Far Eastern Fox Lore[1]

By

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The fox plays an exceedingly important role in the folklore of the Far East. It plays several roles in the folklore of both China and Japan. Material from Korea is difficult to find in Western languages, but what little there is suggests that the fox plays a significant role there also. The tales are spread throughout Japan; Korean distribution is difficult to determine with the evidence available; and Chinese distribution of fox tales is concentrated in the north (Eberhard: 1948). One tale has been discovered from Manchuria (Krappe: 1944) and one Buryat tale from Eastern Siberia is considered by Krappe (1944) to be related to the Chinese tales. Further study might bring to light some interesting items for a distribution study.

Casal (1959) suggests China as the source for all of the Japanese tales. On further investigation, this does not seem to be likely. Not only are there Japanese roles for foxes which do not have Chinese analogues, but there are also Ainu tales which have foxes as major characters. No one seems quite willing to give a Chinese origin for Ainu tales, while an Ainu origin for Japanese tales is very possible.

One of the major problems of folklore scholarship in East Asia is the long history of literacy in the area. There has been a great deal of cross-fertilization between literary and folkloristic traditions. Many tales are taken from folklore and written

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down by scholars, only later to again pass into folklore from the literary tradition. An associated problem is the continual quotation from earlier sources, giving some of the items a panchronic distribution.

Some of these difficulties due to the long literary tradition can be seen in the Japanese tale of Tamamo-no-Mae. The following version was translated by Nozaki (1961: 112–3) from the *Kagaku-shû*, written in 1446:

> "There is a king called Pan-Tsu in the remote western region of ancient India. His consort named Hua-yang, is, in reality, a white fox with nine tails. She is wicked and cruel by nature. She takes pleasure in seeing a thousand innocent people killed.
>
> "Later she flees to China when her true colors are disclosed. In China, calling herself Pao-ssu, she joins the harem of Yu, a king of the Chou dynasty.
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> "She finally becomes the queen, still heartless and cruel. She rarely smiles unless she sees some cruel deed done. The king wants to see her smile, and therefore he does everything cruel to please her. The king and his kingdom cease to exist because of Pao-ssu, the nine-tailed fox.
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> "After her death, Pao-ssu is born in Japan in the 12th century. It is the reign of the 76th Emperor Konoye (according to another legend, the reign of the Emperor Toba the 74th Emperor)...."

Here the Japanese tale looks as if it is a native grafting onto an earlier Chinese legend which, in turn, may have been built on an even earlier Indian legend.

Associated with the literary problem is the question of the choice of names and characters for the fox. An interesting aspect is the Chinese avoidance of the character 狐 (*hu*) for fox in some contexts, and the substitution of the character 胡 (also pronounced *hu*). (Jameson: 1951). The choice of the character is very interesting. Nowhere could I find any comment on the reason for the choice of this particular character of the many possible choices having this same sound, though there seems to me to be an obvious reason in the component parts of the character, 古 (ancient) and 月 (moon), moon being

the embodiment of the female principle.[2]

There are many different names given in the literature for foxes, both Chinese and Japanese. Watters (1874) gives several Chinese names and discusses their usage. Of these the most interesting is *Chiu-shih* (九使) "nine messengers"; used in Fuchow, because the fox is reputed to have nine transverse bars or nine joints in his tail. This term is used for male foxes only and is a god of prostitutes in Fuchow. Buchanan (1935) gives twenty-one Japanese names for foxes.

There also exists a folk-etymology for the word *kitsune*, which is the commonest Japanese word for fox. This is quoted with minor variations in both Visser (1908) and Casal (1959). A certain man in the reign of Emperor Kimmei (540–571) had waited many years to find a beautiful wife. Finally one day, as he was walking across a field he met a beautiful woman. He asked her to marry him and she agreed. Eventually a son was born to them. On the same day, a pup was born to the man's dog. As the pup grew up it became very hostile to the mistress of the house—snarling at her and frightening her. The man refused to kill the dog, however, and one day it attacked the woman so fiercely that, in despair, she returned to fox form and fled. The man was crushed, as he loved his wife in spite of her being a fox, and he cried out to her to *ki tsu ne* (come and sleep) (Casal: 1959), and because she returned to him at night she is called *ki tsune* (Visser: 1908). Visser attributes this legend to the Ryô-i ki (靈異記) (ca. 758).

The earliest apparent mention of the fox in Chinese literature is in a apologue of the year 333 B.C., where the fox warned the tiger to be careful not to attack him and eat him because "the Sovereign of Heaven has priviledged me among all animals by giving me greater cunning than to others. Should you devour me, you would certainly displease him very much." (Casal: 1959)

An especially interesting early Chinese reference to the fox

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2. A Japanese example of belief in the magical power of characters is to be found in the practice of writing the character for dog (犬) on the forehead of an infant as a protection against foxes and other demons (Buchanan: 1935; 53).

is to be found in the *Shuo-wen* encyclopdia (説文) written about A.D. 100 by Hsü Shen (許慎). Here it is stated that foxes are the coursers upon which ghostly beings ride and that they have three particular attributes: they have a color which is central and harmonizing (yellow), they are small before and large behind, and they lift their heads upwards at the moment of death (Casal: 1959); Williams: 1931).

Hsü Shen also gives three good qualities of foxes: their flesh cures ulcers, their livers cause persons who suddenly died to revive, and their blood refreshes people who have been drunken (Visser: 1908). Eventually almost all parts of the fox appeared in the Sinico-Japanese pharmacopoeia (Casal: 1959). De Groot (1892, vol. 6, p. 1072) quotes an eleventh century document, the *Pen-ts'ao kang mu* (本草綱目): "Make soup of a fox which has not been disembowelled, and eat it, and it will cure sores and scabs which for a long time have proved incurable. And when anyone suddenly expires by (demoniacal) violence, then forthwith take the gall of a male fox, grate it in some tepid water, and pour this into the throat of the patient; he will then revive, but if the current hour has elapsed, the cure will not succeed." Watters (1874) gives the most comprehensive list of usages of the fox. The blood is used as a corrective of intoxication, the flesh, roasted or boiled, gives tone to the stomach, cures vertigo, temporary insanity, and other ailments. All kinds of scabies, ulcers, fever, ague, and other afflictions can be treated with the entrails, liver, and other parts. The saliva can be gathered in a decoy-jar with a narrow neck and given as a love-potion to frigid wives. The most specific use given is to take the liver and dry it in a sunless place, exposed for a little just as the Dipper is setting at the fifth watch of the fifth day of the fifth moon (the period of the Dark Element's supreme ascendency), then ground to powder, mixed with rice, rolled up as a pill in a piece of red silk, and held between the fingers of the left hand for males and right hand for females to either cure or ward off intermittent fever.

