

THE MONKEY AND CROCODILE STORY IN JAPAN: THE PRESENCE OF AN ANCIENT  
INDIAN TALE AMONG EARLY JAPANESE NARRATIVES

by

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B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2012

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Asian Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April 2015

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the presence of early Indian narrative elements in Japan through an analysis of tale collections and regional Japanese folklore. Focusing on the reception of the widely distributed monkey and crocodile story, the present study aims to elucidate the role of Indian tales within Japan, and will serve to demonstrate the position of Japanese folklore among globally present motifs and tale types.

The project discusses literary and oral forms of the story, examining variants among the Indian *Jātakas* (ca. 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE – 5<sup>th</sup> c. CE) and *Pañcatantra* (ca. 300 CE), the twelfth century *Konjaku monogatari*, and nineteen oral retellings recorded from across Japan. Elements characteristic of the three primary literary versions are identified, while also recording transformations, additions, or omissions of thematic elements, as well as core motifs that have remained consistent across all known stories. This analysis demonstrates that Japanese variants of the tale were not drawn linearly from a single Buddhist text, but instead represent a fusion of themes from across various religious and cultural contexts.

The present study also provides some explanation as to the extensive dissemination of the story within Japan, identifying characteristics of the tale that facilitated its lasting and widespread promulgation. The study examines similarly themed myths and legends from the indigenous Japanese tradition that provided the foundations for its assimilation into the existing storytelling culture and the integration of characteristically Japanese motifs into the core framework of this imported narrative.

## **Preface**

This thesis is the original, independent, and unpublished work of the author, E. Marsh.

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to offer my deepest appreciation to my supervisors, Dr. Christina Laffin and Dr. Adheesh Sathaye for their unending support and tireless revisions of numerous drafts and outlines. To Dr. Peter Nosco, I extend sincere gratitude for his enthusiasm towards my research and for instilling in me a much deeper understanding of Japanese intellectual history. I would like also to acknowledge Professor Thomas Hunter for his lively Sanskrit lessons, and Professor Fumiko Watai for her invaluable support and Japanese language instruction, without both of whom I would not have had the linguistic skills required to pursue my project. I am also forever grateful to Dr. Pushkar Sohoni for introducing me to the fascinating culture and religion of South Asia.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their generous funding of my research through the Joseph Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship, and to the India Club Prize in Asian Studies for their continuous financial support.

## Introduction

There is a vast array of narratives in Japan that were transmitted into the country in conjunction with the promulgation of Buddhist teachings. As the tales were reproduced across various literary works and oral retellings, they became an integrated part of the existing body of myths and legends that had been present in the country since early times.<sup>1</sup> The aim of my research is to trace the development of one such tale, analyzing its appearance in ancient Indian texts along with known occurrences of the story in the Japanese literary and oral traditions. Such an investigation will add to current knowledge on the presence and function of early Indian folklore within Japan, and will serve to demonstrate the position of Japanese narratives among globally present motifs and tale types.

The tale that is addressed in this thesis is that of the monkey and the crocodile, which has come to be distributed across Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and secular contexts throughout Asia.<sup>2</sup> The story originated in ancient Indian folklore, from which it was adapted as a *Jātaka* tale (ca. 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE - 5<sup>th</sup> c. CE) that functioned to convey the teachings of the Buddhist doctrine.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> The first record of the mythology and legends of Japan is found in the earliest remaining Japanese histories, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*. The *fudoki* (gazetteers), which were commissioned by Empress Genmei (661-721; r. 707-15) in 713, also provide an extensive archive of local myths, legends and folktales from regions throughout the archipelago.

<sup>2</sup> This story is classified as ATU Tale Type 91, “Heart of Monkey as Medicine” in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) Index. “A monkey (fox, jackal) and a turtle (crocodile, fish) are friends. The turtle’s wife becomes jealous and pretends that she has an illness which can be cured only if she eats the heart of a monkey. The turtle meets the monkey and swims into the sea with him on his back. On the way he tells him about his wife’s problem. The monkey sympathises but says he has left his heart in a tree. When the turtle takes him back to the land to get his heart, the monkey runs away [K544, K961.1]. In some variants, the illness of a king (princess) can be cured only by the liver of a rabbit. When one is caught, it pretends to have left its liver at home and offers to go and get it.” See Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography*, Part I (Helsinki: Folklore Fellows Communications), 73. This tale type was formerly titled “The Monkey who Left his Heart at Home” in the earlier Aarne-Thompson (AT) index, *The Types of the Folktale*.

<sup>3</sup> The *Jātakas* are short stories of the former lives of the Buddha in his various animal forms. A large number of *Jātakas* originated as common Indian folktales that were overlapped with characters and episodes from the canonical texts. These tales were inserted with didactic elements and were used to praise the virtues of the Buddha and to depict the fundamental teachings of the Buddhist doctrine.

same folktale was independently assimilated into the *Pañcatantra* tradition<sup>4</sup> (ca. 300 CE),<sup>5</sup> where it was used as a tool for conveying teachings on proper conduct and governance. The *Pañcatantra*, as a highly refined treatise on political science, and the *Jātakas*, as expedient conveyors of Buddhist principles, were widely valued works that facilitated the extensive dissemination of this and other early Indian tales. In Japan, the story took on a widespread presence and was integrated into the Japanese storytelling tradition in various forms, making this particular narrative a valuable focus for the present thesis.<sup>6</sup>

The conventional approach to an analysis of the presence of Indian fables in Japan is to first locate them within the collection of Buddhist *Jātakas* and sutras that were introduced to the country via the continent since as early as the sixth century. The stories were then assembled into numerous tale collections, most notably the *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記 (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.), *Sambō ekotoba* 三寶繪詞 (1011), *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 (12<sup>th</sup> c.), and *Shasekishū* 沙石集 (1283).

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<sup>4</sup> The *Pañcatantra* is a collection of Indian animal tales that have been woven together under an overarching frame story to form a single *nītiśāstra*, or instructional text on modes of government and politics. Like the *Jātakas*, the *Pañcatantra* drew from existing folktales, and adapted them to convey the fundamentals of proper conduct and ethics in Hindu society. Over hundreds of years, the text has been translated and retranslated from its original Sanskrit into over fifty languages, and the tales within have come to bear a significant presence not only across India, but throughout the Asian and Western story-telling traditions. The renowned Sanskritist and *Pañcatantra* scholar, Johannes Hertel has recorded over two hundred versions of the text that have been transmitted across various countries and language regions. For this, see Index I of Hertel's *Das Pañcatantra: seine Geschichte und seine Verbreitung* (Leipzig and Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1914).

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the approximate years of the *Jātakas* and the *Pañcatantra*, a solid consensus has yet to be reached on the time of their earliest publication. The lower limit of the 3rd c. BCE for the *Jātakas* refers to the earliest known representations of these Buddhist birth stories in bas-relief carvings found in Sanchi and Amaravati, although whether the monkey and crocodile story in particular was circulated in its *Jātaka* form at this earliest date is unknown. (Edward B. Cowell, ed., *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births: Translated from the Pāli*, vol. 1 [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973], viii ) For further discussion on the dates of the *Jātakas*, see Patrick Olivelle, *Pañcatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), xxxiii. For the dating of what may be regarded as the earliest occurrence of the *Pañcatantra*, see Franklin Edgerton, *The Panchatantra Reconstructed: An Attempt to Establish the Lost Original Sanskrit Text of the Most Famous of Indian Story-collections on the Basis of the Principal Extant Versions*, vol. 2 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1924), 182; Johannes Hertel, *The Panchatantra: A Collection of Ancient Hindu Tales in its Oldest Recension, the Kashmirian, entitled Tantrākhyāyika* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1915), xiv; and Olivelle, *Pañcatantra*, xii.

<sup>6</sup> For the broad range of distribution of the monkey and crocodile story across the Japanese archipelago, see Seki Keigo 関敬吾, *Nihon mukashibanashi shūsei* 日本昔話集成, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1960), 229-34. The same information is provided in English by Hiroko Ikeda in her *Type and Motif Index of Japanese Folk-Literature*, FF Communications, Vol. 89, No. 209 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1971), 27-8.



Such works have been the subject of interest in regards to their patterns of organization, as well as the purpose for which the stories were so faithfully recorded.

The most voluminous among these texts is the *Konjaku monogatari shū*, amassing over one thousand religious and secular tales of Indian, Chinese and Japanese origin, across twenty-eight extant scrolls. The author of the work is unknown, and unlike many other tale collections it contains no explanatory preface, which renders it a particularly intriguing topic of discussion as to its function and intended audience. The current scholarly consensus is that, like other similar texts, it was designed to supplement the oral sermons of monks as they spread their teachings among the masses, while the secular anecdotes were likely included for their entertainment value.<sup>7</sup> It is this pattern of transmission that is commonly seen to account for the occurrence of Indian stories within the Japanese tradition.

The present thesis aims to demonstrate that Japanese variants of the monkey and crocodile story were not drawn linearly from any single known Buddhist themed source, but rather, they represent a complex fusion of themes from across various religious and cultural contexts. In order to shed light on the diverse array of motifs and narrative elements that came to be a part of the common monkey and crocodile story in Japan, I will examine its earliest known Japanese textual record in the *Konjaku monogatari shū* in conjunction with its counterparts

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<sup>7</sup> Other Japanese tale collections that are said to have been used in this manner include such works as *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記 (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> c.), *Uji shūi monogatari* 宇治拾遺物語 (13<sup>th</sup> c.), and *Shasekishū* 沙石集(1283). Such texts contain predominantly Buddhist themed parables, and are thought to have come into particularly common use during the medieval period with the spread of the religion and its active proselytization among the lay population. For discussion on the performance of such tales during Buddhist sermons, see for example, Katayose Masayoshi 片寄正義, *Konjaku monogatari shū ron* 今昔物語集論 (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1944), 48-49; D.E. Mills, *A Collection of Tales from Uji: A Study and Translation of Uji shūi monogatari* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 34; Marian Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 2; and Kikuchi Ryōichi 菊地良一, *Chūsei setsuwa no kenkyū* 中世説話の研究 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), 13.

among the Pāli *Jātakas* and the *Pañcatantra*. This will add not only to current knowledge on the presence of Indian Buddhist narratives within Japan, but will also be a much needed contribution to research on the eastern dissemination of the *Pañcatantra*, the extensive analysis of which has to date been largely limited to its westward migration through Western Asia, the Mediterranean, and into Europe.<sup>8</sup>

The study will also explore the tale of the tortoise and the cranes, which immediately precedes our primary narrative within the *Konjaku monogatari*, and is likewise present in the two Indian tale collections.<sup>9</sup> The pair of stories will be examined together in accordance with Kunisaki Fumimaro's theories of organization, which established the "two stories, one type" (*ni wa, ichi rui* 二話一類) concept.<sup>10</sup> His work demonstrates that of the over one thousand individual tales in the *Konjaku monogatari*, each is joined to the next in closely linked couplets that are further tied to one another through common motifs. The information gained from such an analysis of the monkey and crocodile story alongside relevant narratives in both Japanese and Indian literature and folklore, will demonstrate that while the version of the tale that is recorded in the *Konjaku monogatari* did influence the shape of several known variants, this text was not the only source from which the story was taken up and adapted into the Japanese culture.

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<sup>8</sup> Much work has been done on tracing the transmission of the *Pañcatantra* from its earliest Kashmir form to its successive translations into Pahlavi, Old-Syriac, Arabic, Greek, Persian, Hebrew, Latin, Spanish, German, Italian, and finally into the first English language recension appearing in 1570. For more on the westward spread of the *Pañcatantra*, see John. B. Alphonso-Karakala, "Facets of Panchatantra," *Indian Literature* 18 (1975).

<sup>9</sup> The tale of the tortoise and cranes is categorized as ATU 225A, "The Tortoise Lets Itself be Carried by Birds." The following is the given description of the tale type. "A tortoise is carried up into the air by two birds (herons, geese, swans) who hold onto a stick which the tortoise holds in its mouth. When it speaks, it loses its grip and drops to its death [J2357]. Or, a bird (eagle) takes the tortoise into the air, drops it so that it smashes, and eats it [J657.2, A2214.5.1]. Sometimes used to explain why the shell of the tortoise has cracks." (Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, Part I, 143.)

<sup>10</sup> For the most comprehensive and detailed discussion on the organizing principles of *Konjaku monogatari*, see Kunisaki Fumimaro 国東文麿, "Konjaku monogatari no setsuwa to soshiki no dokujisei," in *Nihon no setsuwa*, vol. 2, Kanda Hideo and Kunisaki Fumimaro, eds. (Tokyo: Tokyo bijutsu, 1974).

The thesis will begin by outlining literary variants of the story and identifying motifs and thematic elements that are unique to each of the three distinct Indian and Japanese textual streams. These will act as indicators of contact between any of these written versions and other folk renditions of the tale found in Japan. Following this, the study will include an analysis of the eighteen widely distributed oral variants of the Japanese tale, as compiled by the Japanese folklorist, Seki Keiko 関敬吾, touching as well on other forms of the story recorded across various sources.<sup>11</sup> I will identify among them those elements that are characteristic of the three primary literary versions, while also recording transformations, additions, or omissions of narrative elements, and the core motifs that have remained consistent across all known stories. This will be done in order to demonstrate the convergence of these folktales with elements belonging not only to the *Konjaku monogatari* text, but also to the *Jātaka* and the *Pañcatantra* traditions.

This research will further aim to provide some explanation as to the success and widespread acceptance and assimilation of this particular narrative within Japan. As the story was passed on, it retained its most basic form, while growing more elaborate and incorporating itself into the existing body of characteristically Japanese folklore. Elements of indigenous Japanese stories were appendaged onto the original tale, and while this may serve as the most immediate explanation for its pervasive and longstanding presence within Japanese culture, this raises the question as to how such an integration had initially come to occur.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, the thesis will also look at variants of the Japanese monkey and crocodile story recorded in Basil Hall Chamberlain, *The Silly Jelly-fish: Told in English by B.H. Chamberlain* (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 1887); Ikeda, *Type and Motif Index*, 27-8; Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男, *Nihon no mukashibanashi* 日本の昔話 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1983); and Yei Theodora Ozaki, *The Japanese Fairy Book* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, 1903), 189-202.

Among the vast collection of stories recorded in *Konjaku monogatari shū*, only a selection of them exist as substantial pieces of Japanese folklore independently from the text. The present project will identify characteristics of the tale that facilitated its promulgation throughout Japanese literature and oral tradition, exploring similarly themed myths and legends recorded in the earliest extant Japanese chronicles. This will include discussion of relevant episodes in the creation myths recorded in the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720), focusing on the narratives surrounding the indigenous Japanese gods, Sarutahiko no Mikoto 猿田彦命 (Monkey Guard Lad), Hoori no Mikoto 火遠理命 (Flickering Flame), and Ōkuninushi no Mikoto 大國主神 (Great Land Master).<sup>12</sup> The study will demonstrate that when the monkey and crocodile tale was first introduced into Japan, it encountered a culture already familiar with a corresponding set of motifs that would have provided a suitable context for its assimilation into the existing storytelling culture and the integration of Japanese mythological elements, as seen in several oral variants of this tale.

Drawing on such examples from early Japanese mythology, legends, and folklore, my thesis will provide classification and analyses of the monkey and crocodile tale and its regional variants. As the story was transmitted both textually and orally, it was transformed to incorporate religious and secular teachings as well as local customs, beliefs and histories. It is further significant that across a vast range of narrative adaptations and transformations, the variants continued to maintain certain meaningful core motifs that were notably consistent across space and time. This thesis aims to examine such aspects of the tales in order to contribute to present

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<sup>12</sup> All English translations of the names of deities that appear in the indigenous Japanese mythologies are from Gustav Heldt, *The Kojiki: An Account of Ancient Matters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

scholarship on the role of the *Konjaku monogatari*, *Pañcatantra*, and *Jātaka* among Japanese folktales and literary works, and the presence of Indian tale cycles throughout the country.

## Chapter One: The Monkey and Crocodile Story

In the most basic structure of the present story that is common to all known variants, a sea creature carries a monkey out into the water with the goal of obtaining one of his organs. When the monkey discovers the plan, he claims that he has left his organ at home and that they must return to retrieve it. Once they reach the shore, the monkey leaps into a tree where he remains, and with this action saves his own life. In most instances the sea creature is either a crocodile or a turtle, the former being the most common in Indian variants, and the latter being the predominant character in Japan. Likewise, the organ is most often identified as a heart in India, whereas it is typically a liver in Japanese renditions of the tale. These shifts however, appear to have no effect on the progression of the overall story itself.

The appearance of the turtle in many Japanese tales is generally understood as being the result of Buddhist influence, as it is an auspicious creature appearing frequently in Buddhist narratives and art. It may also be suggested that since crocodiles did not exist in Japan at that time, the animal was replaced with one which would have been familiar to the people. This is a common pattern of reasoning that is given for shifts between creatures across variants of an animal fable for which no other structural or cultural explanation can be provided. I will suggest in this thesis that there are themes in Shintō mythology that may in some cases give us an alternative way of understanding this modification.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, there are a number of

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<sup>13</sup> In the interest of brevity and simplicity, the term Shintō is used in this paper to refer to the native deities, mythologies, and religious beliefs and rituals that existed in Japan prior to, or are not recognized as being a part of, imported Buddhist and Confucian doctrine. The current use of “Shintō” is a relatively recent construction that arose in the Meiji Period (1868-1912) as an umbrella term that refers to indigenous Japanese spiritual practices, independently from foreign religions. The history and development of this terminology, as well as its problematic areas, have been discussed at length by Kuroda Toshio in his “Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion,” James C. Dobbins and Suzanne Gay, trans., *Journal of Japanese Studies* 7 (1981).

instances of a *wani* 和爾 appearing in the earliest indigenous Japanese myth-histories.<sup>14</sup> In these stories, the *wani* often takes a passenger upon its back to transport it into or across a body of water, suggesting that the early Japanese were in fact familiar with some large marine reptile other than a turtle being depicted as a connection between land and water.

