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Tales of Times Now Past
Konjaku Monogatari
in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Charles De Wolf

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

William Butler Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium”

“…enfin, quelque chose, quelque part, qui laisse des traces de ce qui se passe, de ce qui se dit, c’est vraiment le minimum, non…”

Samuel Beckett, *Nouvelles et Textes pour Rien*

[The purpose of this article, as the title is intended to suggest, is to consider a medieval folktale collection, long well known in Japan, as it relates to a broad spectrum of folkloric tradition, East and West. Both shared characteristics and striking differences are seen in selections from stories within that extensive work.]

The linguist Daniel Everett (2009) has claimed that in Pirahã, a language isolate spoken by several hundred people in the rain forest of northwestern Brazil, "declarative…utterances contain only assertions directly related to the moment of speech, either experienced…by the speaker or as witnessed by someone alive during the lifetime of the speaker." Thus, there are no past tense forms. Everett characterizes the subjects of his years-long study as living on what he calls the Immediacy of Experience Principle (IEP). As a consequence, he earlier asserts (2005): "The Pirahã do not create fiction, and they have no creation stories or myths."

No Uranus, no giant frost ogre, no Kotoamatsukami, no Little Red Riding Hood—and no avian bard upon a golden bough…Everett's claim has been challenged, but even if it is accurate, it is certainly fair to say that the vast majority of the rest of us, non-Pirahã, are very much involved in narrative—and, indeed, thrive on it. We not only tell stories; we also talk *about* stories; we analyze, categorize, and explain them. We recount them; we retell them; we revise them.

Well-worn tales themselves are clearly older than our labels or pigeonholes. The English term "fairy tale" in the sense in which we use it is a loan translation of French conte de fées, as inspired by Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's collection, published in 1698. German "Märchen," dating from the 15th century and borrowed into English in 1871, is a diminutive form of (archaic) Mär 'news, tale'. Japanese *otogi-banashi* (御伽話), lit. 'nursing tale', dates back to the late Edo period, and originally refers to any story told for distraction or amusement. In the Meiji era, it came to be used to refer to tales told to children.

In the tradition of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, we refer to familiar stories of old as "folktales" (*Volkssagen*), the term dating from 1850. Though "folk" is a native English word, it has taken on in this and other compounds,

cf. "folklore," "folksong," and "folkdance," the German meaning of "Volk," as it came to be used by Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) and those influenced by his thought, notably the Romantics. In reaction to the universalism of then dominant French culture, Herder insisted on the distinctiveness of individual ethnic entities. To him is attributed the familiar compound noun "Volksgeist," though his own term was "Geist der Völker" ('the spirit of peoples'), the shorter version later coined by Georg Wilhelm Friederich Hegel.

Extolling primeval authenticity over tainted sophistication—and thereby implicitly turning the "high culture-low culture" dichotomy on its head—did not begin with Herder and the Romantics, or, for that matter, with Rousseau or Marie-Antoinette, the would-be milkmaid. And yet the impetus to seek out and collect tales passed on from long ago, as seen in the work of the Brothers Grimm, was clearly related to the greater feasibility of recording and publishing them[1)] and to the concern that, with changing social conditions, including urbanization, they might otherwise be lost.

The insistence on "the real thing"—an ancient story told by an illiterate peasant and not by the suspiciously bourgeois wife of the local magistrate—did not preclude due respect for the norms of gentility, to say nothing of regard for a fine literary style. Yet the fact remains that the sources of the tales are varied, and if some came from an unlettered domestic servant from the countryside, the immediate narrator may often have been the mistress of the house.

Another familiar Japanese word for traditional stories, *mukashi-banashi* (昔話) 'tales of long ago', is pre-modern but, as with *otogi-banashi*, acquires a new meaning in the Meiji period, with specific reference to Märchen. Sino-Japanese *minwa* (民話) 'folktale' is clearly a modern loan translation, as is *dōwa* (童話), lit. 'children's tale', which appears in the early years of the

20th century. In 1906, the German-language scholar Hashimoto Seu (橋本青雨, 1878–1944) published *Doitsu-dōwa-shū* (独逸童話集) [A Collection of German Children's Stories].[2)]

The introduction of Occidental folktales gave impetus to revived interest in their Japanese counterparts. Another literary figure, Iwaya Sazanami (巌谷小波, 1870–1933), was instrumental in making such stories as Urashima Tarō and Momotarō known to all Japanese children, as an integral part of their formal education. They were intended both to embody Japan's national culture (国民文化 kokumin-bunka) and to teach moral principles.

It has often been argued by folklore scholars that stories passed on through oral tradition are typically devoid of any such moral content and, being strange, baffling, and even disturbing in their original form, have been adapted—"cleaned up," as it were—to conform to modern norms.[3)] European folktales, one may contend, predate the arrival of Christianity and have subsequently come under the influence of the new religion.

It cannot be denied that an old story may be overlaid with a new, often moralizing meaning. The Titan myth is likely to strike us as merely grotesque in its brutality without our main attention to intrepid and resourceful Rhea in protecting Zeus and thus enabling him to rescue his siblings as well from their cannibalistic father Cronus, who, we remember, has castrated his own father, Uranus. The Greeks of old clearly looked on their already ancient tale in much the same way. Zeus may come from what certain moderns might call a dysfunctional family, but he nonetheless succeeds in establishing a new order.

Though the words for "fairytale," in English and in other languages, are often used dismissively to refer to simplistic or overly optimistic views of the world, the seeming predictability of even familiar stories may be deceptive. Let us consider, for example, the original version of the Frog Prince,

known in German as der Froschkönig. At first, it appears to follow the oft-encountered theme of rescue from enchantment. One thinks of "Beauty and the Beast" (Belle et Bête) and "East of the Sun and West of the Moon" ("Østenfor sol og vestenfor mane"), both of which are related to the Cupid and Psyche myth. In this case, however, the princess is not the unambiguously admirable, if fallible, heroine. She persuades the frog to return her golden ball only to attempt to renege on her promise to be his constant companion. It is only when her father insists that she keep her word that she admits the beast to her room. In what may be the best-known bowdlerized version of the story, the enchantment is broken with a kiss, but in the Brother Grimms' telling, the disgusted princess angrily throws the poor amphibian against the wall. Instead of being cited for wanton cruelty to animals, she is rewarded, as it falls back upon her bed (in later editions to the floor), with a future king.

The story of Urashima Tarō, both ancient and immensely varied, was adapted for educational use and taught in schools from the late 19th century to 1949 in a more or less standard version, as approved by the Ministry of Education.[4)] I confess that the lesson of the story as it is told today, with whatever variations, has long eluded me. Poor Tarō, unlike the above-mentioned princess, is clearly kind-hearted, and yet his reward for rescuing a turtle is to linger in the chambers of the sea with a grateful princess and then to return home with a magic box that she forbids him to open. Seeing that many years (perhaps centuries) have passed in his native village and bereft of all he has known, he opens the box and, instantly enveloped in white smoke, becomes a wizened old man.