In Japan, the earliest mentions of the fox appear to have been as omens. One of the earliest of these is attributed by the Japanese to the Chinese. Bakin (1810) says that:

> "the Emperor Yü [founder of the Hsia dynasty—2205–1766 B.C.] was not yet married in his thirtieth year. Once he went to T'u shan; the inhabitants of that place expressed the fear that, being not yet married notwithstanding his age, he would have no descendants. But Yü said: 'There will certainly occur a good omen when the time comes that I ought to marry.' When behold a white nine-tailed fox suddenly approached him, and the Emperor said: 'White is my colour, and the nine tails are a sign of a good wife and of the great prosperity of my country.' The result was that the Emperor took a wife from that place." (attributed to the *Lü shi ch'un ts'iu*, written by "The guests of Lü puh-wei," in the Ts'in dynasty, B.C. 249–206) (Visser: 1908)

Visser (1908) mentions several instances of the fox being used as an omen in early Japan. In the *Shoku Nihongi* (続日本紀) (797 A.D.) it says that:

> "In the seventh month of 712 Iga Province presented a BLACK FOX to the Emperor; and two months later the Emperor issued the following proclamation: 'We hear that, according to the old tradition, in the year of the rat the crop is not good; yet, by the assistance of Heaven and Earth, we have a very good crop this year. A wise king of old said: 'An abundant year is better than good forecastings.' Moreover, the black fox, presented to me by the Governor of Iga province and his officials, corresponds to the 'Good Forecastings'. That book says: "A black fox appears when a king by his government causes profound peace." ' "

The fox is mentioned nine times in the *Shoku Nihongi*: five times as good omens (one black and four white foxes), three times as bad omens (two wild foxes entering the Palace and one howling fox), and one haunting fox. The *Shoku Nihon kôki* (続日本皇紀) (869 A.D.) mentions foxes three times. In 833 a fox ran into the Palace, but it was beaten to death by the Imperial Guards when it reached the Seiryôden (清涼殿), one of the inner most parts of the palace. In 849, again, a fox rushed into the Palace. This time it was caught and killed by a dog. In 834 the flapping of wings and the sound of crying were heard one evening above the Palace. The Guards looked up but could not see anything for the darkness. Some thought it was a flock of sea-birds, but one claimed that it was Celestial Foxes (天狐). The *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* (日本三代実録)

(901 A.D.) mentions foxes eleven times, all as *bad* omens. Visser also quotes from the *Nichû reki* (日中暦), a calendar dating from the second half of the fourteenth century, where the use of foxes as omina is very explicitly spelled out. "If a fox cries on the *day of the rat*, and this is the *thirtieth* day of the month, should the crying be heard in the *North*, an inmate of the house will die, or it forebodes a lawsuit, or the shedding of blood."

One of the major types of fox behavior in East Asian folklore is the transformation into some other form. Usually this is into a human, (as we have seen above), but there are tales of transformation into a horse (Ainu—Chamberlain: 1888), an automobile (Japan—Buchanan: 1935), or even a tea-kettle (Japan—Seki: 1963; #31). These transformations are the most common roles for foxes in East Asian Folklore.

In China, the fox tales are concentrated in the northeastern part of the country. Eberhard (1948) examined six collections of Chinese literary tales and reported on the frequency of fox stories in them. The *Liao-chai Chih-i* (Shantung: early seventeenth century) contains 14.5% fox tales (86/445); the *Yüeh-wei Ts'ao-t'ang Pi-chi* (Hopei) 10%; the *Tse-pu-yü* from Kiangsu, 3.4%; the *T'un-k'u Lan-yen* (Kiangsu), 1.9%; and the *Mai-yü-chi* from Chekiang contains *no* fox tales. Eberhard also gives a classification of the types of Chinese fox tales, the broad outlines of which will form the focus of the discussion of fox tales in China. His major category is that of "erotic experiences with foxes." The foxes in the novels are always supernatural beings. The majority of Chinese fox stories contain an erotic touch, even though the principle weight of the novel may lie in other areas. The vixen is goodnatured in the greater majority of the cases, however, the fox in relations with women is always vicious. This may or may not reflect the patriarchal nature of Chinese society. In most cases a man lives for some time, often for many years with a vixen. Their life together is usually happy and harmonious; seldom does the vixen bring bad luck to the man. What bad luck there is, is unintentional. The vixen stands out through her extraordinary sexual desire and thereby sometimes harms her lover. Sometimes the vixen's

need for love is explained as the necessity to store in herself as much as possible male semen, i.e., vital power, to thereby advance into a higher form of life.

More than 60% of the fox novels of this type are reported from the northeast. The few that are reported from the eastern middle of China, not infrequently lead back to the northeast, with Shantung being designated as the true home of the foxes in the tale. This type of tale begins in the Han period, but does not become common until the T'ang. Numerous Chinese sources contend that there is no wild fox south of the Yang-tse. Whether true or not it indicates that according to the Chinese view, no fox story can occur in the south. Williams (1931) gives the distribution of the fox in China as having *Vulpes tschihliensis* very common in the north, but with *Canis hoole* found in South China and *Vulpes lineiventer* found in the mountains of Fukien. The Chinese may either not recognize the existence of the fox in the south, or they may consider that the species difference is sufficient so that the southern varieties do not perform the same roles. Or, it may mean that the tales have not spread among the folk to the south and the literati who could spread them among themselves do not recognize the fox in the south.

> Eberhard's second group of tales is that of "experiences with evil fox ghosts" (1948; 97). "The principal theme in this group is that of the revenge of the fox for an insult inflicted upon him: lack of sacrifices or killing of other foxes. In only a few cases is the fox really evil. The cases in which the fox has a love affair with a woman (which in Chinese view is evil *a priori*) are not very numerous either. The erotic slant is typical here too with almost all novels; further that this group too is prevalent in the north (over 60%) and that upper class people (70%), especially scholars, constitute the principal characters."

The third group consists of "general experiences with foxes" (pp. 97–8). This includes those novels in which the fox displays no marked moral quality and the erotic element does not play any part. These give the author a chance to display his erudition, according to Eberhard.

The final group consists of "experiences with good foxes".

"The principal theme of the novels presents the gratitude of the fox for a good deed." (p. 98)

The process of transformation used by the fox is similar in both China and Japan. The Chinese recognize two processes, of which the Japanese recognize one. One group of transforming foxes are described as "normal animals who, having schooled themselves in difficult disciplines, have greatly increased their powers. The approved, or legal discipline, the study of the classics, is difficult, for it requires many years and great concentration." (Jameson: 1951) This method was not taken over by the Japanese. The second method consists of foul means, in contrast to the "fair" means of studying the classics:

> "When a fox is a thousand years old, it goes to heaven for the first time and does not haunt people any longer. The purpose of the foxes in enchanting men is to take the vital spirit away from them in order to transfer it to their own bodies. But why do they not enchant women? Because a fox is an animal of *Darkness* (belonging to the principle *Yin*), and he who has *Light* (the principle *Yang*) within himself, is liable to be enchanted by them. Even male foxes always take the shape of women to seduce men; but other harm than this they do not cause them" (Visser: 1908; 10).

It is considered that the age of the fox is a major factor in the ability to change shapes. "Foxes and wolves may all attain an age of eight hundred years, and when more than five hundred years old, they are able to metamorphose themselves into beings shaped like men" (—Koh Hung (葛洪) in the Pao P'oh-tse (抱朴子) (fourth century), quoted in de Groot: 1892; vol. 4, p. 182). Another source states that the fox can take the form of a woman at the age of fifty years, a young and beautiful girl or a wizard possessing all power of magic at one hundred years, and at the age of one thousand years is admitted to the Heavens and becomes the "Celestial Fox" (Williams: 1931; 165).

