**[title]**

**How Visual Artists Made Yokai Popular**

[Body]

EARLY YOKAI PAINTINGS

The repertoire of bizarre creatures in Japan was expanded by painters of the Muromachi period (1336 - 1573). These artists borrowed traditional characters found in serious religious images, such as horned and hideous demons (*oni*), and added to the assortment by illustrating oral tales of inexplicable phenomena and weird beings. These monster paintings transformed religious subjects into entertaining ones, creating funny monsters engaged in human activity.

The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons scroll (*Hyakki yagyo emaki*) is an early monster painting. The oldest known version comes from the Muromachi period. It was copied over and over again.

[files (place side by side): parade left; parade right]

[caption]

*Hyakki yagyo emaki* (Night Parade of One Hundred Demons scroll)

Artist unknown

This copy is probably Edo period (1603–1867)

Ink and natural pigment on paper

Courtesy of *International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken)* [hyperlink the italics to: <http://db.nichibun.ac.jp/pc1/en/>]

The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons scroll features demons, ghosts, shapeshifters, objects that come to life as monsters (*tsukumogami*), and a variety of other weird creatures that appear as bumbling beasts on parade carrying festival banners. According to one interpretation, the scroll originated from a legend about a horde of demons and monsters streaming down a street one night in Kyoto. The monsters and demons are weird, but full of humor.

View the scroll in its entirety at the International Research center for Japanee Studies (Nichibinken): <http://lapis.nichibun.ac.jp/ema/Detail?tid=20&sid=01&did=01>

[body]

Following the creation of the *Hyakki yagyo* and other early monster paintings, fantastic creatures were no longer limited to horned demons. They could materialize into a variety of different beings.

*Explore popular forms of yokai and yokai lore here.* [link to “Yokai Lore” page]

Although the variety of monster expanded, their audiences were still limited. Scroll paintings were often painted by master artists and then copied by their students; they required much time and great skill to produce. Due to their small size, the scrolls could only be viewed by a few people at a time. Plus, scroll paintings were commonly kept in temples and shrines or in the storehouses of aristocratic families. Viewers needed access to such elite places.

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YOKAI & PRINT TECHNOLOGY

Yokai images left the confines of elite settings in the Edo period (1603–1867), and they burst onto the popular scene thanks to woodblock print technology. With the new technology, many impressions of a print could be created quickly and cheaply. Whereas the early scroll paintings had limited audiences, prints were accessible and affordable. As specific depictions of yokai stories began to circulate among the masses, the images became popular cultural references.

[file: Sekien 1 – place side by side to that the image lines up]

[Caption]

*Hyakki tsurezurebukuro* (volume 1)

Toriyama Sekien

1805

Ink on paper

Courtesy of the Smithsonian Libraries

[body]

Toriyama Sekien’s series of books of The Illustrated Night Parade of a Hundred Demons (*Gazu hyakki yagyo*) is based on the *Hyakki yagyo* scrolls. This series of books is considered the first mass-produced and illustrated yokai encyclopedia. Its yokai range from the very popular to the lesser known, including some dreamed up by Sekien himself. Images of specific creatures drawn by Sekien served as an important visual resource for later artists, including Edo-period print makers, twentieth-century manga creators, and yokai artists today. They are now accepted as standard forms of yokai.

[file: sekien 2]

[caption]

*Gazu hyakki yagyo* ( volume 1)

Toriyama Sekien

1776

Ink on paper

Courtesy of the Smithsonian Libraries

[body]

Explore Toriyama Sekien’s yokai encyclopedias. Visit the *Smithsonian Libraries website* [add hyperlink to italicized words: <https://library.si.edu/books-online/subjects/monsters-in-art>

Master woodblock printers of the Edo period often made reference to tales of monsters. For example, Utagawa Kuniyoshi combined characters from the Night Parade of a Hundred Demons (*Hyakki yagyo*) and another early handscroll, the Tale of the Earth Spider (*Tsuchigumo zoshi*) in a famous printed triptych (a three-part print).

