

GPS Research Grant Report

Grantee Name: Erin Murphy, Graduate School of Japanese Studies

Research Expenses: Total cost of transportation and accommodation were 56,672 yen, out of an awarded 50,000 yen, and overages, local transportation, and fees associated with activity were covered by the grantee.

Accommodation in Kyoto: 31,692

Transportation, round trip: 24,980

Research Goals:

In researching Yokai Fictionalization, I identified not only several experts, but a few resources that were out of my reach in Tokyo, due in part to either their age, rarity, home institution, etc. The goal of this research was, then, not only gain access to these materials in pursuit of creating my model of Yokai Fictionalization, one that expands upon a model introduced by the former head of the Nichibunken Institute, Kazuhiko Komatsu. Many of his publications over his lengthy and lauded career are currently out of print, and therefore difficult to obtain. Expanding my understanding of his research, Yokai culture, and making contact with other researchers in the field were the primary goals of this study trip.

Research Overview:

My research was into a few key Yokai resources located within the Nichibunken libraries and archives, located in Kyoto Japan. Additionally, I wanted to overlap my research with the availability of the main Yokai researcher at the institute, Yasui Manami, as well as connecting with other, various Yokai scholars in Kyoto for the fall season. While Initial plans were to visit only Nichibunken, due to changes in travel schedules for both myself, Professor Yasui, and the availability of resources within the Yokai lab. On the days that these resources were

not available, my time was instead spent engaging with the larger Yokai community to speak to participants about their experiences with Yokai culture, and their impressions on its place within a modern, increasingly globalized Japan.

At the Library and archives themselves, I spent the entirety of one day, and several hours of another, pouring through sources both allocated kindly by the library prior to my arrival, and those that I found during my research. I looked at Yokai imagery from photo books of the Shigeru Mizuki road, to Manga interpretations of famous stories, to books of previous art exhibits, all in between heavier reading material regarding the methodologies of researching Yokai, the history of the study, and the state of the field throughout its two hundred year history. Perhaps even more excitingly, due to my communication with Researcher and Yokai specialist Yasui Manami, I was allowed access to observe the Yokai Research lab at Nichibunken, where researchers search, scan, and categorize Yokai imagery from traditional materials, such as Emaki. From there, spirits are categorized by either visual or textual source, spirit, location, and even notable action, such as dancing. A database of Yokai image on this scale has not existed before, and it does the difficult but very exciting work of pulling together disparate pieces of niche folklore, in order to paint a cohesive, rich spectrum of image.

Due to the timing of this travel, where it fell over the week of September in which the Autumnal Equinox occurred, certain events had to be moved, due to scheduling conflicts, and last minute delays. Yasui, who had been visiting Korea to speak at a conference and present some of her research, would not be back and available for discussion regarding the lab and facilities, until the day I was set to depart. While I could certainly feel the weight of poor timing, and the struggle to plan around the busy schedules of both a student and a researcher, I was still fortunate enough to spend two days at the archive researching, learning, and

documenting the ever growing advancements in Yokai study, including the ways we are integrating modern technology into the study of something that seems antithesis to it.

On days in which I could not visit the archive, whether for holiday or cancelled plans, I was fortunate enough to be able to visit the annual “Yokai Fest” held at Toei Eigamura each year. In this event, visitors are allowed, and in fact encouraged, to attend in costume, with many attendees selecting oft forgotten and well loved Yokai alike to attend as. Additionally, this was an invaluable opportunity to speak to both Yokai experts and enthusiasts alike regarding their impressions of Yokai, the folklore associated with it, and the role that it plays in a modern Japan. Many, of course by nature of the event, were highly complimentary of the subject, and indicated that this was a yearly event for them. Others were simply mildly interested but expressed that they had been previously unaware of such spirits, events, and stories, and expressed interest in learning more. While there, I was also fortunate enough to witness a live filming of the program “Yokai to Asobu,” or Playing with Yokai, a program in which the hosts seek to introduce the public to niche aspects of the folklore. In the end, the course of my research mimicked the nature of Yokai themselves; a core pursuit wrapped in the human desire to imagine, and play.

Applicaton:

Over the course of my time in Kyoto, I took no less than sixteen pages of notes, which are currently in the process of being refined into a coherent, cohesive image of Yokai Fictionalization for my thesis. While what is written in textbooks and studied by experts is important, Yokai have always been of public interest; something that is shared and expounded upon by an eager audience. Witnessing both the public and the academic in my time in Kyoto, I feel it has changed the ways in which I will be approaching my argument going forward. Being able to, nearly simultaneously, interact with both the public and academic was

of great benefit to my research, and I am eager to include these findings within my research on the topic. I hope that not only can much of this research serve me in the completion of my education at Sophia, but that what I had the opportunity to witness and learn will lay a solid foundation for future research into the nature of Yokai folkloric development, genealogy of myth, and Fictionalization as it pertains to modern day interpretations of that myth.

Acknowledgements: Thank you very much to the GPGS and the FLA for their support of my research, both financially and educationally, and I learned how to undertake the grant writing, researching, and awarding process for the very first time. This was quite the daunting task, coming from a system in which grants were not available for students, outside of medical research at my American institution of study. Additionally, I am deeply grateful to Nichibunken, not only for allowing me into their libraries and archives, and preparing materials for my study, but also for welcoming me so warmly, and treating me as one of their own; a peer in pursuit of cultural and folkloric study, rather than an outsider. Specifically, I would like to take Yasui Manami for her support, her kindness, and her depth of knowledge not only regarding the topic at hand, but the systems of Nichibunken, their navigation, and for showing me where the concrete research into Yokai within the institution is done. I would also like to that professor Mathew Thompson, my advisor at the university, as without him, I would not have had to confidence to apply for these programs in the first place. I am deeply appreciative to all who were involved in my growth as a researcher, and the development of my study into Yokai.