The Japanese tend to agree with the latter set of ages. The exact process of the transformation is also of interest to the Japanese:

> "The exact method by which a fox metamorphoses himself is thus given by a native authority: When a fox wishes to change

> its shape into that of a man or women, it covers its body all over with leaves to make itself a top-knot or queue. This being done, it turns three double somersaults without touching the ground. When it returns to its former position it will be in the shape desired" (Griffis: 1874; 58).

A slight variation of this method is common to both Japan and China. The fox places a skull (preferably human) on its head and makes obeisances to the North-Star (Japan) or the Great Bear constellation (China), and the fox is transformed as soon as the skull ceases to fall off its head. (Groot: 1892, vol. 4, p. 194; Casal: 1959).

The problem then becomes, how to recognize and expose foxes. The Chinese recognize several methods: a written Taoist charm, sacred metallic mirrors of Buddhist monks, the Pa-kwa, confronting the fox with an old tree or stone pillar as old as the fox. Foxes may also be recognized by dogs, which will pursue and catch them. (Doré: 1918, vol. 5, p. 701; Watters: 1874, pp. 61–3)

The Japanese add a few more methods. The fox always emits luminosity. Even on the darkest night, its human shape will stand out distinctly with the color of hair and pattern of kimono plainly visible. The face of the transformed fox is unnaturally long. There is always a faint fox-figure near the thing. To kill the transformed fox, the thrust should be made at the vapory fox-shape, not the human-shape. Some foxes are unable to hide their tail completely. A fox can always be disclosed by putting a fried rat on the road where it will pass. The fox is so fond of fried rats that he will abandon his disguise to eat it. A fox being present will cause numbness when a person pinches himself. The true shape will always be reflected in water. And the most interesting of the methods of disclosure, the fox has difficulty in pronouncing certain words. "*Moshi*" is one of the words which foxes are supposed to have great difficulty with and a folk-explanation for the continual use of "*moshi-moshi*" in telephone conversations is to convince the party on the other end that he is not talking to a fox. (Casal: 1959)

An interesting Japanese example of the first of Eberhard's

groups is the tale "How a Maid is Seduced by a Fox" found in Nozaki (1961; 166–8):

> "A wild fox will sometimes indulge in sexual pleasure by seducing human beings. When a woman has relations with a fox, she will invariably suffer from a terrible physical pain, I hear. The remedy, it is said, is to wash her affected part with decocted buckwheat. The effect, they say, is instantaneous.
>
> "A certain Kumazawa, one of my retainers, was once greatly infatuated with his maid. However he was unable to have an improper connection with her because of the jealousy of his wife. Therefore he made use of a shed built in the shade of trees in the premises of his house—often indulging in iniquitous pleasure there with the maid.
>
> "A wild fox, learning of their stolen interviews, led the maid one night to the shed, assuming the form of her lecherous master —and gave rein to carnal passion as much as it desired.
>
> "The act on the part of the fox, however, was beyond the endurance of the maid. Therefore, she cried and cried imploring the *Kitsune* in the shape of her master to stop it—immediately!
>
> "'Stop it, master, please! Stop for Buddhas's sake!' she cried.
>
> "Still the fox insisted without paying the slightest attention to her plight. And the maid finally screamed with pain:
>
> "'Help, Madam! come and help me, Madam! Master is now embracing me and giving me much pain!'
>
> "The wife of Kumazawa, the *samurai*, heard the cry of the maid. However she could not bring herself to believe it. Her husband, at that moment, was with her—sitting sipping tea calmly together with her. Naturally she felt it terribly strange. The husband himself was alarmed, to say the least of it, on hearing the cry of the maid.
>
> "Therefore they, the master and mistress, lost no time in repairing to the shed from which the cry of pain was issuing, breaking the solitude of the night.
>
> "*They found nobody there—except the maid in agony.*"

The most frequent type of Japanese erotic fox story has a tired wayfarer lured into a warm and cozy hut by a fox in the shape of a beautiful women (occasionally an old man in the guise of a venerable priest or retired scholar). He is fed an abundant and excellent meal and given soft silk mattresses for the night. The woman is not at all shy with her favors and they spend an enjoyable evening. In the morning the man

awakens to find himself in an old grave-yard. The remainder of the previous night's sumptuous meal consists of rotting leaves, moss, filth, and excrement.

A recently collected Chinese version (from oral sources in 1928) is given by Jameson (1951; 278):

> A notable *viveur* in Peking sought new sources of pleasure. One evening at dusk he went to a deserted temple near Hsichih-men and courteously inquired whether any fox maidens would care to visit him at his home. That night someone knocked on his door and said she was Miss Red ,the girl he had invited. She was a skillful companion, mistress of all the breaths and rhythms. When his ability lagged, she gave him a pill which restored his energy. She came several evenings. She then suggested that as she could become invisible, she stay with him so that they could amuse themselves by day as well as by night. After some time she said that she would not see him again. His vital essence was exhausted and he would die within a year."

The Korean tales tend to consist basically of evil foxes transforming themselves to human shape and destroying people. One tale given in Zong (1953; #75) is *The Traveller, The Fox* and *The Tiger.* In this tale, a traveller becomes lost in the mountains and finds a cottage with a beautiful woman. He is invited to spend the night. In the middle of the night he awakens to hear the woman grinding a sword in the kitchen. He flees, and the woman hears him going and chases after him half transformed into a fox. He sees a tower with music coming from it, runs into it and shouts for help. The tower belongs to the son of the fox. The man is seized and locked into a small room. The fox's son comes to kill him and the man begs for a large jar of water to drink as his last request. It is brought and the fox's son waits outside for him to drink it. The man throws the water on the earthen wall, kicks a hole in it, and escapes only to fall over a cliff onto the back of a tiger. The tiger is startled and runs back to its den. It believes the man to be dead and scratches his face so that its cub may drink his blood. The tiger then goes out for more prey. The man comes to himself and kills the cub. He leaves the cave and climbs a tall tree. The two foxes come looking for him. They are discovered in the cave by the tiger. In the ensuing fight all three

are killed and the man explores their houses only to find much gold and treasure.

De Groot (1892, vol. 5, pp. 597–8) gives what to a Chinese must be one of the most frightening tales possible on an evil fox:

> "Under the reign of the Tsin dynasty there was in Wu-hing (in Chehkiang pr.) a man with two sons. These were harvesting in the field, when they saw their father appear and pursue them with invectives and even with blows. They complained of this treatment to their mother, who asked the father why he had done so. He was greatly startled by these words, and arrived at the conclusion that this must be a trick played by a spectre. So he told the sons to slay it with their axes, but the spectre kept quiet, and did not go there again. The father, fearing that it might harry his boys somehow or other, went to look after him, on which the sons, crying out 'here is the spectre!' killed him, and buried his body in the ground. Thereupon the spectre hurried to the house, assumed the shape of the father, and told the inmates that the boys had killed the spectre. In the evening they came home, and were congratulated cordially by every one.
>
> "The actual truth remained a secret to them for several years, until a priest passed their house, 'Your father', said he to the two sons, 'exercises a very unpropitious influence'. They reported this saying to their father, who burst into such a rage that the sons hurried out of the door to advise the priest to beat a hasty retreat; but as the latter entered with a noise, the father, turning into a big old fox, crept under the bed, where he was seized and killed. The man they formerly slew was their real father. They re-interred him in another grave and observed mourning for him; but subsequently one of the sons committed suicide, while the other died of remorse." (*Ssu shén chi*)