What are children to conclude from the story? That one should not pine for home? That warning labels on hazardous containers should be heeded? That one should not travel underwater adventures with talking turtles?

To contend that a story which, at least at first glance, makes no unambiguous moral sense, especially if it seems merely to horrify, must somehow be authentically primitive is to engage in circular reasoning. Tales are told for a vast array of reasons: sometimes to reinforce collective memories of real events in the past, sometimes to edify, and sometimes simply to amuse and bemuse.

In the *Konjaku Monogatarishū* (今昔物語集 KJM), a lengthy collection of setsuwa (説話), lit. 'spoken tales', dating from the late Heian or the early Kamakura period, there is no question about the inclusion or addition of "a good lesson" (eine gute Lehre). Each story concludes with such, with the same formulaic regularity as the beginning: 今は昔 (Ima wa mukashi), which may be variously translated: "In times now past…" and "Well, long ago…")

Like the tale of Urashima Tarō, KJM 19:30 features the turtle. A Korean priest named Hongje (弘済), Gusai in Sino-Japanese, befriends a Japanese warrior living in exile after taking part in a military expedition seeking to restore the fallen Baekje kingdom.[5)] At last allowed to return to Bingo, his native province, the warrior takes Hongje with him. There they set about erecting a grand temple, for which purpose Hongje travels to the capital to obtain gold. As he is returning, he rescues four turtles from fishermen about to kill them and releases them to the sea. Continuing on his journey, he is met by pirates, who force him to jump overboard, whereupon he finds himself standing on the back of a giant turtle, which, in gratitude for Hongje's kindness to members of its species, has rescued him. Hongje's saintliness is further demonstrated when, on encountering the pirates, who appear at his door selling the stolen gold, he simply buys it back from them. The story concludes: 亀ノ人ノ恩ヲ報ズル事今に不始ズ、天竺震旦ヨリ始メテ此ノ朝マデ此ナム有リケル、トナム語り伝へタルトヤ。(Kame no hito no on wo hou-zuru koto ima ni hazimezu, Tendiku-Sindan yori hazimete kono teu

made kaku namu ari-keru, to namu katari-tutahetaru to ya.) “This is not the only account of turtles rewarding the kindness bestowed on them by men. There are many such stories from both Sindhu and Cathay. And so the tale has come down to us.”[6)]

In the common version of the Urashima Tarō story, there is a specific initial setting, a fishing village in Tango Province or what is today northern Kyōto Prefecture, but, unlike the KJM story, in which Hongje is presented, however dubiously, as an historical personage, it is Märchen-like in its lack of any time frame.

Urashima Tarō does not appear in the collection, but in KJM 26:9, a tale is told of other fisherman who likewise find themselves on an unexpected journey, as brought about by otherworldly means:

> In times now past there lived in Kaga seven men of no great rank who banded together to fish the sea. They had plied their trade for many a year, when one day, armed as was their custom with bows and arrows, swords and daggers, they launched their boat and ventured forth. They were already well beyond the sight of land, when suddenly a storm arose and swiftly bore them all away. Bewailing their fate, they raised the sculling oar and in despair surrendered to the wind, certain of death beneath the waves. But now there appeared, though still in the distance, an island of no mean size. “Ah,” they thought, “we may yet be saved, if only for a time!” And suddenly, quite as though drawn by design, the boat turned and sped in that very direction, until indeed it brought them there. Rejoicing in their reprieve, they joyfully tumbled out, pulled their craft ashore, and looked about. Before them they saw flowing water and beyond what appeared to be fruit trees.[7)]

The men then encounter a young man who tells them that it is he who has summoned the wind to bring them to his island, saying that he is in need

of their aid. Hearing this, they understand that he is no mortal. Indeed, he is the serpent god, appearing to them in human form. He tells them that the island will come under attack from his archenemy, whom the fishermen are to help to defeat. The next day a giant centipede comes out of the sea to engage in battle with the deity, now in serpentine form. In the end, the fishermen slay the monster and are then duly rewarded.

Interestingly enough, the strikingly "magical" again intersects with the realm of "real" time:

> The fishermen dwelt on the island, cultivating their fields and growing ever more prosperous, with children and grandchildren in great abundance. There, on what is called the Isle of the Cat,[8] their descendants may still be found. It is said that they make an annual pilgrimage to the shrine. The people of Kaga, having heard of this, are eager to seek them out, but they come at night, when least expected, and stay only long enough to worship. Thus, it is only after their departure that their visit becomes known. Year after year, even until the present day, they observe the custom.
>
> It is said that the island can be seen from Ōmiya on the Noto Peninsula, and that, when the sky is clear, the higher western side appears in the distance as a solid green expanse rising out of the sea.
>
> There was once a seaman from Noto named Tsunemitsu who with his crew was blown by the wind to the Isle of the Cat. The islanders went out to meet the ship but would not let it approach and, though they brought fresh provisions, kept it offshore. After seven or eight days, a leeward wind arose and carried it back again to Noto.
>
> As Tsunemitsu recounted their adventure: "From what little we could see, there are many houses on the island, one next to the other, with broad streets fit for the capital. There are likewise many people

going to and fro." It would seem that he and his crew were not permitted to come ashore for fear that they would see more.

In more recent times it is said that ships from distant Cathay have come within the island's waters on their way to Tsuruga. Obtaining provisions, they catch fish and abalone before sailing on. They appear to have been persuaded to say nothing of their visit.

Surely we may say it was strong karma that brought the seven fishermen to the Isle of the Cat and made for their descendants so pleasant and easy a life. It is indeed, says the tradition, a most rich and fertile land. And so the tale has come down to us.

The most famous monogatari (lit. "telling of things") is, of course, *Genji Monogatari*, *The Tale of Genji*. In sharp contrast to the aristocratic world of Murasaki Shikibu, in which references to humble folk such as fishermen occur only rarely and even then far more often in the figurative language of poetry than in real life, *Konjaku Monogatari* covers the entire social spectrum, from emperors to pirates, from saints to horse thieves. There are Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, gods, demons, and ogres. And then, of course, there is a host of animals.

Murasaki Shikibu wrote her work almost entirely in the hiragana syllabary, using a vocabulary that included few words of Chinese origin. Though men of the educated (that is, aristocratic) classes were expected to devote themselves to the continental classics and the imitation thereof, in a style of writing known as kanbun (漢文 'Chinese writing'), the romantic and poetical appeal of wabun (和文 'Japanese writing') was such that they would sometimes resort to pseudonyms to produce works in it. It was thought unseemly for women to acquire knowledge of Chinese, though Murasaki Shikibu discreetly did so anyway.