In this chapter, I will explain the textual variants of the story recorded in the collection of Pāli *Jātakas*, the *Pañcatantra*, and *Konjaku monogatari*, as well as oral stories found distributed within Japan. I will attempt to categorize them into elements that are unique to each branch, identifying motifs that are characteristic of variants from the Indian Buddhist tradition, the *Pañcatantra*, Buddhist themed Japanese texts, and the various vernacular forms in Japan which consist of a convergence of themes from Shintō mythology together with material from the three former streams. Such an analysis will serve to shed light on the presence of both the *Jātakas* and *Pañcatantra* derived narratives in Japan and the extent to which motifs from each have been disseminated within the Japanese storytelling tradition.

### ***Pañcatantra***

In the *Pañcatantra*, the story opens with the formation of a close, mutual friendship between a monkey and a crocodile.<sup>15</sup> In most renderings of the tale, the monkey has been exiled

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<sup>14</sup> In the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*, the word *wani* is either represented phonetically, as in 和邇, or with the single character 鰐 which semantically indicates a crocodile. (Marinus Willem De Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, [Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 1918], 139.) Heldt translates *wani* as “sea beast”. He indicates that the term had traditionally referred to either a shark or a crocodile, the latter having been a common character in Indian folktales that were introduced to Japan along with Buddhism. (Heldt, *The Kojiki*, 202.)

<sup>15</sup> The original *Pañcatantra* is unknown to us, with the only extant forms of the text being its numerous translations and reworkings in Sanskrit and Indian vernacular languages. Franklin Edgerton has attempted to reconstruct the urtext by meticulously tracing back the major streams of the *Pañcatantra* tradition, focusing on the *Tantrākhyāyika*, Southern *Pañcatantra*, Nepalese *Pañcatantra*, *Hitopadeśa*, Somadeva’s *Kathāsaritsāgara*, Kṣemendra’s *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī*, the “textus simplicior”, Pūrṇabhadra’s *Pañcatantra*, and recensions from the Pahlavi translation.

from his herd and now lives alone in a fig tree, sustaining himself on fruit. A crocodile wanders by and begins to eat the figs that the monkey is dropping into the waters below. It is with this act that a close relationship is formed between the two, and they are said to pass the time together at the edge of the seashore, residing in each others' company day after day. The monkey loses concern over his own banishment, and the crocodile is so smitten with his new companion that he fails to return home to his wife.

Meanwhile, the spouse of the crocodile consults with her female friends as to the whereabouts of her husband. She is informed that he has been spotted at the seashore doting over an ape, and in a fit of jealousy she feigns her own illness as a means of deceiving her husband into killing his good friend. When the crocodile finally leaves the shoreline and returns home, he is told by his wife's companions that she is gravely ill and will surely die if she does not receive the heart of a monkey. This, as it is pointed out in the *Pañcatantra* narrative, is a secret remedy known only to women.

The crocodile is gravely distressed by the choice that he must now make between his responsibilities as a husband and his obligations as a friend. The crocodile decides that his loyalties lie with his wife, and returns to the fig tree to invite his friend to share a meal with them in their marine dwelling. The monkey agrees to visit the crocodile and climbs onto his back as they set out together into the water. During their journey, the crocodile mentions that his wife is deathly ill and that he has consulted with a physician whose only prescription was the heart of a primate. The monkey feigns his deep regret, lamenting that he has left his heart at home and asks

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The summary and discussion of the monkey and crocodile story given in the present thesis relies largely on Edgerton's reconstruction. See Edgerton, *The Panchatantra Reconstructed*, vol. 1, 371-385, and vol. 2, 102-5.



that they return to retrieve it. The pair turn around and head back to the shore, giving the monkey the chance to leap to the safety of his tree and out of the reach of the crocodile below.

The *Pañcatantra* story very briefly summarized here is by far the longest and most intricate among the three literary variants that are discussed in the present thesis. Its length and comparative complexity are the result of the numerous elements that have been included within this version of the story to fit in with the similarly themed surrounding narratives as well as the general progression of the work as a whole. It contains a number of distinguishing features that are unique to its position as a component of the broader *Pañcatantra* text, in addition to its status as a product of the social system of early India. The instructional theme of the *Pañcatantra* sets it apart from the *Jātakas* and *Konjaku monogatarishū*, influencing not only the selected stories that are organized within it, but also how each story is shaped to reflect the overall development of the text.

Approaches to understanding the main purpose of the *Pañcatantra* can be divided into two broad categories. Some scholars argue that the text makes use of animal characters to simulate the stratification of early Indian society, while others take the stance that the *Pañcatantra* is first and foremost an instructional text on the art of politics. Both theories will be examined here and applied to the case of the monkey and crocodile narrative in order to uncover motifs linked to social groupings and proper conduct that are particular to variants of the tale rooted in the *Pañcatantra* tradition.

McComas Taylor and Patrick Olivelle, who have each written extensively on the *Pañcatantra*, argue that the stories within work together to demonstrate the text's overarching portrayal of the divisions present in the social structure of early India. Based on this

understanding, the element of friendship that arises between the monkey and the crocodile would be understood as a tool for depicting the layers in orthodox society. The two characters belong to very different realms of the animal kingdom, with the former falling into the category of prey, and the latter being an immediately recognizable predator by nature. Such cross-boundary relationships feature widely across the stories in the collection in order to represent the disastrous consequences that would arise from attempts to ignore each other's natural propensities and to step out of one's boundaries within human society.

Olivelle has examined this theme from the perspective of “meat-eaters” versus “grass-eaters,” suggesting that such tales worked to legitimize a social hierarchy whereby the upper divisions of the strata would rule over the lower reaches of society.<sup>16</sup> In stories set in the animal kingdom this would take the form of carnivorous crocodiles, snakes, and lions falling naturally into a class that is superior to that of plant-eating creatures. Within the human world, the former category would have consisted of *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*, representing the “eaters,” whereas the bottom rungs of the hierarchy, composed of *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*,<sup>17</sup> were to serve as their “food”, such that any attempt to form an equal relationship between the two ranks would inevitably result in its demise.<sup>18</sup>

Taylor explains that through the clever use of animals as representations, the *Pañcatantra* depicts the laws of natural enmity and amity based on the internal divisions existing within

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<sup>16</sup> Patrick Olivelle, “Meat-eaters and Grass-Eaters: An Exploration of Human Nature in Kathā and Dharma Literature,” in *Holy War: Violence and the Bhagavad Gīta*, ed. Rosen, S.J., 99-116 (Hampton: Deepak Heritage Books, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> According to the brahmanical structure of early India, society was organized on the basis of the *varṇa*, or class, system. At the top of the hierarchy were the *brāhmaṇas* (priests), followed by the *kṣatriyas* (warriors), the *vaiśyas* (merchants), and the *śūdras* (servants). The *brāhmaṇas* were concerned with the learning, maintenance, and performance of the sacred Vedic scriptures, which served as the precursors to classical Hinduism.

<sup>18</sup> Patrick Olivelle, *Pañcatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), xxxvi.

human society according to one's birth-given rank, race, or lineage.<sup>19</sup> These delineations were an established part of the normative social structure, and as such they find themselves embedded throughout the narrative of the *Pañcatantra*. Approaching the issue from a slightly different angle from Olivelle, Taylor suggests that the stories in the *Pañcatantra* do not reaffirm the brahmanical hierarchy and enforce the division of early Indian society into top and bottom layers as Olivelle states, but rather, they warn against defying the boundaries of social groups as a whole, regardless of their relative status.

Applying this theory to the monkey and crocodile story, we can see that underlying the central lesson on the effective use of deception in political conduct, it is the grass-eater who defeats the meat-eater in the end by means of counter-craft. This demonstrates that if there is indeed a message on the maintenance of societal divisions, it is one of upholding stringent boundaries across society at large, without concern for a vertical structure of higher and lower social groupings. This is in line with Taylor's theory that the animals in the *Pañcatantra* have been divided according to *jāti*, which refers to the birth, rank, or denomination that determines one's categorization in society. This concept is used across the stories to closely reflect the *varṇas*, or classes of human society, and therein caution its audience against unnatural cross-*jāti* or cross-*varṇa* affiliations irrespective of their status as food or eater, or their position at the top or bottom rungs of the social hierarchy.

The theories put forth by Olivelle and Taylor both demonstrate the pivotal role played by the depiction of unnatural interclass relationships within the *Pañcatantra* stories. Examined from this sociological perspective, in the case of the monkey and crocodile tale we may understand that the aberrant friendship was destined to fail from the very start. The crocodile had begun to

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<sup>19</sup> McComas Taylor, *The Fall of the Indigo Jackal: The Discourse of Division and Pūrṇabhadra's Pañcatantra*, 44.

behave in a manner that was out of line with his nature, treating a monkey as if he were his own family member and indulging in plant foods. The wife orders the killing of the creature not simply so that her husband will stop having friends, but to terminate specifically this relationship which defied the intrinsic laws of society and threatened to offset the balance of the forest. She contrives of a way to attempt the restoration of the natural order and plots to bring about the death of the monkey by feigning her own illness and creating a situation for her husband in which the only appropriate action would be for him to betray his friend.

Other scholars have analysed the *Pañcatantra* primarily as a political treatise, arguing against the sociological interpretation proposed by Olivelle and Taylor. Ashay Naik has focused on the role of the *Pañcatantra* as a *nītiśāstra*, and takes the stance that attributing the outcome of the stories to an innate and predestined natural enmity among members of different *jātis* or *varṇas*, is an oversimplification of the complex lessons that are conveyed through the animal tales. Rather, according to this theory, each unsuccessful relationship fails due to unique circumstances and each communicates its own particular teaching on the importance of being cautious and wise in the formation of strong political alliances.<sup>20</sup>

Examining the *Pañcatantra* from the angle of its emphasis on governance and correct worldly conduct clarifies the prominent role given to the art of deception and the guarding of secrets in the present animal tale. From this perspective, it is not the upholding of the natural hierarchy that is of primary concern, but rather, the use of cunning and careful wording in order to gain the advantage over an adversary. Focusing on the political rather than the social features of the *Pañcatantra* reveals another layer of complex features that are unique to the primary

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<sup>20</sup> Ashay Naik, “‘Meat-eaters’ and ‘Grass-eaters’ in the Pañcatantra: Sociological and Political Readings,” *Pragmata: Journal of Human Sciences* 2 (2014).

didactic message imbedded in the text. The monkey and crocodile story contributes to the overall lesson that the art of deception is the surest means to achieving one's ends. The wife and her friends lie to the crocodile that the only remedy for the illness is the heart of a monkey, further deceiving him into believing that this cure is a secret known only to women. Once the monkey is a helpless passenger aboard the back of the crocodile, it is falsely told to him that his heart has been prescribed by a physician. The statement that the remedy is a feminine secret is presented to the crocodile because it is a fact with which he cannot argue. If they had told him that it was the order of a doctor or a token of more general knowledge, on the other hand, their lie could have been discovered. As Franklin Edgerton has pointed out, when the crocodile discusses this matter with the monkey however, he naturally does not admit that he is prepared to kill his friend on the basis of some obscure folk medicine rumoured among women, and thus gives the credit to a physician.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike in the *Jātakas* or any known versions of the story in Japan, neither of these claims is in fact true. In the *Pañcatantra* rendition of the tale, the wife is not actually in need of medicine, and no one has prescribed any sort of remedy. Therefore, the case here is unique in that the crocodile is not on a mission to obtain the monkey's flesh for food (as is the case in two of the three *Jātaka* variants discussed in the following section), nor is he procuring a medicine for an illness or a difficult pregnancy. The goal of the entire line of events is to have the crocodile kill his friend so that the problematic friendship will be terminated.

Seeing as it is not the deception of the crocodile that triumphs in the end, but rather the counter-craft of the monkey, there are further teachings that can be deduced from this version of the tale. The lesson is that in the art of politics and successful governance, a lie can be defeated

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<sup>21</sup> Edgerton, *The Panchatantra Reconstructed*, vol. 2, 104-5.

through an opposing falsehood, and furthermore, it is just as important to avoid being deceived by others as it is to deceive them. True to its style as a *nītiśāstra*, the *Pañcatantra* teaches that one must not have their ploy foiled by mistakenly revealing their true intentions before the deed has been carried out.<sup>22</sup> During their journey into the water, the crocodile mutters to himself about his regret over having to kill his good friend for the sake of a woman. The monkey overhears him and grows suspicious, plotting to trick him into revealing his secret. If the crocodile had guarded his deception more carefully, the monkey would not have manipulated him into disclosing his plan, thereby giving the monkey the opportunity to come up with the lie that ultimately causes the crocodile's scheme to come undone. This teaching fits in with the overall theme of Book 4 of the *Pañcatantra*, which is to caution against the loss of one's gains. In this case, the crocodile lost what he had obtained due to his lack of discretion. The monkey and crocodile tale serves as frame-story for this section of the text, and works to provide an example of the need to guard oneself against deception and the unwitting disclosure of confidential information in order to avoid being tricked out of one's possessions.

The purpose of the above analysis of the monkey and crocodile tale is to extract certain components that are unique to the *Pañcatantra* story. This discussion has determined that the friendship between the two characters, the illness of the wife, the foolish disclosure of the crocodile's plan, and the accrediting of the remedy to a physician, are all elements that arise from the particular circumstances of the overall *Pañcatantra* text, and are not necessarily to be found in versions of the Indian folktale that were independently adapted for other purposes.

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<sup>22</sup> Olivelle, *Pañcatantra*, xxxv.

## *Jātaka*

There are three separate *Jātakas* that tell the story of the monkey and the crocodile: the *Vānarinda-Jātaka* (No. 57), the *Sumsumāra-Jātaka* (No. 208), and the *Vānara-Jātaka* (No. 342).<sup>23</sup> The first among these tales is quite distinct from all other versions that are presently discussed. In it, a pregnant wife observes a monkey leaping back and forth between the mainland and an island, using a rock in the middle of the water as a stepping stone. She begs her husband to catch the monkey for her so that she may eat its heart. The crocodile camouflages himself into the rock in an attempt to catch the monkey when he next leaps onto it, but through the trickery of the monkey, the crocodile's plan is foiled. This particular story does not include the motifs of being ferried across the water on the animal's back, nor the external heart that has been left at home. As such, it is in a slightly separate category of tale and will not concern us too much in the present discussion.

The *Sumsumāra-Jātaka* and the *Vānara-Jātaka* are very similar to each other and bear a strong resemblance to the stories included in the *Pañcatantra* and the *Konjaku monogatari*. The wife catches sight of the monkey, develops a longing to eat his heart, and orders her husband to retrieve it. In the former story, she threatens to die if she cannot obtain her wish. In the latter, this element is not present. This is the extent of the difference between the two, and the tales both carry on in the typical manner. The crocodile convinces the monkey to visit his home, giving promises of ripe fruit. During their journey through the water the clever monkey says that they must return to the shore to retrieve his heart from the tree, thereby saving his life.

In both cases, the stories are much shorter and simpler than the *Pañcatantra* tale. Expectedly, they do not include any of the motifs that were determined above to be unique to the

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<sup>23</sup> These numbers refer to their classification in Cowell's *The Jātaka*.

context of the more intricately woven textbook of political science. There is no friendship between the two animals, nor is there any feigned illness, untimely divulgence of the scheme, or claim of prescription. However, omissions of details do not reveal as much about a narrative as do inclusions of new information, among which there is one consistent element across the *Jātaka* stories. As with all other *Jātakas*, a core component of these tales is that they are addressing a previous birth of the Buddha which is identified at the end of each story. In this case, Gautama is the monkey, the crocodile is Devadatta, and his mate is the lady Ciñcāmāṇavikā. The monkey and crocodile story is used here to represent the well-known portrayal of the relationship between Devadatta and Gautama within the Buddhist canon, in which the former contrives of many ways to achieve the killing of the latter, but to no avail.<sup>24</sup> In the story of Ciñcāmāṇavikā, she is given by the enemies of the historical Buddha the task of discrediting his authority by wrapping up her belly to simulate pregnancy and publicly accusing Gautama of being the father.<sup>25</sup> The association of the crocodile's wife with Ciñcāmāṇavikā reveals that the theme of pregnancy is a motif that is particular to variants of the monkey and crocodile tale that originated among the Buddhist *Jātaka* stories.

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<sup>24</sup> Ciñcāmāṇavikā is a character who features in a number of Buddhist parables, and is often portrayed in her former lives attempting to bring harm upon the Buddha. She appears in this role in the above mentioned *Vānarinda-Jātaka* (No. 57) and *Sumsumāra-Jātaka* (No. 208), as well as the *Bandhanamokkha-Jātaka* (No.120), *Culla-paduma-Jātaka* (No.193), *Suvaṇṇakakkaṭṭa-Jātaka* (No. 389), *Mahā-paduma-Jātaka* (No.472), and *Vessantara-Jātaka* (No.547). These are all recorded by Cowell in *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*. Devadatta also makes a common appearance among Buddhist tales, plotting various methods of bringing injury or death upon his cousin, the Buddha. In a well-known episode from the *Dhammapada*, Devadatta hires men to kill the Buddha, and when they fail to do so, Devadatta himself tries to undertake the task by hurling a rock at him and sending an elephant as an assassin. For this story, see Eugene Watson Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends*, vol. 1, Charles Rockwell Lanman, ed., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), 234-7.

<sup>25</sup> This tale is present in both the *Dhammapada* and the *Jātakas*. For the former, refer to Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends*, vol. 3, 19-22. For the *Jātaka* variant, see Cowell, *The Jātaka*, vol. 4, 116-7.



### ***Konjaku monogatarishū***

Based on the above discussion on the *Pañcatantra* and *Jātaka* versions of the monkey and crocodile tale, we now have a list of motifs that can be used to identify the presence of stories related to either one of these collections among variants distributed across other texts and oral literatures. In the present section, I will refer to this list in an attempt to add to current knowledge on the extent to which narratives based in the *Jātaka* and *Pañcatantra* may have permeated across the story-telling tradition of Japan.

