

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OF MOMOTARŌ

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This paper examines the major thematic elements, or motifs, that allow the folktale *Momotarō* (*The Peach Boy*) 桃太郎 to undergo changes in plot and usage as it moves from the oral tradition to nationalist literature. My research traces written motifs from a variety of classical and medieval documents to the emergence of *Momotarō* during the Muromachi period (1392-1573) 室町時代. I identify and compare these motifs within different versions of the tale to determine its change and continuity up through World War II. The paper groups the various versions of *Momotarō* chronologically into four time periods, researching the social, political, economic, and artistic histories of each to determine what overarching influences change or maintain plot and other details in the story. At the same time, I identify changes in political and social climate. By connecting this popular folktale with its origins, we gain a greater understanding of *Momotarō*'s importance in Japanese history and culture. While the story has received recent modest attention in Japanese studies due to its usage in World War II propaganda, an exploration of the tale's development is lacking. This paper seeks to shine some light on the growth of *Momotarō* and how it became the most recognized folktale in Japan¹.

¹ Lanham, Betty B., and Masao Shimura. "Folktales Commonly Told American and Japanese Children: Ethical Themes of Omission and Commission." *The Journal of American Folklore*. (35)

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PREFACE

My interest in the Japanese folktale *Momotarō* (The Peach Boy) 桃太郎 began when I was introduced to Blaine Ray's Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS) methods by a fellow teacher Michael Chapman. While teaching Japanese language, the students would practice telling the folktale in the target language while learning vocabulary, grammar concepts, and cultural anecdotes. I was impressed by my students' interest in the culture and how well the story taught about Japanese society. Michael also introduced me to the University of Pittsburgh's Interdisciplinary Masters in East Asian Studies (IDMA) program. Without his knowledge and experience, I would never have started this journey.

Thanks to my wife Beth for her technical editing skills as well as keeping James and Emma occupied while I worked. I could not have done it without you.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the mythic motifs that allow the folktale *Momotarō* to undergo changes to its plot, and uses of the tale as it moves from the oral tradition to nationalist literature. Because *motif* is a vital and recurring term in this research, it is necessary to state that I use the traditional definition of the word. Thus, a motif can be understood in this paper as Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines it: "a recurring salient thematic element or feature." I use written motifs from a variety of classical and medieval documents for the purpose of tracing the development and various combinations of these motifs. My objective is to track the movement of these motifs through Japanese history from their earliest written record to their assembly into the folktale *Momotarō*. Some motifs that contribute to *Momotarō* are derived from the earliest creation myths. According to Mircea Eliade, these early myths have an intrinsic appeal because they are used to describe the origins and instruct cultural norms. In his book *Myth and Reality*, Eliade speaks of two types of stories which he refers to as "true" and "false." He explains that "true" stories are those stories believed to be true on faith, often explaining the origins of the world and creation. The "false" stories are stories that have evolved from the earliest oral traditions but have been adapted for entertainment and social purposes that no longer function as solely myth describing the origins of things. Using Eliade's categories, *Momotarō* is a "false" story, but its mythic motifs, or motifs that are shared with the same creation narratives, gives the tale mythic elements that can be identified as important to defining structure of society and

natural order. By examining these mythic motifs, one can determine the social values and cultural norms revealed in the text. This is the primary methodology of my analysis of social and cultural change and its impact on the development and usage of the tale.

Momotarō has undergone interdisciplinary research outside of folkloric studies, primarily in the areas of history and sociology, because of its connection to World War II propaganda. But much of this work is dated and scant. In 1991, Klaus Antoni wrote an article examining the development of the folktale *Momotarō* (The Peach Boy) 桃太郎 during the Shōwa period (1926-1989) 昭和時代.¹ Other writers have added their insight in the form of literary histories and historical studies, like Nomura Junnichi's 野村純一 book *Atarashi Momotarō no Tanjō* (*The New Origins of the Peach Boy*) 新桃太郎の誕生. His research focuses on the usage of *Momotarō* by the Japanese government during the Meiji period (1868-1915) 明治時代 to the early Shōwa. My research has benefited greatly from these texts. What is still lacking is a study of the continuity and change experienced by the story as it developed. This paper attempts to fill that gap.

The folklorist Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 has written extensively on the subject of folktales, but much of his work has not been translated for easy consumption in the West. His 1933 book, *Momotarō no Tanjō* (*The Birth of the Peach Boy*) 桃太郎の誕生, explores the origins of the folktale and its motifs while also tracking its development. Combining this resource with many others that have been written since, we can make a clearer and more precise analysis of the development of the story. The analysis in this paper will be one of the first English analyses of the development of the story's motifs, beginning in the eighth century to its

modern form during the Muromachi period (1392-1573) 室町時代, and concluding with its inclusion in elementary school textbooks in 1886 and World War II propaganda.

This paper focuses on two aspects of the story: the continuation and extinction of certain motifs and plot points, and the influence inside and outside Japanese society that supports this continuity and change. While following the development of the folktale through Japanese history, one can see how a story that was developed by the lower classes of society found its way into literature supporting the divine ancestry of the imperial house of Japan. The lower class consisted of the peasants, whom the aristocrats and military elite looked down upon. This paper will shine some light on the social and economic developments that enabled this folktale to transcend its origins of oral tradition and become entrenched by 1886 in nationalist propaganda.

Momotarō originated as an oral folktale, first published in written form once the political change of the military elite gained power over the imperial court. When this happened, images and literature depicting the tale and motifs of *Momotarō* permeated Japanese culture. Authors emphasized the classical social values of loyalty, filial piety and righteousness which *Momotarō* contained. This tale and its motifs became synonymous with the ideal characteristics of the Japanese people. *Momotarō* became a national icon, his story taught to all Japanese children in the centralized school system.

Japan, like other cultures, used folktales for political purposes.² Legends and myths were used to legitimize the imperial house, just as *Momotarō* was used to legitimize the national agenda. *Urashima Tarō* 浦島太郎 was one such folktale, recounted for the purpose of legitimizing the emperor's divine rule. But unlike these early folktales found in classical texts, *Momotarō* did not receive state support until after the military took control during the Muromachi period. Initially, the tale's hero journey plot was printed for plebian entertainment in

the popular collection of illustrated stories that included the *Akabon* 赤本, *Kurobon* 黒本, and *Kusazōshi* 草双紙 of the early Edo period (1600-1868) 江戸時代. These printings revealed multiple versions of the story. *Momotarō* lived on because it was popular among the masses, and spoke to both child and adult. It provided an escape for the oppressed masses of Edo. From the mouths of *inakape* (country bumpkins) to the mouths of imperial aristocrats reinstated to power during the Meiji Restoration, *Momotarō* called all to return to Japanese values and defend the nation from uncultivated peoples. It took the national government's acceptance of *Momotarō* during the Edo period before one version became predominant while the others were sidelined. This particular version was not necessarily chosen by one particular person or group. It developed as the dominant version of the story based on the quantity of written texts that have survived today. This version became synonymous with the imperial line and creation stories because of its inclusion in the elementary readers. Its militaristic qualities enabled it to be added to the canon of nationalist tales. After this inclusion, its motifs became the bedrock of Japanese culture with which other legends and myths are associated. This explains why *Momotarō*'s imagery has so permeated art and literature from the Muromachi period to the present, making it Japan's most popular folktale.³

The motifs contained in this story, including divine birth, journey to Devil Island, and defeat of the devils, show up time and again in Japanese society. Many of these motifs existed before *Momotarō* and have continued to the present day by being added to various *Momotarō*-like stories. This is why *Momotarō* has been used in conjunction with myth and legends by the Japanese government to institute nationalist sentiment amongst the Japanese.