A Korean tale of this type titled *The Nine-Tailed* Fox in Zong's collection (1953, #22) tells of a man who urinates by the side of a road and notices that he is doing it on a white bone. For no reason at all he asks, "Is it cold?" and the bone answers, "Yes, it is cold." A little surprised by this the man asks, "Is it warm?" and the bone answers, "Yes, it is warm." The man becomes frightened and runs away with the bone rapidly pursuing him. He comes to a wineshop, stops, tells the bone he will go in and get it some wine, and goes out the back to the shop and escapes. A few years later, he come again and notices a *new* wineshop in front of the old one. He goes inside and is

served by a beautiful young woman. He tells of his earlier experience. The girl says that she has long been waiting for him, turns into a nine-tailed fox and eats the man. The moral of the story is that one should not urinate on white bones.

Stories of this same group are also available in Japan, and were still being created as late as 1922. In a November, 1922 issue of the *Mainichi Shimbun* of Iwate, there is a story of one Chukichi Ishidate (67) of Wainai village. He had smoked a fox from its den by burning pine needles. He had then killed it and sold its fur. Several days later he was awakened by six men, armed with shot-guns, who demanded ¥300 and who threatened his life. He offered them ¥35.68, which was all he had. He finally managed to escape and ran to the village. He brought back policemen, firemen, and others. His visitors had left and they found his purse on the floor, untouched. The rice-pot was empty, though, and fish and other food had disappeared. On the floor they found the foot-prints of foxes. (Casal: 1959)

The classification of neutral fox transformation stories includes what could be considered "poltergeist" stories. Watters (1874; 55) gives one such tale from China as having been told to him:

> "Not long ago a perfect orthodox Confucianist told me of a friend who was thus [by a poltergeist] annoyed. On one occasion this gentleman was proceeding to pay a formal visit at the house of an acquaintance, having a servant carrying his official hat. On reaching the place of his destined visit, the servant discovered that the hat was suddenly missing, so there was nothing for it but to return home. Here he actually found the hat in his own bedroom, the fox-elf having secretly conveyed it thither."

Li (1948) gives a more recent account of such goings on. Sometime, more than ten years prior to 1948, a Manchu family in Hsiang-huang-ch'i, a village in the northern suburbs of Peking, was bothered by a fox spirit. For three years, bricks were tossed into the yard. Finally the family built a wall around the house with the bricks. Eventually a voice was heard in the room. It was the fox, who was of a fox family originating in Kiangsi. The family could talk freely to the fox, but they could never see it. For sixteen years the fox stayed

with the family. The major pleasure which the fox seemed to have was entertaining guests. It bought and prepared food for the family's guests with money which had been locked in the cash box. If there was insufficient money in the cash box, he pawned the family's clothing and left the pawn ticket on the table. The pawnkeeper always said that a short old man had pawned the things.

Buchanan (1935: 41) gives a brief version of one tale which appeared in several of the collections with only minor variations:

> "There was a certain Tokutarô of Shinshû who declared that he did not believe in foxes, and wagered to spend the night alone on the Maki moor. When he arrived there he saw a fox run into a hedge and shortly afterwards was accosted by the wife of the headman of Maki, who begged him to accompany her to the home of her parents in Horikane. He consented, but on reaching her parents' home, Tokutarô told the woman's father that she was a fox in disguise. To prove it he burnt her to death before the kitchen fire. Since she did not return to her vulpine shape, Tokutarô was immediately seized and bound with ropes to await the death sentence from his lord on the following morning. Just at this time there appeared a priest, who pleaded with the irate father for the life of Tokutarô, stating that, since the latter had not killed the girl with any evil intention, if the father would forgive him, he, the priest, would shave Tokutarô's head and make a monk of him. To this Horikane agreed and the priest shaved Tokutarô. The following morning Tokutarô awoke to find himself in the middle of the moor with as bald a pate as any priest could wish. Thus did the foxes punish a man who dared to doubt their power."

The fox cutting someone's hair is a theme which runs through a great many Japanese fox stories. Another, related theme is that of the fox who, deliberately, shows himself taking on the shape of a person who is known to the observer. When that person appears, he is set upon by the principal and his friends, who use all of the traditional methods of exposing a fox: beating him, smoking him out, etc. Actually the fox has withdrawn to watch the fun. (Casal: 1959)

While Dorson was in Japan, he asked students to submit folktales to him. Nobusada Kawasaki submitted in March, 1957,

a story of an incident which was believed in his family. At a party which had been given for his mother in her hometown of Funabashi-shi, Chiba-ken in 1912, Genbe-san, a farmer, who had had too much to drink at the party was given the standard package of food to take home to his family. He left the party and took a short-cut home through a graveyeard back of an old temple which had become thickly covered with bamboo. The next morning, completely sober, he returned with the tale of how, while hurrying through the grove, he had been stopped by a strange man and challenged to a *sumô* (wrestling) match. He agreed. It was a close contest and neither of them could win. Both became tired and stopped to rest. Without being noticed, the stranger disappeared. When Genbe arrived home he found that most of the food he was carrying had been stolen. "It was surely a fox that had done such mischief." Kawasaki's parents were reported as both still believing the story.

Foxes in Japan are believed to be able to take shapes other than of persons as well. A story which Chamberlain reports (1905: 115) shows one form that these can take:

> "In 1889, a tale was widely circulated and believed of a fox having taken the shape of a railway train on the Tokyo-Yokohama line. [Which had opened in 1872]. The phantom train seemed to be coming towards a real train which happened to be running in the opposite direction, but yet never got any nearer to it. The engine-driver of the real train, seeing all his signals to be useless, put on a tremendous speed. The result was that the phantom was at last caught up, when, lo and behold! nothing but a crushed fox was found beneath the engine-wheels."

Casal (1959) reports that a similar legend was still current a few years ago in the south-interior of Kyûshû, where fox-trains were frequently seen on the tracks at night as a row of rapidly moving lights. Buchanan (1935: 48–9) reports that the priest of the Inari Shrine at Wakayama told him the following tale as true:

> "Late one evening, a man was walking along the narrow and steep road known as 'Kurumazaka' ('Cart Hill') which led down from the Inari Shrine when a huge automobile, blazing with lights, rushed up and came within a hair's breadth of hitting the

> pedestrian, who stepped to one side in the nick of time. Several days later, in the wee small hours of the night, this same man was in his own motor-car carefully making his way down 'Kurumazaka' when again up the hill came a larger car going at tremendous speed. There was no room to pass and no time to stop. The driver in the first car put on brakes and braced himself for the collision. There was a dull thud, and the huge car disappeared. Getting out, the driver saw beneath the wheels of his car an old, dead fox!"

For Eberhard's final group, "experiences with good foxes" there are examples from both Japan and China, even though one of Jameson's informants told him in 1928 (1951: 277):

> "My tutor said not to believe any stories about good foxes. All foxes were bad and being invisible they could read anything written about them and took malicious revenge. In self-protection writers invent stories about good foxes. They are all lies. Because my tutor was a consistent student of the classics he could not be attacked."

