy half-*yōkai*. Kitaro, Nezumi Otoko, and Medama Oyaji (“Eyeball Dad”) help out a student haunted by an ancient sorcerer. The artwork for the first run of Kitaro stories mixes realistic drawing with stylisation for Kitaro and his *yōkai* friends, like the later manga, but the tone is darker and the humans less cartoonish, in the style of *gekiga* (“drama pictures”) which, spearheaded by Yoshihiro Tatsumi (*Yūrei Taxi*, 1958), had emerged from the *kashibon* market in 1957 to appeal to older readers.

Mizuki did three volumes for Togetsu Shobo, argued with the publisher over money, and took his character to Sanyo-sha under the title *Kitarō Yawai* (“Night Tales of Kitaro”). However, Togetsu Shobo had fellow *kamishibai* veteran Kano Takeuchi (1907-1995, real name Hachiro Takeuchi) take over the artwork for the series. In the fourth volume, Kineko (“Tree Cat Girl”) kills Nezumi Otoko and meets her end at the hands of Kitaro, and in the finale Kitaro’s father is surgically implanted into his socket. Mizuki’s Sanyo-sha run rebooted Kineko as Neko Musume (“Cat Girl”), who became Kitaro’s love interest, but his series did not last half as long due to disappointing sales. Horror appealing to adults was doing fine in cinemas (there were four versions of *Yotsuya Kaidan* alone from 1956-61) but perhaps Mizuki’s *yōkai* were too cartoonish for them and too morbid for children.¹²

Kodansha’s *Shonen Magazine* debuted in 1959, the first weekly to carry manga stories (it would later become all manga). As the *kamishibai* and *kashibon* markets dried up, artists moved into the weeklies. Creators from *gekiga* titles brought their grimmer, more realistic takes on violence and horror to the magazines, as well as their Leftist politics. *Shonen* eventually picked up “Kitaro” but in the meantime Mizuki introduced two more series teaming *yōkai* with a spooky child.

MIZUKI IN THE 1960s: THE KIDS ARE ALL FRIGHT

Mizuki returned to Togetsu Shobo and created *Kappa no Sanpei*, an eight-volume *kashibon* series in 1961-62. The protagonist, Sanpei Kawahara, is a country boy living with his

¹² An anime series adapting the first Kitaro run aired January 11th to March 21st, 2008. In the late 1950s, children could see the *yōkai*-heavy theatrical series *Akado Suzunosuke* and *Seishun Kaidan*.

grandfather. Sanpei not only swims for his school, he also has a peculiarly kappa-like haircut, so understandably, when he is floating around in a river, kappa “rescue” him and take him below to their world. Realizing he is human, the elders sentence him to death, but he convinces them he can bring useful knowledge from the modern world. Not fully trusting Sanpei, they remove his belly button (where they believe his soul resides)¹³ and send along a young kappa, Kanpei, to accompany him. Like Kitaro and Mizuki, Sanpei acquires his identity through *yōkai* and the loss of a body part. Death stalks Sanpei – literally. The skull-headed Shinigami (“Death God”) is after him and his grandfather throughout the series. Amidst all the slapstick and scatology, this is a story of abandoned children facing life and mortality and searching for their parents. It seems that in Mizuki’s life, at least as he tells it, the macabre and comedy are inseparable.

Wanting to explore the *yōkai* of the West, Mizuki’s next *kashibon* series was *Akuma-kun* (“Devil Boy,” 1963-4). Ichirō Matsushita is nicknamed “Akuma-kun” because of his onion-like hairstyle and bulging eyes. He is destined to save the world from evil by uniting The Twelve Apostles with the aid of Dr. Faust. The series was planned to last five volumes but poor sales truncated it at three, leaving Akuma-kun dead at the hands of the Judas-like apostle Yamoribito (later manga would resurrect Akuma-kun and conclude the story arc). *Akuma-kun* was the first of Mizuki’s manga to criticize the war.

Mizuki’s next magical boy was more successful commercially, especially since it was his move from *kashibon* to *Shonen Magazine*, the best seller of the decade. Asked to deliver a science fiction story, Mizuki crossed *yōkai* and technology in *Terebi-kun* (“TV Kid,” 1965), in which our hero Yamada can enter televisions to steal products shown in commercials and give them to impoverished children in the real world. Only Yamada’s friend Santa knows his secret. Again, there is familial loss and childhood hardship; Santa’s father is dead, his mother is sick, and he has to sell newspapers to support his family. Television sets were enjoying a huge spike in sales because of the unprecedented scale of telecasts of the 1964 Summer Olympics held in Tokyo.¹⁴ The story won the Kodansha Juvenile Manga Award in 1966 and drew further attention to the artist. As far as I know, Terebi-kun is the first *yōkai* to inhabit modern electronic media, which would later be exploited with a vengeance in films like *Ring* (1998).¹⁵ The manga magazine *Terebi-kun*, published by Shogakukan since 1976, is an anthology of comics starring television superheroes.

¹³ Sanpei gets off lightly. Some kappa suck out the *shirikodama* (“Anus Gem”), the life force ball, then haul out the liver and eat it.

¹⁴ The Olympics formed the background for *Walk, Don’t Run* (1966) starring Samantha Eggar and Cary Grant, and the event itself was the subject of Kon Ichikawa’s *Tokyo Olympiad* (1965). The Japanese gymnastic team’s use of the term “Ultra C” begat the titles of two 1966 series in the second TV superhero boom, *Ultra Q* and *Ultraman*.

¹⁵ *Ring*’s ghost girl arising from a well echoes an oft-told story, *Bancho Sarayashiki* (“Dish Mansion of Bancho”), first filmed in 1911.

The switch in manga releasing from monthly to weekly brought the experience of reading episodes closer to the viewing of television series, and if a manga story became popular, a television version was sure to follow. One could argue that if a series were seen as a possible hit in both media, for children, the motivation or pressure to lighten things up would follow. Kitaro had faltered in his ghastly first incarnation, and Mizuki was unable to sell “Graveyard Kitaro” to animation studios, so the boy had a makeover. Kitaro quit smoking, for one thing, and his irregular buck teeth gave way to curiously pursed lips. He became a friend of humans instead of an agent of supernatural punishment. Grue was scaled back. Still, this was a story about a one-eyed ghost boy with an eyeball father and a farting ratman friend. Sponsors were leery of being associated with graveyards and ghosts.

However, 1966 was the year of live action monster shows like *Ultra Q* (running since January) and seven *daikajū* movies¹⁶, so sponsors pulled the trigger on *Akuma-kun*, starring Mitsunobu “Johnny Sokko” Kaneko as the hero and Yoshio Yoshida as Mephisto, a devil whom Akuma-kun keeps in line with Solomon’s Flute, an ocarina given to him by Faust. The series ran for 26 episodes and pitted the team against Japanese *yōkai* like the hundred-eyed *ganma* and a *yuki onna*, and Western monsters like a mummy and a wolfman. Acceptable to Japanese sponsors, but I doubt the devil-conjuring and bloody eye damage in the first episode would have played on daytime television in the West.