Momotarō continues to be an important part of modern Japanese culture. The image of *Momotarō*, aided by his sidekicks (a dog, cat, and pheasant), can be seen in everything from

popular videogames to advertisements for *ramen* (noodles). The hero Momotarō has become synonymous with prodigious size, strength, and goodness. His tale's usages include describing *koi* (ornamental carp) 鯉, tomato plants, and even young boys. One can even see Momotarō acting as a mascot for tourism in Okayama City. His story continues to be told in contemporary literature, *bunraku* (Japanese puppet plays) 文楽, and *kabuki* (traditional Japanese theater) 歌舞伎.

2.0 REGARDING ANCIENT MATTERS

The earliest written record of any folktale in Japan was found in the *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*) 古事記 and *Nihongi* (*The Chronicles of Japan*) 日本紀.⁴ The former is believed to have been written ca 712 CE, while the latter followed ca 720 CE. These texts contain creation stories and tales of imperial lineage. Prior to this time, the majority of written documents were copies or translations of texts from China, like Buddhist Sutras and epic tales. The *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* are important because they are some of the earliest known Japanese texts and reveal much about ancient Japanese beliefs. What is missing from this literary scene is the folktale *Momotarō*. There are two plausible reasons for this. The first is that the folktale was not valued enough by these early authors—literate aristocrats and Buddhist priests who studied ancient texts—to be included in these texts. The other possible reason for *Momotarō*'s absence is that it may not have existed by this time.

The latter of these two theories is more likely. Yanagita Kunio, one of the first researchers of Japanese folktales, argued that *Momotarō* was a product of the Muromachi period.⁵ But to say that *Momotarō* was simply a product of the Muromachi period is an oversimplification of how a folktale evolves with time. Though *Momotarō* is not mentioned explicitly in the *Kojiki* or *Nihongi*, the reader can still observe tales with similar motifs in both works. Yanagita Kunio's book *Momotarō no Tanjo* (*The Origins of Momotarō*) 桃太郎の誕生 cites regional developments and various tales with similar motifs and plots as the early roots of

Momotarō. Many researchers agree with this idea that *Momotarō* was not the invention of a single author, but rather the result of an oral tradition that passed down tales from generation to generation with the occasional corruption by a storyteller to best maintain the interest of the listeners. But there is a problem with this theory. Yanagita's focus was primarily on regional diffusion within Japan. What he ignored was the international diffusion from the mainland. Like much literary analysis during the 1930s, Yanagita did not consider that cultural characteristics assumed to be uniquely Japanese could have originated in another country, especially China. Yet the Chinese told stories about several *Momotarō*-like characters, such as the Monkey King who raided the goddess's immortality-giving peaches. Even the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* contain several tales with motifs originating in China that most likely influenced *Momotarō*'s change over time.

Two tales from the *Kojiki* are relevant to *Momotarō*. The first, found in the first book of the *Kojiki*, is the story of Izanaki, the god associated with the creation of Japan. He fled from the hags sent by his deceased wife to catch him and used three peaches to stave off his pursuers. This is the first written instance of Japanese gods using peaches to serve their purposes.

The second *Kojiki* tale, found in Book 2, is called *Yamato the Brave*. It tells of a national hero who conquered the ferocious people of distant lands. Like *Momotarō*, Yamato traveled to a distant land at the request of his leader. The "others" of the distant land did not submit freely, but had to be forced to comply. Yamato vanquished his enemy, as *Momotarō* did in some versions of his tale prior to the Shōwa period.

The *Nihongi* contains one of the oldest Japanese folktales, the story of the fisherman Urashima Tarō, which retains its form to this day with only some minor alterations. Sea creatures helped Urashima Tarō reach the kingdom of the sea princess. In the "other world" he received a

valuable gift. Momotarō, by comparison, was helped by three animals on his journey. After defeating the *oni* (demons) 鬼, he returned with the demon's treasures.

It is possible that these three tales—*The Creation Story*, *Yamato the Brave* and *Urashimatarō*—long existed among the population as oral tales even before they were collected into written texts. If this is true, it is likely that these tales were passed on orally long before they were recorded. This is similar to the writings of Confucius and Lao Tzu, who, argues Peter Stearns, had built their philosophies upon preexisting ideas and traditions.⁶ Scholars are unsure what other versions of these three early tales may have existed, but the stories do reveal much about early Japanese society, such as beliefs about the relationship among humans, nature, and the gods.

According to Mircea Eliade, myths were created out of the need to explain origins and natural phenomena. Though *Momotarō* is a folktale, it contains mythic elements. In the oral tradition of *Momotarō*, the storyteller was able to take the listener back to a time and place where humans were in close communion with nature and deities. This connection to the “original” world before the “great fall” is evident in all the stories about gods and humans, and the Japanese are no different. While fleeing his pursuers in the first book of the *Kojiki*, Izanaki blocked the connection between heaven and earth, destroying the pass for eternity. *Momotarō* also showed a connection between humans and the gods. Momotarō's ability to communicate with animals expressed a connection to humanity's intrinsic desire to commune with nature.⁷ One might even say that the story reflected Japan's desire to connect with its origins during a time of urbanization and mechanization. The tale *Momotarō* remained popular as a reaction to change, with listeners harkening back to the mythical, uncorrupted days when man and nature communed with deities, prayers were communicated and answered, and selfless motivation trumped selfish desires.

It is important to mention here that though the tales of *The Creation Story*, *Yamato* and *Urashima Tarō* were written down, they did experience change over time. However, these tales were not originally published for consumption by the masses. The Japanese did not have an official writing system for quite some time after the publication of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*. These two texts were written using borrowed Chinese characters to write Japanese words phonetically. These tales were rewritten later in the future, combined with components of oral tradition from other stories as well as other versions of the same story that the aristocracy either did not know or chose to ignore. This same type of development happened to *Momotarō* during its time of publication.

