

O-IWA'S CURSE

Apparitions and their After-Effects in the *Yotsuya kaidan*

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In traditional Japanese theater, ghosts appear in the shadowlands between the visible and the invisible. They often try to approach those who harmed or abused them in life to seek revenge with the aid of supernatural powers. In such scenes, the dead are visible as a sign of impending doom only to those who are the target of their revenge. An examination of the Yotsuya kaidan, one of the most famous ghost stories in all of Japanese literature, is a case in point. The story is set in the Edo period, where the protagonist, O-Iwa, is reputed to have put a curse on those around her with catastrophic results. Her legend spread with such effect that she was later immortalized in a Shinto shrine bearing her name. In a word, so powerful and awe-inspiring was her curse that she not only came to be venerated as a Shinto deity but was even memorialized in a Buddhist temple. There is no doubt that a real historical person lay behind the story, but the details of her life have long since been swallowed up in the mists of literary and artistic imagination. In this article, I will focus on the rakugo (oral performance) version of the tale (translated into English by James S. de Benneville in 1917) and attempt to lay out the logic of O-Iwa's apparitions from the viewpoint of the narrative.

WHO IS O-Iwa? This is the name of the lady of Tamiya house, which appeared in the official documents of Tokugawa Shogunate. As a result, there can be no doubt about that she did exist in the Edo period. But she is also a legend, which claims that she killed around fifteen people by the forces of a curse. Eventually she was venerated in Shinto shrines and memorialized in Buddhist temples in efforts to console her spirit. O-Iwa's story is called *Yotsuya kaidan* 四谷怪談, which inspired later writers and engendered numerous kinds of works. Here we will deal with the *Yotsuya kaidan*, one of the most famous ghost stories in Japan. More precisely, the English translation in 1917 by James S. de Benneville will be referenced. The original text was by Shunkintei Ryūō 春錦亭柳桜 (1826–1894),

who was a professional storyteller of the *Yotsuya kaidan* and published a book based on his oral performance in 1896.

This article consists of three parts. In the first part we will take a look at the *kaidan* world. The word *kaidan* is a Japanese term which means a story about the mysterious and horrible. The *Yotsuya kaidan*, or O-Iwa's legend, basically took three literary forms: documentary novels (*jitsuroku* 実録), theatrical plays (*kabuki* 歌舞伎), and oral performances (*rakugo* 落語). Our aim is to clarify how O-Iwa's curse appears by comparing the concrete scenes between different versions.

The second part presents some interpretations of Japanese ghosts. Around the beginning of the Meiji era in the late nineteenth century, Japanese people encountered and enjoyed new trends from European civilization, which were imported and widespread at that time. This period is characterized by the slogan "Civilization and Enlightenment" (文明開化)¹ and created an obsessive atmosphere for eliminating old-fashioned Japanese customs. Especially in the newspapers, journalists and intellectuals introduced the vocabulary of psychiatry to promote "scientific" perspectives. Phrases such as "ghosts do not exist; it is simply a neurosis," became generally accepted. But in fact, the telling of ghost stories survived through this period, and interestingly people still were being scared by ghosts, even though they fully accepted the enlightenment discourse. So "why is it scary"? That is something we need to take a closer look at.

In the third part we will mention some parts of the *Yotsuya kaidan*, which was translated into English by Benneville, the author of several books about Japanese culture. In the *Yotsuya kaidan*, our protagonist named O-Iwa is abused by her husband, betrayed by neighbors and relatives, and sold as a prostitute in return for money. Soon after finding out about their conspiracy, she puts a curse on them and disappears. And then one by one they fall into O-Iwa's hands and are killed. As her grudge terrifies the people in the ward, they decide to console her wrathful spirit in two ways, the Shinto one and the Buddhist one.

Three Literary Forms of the *Yotsuya kaidan*

As mentioned earlier, the *Yotsuya kaidan* has three literary forms. The oldest text on O-Iwa's legend is titled *Yotsuya zōtan* 四谷雑談 and said to be published underground. Researchers have discovered three variant manuscripts of this work and suspect that the year of first publication was most likely 1727 (KONITA 1997, 281–3). In fact, the author is unknown—probably because the book contained a public scandal, in which three houses of shogunate bureau-

1. It is well known that this term was used by Fukuzawa Yukichi in *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (『文明論之概略』) first published in 1875.

crats—Tamiya, Itō, and Akiyama—had been officially disrupted after some sort of trouble. Even in those days the rumor was that they were all killed by the grudge of Tamiya's wife, O-Iwa, for their vile plot.

