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On the Extinction of the Japanese Wolf

Abstract

Although the Japanese wolf officially became extinct in 1905, this position has been challenged by many local sightings across the country. The present paper, presenting data from the Kii Peninsula, analyzes the wolf controversy as a form of environmental symbolism. Wolf folklore is presented to show how, for generations of Japanese upland dwellers, the moral character of the wolf was environmentally predicated. Similarly, modern and contemporary local claims about the presence of the officially absent wolves can be understood as metonymical references to the *yama* (mountain forests) and to the historical changes that have taken place in the upland environment in modern times.

Key words: wolf—extinction—mountains—environment

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OFFICIALLY, THE TWO SPECIES of wolves that once inhabited the Japanese archipelago have long been extinct. The Honshū wolf (*Canis lupus hodophylax*) is said to have become extinct in 1905 due to an epidemic of contagious diseases like rabies, something that “reported sightings by inhabitants of mountain villages around the turn of the century of large numbers of dead and ailing wolves” apparently confirms (FUJIWARA 1988, 27–28). The Ezo wolf of the northernmost island of Hokkaidō (*Canis lupus hattai*) died out in the Meiji period (1868–1912) when, with the establishment of American-style horse and cattle ranches in the area, wolves came to be viewed as a serious threat to the livestock. Following American advice, strychnine-poisoned bait was used to reduce wolf numbers, and by 1889 the Hokkaidō wolf had disappeared (FUJIWARA 1988, 27–28; CHIBA 1995, 166–72).

Among many Japanese living in upland areas, near to the forests, this official extinction orthodoxy is disputed. Since 1905 and up until quite recently there have been many claimed sightings of wolves in different parts of Japan. That such claims should exist is not in itself particularly remarkable—the sighting of wolves (as well as other animals and beings whose existence is not recognized) is a phenomenon found quite widely, not least in England, where wolves have been officially extinct for over four hundred years (see SHUKER 1991, 177–79). Yet I shall argue that the persistent character of such sightings, coupled with their spatial distribution, suggests something more than archetypical rural superstition.

Many of the claimed sightings of the Japanese wolf have occurred on the Kii Peninsula, in the south-central part of the main island of Honshū (see map on page 131). It was in Yoshino, in the northern region of the peninsula, that what is said to have been the last Japanese wolf was killed in 1905. Local hunters reportedly sold the wolf’s carcass to an American zoologist who was on an expedition, sponsored by the Duke of Bedford, to collect small mammals. The specimen is now in the Natural History Museum in London (although not on display).¹