Other tales existing prior to the Kamakura period (1185-1333) 鎌倉 that shares motifs distinctly similar to those in *Momotarō* include Minamoto no Tamemori's 源為憲 *Sanbō Ekotoba* (*Tales of the Three Treasures*) 三寶絵詞 from 984, and the *Konjaku Monogatari* (*Anthology of Tales from the Past*) 今昔物語 from the late Heian period (794-1160) 平安. In *Sanbō Ekotoba*, the author depicted animals in human-like forms. This is similar to the personification of *Momotarō*'s three animal companions, and the earliest example of this known to date. This anthropomorphization became a traditional motif in the descriptions and imagery associated with *Momotarō*.⁸ In the *Konjaku Monogatari*, examples of contemporary life began to permeate tales. No longer did they focus strictly on the lives of aristocrats or the actions of gods. Stories now took the form of fairytales, incorporating components of humor and satire designed to entertain the commoner.⁹ Because no tale of *Momotarō* or similar story was included in these texts, we can assume that the tale we recognize today did not exist by the start of Japan's Middle Ages. This supports Yanagita's theory that *Momotarō* got its start during the Muromachi period.

3.0 MIDDLE AGES AND CIVIL WAR

The Middle Ages saw an increase in civil unrest. Tales of warrior heroes and military feats were generated from the various civil wars. Motifs from the *Heike Monogatari* (Tale of Heike) 平家物語, *Hōgen Monogatari* (Tale of Hōgen) 保元物語, and *Soga Monogatari* (Tale of Soga) 曾我物語 combined with tales from the folktale collection *Otogi-zōshi* (Companion Stories) 御伽草子 influenced storytellers leading to the development of *Momotarō*. According to Yanagita Kunio, this development began with oral tradition, most likely within the agrarian families.

These nuclear families with paternal grandparents produced close-knit, self-reliant groups which were key in producing the rice needed for taxes. During the winter months, when agricultural production was at a low, the family depended on its own resources for entertainment. The elder members of the family told stories during the long winter evenings. Grandmothers who were from another area of the village would have their own versions of stories, thus giving birth to the diverse variety of oral traditions that *Momotarō* stems from. Besides the winter months *nijūsanya* (moon viewing) 二十三夜 parties provided other occasions for partaking in storytelling.¹⁰ Some villagers looked forward to visits from traveling vendors whose fame grew with the number of stories they could tell when seated with the family around the *iori* (fireplace) 庵. These medicine peddlers, bamboo weavers, and salespeople would learn new stories and pass them on to other villages, spreading stories throughout the region.

Other influences impacted the family structure but also the motifs of the folktale. Japanese society placed great importance on having male children to carry on the family name, a value which saturates stories from this time. John Whitney Hall argues that family size was in decline during this time, partially due to the warring and instability of the developing feudal state.¹¹ To ensure political and military influence, landed families ceased dividing their inheritance amongst their male heirs. Land was kept whole and issued to the eldest male. Women were excluded from property because of their inability to support the feudal lords militarily. Some families even resorted to female infanticide or the sale of daughters in order to have fewer mouths to feed. These smaller families experienced even greater loss and hardship if they lost a male heir, since they could then lose land and rights as well. Sons were a form of social security, ensuring that the father and mother would have a young couple not only to care for them when they grew older, but also to continue the family lineage. When a tale told of a childless couple, the listener understood that these individuals were in a tough situation. And if a barren couple were able to adopt a son, how lucky one could assume that couple was. This is why the folktale *Momotarō* begins by explaining that there was an old man and old woman who were barren, with no children. They make a miserly living performing small jobs like laundry and collecting firewood. They are destitute, aging, and have no one to take care of them as they age. Momotarō's parents were even failing their ancestors by not continuing the family lineage, an important duty in a Confucian society which emphasized filial piety and ancestor veneration. All of these circumstances painted a grim future for the couple, a future that would have been all too familiar to Muromachi-era families. The appearance of a son, their literal savior, would have offered much hope to families struggling toward an uncertain future.

These social norms were further compounded by religious beliefs, especially the Pure Land Faith of Amida Buddhism, which had some popularity during this time. The founding monk Shinran (1173-1262) taught that humans were not capable of achieving enlightenment on their own, but required divine intervention to aid the faithful. Though the elderly couple from *Momotarō* were in a hopeless situation, they did not lose faith. Their continued prayers and righteousness earned them a miracle: a son, a male heir to take care of them in their old age and to continue the family line. The couple's age suggested that they were unable to have children of their own like the Biblical Abraham and Sarah. Because of Momotarō's miraculous birth, he was the result of divine intervention.

A philosophical influence was Taoism. In *Momotarō*, Taoism described man's appropriate relation with nature, which was one of harmony and balance. There was evidence that this influence from China was not limited to the tale of Momotarō. The tale *Urashima Tarō*, for example, undergoes a slight change in the Muromachi period, in which the animal characters take on a greater role. The turtle becomes the shape-shifting sea princess. In another version, *Urashimatarō* comes across a turtle being abused by children. He rescues this animal and it shape shifts into the sea princess. Momotarō befriends three animals which will aid him in accomplishing his goal of defeating the *oni*. The animals' cooperation with each other and Momotarō was the example of harmony. When I asked the Japanese I met why they were told the folktale *Momotarō*, I often was told the story teaches cooperation. Three animals that rarely get along, a dog, monkey, and pheasant, are united in a common cause. I was told by some that these animals are simply a Taoist lesson about knowing one's place and living in harmony and balance.

An important Ming Chinese influence that entered Muromachi Japan was the Taoist deity Zhongtan Yuanshuai. Often depicted as a child Nataka, as he was called in Japan, was a powerful warrior who vanquished foes of the empire.¹² He had a unique birth, being hatched from a meatball that rested in his mother's womb for three years. The subtle similarities of a child warrior vanquishing the empire's enemies and a unique birth from a spherical object were evidence of the influence that earlier Chinese tales might have had on the development of *Momotarō* motifs.

Another motif imported from China was the peach. The peach was tied to the immortals of religious Taoist tradition. Myths told of various gods consuming peaches to maintain their eternal life. Even the famous Chinese hero the Monkey King was left to guard the peaches of immortality and fell into mischief by eating them. Over time, the peach was associated with immortality, healing and rejuvenation. This was why one version of *Momotarō* contained motifs of the old man and old woman consuming the peach. They were rejuvenated and able to have a child.

In both Western and Eastern tradition, the peach represented the feminine form. It was also often related to reproduction and womanhood. The motif of having the peach cut and or consumed was a symbol of penetration. This penetration had sexual underpinnings which were included in later versions of the printed tale for increased sales.

The above mentioned symbolism of the peach was just one example of the commonalities between cultures. Joseph Campbell, the theorist of the universal monomyth, argued that Japanese myth had much in common with ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian culture.¹³ Unlike versions of the folktale in 1781 where *Momotarō* was born naturally, his being born from a peach drawn from the water shared a motif of other legendary leaders of nations of ancient times.