About one hundred years later, Tsuruya Nanboku 鶴屋南北 (1755–1829), one of the most famous kabuki playwrights in the late Edo period, created a theatrical performance in adapting the documentary novel for the kabuki stage. This play, *Tōkaidō Yotsuya kaidan* 東海道四谷怪談, premiered in 1825 at the peak of the *kaidan* culture. Nanboku's work is been the best known variant of O-Iwa's story. Thus *Tōkaidō Yotsuya kaidan* has one translation and one adaptation. The French translation was achieved in 1996 by Jeanne Sigée under the title *Les spectres de Yotsuya*. And then the adaptation of Nanboku's text was written in 1997 by Kyōgoku Natsuhiko 京極夏彦, whose book *Warau Iemon* 嗤う伊右衛門 won several literary awards in Japan and also was turned into a film. In addition, Kyōgoku arranged his novel in accordance with the original documentary novel *Yotsuya zōtan*.

After the Meiji Restoration, another book on the *Yotsuya kaidan* was published in 1896 under the name of Shunkintei Ryūō. This is the record of his oral performance; he is not the author in a narrow sense but just performed it as a *rakugo* storyteller. While his storytelling followed the previous masters' techniques, it should be pointed out that such an oral performance of the *Yotsuya kaidan* preceded the Nanboku's theatrical play (NOBUHIRO 1967, 12–13). Ryūō's plot seems more like *Yotsuya zōtan* than *Tōkaidō Yotsuya kaidan*. This *rakugo* version has one translation and one adaptation. James S. de Benneville translated Ryūō's text into English in 1917 as a book entitled *The Yotsuya Kwaidan or O'Iwa Inari: Tales of the Tokugawa*. Soon after the translation was published, Osanai Kaoru 小山内薫, a famous playwright and theater director of the Taishō period, read it and was so moved that he translated it back into Japanese again consulting with Ryūō's original, adapting it in the form of a novel. His work was published in 1919 under the title *O-Iwa* 『お岩』.

In the postscript of Ryūō's text, Tada Seiken 多田省軒, a famous detective novelist in the Meiji era, explained the prehistory of its publication in the light of O-Iwa's legend.

The protagonist is a wise woman keeping her chastity, and because her graceful virtue was not ordinary, it has been respected by the following people.... The publisher said to me, "For the serious spirituality of the Inari shrine in Yotsuya, if someone wrote about her *kaidan* story, the person would always meet with the divine anger of Inari. In addition, after the other publisher in Tokyo produced a book on this matter last year, it must have stopped as soon as they were in fear of meeting

divine punishment. Since then, nobody has tried to distribute such a publication. (SEIKEN 1896, 1)²

According to Seiken, O-Iwa was a dutiful woman with both virtue and charity until she was caught in the conspiracy against her. As she had a devout faith in the Inari deity of Yotsuya, when horrible accidents happened one after another soon the rumor became widespread saying that those who conspired against her must have caused the divine wrath of the Inari.

Although he says that no publisher dared to deal with the *Yotsuya kaidan*, worried about O-Iwa's curse, why were they able to publish Ryūō's version? As Seiken said, the reason is that only this book shows the true story of O-Iwa's life, and the publication serves the purpose of repayment for her suffering. Furthermore, he emphasizes her divinity as a Shintō deity, using terms such as "divine anger" and "divine punishment." In this way, he tries to clarify the intention of the publication, and enhance the authority of the Inari shrine. Ryūō's book tells the true story, and therefore the lives of the readers will be spared by the benevolence of the deity, instead of being punished by wrath.

On the other hand, Benneville pointed out the historical context of O-Iwa's legend in the preface of his book.