Akuma-kun’s success spurred new interest in Mizuki and Graveyard Kitaro. In 1967 a producer friend at Toei, Akira Watanabe, suggested a name change and Mizuki came up with *GeGeGe no Kitaro*.

GEgege NO KITARO

There are several takes on an English rendering of “GeGeGe”: “Brrr!”, “Spooky Ooky,” “The Spooky,” and “Boo boo boo.” In the manga it is the sound of a chorus of frogs, birds, and insects singing Kitaro’s praise when he wins a battle. “Ge!” is also a cry of startled repulsion. As a child, Shigeru Mizuki had a speech impediment and pronounced his name as “Gegeru,” so his nickname was “Ge-ge.” The title change matched the manga (relaunched November 12th, 1967 in *Weekly Shonen Magazine*) with a new Kitaro series, this time an anime, which began on January 3rd, 1968 and was directed by Isao Takahata, the co-founder of Studio Ghibli. Episodes were adapted from the new manga, which itself had reworked stories from the *kashibon* days. For example, the anime would be a third outing for the *daikajū* tale, entitled “Creature from the Deep” in the 2013 US “Kitaro” collection. The anime ran until March 30th, 1969, with 65 episodes. The single

¹⁶ *Toho with War of the Gargantuas* and *Ebirah, Horror of the Deep*, *Daiei with Gamera vs. Barugon*, and the *Daimajin* triptych, and Toei with *The Magic Serpent*. All four major studios would release monster movies in 1967.

of its opening theme song, “Hakaba no Kitarō,” sold 300,000 copies, with lyrics by Mizuki which, roughly translated, go: “In the morning I sleep, Zzz Zzz Zzz... *Yōkai* don’t have to go to school...” Presumably this delighted children, if not their parents.

In the manga, Kitaro lives in poverty on the outskirts of town with his father Medama Oyaji, and associates with Nezumi Otoko, Neko Musume, Ittanmomen (literally “One Tan [29cm x 10m] Cotton,” a flying bolt of cotton), Sunakake Baba (“Sand-spreading Crone”), Konaki Jiji (“Baby-bawling Old Man”), and Nurikabe (“Coated Wall,” a mobile wall). Kitaro can mentally control his *geta* sandals and detachable hand, and his hair can pop up like antennae to measure “spirit energy” or shoot from his skull like needles. He can blend into backgrounds like a chameleon, flatten himself out like a rug, and take other shapes much like Plastic Man. He can talk to the fleas living in his rags and send them on missions. He wears a stripy *chanchanko* vest woven from the spirit hairs of his ancestors, which can fly about and strangle enemies by itself. In a pinch he can generate an electric shock. And of course, Kitaro and his dad have deep knowledge of *yōkai* lore.

The stories are eerie and often funny, and very weird. Mizuki’s Kitaro works from his mid-sixties breakout onward seem gentler and nostalgic for a magical, bucolic mythical past, rather than the desperate horrors of the boy’s early years when Mizuki was living month-to-month, not knowing if he would be able to afford to eat. Perhaps, however, the new stories were more subversive. *Kitaro* achieves much of its power through the blending of the ordinary, often rural and impecunious everyday world with the fantastic. Our mundane experience, easily recognisable as it is so meticulously rendered in photorealistic detail, is seen through Kitaro’s eye with ironic detachment. Mortal humans come across as blinkered, ignorant fools briefly materializing in the world of ancient elemental spirits. Are *we* haunting *them*? Compare Mizuki’s stories with those of contemporary horror manga maestro Kazuo Umezu (b. 1936, also known in Japan as a comedy manga creator for series like *Makoto-chan*, 1976), in which the viewpoint is of ordinary human children who find themselves in a malevolent universe.

Antagonists can be human criminals or monsters of the West like Dracula, but in most cases they are *yōkai*; although like Sekien, the 18th century cryptozoologist, Mizuki feels free to embellish and invent his own versions, or just make up new creatures, and it is these which populate the *yōkai* films of this collection. The characters are usually drawn with smooth, clean lines as if they were ready for an animation cel, but large *yōkai* can be rendered in a lot of detail with hatching and dotted shading to suggest textures and ghostly light. There is little use of screentones, except here and there as an extra layer of shade. Backgrounds are usually very detailed and heavily photo referenced. I imagine Mizuki’s assistants do the calorie-burning on those. In the following years, the detail would become even more extravagant. Manga tend not to credit assistants but Mizuki’s sixties team included Ryōichi Ikegami (*Sanctuary*, 1990), Yoshiharu Tsuge (*Screw Style*, 1967), and Takao Yaguchi (*Fisherman Sanpei*, 1974).

THE YŌKAI BOOM

Not that he had time to enjoy it, but Mizuki was the epicentre of the *yōkai* boom of 1968. *Shonen Magazine* was selling over a million copies a week. On television, Kitaro was joined by another live-action adaptation of his work, *Kappa no Sanpei: Yōkai Daisakusen* (“Kappa Sanpei: Great *Yōkai* Strategy,” October 4th, 1968 to March 28th, 1969, 26 episodes), starring Yoshinobu Kaneko as Sanpei and Ushio Kenji from the *Akuma-kun* show as Itachi Otoko (“Weasel Man”), a character much like Nezumi Otoko from Kitaro. (Kenji is a familiar face, usually a villain in *Kamen Rider*, Lone Wolf, and *sentai* productions of the 1970s).

Other television monster and horror series running or beginning in 1968 were *Kamen no Ninja Akakage* (“Masked Ninja Red Shadow,” also starring Yoshinobu Kaneko); *Ninja Hattorikun + Ninja kaijū Zippo* (“Ninja Hattori + Ninjamonster Zippo”); *Ultra Seven: Kaiju Oji* (“Monster Prince”); *Giant Robo* a.k.a. “Johnny Sokko and His Flying Robot”; *Kaikī daisakusen* (“Operation Mystery”); and two seasons of *Mighty Jack*, the second of which featured monsters. Anime on television included *Ōgon Batto*; *Yōkai Ningen Bem* (“Yōkai Human Bem”¹⁷); *Bōken Shōnen Shyadaa* (“Adventure Boy Shudder”); *Mahotsukai Sally* (“Sorcerer Sally”); Osamu Tezuka’s *Vampire*, which mixed anime with live-action; the pilot of Tezuka’s *Dororo*; *Chibikko kaijū Yadamon* (“Little Monster Yadamon”); *Oraa Guzura dodo* (“Hey, I’m Guzura!”); and *Kaibutsu-kun* (“Monster Boy”)¹⁸.