Leaders like Moses and those in the tale of *Gilgamesh* were drawn from the water. Like these leaders of nations, Momotarō too was drawn from the water, not just showing up, but brought from the environment of the supernatural to the natural world. According to Campbell, these myths contained universal imagery that all cultures inherently recognize. If this was so, then the motif in its Japanese form predicted Momotarō's leadership and his connection to nature and divinity.

During the early Muromachi period, the imperial court's influence in politics decreased, as well as their influence as patrons of art and literature. The military classes increased in power in this political vacuum and increased their influence over society, especially in the social expressions of art and literature. The imperial court of Kyoto was being joined by the up-and-coming military and merchant elites. Initially these new leaders cultivated the imperial esthetics. But as the military elite's power increased, so did their confidence in developing their own entertainment and literary interests. Court literature which focused on imperial intrigue, like the *Genji Monogatari* (*Tale of Genji*) 源氏物語, was replaced by tales of battles, eroticism and the supernatural. These new genres were received by the masses with increasing popularity. *Momotarō* and its motifs began to proliferate in the art and literature of the time.

Military epics became popular, like the thirteenth-century *Genpei Seisuiiki* (Rise and Fall of the Genji and Heika) and the fourteenth-century *Soga Monogatari* and *Taiheiki* (*A Chronicle of Medieval Japan*) 太平記. The *Taiheiki* remained popular through the late Edo period.¹⁴ These tales often drew on common historical motifs. One such example was the Japanese warrior who traveled to a distant land to quell the indigenous peoples. This Momotarō-like motif was also found in the earliest version of *Hōgen Monogatari* written in 1318.¹⁵ In this tale, Minamoto no Tametomo, a man of amazing strength and prowess with the bow, is ostracized for

being on the losing side of the battles determining imperial succession in 1156. He is banished to Izu Island on the east coast of Japan by his half-brother, Minamoto no Yoshitomo. While on his way, Tametomo sees a bird that leads him to an island. This resembles some versions of the tale *Momotarō* in which the pheasant leads Momotarō through the fog or rough waters to Devil Island. Once Tametomo reaches the island, he discovers unusual and mysterious beings who are very tall and hairy. These monsters do not speak any comprehensible language nor are they civilized, having no agriculture or even clothing. Tametomo communicates with these creatures and determines that he and his supporters have arrived at *Oni ga Shima* (Devil Island) 鬼が島. He also asks to see their legendary treasure. They admit to having once owned the cloak of invisibility, the hat of invisibility and a magical sword, but say they have lost the treasure to someone else. In later versions of this legend, Tametomo is banished to the Ryūkyū Islands (Okinawa). Since the earlier versions of this tale are vague concerning the actual destination, a variety of possible locations are suggested. The popular notion of who was and not civilized at the time determined who were the non-Japanese barbarians and the location of Devil Island. This developed the motif of drawing human caricatures with demon qualities.

The Devil Island motif was not developed by a single individual but by many to describe distant lands that fell outside Japanese civilization. For example, others who had contact with travelers had similar tales to share. Bunshi Genshō (1555-1620) was a Buddhist priest who wrote about meeting fellow priests from Okinawa. He recalls the Tametomo legend as follows,

“Tametomo saw mountains on the island. There were beings who, even though they were most unusual, were similar in shape to humans. On the right side of their head they bore horns. They were such that they were called *oni*.”¹⁶

The above statement bares a close resemblance to the motif set forth by the *Hōgen Monogatari*. It also provided a physical description that will provide a model for demon island motifs in artwork. The image of the non-civilized, subhuman was depicted by a horned demon.

Another well known legend that shares motifs with the tale of *Momotarō* was the legend surrounding Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159-1189). He was captured and executed by the Fujiwara family. Yoshitsune traveled to *Chishima*, an island in the north, before his capture. There he subdued the strange demons he found there and taught them Japanese ways. Some legends identified this northern region as Hokkaido.¹⁷

According to Klaus Antoni, this repetition of imagery showed how *Momotarō* was an easily recognizable motif that united the realms of myth, folk, and legend. In fact, *Momotarō* was the product of both Chinese and Japanese motifs melding together. It was a collection of the most entertaining and culturally relatable concepts that had survived history by this time.

We will revisit this idea later, but it is important to state here that folktales are not strictly children's stories.¹⁸ The contents of folktales often deal with mature matter and the myths are meant to explain. Some argue that folktales are designed to instill morals and conservative values in children.¹⁹ What is true about *Momotarō* is that it was widely more popular amongst adults than with children. Adults were paying for the artwork and for various forms of literature. To entertain the adults, sexuality was included.

4.0 FOLKTALES IN EDO

In the Tokugawa era, the shogunate government moved Japan's capital to Edo and encouraged all manner of peoples to move there. Thanks to improved agricultural production and an extended era of peace, Edo's population exploded. By the eighteenth century the city was home to 500,000 residents in the commercial quarters alone.²⁰ As peasants interacted with artisans, merchants with influential aristocrats, Edo became a melting pot of ideas and values. It was during this time that, after a period of stability, *Momotarō* begins to appear frequently in art and literature.

Amid the proliferation of works that supported the glorification of the military and the *bushidō* (way of the warrior) 武士道, the Tokugawa period was a time of censorship. Despite the era of classes in Edo, the *Bakufu*, or military government, passed strict regulations to keep society separated into four classes according to traditional Confucian ideals. The arts were no exception. To remain in accordance with government sanctions, many books carried didactic messages or moral teachings and appropriate ways to behave. For instance, Takizawa Bakin, a famous artist of the time, depicted Confucius ideas of loyalty, filial piety, humanity and righteousness in his work. In the literary arena, writers and storytellers used Buddhist doctrines of faith and retribution to shape their characters. This explains why earlier versions of *Momotarō* differ from those of the Edo period, especially concerning *Momotarō*'s birth.

Neo-Confucian and philosophical Taoist attitudes might explain how the tale gained the modest ending that it retains to this today. Momotarō traveled to Devil Island and defeated the enemy, returning with honor (and, typically, treasure) for his family and village. But he was never said to live happily ever after with a prized beauty. Typically, his story ended with an appreciative village leader, and later the emperor thanking him for his service. Then Momotarō returned to his aged adoptive parents, where he spent his days waiting on and serving them. This is not the type of ending one might expect for a national hero. *Momotarō*'s humble conclusion is due to the Confucian and Taoist emphasis on knowing one's place and responsibility to family and the community. Both of these values continue in Japanese society to this day.