O'Iwa, the Lady of Tamiya, really did exist in the Genroku and Hōrei periods (1688–1710); just ante-dating the reforming rule of the eighth Tokugawa Shōgun, Yoshimune Kō. Victim of an atrocious plot of her husband and others, she committed suicide with the vow to visit her rage upon all engaged in the conspiracy. The shrine of the O'Iwa Inari (Fox-witched O'Iwa) in Yotsuya was early erected (1717) to propitiate her wrathful ghost; and the shrines of Nippon, to the shabbiest and meanest, have their definite record. (BENNEVILLE 1917, 9)

Interestingly, Benneville says that O-Iwa committed suicide, whereas in both the original story and the *rakugo* version, the fate of O-Iwa is unknown and unwritten; she just disappeared having left her wrathful message. But all the people in the text believed that O-Iwa died and cursed the house so that they would suffer from supernatural accidents resulting in their deaths. Even to today O-Iwa has been enshrined and venerated, and her soul is pacified in several Buddhist temples in order to protect the people from her grudge. This is a typical example of Japanese practices in dealing with harmful ghosts.

Below is the list of the main shrines and temples involved in O-Iwa's legend.

2. 主人公は貞操義烈なる賢婦人にして其俶徳蓋し尋常にあらざるを以て斯は士女の敬尊を後世に受る所以なり〔中略〕館主云らく此れ他ならず四ッ谷稲荷の靈驗神妙にして若し此が怪談を物せば四ッ谷稲荷の神怒に触れ時に神罰を蒙る事無しとせず加のみならず既に都下某書肆の如きは先年此が出版をなして為に神罰に触れ忽ち恐れて絶版せり故を以て此が出版豪もなき所以なり:(adjusted).

1. Yotsuya O'Iwa-inari Tamiya Shrine
四谷於岩稻荷田宮神社
新宿区左門町17
2. O'Iwa-inari Yōunji
於岩稻荷陽雲寺
新宿区左門町18
3. O'Iwa-inari Tamiya Shrine
於岩稻荷田宮神社
中央区荒川2-15-11
4. Myōkōji
妙行寺
豊島区西巢鴨4-8-28

It is said that the house of Tamiya originally had enshrined the Inari deity as a Yashiki-gami 屋敷神 (homestead god) inside of the estate until it was burned out and moved in 1880. Afterward the Tamiya shrine returned to the original place in 1952. The strange accidents of the *Yotsuya kaidan* happened in this ward, Samon-chō, which was the main stage of the story. Yōunji is a Nichiren Buddhist temple and supposed to have been built in the beginning of the Shōwa period (1926–1989) during which the shrine was removed. The other shrine in Arakawa was the new address of the Tamiya Shrine in Yotsuya but could have existed even after it returned to Samon-chō. Finally, O-Iwa's tombstone is in the graveyard of Myōkōji. According to his version in the book, Ryūō reconstructed her grave so as to console her soul in 1868, and that is why he had to keep her story for the following generations.

Frameworks for the Interpretation of Ghosts

While many of the ghost storytellings such as Ryūō's book were published in the Meij period in the form of a stenographic writing, they would take over the role of *kaidan* literature emerging in the late Edo period. Reider picks up *Ugetsu monogatari* 雨月物語 written by Ueda Akinari 上田秋成, one of the most representative works in this genre, and explains its characteristics in the socio-religious context.

Kaidan-shū that appeared in the early Edo period were predominantly entertaining stories, though it should be stressed again that this does not mean the religious and didactic factors were completely excluded. As various *kaidan-shū* were published, *kaidan* evolved from simple tales, which often originated in an oral tradition, to literary narrative fiction as seen in the *Ugetsu monogatari*. Indeed, *Ugetsu monogatari*, while not excluding religious and didactic elements, was an exem-

plary work in the shift toward the secular in the literature of *kaidan*.
(REIDER 2001, 94)

According to her article, *Ugetsu monogatari* marked the essential moment when the genre of the *kaidan* literature shifted from the religious and didactic to the secular and entertaining. As she says in this citation, *Ugetsu monogatari* published in 1776 seems ambivalent: this book maintained the religious and didactic messages of a Buddhist sermon while containing entertaining and secular plots in the popular literature. Reider pointed out that the *kaidan* genre emerged somewhere between the religious perspective and the secular perspective of the middle of the eighteenth century. It is often said that *rakugo* ghost storytelling is rooted in a Buddhist sermon, which progressed in popular entertainment over the whole Edo period, and furthermore kept its religious and didactic elements until around the beginning of Meiji era.

By the way, what was the framework for the interpretation of ghosts among intellectuals? ICHIYANAGI mentions the trend of framework in each period in relation to plausible ideas approved by the governmental office.