Giles (1916, #11) gives a tale of a good fox which helped a man who was her relative. A certain Wang Ch'êng of P'ing-yüan, of good family, but idle such that all his property was gone, was walking one day and found a gold hair-pin with the legend "Property of the Imperial Family" on it. He thought it might have belonged to his family, as his grandfather had married a princess. An old woman came by looking for her hair-pin and so Wang gives it to her. She turns out to be the fox-wife of his own grandfather. Wang takes her home with him and his wife comes out in tatters and weeps about the poverty of the family. The old woman gives the wife the hair-pin to pawn in order to buy food. The fox-woman returns three days later bringing a hundred pounds of rice and a hundred pounds of corn. The woman gives Wang money to buy cloth to carry to the capital and sell at a profit, warning him against delaying. A rainstorm comes up while he's on the road, he stays at an inn rather than travel in it, and arrives in the capital two days too late. The price of summer cloth is going down. He waits ten days in an inn for it to go up again and finally sells for a 25% loss. In the night his money

is stolen. The innkeeper gives him some money and Wang decides to invest in fighting quails to recoup. Buys quails to resell, but it rains and he refuses to go out in it. When the rain stops, only one quail is still alive. Trains the quail himself and begins winning. Finally sells quail and goes home with 600 ounces of silver. Fox urges him to buy land and then stays three years to make sure he is properly industrious. He prospers and finally the fox-woman disappears.

One persistent Japanese legend, which Casal (1959) found in a Tokyo newspaper as an actual incident taking place in Tochigi-ken (no date or name for newspaper in Casal's article, but clearly after 1910), was given in 1894 by Hearn (pp. 332–3):

> "Sugita-San, a physician of Matsue, was called one evening to attend a case of confinement at a house some distance from the city, on the hill called Shiragayama. He was guided by a servant carrying a paper lantern painted with an aristocratic crest. He entered into a magnificent house, where he was received with superb samurai courtesy. The mother was safely delivered of a fine boy. The family treated the physician to an excellent dinner, entertained him elegantly, and sent him home, loaded with presents and money. Next day he went, according to Japanese etiquette, to return thanks to his hosts. He could not find the house: there was, in fact, nothing on Shiragayama except forest. Returning home, he examined again the gold which has been paid him. All was good except one piece, which had changed into grass."

There are many Japanese stories of people being richly rewarded for some favor they have shown a fox. An indication of the strength of these beliefs is the tale told by Hearn (1894: 334–5) of the man who was swindled by another man pretending to be a fox.

> "There is . . . a well authenticated story about . . . (a) wealthy shopkeeper of Matsue who easily became the prey of . . . (a) pretended Inari. This Inari told him that whatever sum of money he should leave at a certain miya by night, he would find it doubled in the morning,—as the reward of his life-long piety. The shopkeeper carried several small sums to the miya, and found them doubled within twelve hours. Then he deposited larger

sums, which were similarly multiplied; he even risked some hundreds of dollars, which were duplicated. Finally he took all his money out of the bank and placed it one evening within the shrine of the god,—and never saw it again."

Watters (1874: 57–8) gives one of the most interesting tales of experience with good foxes. This one is particularly interesting in that it involves a European in the tale:

"I remember that a few months after our Minister, the late Sir Frederick Bruce, had left a monastery, in the western hill near Peking, where he had been spending some weeks, a Chinese gentleman told me about the Minister's Guardian fox. He said that shortly after Sir Frederick came to the monastery, this fox took up his residence in an old pagoda situated in the immediate neighbourhood. I was assured that the soul of the Minister migrated into the body of this animal at night, and that so long as the fox remained there, it had been impossible for any mischief to befall the Minister. This Chinese gentleman, who was well read in classic lore, also informed me very gravely, that in accordance with ancient precedent the fox in question ought to have received the faculty of speech, but that he generously waived his right in deference to a human creature, and that a man who was known to have been dumb from his birth now became endowed with speech."

Another major type of fox-lore is "fox-possession". This is a major type in Japan, though there are only rudiments of it in China. Li (1948) discusses animal spirit possession in the Peking area. The belief is that the spirit of the animal is capable of leaving its own body and entering the body of a person through either the sensory or genital organs. Once the person is possessed, he talks nonsense, runs and jumps around with all his strength, and changes abruptly from laughing to weeping. The animal tries to exhaust all the vigor of the human body. The animal spirit circulates freely in the human, but has a special abode in a soft tumour somewhere on the body. Removal of the tumour frees the person from the spirit. Doré (1918, vol. 5, p. 696) indicates that persons who were possessed were thought to be able to cure all sorts of diseases.

Doré (1918, vol. 5, pp. 698–9) gives an example of the

belief in the curing powers of a person possessed by a fox. In July, 1907, at Shih-li-pu, a market town three miles northwest of Hwo Chow in Nganhwei, a young man of 22 was carrying two baskets of beans across a field surrounded by tombs while accompanied by several people from the neighboring village. He suddenly claimed that he could not go a step further because the baskets were so heavy that he could not lift them. The villagers took him home. He began to make fantastic and wild gestures and to claim that he had been possessed by the second fox sister. The incident became widely known. At the time there was an epidemic of fever raging and killing thousands of people. The possessed man claimed that he could cure the fever. People flocked with presents and money. The Prefect of Hwo Chow sent for him to cure his son of the fever and gave him a larger present. Later he refused to visit private homes. He finally built a large brick temple with the offerings. Doré then claimed that the man was a swindler working with an uncle who was a literary graduate.

Krappe (1944) gives two examples of stories of fox-possession from Shantung:

> "A fox in human shape approaches a farmer, who is, however, aware of his identity and puts him to flight with his ox whip. Some time later a woman becomes possessed by a fox spirit. The farmer is called and puts in his appearance armed with his whip. The fox does not wish to make its acquaintance a second time and promptly leaves his victim."
>
> "Two farmers jokingly threaten to kindle a fire and to smoke the foxes out of a certain cavern in which they had made their home. Both are promptly possessed by fox demons, one of whom imitates the voice of the farmer's deceased father and demands that the farmer's wife prepare a fine chicken for him. Both fox spirits are in the end driven out by a sturdy peasant lad armed with a knife who utters dire threats against them."

Apparently the smoking out of foxes was a common occurence in both China and Japan. The Code of Laws of both the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties forbids the damaging of graves by smoking foxes out of them (de Groot: 1892, vol. 5, p. 600). Visser (1908: 11–2) quotes an *earlier* Japanese law from the *Zokutô ritsu,* "Laws concerning robbers," Section VII of the

Laws, written in 702 by Fujiwara-no-Fuhito under the Emperor Mommu (697–707), and revised in the Yôrô era (717–723):

> "All those who dig up the earth and take out the corpses of men without burying them again, and who smoke foxes or badgers out of graves, or burn the coffins, (shall be punished with) one hundred blows with the stick. Those who burn corpses, with transportation for one year; but, if they belong to the fifth or higher ranks, their punishment shall be two degrees heavier, and if they are people of low standing, or children, it shall be diminished by two degrees. If children or grand-children smoke foxes or badgers out of the grave of a grand-father, father or mother, and if the inmates of a house do the same at the grave of the master of the house, (their punishment shall be) transportation for one year; if they burn the coffin, the same for two years, and if they burn the corpse, then for three years."