The *Momotarō* tale that exists today greatly resembles the tale that existed during the late Edo period. This was an era when authors and artists, well-versed in both the classics and the vernacular, had to use their wit and pluck to avoid *bakufu* censors. *Mitate* (humorous flouting) 見立 and *haikai* (poetry) parties were popular ways to use wordplay to convey hidden meanings. *Momotarō* contains a blatant example of this: the word *momo* (peach) 桃 was slang for female genitalia. Therefore, the scene where Momotarō leaps from the old woman's peach is actually a subversive reference to childbirth, a topic which otherwise would have been taboo.

Beside illicit erotica, which the government tried to suppress, military histories were popular during the early half of the Tokugawa shogunate. Military officials would commission legendary military epics depicted either on scrolls or screens. The Kano school, with its aristocratic reputation from Kyoto, was popular among these patrons. Kano Naganobu (1775-1828), an artist who received such a commission, used ink, paint and gold on silk to create two hand scrolls that captured the adventures of Momotarō. The first scroll begins with Momotarō jumping out of the peach and ends with the journey to Devil Island. The second scroll consists

of the battle scenes and the surrender of devils to Momotarō and his associates. As usual, Momotarō and his animal friends are dressed as samurai. Though the devils are not depicted as grizzly beasts, they are still shown to be substandard beings, inept goofs who quickly capitulate to Momotarō's strength. This is exemplified in the scene where the defeated devils carry the young Momotarō around in a sedan chair.



Figure 1. Hokusai Katsushika's *Chinsetsu yumihari-zuki* (*Strange Tales of the Bow Moon*)

Source: British Museum on-line catalog. <http://www.britishmuseum.org>

Another relevant artwork from the time is the above painting by Katsushika Hokusai. It was completed in 1811 by commission of the publisher Hirabayashi Shōgorō to celebrate Takizawa Bakin's (1767-1848)²¹ best-selling, twenty-nine volume set of the *Chinsetsu yumihari-zuki* (*Strange Tales of the Bow Moon*), published between 1809 and 1811. The story tells the

exploits of the hero Tametomo on a place called Devil Island. Hokusai depicts a scene of a beach and lone pine tree, with the ocean in the background. The sea is not broken up by any other land formations, emphasizing the isolation of this island. A heavy sea wind blows the boughs of the pine and two birds—perhaps the fowl who led Tametomo to the island—struggle to keep flight. Tametomo stands rigid, steadying his bow while three horned devils attempt to draw his bowstring. Uncorrupted by his environment, Tametomo symbolizes strength, continuity, and civilization. The basket of fish behind the standing devil and the barren shoreline show the only source of food for these creatures, emphasizing the lack of agriculture and cultivation. Their clothing appears to be nothing more than skins and furs, rather than the cotton and silks found in civilized Japan. The inscription in the upper left corner comes from Bakin's text and reads:

“A word gives great pleasure and friendship profits.
The distribution of forces at this time,
Observes the wisher of the Lord.
On the island in the Eastern Sea where Hachirō holds court,²²
Truly this year's blessings are so profuse that
The cloud of the devil-ridden here clear away
And the light of the bow-moon shines bright.”²³

Despite the number of stunning works from the Tokugawa period, the fact is that not all samurai could afford commissioned art. On the other hand, the merchant class began to experience an increase in wealth and disposable income. Though the *bakufu* had created a four-class system placing merchants at the bottom of the social hierarchy, merchants continued to

achieve economic gain. A money system slowly replaced the bartering system of the feudal era. Samurai, who were paid in rice, had to go to the merchants to have their rice converted to money. The samurai class saw their power wane to the hegemony of the up-and-coming merchant class, who were less interested in commissioning elaborate, expensive artwork. Artisans and even some samurai had to find other means of producing income. An ever-increasing market for picture books and literature developed as a result. Various forms of picture books like *akabon*, *kurobon*, *kusazōshi* and novels developed.²⁴ If authors wanted to attract the rising merchant class, they needed to create stories that would appeal to all classes of readers, not just military leaders or aristocrats. Also, they had to take into account for the investor's willingness to invest in their stories. One author from this time explained that there was not much money in writing, but it provided an excellent opportunity for self advertisement.²⁵ In other words, literary success with the general population often led to better-paying commissions from wealthy patrons.

Because *Momotarō* encapsulated the universal values of loyalty, humanity, filial piety, and righteousness, the tale was commonly found in this literature. An *akabon* published in 1781 followed the journey of Momotarō and his animal friends as they journeyed to Devil Island and battled the devils.²⁶ The generous Momotarō shares his millet dumplings with his animal assistants, who look more human than ever, dressed for battle in samurai armor and possessing human-like feet. Only their animal heads indicate that they are not human. This version of *Momotarō* contains a bit of subversion, too: one image from the book shows Momotarō pose in a *kabuki*-like stance before attacking the devils. *Kabuki* and similar entertainment from the pleasure quarter were frowned upon by the *bafuku*, but here the reference is subtle enough to convey the idea without fear of censorship.

Sometimes artwork depicting Momotarō subverted the power of the *bakufu* while simultaneously promoting *bakufu* values. Takizawa Bakin published the *Enshin Zashi, Collection of Tales*, in 1811, and Momotarō was a part of this collection. Bakin later revealed in his autobiographical works, *Waga Hotoke no Ki, The Lineage of Our House*, and *Kyokutei Ikō, Kyokutei's Posthumous Papers*, that he saw himself as a teacher of national history. He admitted to basing his characters on historical figures but giving them modern emotions and sensibilities. He wrote about seeing his characters as a mirror into the present and a means to teach proper moral values. In his fictional texts, commoners often appear as samurai.²⁷ And many of his tales include *Momotarō* motifs like traveling to distant lands and defeating the devil inhabitants. He uses this motif to show his increasing concern over the Russians, the “barbarians approaching from the north,” and his disapproval of Tokugawa isolationism.²⁸ His hope, he explained in his nonfiction, was that readers would develop an interest in faraway places, even though foreign travel was restricted by the *bakufu*.

The social, economic, and political environment of the Tokugawa period enabled folktales to become popular among the literate, especially those in power. The military elite favored *Momotarō* because it glorified their values and espoused Confucian ideals like filial piety. Artists and writers, for their part, were drawn to *Momotarō* for its ability to both support the values of their patrons and also subtly subvert the political establishment. The profusion of *Momotarō* tales and images led to a large population of Japanese who were familiar with the story and its motifs.

5.0 MEIJI, TAISHŌ AND SHŌWA

During the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), which followed the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate, *Momotarō* experienced a metamorphosis in both its content and how it was used. At first the story was still being published in *kurobon*, like the one published in 1881 by Utagawa Kunisawa (Toyokuni I). Then, in 1886, the first of the *Shōgaku Kokugo Tokuhon*, (*Primary Education Readers*) 小学国語読本 was published. These readers, used in the compulsory education system, were mandated to provide examples of *shūshin* (ethical values and moral standards) 終身, by decree of the Imperial Rescripts (1890).²⁹ *Momotarō*, by now associated with the myths and legends about the origins of Japan and the imperial court as found in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, was the perfect vehicle for imparting imperial values.³⁰ Later publications in 1893, 1903, 1909 and 1933 displayed an attempt by the Japanese government to unify a nation behind its emperor.³¹ They also further embedded the story of *Momotarō* in the national culture.