A brief outline of the *Konjaku monogatarishū* version of the monkey and crocodile tale would closely resemble that of the *Suṃsumāra* and *Vānara Jātakas* given above. Among a few notable differences are the substitution of the crocodiles with a pair of turtles, and the wife's request for the liver of the monkey rather than the heart. It is also the case that the monkey's liver is described as a remedy for pregnancy related problems, whereas it is nowhere among the *Jātakas* mentioned as a medicine, but only as a food craving.

Assuming that the *Konjaku monogatarishū* story did not have any contact with a variant that was based in the *Pañcatantra* and that it was derived from the Buddhist stream, there are some possible alternative explanations for the description of the monkey's organ as a remedy rather than as a simple hunger craving as it appears in the *Jātakas*. One possibility is that this element was already present in a Chinese Buddhist scripture from which the *Konjaku monogatarishū* variant was perhaps translated. There exists one version of the monkey and crocodile tale in an English rendering of the *Abhinishkramana sutra*, originally translated into Chinese by the North Indian Buddhist priest, Djanakuta, at the end of the sixth century. In this, the wife develops such a strong desire to eat the heart of a monkey that she is consumed by her

longing and grows pale and afflicted. It is worth noting that this is similar to the earlier described scenario in the *Sumsumāra-Jātaka* in which the wife craves a heart so intensely that although she does not fall ill, she does threaten to die if her husband does not deliver one to her.

In this manner, it is possible that the particular combination of pregnancy and remedy may derive from stories branching out of the Buddhist canon. The motif of the monkey's organ as a remedy for an affliction is reminiscent of the *Pañcatantra* version, yet we are reminded that in this case, the heart is required specifically in order to cure a feigned illness that has been contrived out of deception in order to give the husband reason to kill his friend. This is unlike tales from the Buddhist canon in which the pregnancy motif arises specifically out of the context of the Ciñcāmānavikā story. In this, it is explicitly the case of the pregnancy that is used as a means of staining and discrediting the authority of the historical Buddha by falsely accusing him of having fathered the child. Therefore, it may be said that the particular combination of pregnancy and craving, and in some cases pregnancy and remedy, is a product of the Buddhist tradition, whereas the specific combination of illness and remedy is related to stories from the *Pañcatantra* stream.

Another possibility that is worth exploring is that the coupling of the pregnancy and remedy elements in China was introduced within the continent as a reflection of cultural practices. It is well acknowledged that monkeys and other animals have traditionally been used in Chinese medicine for a wide variety of purposes. A preliminary look into the study by Alves et al. on the use of primates in folk medicine reveals that they were favoured for the treatment of fever, typhoid, malaria, pox, rheumatism and overall bodily health in Chinese culture.<sup>26</sup> There

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<sup>26</sup> Romulo R.N. Alves, W.M.S. Souto, and R.R.D. Barboza, "Primates in Traditional Folk Medicine: A World Overview," *Mammal Review* 40, (2010).

are no cases of the medicinal use of primates listed here for Japan. The only instance in which monkeys are used specifically for the facilitation of childbirth and the treatment of delivery pains is attributed to India and Vietnam. However, it is possible that further research into the application of primates in Chinese folk medicine may reveal a similar use in the context of China.

The long standing association of monkeys with fertility and the prevention and treatment of illness in traditional Japanese mythology may also have influenced interpretation of the monkey and crocodile story in Japan, or at least have laid the foundations for the easy acceptance of these themes found within the story. Japanese myth-histories and indigenous folklore have since early times spoken of primates and simian deities as having links to the securing of progeny and the warding off of illness and epidemic. According to Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney who has written extensively about monkey symbolism in Japanese history and ritual, the creature has been attributed with medicinal properties since as early as the sixth century. The body of the monkey itself was administered for the curing of physical and mental ailments, while iconic representations of the animal were used in various ways, including as amulets to be worn by pregnant women for the purpose of deterring illness.<sup>27</sup>

Monkeys were not only involved in the treatment of human afflictions, but were traditionally believed to possess remedial powers granted to them by the mountain deity, which could also be used for curing ill horses. As such, since at least the late Heian period (794-1185), monkeys were employed during religious healing rituals, performing at stables to secure the

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<sup>27</sup> Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *The Monkey as Mirror: Symbolic Transformations in Japanese History and Ritual* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 50.

health of the patron's horses.<sup>28</sup> Notably, a similar association existed in India, where there was a tradition of keeping monkeys in stables in order to secure the well-being of the horses within.<sup>29</sup>

Deities possessing simian characteristics have also been associated with remedial powers in Japan since as early as the eighth century, as recorded in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*. In these documents, the Sarume clan<sup>30</sup> is said to have descended from the union of Sarutahiko and Ame no Uzume no Mikoto 天宇受賣命 (Wreathed Woman of Heaven), and members of the clan were employed at the Imperial Court for their status as diviner-healers. This evolved into the tradition of engaging the monkey itself in court rituals and religious performances that were conducted for healing purposes.<sup>31</sup> In the following section, I will explore such roles of monkeys within early Japanese literature and folklore in order to shed light on some of the ways in which the monkey and crocodile tale was accepted and merged into the existing culture of Japan.

### ***Pañcatantra and Jātaka Elements in the Konjaku monogatari shū***

The *Konjaku monogatari shū* variant of the story includes none of the elements that have been demonstrated to be unique to the *Pañcatantra* stream. The monkey and the crocodile are not previously known to each other, and no friendship develops between the two. Expectedly, the result of this is that there is no jealousy on the part of the wife, nor is there the need to split up the pair on the basis of any brahminical or dharmic justifications. This means that the wife is not

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<sup>28</sup> Ohnuki-Tierney, *The Monkey as Mirror*, 167-8.

<sup>29</sup> Ishida Eiichirō 吉田英一郎, "The 'Kappa' Legend: A Comparative Ethnological Study on the Japanese Water-Spirit 'Kappa' and Its Habit of Trying to Lure Horses into the Water," *Folklore Studies* 9 (1950): 128. On this same page, Ishida, a prominent ethnologist and scholar of folklore, has also noted an episode in the fifth book of the *Pañcatantra*, in which horses have been injured in a fire and monkeys are used as a remedy.

<sup>30</sup> The Japanese term *saru* 猿 literally means monkey.

<sup>31</sup> Ohnuki-Tierney, *The Monkey as Mirror*, 111-2.

practicing any deception in this story. She is genuinely in need of a remedy, and beyond this her role is greatly diminished in the *Konjaku monogatari* tale. During the journey through the water, the crocodile is not coaxed into revealing his plan. Rather, he volunteers the information, presumably with the understanding that the monkey is now under his mercy and that his escape would in any case be impossible. He makes no mention of any prescription by a physician, and instead simply states that the monkey's liver is needed as a cure for his pregnant wife.

At this level of the story's presence in Japan, it does not appear to draw on any significant themes from the *Pañcatantra* nor from indigenous Japanese folklore, which in contrast, is indeed the case for many of the Japanese vernacular variants discussed later. The main theme of the *Konjaku monogatari* tale falls in line with others of the Buddhist canon, incorporating no further extraneous details that would detract from the central teaching. The story seems to have been drawn from a Buddhism derived source in which the tale highlighted the cost of succumbing to greed and temptation aroused by the promise of abundant fruits, while glorifying the ingenuity and infallibility of the Buddha.

It is interesting to note, however, that despite the above observations, the *Konjaku monogatari* tale is still somewhat removed from its Buddhist roots. While the motif of pregnancy seems to indicate that this variant grew out of a Buddhist version in which the wife was identified with Ciñcāmāṇavikā, there are no explicit religious messages that are delivered. It is nowhere in the collection actually mentioned that the story is a depiction of a previous birth of the historical Buddha, and it draws no explicit association between the animal characters and Śākyamuni, Devadatta, or Ciñcāmāṇavikā as is done in the original *Jātakas*. In this instance, there would be no way for readers to recognize any directly religious undertones to the story unless they had already been familiarized with it in a different context.

This is not to say that there the compiler or compilers were unfamiliar with the *Jātaka* genre, as among the numerous *Jātaka* derived tales included in the India section of the *Konjaku monogatari*, ten are in fact specifically stated to depict episodes from past lives of the Buddha. In the case of the present narrative however, it appears that the story was included simply as a secular Indian folktale for its own sake. The brief moral that is attached to the end of the *Konjaku monogatari* story indicates that the compiler or compilers were not concerned with, or perhaps not aware of, the fact that this story did already exist in the form of a *Jātaka*.

Following the main body of the *Konjaku monogatari* narrative, the teaching that is offered is simply that in early times animals were foolish like this, and that humans can be just as unwise. The expounding of Buddhist doctrine does not appear to have been the sole objective behind the inclusion of this tale within the collection. From a Buddhist point of view, the final message evades the main point of the story. In its *Jātaka* form, the tale is not meant to describe the behaviour of animals or to use them as a symbol for the actions of foolish humans. The monkey is not a metaphor, but is in fact Śākyamuni himself, and the same applies to the other characters in the story. They are not examples or representations of human behaviour personified in forest creatures, but are actual figures from the canonical texts, brought together into one narrative to demonstrate the virtues of the Buddha.

It has been recognized among the work of scholars such as Kunisaki that the *Konjaku monogatari* tales were altered to fit in with the compiler's greater scheme of organization and progressional flow which was maintained across the entire collection. Each chapter of the text, as well as the numerous stories within, were adjusted and arranged to carry the work forward sequentially, allowing each segment to transition naturally into the next through an intricate

network of associations. One major part of this was the modification of individual elements such that each tale and each chapter would form a couplet with its neighbouring text.

As such, it would appear that the somewhat clumsy inclusion of this final moral served more as a structural component than as a tool for religious or worldly edification. It was a means of tying the tale in with the immediately preceding story of the tortoise and the two cranes. This is a variant of another story that has been widely disseminated throughout early Indian narratives, also appearing among the Pāli *Jātakas* and the *Pañcatantra*. In the context of Indian folktales, the two birds are most commonly identified as a type of goose (Skt. *haṃsa*), whereas in Japanese renditions there is typically a substitution of cranes. As is the case with the monkey and crocodile tale, the shift in species has no impact on the narrative itself. It is worthwhile noting that in the *Konjaku monogatari*, the story is again presented in the format of a secular fable, without any reference to its religious associations or *Jātaka* form.

In the *Kacchapa-Jātaka* (No. 215), as this same tale is referred to in the Indian Buddhist collection, the story of the foolish tortoise is used to convey a warning against talking in excess. In the case of the *Pañcatantra* variant the tale appears in the first book, which contains an assortment of narratives that address dissention among allies. In this collection, the story about the tortoise and geese teaches the practical lesson that disaster will fall upon fools who do not heed the advice of their allies. It appears that the compiler or compilers of the *Konjaku monogatari* added in the final teaching regarding the foolishness of animals in order to create some form of thematic association between the monkey and crocodile story and the preceding tale, as is similarly done with the over one thousand narratives arranged within the collection. It is unclear whether the substitution of the pair of crocodiles with the turtle couple was also a modification that was done for the sake of further linking the two tales together, or whether this

element was already present in the source from which the *Konjaku monogatarishū* compiler or compilers had derived the monkey and crocodile story.

It is possible that the coupling together of the two animal tales did not remain bound to its textual format, but may have been reproduced in oral readings of excerpts from the *Konjaku monogatarishū*. Such a scenario provides one possible explanation for the fact that certain motifs from the story of the tortoise and geese appear frequently within monkey and crocodile variants in Japan. In the following section, this and other characteristics particular to the widespread variants of the latter tale will be examined using the collections of Seki. To my knowledge, no English translation has yet been provided for this section of his work. To aid the discussion, I will first provide an outline of the single representative tale that he recorded from an oral source in Kagoshima. Following this, I will include a translation of the summaries and distributions given by Seki for a further eighteen variants. The subsequent discussion will aim to shed light on the extent to which elements from the *Jātakas* are present in the Japanese vernacular tales in conjunction with the occurrence of themes that may demonstrate links to the *Pañcatantra*, Shintō mythology, and local Japanese folklore.



## Chapter Two: Nineteen Japanese Regional Variants

The full tale that Seki has recorded (referred to as variant 1 in the present paper) is longer and more complex than the *Konjaku monogatari* version that has been discussed thus far, and includes a number of additional motifs. It begins by introducing the monkey and turtle in a close friendship, talking and sharing food with each other along the shoreline. The turtle disappears one day to visit the princess of an underwater palace who is referred to here by the name Otohime 乙姫, as is also the case in most other Japanese oral variants of the story.<sup>32</sup> The princess has fallen ill and a doctor has prescribed a monkey's liver as her cure. The turtle returns to the shoreline to invite his friend to see his underwater world. The monkey climbs onto the turtle's back and closes his eyes. When the turtle tells the monkey to open them, they have already reached the gates of the dragon palace, or *ryūgū-jō* 竜宮城.<sup>33</sup> A *yusuzu* fish<sup>34</sup> and a jellyfish stand guarding the gate and the monkey overhears them discussing the plan to obtain his liver. The monkey begins to cry, explaining that he has left his liver on a tree by the shore and he is worried that it will be washed away by the rain. The turtle is sent to carry the monkey back to the water's surface. When they reach land, the monkey offers to show the turtle his terrestrial world and pulls him up into a tree by a vine. The monkey then bites the vine, dropping the turtle to the ground. This is given as the origins of the cracks found on the shells of turtles. When the turtle returns to the underwater palace, the two gatekeepers are punished by the king for their revealing of the secret plan. This is said to be how the *yusuzu* fish acquired the appearance of having stones in its cheeks, and how the jellyfish came to have no bones. (Variant No. 1)

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<sup>32</sup> This is another name for the indigenous Japanese sea goddess, Toyotamahime, who will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

<sup>33</sup> This motif also appears in the Japanese Urashima legend, as well as the *Bhūridatta-Jātaka*, which will be addressed below.

<sup>34</sup> *Yusuzu* ゆすず is a term that was used locally in Kagoshima to refer to the *ishigakidai* 石垣鯛 or *Oplegnathus punctatus*, commonly referred to as the Spotted knifejaw.

The summaries of eighteen other variants and their geographical distributions are given below. Due to the extreme brevity of these outlines as provided by Seki, many details from each of the original variants appear to be lost. As such, the present work will not draw conclusions based on the omissions of elements in each of the stories, but will focus instead on features that have been included or replaced. An in-depth trace back to the sources from which Seki collected the tales would facilitate a more comprehensive examination of the variants in full.

In the variant recorded from Kawagoe-shi, Saitama-ken, the princess of the underwater dragon palace is said to fall ill. A turtle is sent to retrieve a live monkey in order to obtain its gallbladder as a cure. The monkey is brought to the palace, whereupon the plot is revealed to him by a jellyfish gatekeeper. The monkey lies that his gallbladder has been left hanging on a tree, and the turtle delivers him back to shore, giving the monkey the chance to run off. As is the case for many of the Japanese oral variants, a sequel has been added on to the story proper. Here, the turtle is said to return to the palace, where he informs the king that the jellyfish was to blame for the escape of the monkey. As a punishment, the jellyfish is skinned and his bones are removed, giving the creature its present form. (Variant No. 2)

In Yoshimi-mura, Hiki-gun, Saitama-ken, a human informs the inhabitants of the underwater palace that a monkey liver will be a suitable remedy for the ill princess. A turtle is sent to the shore, and while he is searching for a monkey, something falls on his back. The turtle looks up and discovers a monkey in the coconut tree above. The monkey is deceived and carried down into the water. When the plan is revealed, the monkey says that he has forgotten his liver at home and deceives the turtle into carrying him back to land. Once he has returned to the safety of the shore, the monkey taunts the turtle, saying that his liver has been inside his body all along. (Variant No. 3)

Regarding the variant from Kuzumaki-mura, Minami Kanbara-gun, Niigata-ken, Seki only writes that the story is similar to the *mukashibanashi* recorded by folklorist Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 (1875-1962), including the event of the jellyfish kindling a fire in a stove.<sup>35</sup> The only difference between the two is that in the present tale, the monkey is said to step on the turtle's back after escaping to the shore. As a result of this, the shell of the turtle has developed a cracked appearance. (Variant No. 4)

The story from Ōshima-mura, Sakai-gun, Fukui-ken, is one of only three listed by Seki that does not include the motif of the underwater palace. In this variant, a female snake is suffering from a difficult childbirth. Having heard that when humans experience the same condition, they consume the liver of a live monkey, she sends her husband to the shoreline. The male snake discovers a monkey in a tree, and from this point onwards, Seki says that the rest of the story unfolds in the typical fashion, with the exception that there is no appearance of the jellyfish character. (Variant No. 5)

Seki very briefly mentions the variant from Chiisagata-gun, Nagano-ken, writing that it is no different from the general story. The only difference is that in this region the jellyfish is occasionally substituted with a turtle or a crocodile. (Variant No. 6)

In Nyūkawa-mura, Yoshiki-gun, Gifu-ken, the underwater princess, Otohime, falls ill and a *kappa* is sent to obtain the remedy.<sup>36</sup> A monkey is spotted staring down at some fish, and he is

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<sup>35</sup> Yanagita's variant is recorded in his *Nihon no mukashibanashi*, 18-19.