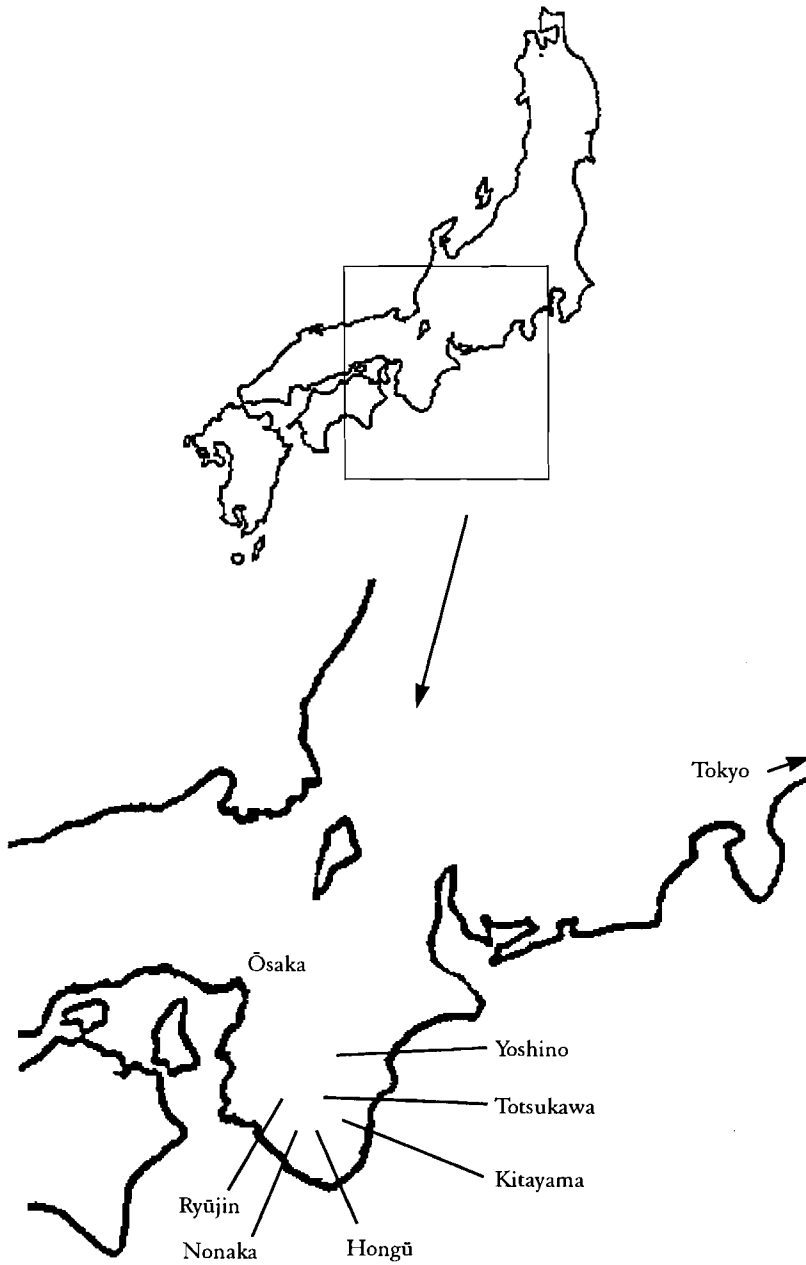


FIGURE 1. Map of the Kii Peninsula

I conducted fieldwork in mountain villages on the peninsula (see map) between 1987 and 1989 and again in 1994 and in 1995. In the later trips my research focused on upland forests, and in the course of collecting data on forestry and boar hunting I met and interviewed many wolf-sighters and others who believed that the animals still exist.

My own interest in these claims concerns not so much their veracity as their potential for telling us something about the local understandings of the upland forest environment typical of the peninsula. Accordingly, no zoological, ethological, or ecological evidence that could either confirm or deny the extinction orthodoxy is offered here. My concern is rather the social anthropological one of exploring the way in which the upland environment is imagined by those who live in it. I shall argue that the presence or absence of wolves in the mountains—or rather the uncertainty surrounding their possible existence there—says in itself something about 1) the relationship of Japanese mountain villagers with the forests that surround them, and 2) the changes to the upland environment that have occurred over the course of this century. The refusal to accept the extinction of the wolf among certain rural Japanese offers insight into the local cultural perception of the upland natural environment and its recent history. I shall examine wolf-sightings on the Kii Peninsula in terms of the much more widespread phenomenon whereby particular animal species take on a larger, emblematic status within human society.

ENVIRONMENT METONYMS

In his three-nation study, Stephen KELLERT found that “respondents in the United States, Japan and Germany expressed strong, positive attitudes toward large and higher vertebrates, especially mammalian and bird species generally regarded as aesthetically appealing, culturally important, and historically familiar” (1994, 172–73). This sort of skewed emotional attachment is the reason for the tendency, widely noted in wildlife conservation, for the focus on particular “charismatic” species of animals, such as pandas, elephants, and whales, while other species attract far less, if any, public concern (KAUFMAN 1993, 30; FOOSE 1993, 170–71). The saving of such “celebrity” species can come to represent the conservation of wildlife as a whole. An example of this is international whale conservation, in which “whales have come to play the role of a metonym for nature” (KALLAND 1993, 5). Whaling becomes a symbol of humanity’s destructive relationship to the environment in general, and whaling nations such as Japan or Norway are accordingly cast as environmental miscreants.