The historian Maruyama Masao maintains that the objective of this new *kokugaku* (national learning) 国学 was to take all the former feudal patterns of loyalty, filial piety, honesty, and righteousness and hang them on the “axis” of the imperial household.³² The same values that Bakin tried to instill in his readers were used by the centralized education system, except that now loyalty was shifted from lord or family to the emperor and nation. The government intended this new *Yamato Damashii* (Japanese spirit) 大和魂 to excite Japanese youth in support of the imperial system.³³

By 1938 centralized education and nationalized textbooks were firmly established, diffusing regionalism including language and dialects.³⁴ The first volume of standard textbooks contained five folktales: *Shitakiri Suzume*, *The Cut-Tongue Sparrow*, *Usagi to Kame*, *The Rabbit and the Hare* and *Momotarō*. The fourth volume included the tale *Kunibiki, Pulling of Land*, a creation myth taken from the *Kojiki*. The presence of *Momotarō* alongside this long-established, traditional myth shows that the folktale had now been placed in context with Japanese nationalism and the history of a people.

Because stories in these national texts became standardized, alternative versions of the tales were shelved. *Momotarō* was no different. Some variations did not resurface until the 1950s in prefecture collections of traditional folktales. In one of these alternative versions, *Momotarō* initiates the trouble with the devils just to be mischievous. The devils attack because *Momotarō* stole their treasure first. Another version concludes with *Momotarō* and his gang decimating and killing all the devils on the island. Neither of these versions would have been compatible with the Confucius and Buddhist ideals espoused during Japan's militarization period. A righteous hero would not have made mischief for its own sake, nor would he steal from others.

By the end of the Meiji period, *Momotarō* had abandoned his samurai clothing in favor of the uniform of a Japanese soldier. At the dawn of the twentieth century, he was an established symbol of a nation, representing Japanese ideas of strength, righteousness, loyalty, and bravery, and was instantly familiar to every citizen. This time period saw the beginning of *Momotarō*'s use in modern war propaganda. An early example is the 1904 text *Meiji Momotarō* 明治桃太郎, in which *Momotarō* defeats demons who are Russian, distinguishable by their uniforms, facial features and beards.³⁵

Several decades later, at the start of World War II, non-Japanese were depicted as lesser humans, often confused, dumb, or beastly. Those who harbored ill will toward the Japanese were shown as demons, often with one (or, if they were really bad, two) horns. In propaganda from the Shōwa period (1926-1989) 昭和時代, Saso Yoshikuni promoted the image of a demon removing a mask that resembled American president Franklin Roosevelt.³⁶ The overt implication was that Roosevelt was an uncivilized demon, leader of a demonic people.

Perhaps the most blatant example of Momotarō's use in war propaganda is found in *Momotarō Umi no Shimpei* (*Momotarō's God Blessed Sea Warriors*), a film some argue to be the first full length Japanese *anime* (animation film). Released on April 12, 1945, this seventy-four minute movie is set on a South Pacific island populated by strange beasts and devils. Momotarō is the only fully human character in the film. The Caucasian devils resemble British soldiers who babble in incoherent English, drinking and gambling, lying and cheating. Momotarō and his righteous band of woodland animals win a victory by capturing the enemy's armaments, taking control of the devils' territory and liberating the island's indigenous beasts. The film concludes with young woodland creatures preparing themselves for an airborne invasion of North America. They climb a tree and jump down to an outline of the United States. The last woodland creature performs a ceremonial stomping of his foot on the enemy nation before joining his fellows in their run to the foothills of Mt. Fuji.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The continuity of myth, folktale and legend throughout human history is evidence that if a certain motif is valued and appreciated, it will continue through time. The core meaning of these motifs has remained unchanged and will continue to be stable in the future, even as they can be adopted by countless stories. The motifs behave like vectors that travel through time, connecting us in the present with those who told these tales in the past. Because of their enduring meaning, motifs provide a constant platform from which we can examine human attitudes through history. Motifs from *Momotarō*, like peaches, hero journeys, devil islands and human-like animals, are examples of this. With the framework of continuity, it is easy to observe changes that took place in the story.

Change in society and cultural norms can be observed through what is kept and what is discarded from the tale, as during the rise to power of the military elite. Folktales of that time included comic accounts and satire, due to the new elite's interest in a more "lowbrow" form of entertainment when compared to the aristocratic elite. This interest influenced the character of *Momotarō* and explains depictions of him from this time as lazy or thuggish. Later, the government's desire to develop loyalty to the state sterilized the story of any aspects that deviated from the state's defined ideal. This modified folktale continued into the twentieth century, while versions that had fallen out of favor waited on the sidelines. "Unofficial versions" were printed only when the social and political atmosphere allowed them to be retold.

Once *Momotarō* was incorporated into the national readers in 1886, generation after generation of Japanese were exposed to one standard version of the story. This mandated exposure perpetuated the most common version of the story, which is included in Appendix A. The motifs in *Momotarō* and similar motifs in other stories permeated the belief systems and ideas of Japanese society, impacting their worldview. Following America's occupation in the post-war years, new textbooks and ancillary materials were introduced. *Momotarō* was removed from the reader and replaced by other tales. But the story continues on, told orally as well as reprinted in collections of children's fairytales.

This continuation of the tale even after it was removed from the national readers, and the continuation of other versions of the tale even though they were less publicized, are interesting commentaries on the story's inherent qualities. There is something in *Momotarō* that enables Japanese today to connect to and appreciate the story, just as they did centuries ago. More than simply a story of a hero's journey, *Momotarō* incorporates images of a Japanese society in close communion with its gods and in harmony with nature. It contains themes of human bravery, success over great challenges, and cooperation. All these characteristics make it stick in Japan's collective memory. Not only is the story remembered, but it draws people to retell it, passing it on to future generations.

An interesting discovery from this research is the idea that this quintessential Japanese tale developed with the help of foreign influences. Like many ideas diffused from the mainland, the Japanese took a foreign idea and made it uniquely theirs. It will be interesting to see if further study in this area will reveal Chinese tales that more closely resemble the tale *Momotarō*. Hopefully we will discover even earlier versions of the story so that its development can be more closely followed. Technology will improve the access to art collections and libraries, which will

in return provide more examples of *Momotarō* motifs in art. This area in particular needs the greatest attention. It would shine even more light upon the usage of these motifs in Japanese propaganda.

