[Title]

**Toys & Games made Yokai Popular**

Toys and games are an important part of yokai culture and a fun way that children have learned about yokai through the ages. Similar to Pokémon cards, children were especially delighted by paper based toys with yokai images that they collected and traded. Toys and games reflect the popular culture of their time and those that were played centuries ago still bring joy and challenges to children today.

[file: zukushi print]

[caption]

Bakemono zukushi (All about bakemono) woodblock print

Artist unknown

Edo period (1603–1867)

Japan

Courtesy of the Yumoto Koichi Memorial Yokai Museum of Japan

(Miyoshi Mononoke Museum)

Produced in large quantities, *omocha-e* (paper toys) were inexpensive enough for children to buy. Zukushi prints were made to be cut, and children would trade and collect various images. Monsters, being a persistently popular theme, were a favorite. Putting images together created a catalog of yokai. These may be considered “Edo period Pokémon cards.”

Learn more about the connection between Pokémon and yokai *here* [hyperlink to here: <https://mluce.ro/articles/the-yokai-roots-of-pokemon/>]

[file: A.2018.40.1 (3)]

[caption]

Kawari-e: obake andon (Trick monster lantern)

Artist unknown

Meiji period (1868–1912)

Japan

Ink on paper, adhesive

Gift of David M. Kahn, Museum of International Folk Art (A.2018.40.1)

*Omocha-e* are woodblock prints meant to be cut, pasted, and arranged to craft a three dimensional paper toy. This example is an *andon* (floor lantern) that transforms into an *obake yashiki* (ghost house). Lifting paper flaps reveals various yokai, including *tanuki* (raccoon-dog), O-Nyudo (a stretchy-necked monk), *tsukumogami* (in the form of a tea kettle), skeleton musicians, and a *buriburi* (shaking ghost).

[file: karuta]

[caption]

Obake karuta (Monster-themed playing cards)

Artist unknown

Post-Meiji period (after 1912)

Japan

Ink on cardstock

On loan from the Yumoto Koichi Memorial Yōkai Museum in Japan (Miyoshi Mononoke Museum)

The word *karuta* derives from the Portuguese word for “card.” Portuguese traders introduced playing cards to Japan during the sixteenth century. Some karuta games involved finding images to match written Japanese syllables. In the case of these monster cards, the name of a monster would be matched to its picture.

[file: menko cards]

[caption]

Menko playing cards with yokai characters

Artist/manufacturer unknown

1970s

Japan

Cardboard, ink

Menko involves throwing cards in attempt to flip those already laid out on the ground. Menko cards commonly depict images and characters that reflect popular culture of the time. Yokai were a long-time favorite, and other popular themes have included ninja, samurai, military images (prior to the World War II era), manga characters (such asGeGeGe no Kitaro), and baseball.

[file: pop-out yokai]

[caption]

Unpunched, die-cut paper yokai toys

Artist/manufacturer unknown

1950s-1960s

Japan

Coated paperboard, ink

Toys like this are a more contemporary, industrially produced version of *omocha-e* (paper toy) prints.

[file: M181227016]

[caption]

“Heroes going into the Mountain of Hell”

Sugoroku (illustrated board game)

Hasegawa Konobu

1875

Japan

Paper, ink, adhesive

International Folk Art Foundation, Museum of International Folk Art (T.2019.2.1)

Dating to the first half of the eighteenth century, *sugoroku* were among the earliest yokai-themed toys. Similar to Chutes and Ladders, the game involves rolling dice and advancing a marker, trying to reach the goal. In each square, this example shows scenes from heroes’ journeys and encounters with yokai such as *tsuchigumo* (earth spider), Ao Bozu (a monster-monk), yamamba (mountain hag), Shuten Doji, and various oni.