<sup>36</sup> The *kappa* is a legendary water creature unique to Japanese folklore. In its appearance it resembles a small monkey-shaped sprite, usually green in colour, with the shell and beak of a turtle, webbed hands and feet, and a small water dish on the crown of its head. Two of its major characteristics are its affinity for livers, and its passion for dragging horses into the water. There are different accounts of its origins that are given across the country, with the most common links being made to soft-shelled turtles, monkeys, or the child-like water deities of Chinese legend. (Michael Dylan Foster, "The Metamorphosis of the Kappa: Transformation of Folklore to Folklorism in Japan," *Asian Folklore Studies* 57 [1998]: 3.)

deceived into accompanying the turtle to the dragon palace. When the *kappa* attempts to kill the monkey, the creature lies that his liver has been left on a rock to dry. The *kappa* carries him back to land, and when the monkey climbs onto the shore, he throws an akebia fruit down at the *kappa*, saying that this is his liver.<sup>37</sup> (Variant No. 7)

In the story from Goza-mura, Shima-gun, Mie-ken, a turtle is sent to acquire the cure for the sick Otohime princess. He successfully deceives a monkey into riding on his back and journeying with him down towards the underwater palace. During the trip, a jellyfish appears and reveals to the monkey that his liver will be removed. The monkey lies to the turtle that he does not have his liver with him as he had just washed it and left it out to dry. After the monkey escapes, an octopus deals out the punishments, hitting the turtle with a rock and removing the bones of the jellyfish. (Variant No. 8)

In Toriishi-mura, Senboku-gun, Osaka-hu, we again encounter the motif of the ill princess of the underwater dragon palace. In this case, it is a jellyfish that is sent to harvest the liver of a live monkey. After obtaining the monkey, the jellyfish is deceived into carrying him back to shore, as he is told that the monkey has left his liver on the top of a tree. Once on land, the monkey climbs into a tree and pats his stomach, saying that his liver has always been inside his body. As punishment for letting the creature escape, the jellyfish was ground in a stone mill, resulting in its current boneless form. (Variant No. 9)

A jellyfish again serves as the captor for the variant from Wakayama-ken, Ito-gun, Koya-cho. Here, the monkey is said to be eating nuts by the seashore when he is approached by a jellyfish and told that there are also plenty of sweet foods in the ocean. The monkey is carried

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<sup>37</sup> The akebia, referred to in Japanese as *akebi* 木通, is an edible fruit produced by the *Akebia quinata*, a vine native to Japan, China and Korea.

down into the water, and during the journey, the jellyfish reveals to him that he is planning to remove his liver. The monkey says that his liver is still drying on a tree and the two return to the land. After the jellyfish returns to the water, having lost the monkey, he is told that he failed on his mission because he spoke in excess. As punishment, his bones are removed. (Variant No. 10)

The story from Higashi Oshika-mura, Tōhaku-gun, Tottori-ken, is the only variant recorded by Seki in which a pufferfish appears as the captor. He writes that on the Eighth Day of the Twelfth Month, on the day of the *hari kuyō* 針供養 prayer ritual, it is thought that the pufferfish exits the water and climbs onto the shore.<sup>38</sup> In relation to these events, it is this creature that is said to be in search of the liver of a monkey. (Variant No. 11)

In the Matsue-shi, Shimane-ken variant, Otohime is ill and a turtle is sent to retrieve a monkey as remedy. The plot is disclosed by a jellyfish, allowing the monkey the chance to deceive the turtle and escape. As a penalty for his foolish reveal, the jellyfish is skinned and deboned, resulting in its current state. (Variant No. 12)

In Oki-no-shima, Shimane-ken, a doctor says that the liver of a live monkey is the best remedy for the ill Otohime princess. A turtle is sent to the shoreline and discovers a monkey in a persimmon tree. After accompanying the turtle to the underwater palace, the monkey becomes aware of the plot when he overhears the turtle reporting to the king. The monkey lies that he has left his liver hanging on a tree to dry. After being delivered to his tree, the monkey shouts at the turtle and throws a rock at it, cracking its shell. The king takes pity on the injured creature and

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<sup>38</sup> The *hari kuyō* is a centuries old mortuary rite performed for broken needles, and is one of a number of prayer rituals performed for inanimate objects in Japanese Buddhist and Shintō tradition. *Hari* means “needle”, and *kuyō* is the Japanese translation of the Sanskrit *pūjā* or *pūjanā*, meaning “to bring offerings”. In the region from which this variant was collected, the *hari kuyō* continues to take place each year on the eighth of December. For more discussion on the *hari kuyō*, see Angelika Kretschmer, “Mortuary Rites for Inanimate Objects: The Case of Hari Kuyō,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27 (2000).

gives it a remedial ointment. As a result of this incidence, the turtle has developed hexagonal cracks on its shell. (Variant No. 13)

In the story recorded in Misato-mura, Nagaoka-gun, Kōchi-ken, Otohime is ill with an eye disease. For this the gallbladder of a live monkey is an effective cure, and a turtle is sent for the task. Once the monkey has been transported to the underwater realm, a jellyfish gatekeeper reveals the plan to him. The monkey is presented with a feast, but he refuses to eat, saying that he has left his liver hanging out to dry and he is afraid that it will get wet and become rotten. The turtle carries the monkey back to the shore, enabling him to escape. As punishment for revealing the secret, the jellyfish is de-boned. (Variant No. 14)

The variant from Nagasaki-ken, Iki-gun, Isafushi-son, is distinct in that it is the only variant recorded by Seki that occurs entirely on land. In this story, the liver of a live monkey is required as a remedy for an ill old man. A turtle is sent to retrieve a monkey, and lures him toward the house with promises of abundant treasure. Arriving at the old man's dwelling, the monkey hears a loud racket and runs away into a tree. The turtle follows after him and is thrown to the ground, resulting in a cracked shell. (Variant No. 15)

In Mushōzu-cho, Nagasaki-ken, Otohime is said to be in need of a remedy. A turtle is sent to transport the monkey down to the dragon palace. A jellyfish and a flounder reveal the scheme to the monkey, and he is returned home upon stating that he has left his liver hanging in a tree to dry. As punishment for divulging the plan, the jellyfish is de-boned and the flounder is cut into half, resulting in their current shapes. (Variant No. 16)

Seki mentions that a variant has been recorded in Shimokoshikishima-mura, Satsuma-gun, Kagoshima-ken, but provides no details. (Variant No. 17)

In the story from Kikaijima, Ōshima-gun, Kagoshima-ken, the daughter of the god of the dragon palace is said to fall ill. A fortune teller recommends the liver of a live monkey as the most effective treatment. A dog is sent to obtain the cure, and a monkey is brought down to the underwater realm by hanging onto the dog's waist. The plan is disclosed by an octopus and a pufferfish, upon which the monkey lies that he has left his liver at home and is carried back to shore by the dog. As punishment, the octopus is de-boned and the pufferfish is pounded with bones. (Variant No. 18)

The final variant provided by Seki is from Amami Ōshima, Kagoshima-ken. In this, the princess of the dragon palace is said to fall ill, and a jellyfish is sent to bring back the liver of a monkey. After obtaining the monkey, the jellyfish reveals the plan to him. The monkey states that he has left his liver is drying on a tree, and is carried back to land. Once he is safely on shore, the monkey throws a rock at the jellyfish, saying that it is not possible to remove a liver and hang it out to dry. After returning to the water, the angry king sentences the jellyfish to be beaten. As a result, the creature loses its bones and its legs are split into tentacles. (Variant No. 19)

Table 1 as seen below points out some notable elements that appear across the nineteen variants. These are motifs that are unique to the above vernacular Japanese stories and appear neither in the *Konjaku monogatari* text, nor in any of the known monkey and crocodile tales distributed in India. The subsequent Table 2 provides some clarification on the presence of themes related to the original *Pañcatantra* and *Jātaka* stories within these same Japanese variants. This data demonstrates that these nineteen tales – and perhaps others distributed across the country – are not the products of a single stream of translations from Buddhist scriptures. Rather, they have been adapted and combined in Japan to form an amalgamation of themes that

represent a broader collection of religious teachings, indigenous motifs, and secular folk traditions.

**Table 1, Motifs from Japanese tales (not in *Konjaku*, *Jātaka*, or *Pañcatantra* variants)**

|     | <b>Motif</b>  | <b>Variant No.</b>                                     | <b>Proportion of Tales</b> | <b>Notes</b>   |
|-----|---|--|----------------------------|--|
| (a) | Underwater World                                      | 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19 | 16/19                      | Associations with Hoori/Toyotama story and Urashima story.   |
| (b) | De-boning of Jellyfish, etc.                          | 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19                     | 10/19                      | The only other known jellyfish in Japanese folklore is in the <i>Kojiki</i> . Before there was land, the whole world was a floating jellyfish-like mass.<br>With the exception of 18, every story here involves jellyfish (and sometimes another creature: flounder, etc.) |
| (c) | Plan Revealed by Third Party (Not the turtle himself) | 1, 2, 4, 8, 12, 14, 16, 18                             | 9/19                       | May overlap with sea-bream in Hoori story. In both tales, there is a third-party sea creature who provides the reasoning for the land dweller's return to the surface.   |
| (d) | Origins of Cracked Shell                              | 1, 4, 8, 13, 15  | 5/19                       | <i>Konjaku</i> stream: overlapping of tortoise and cranes with monkey and crocodile.   |
| (e) | <i>Kappa</i> is Captor                                | 7  | 1/19                       | <i>Kappa</i> are identified with turtles, and are said to be the enemies of monkeys. Water-dragging creature with affinity for livers.   |
| (f) | Dog is Captor   | 18   | 1/19                       | In folk belief, dogs are said to be the enemies of monkeys.  |
| (g) | Snake is Captor                                       | 5  | 1/19                       | Pregnancy motif. None of the <i>Pañcatantra</i> themes are present, except liver as remedy. Similar to <i>Shasekishū</i> variant.  |
| (h) | Eye Disease   | 14   | 2/19                       | Local folk belief  |
| (i) | Old Man's Illness                                     | 15   | 1/19                       | Highly altered variant. No motif of external organ that is a key element of all monkey and crocodile tales. All events unfold on land – no water journey.  |



**Table 2, Distribution of *Pañcatantra* and *Jātaka* motifs among Japanese oral variants**

| Tale No. | <i>Pañcatantra</i> motifs |         |              |                   | <i>Jātaka</i> motif | <i>Konjaku</i> stream    |
|----------|---------------------------|---------|--------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
|          | Friendship                | Illness | Prescription | Accidental Reveal | Pregnancy           | Origins of Cracked Shell |
| 1        | x                         | x       | x            | x                 |                     | x                        |
| 2        |                           | x       |              | x                 |                     |                          |
| 3        |                           | x       | x            |                   |                     |                          |
| 4        |                           |         |              | x                 | x                   |                          |
| 5        |                           | x       |              |                   | x                   |                          |
| 6*       |                           |         |              |                   |                     |                          |
| 7        |                           | x       |              |                   |                     |                          |
| 8        |                           | x       |              | x                 |                     | x                        |
| 9        |                           | x       |              |                   |                     |                          |
| 10       |                           |         |              | x                 |                     |                          |
| 11*      |                           |         |              |                   |                     |                          |
| 12       |                           | x       |              | x                 |                     |                          |
| 13       |                           | x       | x            | x                 |                     | x                        |
| 14       |                           | x       |              | x                 |                     |                          |
| 15       |                           | x       |              |                   |                     | x                        |
| 16       |                           |         |              | x                 |                     |                          |
| 17*      |                           |         |              |                   |                     |                          |
| 18       |                           | x       | x            | x                 |                     |                          |
| 19       |                           | x       |              |                   |                     |                          |

\* For Variants 6, 11, and 17, insufficient detail is provided for classification according to these motifs.

Variant 1 as outlined above is a prime example of an instance in which motifs from Japanese mythology, the *Konjaku monogatari* stream, and the original Indian tales have become incorporated into a single narrative. Furthermore, in variant 1 we encounter for the first time in this discussion, a Japanese rendition of the monkey and crocodile tale that bears some presence of *Pañcatantra* themes. Amidst a number of elements that have likely been influenced by Japanese myth and folklore, such as the visit to the underwater palace, the talkative gatekeepers, and the monkey's revenge, there are apparent similarities to the *Pañcatantra* story. This includes the earlier discussed motifs of the friendship between the two animals, the illness in need of remedy, and the doctor's prescription. The foolish reveal of the plot is not present here in the same format as in the Indian tale, but it does seem to appear in an altered form. In this case, the unwitting disclosure is attributed to the two sea creatures rather than to the captor himself.

This latter point is one version of the commonly occurring theme among the Japanese variants of a third party revealing the scheme to the monkey, facilitating his escape. This is an adaptation that bears some resemblance to a familiar element in Japanese mythology. There is one more well-known instance in indigenous narratives in which a fish reveals the material necessary for a land creature to return from the underwater world to his terrestrial home. This appears in the early mythology of Hoori no Mikoto and his journey into the sea to retrieve his missing fishhook. There, he weds the fabled sea goddess and princess of the underwater palace, Toyotamahime 豊玉毘売 (Lady Bountiful Soul), who is often said to transform into a crocodile, turtle, or dragon, across different variants and interpretations of the myth. After spending three years there, the hook is discovered in the mouth of a fish, upon which Hoori no Mikoto is able to return to his home. This and other episodes from indigenous Japanese mythology are valuable sources of comparative study with the present tale, and will be discussed in further detail in a later section.

Across the Japanese variants of the monkey and crocodile story, the revealing of the secret is either performed by one or two gatekeepers, or a solitary sea creature that appears alongside the monkey and the turtle as they journey down towards the palace. This is again a familiar scene in Japanese mythology. In the above mentioned story of Hoori no Mikoto, during his passage up to the surface of the water on the back of a *wani*, they are escorted by fish who swim alongside them. In most cases, the informer is a jellyfish, who in a sequel that is added on to the end of many variants, is punished by having his bones removed.

The jellyfish motif is a curious addition that appears uniquely in several of the Japanese tales, but features in no known variants recorded across other cultures. It is not a commonly

appearing creature even among Japanese narratives. Its only other significant mention is in the mythology detailing the formation of the High Plain of Heaven, Takama-ga-hara 高天原. In the creation myths of the *Kojiki*, it is said that before the solid earth came into existence, there was only a shapeless form floating about in the chaos like a jellyfish. From this oily mass emerged the heavens and the first Shintō deity, Ame no Minaka Nushi. Ōno Susumu has suggested that the original phrase detailing this incident in the *Kojiki* should be understood to represent the name of a god, in a similar manner to the countless other occasions in which descriptive names for momentary deities are listed in the *Kojiki* to describe the phenomenon for which they are responsible.<sup>39</sup> As such, the jellyfish in Japan may be said to have mythological associations with the earliest primeval state from which the land and the heavens first emerged. However, the relevance of the animal for the narrative in question remains to be known, as well as how it came to bear such a prominent place among so many of the oral variants.

At this stage, the only information that can be provided in regard to the jellyfish character is that the creature was likely included in the story based on its physical characteristics. It is worth noting that all of the sea creatures that appear across the variants are not restricted to the water, but are also connected in some manner to the land. This is true not only of the turtle, but also of the jellyfish and the other extraneous characters mentioned among the folk variants, including the octopus, pufferfish, and *kappa*. The turtle and *kappa* are both amphibious creatures that are able to exist both in the water and on land, and although the pufferfish are legless sea creatures, variant 10 does mention that on the Eighth Day of the Twelfth Month, during the *hari kuyō* festival, they are washed up onto the shore. This seems to refer to a regional folk belief in

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<sup>39</sup> Konishi Jin'ichi, *A History of Japanese Literature, Vol. 1: The Archaic and Ancient Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 177.

which pufferfish are believed to emerge onto the land at a certain time each year, which would thereby have given them access to the monkey.

Regarding the octopus and the jellyfish, in variants in which they appear, a reasoning is provided as to why they are now invertebrates, and the story serves to explain why they are no longer able to use their legs to walk on the earth. In some variants, although not among those recorded by Seki, the story specifically says that in the past jellyfish had a shell and were able to use their legs to move about on dry land, supplying an explanation as to why they are now without shell and are bound to the water. For example, in a version of the tale recorded by Yei Theodora Ozaki, the jellyfish is said to have originally been similar to a tortoise, possessing a shell, bones, and four legs with which it was able to walk about on land. As punishment for letting the monkey escape, the angry king of the dragon palace sentenced the jellyfish to be deboned and beaten.<sup>40</sup>

One further observation in regard to the jellyfish motif is that it is perhaps drawn from some myth or folktale that is shared broadly across the regions of Japan, and that it is associated with the underwater world motif. As seen in Table 1, approximately half of the variants include the character of the jellyfish, and among these, all but variant 18 are overlapped with the journey to the palace. Furthermore, variants that seem to include more unique elements or items of localized folk belief have been distributed less widely, while elements that have established associations with generally known motifs such as that of the underwater castle appear most commonly across many of the nineteen tales.

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<sup>40</sup> See Yei Theodora Ozaki, *The Japanese Fairy Book* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, 1903), 189-202.

Some of the other less frequently appearing extraneous motifs across the variants were likely influenced by local customs or beliefs held in the regions in which those tales were transmitted. For instance, in motif (j), which appears only in variant 14, the monkey is said to be required for the cure of an eye disease. Ohnuki-Tierney has noted that there exists a folk belief associated with Tennōji Shrine, in which visitors may be cured of their eye disease by passing the affliction on to one of the monkeys roaming the compound.<sup>41</sup> Regarding (h), in which the role of the turtle as the captor is substituted for a dog, we may refer to the theme that appears across Japanese folktales in which dogs and monkeys are understood to be natural enemies to the extent that U.A. Casal has likened the status of their relationship in Japan to the association between cats and dogs held in the western world.<sup>42</sup>

Variant 7 is the only instance in which a *kappa* takes the role of the typical captor. *Kappa* and turtles are often overlapped in Japanese folklore, which is a shift that is particularly logical in the case of the monkey and crocodile story, as *kappa* are commonly said to be the arch enemy of monkeys. Notably, two other characteristics attributed to the small creature are its affinity for livers, and its practice of lying wait along the shore in an attempt to drag horses into the water. Ishida, in his extensive study of the *kappa*, has noted this similarity between the legends surrounding the Japanese water creature and tales of Indian origin that variously depict a crocodile, turtle or dragon luring a monkey into the water in the attempt to obtain its liver or heart.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ohnuki-Tierney, *The Monkey as Mirror*, 65.

<sup>42</sup> U.A. Casal, "Far Eastern Monkey Lore," *Monumenta Nipponica* 12 (1956) 35.