In the theatres, Daiei’s *100 Monsters* was released March 20th, on a double bill with *Gamera vs. Viras*, and *Spook Warfare*, which drew even more clearly on Mizuki, on December 14th with *The Snake Girl and the Silver-Haired Witch* (*Hebimusume to hakuhatsuma*, directed by Gamera’s Noriaki Yuasa and based on Kazuo Umezu’s manga). The same studio released *The Snow Woman* (*Kaidan yukijorō*) on April 20th, and a double bill of the *yūrei* film *The Ghostly Trap* (*Kaidan otoshiana*, Kōji Shima) and *The Bride from Hades* (*Botan-dōrō*, Satsuo Yamamoto’s take on the classic ghost story) on June 15th. Kindai Eiga Kyokai produced the *kaibyō*¹⁹ (ghost cat) classic *Kuroneko* (*Yabu no naka no Kuroneko*), released by Toho on February 24th; Toei released *Bakeneko: A Vengeful Spirit* (*Kaibyō nori no numa*, Yoshihiro Ishikawa, aka *The Cursed Pond*) and *Snake Woman’s Curse* (*Kaidan: Hebi onna*, Nobuo Nakagawa) on July 12th, and *The Green Slime* (*Gamma dai-san-go: Uchū daikusen*) on December 19th. Okura Eiga released *Ghost Story: Dismembered Ghost* (*Kaidan: Barabara yūrei*, Kinya Ogawa) on May 28th. Shochiku released *Goke: Bodysnatcher from Hell* (*Kyūketsuki Gokemidoro*, Hajime Satō) on August 14th, *The Living*

¹⁷ “Bem,” used in several *kaiju* names, is adopted from the American SF acronym of “Bug Eyed Monster.”

¹⁸ The first anime *yōkai* films were Seitarō Kitayama’s *Monkey and Crab Battle* (*Saru to kani gassen*) and *Severed-tongue Sparrow* (*Shitakiri suzume*) of 1917.

¹⁹ The first known *kaibyō* film is *Night Blossoms of Saga* (*Saga no yozakura*, 1910), based upon the 1853 kabuki play by Joko Segawa III.

Skeleton (*Kyūketsu dokurosen*, Hiroshi Matsuno) and *Insect War* (*Konchūdaisensō*, Kazui Nihonmatsu, released in the US as *Genocide*) on November 9th. Toho rolled out *Destroy All Monsters* (*Kaijū sōshingeki*, Ishirō Honda) on August 1st and re-released 1963's *Atragon* (*Kaitei gunkan*, Ishirō Honda 1963), featuring the *ayakashi* (sea serpent) Manda.

Why was 1968 the peak year of *yōkai*? It was a tumultuous decade in Japan across the board. Old neighbourhoods in Tokyo had been razed. The bullet train now whisked past where, not that long ago, people had walked the haunted footpath of Tokaido. Did Mizuki's ghosts speak to both anxiety and a sense of nostalgia for a simpler, mythical time now gone? In regard to *yōkai* films, there is a clear development of giant monster movies from dark horrors for all ages towards child-oriented fare. Perhaps by this time, the Mizuki-style *yōkai* were seen by studios as creatures they could market to children, whilst parents continued to shudder at the bloody horrors of *yūrei* and *kaibyō*. Kids were lapping up monsters and ghosts on television and in manga, so it might have been the time when movie *yōkai*, which took more money and effort to create than the merely disfigured ghosts of stories like "Yotsuya Kaidan," were seen as worth a risk.

The bestiaries of the old scrolls and *yōkai* guides had not been that deeply represented on screen, especially not en masse as in the Daiei trilogy, although it is hard to tell as such a high proportion of pre-war films are lost. There were over a dozen adaptations of *Honjo Nanafushigi* ("Seven Mysteries of Honjo"), starting in 1914 and culminating in Shintoho's 1957 *Ghost Stories of a Wanderer at Honjo* aka *Seven Mysteries*, directed by Gorō Kadono. *The Seven Mysteries* was an oral tradition of the Honjo area of Edo, once dark and sparsely populated but now a part of Sumida ward in Tokyo. It was a collection of stories of various *yōkai*, which form a parade in the 1957 film. There are tanuki, *yūrei*, ghost snakes, a *rokurokubi*, a *chōchin obake* (lantern ghost), a *hitotsume kozō* ("one-eyed apprentice"), a *mitsume otoko* ("three-eyed man"), a *nopperabō* ("blank-faced one"), and the ever-delightful *karakasa obake* ("from-umbrella ghost"). In Shinko Kinema's 1937 version, there are tanuki and, in the story "Foot-washing Mansion," a giant phantom leg. It also contains the story "*Oitekibori*" ("Leave It & Go Moat") which re-appears in *100 Monsters*. There were films referencing the *yōkai* parades of the *Hyakki Yako* picture, *Muromachi goten hyakkaden* ("100 Weird Legends Of Muromachi Palace," 1914), *Hyakki yako* (1927), and *Hyakki yako Oedo kyōfu-hen* ("Night Parade of 100 Demons: Edo Terror," 1928) but these are lost.

Since 1968, a *yōkai* parade has been the highlight of *Pom Poko*, the 1994 Studio Ghibli anime directed by Isao Takahata which gives special thanks to Mizuki, and *Sakuya: Slayer of Demons* (*Sakuya yōkaiden*), a 2000 live-action fantasy directed by Tomoo Haraguchi, again featuring a *karakasa*. The next year brought another anime, Hayao Miyazaki's wonderful *Spirited Away*, and in 2011 *A Letter to Momo* (*Momo e no tegami*), directed by Hiroyuki Okiura. There is a village full of *yōkai* in Kibakichi (*Bakko yōkaiden Kibakichi*,

Tomoo Haraguchi, 2004) and demons and werewolves in its sequel (also 2004), based on a manga by Takao Shimamoto and Tatsuya Morino, the latter an assistant of Mizuki and illustrator of Matt Alt's book *Yokai Attack!*. 2005's *The Great Yokai War* was followed by two live-action *Kitaro* movies directed by Katsuhide Motoke, *GeGeGe no Kitarō* (2007) and *GeGeGe no Kitarō: Sennen noroi uta* ("1000 Year Curse"). Several *yōkai* appear in Yudai Yamaguchi's *Rokuroku* (2017) but they are all one witch taking various forms.

THE END

Shigeru Mizuki passed away on November 30th 2015. Kitaro had become a merchandising phenomenon, the star of manga, games, anime, and live action movies. He was, for a while, the mascot of the Gainare Tottori soccer team (replaced by Gainaman in recent years). Mizuki appeared at the end of *The Great Yokai War* as the Great Yokai Elder. He has won numerous awards in Japan and abroad, as have translations of his books. Mizuki travelled to various countries gathering *yōkai* tales for his bestiaries, and the 2008 autobiography by his wife, *Ge Ge Ge no nyōbō* ("Ge Ge Ge's Wife") was adapted as a television series and a 2010 movie.

Tourists can land at the Yonago Kitaro airport in Tottori and take a ghost train to Sakaiminato's Mizuki Shigeru Road, set out in 1993, admiring the bronze statues of his characters lining the pavements and shopping for Medama Oyaji balloons and Kitaro toilet paper by the light of eyeball streetlamps. A statue of Mizuki stands at the temple where he studied Hell paintings as a child. One can spend some time in the Mizuki Shigeru Museum built in 2003, posing for photographs with cut-outs of his ghostly creations and admiring the collection of masks and carvings collected from his trips to Africa and New Guinea. Outside the station is a statue of Shigeru Mizuki at his desk, pen in hand, watched closely by Medama Oyaji, Nezumi Otoko and of course Kitaro. Mizuki's mouth is open. Is he yawning, or hungry, or telling his children another tale of *yōka*?