As for the point of seeking for reasonable interpretations of the weird, there is the same meaning between the explanations by *shinkei* 神経 in the Meiji era and the discourses of *bendan* 弁談 or *benwaku* 弁惑. These are slightly different in whether the framework about the mysterious phenomena is based on science or Confucianism. The explanations through *shinkei* say that the ghost is an illusion that the scared people created in their mind, but it is just a paraphrase of Confucian affirmations in premodern times. (ICHIYANAGI 2009, 267)

According to Ichiyanagi, “reasonable” explanations of ghosts existed even in the premodern period, which would negate superstitious explanations and interpret them psychologically. He insists that the pathological explanation of ghosts, based on the science of “neurosis” as a new mode in the Meiji period, followed the explanations based on Confucian intellectualism in the Edo period, and the remarkable point is the same structure shared by these discourses. For Ichiyanagi and TSUTSUMI (2004, 361), the history of the Enlightenment in Japan has three trends in the framework for the interpretation of ghosts.

1. The trend of “Science” in the Meiji era
2. The trend of “Confucianism” in the Edo era
3. The trend of “Buddhism” before the Edo era

In any case, even if the Enlightenment writers had to seek “reasonable” interpretations in each period, this fact itself reveals that the Enlightenment discourse was not enough to eradicate superstitious phenomena from popular culture. In

this way, ghost storytellings turned out to survive through the modern Enlightenment in the Meiji period.

We have seen the frameworks of ghost tales before the eighteenth century, and now come back to the age of “Civilization and Enlightenment.” San'yūtei Enchō 三遊亭円朝 (1839–1900) was the most famous *rakugo* performer from the late Edo to Meiji period, and he was also a contemporary of Ryūō. He is called “a god of *rakugo*” who created new ghost stories for the audience of this time. In spite of his intellectual supporters, Enchō left a commentary on ghosts and neurosis which bucked the trend of the Enlightenment. This is his commentary translated by Figal in *Civilization and Monsters*.

What are called “ghost stories” [*kaidan-banashi*] have greatly declined in recent times; there is hardly anyone who does them at the variety halls [*yose*]. That is to say, since there are no such things as ghosts and they all have come to be called neurosis [*shinkeibyō*], ghost stories are unseemly things to the professors of civilization [*kaika senseikata*].... By saying that it's a neurosis because there's no such things as fox-possession and goblin [*tengu*]-abduction, they completely fob off any and all frightening things on neurosis. (FIGAL 2007, 28)³

In this citation, Enchō criticized the professors of enlightenment, but he didn't reject the interpretation of ghosts as neurosis. In other words, he pretends to deny the existence of ghosts in compliance with public opinion, and at the same time he seems to believe in the apparition of ghosts as a result of neurosis. He also insisted that the superstitious phenomena were frightening despite their being explained away as neurosis. Briefly speaking, he revealed the uselessness of the Enlightenment discourse to deal with fearful objects from the premodern period.⁴

According to Figal, whose book covers basic information on the Japanese Enlightenment and the study of *yōkai* 妖怪 (Japanese monsters), there are some representatives constructing intellectual discourses to explain away supernatural phenomena. In premodern times, Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843) wrote a work entitled *Kishin shinron* 『鬼神新論』, which interpreted the supernatural while criticizing previous Confucian theories. And then Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919) is probably the most famous scholar of the time in this field. He created “monsterology” (*yōkaigaku* 妖怪学), and founded the scientific

3. 怪談ばなしと申すは近来大きに廃りまして、余り寄席で致す者もございません、と申すものは、幽霊と云うものは無い、全く神経病だと云うことになりましたから、怪談は開化先生方はお嫌いなさる事でございます。〔中略〕狐にはかされるという事は有る訳のものでないから、神経病、又天狗に攫われるという事も無いからやっぱり神経病と申して、何でも怖いものは皆神経病におつつけてしまいます (ENCHŌ 1963, 1:1–2): The expression is modified.

4. My article will be forthcoming shortly about modernity and the religiosity in another work of Enchō, *Kaidan botandōrō* 怪談牡丹燈籠.

study of monsters in an attempt to eliminate superstitious beliefs. In contrast, Yanagita Kunio 柳田国男 (1875–1962), a founder of Japanese folklore studies (*minzokugaku* 民俗学), compiled local customs and collected traditional legends to conserve the culture and history of premodern Japan.