<sup>43</sup> Ishida, "The 'Kappa' Legend," 135. Also, there is another narrative in Japan that ties together the elements of water-dragging legends and tales of monkeys being carried into the sea. In an episode from the *Nihon shoki*, Sarutahiko no Mikoto, a native Japanese monkey deity, gets his hand caught in a seashell and is dragged down to the ocean floor. The mythology surrounding this character will be discussed in further detail below in order to shed light on some of the connections between monkeys, water, and fertility in Japanese narratives and folklore, which may provide some explanation for the widespread acceptance of the monkey and crocodile story into Japanese culture.

In the case of motif (i), the usual captor is replaced by a snake. Here, we refer to another textual recording of the story in Japan which may have influenced or shared a common source with variant 5; the only tale provided by Seki that contains this element. In the *Shasekishū* 沙石集, a thirteenth century collection of tales compiled by Mujū Ichien 無住一圓,<sup>44</sup> the monkey is said to be carried into the water by a serpentine creature that is in need of a liver for his pregnant wife.<sup>45</sup> In this tale, the organ is not said to be a remedy, but is sought after as a food craving. As established above, these elements are in agreement with the *Jātaka* stories, in which the crocodile wife is pregnant and the monkey's heart is not regarded as a remedy, but as a desired food. The *Shasekishū* tale does not contain any of the motifs determined to belong to the *Pañcatantra* stream. In variant 5, the wife is likewise pregnant, and there are none of the extraneous elements predominant among the Japanese oral tales such as the jellyfish or the visit to the underwater palace. It is the case that in this version of the story, the liver is required to assist with a difficult childbirth and as such it would fall into the category of a remedy. With the exception of this, variant 5 contains no other *Pañcatantra* motifs, as seen in Table 2, suggesting that (i) may be the result of an isolated transmission of the *Shasekishū* story or another similar tale from the Buddhist canon.

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<sup>44</sup> Mujū's collection is strongly influenced by the theories of *honji-suijaku* 本地垂迹, or Shinto-Buddhist syncretism, which were expanding during this era and which identified the indigenous *kami* as manifestations of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. One of the most referenced portions of this tale collection is the preface, in which Mujū argues for the overlap between native Japanese waka and *dhāraṇī*, a type of verbal formulae originating in the Buddhist practices of India. See Robert E. Morrell, "Mujū Ichien's Shinto-Buddhist Syncretism: *Shasekishū*, Book 1," *Monumenta Nipponica* 28 (1973): 453; and R. Keller Kimbrough, "Reading the Miraculous Powers of Japanese Poetry: Spells, Truth Acts, and a Medieval Buddhist Poetics of the Supernatural," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32 (2005): 7.

<sup>45</sup> Tsunaya Watanabe 渡邊綱也, ed., *Shasekishū* 沙石集, in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 85 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966). For an English translation, see Robert E. Morrell, trans., *Sand and Pebbles: The Tales of Mujū Ichien, A Voice for Pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

Returning to the earlier discussion on the overlapping of the two *Konjaku monogatari* stories within vernacular Japanese transmissions of the monkey and crocodile tale, motif (d) may lend some clarification. In the turtle and cranes story, the *Konjaku monogatari* text describes a pair of birds who assist a turtle during a period of drought by carrying him to a fresh body of water after his own has dried up. They carry a stick between them and instruct the turtle to bite down on it, cautioning him not to talk during the journey for fear that he will lose his grip. The turtle opens his mouth to speak, letting go of the stick and falling to the ground below.

The account of the origins behind the cracks on the shells of turtles is a sequel that is added on to a number of the regional Japanese tales after the main body of the narrative has ended. In textual renditions of the story from the *Konjaku monogatari*, the *Pañcatantra* and the Buddhist canon, once the monkey has reached the safety of his tree, the conclusion has been reached and the tale ends. As seen in Table 1, in five out of the nineteen cases listed here, the main events of the story proper are flanked by an extra episode in which revenge is taken on the turtle and he is either stepped on, dropped from a tree, or hit by a rock, creating cracks in his shell. In light of the tradition of oral performance that has been widely proposed for the *Konjaku monogatari* text, and also taking into consideration the fact that the monkey and crocodile tale and the story of the tortoise and cranes were likely treated as a couplet, as established by Kunisaki, it is possible that in the event of recitation the two narratives were presented together. This being the case, the stories were likely heard one after another on the same occasion, allowing elements of the individual tales to become merged in later oral transmissions, giving rise to the sequel of the origins of the cracked shell.

To lend support to this theory, it would be relevant here to provide a brief discussion on the present understanding of the *Konjaku monogatari* as a vocally performed text. Generally

speaking, there are two paths that are considered in regard to the dissemination of folktales. These are the bottom-up and top-down models of transmission.<sup>46</sup> In the former, the spoken tales of the common people are taken up into the literary stream, whereas in the latter, a work that was originally literary or produced among the upper levels of society comes to enter into an oral folktale tradition. Both patterns of diffusion have historically held an acknowledged position in the transmission of tales within Japanese culture. It has been shown that narratives flowed in both directions between nobility and commoners, and that these have come to bear prominent roles as both written texts and oral literature.<sup>47</sup> In the case of *Konjaku monogatari shū*, the work is recognized to have belonged to a genre of tale collections in Japan that were commonly used for the purpose of propagating stories and legends via spoken performances. This would have made it likely that some of the narratives were taken up and adapted as folktales which were then diffused by word of mouth.

It is well noted that in the early and middle ages of Japan, there was an established tradition of oral literature. The *Kojiki* was produced by Ō no Yasumaro 太安萬侶 (d. 723) from the dictation of Hieda no Are 稗田阿礼 (literally, “Ours of Feed-Millet Paddies”; ca. 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> c.).<sup>48</sup> The latter had been commissioned by Emperor Tenmu 天武天皇 (ca. 631-86; r. 673-86) to memorize the vast array of mythologies, histories, and royal genealogies in their oral and textual forms in order that they could be preserved without further distortion. Hieda no Are belonged to a class of trained reciters referred to as *kataribe* 語部, who committed legends and important records to memory for the purpose of transmission to the imperial court and local clans. This was

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<sup>46</sup> Alan Dundes, *The Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2007), 166.

<sup>47</sup> Konishi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, 422-3.

<sup>48</sup> Gustav Heldt, *The Kojiki*, xviii.



a profession that appeared in the late seventh century after the establishment of a highly literate culture in Japan had been causing their histories to decline and become altered as the people grew to rely more heavily on written materials. At a time when Chinese characters were being used extensively for the writing of the Japanese language, much of the *Kojiki* text made careful use of the symbols for their phonetic values in the attempt to preserve the original Japanese sounds.<sup>49</sup> This has led most scholars to believe that the *Kojiki* was meant to be received aurally. Well beyond the introduction of literacy in Japan, the culture maintained a sense of authority surrounding the oral transmission of histories, literature, poetry, and other narrative works.<sup>50</sup>

Short stories and anecdotes were similarly maintained and communicated in oral form, even after they had been written down and recorded in the country's many tale collections. In the medieval period, various ranks of professional reciters contributed to the continued propagation and widespread knowledge of episodes from written stories and picture scrolls. Among them were the *biwa hōshi* 琵琶法師 (lit. lute priests) who travelled through the country playing the lute while reciting war tales, or *gunki monogatari* 軍記物語, and whose performances reached broad audiences ranging from commoners to members of the aristocracy. Through instances of later retellings, their narrations of such military tales as *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (1371) came to be incorporated into the Japanese folktale tradition, giving rise to the appearance of regional stories recounting various characters from the medieval epics.<sup>51</sup>

Compilations of Buddhist tales were also widely used by itinerant monks and nuns for the proselytization of Buddhist messages. These travelling storytellers used the tales to supplement

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<sup>49</sup> Heldt, *The Kojiki*, xix.

<sup>50</sup> Konishi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, 162-9.

<sup>51</sup> Barbara Ruch, "Origins of the Companion Library: An Anthology of Medieval Japanese Stories," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30 (1971), 599.

their sermons as they moved from place to place, spreading their teachings to the masses and gathering finances for the production of sutras, temples, and statues. Those recited for the former purpose consisted of a broad range of miracle tales and legends, while tales serving the latter function belonged to a category of short story referred to as *engi* 縁起. *Engi* were anecdotes about the founding of temples or other notable figures and statues associated with the complex that was seeking funds.<sup>52</sup> Stories with this theme are found collected in the *Konjaku monogatari* and may have been used as a source for itinerant priests who were performing such duties.

It was often the case that written records of myths, legends, and tales underlined the fact that the stories within had been obtained from oral sources.<sup>53</sup> This was frequently done by means of direct crediting to verbal accounts within the preface or introduction to a work.<sup>54</sup> The fact could also be enforced by the structure of the language in which the narratives themselves were recorded. For instance, classical Japanese literature made use of a series of modal particles that could be used to imply narrative contexts or hearsay, embedding within the text the understanding that the storyteller was simply relating past events that had been heard by him.

In the case of *Konjaku monogatari* and other similar tale collections, vocalicity was preserved through the repetition of formulaic phrases which served as indicators of their verbal origins and provided a format that was suitable for further oral performance.<sup>55</sup> Scholars have

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<sup>52</sup> Margaret Read MacDonald, *Traditional Storytelling Today: An International Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 115.

<sup>53</sup> Konishi Jin'ichi, *A History of Japanese Literature, Vol. 1: The Archaic and Ancient Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 251.

<sup>54</sup> For instance, Kyōkai states a number of times in the prefaces to the *Nihon ryōiki* that he has drawn from the oral tradition. See Kyoko M. Nakamura, *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 34-5.

<sup>55</sup> See Walter J. Ong's discussion on the oral-formulaic theory pioneered by Milman Parry. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 1982), 23.

pointed out the recurring use of phrases throughout *Konjaku monogatari*shū which emphasize the spoken qualities of the text. The most frequently noted characteristic is the use of the beginning and ending formulae which are repeated for each tale in the collection. This is a stylistic device that is found universally in the context of folktales.<sup>56</sup> The opening phrase, *ima wa mukashi* 今は昔 (now is the past), is most identifiable with the “once upon a time” phrase used in western storytelling.<sup>57</sup> Each story is concluded with a formula such as *to namu katari tsutaetaru to ya* となむかたりつたえたとや (thus, indeed, it has been told and passed on) to indicate that the story has been handed down in spoken form.

Other recurring formulae distributed among the tales, such as *sono toki ni* その時に (at that time), *sono nochi* そののち (after that), and *shikaru aida* しかる間 (now, however), serve to create rhythm and breathing spaces that facilitate the act of storytelling.<sup>58</sup> Even in cases in which the *Konjaku monogatari*shū variant borrows from another textual source, which is a frequent occurrence in the secular chapters of the Japan section, such phrases are inserted to provide the tale with a pattern that would be more suitable for being read aloud. Marian Ury has noted that in such cases there are times that the text is partitioned into scenes in a manner similar to plays, and that in passages where other recorded variants had simply given descriptions of the events, the *Konjaku monogatari*shū presents them in dialogue form, giving the narrative a more vernacular style.

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<sup>56</sup> Robert H. Brower, “The Konjaku Monogatari: An Historical and Critical Introduction, with Annotated Translations of Seventy-Eight Tales” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1952), 259.

<sup>57</sup> It arguably serves a more dynamic function than the phrase, “once upon a time”, in that it does not simply inform the audience that the narrative to follow is an account of past events that are now no longer occurring. Rather, it attempts to transport the listeners into an earlier age by expressing that now is no longer the present, and the events of the past are being conjured to unfold in this very place and time.

<sup>58</sup> Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past*, 8-9.

Drawing from the analyses of such scholars as Igarashi Tsutomu 五十嵐力, Robert H. Brower provides further support for the nature of *Konjaku monogatarishū* as a collection of primarily orally delivered anecdotes.<sup>59</sup> In cases in which the *Konjaku monogatarishū* draws from known literary works such as *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語,<sup>60</sup> the refined and complex language of the original is substituted with simpler alternatives that are more suitable for oral performance. A colloquial element is introduced into the narrative, and formulaic phrases are inserted, creating a break in the smooth literary progression. This is widely understood to be an indication that the intended audience of *Konjaku monogatarishū* were commoners, rather than aristocrats who would not have required these modifications.

Such an observation introduces a paradox in that the text had been altered to appeal to the general public, and yet it relies greatly on the use of Chinese characters which would have made the work inaccessible to the majority of Japanese society at that time. The conclusion drawn by Brower and other scholars is that the stories were meant to be read aloud by priests for the entertainment and edification of the common people.<sup>61</sup> This agrees with the general consensus held today regarding the text's most probable mode of reception, and provides partial explanation for the elements of Buddhist tales and anecdotes of courtly life that were present among the common storytelling tradition.

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<sup>59</sup> Brower, "The Konzyaku Monogatarisyū," 271-2; Igarashi Tsutomu 五十嵐力, "Heianchō bungaku shi" 平安朝文学史, in *Nihon bungaku zenshi* 日本文学全史, vols. 3-4 (Tokyo: Tokyōdō, 1939), 529-530.

<sup>60</sup> For example, the thirty-fifth story of the twenty-fourth scroll.

<sup>61</sup> Brower, "The Konzyaku Monogatarisyū," 271-2.

### **Chapter Three: Japanese Narratives Relevant to Reception of the Monkey and Crocodile Story**

As demonstrated by the above discussion, the monkey and crocodile story has come to be widely distributed across Japan in various forms, incorporating elements from a broad selection of sources. In this section, I will shift to an examination of relevant episodes in Japanese mythology as recorded in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* in order to explore the established narrative framework that allowed for such long-standing and successful dissemination of the monkey and crocodile tale within Japan. Among the over one thousand individual tales in *Konjaku monogatari shū* there is only a relatively small selection that can be found so richly distributed across the vernacular tradition and with such permanency. Assuming that this tale had not already been circulating in Japan as an oral narrative, this section will discuss the tale in the context of the foundational indigenous mythologies, and address prominent characteristics that not only facilitated its retellings across other tale collections but also allowed it to step out of its textual format and become a part of the Japanese storytelling tradition. For an outline of the central narrative elements that will be discussed here, see the table below.

**Table 3, Shared Motifs among the Monkey and Crocodile Story and Japanese Folklore**

| Motifs   | Monkey and Crocodile Story (Japanese and Indian)   | Traditional Japanese Tales   |
|--|--|--|
| Monkeys are associated with fertility                            | Monkey organ is a food or medicine during pregnancy.<br><i>(Jātaka, Konjaku monogatari, Shasekishū)</i>  | - Sarutahiko and Sarume are simian fertility gods<br>- Monkey pendant is worn by pregnant women<br>- Monkeys are used to secure a fruitful crop  |
| Monkeys are used as remedy for illness/death                     | Monkey is a medicine for the ill female crocodile (alt. turtle, serpent, Toyotama).<br><i>(Pañcatantra and most Japanese oral variants)</i>  | - Sarutahiko protects against epidemic<br>- Uzume and descendent Sarume clan members perform <i>chinkonsai</i> to restore life and health<br>- Monkeys protect horses from sickness<br>- Monkeys cure eye disease  |
| Monkeys are associated with water                                | Monkey lives by the shore and is taken into the water.   | - Uzume is fertility goddess of the sea<br>- Sarutahiko dies underwater after being dragged by a seashell<br>- Monkeys are portrayed as enemies of water creatures including the <i>kappa</i> , <i>namazu</i> , and crabs  |
| Passenger is taken from a tree before journey to the netherworld | Crocodile (alt. turtle, dragon, serpent) meets the monkey in a tree.   | Hoori legend (Toyotama meets Hoori in a tree)  |
| Sea-creature transports terrestrial souls through the water      | Crocodile (alt. turtle, dragon, serpent) carries the monkey into the water.<br><i>(To crocodile's abode in Jātaka, Pañcatantra, and Konjaku; to underwater world in most Japanese oral variants)</i> | - Hoori legend (journey facilitated by Toyotama, identified as <i>wani</i> or dragon)<br>- Urashima legend (Toyotama as ferry in the form of turtle)<br>- White Hare of Inaba legend ( <i>wani</i> form a bridge)<br>- Sarutahiko episode (dragged by a seashell)<br>- <i>Kappa</i> folklore (propensity for dragging horses into the water)<br>- Toyotama as <i>asobi-be</i> (transports human spirits beyond the horizon of the sea) |

In what follows, I will discuss the substantial body of pre-existing myths and tales that would have laid the groundwork for the acceptance of the monkey and crocodile story into the Japanese tradition. A number of elements that feature in this story had close parallels in Japan, allowing them to be assimilated into themes that were already familiar to the Japanese. By the time *Konjaku monogatari* was composed, such themes were already a well-established part of the indigenous mythology and folklore that are known to us through Japan's earliest extant written histories including the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720), and *Tango no kuni fudoki* 丹後国風土記 (*Tango Topography*, early 8<sup>th</sup> c.).

According to folkloristic convention, such correspondences would commonly be analyzed and understood according to one of two approaches: the psycho-analytical theory of universal archetypes, or the theory of monogenesis and diffusion – both of which here warrant a brief explanation. The former is a polygenetic approach and suggests that all human minds share certain universal features in their collective unconscious that are responsible for the independent generation of folktales which may bear strong resemblances to those produced in other regions or cultures. Commonalities among myths distributed across populations that are not known to have shared a means for the exchange of ideas can be better explained by these universal archetypes which lead humans to spontaneously create similar explanations for natural phenomena without the need for direct contact. While this path of logic holds ground in various respects, this is a widely disputed theory whose weak points have been discussed in great detail within the field.<sup>62</sup>

The latter theory of monogenesis and diffusion takes the stance that close similarities between myths – not only in terms of their general concept, but right down to the complex structure and sequential arrangement of their motifs – cannot be a product of a common neurological blueprint. The only explanation is that the narratives were gradually disseminated across space and time through a series of direct exchanges of oral or literary information. Such a pattern suggests that for each globally distributed folktale, there lies at its root a prototypical narrative; a single originary source from one location to which each variant can be traced. Although research along this stream of thought would provide valuable information on early interactions among various populations, tracing routes of exchange for a single tale is a monumental undertaking and difficult to achieve to any high degree of certainty.