Jolyon Yates was born in England and now lives in Denver with one woman, two dogs, and at least one mouse.



THE GREAT YOKAI WAR PRESS NOTES

by Keith Aiken

The following production notes and character biographies were written by Keith Aiken as part of the publicity for the film's original US release by Media Blasters in 2006.

The legends of Japan are replete with tales of the strange creatures known as *yōkai*. Not quite apparitions, monsters, or ghosts, the *yōkai* are mystical beings that secretly live in the world of men. Mostly unseen, they come in a variety of bizarre forms – some hideous, some cute – and have incredible supernatural powers. They tend to be mischievous and playful, but they are sometimes dangerous towards humans because the *yōkai* are not restrained by the laws of nature. Most avoid people and simply haunt the province where they were “born,” but others enjoy the company of men and travel all over Japan. Despite their prominent place in Japanese folklore, the *yōkai* have been the subject of only a handful of films over the years... notable examples include *Hiruko the Goblin* (*Yōkai Hantā: Hiruko*, 1990), Hayao Miyazaki's Oscar-winning blockbuster *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, 2001), and director Tomoo Haraguchi's *Sakuya, Slayer of Demons* (*Sakuya Yokaiden*, 2001) and *Kibakichi* (*Kibakichi: Bakko-yokaiden*, 2004). Perhaps the most enduring of the yokai movies was the classic trilogy produced by Daiei Motion Picture Company in the late 1960s: *100 Monsters* (1968), *Spook Warfare* (1968), and *Along with Ghosts* (1969).

Set in the 18th century, *100 Monsters* tells the story of a crooked Shrine Magistrate and a greedy developer who tear down a shrine and replace it with a brothel. On opening day they call in a local storyteller to entertain their guests with the Hundred Monster Collection, a series of tales about *yōkai*. But the developer was so entertained that he neglected the exorcism ritual that traditionally ends opening ceremonies. The brothel is soon haunted by the hundred spirits that had been set free by the storyteller's tales, and the two men are driven to madness and death.

100 Monsters featured many of the most famous *yōkai* characters – including Kasabake the umbrella monster, the water spirit Kappa, Lamp Oil, and Rokurokubi the long-necked woman – as spirits of vengeance. These same *yōkai* took on more heroic roles in *Spook Warfare* by banding together to protect innocent townspeople from Daimon, a powerful vampiric demon from ancient Babylon. In *Along with Ghosts*, the *yōkai* come to the aid of a little girl named Miyo whose grandfather was murdered on sacred ground by a corrupt clan leader and his men. The Daiei *yōkai* movies were rarely seen in the United States

until ADV Films released all three on Region 1 DVD in 2003 as the *Yokai Monsters* series. In 2002, Daiei was purchased by Kadokawa Publishing, who merged the studio with the company's own film unit to form the new Kadokawa Pictures. 2005 marked Kadokawa's 60th anniversary, and as part of the year's festivities the company decided to produce an updated version of *Spook Warfare*. Billed as "the biggest fantasy adventure film in the history of Japan," the new movie was given the English title *The Great Yokai War*. In charge of the film was executive producer Tsuguhiko Kadokawa (chairman and CEO of Kadokawa Publishing) and producer Fumio Inoue, an experienced horror filmmaker who had produced *Inugami* (2001), *One Missed Call* (*Chakushin Ari*, 2003) and *Three... Extremes* (*Saam Gaang Yi*, 2004). To direct *The Great Yokai War*, the pair chose a director Inoue had worked with before: the talented and prolific Takashi Miike.

Born near Osaka in 1960, Miike had studied directing under Shohei Imamura (*Pigs and Battleships*, *Unagi*) and Hideo Onchi (*Young Wolf*, *The Call of Flesh*) following his graduation from film school. He has worked on over seventy films in the past fifteen years, starting with straight-to-video titles like *Bodyguard Kiba* (*Bodigaado Kiba*, 1993) before moving to theatrical features with *Shinjuku Triad Society* (*Shinjuku kuroshakai: Chaina mafia senso*, 1995), *Fudoh: The Next Generation* (*Gokudō sengokushi: Fudō*, 1996), and *Rainy Dog* (*Gokudō kuroshakai*, 1997); the latter film winning Miike the Japanese Professional Movie Best Director Award. The disturbing *Audition* (*Ōdishon*, 1999) brought Miike international attention, the FIRPRESCI Prize at the 2000 Rotterdam International Film Festival, and a US theatrical release from the American Cinematheque and Vitagraph Films. It also earned him a reputation as one of the few Japanese directors guaranteed to draw audiences at festivals and cinemas around the world. Since *Audition*, Miike has repeatedly validated that reputation with a slew of movies in a variety of genres: a partial list of his credits includes the twisted family story *Visitor Q* (*Bijitā Kyū*, 2001), the ultra-violent *Ichī The Killer* (*Koroshiya 1*, 2001), the horror comedy musical *Happiness of the Katakuris* (*Katakuri-ke no Kōfuku*, 2001), the tragic drama *Sabu* (2002), the absolutely bizarre yakuza story *Gozu* (*Gokudō kyōfu dai-gekijō: Gozu*, 2003), *One Missed Call*, the super-hero romp *Zebraman* (*Zeburāman*, 2004), the supernatural samurai story *Izo* (2004), several episodes of *Ultraman Max* (*Urutoraman Makkusu*, 2005) – including a hilarious show with three monstrous mutated housecats – and *Imprint* (2006), the banned episode of Showtime's *Masters of Horror* series. Miike has also appeared in small roles in several films such as *The Neighbor No. 13* (*Rinjin 13-gō*, 2005) and Eli Roth's horror hit *Hostel* (2005).

Takashi Miike was an inspired choice to direct *The Great Yokai War*, and the news created a buzz among fans of Japanese cinema. With a budget of \$10 million it would be his biggest movie to date, and many fans around the world eagerly awaited the director's take on the *yōkai* genre. Along with his co-screenwriters Mitsuhiro Sawamura (*.hack//Quarantine*) and Takehiko Itakura, Miike worked with an "all-star supernatural team" to craft the

story for *The Great Yokai War*. Headlining this group was 83-year-old Shigeru Mizuki, the creator of the manga *Little Devil* (*Akuma-Kun*) and *Kitaro* (*GeGeGe no Kitaro*) which were first published by *Shonen Magazine* in 1966 and brought to television by Toei Animation. The popularity of these series earned Mizuki the title of "the father of *yōkai* tales." One scene in *The Great Yokai War* even takes place at the Shigeru Mizuki Museum located in his hometown of Sakaiminato. Mizuki was joined by the other members of the "Kwai" Team (Scary Team) such as Hiroshi Aramata, author of the 1971 novel *Teito Monogatari* which was adapted into the live action movie trilogy *Tokyo: The Last Megalopolis* (*Teito Monogatari*, 1987), *Tokyo: The Last War* (*Teito Taisen*, 1989), and *Tokyo Story: Secret Report* (*Teito Monogatari Gaiden*, 1995), as well as the four-part anime *Doomed Megalopolis* (1991). Aramata wrote the original story for *The Great Yokai War* and acted as the script supervisor for the writing staff. Natsuhiko Kyogoku, author of horror novels *Eternal Love* (*Warau Iemon*) and *Summer of Ubume* (*Ubume no Natsu*) which were both recently made into films, was brought on as a "*yōkai* casting agent." Rounding out the production team was Miyuki Miyabe, screenwriter of the Toho movie *Pyrokinesis* (*Kurosufai*a, 2000).