In this context, some researchers in the field of *yōkaigaku* or *minzokugaku* would like to categorize *yūrei* 幽霊 (ghosts) as a kind of *yōkai* 妖怪. It seems to me, however, that compared with *yūrei*, *yōkai* is more difficult to reduce to a psychological object or, in other words, symptomatic formation by neurosis. This is the case because most *yōkai* have the shape of an imaginative creature, whereas *yūrei* appear as a dead person. In fact, the *rakugo* tradition has appreciated the fearful stories of *yūrei* much more than the comical stories of *yōkai*. Should we consider the conceptual segregation that *yōkai* is superstitious and *yūrei* is traumatic? For example, as Adorno and Horkheimer said in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, if the Enlightenment activities intend to eliminate fear through the science and to be sovereign on earth,⁵ Enryō's attempt would be the most adequate for such an aim so that we could explain away things that are supernatural and awe-inspiring. But our aim is to focus on the religious dimension even in the Enlightenment discourses.

The Translation Procedure of Benneville

Before entering the text of Benneville's translation, *The Yotsuya Kwaidan or O'Iwa Inari*, it is necessary to make clear his attitude toward Japanese ghost stories. In the preface of his book, Benneville declares their authenticity.

Curiously enough, it can be said that most Nipponese ghost stories are true. When a sword is found enshrined, itself the malevolent influence—as is the Muramasa blade of the Hamamatsu Suwa Jinja, the subject of the Komatsu Onryū of Matsubayashi Hakuchi⁶—and with such tradition attached to it, it is difficult to deny a basis of fact attaching to the tradition. The ghost story becomes merely an elaboration of an event that powerfully impressed the men of the day and place. Moreover this naturalistic element can be detected in the stories themselves. Nipponese writers of to-day explain most of them by the word *shinkei*—"nerves"; the working of a guilty conscience molding

5. "In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating people from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant. The program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy" (HORKHEIMER and ADORNO 1972, 3).

6. See 松林伯知『怪談小松怨霊』[Ghost tales of vengeful Komatsu spirits], 滝川書店, 1901.

succeeding events, and interpreting the results to the subsequent disaster involved. (BENNEVILLE 1917, 7)

As he says, almost all shrines in Japan have their own historical legends about the shrine treasure or the divine entity and some of them are based on ghost stories. It is important for us that the author attempts to emphasize their “naturalistic element” instead of judging their deceptiveness as the Enlightened writers did. In this citation, the neurologic interpretation connected with the “guilty conscience” absolutely does not fall into the contradiction of supporting the traditional narratives, where two different discourses coexist separately and simultaneously. This is the narrator’s stance Benneville would share with ghost storytellers like Enchō and Ryūō. He indicates three references except Ryūō’s book, which are all the oral performances of famous ghost stories, including the *Yotsuya kaidan*.⁷

For example, in the Benneville’s translation, having known the conspiracy, O-Iwa raged madly and put a curse on those involved.

On Itō Kwaiba, Iémon, Akiyama Chōzaémon, Chōbei, all and every one engaged in this vile plot, rests the death curse of Iwa. Against these; against Natsumé, Imaizumi, Yoémon of Tamiya, lies the grudge of Iwa of Tamiya. Gods and Buddhas—grant this prayer! (BENNEVILLE 1917, 139)

O-Iwa goes missing, but rumor says that she committed suicide. And then around fifteen people turn out to be dead. Some of them have seen her figure before their death. Iémon is her husband and the other people are his accomplices. In contrast to this, the literal translation of Ryūō’s original text seems a little different.

And so, I must have been sold as a prostitute for life. Not only Kazaguruma Chōbei, Itō Kaiho, Kawai Sanjūrō—I should kill all the people complicit in Iémon by a curse! (RYŪŌ 1896, 96)⁸

In the Benneville version, O-Iwa prays to Gods and Buddhas for the death of the people involved in Iémon’s affair. But in Ryūō’s text, O-Iwa proclaims herself to be murdered through magical means. There is a question about who is the subject of the death curse between both descriptions, and also this expression

7. See these references: (1) 桃川若燕「四谷怪談 お岩稲荷の由来」『怪談恋物語』国華堂, 1910. (2) 桃川如燕『実説怪談百物語』国華堂, 1910. (3) 藜々斎桃葉「四谷怪談」『大衆芸能資料集成5寄席芸2講談』三一書房, 1981 (1907).