The Konjaku tales are written in a mixture of kanbun and wabun styles,

with a substantial increase in the use of Sino-Japanese words. Here, for example, is the first sentence of the fishermen's tale. In the Romanization, the Sino-Japanese words are marked in upper-case:

今昔、加賀ノ国□郡ニ住ミける下衆七人、一党トシテ常ニ海ニ出テ、釣ヲ好むヲ業トシテ、年来ヲ経ケルニ、此七人一船ニ乗テ漕出ニケリ。

Ima wa mukasi, KAGA no kuni [redacted] kohori ni sumi-keru GESU-SITININ, ITTAU to site tune ni umi ni idete, turi wo konomu wo GEFU to site, tosi-goro wo he-keru ni, kono SITININ hitotu-hune ni norite ko-gi-ide ni-keri.

The sentence consists of an (unmarked) subject/topic (GESU-SITININ 'seven humble men'), followed by a series of clauses, nearly all marked with -te. Originally the conjunctive form of the perfective auxiliary -tu, it has come to be used, particularly in the modern language, as a clause-final marker in serial verb constructions.

Whereas the Genji consists of smoothly flowing, sometimes labyrinthine, sentences of great subtlety and more than occasional ambiguity, the style of *Konjaku Monogatari* is simple, brusque, and direct. There are grammatical lapses, and the scribes make errors in their use of Chinese characters. There are also not infrequent omissions or deletions, particularly of place names. In the story of the fishermen, the district within the province of Kaga was included in the original but was then expunged.

It was long claimed that the Konjaku tales were compiled by a Heian-period nobleman, Minamoto no Takakuni (源隆国 1004–1077), who is said to have jotted them down as he heard them from passersby. In fact, there are stories that clearly postdate his lifespan, but, more importantly, as suggested above in regard to the Grimm Märchen, the relationship between purely oral tradition and scribal transmission is ever murky.

The oldest Konjaku tales have their source in India; they came to be

known in Japan through the transmission, via China, of Buddhism. In KJM 5:2, for example, we find a retelling of a Sri Lankan foundation myth, according to which the first king was the son of a princess and a lion. In KJM 5:1 (see Appendix 1) a different story is told of the same island kingdom: a shipwrecked Buddhist monk named Kāla and his merchant companions acquire local beauties as wives, only to learn that they are, in reality, cannibalistic demons. With the help of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, known in Japan as Kannon, appearing as an immense white horse, they manage to escape, but the monk eventually returns, leading an annihilating army and becoming the island's royal ruler.

The source of both tales is the early Tang-Dynasty Buddhist pilgrim and scholar, Xuánzhuāng (玄奘), who in the mid-7th century produced the *Great Tang Records of the Western Regions* (大唐西域記), which includes the account of his sojourn in India. At the conclusion of KJM 5:2 the name of the country is given as 師子国 (shishi-koku), clearly intended to mean 'lion land' (獅子国); in KJM 5:1, it is given the name of 僧迦羅 (soukara-koku), in reference to the story's protagonist.

Perhaps surprisingly, the story does not end with a moral, e.g. that one should always turn to the Bodhisattva, that Kāla must have been blessed with good karma from previous lives, or that those who readily yield to carnal desire will all too soon find themselves the fodder of demons. Instead, what seems to begin as a once-upon-a-time story takes on the form of would-be history. We are at least vaguely reminded of Homer's Odysseus and Virgil's Aeneas, who, like Kāla, must resist feminine wiles to pursue their destinies.

In KJM 9:23, a story from ancient China that includes both supernatural retribution and the moral to be drawn from it is again given a specific historical context. Entitled 京兆藩果抜羊舌得現報話 ('How a Jīngzhào Clerk

Named Pānguǒ Cut Out a Sheep's Tongue and Was Punished'), it begins:

"In times now past, in Cathay, during the…Dynasty, there lived in the Province of Jīngzhào a man whose name was Pānguǒ who and already in his youth, during the Wǔdé era, was a minor official in the Office of the Levees."

The specification of the dynasty has either been omitted or deliberately expunged, but the mention of Wǔdé (武德) points to the year 644, i.e. the beginning of the Tang Dynasty. Pānguǒ is said to have been a subordinate of Zhèng Yúqìng (鄭餘慶), a high-ranking official, who, however, did not live until a century later.

Pānguǒ is out in the fields one evening, engaging in sport with youthful friends, when they spy a lone sheep[9] with which they then decide to abscond. When the sheep starts to bleat, Pānguǒ, fearful of detection, silences it by cutting out its tongue. Once safely home, they slaughter, roast, and eat the sheep. Thereafter Pānguǒ finds his own tongue melting away, forcing him to resign his post. Zhèng Yúqìng learns of what has occurred, severely reprimands Pānguǒ, and orders him to make amends with benevolent deeds. Over the course of a year, his tongue is gradually restored. We are told that Zhèng Yúqìng himself passed on the story as an example of karma's dread consequences.[10]

KJM 9:18, again from the Chinese section of the tales, tells of an official in Province of Jīngzhào, whose beautiful daughter dies while still a young girl. Two years later, in preparation for a long journey, he orders a member of his household to buy a sheep at the market and have it slaughtered. His wife has dreamt the previous night of her deceased daughter, who weepingly tells her that as retribution for having been unfilial and stolen money from her parents, she has been reborn as a sheep and moreover is doomed to be put to the knife.[11] She implores her mother to save her, but her

fate is sealed. Overwhelmed by grief at the realization of what he has unwittingly allowed, the father sickens and dies.

Readers of the Japanese stories in KJM might anticipate in the conclusion a stern Buddhist moral, condemning the slaying of all sentient life and the eating of meat. Here, however, the lesson suggested is merely that one should not be overly hasty in preparing one's dinner menu. The tale might be contrasted with KJM 19:7, which tells of a Fujiwara nobleman, Fujiwara no Yasumasa (藤原保昌 958–1036), who it is said was renowned for his prowess as an archer and for his love of hunting.[12] A vassal of his, skillful at bringing down deer, dreams one night of his dead mother, who tells him that because of her sins she has been reborn as a doe and has the premonition that he will slay her when he joins his lord on an upcoming foray. The man asks to be excused, but, having failed to explain his reason, is ordered to carry on. Momentarily forgetting his dream in the excitement of the chase, he lets fly an arrow at a doe and on piercing her flank immediately sees the face of his mother. He renounces the world and retires to a mountain temple. The tale concludes: "Such again tells us how evil deeds can be the karmic bond that leads to surrender to the Way."