Many of the *yōkai* could never be described as "realistic" by western standards, but the sheer variety of shapes, sizes, and appearances of these spirit creatures gave the filmmakers an opportunity to play with just about every technique possible – suits, makeup, prosthetics, puppetry, props, computer graphics, and more – to bring these creatures to cinematic life. Art director Hisashi Sasaki, whose credits include *Keizoku: The Movie* (*Keizoku/eiga*, 2000), *Ichī The Killer*, and *Madness in Bloom* (*Kyouki no Sakura*, 2002), worked with the four designers who were in charge of creating, updating, and building the *yōkai*. Many of the *yōkai* models and props were designed and sculpted by Tomo Hyakutake, creator of the suit for *Casshern* (2004) and the poster designs for the film *Ashura* (*Ashura-jō no hitomi*, 2005). Other *yōkai* were designed by Takayuki Takeya, who had worked on *Eko Eko Azarak II: Birth of the Wizard* (*Eko Eko Azaraku 2*, 1996) and *Gamera 3: Revenge of Iris* (*Gamera 3: Irisu Kakusei*, 1999), and manga artist Junya Inoue, creator of the *Otogi Matsuri* stories serialized in *Gum Comics*. The machine *yōkai* called Kikai were the work of Yasushi Nirasawa. Nirasawa has also worked on *Vampire Hunter D* (2000), *Devilman Apocalypse* (*Amon: Deburuman Mokushiroku*, 2000), and designed the new Gigan and Xilians for *Godzilla: Final Wars* (*Gojira Fainaru Uozu*, 2004). The *yōkai* makeup and prosthetic appliances were created by Yoichi Matsui of *The Eel* (*Unagi*, 1997) and *Ichī The Killer*. The CGI director for *The Great Yokai War* was Kaori Otagaki, a talented computer artist who has worked on Miike's films *Ichī The Killer* and *One Missed Call*. The beautiful, humorous, and haunting soundtrack was created by Koji Endo, the main composer for Takashi Miike's films including *Rainy Dog*, *Audition*, *Visitor Q*, *Happiness of the Katakuris*, *Sabu*, *Gozu*, *One Missed Call*, *Zebraman*, *Izo*, and *Masters of Horror: Imprint*.

The creative team worked for a year and a half, with seven months of principal photography, to make *The Great Yokai War*. Their combined efforts created "the first

family film from Takashi Miike” – a large-scale fantasy for all ages that manages to retain much of the horror, action, comedy, and bodily fluids that the director’s fans have come to expect. As with better-known fantasy films like *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *The NeverEnding Story* (1984), or the *Harry Potter* series, *The Great Yokai War* will appeal to (perhaps less squeamish) children and adults alike.

Unlike the 1968 version, the new film takes place in modern day Japan. Times are tough for 10-year-old Tadashi Ino (Ryunosuke Kamiki). After his parent’s divorce, Tadashi and his mother Yoko (Kaho Minami) leave Tokyo and move in with his senile grandfather Shunta Ino (Bunta Sugawara) who lives in a rural fishing village in the Totori prefecture. Having been raised in the city, Tadashi is not as physically fit as his new classmates so they constantly taunt and tease him. One night, Tadashi wanders into a local shrine festival and is knocked on the head by a man in a traditional dragon costume. One of his classmates explains that he has been chosen as the next Kirin Rider, the defender of justice and peace in times of darkness. According to legend, the Kirin Rider must climb the nearby Goblin Mountain and claim the legendary sword guarded by a spirit called the Great Goblin.

Remembering the bullies at school called him a crybaby, Tadashi is determined to climb the mountain and fulfill the prophecy. But he soon grows scared, turns back, and boards a bus heading towards town. As he rides home, he suddenly realizes there are scores of strange creatures staring at him through the bus windows. Tadashi screams in terror, and the spectres fade away before his eyes. The boy is startled by Sunekosuri, a catlike sprite that only he can see. The tiny creature has a damaged leg, so Tadashi brings Sunekosuri home with him to nurse it back to health. Checking a reference book, he learns that Sunekosuri is one of the *yōkai* from Japanese folklore. Meanwhile, children begin to disappear across Japan, and terrifying mechanical monsters launch a series of attacks against human beings. This is the handiwork of an evil being named Lord Yasunori Kato (Etsushi Toyokawa), who has used the power of Onmyodo (a mixture of natural science and occultism) to reawaken the giant raging spirit Yomotsu-monō. With the assistance of his lover Agi the Bird-catching Sprite (Chiaki Kuriyama), Kato merges the souls of captured *yōkai* with trash and discarded mechanical items to create an army of machine monsters called Kikai. The anger and sadness of the *yōkai* and human victims adds to Lord Kato’s power, and soon he will merge with Agi and Yomotsu-monō into a being that will become the absolute ruler of earth. Only Tadashi and the good *yōkai* stand in Lord Kato’s way, but will the boy be able to find his courage, become the new Kirin Rider, and convince the good *yōkai* to work together to prevent a new age of darkness?

The Great Yokai War was a co-production between Kadokawa Pictures, the Japan Film Fund, and Nippon Television Network, with theatrical distribution in Japan handled by Shochiku. The film premiered on August 6th, 2005 and opened in 4th place at the box

office, behind *Madagascar*, *Star Wars: Episode III*, and *Pokemon: Lucario and the Mystery of Mew* (*Myu to Hadou no Yuusha – Rukario*), and ahead of such big budget US fare as *War of the Worlds* and *The Island*. In five weeks the movie topped \$22 million at the box office, making it a major hit for the studio. Tsuguhiko Kadokawa quickly announced to the Japanese press that *The Great Yokai War* would be the first movie in a series that will rival *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* in worldwide appeal. Kadokawa Pictures also tapped Takashi Miike to direct a remake of the classic Daiei monster movie *Daimajin*, but that project has reportedly been put on hold due to the poor box office for the studio’s *kaiju* film *Gamera the Brave* (*Chiisaki Yūsha-tachi Gamera*, 2006). Horizon Entertainment is the world sales agent for *The Great Yokai War*, and the Canadian company set up the film’s international festival premiere in Venice in late August of 2005. These were followed by festivals in Toronto and in Sitges, Spain and the first US screenings on November 5th and 7th, 2005 at the American Film Market. On February 12th, 2006 Kadokawa showed *The Great Yokai War* as part of the SF Indie Fest in San Francisco. Not long after, Media Blasters acquired US rights to the film. They launched a limited theatrical run in June with dual premieres at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood, California and Subway Cinema’s annual New York Asian Film Festival. The theatrical run apparently ended with a screening on September 29 at the Idaho International Film Festival, and Media Blasters released the film on DVD on September 12.