8. さてこそ私を命のあらん限り夜鷹に売ったに相違ない、おのれ風車長兵衛伊藤快甫河井三十郎始め伊右衛門に加担した者は残らず取り殺さずにおくものか: The expression is modified. Itō Kwaiba and Itō Kaiho are the same person.



The above image, taken from the *Momonga kon kaidan* 『模文画今怪談』, is said to depict the scene immediately following O-Iwa's curse in the *Yotsuya zōtan*. (National Diet Library Digital Collections)

of Benneville's book is dependent on the Jakuén's text of other references. Thus, Benneville employs Ryūō's book as a main text while making a choice among them. Taking into consideration the fact that the purpose of publication is to console her spirit, it is not an insignificant difference whether O-Iwa prays to gods and Buddhas or becomes a murderer by herself. Keeping in mind the accounts above, we shall take a look at his translation of the *Yotsuya kaidan*.

The First Manifestation of O-Iwa's Curse

In the first scene of the manifestation just after O-Iwa's disappearance, someone from the prostitution house brought that news to Chōbei's knowledge and took him back to the office. There are two names of the main characters; (1) Chōbei is a well-known "pimp," who was engaged in their conspiracy. It was he who sold O-Iwa as a prostitute for a life-long contract through deception. As we know, he is on the list of O-Iwa's curse. (2) O-Taki is Chōbei's wife and has a newborn baby. She carefully respects the lady of Tamiya because of her kindness and therefore feels accused of Chōbei's account. Below is the citation form Benneville's translation.

The old Baba went to the foot of the ladder and listened. "Nésan! Nésan!" No answer came, beyond the curious droning monotone

above, varied by an occasional wailing cry of the child. It seemed to be in pain. Resolute, the sturdy old Baba began to climb the steps. At the top she halted, to get breath and look into the room. The sight she witnessed froze the old woman in horror to where she stood. A woman was in the room. She knelt over the body of the child, which now and again writhed in the hard and cruel grasp. (BENNEVILLE 1917, 152)

In the first part of this description, the old Baba⁹ heard the strange noise from the upstairs of Chōbei's house and addressed O-Taki, who must have been there with her baby. When the Baba went up the steps, O-Taki knelt over her baby and murmured complaints about her husband's affair. Chōbei is one of Iémon's accomplices, responsible for selling O-Iwa as a lifelong prostitute.

The queer monotonous voice went on — “Ah ! To think you might grow up like your father. The wicked, unprincipled man! To sell the Ojōsan for a street whore, for her to spend her life in such vile servitude; she by whose kindness this household has lived. Many the visits in the past two years paid these humble rooms by the lady of Tamiya. To all her neighbours O'Taki has pointed out and bragged of the favour of the Ojōsan. The very clothing now on your wretched puny body came from her hands. While Chōbei spent his gains in drink and paid women, Taki was nourished by the rice from Tamiya. When Taki lay in of this tiny body it was the Ojōsan who furnished aid, and saw that child and mother could live. Alas! That you should grow up to be like this villainous man is not to be endured.... Ah! An idea! To crunch your throat, to secure revenge and peace, security against the future.” (BENNEVILLE 1917, 152)

As we have seen in the previous chapter, O-Iwa has a characteristic of the best wifely virtue in the story tellings of the *Yotsuya kaidan*. O-Taki has respected her for a long time and thought her a lifesaver for O-Taki and her baby, because O-Iwa has taken care of their lives in giving them enough rice and many clothes all the time. For that reason, O-Taki could not accept Chōbei's account to have gone to the extreme. In her saying the offensive words to her husband, O-Taki escalates her feeling and then has the inspiration of killing her baby in order to extinguish his blood line.

She bent down low over the child. Suddenly it gave a fearful scream, as does a child fallen into the fire. The Baba, helpless, could only feebly murmur—“Nésan! Nésan! O'Taki San! What are you about?

9. On the Japanese terminology, the word Baba (婆) means an old lady and Nésan (姐さん) means a younger lady. In the following citation, Ojōsan (お嬢さん) means a daughter of a decent household.