In the Judeo-Christian worldview, the realms of the divine and the terrestrial are clearly distinct; likewise, men are men, and beasts are beasts. Such does not, of course, preclude shapeshifting myths and anthropomorphic tales inherited from the pagan tradition. Still, in Western folklore, the transformation of humans into non-human forms typically occurs only as the result of a malicious—and reversible—act. Moreover, whereas demons may masquerade as humans, it is far less common for animals to do the same. We find a rare example of such in Norse and Celtic tales of seals shedding their skins, taking on the form of beautiful human females, acquiring human husbands, and bearing them children, only to be overwhelmed by longing for

the sea, to which they eventually return.

In the Konjaku tales, as is evident from KJM 19:7, being reborn in the realm of beasts (畜生道 chikushōdō) represents a karmic demotion. In KJM 16:17, a lecherous dealer in coins is out strolling about one evening, his wife conveniently off on a journey, when he meets a beautiful young girl who, in reality, is a vixen. He lives with her in a state of enchantment, until rescued by a manifestation of Kannon. Slowly recovering from it all, he expresses profound shame at the degradation he has undergone. The narrator does not chide him for fennecaphobia, the worldview of KJM being clearly not one of diversity, equity, and inclusion.[13)]

The overall status of our fellow sentient creatures is, however, ambivalent. As in many other cultures, the fox is seen as a trickster. On the other hand, in Japanese tradition, the kitsune is revered as a messenger of the gods. The Shintō deity Inari is closely associated with rice, bountiful harvests, and foxes.

In KJM 31:15, a man from the capital goes wandering in the hills and, as darkness falls, loses his way. Close to despair, he stumbles on a thatched-roof cottage, from which a beautiful young woman emerges. She offers him shelter for the night but warns that her husband will soon return and that to avoid suspicion he should claim to be her long-lost elder brother. She tells him that she too is from the capital but has been abducted by a strange and loathsome creature, which, however, provides her with all her needs. Soon he hears a growl at the door, and in walks a huge white dog. Hearing the woman's explanation concerning the visitor, he goes to lie down in front of the stove, while she goes about preparing dinner.

The next morning she implores the man to say nothing of their encounter, while urging him to come again. He promises both to hold his tongue and to return, but once back in the capital, he prattles to all and eventually

brings together a large band of hot-blooded youth. Together they go forth, intending to slay the dog and make off with the woman. Untouched by their arrows, the pair flees into the mountains as swiftly as birds. The men conclude that these were no ordinary mortals. On his return, the man soon sickens and dies. The story concludes:

> "An elder, wizened but wise, declared: 'The dog may well have been a god.' Ah, but what loose-lipped, good-for-nothing the young man was! Judgment is upon all those who flagrantly break their vows.
>
> "There was no one who knew the subsequent whereabouts of the dog. It is said that he was once seen in the Province of Ōmi . No doubt, it was thought, he was indeed a deity. And so the tale has come down to us."[14)]

The theme of wanderers in forests of mystery and peril is both ancient and ubiquitous. Landing on the island of Aeaea, Odysseus sends his men into the dense wood surrounding the house of Circe, guarded by beasts that she has tamed. There they are drugged and turned into swine. Fleeing from her murderous stepmother, Snow White has better luck in stumbling on the sylvan cottage of kindly dwarves. Hänsel and Gretel must use all of their wits to overcome a cannibalistic witch on whose house the children, abandoned and hungry, have nibbled. Dante famously begins *La Divina Commedia* with himself, the protagonist, finding himself losing his way in a dark forest (una selva oscura) and soon confronted by beasts embodying deadly human sins.

In the *Man'yōshū* (208), we find a well-known verse by late sixth- to early seventh-century poet Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (柿本人麻呂):

> 秋山之黄葉乎茂迷流妹乎将求山道不知母
>
> Akiyama no/momiti wo sigemi/mayofi-nuru/imo wo motomemu/yamadi sirazu mo.
>
> Thither shall I go,/wandering among the hills,/knowing not the path,/

E'er seeking my beloved,/lost amidst thick autumn leaves.

As we see above in KJM 19:7, mountains and woods can also be seen as sacred places, especially for those seeking salvation. In Chapter 34 of the *Tale of Genji*, the lay monk who is the maternal grandfather of Genji's daughter, the empress, who has just given birth to a son, abandons his home in Akashi, leaving behind a message for her, referring to his foreknowledge that his great-grandson will one day be emperor:

> "On the fourteen day of this month, I shall leave my grass hovel and journey deep into the mountains, there to leave my useless body as prey for bears and wolves. You must wait until the promise is fulfilled, and then one day in the light of paradise we shall indeed meet again."

A strikingly different story is told in KJM 26:8, in which a young man involuntarily journeys to a land where he gives up his monkish ways, marries, and, though intended to be sacrificed to cannibalistic monkeys believed to be gods, prevails as their conqueror and becomes the village chief. Here is how the tale begins:

> In times now past there was an itinerant monk whose wanderings brought him to the Province of Hida, where deep in the mountains he lost his way. He desperately followed what he took to be a path, treading thick layers of fallen leaves, until this too came to an abrupt end. Before him stood a waterfall, which like a vast bamboo curtain fell from a great height and across a broad expanse.
>
> "Only thou, Lord Buddha, canst save me!" he exclaimed in supplication, for he was now no more capable of retracing his steps than of scaling the sheer cliff, which, like a giant palm held before him, towered a thousand cubits into the sky. As we was praying, he heard footsteps behind him and, turning round, saw a man in a sedge hat, a burden on his back.

"Ah, someone has come!" he thought with joy and sought to ask him the way. The stranger glared at him most suspiciously, but the monk nonetheless went up to him and inquired: "Whence and how have you come? And where does this path lead?" Without replying, the man walked toward the waterfall and, stepping into it, instantly vanished.

Seeing this, the monk was filled with terror: "Such cannot have been human; it is a demon! Surely there is no escape. But rather than be devoured, I shall follow his example and throw myself into the falls, for even should he then consume my remains, I shall no longer suffer for it. May the Lord Buddha be my salvation in the life to come!"

And so he too threw himself in. Feeling no more than a splash on his face, he found himself on the other side. Having thought that he would surely drown, he now recovered his senses and looked behind to see that what he had taken to be a mighty cascade was but a thin sheet of water, indeed quite like a bamboo blind.