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<sup>62</sup> For example, see Andrew Neher, “Jung’s Theory of Archetypes: A Critique,” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 36 (1996).

Underlying the current project is the implicit assumption that the monkey and crocodile tale present among the *Jātaka*, *Pañcatantra*, *Konjaku monogatari*, and Japanese oral traditions are ultimately derived from a common source. Rather than being the independent products of a generic psyche or cultural pattern, this thesis takes the stance that the monkey and crocodile tale type is traceable to a singular narrative, which would make the analysis of its diffusion a valuable source of information on historical interactions and cultural exchanges between South Asia and the regions of Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Middle East across which this tale was widely transmitted.

The present section of the thesis will provide observations on the connections between the monkey and crocodile story and native Japanese folklore. Within the scope of the current project, conclusive statements cannot be made as to the presence of a direct influence or path of transmission, although future research dealing with variants drawn from a broader range of cultures would provide a valuable step toward identifying the original form of the tale. The collection of information provided here may act as the groundwork for later in-depth research into the resemblances between characteristically Indian motifs and those of early Japanese folklore.

### **Sarutahiko no Mikoto and Ame no Uzume**

Sarutahiko no Mikoto and Sarume no Mikoto 猿女命 (Mummer Woman) are a pair of Shintō deities with clear simian affiliations, whose stories are recorded in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. A discussion of the ancient narratives surrounding these two will demonstrate that monkeys were associated with fertility, remedy for illness, aquatic settings, and water-dwelling



creatures at an early stage in the Japanese tradition. Notably, these characteristics correspond with the role that was assigned to it across variants of the monkey and crocodile tale, suggesting that the adaptation of this story in Japan was facilitated by its portrayal of a familiar set of motifs that was present among already established myths and legends.

In one of the most prominent episodes in Japanese myth-history, Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大御神 (Heaven Shining), the Shintō sun deity, locks herself away in a cave after the purity of her sacred weaving hall is polluted by her brother deity, Susano no Mikoto 須佐之男命 (Raging Man). The world grows dark and the whole land falls into a state of chaos and turmoil. In an attempt to lure her out of her hiding place, the goddess Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, whose interconnection with monkey symbolism is discussed below, performs a bawdy dance outside the entrance of the cave. She tucks up her garments and stomps atop an overturned wooden tub while striking it with the tip of her spear. This causes great laughter amongst the gods who are gathered there. Made curious by the commotion, Amaterasu opens up the mouth of the cave to steal a look and is dragged outside, restoring sunlight to the land.<sup>63</sup>

The dance of Ame no Uzume has been discussed in great detail and is seen as an early reference to her role as a fertility goddess in Japanese myth. It is one episode among others in the body of mythology dealing with Ame no Uzume that represents her involvement in securing healthy offspring and a fruitful agricultural season.<sup>64</sup> This echoes the earlier mentioned function of monkey imagery in charms worn by pregnant women, and the participation of the animal itself in ritual performances that were conducted for the securing of a bountiful rice harvest.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Heldt, *The Kojiki*, 24.

<sup>64</sup> Casal, "Far Eastern Monkey Lore," 19.

<sup>65</sup> Ohnuki-Tierney, *The Monkey as Mirror*, 107.

Ame no Uzume was responsible for the restoration of the solar deity to her functioning state, as well as for the return of sunlight to the land, which would have been required for the growth of a successful crop and the prevention of epidemic and death among the people.<sup>66</sup> The self-exposure in her dance has been understood as a ritualistic means of upholding the fertility of the soil through the restoration of the life-giving sun.<sup>67</sup> Matsumae Takeshi has suggested that the beating of the wooden barrel with her spear and the immodesty of her dance may have been a form of divination for reviving the deceased solar deity. He bases this on the resemblance of the ritual to the folk tradition of *tamayobi* 魂呼び (lit. spirit-calling) in which the relative of a deceased person strikes an overturned wooden box to resurrect the soul of the departed.<sup>68</sup>

The performance by Ame no Uzume has been determined by some scholars to be representative of ancient rituals involving the revival of the sun, in parallel with globally found mythologies regarding the death and renewal of a solar deity during the winter solstice.<sup>69</sup> The early Japanese practice of performing cave burials for deceased people of noble descent is indicated in the use of the word *iwatogakure* 岩戸隠れ (lit. rock-hiding) to refer to the death of members of the imperial family – a term that is also found in the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (ca. 759) as a pillow word for death.<sup>70</sup> Based on such evidence, the rock cave has been understood as representing a tomb, into which Amaterasu retreated as a representation of her “death” or illness.

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<sup>66</sup> This association among monkeys, fertility, remedial properties, and the solar divinity is also notably present in India. Hanuman, the foremost monkey god of the Hindu religion, is linked to the sun in India and is said to be the student of the sun god, Surya. Hanuman is also worshipped as a god of progeny and health, suggesting that Hanuman, Ame no Uzume, Sarutahiko, and the Sarume clan are part of a larger network of beliefs surrounding the interrelationship among monkeys, healing, virility, and the sun.

<sup>67</sup> Charles Haguenaer, “La Danse Rituelle dans le Chinkonsai,” *Journal Asiatique* 226 (1930): 349.

<sup>68</sup> Matsumae Takeshi, “The Heavenly Rock-Grotto Myth and the Chinkon Ceremony,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 39 (1980): 14.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Matsumura Takeo, *Nihonshinwa no kenkyū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Baifūkan, 1958), 74-87 and Matsumoto Nobuhiro, *Nihon shinwa no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Dōbunkan, 1931), 92-98 and Herbert E. Plutschow, *Chaos and Cosmos: Ritual in Early Medieval Japanese Literature* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 1990), 62.

<sup>70</sup> Matsumae, “The Heavenly Rock-Grotto Myth,” 10.

This is then remedied by Ame no Uzume through her shamanistic rite, enforcing the vital curative role that was placed on simian beings among some of the earliest episodes in Japanese mythology.<sup>71</sup>

The ritualistic dance performed by Ame no Uzume is seen as representing the mythical origins of the *chinkonsai* 鎮魂祭 ceremony, a traditional pacification rite performed by members of the Sarume clan in order to restore life to the sun.<sup>72</sup> The ritual combines the elements of dance, poetry and music, and was customarily performed at the imperial palace as a means of securing the health and long life of the emperor by identifying him with the sun and symbolically renewing his *tama* 魂, or soul, which is a recurring theme in native Japanese religious practice. According to the *Nihon shoki*, Emperor Tenmu fell ill in the year 685 and a *chinkonsai* was performed in the hopes of curing his deteriorating health.<sup>73</sup> Bearing strong similarities to the original performance by Ame no Uzume, the *chinkonsai* is executed by a female member of the Sarume clan, a high-ranking lineage which according to legend had descended from Ame no Uzume herself. In this, the Sarume maiden dances on top of an upside down wooden barrel, bearing a spear and stomping her feet to make a resounding sound. This is a prominent theme in a number of traditional Japanese dances, and is used as a ritualized means of reaffirming life and the cosmic order.<sup>74</sup> According to custom, she would become divinely possessed while

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<sup>71</sup> There are many versions of this myth recorded in the *Nihon shoki*. In one of these accounts, it is specifically mentioned that the wild behaviour of Susanoo caused Amaterasu to fall ill prior to her retreat into the cave. See Akima Toshio, "The Origins of the Grand Shrine of Ise and the Cult of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami," *Japan Review* 4 (1993): 158.

<sup>72</sup> According to Ebersole, the *chinkonsai* ritual was also performed for members of the imperial family, in which case it was referred to as the *mitamafuri no matsuri*. See Gary L. Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 91. For further discussion on the life-restoring functions of the *chinkonsai* rite performed by the Sarume clan, see Matsumae Takeshi, "The Heavenly Rock-Grotto Myth," 14 and Akima, "The Origins of the Grand Shrine of Ise," 158.

<sup>73</sup> Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, 158.

<sup>74</sup> Casal, "Far Eastern Monkey Lore," 14. Plutschow also mentions that such ritualized stomping of the feet also appeared in other Shintō dances such as *goryō-e* 御霊会, in which they served the same purpose. (Plutschow, *Chaos*

performing the ritual, just as Ame no Uzume had originally done. This trance has been understood to be another element common to indigenous Japanese rites and other shamanistic rituals across different cultures in which the performer falls into a daze as her soul is sent out to pacify and revive the soul of the sick or dead patron.<sup>75</sup>

The story of the monkey deity, Sarutahiko no Mikoto, appears in the succeeding episodes of the Japanese myth-history. These passages delineate the simian qualities acquired by Ame no Uzume, and the powers over fertility and healing that Sarutahiko himself also possesses, serving to exemplify the ways in which monkeys were portrayed in early Japanese narratives. In the *Nihon shoki*, the episode begins by recounting that Amaterasu bestows the three imperial regalia upon her grandson, Ninigi no Mikoto 瓊瓊杵命 (Ripening Rice Ears Lad), and sends him down from the heavens to pacify and govern the land. During his descent, his passage is blocked by Sarutahiko at the eightfold bridge between heaven and earth. Ame no Uzume is sent to confront the god and clear the path by means of a lewd dance which resembles her earlier performance outside the entrance to the rock cave. The monkey guardian deity is revealed to have presented himself in order to greet their entourage and serve as a guide along their journey, after which Sarutahiko and Ame no Uzume proceed together to Ise and are made husband and wife. Through this chapter of the myth, Ame no Uzume takes on the new name Sarume no Mikoto and gains her role as fertility goddess of the sea, as well as her simian associations from which the prestigious Sarume clan is said to have descended.

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*and Cosmos*, 206.) The *goryō-e*, or ritual of departed spirits, was thought to ward off illness and calamity. The ritual was performed by the ancient Gion cult whose central myth recounts the journey of a divinity to the underwater palace where he marries the daughter of the dragon king. On his way to the underwater realm, he produces a wreath capable of fending off disease and epidemic. For more on the ritual and this episode in traditional Japanese mythology, see Neil McMullin, "On Placating the Gods and Pacifying the Populace: The Case of the Gion 'Goryō' Cult," *History of Religions* 27 (1988).

<sup>75</sup> Matsumae, "The Heavenly Rock-Grotto Myth," 18.

The titles held by the two gods serve as an indication not only of their legendary ties to monkeys, but also with their role in agricultural fertility. This connection is furthered by their status as a pair of crossroad guarding *kami*. In native Japanese belief, such gods are traditionally associated with fertility and prevention of illness. Paths needed to be closely watched in order to prevent harmful outside forces from wandering into the domain, while agricultural crops likewise required the protection of a fertility god to ensure a healthy and productive harvest that would avert the rise of epidemic or illness. These beliefs surrounding Sarutahiko were not only confined to immaterial concepts, but took on a tangible presence in the form of small sheds that were erected along the roadside in early Japan as a sign of his role in safeguarding against illness, infertility, and crop failure.<sup>76</sup>

In the *Kojiki*, there is another narrative regarding Sarutahiko which illustrates the proximity of monkeys to bodies of water in Japanese folklore, and the hostile relationship that they are said to have with water-dwelling creatures.<sup>77</sup> This scene is evocative of the central motif in the monkey and crocodile story, in which the former is carried into the water by an aquatic creature, toward its intended death. In the episode recorded in the *Kojiki*, Sarutahiko goes fishing and his hand becomes caught in a giant shellfish whereupon he is dragged down into the depths

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<sup>76</sup> Casal, “Far Eastern Monkey Lore”, 20-21.

<sup>77</sup> The *kappa* and the *namazu* are two other legendary water-dwelling characters in Japanese folklore who are widely depicted as having a negative relationship with monkeys. The monkey is often depicted attempting to subdue the *namazu* – a catfish-like creature that is said to live under the Japanese islands and is held responsible for causing earthquakes. Significantly, the *namazu* is also overlapped with dragons and serpents in Japanese tales and art. (Cornelis Ouwehand, *Namazu-e and Their Themes: An Interpretative Approach to Some Aspects of Japanese Folk Religion* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964],178) For discussion on the enmity between *kappa* and monkeys, see Ishida, “The ‘Kappa’ Legend,” 122. In another popular folktale, referred to as *Saru kani gassen* 猿蟹合戦, the monkey is portrayed in conflict with a crab. In this story, the monkey sits in a tree and throws fruit at the crab below, injuring or killing it. Notably, this motif has parallels in some of the above mentioned regional variants of the monkey and crocodile story, in which the monkey escapes into the tree and throws fruit or rocks at its captor, resulting in a cracked shell. Seki has recorded the story of the monkey and the crab in his *Nihon mukashibanashi shūsei*, vol. 1, 142-3.

of the waters off the shores of Ise.<sup>78</sup> It will be recalled that Sarutahiko and Ame no Uzume were married at Ise, and that they are both the local deities of this region which is one of the most sacred locations in Japan. The Ise shrine is the site of worship for Amaterasu, and was thought to have been the closest land to the underwater realm of *tokoyo no kuni* 常世国, emphasizing the inherent relationship that was believed to exist between monkeys and the aquatic realm. *Tokoyo no kuni* is the name for one of three mythological eternal netherworlds in indigenous Japanese narratives, and later comes to be identified with the undersea palace of the dragons which plays a prominent role in oral variants of the monkey and crocodile story as discussed in a later section.<sup>79</sup>

The renowned Dutch folklorist, Jan de Vries (1890–1964), has recorded a tale that closely resembles this episode between Sarutahiko and the shellfish.<sup>80</sup> The story is a narrative from Indonesia in which the two central characters are a monkey and a tortoise.<sup>81</sup> Having been outwitted by the monkey, the tortoise schemes to lure him towards the edge of the water, where the monkey becomes ensnared by a seashell and is by it carried down and submerged under the sea.

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<sup>78</sup> Heldt, *The Kojiki*, 51.

<sup>79</sup> *Tokoyo no kuni* can also be referred to as *ne no kuni* or *yomi no kuni*, which are alternative names used to refer to the underworld in Shintō myth and legend. The first of these has positive connotations, while the latter two titles typically refer to a land of passage after death. For a discussion on these realms, see Yanagita Kunio, *Yanagita Kunio shū* 柳田國男集, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1969), 35-72.

<sup>80</sup> Jan De Vries, *Volksverhalen uit Oost-Indië: Sprookjes en Fables*, (Zutphen: Thieme, 1925).

<sup>81</sup> Indonesia has been a part of the Sanskrit cultural sphere of India since at least the beginning of the common era, with influences culminating in the period between 300 and 1300 CE. Through a network of ancient trading waterways, Sanskrit culture found its way into the Indonesian islands on a large scale, resulting in an extensive body of Indian tales and motifs becoming incorporated into the Indonesian narrative tradition. For more on the close cultural exchange between India and Indonesia, see Sheldon Pollock, “The Sanskrit Cosmopolis, 300-1300 CE,” in *Ideology and Statues of Sanskrit: Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language*, Jan E.M. Houben ed. 197-248 (Leiden: New York, 1996), 199; Moti Chandra, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India*, (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1977), 26; and Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 301;

In the Japanese myth, after the drowning of Sarutahiko, Sarutame (formerly Ame no Uzume) calls together all the various fish in the sea and has them agree to serve the progeny of the deities.<sup>82</sup> In so doing, she replaces the role of Sarutahiko as fertility deity, becoming not only the goddess of fertility, but also goddess of the fertility of the sea.<sup>83</sup> This episode gave rise to the tradition that when the year's first offerings of foods from the sea were presented to the emperor, they would be shared with members of the Sarume clan.<sup>84</sup>

### **Toyotamahime and Hoori no Mikoto**

The story of Hoori no Mikoto and Toyotamahime is another prominent episode in the founding mythology of Japan, which is relevant here for its depiction of a *wani*, or crocodile, acting as a vehicle between the terrestrial and aquatic realms, and for its familiar motif of a land-dweller being lured down from a tree and transported to an underwater realm.<sup>85</sup> Following the descent of Ninigi no Mikoto as detailed above, he is married to the daughter of a mountain deity. From their union are born three sons among whom are Hoderi no Mikoto 火照の命 (Bright Flame), a great fisherman, and Hoori no Mikoto, a skilled hunter. On one occasion, they agree to exchange the tools of their trade and they set out to try their hand at each other's craft. Hoori loses his brother's magical fish hook and finds himself crying at the edge of the sea after unsuccessfully offering replacements of five hundred and then a further thousand regular hooks. Shiotsuchi no Kami 塩椎神, the god of the tides, surfaces and provides him with a small boat

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<sup>82</sup> Heldt, *The Kojiki*, 51.

<sup>83</sup> Casal, "Far Eastern Monkey Lore," 27.

<sup>84</sup> See Matsumae, "The Heavenly Rock-Grotto Myth," 14 and Akima, "Origins of the Grand Shrine," 158.

<sup>85</sup> In the *Nihon shoki*, Hoori no Mikoto is referred to as Hiko Hohodemi no Mikoto. His brother, Hoderi no Mikoto, is in this later text known as Honosusori no Mikoto. The *Nihon shoki* gives a number of variants of the Hoori legend that was first recorded in the earlier chronicles. It is the *Kojiki* form of the narrative that is discussed in the present work. (Heldt, *The Kojiki*, 54-60.)

that will take him towards the underwater palace where he receives assistance in attempting to retrieve the missing hook. Once Hoori arrives at its gates, he climbs to the top of a *katsura* tree.<sup>86</sup> Toyotamahime, the daughter of the sea god, is curious about the new visitor and goes to the base of the tree to greet him. Hoori is invited back into the interior of the palace where the couple get married, and a great banquet is held in his honour. After remaining in that land for three years, Hoori longs to return to his home. The sea god is informed of this and he initiates a search for Hoori's missing fishhook, calling together all the fish in the sea. The hook is discovered buried in the throat of a fish, and Hoori is finally able to return home. He is carried to the surface aboard the back of a large *wani*, according to the *Kojiki*, and with the aid of the jewels that were given to him by the sea god, he is able to subjugate his elder brother.<sup>87</sup>

Toyotamahime is pregnant with their son and soon follows after her husband to give birth on the seashore in a parturition hall thatched with cormorant feathers. She cautions Hoori not to look upon her as she retreats into the shelter. He fails to obey her command and peeks into the hut to find that she has transformed into a *wani*. In the *Nihon shoki* version of this episode, she is instead recorded as having taken on the form of a dragon. In either case, Toyotamahime's alternative form reveals that not only was Hoori returned to land by a crocodile or other similar being, but that this creature also served as the vehicle for his original descent into the water,

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<sup>86</sup> This tree motif is relevant for its associations not only with the monkey and crocodile story, but also with an episode from the *Bhagavata Purāṇa* discussed later in this paper.