While the Japanese law is earlier than any Chinese law I found in the available literature, I would still suspect that it was patterned on a Chinese original. De Groot (1892: V, 577–8 and 582–3) gives two third century examples connecting foxes with tombs in China. Fox-possession can even run in families in China. Dennys (1876: 96) gives as an example, a certain family in which members had gone insane for three generations because one of their ancestors had injured a fox.

Fox-possession is much more common in Japan than in China. According to Yanagida (1957: 309), the belief is especially strong in central Japan and Shikoku. While there are no foxes on Shikoku, Yanagida (p. 312) claims that dogs fulfill the same function there:

> "On Shikoku, where there are no foxes, dogs are supposed to be able to possess people. A well-known story has it that the great priest Kôbô Daishi, who lived in the eighth and ninth centuries, shut up all the foxes in a cave and effectively rid the island of them, but that later, in violation of his command, the cave was opened. Inside, nothing save a picture of a dog was found, but since that time, it is said, dogs have acted like the foxes in other parts of the country."

Visser (1908; 67–8) gives another version of the legend of why there are no foxes in Shikoku, from the *Honchô koji*

inenshû, probably written in the beginning of the eighteenth century:

> "A fox took the shape of the consort of the Lord of Shikoku, and the latter found to his unbounded astonishment two women sitting in his house, who were exactly alike and who both pretended to be his real wife. A physician believed that it was the so-called 'soul-separating' illness, which causes one woman to become two. He uttered a Buddhist stanza, and striking on the floor with his staff proceeded to recite prayers, but all in vain. Then the husband seized the women and shut them up. As he saw that one of them ate quite different food from the ordinary, he examined that one by torture, whereupon she became a fox. He then decided to kill the animal, but a crowd of 4 or 5000 people, Buddhist priests and laymen, men and women, came before the gate and answered the Lord's question, as to why they were, as follows:
>
> "We are the foxes of the whole of Shikoku, who come to you with a request. The fox who has done you a wrong is a descendant of Kiko myôjin, the 'Venerable Fox-god'; his name is Osagitsune, he is a messenger of Inari, and the King of the Foxes of Japan. If you do him harm, there will come great calamity upon the country. He is our teacher of haunting, and if he dies we cannot haunt any longer. Please spare his life!' The Lord promised that if they all would leave Shikoku by ship, he would send the prisoner after them. Thereupon, they gave him a written oath, that they never would return to Shikoku as long as this document existed. They went away and since that time there have been no foxes in Shikoku. The document was, in the auther's time, still in the hands of the same family."

In Japan, the patient "fortunately" knows when he is possessed by a fox and he will generally seek help to dispell the fox. Naoe (review in *Folklore Studies*, 1951, vol. 10, pp. 30–4) tells us that around the turn of the century, there was a spate of fox possession in Goshoura village, Amakusa district in Kumamoto-ken. People who were possessed behaved strangely and began speaking classical Chinese! Sasaki (op. cit., 1954, vol. 18, p. 276) tells of an incident in Kurozawa, Akebono village, Katsuno district of Akita-ken, where a sorcerer was called in to cure a mad woman. He decided that the woman was possessed by a malignant fox and proceeded to drive out the fox. He denied the woman all food, applied pepper to her nose, eyes,

and mouth, rubbed her body with red-hot fire tongs, and bored holes into her breasts and abdomen. The woman died after three days of this treatment. A similar case is reported in the *Osaka Mainichi* of 1926 as taking place in Chiba-ken. Two women were killed by their kinsmen because of fox possession. Yasu Fujita had been insane for some time and her daughter and brother became convinced it was through fox possession. They went through "the usual process of filling the poor woman's eyes and nostrils with sulphur to drive the animal out." Throughout the process they continually repeated the opening of the Lotus Sutra, "*Namu myôhô renge kyô.*" They then went through the same process for the woman's mother, who was also possessed. They waited for the restoration of their senses, unaware that the patients were already dead. Finally they reported the whole thing to the police. (Casal: 1959)

> "Superstition prevailed . . . among the people at large, both as to cause and treatment of the disease. Fox possession was an ailment which I frequently met at the clinics—the story generally being, 'When returning home at night my lantern went out. Confused, I lost my way, when a light appeared in the distance which I took to be my home. I went toward it, falling and confused, for there was no road, but the light receded as I went, and finally disappeared. A beautiful girl came, and to my great relief, guided me to my home, when she suddenly vanished.' Such "possession' patients were usually anaemic, anxious, foreboding evil, sleepless, and nervously depressed. Tonics, general hygiene and the intelligent co-operation of the patient usually resulted in a cure, though the priests were about as successful in such cases as I was. They would gravely direct the patient to go to a distant shrine, make certain offerings, recite certain prayers, and then return. 'You will be cured.'—and usually they were." (Casal: 1959)

Dr. John Berry, one of the first Western physicians to come to Japan, in 1872 wrote:

Dr. Baelz, of the Imperial University of Japan, had some further comments on the problem from his observation of cases in the hospital under his charge:

> "Possession by foxes (***kitsune-tsuki***) is a form of nervous

disorder or delusion, not uncommonly observed in Japan. Having entered a human being, sometimes through the breast, more often through the space between the finger-nails and the flesh, the fox lives a life of his own, apart from the proper self of the person who is harbouring him. There thus results a sort of double entity or double consciousness. The person possessed hears and understands everything that the fox inside says or thinks; and the two often engage in a loud and violent dispute, the fox speaking in a voice altogether different from that which is natural to the individual. The only difference between the cases of possession mentioned in the Bible and those observed in Japan is that here it is almost exclusively women that are attacked—mostly women of the lower classes. Among the predisposing conditions may be mentioned a weak intellect, a superstitious turn of mind, and such debilitating diseases as, for instance, typhoid fever. Possession never occurs except in such subjects as have heard of it already, and believe in the reality of its existence...."

"The rationale of possession is an auto-suggestion, an idea arising either with apparent spontaneity or else from the subject matter of it being talked about by others in the patient's presence, and then overmastering her weak mind exactly as happens in hypnosis. In the same manner, the *idea* of the possibility of cure will often actually effect the cure." (Chamberlain: 1905; 115–6)

Even a long period spent outside the country is not enough to remove the idea of fox possession. Casal (1949) reports a case occuring after World War II:

"An acquaintance of mine, in Kobe, received a request from some relatives in Kishû, across the bay, to visit a prominent *Inari* zealot and ask for counsel. A man and his wife, after spending almost twenty years in California as farmers, returned to Japan some ten years ago, bought ground in Kishû, and developed some 'upland' near their paddy-fields. In the course of his work the husband happened to cut in two a snake in the soil. Suddenly he was taken ill and died—round sixty years old. The illness looked suspicious, and a diviner of course blamed it on the curse of the cut-up snake, to whose spirit no oblations had been made. And now, a few years after the husband's death, ill-luck would that the wife, too, became bed-ridden. She simply could no longer walk about, without feeling otherwise sick. Somebody had suggested a fox curse.

