



HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Title	How Can Local Shopkeepers' Associations and Students Collaborate to Revitalize the Intangible Heritage in a Modern Context? : Experience of Event Creation and Product Development Based on "Yokai" Specter Stories that Exist in the Ancient City of Kyoto, Japan
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Yokai

Yokai are the messengers of Japanese people's views of the world in ancient and medieval times, when people still thought that yokai were real. In other words, they are the Japanese people's heritage.

If cultural heritage is defined as the transmission of world views of the past to the present, myths and legends can also be classified as intangible cultural heritage in that, being built on values and beliefs of the past, they transmit a world view of the past into the present. Japan is a country where myths, legends, and other mysteries are still abundant today. In Japan, the concept of god is very different from the monotheism of Western Europe. In Japan, it is often said that there are '8,000,000 gods', and these gods, transcending human beings, live in all natural things, from mountains to rivers, in forests and in houses. In Japan, where this concept of gods prevails, reverence for and a sense of appreciation of nature are manifested even now in various ceremonies and customs. A glimpse of the national characteristics held by the Japanese people can be seen in their respect for things that cannot be seen and for things that are not human. Gods are revered and feared by humans, but for the Japanese people, it is not only gods who possess this type of supernatural existence. There are also the *yokai* (spirits/supernatural beings). *Yokai* exist in very close proximity to people's living spaces. They are beings with a different form to humans. Sometimes, they bring evil and are exterminated by humans, other times they scare humans by appearing in strange forms, and yet other times they bring happiness to humans. While gods are a supernatural force to be revered and feared, *yokai* are strange but lovable characters. In myths and other stories passed down through generations in Japan, these kinds of beings make frequent appearances. From a modern perspective, yokai can easily be dismissed as pre-modern superstitions. However, *yokai* are part of the culture and the views on spirits of Japan formed from the ancient past.

Pop culture and Art

Popular works highlighting '*yokai*':
the continuation of past world views through media

Like most supernatural beings in Japan, *yokai* were originally invisible to the human eye, but they were portrayed in many paintings to give it a visible form. During the *Edo* era (1603-1867), when Japan was closed to most other countries and developed its own culture, *yokai* started to be used as a theme for entertainment, notably in *ukiyo-e* paintings. The famous *ukiyo-e* painters, *Hokusai* and *Gyosai*, were among those who left a number of works illustrating *yokai*. Many other paintings created for pleasure or entertainment also featured *yokai*. Later, when Japan opened up and introduced western culture, *yokai* were considered to be a superstitious product posing a barrier to the process of modernization, and the trend of using yokai for pleasure or entertainment declined. In addition, the two successive world wars left little time for people to have the luxury of enjoying *yokai*. However, after the Second World War, *Manga* artist, *MIZUKI Shigeru*, had great success with *Manga* featuring *yokai*. This led to a renewed interest in *yokai*, and *yokai* became featured in a lot of leisure and entertainment works through to the present day. *MIZUKI* is a *Manga* artist of the same generation as *TEZUKA*. And, like *TEZUKA*, is one of the great masters of Japanese *Manga*. After the Second World War, he brought the forms and stories of *yokai*, which were in danger of suffering the fate of being lost for ever, to the present through the medium of picture stories, or *Manga*. *MIZUKI*'s portrayals of *yokai* have a unique presence, which gives many Japanese people a strange sense of nostalgia. Incidentally, '*Non Non Ba*', which won the best album award at the *Angouleme International Comics Festival*, is an autobiographical *Manga* about the relationship between *MIZUKI* when he was a child, and his grandmother, who knew a lot about *yokai*. In this way, *yokai* in Japan have persisted from representation in ancient stories and paintings through to reproduction in new forms of expression and presentation. For many Japanese people, it is the combination of interest in the stories and interest in the forms that make *yokai* into lovable characters. At the same time, *yokai* are part of the culture and views on spirits of Japan formed from the ancient past, and as such, are pursued as a valid object of academic folklore and anthropological research. In other words, *yokai* are not only a source of popular entertainment, but can also be approached academically. Through enjoying *yokai* as a form of entertainment, Japanese people are unconsciously reproducing *yokai* through new media and connecting with the culture and views on spirits of Japan formed from the ancient past. This can be called the transmission of world views of the past through entertainment media.