Large terrestrial carnivores such as the wolf have also been accorded a special status. In North America, “[t]he wolf has functioned as a particular-

ly powerful barometer of changing and conflicting attitudes toward wildlife" (KELLERT et al. 1996, 978). Special status—now ecologically predicated—continues to be invoked for wolves and other large carnivores in relation to future conservation strategy. The scale of their home range makes them "umbrella species," species whose habitat encompasses the habitats of a great many other species and that can serve as "good indicators of complete and healthy ecosystems" (NOSS et al. 1996: 950).

From a slightly different perspective, Steven YEARLEY too has recently drawn attention to the problem of scale in the area of environmental protection (1993). Important and potentially damaging changes in the environment are often not readily apprehended by ordinary people, or are noticed only when it is too late to do anything about them. It follows that scientific observation is necessary for the effective monitoring of nature, a fact that has profound implications for the way environmental organizations should work (YEARLEY 1993, 59). The wider point is that there is often a disparity between the natural environment as it actually is and the manner in which it is perceived, with the result that nature may, to a large extent, be sensorily unavailable to the people who live within it. Yearley points out that one corollary of this scale disproportion is that scientists and experts come to "stand in" for natural environments, vicariously representing what is otherwise inaccessible. A further corollary, I would add, is that some parts of the natural environment tend to stand for the whole of it.

Here my concern is to explore how this issue of scale disproportion applies to the culturally embedded natural environment of Japanese mountain forests (*yama* 山). In his discussion of the antiwhaling campaign Arne KALLAND specifically refers to this factor, pointing out that "we know relatively little about what is going on in the oceans, which opens this realm to mystery, manipulation, and myth creation" (1993, 4). To understand the whale, it is necessary to understand the perception of the larger environment of which it is part. A similar point might be made about Japanese mountain forests, which make up some two-thirds of the Japanese land area.²

THE MOUNTAINS

In Japan mountains are dangerous, frightening places that are associated with death, not only as sites of physical burial but also as the abode of the spirits of the dead. There is a large body of Japanese folklore featuring encounters in the mountains with ghosts and a range of other, often malevolent, spirits. Many Japanese folklorists have argued that a dualistic worldview existed among rural, especially upland, Japanese in which the *sato no sekai* 里の世界 (village world) was imagined as starkly opposed to the *yama no sekai* 山の世界 (mountain world). The mountains form a world

with its own separate way of thinking and ethics, one that belongs to the *yama no kami* 山の神 (mountain spirit) (YUKAWA 1991, 50). When in the mountains a range of interdictions must be observed relating to the use of certain words, singing in a loud voice, and using a hand-towel, among others (YUKAWA 1991, 287). Man's presence there is a potential infringement of the kami's territory, and thus potentially provocative. When actions are to be carried out that might offend the mountain spirit, they should be preceded by ritual acts to mollify or reassure it. Such ritual conduct amounts to an "apology" (*wabi* 詫) made to the mountain spirit for human transgressions of mountain space, transgressions necessary for obtaining a livelihood (YUKAWA 1991, 61).

The vertical landscape itself is another source of danger. Even the most experienced forester can lose his footing on a steep slope, while from time to time people get lost in the *yama*, especially during the late-autumn season for gathering the fragrant mushrooms known as *matsutake* 松茸 (*Armillaria matsudake*). Wild animals, such as bears, feral dogs, and vipers, are a further source of perceived danger to humans. The boundary between wild animals and spirits in the *yama* is often blurred on account of the theriomorphic character of the spirits. Many forest animals, particularly remote-dwelling ones, are associated with the *yama no kami*.

The *yama* have long been important to upland livelihoods. The *satoyama* 里山—the part of the mountains near the village—was a site of swidden farming where wheat, millet, and tubers were grown. YUKAWA Yōji argues that the mountains were traditionally the site of production (hunting, gathering, and swidden farming), while the village was the site of consumption (1988; see also UE 1994, 7). The *satoyama* also contributed to village farming through the forest greenery, which was used for farm fertilizer and animal fodder. The *yama* was also a source of firewood and charcoal for fuel. Forestry has been the main economic activity in the *yama* this century, with many men working as loggers, haulers, raftsmen, planters, undergrowth-cutters, etc. In recent decades, with the rise of wood imports, forestry has fallen into decline and the number of foresters has decreased sharply.