CAST AND CHARACTERS

According to the filmmakers *The Great Yokai War* features 1.2 million *yōkai*, most of whom will be unfamiliar to western audiences. The following list should help viewers identify many of the key *yōkai* and humans in the film.

Tadashi Ino: Tadashi is the young “pipsqueak” who is chosen to be the new Kirin Rider. He quickly matures as he joins with the *yōkai* to fight against an army of evil spirits. Tadashi is played by 12 year-old Ryunosuke Kamiki. Already a ten-year veteran of the acting business, Kamiki’s film credits include *Rockers* (*Rokkazu*, 2003), *Bayside Shakedown 2* (*Odoru Daisosasen 2: Rainbow Bridge wo Fuusa Seyo!*, 2003), *Install* (*Insutoru*, 2004), and *Zoo* (2005). He has also provided voices for the Japanese versions of Hayao Miyazaki’s *Spirited Away* and *Howl’s Moving Castle* (*Hauru-no Ugoku Shiro*, 2004) plus the documentary *March of the Penguins* (2005).

Shuntaro Ino: Tadashi’s half-senile but lovable grandfather who tells him about the legend of the Kirin Rider. He loves to eat red bean rice. He is played by Bunta Sugawara, a longtime audience favorite from his many films with director Kinji Fukusaku. Born in 1933, Sugawara had his first starring role in *Modern Yakuza: The Rule of Outlaws* (*Gendai Yakuza: Yotamono o Okite*, 1968), and in 1972 he had his first collaboration with Fukusaku, *Modern Yakuza: Outlaw Killer* (*Gendai Yakuza: Hito-Kiri Yota*, aka *Street Mobster*). In 1976

he won the Best Actor Blue Ribbon Award for his work in *Cops vs. Thugs (Kenkei tai Soshiki Bōryoku)*, and followed that with a Japan Academy Award for *The Man Who Stole the Sun (Taiyō wo nusunda otoko, 1979)*. His long list of credits includes *Battles Without Honor and Humanity (Jingi Naki Tatakai, 1973)*, *The Burmese Harp (Biruma no Tategoto, 1985)*, *Spirited Away*, and *Tales of Earthsea (Gedo Senki, 2006)*.

Sata: Sata is Tadashi's friend and a reporter for *Kai*, a magazine about the strange creatures. As a child, Sata was saved from drowning by Kawahime, and he longs to see her again. He also takes part in a funny bit of product placement during *The Great Yokai War*. Actor Hiroyuki Miyasako is a well-known television comedian in Japan whose work in *Wild Berries (Hebi ichigo, 2003)* won him the Mainichi Film Concours Sponichi Grand Prize New Talent Award and the Best New Actor award from the Yokohama Film Festival. Other recent credits include *Casshern (2004)*, *Kamikaze Girls (Shimotsuma monogatari, 2004)*, and *Summer of Ubume (Ubume-no natsu, 2005)*.

Lord Yasunori Kato (Majin Kato): The King of the Evil Monsters, Lord Kato was first introduced in Hiroshi Aramata's novel *Teito Monogatari*. He is an evil spirit raised from the dead by the grudge of the native people of Japan who were overthrown in ancient times. Kato mixes the things humanity has used and thrown away with the souls of *yōkai* to create an army of mechanical monsters to destroy mankind. Kato is played by Etsushi Toyokawa, an award-winning actor for his roles in *Twinkle (Kira Kira Hikaru, 1992)* and *Loveletter (1993)*. He played a serial killer in Toho's *The Man Behind the Scissors (Hasami Otoko, 2004)* which is now available on DVD from Media Blasters. He followed up *The Great Yokai War* with the horror film *Loft (Rofuto, 2005)*, *Dead Run (Shisso, 2005)* from Kadokawa Pictures, and the box office hit *Sinking of Japan (Nippon Chinbotsu, 2006)* from Toho.

Agi the Bird-catching Sprite (Torizashi Yojo): Agi is a cold-blooded *yōkai* who betrayed and captures her brethren for Lord Kato's spirit army. Born in 1984, actress Chiaki Kuriyama is a former model and winner of the 1998 "Miss Tokyo Walker" competition. She appeared in the early video version of *Ju-on (2000)* and made a huge international impression with her performance in Kinji Fukusaku's controversial blockbuster *Battle Royale (Battoru Rowaiaru, 2000)*. That role caught the eye of Quentin Tarantino, who cast her as Go Go Yubari in *Kill Bill Vol. 1 (2003)*. Kuriyama also appeared in *Last Quarter (Kagen No Tsuki, 2004)*, *Azumi 2: Death or Love (2005)*, and the recent *Kisarazu Cat's Eye: Sayonara Game (2006)*.

Shojo the Kirin Herald (Shyo Jyo): Shojo is a baboon spirit whose body and clothing are entirely red. It is said he is that color because he is always drunk on sake. He stands at the head of the kirin dance and exorcises evil spirits so that god can go along the purified path. In feudal times, there was an outbreak of smallpox and many people used Shojo dolls as talismans to ward off the evil god they thought was responsible for the disease.

In *The Great Yokai War* Shojo uses his strange magical powers to lead Tadashi to the Great Goblin Cave and to bring together the good *yōkai* for battle against Lord Kato. Actor Masaomi Kondo made his debut in director Shohei Imamura's *Pornographers (Erogotoshi-tachi yori: Jinruigaku nyūmon, 1968)* and was a cast member of the long-running television series *Song of Man (Ningen-no Uta, 1970-78)*.

Kawahime, the River Princess: Also known as the Yokai Pretty Girl (Yokai Bishojo), she is a very good swimmer but rarely spends time underwater. She is very agile and can even walk on water. Legends state that if you see her your heart will be moved by her beauty and your spirit snatched away, and Kawahime has reportedly saved lives by a river in Fukuoka province and sucked the life out of men in Kyushu and Shikoku. Whether those stories are true or not, she is kind to children... and her thighs clearly hold a fascination for young boys. Kawahime has an ancient connection to Lord Kato. 21-year-old model/actress Mai Takahashi has appeared in magazine photo layouts, McDonalds advertising, and the musical *Futari*. Her roles include an episode of the Shochiku television series *Horror Theater (Umezu Kazuo: Kyōfu gekijō, 2005)* entitled "The Present," *Strange Circus (Kimyō na sākasu, 2005)* and *The Booth (Busu, 2005)*. A book of her modelling photographs was published in 2004.