[file: print – kuniyoshi – earth spider]

[caption}

The Earth Spider Conjures up Demons at the Mansion of Minamoto no Raiko

Utagawa Kuniyoshi

1843; this edition likely published in the Kaei period (1848-1854)

Ink on paper

International Folk Art Foundation Collection, Museum of International Folk Art (T.2010.10.1)

Minamoto no Raiko, a valiant military leader of the eleventh century, is depicted in the foreground with his four retainers. The Earth Spider, Tsuchigumo, appears in the background and dispatches yokai to attack the heroes. This three-part print is known for its social commentary, critiquing oppressive governmental codes enacted as the Tenpo Reforms (1841-1843). When Kuniyoshi published this work, viewers understood the yokai to be those who suffered due to the reforms. The image therefore suggests the government’s nightmare of a popular uprising. Another layer of social commentary concerns the Earth Spider, traditionally viewed as a legendary outcast and a source of evil. But Kuniyoshi made the Earth Spider into a hero who leads the angry mob of monsters in seeking revenge against the shogun and his administrators.

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Artists today are still inspired by the Night Parade of One Hundred Demons! Playing off of traditional images found in historical paintings, the contemporary artist, “Sakyu” depicts classical yokai alongside modern yokai. . In the Modern *hyakki yagyo*, Sakyu dreams up new *tsukumogami*, the discarded objects that become animated and haunt the owner who failed to appreciate the service they had provided. Sakyu includes not only traditional demons, but also spirited floppy disks and an angry rotary dial phone.

[file: modern night parade]

[caption]

*Modern Hyakki yagyo* (Night Parade of One Hundred Demons) book

Sakyu

2018

Giclée print, digital art, washi paper, cloth, adhesive

International Folk Art Foundation, Museum of International Folk Art [P.2019.14.14-16]

Sakyu is a member of the artist collective, *Hyakuyobako* (Box of 100 Yokai). The collective re-enacts the Night Parade of One Hundred Demons annually in Kyoto.

[hyperlink *Hyakuyobako* to: <http://kyotohyakki.com/>

MANGA: ILLUSTRATED BOOKS & WHIMSICAL IMAGES

Short books with woodblock printed illustrations were widely available during the Edo period (1603–1867). They met the needs of Japan’s growing market for popular literature. Today these books are considered as precursors to manga, which include comics, graphic novels, and “whimsical drawings.”

Monster stories were a favorite of Edo-period manga. Many tales had political undertones and critiqued the strictness of the shogunal government and the conservativism of Edo society. That was especially the case in the late eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, when censorship laws landed some authors in jail.

[file: F180615062]

[caption]

*Jiraiya Goketsu Monogatari 13-hen* (Tale of a Hero, part 13)

Illustrator: Utagawa Toyokuni

Circa 1800

Ink on paper, cotton string

International Folk Art Foundation, Museum of International Folk Art (FA.2002.3.2v)

[body]

Today manga remains hugely popular among all ages and social groups, from young school children to mature corporate executives. Manga enjoys a surprisingly wide range of subject matters, including action, science fiction, sports, erotica, history, and of course, yokai.

[file: url: image from Wikipedia – fair use: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nura:_Rise_of_the_Yokai_Clan#/media/File:Nurarihyon_no_Mago_Japanese_Vol_1_Cover.jpg>]

[body]

ANIME

Japanese anime (animation) has become an international pop-culture phenomenon over the past twenty years. Anime is an outgrowth of manga. It grew in popularity after World War II but especially in the 1960s, when animation premiers captured the attention of young television viewers.

The award-winning films of Studio Ghibli are at the forefront of anime productions. My Neighbor Totoro (1988) and Spirited Away (2001) are some of the highest-grossing anime films ever. Both were created by Miyazaki Hayao, who is a writer, illustrator, and co-founder of Studio Ghibli. Miyazaki is praised as one of the greatest animation filmmakers of all time. His films tend to deal with the challenge of balancing traditional values and contemporary demands.

[link]:

<https://ghibli.fandom.com/wiki/Ghibli_Wiki>