"The *Inari*-god's reply was definite and distinct. The husband's death had been erroneously diagnosed as due to the snake-

spirits's revenge. In the course of levelling some ground, he had also closed up a fox-hole. In that hole lived an old old Reinecke, so old he was almost hairless, and not nimble enough to escape while it was time. So he was entombed in his lair, and asphyxiated. Which he did not like: hence his revenge on the malefactor, unwitting that he was. Yet through the stupidity of the diviner, no propitiation had taken place even after that, and now the fox was harassing the widow.

"The remedy: some paper charms and a few grains of sacred rice. Used according to prescriptions, they would break the fox's spell."

Once it has been determined that a person has been possessed by a fox, varying forms of exorcism are resorted to. While some of the Buddhist sects believe in fox possession, they invariably use a Shintô magic wand to effect an exorcism (Casal: 1959). Most Nichiren Buddhist temples are considered to be good for fox cures. The usual procedure is for the priest to upbraid the fox for being in a place where he has no right to be. This may continue for days or even weeks until the fox leaves (Casal: 1959). Another remedy is to burn a moxa (pellet of dried mugwort) under the nose of the victim. The almost intolerable odor of it will eventually drive out the fox (Griffis: 1874).

Fairchild (1962) reports on the method of exorcism used by members of the Ontake Kô. They work in teams of two called *Ôza* (main seat 大座). The two members are called *Zenza* (front sea 前座) and *Chûza* or *Nakaza* (middle seat 中座). The *Chûza* sits on the ground (occasionally blind-folded) and the *Zenza* sits on the ground in front of and facing him. The patrons of the event sit or kneel behind the *Zenza*. The Zenza chants and prays invocations, while the Chûza goes into an ecstatic trance. While in esctasy he performs the cure.

Baelz mentioned one of the main functions of fox possession in Japanese culture, as I see it. He mentioned that the patients were mostly young women. While possessed by a fox, a young wife would be able to say anything she wanted to about her mother-in-law or any other member of her husband's family without incurring their wrath. It also gives her a respite from the uniformly difficult tasks expected of the young wife. Much

more data would be needed to investigate this though.

One fox belief which seems to be peculiar to Japan is the belief in the possession *of* foxes. The earliest record of this particular form of fox belief is in the Yasutomi-ki by Nakahara Yasutomi (中原泰冨) (1401–1457). It is related there that four prominent men in the court of the Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimichi were accused in 1420 of engaging in fox sorcery. They were the court physician, his younger brother and his son, and Sadamune Ason, the chief diviner of the Shogun. Priests were called in. By means of incantations, the priests succeeded in driving out two foxes from the apartments of the Shogun's consort. Thus were the men proved guilty, and the court physician was sent to Sanuki Province to spend the rest of his days in exile. (Buchanan: 1935; 56)

The most thorough statement on fox possessing, in a western language, is by Chamberlain (1905; 118–9); quoting the *Nichi-Nichi Shimbun* (a Tokyo daily newspaper) of August 14, 1891:

> "In the province of Izumo, more especially in the western portion, there exists a peculiar custom called fox owning, which plays an important part in marriages and transfers of landed property. When a marriage is being arranged between persons residing several leagues apart and unacquainted with each other, enquiries into such points of family history as a possible taint of leprosy or phthisis are subordinated to the first grand question: is or is not the other party a fox owner? To explain this term, we may say that fox owning families are believed to have living with them a tribe of small weasel-like foxes to the number of seventy-five, called human foxes ('Jinko'), by whom they are escorted and protected wherever they go, and who watch over their fields and prevent outsiders from doing them any damage. Should, however, any damage be done either through malice or ignorance, the offender is at once possessed by the fox who makes him blurt out his crime and sometimes even procures his death. So great is the popular fear of the fox owners that any one marrying into a fox owning family, or buying land from them, or failing to repay money borrowed from them, is considered to be a fox owner too. The fox owners are avoided as if they were snakes or lizards. Nevertheless, no one ever asks another point blank whether or not his family be a fox owning family; for to do so might offend him, and the result to the enquirer might be

a visitation in the form of possession by a fox. The subject is therefore never alluded to in the presence of a suspected party. All that is done is politely to avoid him.

"It should be noticed, moreover, that there are permanent fox owners and temporary fox owners. The permanent fox owners silently search for families of a similar nature to marry into, and can never on any account intermarry with outsiders, whatever may be the inducement in the shape of wealth or beauty. Their situation closely resembles that of the pariahs and outcasts of former times. But even the strictest rules will sometimes be broken through by love which is a thing apart, and liasons will be formed between fox owners and outsiders. When such an irremediable misfortune takes place, parents will renounce even their well-beloved son, and forbid him to cross their threshold for the rest of his life. Temporary fox owners are those who have been expelled from the family for buying land from a permanent fox owner. These circumstances conspire to give security to the fox owners (whether such in truth or imagination we are not in a position to say); for no one will harm them by so much as a hair's breadth. Therefore they are all well-to-do; some are even said to count among the most affluent families in the province. The very poorest people that have borrowed money from them will strain every nerve to raise money to repay the loan, because failure to do so would make others regard them as fox owners and shun them."

Other authors writing in Western languages have added to this article, but very little of it has been contradicted. The major point which was contested was the geographical distribution of fox possessing families. Fairchild (1962) shows that possession of animal spirits is not limited to foxes and gives examples of snake-, dog-, wolf-, monkey-, leech-, and other animal spirit families. He also includes a distribution map, which shows fox spirit families distributed throughout Honshû and Kyûshû. Fairchild confirms the lack of intermarriage between animal spirit families and non animal spirit families. In five villages studied, with percentage of animal spirit families ranging from 13.2% to 56.7%, the percentage of intermarriage was between 2% and 7% for a total of 673 marriages. The total was about 4.5% intermarriage.

Fairchild also mentions some of the counter-measures which can be taken against fox possessors. In Kôchi-ken, when passing the house of a family possessed by an animal

spirit it is the custom to pin a needle on one's clothing over the breast to prevent possession. In Tokushima, if a person is possessed by an animal spirit, he spreads faeces around the house of the animal spirit family.

Ishizuka (summary in *Folklore Studies* (1955), vol. 14, p. 259) reported, on the basis of his fieldwork, more than half the families in the villages of Izumo and Oki in Shimane-ken are fox spirit possessors.

Hearn (1894: 326) mentions another disadvantage to the possession of fox spirits:

> "Now every fox is supposed to have a family of seventy-five, —neither more nor less than seventy-five,—and all these must be fed. So that although such foxes, like ghosts, eat very little individually, it is expensive to have foxes. The fox-possessors (*kitsune-mochi*) must feed their foxes at regular hours; and the foxes always eat first—all the seventy-five. As soon as the family rice is cooked in the *kama* (a great iron cooking-pot), the *kitsune-mochi* taps loudly on the side of the vessel, and uncovers it. Then the foxes rise up through the floor. And although their eating is soundless to human ear and invisible to human eye, the rice slowly diminishes. Wherefore it is fearful for a poor man to have foxes."