Sunekosuri: A small, furry type of *yōkai* from Okayama that can sometimes be seen along mountain paths on rainy nights. Their name means "rub the shin," and Sunekosuri scares people by running around their feet and clinging to their shins. If they are entertained for a while they will leave once they are satisfied. In *The Great Yokai War* Tadashi befriends a wounded Sunekosuri. Puppeteers Junko Takeuchi and Mao Sasaki performed Sunekosuri's actions, with Sasaki also providing the *yōkai's* voice.

Kawataro: A water spirit known as a kappa that lives in ponds and rivers, Kawataro is a green-skinned creature with a turtle shell on his back and a plate on his head. Some kappa are pranksters but some are violent and will drag humans underwater and pull their victim's soul from their anus. Some kappa are friendly and like to sumo wrestle for fun. Actor Sadao Abe is a member of the theatrical company Otona Keikaku, and has appeared in the television series *Kisarazu Cat's Eye (2002)* and the movies *Uzumaki (2000)*, *Kamikaze Girls*, and *Kisarazu Cat's Eye: Sayonara Game*.

Great Goblin (O Tengu): Originally an evil spirit that kidnapped children, O Tengu was defeated and punished for his deeds by the Kirin Rider. He then changed his ways, becoming the protector of his land and guardian of the legendary sword in the cave on Goblin Mountain. He is played by Kenichi Endo, an actor whose extensive list of credits includes *Ninja Task Force Kakuranger (Ninja Sentai Kakurenjā, 1994)*, *Family, Visitor Q, The Happiness of the Katakuris, Azumi, Gozu, One Missed Call, Izo, Azumi 2: Death or Love, Flower and Snake 2 (Hana to Hebi 2: Pari/Shizuko, 2005)*, and *Sinking of Japan*.

Lamp Oil (Aburasumashi): Also known as the Oil Licker, Aburasumashi resembles an expressionless old man wearing a traditional Japanese straw raincoat. He is the spirit of people who stole heating oil in ancient times. He lives in the mountain pass called Kusazumigoe in Kumamoto prefecture, and if someone says "Aburasumashi used to live around here a long time ago," he will suddenly appear to say, "I still live here." The Oil Licker is a very wise spirit, and a member of the Yokai Council. Lamp Oil is played by writer/director Naoto Takenaka. Takenaka won the Japanese Academy Prize for his performances in *Sumo Do, Sumo Don't* (Shiko Funjatta, 1992), *East Meets West* (1995), and *Shall We Dance?* (1996), and was given the International Critics Association Award at the 48th Venice International Film Festival for his directorial debut, *Nowhere Man* (Muno-no Hito, 1991). His credits include *Hiruko the Goblin*, *Patlabor 2* (Kidô keisatsu patorebâ 2, 1993), *The Mystery of Rampo* (1994), *Pokemon* (1997), *Sakuya: Slayer of Demons*, and *Azumi*.

Sunakake Baba the Sand Throwing Old Hag: Sunakake Baba is a shaman who was transformed into a *yôkai*. Most people can't see her, but she likes to scare people visiting shrines by throwing sand at them. She can also turn enemies into sand. Sunakake Baba has a funny encounter with Sata. Actress Toshie Negishi has appeared in *The Drifting Classroom* (Hyôryu kyôshitsu, 1987), Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams* (Yume, 1990), *Audition*, *Gamera 3: Revenge of Iris*, *Azumi 2: Death or Love*, *Masters of Horror: Imprint*, and *God's Left Hand*, *The Devil's Right Hand* (Kami no Hidarite, Akuma no Migite, 2006).

General Nurarihyon (the Old Man): Considered to be the leader of the Yokai Council, Nurarihyon resembles a wealthy elderly master with a huge head. He is a tricky *yôkai* who never gets caught because he is slippery and hard to grasp like a catfish. Nurarihyon sometimes goes into people's houses and makes himself at home. People assume he's an invited guest, and by the time they realize he's not he is already gone. General Nurarihyon is played by Kiyoshiro Imawano, lead singer of the rock group RC Succession. He is known as "Japan's King of Rock" and in 1992 he received an honorary citizenship from the Mayor of Memphis, Tennessee. Imawano's acting credits include *Happiness of the Katakuris* and *Otakus in Love* (Koi-no Mon, 2004). He performs the theme song for *The Great Yokai War*.

Ippon Datara (One-Leg the Blacksmith): A one-legged *yôkai* who lives deep in the mountain on Kii peninsula, Ippon is a skilled blacksmith who forges swords for the mountain god. Under his agreement with the mountain god, he gets December 20th off from work to do whatever he pleases. Actor Hiromasa Taguchi has appeared in *Sumo Do, Sumo Don't*, *Shall We Dance?*, *When You Sing of Love* (Koi ni Utaeba, 2002), *Sky High*, and *Rampo Noir* (Rampo Jigoku, 2005).

Tofu Kozo (Tofu Boy): This *yôkai* resembles a young man dressed in traditional garb and straw hat who is holding a plate of tofu garnished with a Japanese maple leaf. Tofu Kozo sometimes appears on quiet roads at night, offering tofu to travelers. Anyone who takes a

bite of his tofu is cursed, with some victims even dying from a fungus that begins to grow in their stomach. Tofu Kozo is played by Toru Hotohara.

Bakeneko the Monster Cat: An old cat that became a *yôkai*, Bakeneko is a shapeshifter with magical powers. She will often haunt the house of her former owners, menacing them in their sleep. In some cases she will even take the place of her owner after eating her. Bakeneko is played by Minoru Fujikura, an actress who had earlier appeared in Takashi Miike's *One Missed Call*.

Aobozu the Blue Monk: Before the wheat is ready for harvest, the one-eyed Aobozu emerges from the fields to kidnap any children who are playing after dark. This *yôkai* is played by stuntman Makoto Arakawa.

Okubi: A *yôkai* with giant head. When someone dies while holding an intense grudge, Okubi appears before the person they hate and scares them. He will not harm that person; he just frightens them and weakens them emotionally. Actor Renji Ishibashi has appeared in more than a hundred movies, including the classic *Lone Wolf and Cub* series, *The Inferno* (Jigoku, 1979), *Tokyo Blackout* (Shuto shôshitsu, 1987), *Tetsuo the Iron Man* (Tetsuo, 1989), *Audition*, *Pyrokinesis*, *Graveyard of Honor* (Shin Jinji no Hakaba, 2002), *Gozu*, *One Missed Call*, *Flower and Snake* (Hana to Hebi, 2004), *Izo*, *One Missed Call 2* (Chakushin Ari 2, 2005), *Shinobi* (2005), and *Masked Rider the First* (Kamen Raidô the First, 2005).

Nopperabo (No-Face): A *yôkai* that delights in scaring people with her featureless face. She often imitates a real person in order to lure victims as close as possible before revealing her true face. Nopperabo is played by actress Riko Narumi, whose credits include *Trick: The Movie* (2002) and *Waters* (Uotazu, 2006).