Before him lay a path, and on following it he found a narrow trail at the base of the mountain. At the end he could see the many houses of what appeared to be a sizable village. His spirits rose, and he walked on until he saw a man putting down his burden and running toward him—the very same man he had encountered in front of the waterfall. Yet before he could reach him, another came bounding up and took him by the hand. "What is this?" exclaimed the monk, but this older man, dressed in a light blue jacket and skirt, merely said: "Come along home with me.".[15)]

The tale is immediately preceded by KJM 26:7,[16)] which tells essentially the same story, but with important differences. The protagonist is not a monk but rather a man from the east, an inuyama, who hunts boar and deer in the mountains with a pack of dogs. The setting is Mimasaka, present-day

Okayama. The intended victim is a beautiful maiden, whose parents he rebukes for their passivity before offering to marry her and take her place. Arming himself with a sword, he steps into the chest intended for his wife, his dogs at his side, and is taken to the shrine, where, as in KJM 26:8, he confronts and defeats the monkeys, though in this case it is unclear how we are to regard their leader: Is he simply an ape masquerading as a god or is indeed the avatar of the shrine god? In KJM 26:8, the one-time monk denounces the chief monkey as nothing more than a beastly carnivore and then sends it and its companions packing. In KJM 26:7, the hunter intends to slay the ape, even at the risk of his own life. The chief priest, possessed, we are told, by the divine spirit, asks for mercy. Though the dogs kill many of the monkeys, their leader is eventually spared.

The theme of heroes who arrive to defeat monsters making murderous demands is, of course, common across many cultures. We readily think of St. George and the dragon, though the contrast here is nonetheless striking. The inuyama, though both intrepid and generous, is no nobleman in armor. His home is in the eastern provinces, and his livelihood is clearly contrary to the precepts of Buddhism. In the story that came to be known in Europe at about the time the Konjaku tales were being compiled, a pestilence-spreading dragon is appeased first with sheep but eventually with humans, lastly a princess, whom St. George rescues, slaying the dragon on the condition that the inhabitants of the kingdom convert to Christianity. The dragon is depicted as a truly dangerous and evil foe, clearly associated with satanic forces. He is no cowardly monkey, and his intended victim is a king's daughter, not a comely but otherwise ordinary peasant girl.

The Konjaku tales, particularly in those of Japan, are replete with exhortations to follow the Way of the Buddha. The two versions of the story described above are thus all the more striking. Though both conclude with

the assertion that all that occurred must have been a matter of karmic fate, their focus would appear to be not on piety but rather on the folly of credulity and weak-kneed conformity.

Here is the summary of an equally remarkable tale (KJM 26:21) about an inuyama. The setting is unknown, the province and district names having been deliberately expunged. The hunter takes his dogs into the mountains for several days. In his absence, a wandering mendicant appears, persuading the hunter's young wife to accompany him into the hills, where he promises to perform rites of great benefit to her and her household. As he is preparing to carry out the promised ceremony, he is suddenly seized by carnal desire, draws out a dagger, and threatens to kill the wife if she does not submit. As it happens, the husband is close by. Perceiving a rustling in the bushes, he judges it to be made by a deer and lets fly an arrow. To his surprise, he then finds underneath the now dead mendicant none other than his wife, who tearfully explains what has occurred. Seeming merely to raise his eyebrows at his spouse's gullibility, he calmly throws her over his shoulder and, with his dogs, returns home. The tale concludes with yet another allusion to karma, though with a further comment, perhaps added by a later scribe and intended as a practical admonition:

> The Lord Buddha would surely judge the wretched monk most harshly. This too, we should know, was the consequence of previous lives.
>
> Nonetheless, we see on reflection that all of us, whether of high estate or low, should not heedlessly trust in persons unknown or be taken in by their honeyed words. Nor should women be allowed to act precipitously and arbitrarily on their own. And so the tale has come down to us.[17)]

This is by no means the only Konjaku tale that will strike the mind of

many a modern as dismayingly misogynistic. Yet the collection is, I wish to contend by way of conclusion, far too rich and varied to be typecast as such. I shall therefore conclude this essay by contrasting in Appendix 3 the "she-demons" of Appendix 1 and the sweet but somewhat clueless maiden of Appendix 2 with the sagacious and redoubtable sister of a long-ago sumo wrestler. Readers may take note of his praise for her.

Appendix 1

How the Monk Kāla and Five Hundred Merchants Went to the Land of the Rakshasa

Konjaku Monogatari 5:1

In times now past, there was in the land of Sindhu[18] a monk by the name of Kāla, who with five hundred merchants[19] had gone to sea in search of wealth, when suddenly their ship was struck by a malevolent wind, carrying them southward, as swiftly as an arrow flies, and bringing them at last to a large island. Though finding themselves in a foreign realm, they immediately stumbled out, grateful to be on land.

Soon they beheld ten lovely maidens, singing as they came. Having lamented their fate for having been brought to this strange place, the men were now instantly filled with desire and beckoned to the women, who most gracefully approached them. The merchants, together with Kāla, gazed at the beauties standing before them and declared: "We rowed out to sea to seek our fortune in the South Seas but through a sudden change in the wind have been brought to a land we do not know. Though thus cast down, we have, on seeing you, forgotten our hardships. Will you not look to our immediate welfare? Our ship is no more, and for the moment we cannot return to our homeland."

To this, the women replied: "We are your obedient servants." They then

guided them to their dwelling, where they beheld a high and extensive hedge. Over it towered an imposing gate, through which the woman led the way, immediately securing the lock as they went. Inside, the men could see that there were many houses, all separated by walls.

There were no other inhabitants than women, whom Kāla and his companions took as wives and resided there, giving no thought to anything other than their life together, being as they were inseparable for any but the briefest of moments.

As time went by, it was noted that every day the women spent the long afternoons in slumber. As the men gazed at their faces, they were struck by their beauty, even as they found the sight strangely disquieting.

His spirits troubled, Kāla quietly arose while the women slept and went looking about. Among the houses in the area where he and the other men had come to live, there was one that none had ever been allowed to see. With walls on all sides, the gate was tightly locked. Clambering up one such wall, Kāla looked inside. There he saw a host of wretched souls, some dead and reeking of decay, others alive and wailing. Some of the remains were mere skeletons, others still covered in blood. Kāla called out to one of those living, beckoning him to approach and asking:

"Who are these people? What is this?"

"We are from southern Sindhu. We went to sea to ply our trade, but the wind blew us to this land. Enchanted by beautiful maidens, we gave no more thought to returning home, surrounded only, as we were, by womanly creatures whom we took to be most loving. Yet when a new ship arrived, they took us, their old husbands, cut the flesh from the backs of our knees, and made of us a daily feast. You will suffer the same fate when once again there are newcomers. You must make ready to flee, for these women are none other than man-eating Rakshasa. As the demons nap all during the afternoon

hours, they will not know of your flight. The door of this dwelling, with its four walls, is locked, and once one is imprisoned within, the severed sinews of one's inner knees cut away, there is no hope of escape. Ah, it is a sad and terrible thing! Go now, quickly!"