<sup>87</sup> These two jewels are in the *Kojiki* said to be the *shiomitsutama* 潮満珠 and the *shiohirutama* 潮干珠, translated by Heldt as the tide-raising jewel and the tide-ebbing jewel, respectively. See Heldt, *The Kojiki*, 57. They have been identified with the Buddhist *nyoi* pearls, or *nyoi no tama* 如意珠 (alt. *nyoi hōju* 如意宝珠) that appear in the *Nihon shoki* account of Empress Jingū 神功天皇 (169-269; r. 192-200). For this passage of the *Nihon shoki*, see Sakamoto Tarō 坂本太郎, ed. *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* vols. 67-68 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1967), 325. For the English translation, see William G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi*. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956), 219. The two jewels are also associated with the Sanskrit *cintāmaṇi* that appear across Indian Hindu and Buddhist narratives. See Bernard Faure, "The Impact of Tantrism on Japanese Religious Traditions," in *Transformations and Transfer of Tantra in Asia and Beyond*, István Keul ed. 399-410 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 403.



indicating that the *wani*, or crocodile, was depicted as a ferry between land and water in some of the earliest extant traditional Japanese folklore.

After having been discovered in her true animalistic form, Toyotamahime leaves the child and returns to her home in the sea. The child is named Ugayafukiaezu no Mikoto 鵜葺草葺不合命 (Seaside Brave Lad of Unfinished Cormorant-Feather Thatching), and of him are born four sons, the youngest among whom according to legend becomes Emperor Jinmu 神武天皇 (ca. 711-585 BCE; r. 660-585 BCE), the first imperial ruler of Japan.

### **Urashima Tarō**

Another Japanese tale that is of significance to the present discussion is the legend of Urashima Tarō. With the exception of the forbidden chamber motif which is absent in this case, the Urashima story has close associations with the myth of Hoori and Toyotamahime, incorporating the familiar theme of a ride to the underwater palace on the back of a turtle.<sup>88</sup> This narrative illustrates one prominent instance of overlap between *wani* and turtles in Japanese myth and legend, demonstrating that the substitution of the turtle as noted earlier in oral variants of the monkey and crocodile tale, was not an isolated instance but rather a recurring theme in the Japanese storytelling tradition.

The oldest extant textual record of the Urashima legend is found in the *Nihon shoki*, in which the young fisherman is referred to as the son of Urashima of Mizunoe.<sup>89</sup> In this particular text, he is said to set out into the water in his boat and catch a turtle that transforms into a woman

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<sup>88</sup> Anthropologist and scholar of Japanese folklore, Cornelis Ouwehand, has in fact categorized the Urashima legend as a variant of the above Hoori story. (Ouwehand, *Namazu-e and Their Themes*, 90.)

<sup>89</sup> For this passage in the *Nihon shoki*, see William G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi* (London: Kegan Paul, 1896), 368.

before his eyes. He falls in love and journeys with her to the submerged realm, or *tokoyo no kuni*, following suit with other similarly themed short stories in the Japanese tradition that involve both earthly and marine settings.<sup>90</sup>

Another rendition of the tale is given in the eighth century *Tango no kuni fudoki*.<sup>91</sup> Using this as a basis, the legend also appears in *waka* form in the *Man'yōshū*. The *fudoki* variant is slightly more similar to the widespread version that has come to be known in Japan, and which has become particularly popularized since the Muromachi period (1336-1573) when it was first adapted as an *otogizōshi* お伽草子.<sup>92</sup> In the *Tango fudoki*, Urashima Tarō (here named Shimako 嶋子) sets out in his boat for three days and nights, catching only a single five-coloured turtle. This turtle transforms into Kamehime 亀北壳 (Turtle Princess) the daughter of the sea god and invites him to return with her to *tokoyo no kuni*.<sup>93</sup> Urashima Tarō is put to sleep, and when he awakens, they are already in front of the luxurious palace. Celestial children come through the gates to greet them, and Urashima Tarō is led inside to feast upon a lavish banquet. After spending three years in this land as the husband of the turtle princess, Urashima Tarō longs to return to his home. He is given a box accompanied by a warning never to open it, and is then put

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<sup>90</sup> Ouweland describes the Urashima Tarō story as one classic variant out of a whole cycle of Japanese narratives involving journeys to the underwater realm, noting that there are many similar local tales found throughout Japan. (Ouweland, *Namazu-e and Their Themes*, 90.)

<sup>91</sup> The *Fudoki* were a series of almanacs that were imperially ordered in 713. They were the first systematic and deliberate textual recording of local legends, myths, and other items of folklore. The *Tango no kuni fudoki* variant of the Urashima story would have been one of many localized provincial *setsuwa* 説話 from the people of Tango Province. *Setsuwa* are defined as short secular or religious anecdotes, often with didactic value, which are rooted in the Japanese oral tradition. (R. Keller Kimbrough, *Preachers, Poets, Women, and the Way: Izumi Shikibu and the Buddhist Literature of Medieval Japan* [Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2008], 28.)

<sup>92</sup> The *otogizōshi* is a form of popular short prose narrative fiction that emerged during the Muromachi period, drawing on a wide range of sources including religious parables, classical literature, and tales of the supernatural. *Otogizōshi*, *setsuwa*, and *jisha engi* 寺社縁起 (temple and shrine histories) together comprised the bulk of popular Buddhist tale literature from twelfth to sixteenth century Japan. (R. Keller Kimbrough, "Tourists in Paradise: Writing the Pure Land in Medieval Japanese Fiction," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 33 [2006]: 270.)

<sup>93</sup> Her identification as the daughter of the sea god suggests that Kamehime is Toyotamahime, and she is in fact referred to as such in most common renditions of the tale that have circulating up to the present time.

to sleep and sent back up to the surface in a small boat. Upon returning to his village, he realizes that three hundred years have passed and that his old home is now unfamiliar to him. In despair, he opens the box and is immediately transformed into an old man.<sup>94</sup>

The Urashima legend and the earlier mentioned episodes from the indigenous mythologies have been discussed here to demonstrate that in the Japanese narrative tradition there existed a pattern of associated motifs which bore parallels in the monkey and crocodile story. The linking of monkeys to medicinal properties, fertility, bodies of water, and journeys to the aquatic realm appears not only across variants of this animal fable, but is widely depicted within the Japanese tradition. In the following section, I will extend the discussion to further Indian tales and myths in order to show the ways in which the above tales reveal the widespread integration of analogous Indian and Buddhist motifs across Japanese folklore.

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<sup>94</sup> For the full text in Japanese, refer to Akimoto Kichirō 秋本吉郎, ed., *Fudoki* 風土記, in *Nihon koten bungaku taikai* 日本古典文学大系, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958), 470-77.

## Chapter Four: Monkeys and Water Creatures in Japanese and Indian Narratives

The monkey and crocodile story is one example among a broader trend toward the adaptation and popularization of imported narratives, particularly those depicting dragon-like creatures and journeys into the water, which were readily assimilated into the local Japanese context through identification with similar elements in existing mythology and legends. This pattern of integration can be applied to the case of the monkey and crocodile story to understand the process by which this fable from ancient India came to be wrapped up in such characteristically Japanese garb and was transformed into an enduring component of the local storytelling tradition.

The earliest extant records of the episodes in Japanese folklore outlined in the previous section display little overt presence of Buddhist ideology, whereas later texts do show that they soon came to be identified with corresponding arrivals from Indian and Chinese religious thought. There was already present in early indigenous Japanese mythology the concept of other worlds that existed beyond the present earthly realm, into which deities and even humans could cross over under certain circumstances. The *Kojiki* variant of the Hoori story as outlined above refers to this realm as *tokoyo no kuni*, and makes no mention of the Buddhist influenced dragon king and dragon palace motifs that would later come to bear a significant presence in variants of this and other Japanese narratives, including the earlier discussed regional variants of the monkey and crocodile story.

Likely prior to the introduction of the Chinese four-legged dragon (*lung* 龍) and the Indian serpentine *nāga*, Japanese folk belief held descriptions of a dragon-like creature, or *tatsu* 龍, which has been widely incorporated into the names of shrines, villages, hills, and other

locations, particularly within central Japan and to a lesser extent in the north and south.<sup>95</sup> De Visser has recognized that the *nāga* was identified by the Chinese with their own *lung*, despite differences in physical features, due to their shared associations with rain and bodies of water. When these creatures were familiarized in Japan, they were naturally overlapped with the existing Japanese dragon-like deities who were used as the focus of prayer in rainmaking rituals, providing some explanation for the appearance of traditionally Japanese elements among imported Indian and Chinese narratives.

De Visser has further suggested that the *wani*, or crocodile, that appears in the Hoori story, as well as other episodes in early Japanese mythology, originally referred to an ancient serpentine sea god. This character was later identified with the dragon gods of Indian and Chinese folklore as their tales came to be introduced and established in Japan. Stories of the *wani* were overlapped with these creatures, and episodes from indigenous myths and legends were ornamented with features that ultimately relate back to the *nāga* tales of India.<sup>96</sup> Such a convergence between crocodiles and dragon gods appears also to have occurred in the case of the monkey and crocodile story in the Japanese context, giving rise to the common appearance of the dragon palace motif in known regional variants of the story.

In ancient India, there existed a belief in the large snake-like *nāga*, which was said to dwell under the earth or in the waters of the human world. As with depictions of dragon and *wani* rulers of the underwater realm which appeared much later in Japanese accounts, Indian *nāga* kings were often said to live in lavish palaces under the sea, and the creatures were said to

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<sup>95</sup> De Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, 227.

<sup>96</sup> De Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, 140.

be able to take on the form of human beings.<sup>97</sup> Although the creature had a presence in India independently of Buddhism, it was adapted into the religion, and the *nāga* came to be represented as a devotee of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and as a retainer of the Buddhist law.<sup>98</sup> This was a familiar technique that came into use across the various cultures into which Buddhism was introduced. Notably, this practice of identifying native gods as servants of Buddhist deities played a prominent role in the integration of the religion into Japanese culture, and resulted in the complex intertwining of images of traditional Japanese deities, shrines, rituals, terminology, and folklore, with close parallels in the Buddhist canon.<sup>99</sup> In early India, a similar adaptation of pre-existing folklore was developed under the influence of the Mahāyāna school. As a result, the frightening and angry *nāgas*, who were once fabled to reign terror upon humans by way of their control over the clouds and thunder, came to be identified as protectors of men, with the ability to shower life-giving rain upon the land.<sup>100</sup>

Among some of the earliest references to dragons in India, the *Ṛg Veda* tells of the villainous serpent, Vṛtra, who has taken up all the waters of the world and caused a pandemic drought. Indra, the god of thunder and rain, slays the great serpent, restoring the water back to the land.<sup>101</sup> The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also relates another episode depicting the destructiveness of serpents in early Hindu myth. In this, a poisonous *nāga* known as Kāliya inhabits the Yamuna

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<sup>97</sup> Female *nāgas* typically present themselves as beautiful maidens, while the motif of half-human *nāga kings* who take on human form is a common occurrence in the *Mahābhārata* as well as throughout records from Kashmir to Cambodia. See Michael E.J. Witzel, *The Origins of the World's Mythologies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 123.

<sup>98</sup> De Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, 7.

<sup>99</sup> This refers to the *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合 syncretism of Buddhist and native practices which initially arose in the seventh century and went on to expand into a complex doctrine of assimilation between Buddhist and Shintō beliefs. (Morrell, "Mujū Ichien's Shinto-Buddhist Syncretism," 449.) The earlier mentioned *honji suijaku* theory developed as a later stage of *shinbutsu shūgō*.

<sup>100</sup> De Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, 17.

<sup>101</sup> Steven Darian, "The Other Face of the Makara," *Artibus Asiae* 38 (1976): 33.

and attacks Kṛṣṇa when he enters the waters from atop a nearby *kadamba* tree. Kṛṣṇa subdues the creature and dances on his head, banishing him from the river.

In later canonical Buddhist legends, the Indian *nāgas* are typically portrayed in a favourable light as wise and intelligent benefactors of mankind. One of the most prominent depictions of these creatures in the Buddhist tradition is that of the seven-headed *nāga* king, Mucilinda. In the story of the Buddha's path towards enlightenment, Mucilinda is said to have emerged from his underwater abode and to have used his seven hoods to shield Śākyamuni from the elements as he sat in meditation at the foot of a tree. According to the *Lalitavistara sūtra*, the sky cleared after seven days, upon which the *nāga* king assumed the form of a human youth and worshipped the prince.<sup>102</sup> This famous episode is the subject matter of numerous works of Buddhist paintings and sculptures, and is a well-known image across all regions to which the religion has spread.

The story of Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 CE), the philosopher and founder of the first Madhyamaka school of Mahāyāna Buddhism, is another episode in which benevolent *nāgas* play a significant role. This is also one of the early and most widespread depictions in Indian Buddhism of the journey of a terrestrial being to a dragon kingdom at the bottom of the ocean, which came to feature widely in Japanese variants of the monkey and crocodile story. It is here, through his visit to this underwater realm, that Nāgārjuna is said to have discovered and restored to the human world the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* which had remained hidden ever since their expounding by the Buddha.

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<sup>102</sup> Bijoya Goswami, trans., *Lalitavistara* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 2001), 345.

Such a shift from the threatening to the favourable characterization of dragon-like creatures is likewise visible in the Japanese tradition.<sup>103</sup> This perhaps reflects the amalgamation of these Buddhist influenced conceptualizations of the *nāga* with the indigenous Japanese *tatsu* 龍, indicating that the originally Indian motifs that were imported into Japan were identified with the existing narratives. This would have influenced the ways in which traditional myths and legends evolved, and it was through such a process that there emerged the agreeable image of the dragon deity as seen in local variants of the monkey and crocodile story and other similarly themed tales that are present in Japan.

In the indigenous creation myths recorded in the oldest stratum of the *Kojiki*, there is a passage that illustrates the negative attributes that had traditionally been assigned to such creatures in Japan before the shift in representations was adapted. In this episode, there is a depiction of a malevolent serpentine figure referred to as Yamata no Orochi 八岐遠呂 (Eight-headed Dragon), who is said to have been yearly devouring the daughters of an earthly deity couple.<sup>104</sup> In exchange for the hand in marriage of the final surviving daughter, the deity Susanoo slays the giant serpent and from its body extracts the sacred sword, *kusanagi no tsurugi* 草薙劍, which would become one of the three imperial regalia of Japan.

It was only among later myth and legend that there emerged the now common image of the beneficent dragon king dwelling in a luxurious underwater palace. This agrees with the observation by Michael Witzel that in one of the earliest dragon myths of China, an ominous black dragon is slain by the second primordial emperor, Nügua, as a prerequisite to the formation

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<sup>103</sup> I use “dragon-like creatures” here to refer also to other beings with which dragons are frequently interchanged, including crocodiles, serpents, snakes, and turtles.

<sup>104</sup> In the *Nihon shoki*, Yamata no Orochi is written as 八岐大蛇, in which case the latter two characters represent “large snake.”



of the four quarters of the world. Witzel notes that in later Chinese variants of the same myth, the dragon came to be regularly depicted as a peaceful and favourable creature.<sup>105</sup>

It appears that the positive characterizations of the *nāga* that had originated in Indian Buddhist narratives were merged with parallel episodes existing in Japan, in which large water creatures were depicted as transporting humans to their undersea kingdoms and presenting them with lavish rewards or charms. This lends some explanation to the fact that in the earliest records of the Hoori and Urashima legends, the heroes are taken to *tokoyo*, which is characteristic of indigenous Japanese tales, while in most widely transmitted later renditions, both literary and oral, it is the Buddhist influenced setting of the dragon palace which most commonly appears, demonstrating that traditional concepts of an underwater land were identified with imported images originating in the tales of the *nāga* realm. It is also the case that in the *Kojiki* record of the Hoori story, it is written that Toyotamahime shifts into her true form as a *wani* in order to bear her child in the parturition hut. The same episode was soon after chronicled in the *Nihon shoki*, in which case the traditional crocodilian motif was eliminated, and Toyotamahime was identified with a dragon.<sup>106</sup> This illustrates the overlap that was formed between the two creatures in Japanese narratives, and thereby the path through which the crocodile became associated with the lavish underwater dragon palace as seen in regional variants of the monkey and crocodile story.

The transformation from *wani* to dragon in the *Nihon shoki* record makes sense if taking into consideration the Chinese nature of the document. This characteristic was first acknowledged and discussed in depth in the late Tokugawa (1603-1868) and early Meiji (1868-

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<sup>105</sup> Witzel, *The Origins of the World's Mythologies*, 152.

<sup>106</sup> Keizai zasshisha 経済雑誌社, ed., *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, in *Kokushi taikai* 國史大系, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Keizai zasshi, 1897), 63.

1912) periods by Kokugaku scholars including Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801) and Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776-1843).<sup>107</sup> Although both texts were strongly oriented towards native Japanese beliefs, it was the *Kojiki* that was recognized by nativist thinkers to directly reflect indigenous mythology preserved in the Japanese language, while the *Nihon shoki* was written in the classical Chinese style and functioned in favour of the rising Ritsuryō system of government modelled after the legal code of Tang China. The influence of continental culture in the *Nihon shoki* may be identified even in as minute a detail as the shift from the *wani* of ancient Japanese mythology to the wise and benevolent dragon that had emerged from late depictions of the *nāga* in Indian Buddhism.