Control yourself.” She gave a frightened yowl as the creature began to spread far apart the child’s limbs, and with quick rips of the sharp kitchen knife beside her dismembered and tore the little limbs from the quivering body. At the cry the woman turned half around and looked toward her. Jaws dripping red with blood, a broad white flat face with bulging brow, two tiny piercing dots flashing from amid the thick swollen eyelids, it was the face of O’Iwa glowering at her. “Kiya!” The scream resounded far and wide. Incontinently the old woman tumbled backward down the steep steps, to land below on head and buttocks. (BENNEVILLE 1917, 152–53)

In the last part, O-Taki moves into action in front of the Baba. After the murder scene, when O-Taki turns around to the Baba with the bloody face, the Baba recognizes that O-Taki’s face becomes O-Iwa’s and that this situation is caused by her curse.

In these sequences, the narrator attempts to keep a space for the interpretation that the event is a kind of temporal delirium or hallucination evoked by horror. The Baba encounters the apparition of O-Iwa through her sight. It is probably the most important thing that O-Iwa could exist in the Baba’s perception as well as in the narrative strategy over the literal level. The narrator depicts her feeling of fear in grim detail and expects the readers to share this emotion. In fact, there is no use explaining away the horrible apparitions under the neurologic framework. In the second scene of the manifestation, Itō Kwaiba, who is the chief villain topping the list of O-Iwa’s curse, goes mad with anxiety about his responsibility for conspiracy. The narrator declares clearly that he is attacked by neurosis.

This is a typical case of the “guilty conscience,” Benneville suggested, where those involved in the conspiracy, even their family, would not be able to escape from the curse bringing about the worst end. They could see, hear, touch, and experience the figure of O-Iwa appearing through their “nerves.” After O-Taki’s accident, the curse spreads widely one by one in the ward, Yotsuya Samonchō 四ツ谷左門町, and continues until the death of the last target, her husband Iémon. Thus, the narrator of the *Yotsuya kaidan* would like to create an awe-inspiring object based on the “neurological apparition,” in a sense, and induce a fearful emotion to the characters within the story, and probably also the supposed readers outside of the book.

Conclusion

The story tellings of the *Yotsuya kaidan*, both Ryūō’s original and Benneville’s translation, seem to be on the same side as Encho’s opinion that the apparition

could be explained away by the neurological term *shinkei*, which has a connotation of denying the existence of ghosts. As mentioned above, the narrator of the *Yotsuya kaidan* would never declare their simple existence in a very skillful manner. However, there is no doubt in the story that O-Iwa's apparition is shaped as a frightening object and her curse is shared with all the people in the ward. This is to be a reality of experience not only for the characters, but also for the audience in the theater and the readers of the book.

In truth, the medical science imported from the Dutch and the Buddhist exorcism practiced in the populace coexist in a parallel way in the storyline. In one episode, the physician's knowledge could save a man with symptoms of leprosy, while in another, the Buddhist rite could succeed in preventing O-Iwa's disaster. In spite of the fact that the physician has almost no role in the exorcism of O-Iwa's curse, it seems to me that the narrative of the *Yotsuya kaidan* tries to balance modern medicine and traditional religion, even if the final solution is dependent on the magico-religious. Taking into account the remade work through the Meiji Enlightenment, it is interesting that the terminology of neurosis could not only eliminate the fear of the ghosts, but also support the logic of their appearance, instead of their existence.

According to Ryūō's original, after the exorcism the relatives of Tamiya household have venerated O-Iwa as an Inari 稲荷 Shintō deity inside their property at Samonchō, and memorialized her in Myōkōji, the Buddhist temple in Yotsuya-Samegabashi. In a word, the people made O-Iwa become both a *kami* 神 and a *hotoke* 仏 because of her powerful grudge. This case of the evil spirit is one of the most popular ghost stories from the end of Edo period, continuing to these days.

Though there are too many features of the *Yotsuya kaidan* to completely cover here, the most important is to analyze the signification of an exorcism in keeping with the relationship between medicine and religion before the Enlightenment. In the story of the *Yotsuya zōtan* in the eighteenth century, the first publication of the *Yotsuya kaidan*, the physicians played the same role as the Buddhist monks in taking care of the victims suffering from the curse. But in the later versions, they never appear as medical persons but rather as religious specialists. Consequently, it seems that the religiosity in the narrative is more emphasized around the last days of the Tokugawa Shogunate. We will have to work on this issue within the context of the modernization of ghosts.

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