Another form of fox beliefs in East Asia has to do with the sacredness or worship of the fox. This occurs among the Ainu, where there is always a fox-skull decorated with shavings in the eastern (sacred) end of the house. The man of the house prays to it and uses it to divine the reason for bad luck. Even when going on a journey, most Ainu carry a fox's skull. (Batchelor: 1901)

Li (1948) reports on the "Cult of the Four Sacred Animals" *Szu ta men* (四大門) in the Peking area. These animals are the fox, weasel, hedgehog, and the snake. Sometimes either the hare or the rat is added to make five animals. The fox holds the highest rank among the four animals. Ordinary animals can become sacred by the performance of virtuous deeds, such as causing epidemics and then curing them, or through the process of *hsiu-lien* (修練). This is the method used for refining the soul substance. Many people claim to have witnessed it.

Occasionally on a fair evening at about nine or ten o'clock, a small red, fire-like ball will be seen moving up and down in the air and surrounded by light blue flames. It usually moves twenty to thirty feet. This is a fox spitting out and swallowing his soul substance. If the ball is stolen, all the fox's effort comes to nought. Ancient tombs and high mountains are preferred places for the performance of such rites.

In the area surrounding Peking, the normal animals may be hunted, but the sacred ones are taboo. The way to distinguish the two is that the profane animal is very timid and never approaches men. The sacred animal, on the other hand, pays no attention to men and is without fear or shyness. Its shining eyes are a further characteristics. A gun cannot kill a sacred fox, though it may injure the hunter. When a hound comes too near a sacred fox, it turns back upon its master. The only way that a sacred fox can be killed is if it is surprised.

It is in Japan, though, that worship of the fox reaches its highest point.

> "In popular esteem *Inari* [the god who is popularly associated with the fox] reigns supreme, in spite of his low station in the divine Shino hierarchy. The official crop rituals are not connected with *Inari*, but with *Toyo-uke-bime-no Kami*, who, like so many 'producing' deities, is a lady (*hime*, *bime*, Princess). There is a male *Uga-no Mikoto* of indistinct character, and several food-divinities that are never heard of." (Casal: 1949; 1) Originally the fox was only the messenger of Inari, but
>
> "The worship of the retainer has almost replaced the worship of the god. Originally the Fox was sacred to Inari only as the Tortoise is still sacred to Kompira; the Deer to the Great Deity of Kasuga; the Rat to Daikoku;.... But in the course of centuries the Fox usurped divinity. And the stone images of him are not the only outward evidence of his cult." (Hearn: 1894; 316)

There are many tales and legends of Inari. The cult of Inari is probably the most widespread in Japan. He has even become a fishery-god in some regions. In the Tsugaru region, Inari announces the will of god. Fishermen know whether or not the catch will be good by the cries of the fox. Also the net is hung in the direction of the fox's cry in order to insure a

good catch. (Kameyama, summarized in *Folklore Studies*, 1951, vol. 10, pp. 297–8)

> "At Oba ... there is a particular Inari, of great fame. Fastened to the wall of his shrine is a large box full of small clay foxes. The pilgrim who has a prayer to make puts one of these little foxes in his sleeve and carries it home. He must keep it, and pay it all the due honor, until such time as his petition has been granted. Then he must take it back to the temple, and restore it to the box, and if he be able, make some small gift to the shrine." (Hearn: 1894: 313–4)

One of the standard gifts to an Inari shrine is a *torii*, which is a formal "arch", or shrine gate, made of two uprights and two crossbars. There is a shrine of Inari in the Haneda district of Tokyo of note:

> "Until the early 1800's this area was a barren marsh, but around that time a person named Suzuki Yagoemon began to open up the land, setting up this little shrine to protect his possessions. Many years later, in 1885, an old fox that had long lived in a godown belonging to the Suzuki family acquired the reputation of having cured an ailing man, and thereupon people began to flock to the shrine. According to the *Hôchi Newspaper* for January 7, 1897, it boasted by this time 2700 *torii*." (Yanagida: 1957: 314)

One of the more interesting features of Inari-worship, however, is the strong evidence for phallicism surrounding it. Phallic emblems are objects of worship or votive offerings at many Inari shrines. At Mount Inari, which is the center of Inari-worship for all of Japan, there is a natural rock of phallic design at the summit of the mountain. It is the chief object of worship there. Half-way up the mountain there is a stone pillar of pronounced phallic shape. Candles are kept constantly burning before it. Offerings of rice, mochi, beans, sake, and cakes are made at it. Behind the main shrine there is a stone lantern showing unmistakable phallic influence. (Buchanan: 1935: 24–5)

The fox at Inari shrines is always protrayed with a tail of quite phallic proportions. "The fox-tail is never anything but a conventionalized upright phallus. From a short 'stem' it

sharply widens into a thick, vertical cylinder, surmounted by what is called a 'jewel', the onion-shaped *tama*, often coloured red." (Casal: 1949; 55)

Casal further suggests that even the paper lanterns used at Inari festivals are phallic:

> "Paper lanterns are common to all Japanese festivals. But those for *Inari* are peculiar, and of two kinds. The hanging one (*chôchin*) are sometimes round, but more usually and typically cylindrical and very long, often extremely narrow, with a broad metal or laquered wood border at top and bottom.... The cylindrical type I believe frankly suggestive of a phallus (Odawara, near Kamakura, is famed for similar collapsible lanterns, and an important man is jokingly referred to as an Odawara *chôchin*" (1949; 40).

Davis (1912; 101–2) gives an excellent example of the phallic nature of Inari:

> "Inari, as we have already found, is often extremely benevolent. One legend informs us that a woman who had been married many years and had not been blessed with a child prayed at Inari's shrine. At the conclusion of her supplication the stone foxes wagged their tails, and snow began to fall. She regarded these phenomena as favourable omens.
>
> "When the woman reached her home a *yeta* (begger) accosted her, and begged for something to eat. The woman good-naturedly gave this unfortunate wayfarer some red bean rice, the only food she had in the house, and presented it to him in a dish.
>
> "The next day her husband discovered this dish lying in front of the shrine where she had prayed. The beggar was none other than Inari himself, and the woman's generosity was rewarded in due season by the birth of a child."

The phallic implications of this are enhanced by the colloquial Japanese word for semen, which is homonymous with the word for 'snow'.

There are many more minor beliefs and hundreds more tales of the fox, but one true story from Hearn (1894; 323–4) neatly sums up the whole attitude toward the fox in East Asia:

> "... The old-fashioned peasant, on seeing anything extremely queer, is slow to credit the testimony of his own eyes. The most

interesting and valuable witness of the stupendous eruption of Bandai-San in 1888—which blew the huge volcano to pieces and devastated an area of twenty-seven square miles, leveling forests, turning rivers from their courses, and burying numbers of villages with all their inhabitants—was an old peasant who had watched the whole cataclysm from a neighboring peak as unconcernedly as if he had been looking at a drama. He saw a black column of ashes and steam rise to the height of twenty thousand feet and spread out at its summit in the shape of an umbrella, blotting out the sun. Then he felt a strange rain pouring upon him, hotter than the water of a bath. Then all became black; and he felt the mountain beneath him shaking to its roots, and heard a crash of thunders that seemed like the sound of the breaking of a world. But he remained quite still until everything was over. He had made up his mind not to be afraid,—deeming that all he saw and heard was delusion wrought by the witchcraft of a fox."

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