Hearing this lament, Kāla thought it all indeed most alarming and on his return informed the men, even as the women remained in slumber.

Together they hastened to the shore, though there they could find no remedy to their plight. Turning in the direction of Potalaka,[20] they raised their voices in prayer to Avalokiteshvara. Even as they were still chanting, an immense white horse appeared from out of the sea, striking the waves with its hoofs before kneeling before the merchants.

"This can be no other than the Bodhisattva!" they exclaimed and eagerly mounted the gigantic steed, which then set forth across the water.

When the demons awoke, they saw that all the merchants were gone. "Ah, they have escaped!" they thought and went out of their castle to the sea, where they saw the men riding a horse. Taking on their form as Rakshasa, each nearly nine cubits tall, they leapt thirty cubits into the air, shouting and cursing. One of the merchants remembered the beautiful face of his wife and fell into the sea, whereupon the demons instantly fell upon the wretched man and devoured him.

When the horse reached the shores of southern Sindhu, the men dismounted with delight, their rescuer now vanishing. "This is all the work of Avalokiteshvara," Kāla thought, as he and his companions weepingly gave thanks to the merciful Bodhisattva. They then all returned to their native land, speaking naught of what they had endured.

Two years had passed, when the Rakshasa that had been Kāla's wife came to where he was sleeping alone. She appeared all the more beautiful. As she approached him, she said: "Our bond must surely be from previous

lives. You were most truly my rock and my support. Why have you abandoned me? In that land whence I have come, there are yaksha that sometimes come forth to seize and feed upon hapless mortals. It is to protect ourselves from those demons that we build fortresses with high and sturdy walls. There was a multitude out on the shore that day and heard the tumult, as the demons raged. And so it was that you took us for them, a most grievous error. Your departure left us in utter misery and longing. Are your hearts not the same?"

She wept so bitterly as she spoke that any man not knowing her true nature might well have been taken in by her wiles. Kāla, however, drew his sword in wrath, as though to slay her. Full of bitterness herself, she then left the house and went to the palace to present her complaint before the king: "The monk Kāla has been my husband for lo these many years, only now to abandon me. To whom shall I turn? I would beseech His Majesty to render judgment."

When the courtiers appeared to hear the words of the matchless beauty before them, their lustful longing for her was unrestrained. On hearing their report, the king himself met her in secret and saw that even his favorite concubine was a lump of earth when compared to this jewel of a woman. When he questioned the monk, so loath to live with her, he was told: "She is a murderous ogre. Do not allow her into the royal presence. Make haste to banish her!"

The king did not believe him. So ensnared was he in his desire for the woman that as night fell he invited her to his palatial bed. As she drew near to him, he saw her as more lovely than ever and thus, having embraced her, remained with her for three full days of carnal rapture, giving no heed to matters of state.

Kāla went to the palace and pleaded: "The time is most dire. That

woman is a demon who has taken on human form. You must act most swiftly." Yet no one would heed his warning.

Again three days went by, when in the morning the woman emerged from the palace and stood off to the side, her eyes with an altered expression, her appearance most frightening, her mouth covered in blood. Gazing about for a moment, she then disappeared into the clouds as swiftly as a bird taking flight from lordly eaves. Courtiers went looking for the king, but he was not to be seen or heard. In astonishment and dread they opened the royal bed curtains and found within traces of blood but no sign of their master other than a single crimson strand of hair. The ministers and the various other officials gathered round to weep and lament, but it was now all for naught.

Thereafter, the king's son ascended the throne. He summoned Kāla, who declared:

"Again and again I have said that we must seek vengeance. I know the land of the Rakshasa[21)] and, if given Your Majesty's leave, will journey there to bring ruin upon them."

To this, the king replied:

"So then go and carry out your task. I shall dispatch the men of arms in such numbers and strength as you request."

"I require ten thousand archers, ten thousand stalwart swordsmen, and one hundred swift ships," said Kāla, and such were then granted him.

Kāla led his forces of twenty-thousand to the land of the Rakshasa. Ten men were first sent out in the guise of merchants, again as before ten beautiful women appeared, singing as they advanced. The warriors followed them into their domain, whereupon they hacked them with their swords and pierced them with their arrows. The demons fleetingly and pitifully sought to display their beauty, but as Kāla shouted to his companions as he led the charge, the demons were unable to conceal their true appearance, and as

they opened their monstrous mouths, their heads, shoulders, and haunches fell to the sword, with not one of them left alive. Their dwellings were now set ablaze. The entire land, thus made desolate, was bestowed to Kāla, who became its king and dwelt there with his army of men, in greater comfort than in the place of their birth. His descendants have remained. The Rakshasa vanquished and extinguished, the kingdom has come to be known by the name of its founder. And so the tale has come down to us.

Appendix 2

How the God of Mimasaka Was Forced by a Hunter to End Human Sacrifice

Konjaku Monogatari 26:7

In times now past, there were in the Province of Mimasaka two enshrined gods, Chūzan and Kōya. The first was manifested as a monkey, the second as a serpent. In that land it had long been the custom each year to offer up a maiden in sacrifice. The households were few, but among them was one with a beautiful daughter aged sixteen or seventeen. Her parents loved her dearly and would fain have given their own lives to save her, but, alas, it was she who had been chosen. From the very day the event was determined to take place in a year's time, she began to be well fed and suitably fattened.

The lot having fallen to the girl, the sorrow of her father and mother knew no bounds, but there was no remedy for it, and so with the days and months hastening by, the length of her remaining life inexorably diminished. As the time drew nigh when parents and child would see one another no more, they bitterly counted the hours and shared their tears.

It was just then, as fate would have it, that a man appeared from the eastern lands. He was known as Hound Mountain, for he was a keeper of many dogs, a hunter who would go forth into the hills, where his pack would bring down wild boar and deer. He was dauntless and daring.

While dwelling in that land, he heard of the fate that was to befall the maiden. One day he had reason to visit the household. As he was sitting on the veranda, waiting to be received, he happened to spy through an opening in the lattice doors the prostrate figure of the hapless daughter. She was a winsome, long-haired beauty, fair of skin and far too refined to be an ordinary rustic lass. Seeing her there, flung down in misery and weeping in her tangled tresses, he was filled with pity and compassion.

Soon he was met by her parents, who said to him despondently:

"Great and constant, morning and night, is our sorrow, as we mark the days that bring us ever closer to the time of our one and only daughter's sacrifice and our parting from her. Such is the heartless land in which we dwell. What sins did we commit in previous lives that we should be reborn here to suffer such woe?"