Although parts of the mountains have been productively incorporated by upland villagers, when it comes to the mountains as a whole there is a strong local sense of disproportion. The central characteristic of the *yama* for mountain villagers is their vastness and consequent unknowability. Many upland villages are literally in the shadow of the *yama* that surround them, a situation that affects the productivity of terraced plots because of the diminished hours of daily sunshine. The *yama* are by definition a *kurai* 暗い (dark), *ussō shita* 鬱蒼した (dense), and therefore inhospitable place.

The association of the wolf with the mountains is indicated by the many wolf-related place-names found in upland areas of Japan. In the mountains of the Kii Peninsula, for example, there are places known as Ōkamitaira 狼平 (Wolf Plateau), Ōkamizawa 狼沢 (Wolf Marsh), Ōkami'iwa 狼岩 (Wolf Rock), and Kobirotdōge 吼比狼峠 (Howling Wolf Pass; this name is today written with the characters 小広峠, Small Wide Pass). These tend to be sites of past encounters with or sightings of the wolf. In some cases an area may be associated with wolves even when the name does not reflect it, such as the forest around one remote village in the Hongū area, which is said to be cold in the summer and warm in the winter (WKMK 1981, 85). The wolf is also associated with Shinto shrines on the peninsula, shrines such as Tamaki Jinja 玉置神社 and Takataki Jinja 高瀧神社 (both in Totsukawa Mura), where they serve as the kami's *otsukai* お使い (messenger) (NAKAMORI 1940, 32–33; KHI 1980, 31; ANON. 1990d, 1990e).

THE JAPANESE WOLF

The Honshū wolf (*ōkami* 狼) was grey-haired, and, standing just over one foot at the shoulder, was the smallest wolf of all. It has long been recognized as significantly different from other wolves, even to the point where its very status as a wolf has been called into question. *Murray's Handbook for Japan* of 1884 carried the following entry:

The Japanese speak of an *ōkami*, or wolf-like dog, but of this, if it exists, nothing is known to science.... No true wolf exists in Japan, but *Canis hodophylax* is a sort of lame counterfeit of the European beast. (SATOW and HAWES 1884, 40)

The *ōkami* has since been scientifically elevated to the status of a wolf, becoming *Canis lupus hodophylax*. The Japanese zoologist Imaizumi Yoshinori, stressing its difference from other wolves, claims that the Honshū wolf was in fact a distinct species. But most mammalogists have not accepted this position and continue to regard the animal as a miniature subspecies of the common wolf (SHUKER 1991, 176).

Perhaps adding to this uncertain taxonomical status has been the incorporation into scientific nomenclature of certain Japanese terms. Thus the Honshū wolf has been known as the *shamainu* (the *jamainu des Japonais* in *Fauna Japonica* [VON SIEBOLD 1833, 38–39]), a corruption of *yamainu* 山犬, literally “mountain dog,” the name by which the wolf was known in much of Japan, particularly on the Kii Peninsula and elsewhere in western parts of the country (NOMOTO 1990, 65–68).³

The term *yamainu* suggests the existence of the antonym, *satoinu* 里犬,

or village dog (CHIBA 1995, 50). An extension of this semantic affinity of the wolf with the dog is its image (in myth and legend) as a protector of mankind—a sort of *banken* 番犬 (watchdog) in the mountains (NOMOTO 1990, 68). This watchdog role appears in the benign *okuri-ōkami* 送り狼 (sending wolf) stories. “When someone is walking along mountain roads at night sometimes a wolf follows without doing anything. On nearing the house the wolf disappears” (ANON. 1990a).⁴ Sometimes the ubiquitous *okuri-ōkami* tales also mention the danger of looking back or falling over while being followed by the wolf, acts that may invite the wolf to attack (e.g., IBARAKI 1993, 292–93; ANON. 1990a). (Hence the contemporary meaning of the term *okuri-ōkami*: the boy who escorts a girl home only to attack or molest her on arrival; see Sakusa 1995, 74.) Nonetheless, what is usually stressed is that the wolf’s purpose is not to prey but to protect, to see the lonely human being safely home through the dangerous night-time mountains. The danger of the nocturnal mountains is neutralized by the wolf’s presence. Even today many villagers claim to have had such experiences in their youth. The nearby presence of the wolf is known aurally rather than visually, in the chirping of the *okurisuzume* 送り雀 (sending sparrow), a form assumed by the wolf.