The fact that certain characteristics from the Hoori legend correspond to and were assimilated with motifs found in imported tales can be understood by viewing the story as one variant of a more widespread myth cycle, rather than as an isolated product of the indigenous Japanese tradition. Friedrich W.K. Müller has noted the presence of a parallel Indonesian myth on the Kei Islands and the Minahassa Peninsula. In the version from the former region, a man loses a fishhook that has been lent to him by his brother, and in search of it he journeys to the sky in a boat where he discovers the hook in the throat of a fish. In the story from the Minahassa, the man travels to an underwater realm and upon locating the hook in the throat of a girl, he returns to land riding on the back of a fish.<sup>108</sup> Matsumoto Nobuhiro 松本信広 has also identified

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<sup>107</sup> The Kokugaku movement was an extensive scholarly investigation into the early classical texts, and was characterized by the notion that the precise deciphering of these ancient writings would reveal details about the nature of Japan prior to the importation of foreign scripts and belief systems. (See Peter Nosco, *Remembering Paradise: Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth Century Japan*, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990], 9.) This drove such Kokugaku scholars as Motoori Norinaga and Hirata Atsutane to resurrect ancient works and establish an advanced, scientific method of literary study.

<sup>108</sup> Friedrich W.K. Müller, "Mythe der Kei-Insulaner und Verwandtes," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 25 (1893), cited in de Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, 141. Donald Philippi also discusses the connection between the Hoori

corresponding Indonesian myths, one of which tells of a man who loses his spear while out hunting for boar and goes on a journey to the underworld in search of it. There, he meets and cures a princess who has been injured by a spear.<sup>109</sup>

In Japanese versions of this tale type, the submarine kingdom was identified as *tokoyo*, and in a manner resembling the transformation undergone by the monkey and crocodile narrative, the story was embellished with characters from native mythology who were said to be the inhabitants of this otherworld. De Visser has suggested that the *wani* was originally a feature present in early forms of the story that had made their way into the Japanese tradition.<sup>110</sup> As we can see in the *Kojiki*, this creature was present in ancient transmissions of the tale, and later became assimilated with Buddhist depictions of the *nāga*.

Preceding the above passage in the *Kojiki* is another prominent story involving *wani*, in which the creature is again said to serve as a ferry that transports the main character across a body of water. The *Inaba no shiro usagi* 因幡の素兎 (The White Hare of Inaba) tale is an episode in the legend of the Japanese deity, Ōkuninushi no Mikoto.<sup>111</sup> In this, a hare uses trickery and deception to enable his passage across a section of the sea, from the Oki Islands to Cape Keta. He issues a challenge to a *wani*, suggesting that they each gather together all the members of their clan in order to determine whose numbers are greater. Once the *wani* have

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legend and stories found in Indonesia, the Marshall Islands of Micronesia, and the American Pacific Northwest. See Donald L. Philippi, *Kojiki* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1968), 148.

<sup>109</sup> Matsumoto Nobuhiro, *Nihon shinwa no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Dōbunkan, 1931), 55-61.

<sup>110</sup> De Visser, *The Dragon in China and Japan*, 141.

<sup>111</sup> The White Hare of Inaba legend falls under the category of ATU 58, “The Crocodile Carries the Jackal”. The description of the tale type is as follows. “A rabbit (jackal) wants to cross a river in order to get some food (because he is invited somewhere). He persuades a crocodile (camel) to carry him across on his back. During the ride, the rabbit declares that the crocodile stinks (the camel is chased on the opposite bank by men). On the return trip, the crocodile, offended, lets the rabbit drown. Occasionally the rabbit escapes. In some variants a monkey (fox) declares that he has been commanded to count the crocodiles. He orders them to lie in the river next to each other [B555]. He counts them by walking on their backs and is able to cross the river [K579.2].” (Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, Part I, 53.)

lined themselves up across the water, the hare runs over their backs towards the neighbouring shore. Just as he is about to reach the land, he reveals his plot and the final *wani* tears the fur off his body, incensed at having been deceived by the hare. This tale serves to demonstrate the benevolence of Ōkuninushi, who travels through the region and stops to instruct the hare on how to treat his wounds and restore his body to its original condition.<sup>112</sup>

In the White Hare of Inaba story, we see another instance in the earliest records of Japanese mythology of a *wani* transporting a terrestrial creature through a body of water. A parallel concept of crocodiles serving as links to the netherworld is also held in Indonesia, in which they are said to act as servants to sea serpent gods, and are thought of as the carriers of souls to the next realm.<sup>113</sup> The idea of a crocodile transporting someone across a passage of water also exists in Indian tales, in which the creature frequently figures as a ferryman, or in cases where no ferry is available, crocodiles, tortoises or fish may offer to form a bridge connecting the two shores.<sup>114</sup> This indicates that the theme of a crocodile or turtle as a vehicle between marine and terrestrial spheres is not an isolated feature of the monkey and crocodile story. Rather, it is one component of a broader cycle of motifs present within the folklore of South, East, and Southeast Asia, including a number of prominent episodes in Japanese myth and legend.

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<sup>112</sup> For the story in full, see Kurano Kenji 倉野憲司, ed., *Kojiki* 古事記, in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 1, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958), 90-93. For the English translation, see Heldt, *The Kojiki*, 28-9. Regarding the White Hare of Inaba tale, Klaus J. Antoni has provided a detailed discussion on its counterparts in Indonesia, which are taken by many scholars to be the source of the story. For Antoni's discussion, see Klaus J. Antoni, *Der Weisse Hase von Inaba: Vom Mythos zum Märchen Analyse eines Japanischen "Mythos der Ewigen Wiederkehr" vor dem Hintergrund Altchinesischen und Zirkumpazifischen Denkens* (Weisbaden: Franz Steiner, 1982). An Indonesian variant has been recorded by De Vries (de Vries, *Volkverhalen uit Oost-Indië*, 13). For a Marathi variant, see Wilfred E. Dexter, *Marathi Folk Tales* (London: George G. Harrap & Co.: 1938), 36-8.

<sup>113</sup> Antoni, "Death and Transformation: The Presentation of Death in East and Southeast Asia," *Asian Folklore Studies* 41 (1982): 150.

<sup>114</sup> Casal, "Far Eastern Monkey Lore", 16.

In the *Kojiki* variant of the Hoori episode, not only is the hero ferried to shore aboard a *wani*, but Toyotamahime herself has been identified as having a role in ferrying human spirits to the netherworld just beyond the *unasaka* 海境, or the distant horizon of the sea. There existed in ancient Japan a class of shamanesses referred to as *asobi-be* 遊部 who were engaged in early traditional death rituals.<sup>115</sup> Toshio Akima has pointed out that these rites were reminiscent of a broader Asian ritualistic practice in which a shaman or shamaness transported a human soul to the underworld by boat.<sup>116</sup> He demonstrates that Toyotamahime and her sister, Tamayorihime 玉依毘売命 (Lady Summoned Soul) who figures alongside her in the Hoori legend, are regarded as two sides of a single deity, and that the sea goddess was herself considered to be an *asobi-be* shamaness. Taking into account the fact that in the *Kojiki*, the true form of Toyotamahime is revealed to be that of a *wani*, her identification with the *asobi-be* indicates that in ancient Japan, *wani* were thought to be involved in the ferrying of spirits to the underwater realm. This is reminiscent of images introduced via the monkey and crocodile story in which the crocodile acts as a medium for transporting the creature into the water, clarifying the relationship that appears in Japanese folk variants between the imported tale and the set of motifs surrounding Toyotamahime narratives.

With this understanding of the role of Toyotamahime, the overlap between *wani* and dragons in Japanese myths and legends also begins to make more sense, particularly if we take into account the fact that comparable associations have developed in the folklore of other cultures. One relevant example would be that of the *makara*, a sea creature that has been a part of

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<sup>115</sup> Scholars have recognized the *asobi-be* ritual to be a cognate of the earlier discussed *chinkonsai*. See Gorai Shigeru 五来重, "Asobi-be Kō," (*Bukkyo Bungaku Kenkyū*, 1, 1963: 10-50). See also, Orikuchi Shinobu 折口信夫, *Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū*, vol. 20 (Tokyo: Chuō Kōron-sha, 1967) 364-8.

<sup>116</sup> Akima, "The Origins of the Grand Shrine of Ise," 153.

the Indian tradition since the earliest of times. It has been acknowledged that in the pre-Vedic age, the *makara* was identified with the crocodile and was seen as a symbol of the fearsome and dark nature of the unknown depths of the sea.<sup>117</sup> It was later assimilated into the Hindu pantheon where it was assigned the role of the mount, or *vāhana*, of Varuṇa.<sup>118</sup>

Varuṇa is known as the god of water and guardian of the western quarters of the underwater realm. He shares associations with Yama, the god of death and ruler of the southern waters, and is himself capable of granting death due to his connections to punishment and morality as set out in the Vedas. Moreover, in the *Atharva Veda*, it is said that the portion of a man that reaches the ocean after his death belongs to Varuṇa, and the same texts make mention of a divinity called Varuṇo Yamo vā, demonstrating that the two gods were in some cases identified with each other.<sup>119</sup> Steven Darian has pointed out that in Hindu mythology, the *vāhana* of a god embodies the characteristics of its rider, which explains the fact that in the *Viṣṇudharmottara purāṇa* the crocodilian *makara* is itself associated with Yama.

Not only is Varuṇa connected to the aquatic underworld and the souls of the dead, but he is furthermore linked to the *nāgas* and in Indian folklore is often depicted surrounded by these creatures. Sukumari Bhattacharji has pointed out that in the *Mahābhārata*, Varuṇa is described sitting together with his wife and the *nāgas*, and in the *Harivaṃśa*, the creatures are said to have aided Varuṇa in his battle with the demon Vipracitti.<sup>120</sup> In the *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka*, the two

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<sup>117</sup> Darian, “The Other Face of the Makara,” 29.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>119</sup> Sukumari Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony: A Comparative Study of Indian Mythology from the Vedas to the Purānas* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 40.

<sup>120</sup> Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony*, 34.

beings are again tied to each other, with Varuṇa himself being directly identified as a *nāga*, and his younger sister being referred to as a *nāga* maiden named Irandatī.<sup>121</sup>

A similar association is also shared by his vehicle, the *makara*, in Indian mythology, such that Darian has identified the creature as an equivalent of the *nāgas* as well as of the serpent Vṛtra whose episode in the *Ṛg Veda* was mentioned earlier in the present paper.<sup>122</sup> The Indian dragon has furthermore been thought of as a counterpart of the *makara*, with each being characterized by a similar duality of positive and negative representations.<sup>123</sup> Darian refers to an episode in the great Hindu epic, the *Mahābhārata*, in which Arjuna drags a giant crocodile from the water, upon which it transforms into a beautiful celestial maiden, bearing notable similarities to Japanese accounts of Toyotamahime and her alternate crocodilian form. On the other hand, the *makara* retains associations with death, destruction and the inhibition of life in a way that has been associated with Vṛtra's causation of pandemic drought through his containment of all the waters of the world.<sup>124</sup>

These elements in early Indian folklore illustrate an instance external to Japan in which there existed a complex system of identification among water-dwelling reptiles, the underworld, and the involvement of sea deities in the migration of terrestrial souls toward the aquatic realm. While such a network of motifs is likely also found among other cultures, it is significant that this pattern of beliefs was shared between these two regions in particular, as it facilitated the acceptance and assimilation of Indian narrative elements that came to be transmitted to Japan in abundance, particularly via the spread of Buddhism.

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<sup>121</sup> This is story No. 545 in Edward Cowell's translation of the complete Pāli *Jātakas*. See Cowell, *The Jātaka*, vol. 6, 127-157.

<sup>122</sup> Darian, "The Other Face of the Makara," 29.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-3.

Regarding this latter point, there is one more Buddhist Indian narrative that is worth addressing due to its notable similarities to both the Hoori legend and the Japanese monkey and crocodile variants, as well as numerous other similarly themed folktales present in Japan. The *Bhūridatta-Jātaka* is one of seven stories among the massive collection of Pāli *Jātakas* in which *nāgas* play a prominent role. The tale in its original form is quite extensive, but I will attempt to briefly summarise its main points here.<sup>125</sup>

At the opening of the story, King Brahmadata of Benares banishes his powerful son from the kingdom, telling him not to return until it is time for him to inherit the throne. The son retreats into the forest to live as an ascetic, but ends up falling in love with and marrying a beautiful *nāgī* (a female *nāga*) who has left the underwater world in search of a husband. Together, they dwell in the forest and have two children. After two or three years the prince is informed that the king has died and he makes plans to return to Benares with his family. His wife regrets that her nature will not allow her to accompany him to the kingdom, and returns to the *nāga* world, leaving the children in his care. One day when the two youths are swimming in a lake, a tortoise enters the water and startles them. The king orders the creature to be punished. His attendants propose various methods, suggesting that it be ground into powder with a mortar and pestle, baked on hot coals, or thrown into the Yamunā River. The final option is chosen, and when the tortoise enters the water he ends up being taken by current to a submerged world. There, he is seized by the *nāgas*, and in order to facilitate his escape, the tortoise lies that he has been sent to the dragon realm as a messenger from the king. As a result of the tortoise's lie, through a series of events the princess of Benares ends up being married to the *nāga* king

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<sup>125</sup> This is *Jātaka* No. 543 in Cowell's translation. For the full story, see Cowell, ed., *The Jātakas*, 80-114.



Dhataratṭa. She is put to sleep and is immediately transported to the *nāga* realm, where she lives in luxurious jeweled palaces without realizing that she has left the human world.

In this episode from the *Bhūridatta Jātaka*, there emerges a pattern of events that is reminiscent of myths and legends known in Japan: A young man and a sea goddess fall in love and are married; the wife returns to the netherworld and leaves their offspring on land; a tortoise serves as messenger between the two regions; and sleep is used in the transportation of humans to the lavish underwater realm. Another motif that is of particular interest here is the punishment of the tortoise. Amidst a series of familiar and widely encountered elements, we see for the first time an episode with similarities to one of the more curious features of the Japanese monkey and crocodile variants. It will be recalled that in over half of the nineteen variants briefly described above, the king orders the punishment of the sea creatures involved in the foiled plan. The most commonly appearing punishment is the de-boning of the jellyfish. This is such a prominent and characteristic feature of the Japanese story that folklorists including Yanagita and Ikeda have specifically classified the tale type under the title, *Kurage hone nashi* 海月骨無し (Why the Jellyfish has No Bones).<sup>126</sup> In most of the variants summarised by Seki, he mentions only that the bones are removed as punishment and gives no further information. In variant 9, however it is specifically mentioned that the jellyfish loses its bones by being ground in a stone mill. While the current study can suggest no direct connection between the two with any certainty, it is possible that elements from the *Sumsumāra* or *Vānara-Jātaka* became associated with motifs from the *Bhūridatta-Jātaka* due to a similar context of transmission or their associated themes,

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<sup>126</sup> See Yanagita, *Nihon no mukashibanashi*, 18-19, and Ikeda, *Type and Motif Index*, 27-8. Chamberlain also published an English translation of one variant of the story, which he calls *The Silly Jelly-fish*. See Chamberlain, *The Silly Jelly-fish: Told in English by B.H. Chamberlain* (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 1887).

allowing elements from the latter to be merged into monkey and crocodile variants in much the same way as had occurred for features belonging to early indigenous Japanese narratives.

## Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that there exist parallels between the folklore of India and Japan, as well as the relationship of the Indian monkey and crocodile tale with the early Japanese tradition. Taking these similarities into account, it becomes apparent how elements from Japanese myth and legend came to be identified with and merged into variants of the monkey and crocodile story as it was transmitted throughout the country. When the narrative was first introduced into Japan, it encountered a culture already familiar with images of a great marine reptile, likely a crocodile, meeting a terrestrial creature atop a tree and transporting it to an underwater realm. Present also was the understanding of the monkey as a guarantor of fertility and a source of remedy in times of disease and epidemic. Furthermore, the monkey had long been associated with marine settings and water beasts in the Japanese tradition, one example of this being the two simian deities, Sarutahiko and Sarume, the first of whom was dragged to the bottom of the ocean by an aquatic creature, and the latter having been identified as a goddess of the sea. These were all elements that laid a suitable foundation for the acceptance and assimilation of the Indian story about a monkey who was taken to a watery abode on the back of a crocodile to provide remedy for an illness or for pregnancy-related troubles.

In the Japanese context, certain other features came to be embedded in the general narrative. Introduced into the story were such motifs as the underwater dragon palace, the ill sea goddess, the substitution of the turtle in place of the crocodile, and the divulgence of the plan and subsequent punishment of a selection of extraneous marine characters. These elements appear to have been tied together and merged into later transmissions of the story, as a part of the overarching motif of the *wani* as ferry between land and water with which they were associated in the existing storytelling tradition. When a Japanese audience familiar with these images was

presented with the depiction of a crocodile transporting a soul to the marine realm, they would have identified it with analogous tales of journeys to *tokoyo*. It is likely that such stories, at the time at which the monkey and crocodile story was being disseminated in Japan, had been largely overlapped with dragon palace lore. This would account for the prominent role of this motif in recorded vernacular retellings of the story, and suggests that these particular variants were produced once narratives that were based in Buddhist *nāga* legends had been familiarised within the Japanese context.

The monkey and crocodile story discussed here serves as one small illustration of the exchange of cultural information across South, Southeast, and East Asian folklore, as part of a greater network of motifs that are imbedded in myths and legends from across these regions. In the present study, this tale has been used to illustrate a core narrative framework that was maintained in transmissions of the story throughout Hindu, Buddhist, indigenous Japanese, and secular folk contexts. This thesis has demonstrated the presence of these central elements among other items of Japanese and Indian folklore, and their role in facilitating the widespread popularity and permanence of the tale by enabling its identification with an established structure of cultural knowledge. Such a study contributes to current research on the dissemination of globally acknowledged motifs and tale types within Japan, and suggests that a close analysis of the presence of early Indian narratives in the Japanese literary and folk traditions will reveal valuable information on early cultural exchanges between the two regions.

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