To this the man of the east replied:

"For all who are human in this world there is nothing greater than life—and nothing more precious than one's children. Yet you are standing by as your beloved daughter is to be turned into chopped and vinegared fish. The pity of it all. It is you who should die in her place. How can there be anyone who, submitting to a foe, would lead another to pointless slaughter? To stand in proper awe before the gods and the Buddha is to value life, cherishing all the more the life of the youngest of us. And yet this noble maid now already counts among the dead. If such is your daughter's doom, give her to me, and I shall die in her place. To this you can surely raise no complaint."

Hearing this, the parents asked him: "But what might you do?"

The man from the east replied: "Here is my intent. Do not tell a soul that I am in your house. Hang festive festoons about and let it be known that you are engaged in fasting and abstinence."

"If our daughter can thus escape death, our own fate may be what it must be," they said. Thus, they secretly brought their daughter to him, who took her for his bride, and together they dwelt there, growing ever more inseparable.

The hunter now chose two of the dogs he had spent many a year in keeping. "Well now," he said, "you shall now act in my stead." He then carefully and thoroughly trained them, furtively bringing monkeys from the mountains and, again in secret, teaching the dogs to slay them. And as by nature dogs and monkey bear each other enmity, the hounds so trained came, at the very sight of the simians, to leap at them, instantly and feverishly, biting them to death. Meanwhile, the man girded on a sword that he had whetted. He then said to his wife:

"It is my intention to die in your place. Though such is our karmic destiny, it is nonetheless a cause for sadness, is it not?"

Though she did not grasp the meaning of his words, she was filled with immeasurable sorrow.

The fateful day had come. The shrine priest, along with a host of followers arrived, bearing a new elongated chest, into which it was ordered that the daughter should be laid. It was placed in her sleeping quarters, and now the man from the east, together with his dogs, left and right, slipped into it, wearing only his hunting garment and trousers, while armed with his sword. The mother and father escorted the chest outside, presenting themselves in a manner to suggest that their daughter lay within.

A cloud-like swarm of forerunners gathered, carrying a decorative halberd festival float, sacred evergreen branches, bells, and mirrors. Moving forward in a stately procession, they raised their voices as they went. The hunter's wife looked on, fearfully pondering what could now be taking place and greatly pitying her spouse, now taking her place as the offering.

The participants in the ceremony brought the victim to the shrine, where they opened the fence gate and cut the rope with which they had bound the chest, then brought it inside before stepping back and closing the gate behind them. As the priests and their followers stood outside, the hunter slightly raised the lid of the chest and saw squatting before him a huge monkey, some five cubits tall. From out of its face, as red as its haunches, it was baring white teeth. To its left and to its right sat some one hundred of his likewise ruddy-faced companions, raising their eyebrows as they screamed and squawked.

Before them on a cutting board lay a large sword, along with such condiments as pickling salt and cooking wine. It was all indeed as though a feast of venison were being prepared. After a few moments, the giant ape rose to open the chest and was promptly joined by his companions. With that the man lying inside burst forth and barked an order to his dogs: “Bring them all down, one by one.”

The two hounds instantly sprang at the chief monkey and with teeth and claws laid him prostrate. Their master now coolly drew his sword and, seizing the beast, flung it onto the cutting board, holding his blade to its throat:

“Is this then, wretch, how thou wouldst slay humans and eat them? I shall now sever thy head and feed it to these dogs.”

The ape’s face grew all the ruddier, as it batted its eyes, displayed again its white teeth, wept, and held out its clasped paws in supplication. The plea ignored, the man declared:

“For oh so many years hast thou devoured human children, and now in turn I shall render thy doom. But if thou art indeed a god, thou shouldst instead be the death of me.” And with that he continued to hold his sword on the monkey’s neck, even as his dogs were slaying many of its followers. Those that escaped clambered up the trees or fled deep into the mountains,

calling out to one another, so that their screeching echoed throughout hill and dale, though all for naught.

A shrine priest, possessed by the divine spirit, now spoke: “From this day and forever more, we shall demand no more sacrifices and shall take no more life. Moreover, no harm, no retribution, is to come to this man for whatever actions might be deemed willful or reckless. The woman who was to be offered up, her parents and their entire clan, are not to be chastised for wrongdoing. And lastly we too seek your pardon.”

All the priests went into the shrine, saying to the man: “Such is the will of the gods. It is a most august and sacred matter.”

But the man was unrelenting: “My own life is not dear to me, but as recompense for the slaughter of so many, I shall put to death this villain—and so we shall perish together.”

The chief priest intoned prayers and made solemn pledges, and so at last the man was mollified, saying only that the evil past must not be repeated, even as he allowed the ape to escape into the hills.

He returned home and lived with his wife to the end of their days, the father and mother ever lavishly showing their gratitude. Never again was their household plagued by fear and dread.

Such was all surely the karmic consequence of previous lives. We are told that human sacrifice was not revived and that in the land peace and harmony prevailed. And so the tale has come down to us.

Appendix 3

How a Wrestler's Sister Proved Her Own Strength

Konjaku Monogatari 23:24

In days gone by, there was a wrestler named Ōi no Mitsutō.[22] Attached to the Imperial Guard of the Left, he lived in the Land of Kai.[23] He was truly a champion: short and stout, wonderfully strong, quick on his feet, and solid as a rock.

Mitsutō's younger sister, twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age, was a graceful and beautiful woman, who lived in a house of her own. One day a sword-waving fugitive came storming in. Locking her in his arms and pressing the weapon against her, he held her hostage. As her attendants looked on in great agitation and amazement, one of them ran to Mitsutō's house to tell him. But the wrestler responded in a calm and even tone:

"If she has indeed been taken, it could only have been by that legendary wrestler of old, Satsuma no Ujinaga[24] himself."

The messenger shook his head in bewilderment at this strange reply and hurriedly returned to the house of his mistress. Cautiously he peered through a crack in the door.

She was wearing only a thin cotton robe, for it was still September. With her left hand, she shyly held a sleeve to her mouth; with the other, she gently restrained the arm of her assailant, who sat behind her, securing her body between his legs and holding the naked blade of his long, fearsome weapon in a backhand grip against her abdomen.

Now the woman appeared to be weeping, and as she wept, she stretched out her left hand towards a scattered heap of rough-hewn bamboo arrow shafts, lying, two dozen or more, in front of her. When her fingers had found the joints, she pressed and crushed them against the floor planks.

When her servant, peeping in through the door, saw his mistress turning bamboo to powder as easily as though it were rotting wood, he gaped in astonishment, as did her attacker.

"It is no wonder," thought the servant, "that her elder brother showed no sign of alarm. It would seem that he had himself taken a hammer to these bamboo shafts and with all his well-known might. With her own terrible strength, she will surely flatten this ruffian as well!"

When the fugitive saw this, he said to himself in great dismay: "No blade of mine will pierce this woman. With a pinch of her fingers she could crush my arm. My only hope for life and limb is to flee!"