In this connection the scientific name of the Japanese wolf, *hodophylax*, is worth reflecting on, for it is related to the *okuri-ōkami* legend described above (HIRAIWA 1992, 201; SAKAMOTO 1983). *Hodo* derives from the Greek for “way” or “path,” and *phylax* from the Greek for “guard,” together giving the meaning of “guardian of the way.” The folk identity of the wolf as a guardian of the traveler through the mountains has been preserved in scientific nomenclature.

Although this article makes no attempt to cover the voluminous Japanese folklore about the wolf, for the purposes of the present discussion a number of features locally attributed to the wolf should be specified. First, the wolf, unlike other forest animals, is seen as being unafraid of human beings.

The wolf is considered to be an extremely frightening animal, and while this might be said of all wild animals, none are as frightening as it is. If it sees a person during the daytime, in most cases it will hide itself, but from sunset on it is usually the case that even if a person passes right before it, it will stare intently [without moving]. (ANON. 1987, 106)

Bears too inhabit the Japanese mountains, but, though dangerous, they are known to be shy or timid animals, quite unlike the wolf. The difference

between the two is expressed in the saying, “In a wolf mountain be quiet, in a bear mountain be noisy” (*inuyama damare, kumayama sawage* 犬山黙れ, 熊山騒げ) (ANON. 1989b, 1).

Second, the wolf is quick and nimble (*subashikoi*). This made it difficult to spot. There are frequent claims to have encountered a wolf without actually seeing it. A local Hongū saying attests to the wolf’s singular capacity to conceal itself: “The wolf can hide even where there is only a single reed.”⁵ YANAGITA (1992, 35) records a similar statement for the Tōno area, along with the local belief that the wolf’s coat changes color with the seasons, thus adding to its environmental invisibility.

This is something related to the third main feature of the wolf: its discreet observance of human beings. This is reflected in the *okuri-ōkami* tales noted above. Japanese folktales credit other wild animals, such as the fox, *tanuki* 狸 (raccoon-dog), and snake, with a capacity for concealment. The difference is that these animals are said to achieve this by assuming human (often female) form, while Japanese wolf lore—unlike European wolf lore (e.g., NOLL 1992; RHEINHEIMER 1995)—has little to say about wolf shape-shifting or lycanthropy. Rather, the Japanese wolf is concealed by the natural environment itself. This virtual invisibility of the wolf in the *yama* is the basis for the claims to have encountered it after its supposed extinction. Even when the wolf actually did exist, in the *yama* it was able to keep well out of sight of man, while keeping man in its sights.

A BENIGN BEAST?

Much folklore—not least from the Kii Peninsula—presents the wolf as a good animal. Chiba argues that up until the second half of the seventeenth century the wolf was considered an *ekijū* 益獣, or “benign beast” (CHIBA 1995, 183). Hunters and other mountain villagers often pointed out to me that the Chinese character for *ōkami*, 狼, consisted of two parts: *kemono hen* 兇, or wild animal radical, and *ryō* 良, the character for good, giving the meaning of “good animal.”

The *okuri-ōkami* legend above is an example of the way the wolf protects the vulnerable—in this case the lone traveler in the night-time mountains. Other stories tell of how the wolf protects the young and helpless, some echoing the famous Romulus and Remus legend in which the founders of Rome are suckled and raised by a she-wolf (PRESTON-ECKELS 1937, 70–80). In the Nonaka area of the southern Kii mountains an abandoned infant (of the court noble Fujiwara Hidehira, on a pilgrimage to the area with his wife) is said to have been brought up and protected by wolves (NAKAMURA 1987, 67; TABUCHI 1992, 84–85; KHI 1980, 63), and in the post-war years the tale was told of an old man who lived to be nearly one hun-

dred years old after having drunk the milk of a mother-wolf as an infant (TANIGAWA 1980, 32). During a 1994 trip to Hongū I was told of the existence of an *ōkami jizō* 狼地藏, the wolf Jizō, a form of the bodhisattva Jizō associated with the wolf. This statue would be petitioned by mothers to care for the spirits of dead infants buried nearby and to protect the remains from the attentions of forest animals.⁶