The continuance of views on spirits:

Art and Economy

Here we would like to introduce tourism activities based on the theme of *yokai* in the World Heritage city, Kyoto, and report on ways in which local residents and students use *yokai* as a focus in economic activities. In Japan's pre-eminent tourist city, Kyoto, there remain many historic buildings, much traditional culture, and many associated myths and stories have survived to the present.

- The story of the bridge where the dead are resurrected
- The story of the man who worked in the Imperial Court in the daytime and judged the dead in hell at night
- The story of the Buddhist priest who drove away a devil who brought the plague in the form of a black-boned demon...

Many such stories still remain. Among the many stories that have been passed down in Kyoto is the story of an old tool that transformed into a *yokai* when it was thrown away by a human. The Buddhist tale, "*Tsukumo-Gami-ki*", is a story about old tools that were thrown away after many years of use, and transformed into *yokai* called "*Tsukumo-Gami*". The "*Tsukumo-Gami*" formed groups and caused trouble until they were eventually subdued by the power of a Buddhist priest and repented of their actions...

Stories of trees, rocks, or other natural phenomena developing mysterious power over the years can be found in other countries as well as in Japan, but the concept of a completely manufactured article such as a tool developing mysterious power and transforming is unique to Japan. In the olden days, Japanese people attributed spirituality (soul or individuality) to manufactured articles such as tools, and treated them with care. "*Tsukumo-Gami*" is a *yokai* that emerged from Japanese people's sense of appreciation, reverence and care for their tools in the old days. The sense of reverence for nature and the notion of taking care of tools that were evident in the consciousness of ancient Japan are directly connected to the recent trend of ecology and recycling. Through this story, people in contemporary society can learn the wisdom of their ancestors regarding how to live in symbiosis with the environment.

Now, we would like to introduce a project that was put into practice in the "*Taishogun*" shopping district in downtown Kyoto. This shopping district is located on *Ichijo*-Street, where a carnival procession was held to celebrate the ability of "*Tsukumo-Gami*" to transform from an old tool to a *yokai*, and to express thanks to the god of transformation (the dedication of the concept of transformation).

A few years ago, this shopping district faced an economic crisis when the number of customers declined due to the opening of a huge shopping center nearby. There was no way for the group of individual shopkeepers in the district to compete with the huge shopping center, which was backed by huge funds, and the existence of the shops selling only goods was threatened. Faced with this situation, "*Taishogun*" shopping district spent several years searching for a way to revitalize the community, and eventually, taking into account the popularity of *yokai* in Japan, settled on this "*Tsukumo-Gami-ki*". As "*Tsukumo-Gami*" is the *yokai* of tools, this was particularly appropriate for shops selling tools. Then, in 2005, "*Taishogun*" shopping district named *Ichijo*-Street the "*Yokai Street*", and set to work to revitalize the community through a project on the theme of *yokai* and "*Tsukumo-Gami*". At first, the shop owners gathered to set up the project, but they had neither a profound knowledge of *yokai* nor outstanding skills in presentation or expression, and the project had no great appeal. However, Kyoto has many universities, especially arts universities, and when they heard about the "*Taishogun*" shopping district's community revival *yokai* project, students started to visit the area. Many got involved as volunteer staff managing the project together with the shop owners (local residents), planning events and developing products. The fact that the students and local residents could work together across generations on a common theme can be seen as proof of the wide appeal of *yokai* to all ages, from adults to children. Representative events undertaken in "*Taishogun*" shopping district are (1) the *yokai* costume parade, based on the legend of "*Tsukumo-Gami*" and (2) an exhibition of works on the theme of *yokai*, original creations by present-day art university students following in the footsteps of artists of older days:

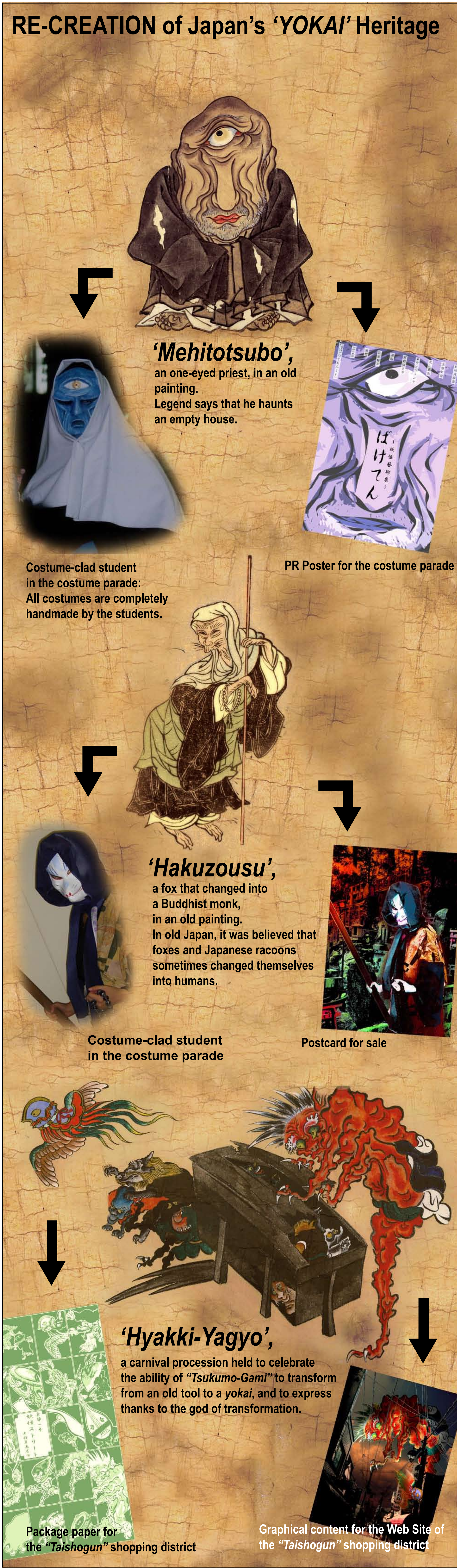
(1) The first costume parade took place in 2005, with about 30 *yokai*, mainly students, and it was well received by local residents and tourists. As a result, the 2006 parade consisted of 60 *yokai*, mainly students, and an audience of over 1,500 people. An even bigger event, with 100 *yokai*, is being planned for 2007. (2) The exhibition is an ideal give-and-take style managed event, where the shopping district provides free use of its office as a gallery for works by students of Kyoto's art universities.

The exhibition has only just been started in 2007, but there are already plans to make the entire *Ichijo*-Street the exhibition site in the future, with works dotted along the street so that visitors will wonder the whole area.

Preserve Historical Heritage, Create Future Heritage

In addition, *Yokai*-related products are being developed and a homepage is being designed in collaboration. The collaborative project between local residents and students has been a success, and at present, many people visit the "*Taishogun*" shopping district during events, and the number of tourists visiting at other times is also gradually on the increase. The continuation and development of this collaborative project between the shopkeepers association and students can be expected to achieve the following results in the areas of cultural heritage succession and local community promotion.

- The revitalization of the local economy due to tourists
- Cross-generation interaction between local residents and students
- Through events on the theme of *yokai*, education about past world views and the succession of this heritage
- The succession of past world views and the skills and sensibilities of past artists to the next generation through the young generation (students), who are deepening their knowledge of classic *yokai* and expressing this in modern terms in their works.
- The learning of the importance of ecology and recycling from ancestors through "*Tsukumo-Gami*", and the promotion of this in contemporary society.
- By making people aware of the lesser-known aspects of Kyoto, adding to the appeal of Kyoto as a multi-layered, multi-faceted destination.



HOW CAN LOCAL SHOPKEEPERS' ASSOCIATIONS AND STUDENTS COLLABORATE TO REVITALIZE THE INTANGIBLE HERITAGE IN A MODERN CONTEXT?

EXPERIENCE OF EVENT CREATION AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT BASED ON "YOKAI" SPECTER STORIES
THAT EXIST IN THE ANCIENT CITY OF KYOTO, JAPAN

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