Finding his opportunity, he suddenly released her, lunged towards the door, and went flying out of the house. On his heels was a large crowd, which caught and pinned him to the ground. Bound hand and foot, he was brought before Mitsutō.

"What can it mean," asked the wrestler, "when a man goes to the trouble of taking a hostage and then runs away?"

"There was naught to be done!" came the reply. "I seized her ladyship thinking her an ordinary woman, but when I saw her crush those arrow shafts of hard bamboo as though they were soft as a mouldering tree, I knew she could do the same and more to me. And so I fled."

When Mitsutō heard this, he roared with laughter. "No, no aimless jabbing of thine would have touched *that* woman! Hadst thou so much as tried, she would have wrenched up thy limb with such force that we should now be seeing the jagged edge of a shoulder bone. Some karmic merit must have stayed thy hand and thus caused her to spare thine arm.

"Even these hands of mine could slay thee. Were I to seize thine arms, throw thee to the ground, and tread on thy ribs, what little life would be left in thee! And yet that woman has twice the might of a Mitsutō. She may seem

as delicate as the gentlest maiden, but if I playfully took her arm in a test of strength, she would give my own such a squeeze that the fingers of my hand would in an instant lose their grip. Oh, it is a great pity she was born a woman, for as a man she would have been a wrestler without rival!"

When the fugitive heard this, he felt more dead than alive and through bitter tears exclaimed: "I thought her quite the usual sort of woman, who would serve me well as a hostage. Never did I dream that she would be one of such uncanny strength!"

"Thy life should be forfeit," said Mitsutō, "and hadst thou caused her the slightest injury, I should well have slain thee myself. She is, however, unharmed, and thou whose life was indeed in peril hast shrewdly sought to flee. Thus, I shall spare thee. But listen well: With that same slender arm she can break an antler on her knee as though it were but kindling wood. Of what she might do to a knave such as thee I need not say. Now be gone!" And so they chased him away.

Here was a woman of strength beyond description. And so the tale has come down to us.

Notes

1) It is estimated that by the mid-19th century, literacy in Germany had climbed to well over 50%, with, of course, considerable regional differences.

2) The Sino-Japanese compound that translates "fairy" is yōsei (妖精), which as Chinese yāojīng, referring broadly to mischievous spirits, is found in, for example, the 16th-century novel *Journey to the West* (西遊記*Xī Yóu Jì*, well known in Japan as Saiyūki). In the Meiji era, yōsei came to refer to the figures of Western mythology that include fairies, elves, sprites, leprechauns, and kobolds.

3) In *Die Moral von Grimms Märchen* [The Morality of the Grimm Tales], Wilhelm Solms (1999) cites the folklorist Lutz Röhrich (1987) as claiming in regard to "The Frog Prince" that Wilhelm Grimm adds a moral teaching: "So ist aus dem ur-

sprünglich reinen Erlösungsmärchen eine moralische Erzählung geworden." [Thus, from what was originally a pure salvific tale has come a moral narrative.] Solms notes: "Er unterstellt also ebenfalls, daß die Märchen ursprünglich, vor ihrer Bearbeitung durch die Brüder Grimm, keine Moral enthalten hätten." [He likewise assumes that the tales did not originally, before being edited by the Brothers Grimm, contain a moral.] Clearly seeking to refute this view, Solms continues: "Da das neue Interesse am Märchen auf seinen Sinn gerichtet ist, braucht man sich nicht zu wundern, daß die Psychologen den Vertretern der anderen Disziplinen in der öffentlichen Diskussion über die Märchen den Rang abgelaufen haben. Wenn es für Volkskundler und Literaturwissenschaftler feststeht, daß in den Märchen selbst kein Sinn zu finden sei, können sich die Psychologen und Pädagogen berechtigt, ja geradezu aufgefordert fühlen, jeden beliebigen Sinn in sie hineinzulegen." [As the new interest in the fairy tale is oriented toward its meaning, one need not be surprised that psychologists have overtaken representatives of other disciplines in the public discussion about the tales. If it has been maintained by folklorists and literary scholars that there is no meaning to be found in the fairy tales themselves, psychologists and pedagogues can feel justified, indeed almost called upon, to put any meaning they like into them.]

4) See Yamamoto McKeon, Midori (1996).

5) If Hongje was indeed an historical person, he would have lived sometime in the 7th century, as the military expedition to Korea took place from 661 to 663. The characters弘済 are read Kōsai in reference to the temple of that name in present-day Yamaguchi Prefecture in Kyūshū. Hongje is the name of a station on the Seoul subway, but it is named for a local stream, the Hongjecheon (弘済川).

6) For a complete translation, see De Wolf et al. (2015).

7) For a complete translation, see De Wolf (2003).

8) 猫島 (Neko-no-shima): Hegura-jima (舳倉島, lit. 'stern-berth island') is the modern name. The island is located fifty kilometers north of Wajima (輪島) in Ishikawa Prefecture. In notes to her own translation of the tale, Marian B. Ury (1979) points to the oddity of the fact that no comment is made regarding the origin of the name, especially since the island is supposedly ruled not by a feline deity but rather by a serpent god.

9) The story could not have taken place in Japan, where sheep were not widely known until the Meiji era. The Japanese word for the animal, hitsuji, clearly originates as a zodiac designation; hi- 'sun' + -tsuji 'crossing', the Hour of the Sheep being from one to three in the afternoon.
10) For a complete translation, see De Wolf et al. (2015).
11) In KJM 9:19 a similar story is told, with the teenage female thief having sought to purchase facial powder. For her sin, she too is reborn as a sheep.
12) Elsewhere a better-known tale is told of his sangfroid and generosity when, while out on an autumn evening playing his flute, he is accosted by a robber. For a complete translation of KJM 19:7, see De Wolf et al. (2015).
13) For a complete translation, see De Wolf (2003).
14) For a complete translation, see De Wolf et al. (2015).
15) For a complete translation, see De Wolf (2000).
16) For a complete translation, see Appendix 2.
17) For a complete translation, see De Wolf (1998).
18) Tenjiku (天竺) in the original, corresponding to Chinese tiānzhú, deriving ultimately from Sanskrit sindhu. The term here is intended to refer to India as a whole.
19) Five hundred is not an actual numerical designation but is rather intended to suggest a multitude.
20) The mountain paradise of Avalokiteshvara.
21) The reference is clearly to Sri Lanka.
22) An apparently historical person who lived during the reign of Emperor Ichijō at the turn of the 11th century.
23) in present-day Yamaguchi Prefecture
24) a legendary wrestler (薩摩氏長), thought to have lived a century and a half earlier, during the reign of Emperor Ninmyō

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