Folktales can be perpetuated by their own inherent qualities regardless of what social and political forces may say or do. With this in mind, it is curious to think about the history that modern textbooks perpetuate—what they include and ignore. If the tale of *Momotarō* is any indication, no matter what special interests remove from, modify, and add to textbooks, legends and myths will continue. These continuing ideas will reveal much about society and its values, long after the history has been rewritten to promote or hide certain ideals.

APPENDIX A

MOMOTARŌ

The following text is adapted from the book Japanese Children's Favorite Stories, compiled by Florence Sakade.

Once upon a time there was an old man and his old wife living in a mountain village in Japan. The old man was a woodcutter. He and his wife were very sad and lonely because they had no children.

One day the old man went into the mountains to cut firewood, and the old woman went to the river to wash some clothes.

No sooner had the old woman begun her washing than she was very surprised to see a big peach come floating down the river. It was the biggest peach she'd ever seen in all her life. She pulled the peach out of the river and decided to take it home and give it to the old man for his supper that night.

Late in the afternoon the old man came home, and the old woman said to him, "Look what a wonderful peach I found for your supper." The old man said it was truly a beautiful peach. He was so hungry that he said, "Let's divide it and eat it right away."

So the old woman brought a big knife from the kitchen and was getting ready to cut the peach in half. But just then there was the sound of a human voice from inside the peach. “Wait! Don’t cut me!” said the voice. Suddenly the peach split open, and a beautiful baby boy jumped out.

The old man and woman were astounded. But the baby said, “Don’t be afraid. The God of Heaven saw how lonely you were without any children, so he sent me to be your son.”³⁷ The old man and woman were very happy, and they took the baby to be their son. Since he was born from a peach, they named him Momotarō, which means Peach Boy. They loved Momotarō very much and raised him to be a fine boy.

When Momotarō was about fifteen years old, he went to his father and said: “Father, you have always been very kind to me. Now I am grown up and I must do something to help my country.”³⁸ In a distant part of the sea there is an island named Devil Island. Many wicked devils live there, and they often come to our land and do bad things, like carrying people away and stealing their things. So I’m going to go to Devil Island and fight them and bring back the treasure which they have there. Please let me do this.”³⁹

The old man was surprised to hear this, but he was also very proud of Momotarō for wanting to help other people. So he and the old woman helped Momotarō get ready for his journey to Devil Island. The old man gave him a sword and armor, and the old woman fixed him a good lunch of millet dumplings.⁴⁰ Then Momotarō began his journey, promising his parents that he would come back soon.

Momotarō went walking toward the sea. It was a long way. As he went along he met a dog. The dog growled at Momotarō and was about to bite him, but then Momotarō gave him one of the dumplings. He told the dog that he was going to fight the devils on Devil Island. So the

dog said he'd go along too and help Momotarō. Momotarō and the dog kept on walking, and soon they met a monkey. The dog and the monkey started to have a fight. But Momotarō explained to the monkey that he and the dog were going to fight the devils on Devil Island. Then the monkey asked if he couldn't go with them. So Momotarō gave the monkey a dumpling and let him come with them.

Momotarō and the dog and the monkey kept on walking. Suddenly they met a pheasant. The dog and the monkey and the pheasant were about to start fighting. But when the pheasant heard that Momotarō was going to fight the devils on Devil Island, he asked if he could go too. So Momotarō gave the pheasant a dumpling and told him to come along.

So, with Momotarō as their general, the dog and the monkey and the pheasant, who usually hated each other, all became good friends and followed Momotarō faithfully.⁴¹ They walked a long, long way, and finally reached the sea. At the edge of the sea they found a boat. They all got in it and started across the sea toward Devil Island.

When they came within sight of the island, they could see that the devils had a very strong fort there. And there were many, many devils. Some of them were red, some blue, and some black.

First the pheasant flew over the walls of the fort and began to peck at the devils' heads. They all tried to hit the pheasant with their clubs, but he was very quick and dodged all their blows. And while the devils weren't looking, the monkey slipped up and opened the gate of the fort.⁴² Then Momotarō and the dog rushed into the fort and started fighting the devils too.

It was a terrible battle! The pheasant pecked at the heads and eyes of the wicked devils. And the monkey clawed at them. And the dog bit them. And Momotarō cut them with his sword. At last the devils were completely defeated. They all bowed down low before Momotarō and

promised never to do wicked things again.⁴³ Then they brought Momotarō all the treasure they had stored in the fort.

It was the most wonderful treasure you can imagine. There was much gold and silver and many precious jewels. There was an invisible coat and hat, and a hammer that made a piece of gold every time you hit it on the ground, and many other wonderful things.⁴⁴ Momotarō and his three helpers carried all this in their boat back to the land. Then they made a cart and put all the treasure in the cart and pulled it back to Momotarō's house.

How happy the old man and woman were when they saw their son return safely from Devil Island! They were very rich now with all the treasure that Momotarō had brought, and they all lived together happily ever after.

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² Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) 8-10.

³ Betty B. Lanham, "Folktales Commonly Told American and Japanese Children: Ethical Themes of Omission and Commission," *The Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 80, No. 315 (Jan.-Mar., 1967): 35.

⁴ *Kojiki, Record of Ancient Matters*, consists of three volumes, each dealing with Japanese mythology and the reigns of Japanese emperors Jimmu to Oujin and Nintoku to Suiko. They were written by Hieda no Are and Oo no Yasumaro for the emperor Tenmu in 712. *Nihongi, Chronicle of Japan*, is a thirty-volume set written by Toneri Shinnor and Oo no Yasumaro in 720.

⁵ Yanagita Kunio, *Momotaro no Tanjo*, (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1933) 1-10. In this book, Yanagita explores the oral traditions that led to the creation of Momotarō during the Muromachi period, which occurs during the Ashikaga Shogunate. It refers to the time period following 1392 through the collapse of the shogunate in 1575.

⁶ Peter Stearns, *World Civilizations: The Global Experience*, (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005) 40-41.

⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965) 10.

⁸ Chieko Mulhern, "Otogi-zōshi: Short Stories of the Muromachi Period," *Monumenta Nipponica* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer, 1974): 193.

⁹ Mulhern (191).

¹⁰ Robert J. Adams, "Folktale Telling and Storytellers in Japan." *Asian Folklore Studies* Vol. 26, No.1. (1967): 107. Traditionally August 23, but also on the 15th and 28th of the month.

¹¹ John Whitney Hall, *Japan From Prehistory to Modern Times*, (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1993) 127-128.

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nezha_deity. Nezha (Nataku JPN) is a deity originally from Chinese mythology. He is often depicted as a youth with a wheel of flame and a spear. He is blamed for several murders and then executed. He is resurrected as an immortal to fight for the empire.

¹³ Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, (New York: Viking Press, 1959) 7. This reference is also found in the essay *The Historical Development of Mythology*, in Part II under Oriental Mythology.

¹⁴ Tokugawa period 1603-1867.

