

## HOYAUKAMUI

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According to Ainu folklore, Hoyaukamui are snake gods who are lords of the lakes they dwell in. They are also called Saxomoaipu, meaning “one whose name is not spoken during summer.” Their trunks are as thick as rice bales, with wings sprouting from their backs; their heads and tails slender. They are pale black, and have red rims on their eyes and sharply pointed noses.

Hoyaukamui emit a foul odor, making it easy to identify the lakes wherein they live. Should anyone enter the miasma of their stench, their skin will swell with red sores and their hair will fall out. These swamps are called Kamuito, meaning the swamp of the evil god. Everyone avoids these foul places.

According to the folklore of the Hidaka region, the god of Lake Toya is a Hoyaukamui. He looks like a turtle with wings. This god can be evil and attacks humans, yet also protects humans by possessing them and using their mouths to diagnose illnesses. Many believe it was Hoyaukamui's stench that drove away the demon of smallpox.



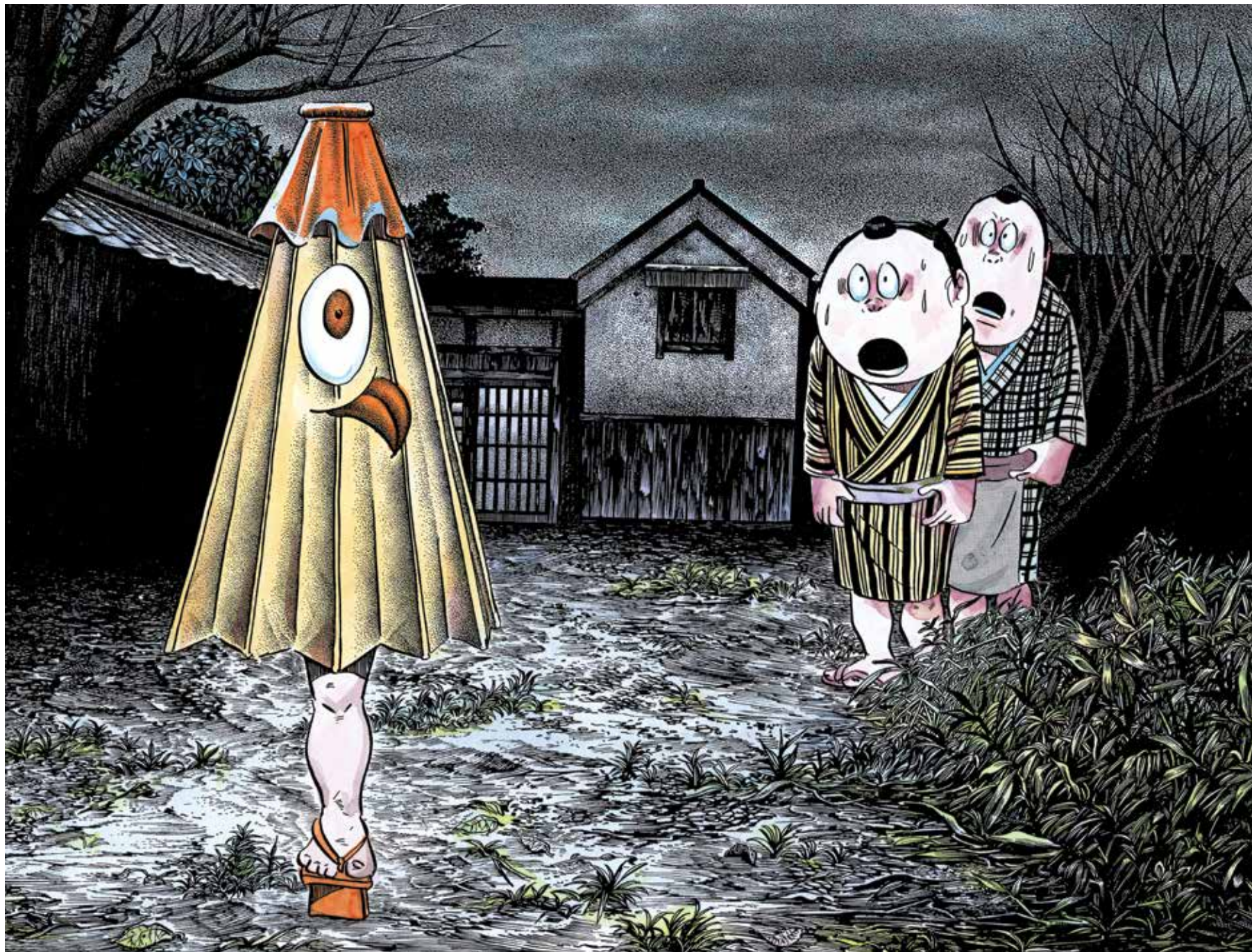
## KASABAKE

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In his *Gazu Hyakki Tsurezurebukuro*, ukiyo-e artist Toriyama Sekien drew a yokai called Honekarakasa. There is no detailed explanation, but looking at the picture, it is likely depicting an old umbrella that has transformed into a yokai. Kasabake also sometimes appear in illustrations of the story “The Tongue-cut Sparrow.” Related to Tsukumogami beliefs that objects can come to life after a hundred years, Kasabake are more charming than frightening. Thought to come out at night, Kasabake sometimes have two eyes and sometimes one, with tongues wagging from smiling mouths.

Long ago, Yureigasa, or ghost umbrellas, were said to haunt Mizokuchi, Tottori. Also one-eyed and one-legged, it was said to pull people into the sky on windy days. When I was a child, I read a story about a group of Kasabake that swam across a river.

In the olden days before electricity, nights were dark. It is easy to see how people might have seen old objects appearing to come to life. If it had been as bright at night as it is in modern times, you wouldn't even see rats scurrying around.