Kasabake the Umbrella Monster: When an old umbrella (known as karakasa) has been abandoned, a spirit dwells in it and turns it into a playful monster. During the daytime it's just a worn out umbrella, but at night it becomes a *yôkai* that likes to scare people by licking them with its long tongue.

Nuppeppo: This *yôkai* appears as a greasy chunk of meat to scare people. Nuppeppo generally wanders deserted streets, temples and graveyards. It stinks like rotting meat. According to legend, eating the flesh of Nuppeppo will give eternal life.

Otoroshi: A large, long-haired creature that guards temples and shrines. It lives on top of the shrine gates, waiting to pounce on people who are disrespectful.

Yuki Onna the Snow Woman: A beautiful female *yôkai*, she usually appears on cold and snowy days. She is often described as having white or ice-blue skin, being cold to the touch, and with breath as cold as ice. She is thought to be the very spirit of the snow.

Yuki Onna was the focus of a famous segment from the Toho film *Kwaidan* (*Kaidan*, 1964). Actress Rie Yoshii has also appeared in *Hibi* (2005) and *Nightingale* (2006).

Rokurokubi (Long-Necked Woman): This *yōkai* is a beautiful woman who can stretch her neck to incredible lengths. According to a book from the Edo period, maids would become Rokurokubi after contracting a rare disease. Their necks would stretch out while they slept, hunting for insects to eat. Rokurokubi will also feast on the vitality of human males. Actress Asumi Miwa plays Rokurokubi. Her other credits include *Uzamaki* (2000), the video version of *Ju-on* (2000), and *Appleseed* (*Appurushido*, 2004).

Nurikabe (Painted Wall): A weird *yōkai* that often mimics walls and other man-made structures. It also walks around at night creating obstacles for anyone trying to pass by... particularly people who are in a hurry. His massive body is always knocking things over. Nurikabe is played by stuntman Koichi Funayama.

Hyakume (Hundred Eyes): A creature with eyes all over his body. It protects shrines from thieves. If someone steals from a temple, Hyakume will send one of its hundred eyes to brand them publicly as a thief.

Hitosume Kozo (One-Eyed Little Monk): A small one-eyed *yōkai* that resembles a young boy dressed in traditional clothes like a monk in training. Hitosume Kozo is a mischievous prankster who likes to scare people by leaping out of the shadows or sneaking into houses to steal candy. Actor Kenji Hirono also played Mitsume Kozo, the Three-Eyed Little Monk.

Tsuchikorobi (Rolling Soil): Tsuchikorobi rolls down mountains but doesn't do anything bad beyond running over the occasional traveler. It is played by stuntman Naoki Asaji.

Ittan Momen: A 35-foot long cloth-like *yōkai* that used to fly around at night and attack people by wrapping around their throats. He is occasionally used as a magic carpet by the other *yōkai*. Ittan Momen is a famous *yōkai* thanks to his prominent role in Shigeru Mizuki's manga *Kitarō* (*GeGeGe no Kitarō*).

Azuki Arai, the Azuki-Bean Washer: A *yōkai* that stays by a riverside and washes azuki beans which are used for charms and driving off evil spirits. He cannot be seen and he uses the sound of washing red beans by the river to scare people. Azuki Arai used to be a young Buddhist disciple who was famous for guessing the correct number of azuki beans in a container just by looking at it. He was murdered and his spirit became a *yōkai*. In *The Great Yokai War*, he holds an important key to the conflict. Azuki Arai is played by popular comedian and television host Takashi Okamura. He won a Rookie of the Year Blue Ribbon Award for his performance in *Boys Be Ambitious* (*Kishiwada Shonen Gurentai*, 1996) and a Popularity Award at the Japan Academy Awards for *No Problem* (*Mou Mon Tai*, 1999). He also appeared in *Bayside Shakedown 2*.

Mitsume Kozo (Three-Eyed Little Monk): Similar to the one-eyed Hitosume Kozo, Mitsume Kozo is a ghost resembling a small boy in traditional garb. Mitsume has a third eye on its forehead, which grants it greater enlightenment and the ability to see below the surface. The Three-Eyed Little Monk is played by actor Kenji Hirono.

Kamikiri: The Praying Mantis is also known as the hair-cutting *yōkai* because it is known to sneak up on people and chop their hair off at the roots without them noticing. Kamikiri often attack people in bathrooms or while they sleep, and is said to have a fondness for the hair of servant girls. It is played by Hiroyuki Otake.

Tenoume (Eyes On Hands): Tenoume is the ghost of a blind man who was murdered by a robber. He wanders through villages, searching for the man who killed him. He has eyes on the palms of his hands, and sees by waving his hands in front of him. But Tenoume is so blinded by his anger that he has never found his murderer and instead attacks anyone he can get his hands on. Tenoume is played by Nobuo Fujiyama.

Ungaikyou: A Magic Mirror *yōkai* that can show faraway places and people. Mirrors were extremely rare in ancient Japan so Ungaikyou would often confuse people by reflecting their visage to them. If a mirror is preserved for a hundred years it may gain sentience and become an Ungaikyou.

Kikai: They are mechanical monsters created from the mixture of *yōkai* and waste materials. They personify the anger and resentment of items that have been discarded after faithfully serving their human owners. *Yōkai* that are transformed into Kikai lose their spirits and become the followers of Lord Kato.

Yomotsumono (Great Supernatural): The giant raging spirit takes the form of a living factory, a massive monster that even dwarfs *daikaijū* like Godzilla and Gamera.

Kirin: An extremely powerful mystical being that resembles a fiery golden flying horse. The Kirin is a good luck omen that brings peace and prosperity. In *The Great Yokai War*, Tadashi attends a festival honoring the Kirin.

Farmer in cow barn: The unnamed farmer at the beginning of *The Great Yokai War* is played by Akira Emoto. Emoto's credits include *Godzilla vs. Space Godzilla* (*Gojira tai SupēsuGojira*, 1994), *Shall We Dance?*, *Onmyoji* (2001), *Zatoichi* (2003), *Zebraman*, *Tetsujin-28* (2005), and *Sinking of Japan*.

Kai Editor in Chief: Sata's slick boss is played by Shiro Sano. Sano appeared in the film version of *Tokyo: The Last Megalopolis* and was the narrator for *Ultra Q: Dark Fantasy* (*Urutora Kyū: Daku Fantaji*, 2004) and *Ultraman Max* (*Urutoraman Makkusu*, 2005). He particularly popular for his roles in the recent Godzilla films *Godzilla 2000* (*Gojira Ni-sen*

Mireniamu, 1999), *Godzilla, Mothra and King Ghidorah: Giant Monsters All-Out Attack* (Gojira, Mosura, Kingu Gidora: Daikaijū Sōkōgeki, 2001), and *Godzilla: Final Wars*.

Tadashi: Actor Kanji Tsuda has appeared in several high profile films, including *Fireworks* (*Hana-bi*, 1997), the massive hit *Bayside Shakedown* (*Odoru Daisōsasen*, 1998), *Audition*, *Ju-on* (2003), *Zatoichi*, *Masked Rider the First*, and *Gamera the Brave*.