¹⁵ Miyeko Murase. "Japanese Screen Paintings of the Hōgen and Heiji Insurrections." *Artibus Asiae* Vol. 29, No. 2/3. (1967):195.

¹⁶ Klaus Antoni. "Momotarō (The Peach Boy) and the Spirit of Japan: Concerning the Function of a Fairy Tale in Japanese Nationalism of the Early Shōwa Age." *Asian Folklore Studies* Vol. 50, No. 1. (1991): 170.

¹⁷ Antoni (174).

¹⁸ Tolkien (15-50).

¹⁹ Jack Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick. The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*, (New York: Routledge, 2006) 31.

²⁰ Hall (175).

²¹ Bakin received an extra ten gold ryō for his work on this series. The amount of gold used in the artwork itself flaunts the wealth of the commissioning publisher. The author's estimates that the value of 1 gold ryō is approximately US\$55 today.

²² Hachirō is the legendary barbarian king of the Ryūkyū Islands.

²³ Translation and image source from the British Museum digital collection.

²⁴ There were a variety of mass-produced picture books and literature. What differentiated these works was the quality, color of ink, story plots, and aesthetic level. The first mass produced picture books were labeled by the color of the ink used to produce them. This included *kibyōshi*, yellow books; *akabon*, red books; and *kurohon*, black books. Many historians believe that the color of ink provides some sense of chronology, beginning with red books, yellow books, and finally black books. These picture books often referred to Chinese and Japanese myths and legends and drew upon modern terminology and puns. The *yomihon*, novels, were more elaborate and longer texts, typically designed for a more educated readership. *Kusazōshi*, or grass books, has been a term used to describe all plebian forms of literature during this time period. Some scholars believe that the name refers to the grass which the picture lines resemble, or to the source of paper. Others believe it is a *mitate* (flaunting) or play on words. The Japanese term *kusa* can mean either grass or stink. Hence the occasional translation is "stink books." Most likely this term derived from the aristocrats' opinions of these lowbrow forms of entertainment.

²⁵ Leon M. Zolbrod, "Takizawa Bakin, 1767-1848. A Restoration that Failed." *Monumenta Nipponica* Vol. 21, No. ½. (1966): 18. Letter from Takizawa Bakin to Suzuki Bokushi, Apr. 5, 1818, *Kyokutei Ikō* (*Kyokutei's Posthumous Papers*), 359.

²⁶ The author and publisher are unknown.

²⁷ Zolbrod (1-46). The tale of Momotarō and the life of Takizawa Bakin have some uncanny similarities. After his father's death and while his mother lay dying, Bakin is asked to carry on the family lineage. This is the same prayer Momotarō's parents would have prayed. In *Momotarō*, good is rewarded and evil is punished. Bakin felt responsible for his youngest brother's and his own son's death. He felt that his inability to restore glory to the family name was because of his guilt over these two deaths. Though Bakin was of the samurai class, he was unable to make ends meet. He resorted to becoming a merchant and writer, two fields scorned by the samurai. He felt he was dishonoring his family by remaining in and finding success in these fields. He spent the remains of his wealth to purchase a sword, armor and firearms for his grandson to aid him on his journey in becoming a samurai. Bakin also planted a peach tree on his brother's grave.

²⁸ *Ibid* (24-43).

²⁹ Mandate of the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890).

³⁰ Momotarō and other cultural icons can be seen in public service announcements like anti-smallpox posters showing Daruma, Shōki, and Momotarō, the forces of good, fighting the evils of small pox at the foot of Mt. Fuji (1849). Source: UCSE Digital Library.

³¹ Shin Torigoe, *Momotarō no Unmei*, (Kyoto: Mineruva Shobo, 2004) 23-150.

³² Antoni (159).

³³ *Ibid* (179).

³⁴ *Ibid* (157-159).

³⁵ Junnichi Nomura, *Shin Momotaro no Tanjo*, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2000) 33-35.

³⁶ John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986) 195. This image appeared in October 1944, when alleged Allie atrocities were increasing.

³⁷ Momotarō is called a *sazukarimono* (godsend)授かり物. This aspect of the story displays a connection between the divine and the commonplace. When this folktale was used for political purposes, myth, legend, and folk were combined, dissolving any delineation between reality and the supernatural. This was a key concept in the development of nationalism during the Meiji era.

³⁸ This version of the tale emphasizes Momotarō's duty to the nation. Prior to the nationalist movement of the Meiji period, the tale often focused on Momotarō's link to his family and village. He pursues the devils because they were attacking his family or village.

³⁹ Earlier versions of this tale depict Momotarō as bored with his daily routine and desiring adventure. He seeks adventure by looking for devils so that he can steal their treasure. Other versions show Momotarō as a lazy boy, not willing to lift a finger to help collect firewood. He makes excuses, explaining that he does not have a firewood sack or sandals. It takes the beseeching of his mother and the village chieftain before he comes to the aid of his people to stop the devils. This version of the tale disappears by the Tokugawa period, but reappears after the 1950s when Japanese folktales were researched in anthropological studies.

⁴⁰ *Kibidango* (millet dumplings)きびだんご are a common motif in all Momotarō stories. They are a uniquely Japanese treat. Some versions of the folktale explain that they were *nihonichi* (Japan's best) 日本一. These dumplings, the best food in Japan, win over the dog, monkey and pheasant, gaining Momotarō their allegiance. This could be seen as an allegory for the superiority of a Japanese culture that would win over the less civilized during the nationalist movement. In some versions, the *kibidango* provides confidence and energy just before the battle. It is used in a similar manner to the lembas bread that energizes Frodo in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, or Popeye's can of spinach.

⁴¹ Momotarō was depicted as a civilizing agent, unifying the once-independent characters into an organized force. This motif will be used in the nationalist movement and to explain how Japanese imperialism in the early twentieth century could unify the peoples of eastern and southern Asia under the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.

⁴² Some versions of the story describe the devils as having an orgy. Because they are distracted by deviant behavior and fulfillment of their selfish desires, the noble and righteous Momotarō is able to surprise and defeat them.

⁴³ The devils' asking for forgiveness and promising that they will not do wrong refers to Chinese Taoist beliefs that all creatures have good and bad (yin and yang), each with the ability to do both good and bad. This version of the Momotarō story was quite popular. It shows a defeated but apologetic enemy realizing the error of their ways and asking for redemption (redemption being a reference to Pure Land Buddhism and the belief in the saving graces of Amida Buddha). There are some older and more rare versions of the folktale that depict the massacre of devils by the righteous Momotarō. This is another example of good being rewarded and bad being punished.

⁴⁴ Treasure motifs often depict gold, jewels, the magic hammer that fulfills wishes, and a red, coral-like bush. The invisibility cloak and hat are often missing from artistic depictions (most likely because they are, well, invisible). The meaning and origins of the bush are still unknown.