## SHIRIME

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This yokai was reported to have appeared on the streets of Kyoto long ago. A samurai was walking home one night when he heard a voice shouting "A moment, sir!" The samurai responded, "Who's there?" A man stepped out from the shadows, removed his kimono, and pivoted to show his rear. Bending over, a huge glowing eye appeared between his butt cheeks. Shocked, the samurai fled. Haiku poet Yosa Buson was fond of yokai and left behind a collection called *Buson Yokai Emaki*, which is the only known appearance of Shirime.

Shirime seems to have originally been a type of Nopperabo, creatures that like to startle people by surprising them with a face with no eyes or nose. Shirime has an eyeball in its butt, doubling the shock. It has no motivation other than the joy it gets from pranking humans.



## KANATZUCHIBO

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The *Hyakki Yagyo Emaki* was said to have been painted by Tosa Mitsunobu during the Muromachi period (1333–1568). In it, Tosa depicted a birdlike figure with glaring eyes, wielding a large wooden mallet. However, there is no explanation—we know nothing else about this yokai. At the Kanatzuchibo's feet is another unidentified yokai, a bright red blobby creature. Kanatzuchibo appears to be striking the other yokai. Many later artists modeled yokai after the ones in *Hyakki Yagyo Emaki*, including Kanatzuchibo.

Many of the yokai in *Hyakki Yagyo Emaki* are objects or vessels, leading them to be called Tsukumogami, or object spirits. There are other yokai wielding mallets. It's possible at some point in time these were the spirits of the mallets themselves, including Kanatzuchibo.



## TOHOKU NO TSURUBEOTOSHI

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Tsurubeotoshi is a yokai that appeared mainly in the Kinki region, but according to Yamada Norio's *Travels in Tohoku*, it also appears in the Tohoku region. The story goes like this...

Long ago, in Oshu, Shiroishijoka (modern-day Miyagi), a merchant traveled to Yonezawa along the Shichigashiyuku Highway. The weather was fine, and the trip was pleasant until they approached a cedar forest, and something fell from the top of a tree with a thud. It was the heads of a man and a woman. A dozen more heads fell from the tree. Looking at the merchants, the heads giggled and laughed and then retreated back to the tree.

Tsurubeotoshi from the Kinki region are said to pull people into trees and eat them. But those from the Tohoku region seem to be content startling people. And while the name Tsurubeotoshi is used primarily in the Kinki region, related stories—such as this one from Shiroishijoka—can be found across Japan.