The wolf may also help the poor. In the tale *Ōkami no mayuge* 狼の眉毛 [The wolf's eyebrow], a starving man resigns himself to death and goes to the mountains to offer himself to the wolf. But the wolf, instead of eating him, offers him an eyebrow hair, and with this the man returns to human society to become wealthy and happy (ISHIZAKI 1991, 236; NAKAMOTO 1991).

Another dimension of the protective character of the wolf has to do with its powers of prophecy vis-à-vis the natural world. In the high Tamaki mountains north of Hongū there is a giant tree known as “the cypress of dog-howls” (*inuhoe no hinoki* 犬吠え桧). Here wolves are said to have howled continuously on the eve of the great flood of 1889, which killed many people in Hongū and nearby areas (NAKAMORI 1941, 35–37). Kan'ichi NOMOTO sees this as an example of the wolf “warning man of abnormalities in the natural world” and thus performing a role in the wild mountains equivalent to that of the *banken* (watchdog) in the village (1990, 66). The wolf appears as a human ally in the mountains, protecting villagers from the vicissitudes of the natural world around them.

The Japanese stress on the protective, benign character of the wolf contrasts with the widespread view outside Japan of the wolf as a threat to human livelihood, if not human life itself, and therefore as the very embodiment of evil. Accordingly, wolf-killing has often been encouraged, celebrated, and institutionalized in places like northern Europe, where this took the form of large-scale wolf chases, the levying of taxes in wolf-skins, or even the hanging of wolves.⁷ In southern Europe too a strongly negative view of the wolf has been documented. The Castilian mountain villagers studied by KAVANAGH associated the wolf “with the worst features of nature and even of the supernatural as [it is] invested with certain human characteristics of cunning intelligence and bloodthirsty cruelty and even equated with the devil himself” (1994, 135). To guard against this source of evil, a stone cross is placed at the boundary of the village; the Christian sign serves to repel any wolves that follow villagers returning home from the mountainside at the end of the day (KAVANAGH 1994, 119). In another report from the Iberian peninsula, BEHAR (1986, 211, 368; cf. CATEDRA 1992, 271–76) points to villagers' loathing of wolves—the “most hated creatures from the wild”—and mentions the custom of “begging for the wolf.” “[W]hen someone has killed a wolf, he or she takes it from house to house around the village and is given

eggs, sausage, potatoes, and other foods by grateful cattle-owners.” Greek mountain villages are another place where, even in recent years, wolf-killing is an occasion for great celebration (MOORE 1994).

The European settlers in North America brought with them a strong antipathy to wolves, which, as in the Spanish case, appears to have been sanctioned by religious tradition. “Killing wolves attested to one’s belief in community and God as much as to practical threats to livestock and person” (KELLERT et al. 1996, 978). The Christian association of the wolf with evil seems to inform some of the local opposition to wolf conservation and wolf reintroduction initiatives in American western states. “The wolf is the Saddam Hussein of the Animal World. We don’t want Saddam in Montana!!!” read one anti-wolf poster that appeared during the Yellowstone Park controversy (GROOMS 1993, 141). Similarly, bumper stickers that read “Predators—Nature’s criminals” (FISCHER 1991, 35) also suggest that the objection to wolves is moral in character.

Japan offers a marked contrast. In Yamanashi Prefecture, for example, there is the tradition known as *inu no ubumimai* 犬の産見舞い (or in other regions *ōkami no bokomi* or *ubuyashinai*) whereby *sekihan* 赤飯 (azuki bean rice) is offered to the wolf when wolf cubs are born (ŌTŌ 1968, 368; for Gifu Prefecture, see TERADA 1994). *Seḱihan* is a ceremonial food traditionally served to celebrate human births and other felicitous occasions such as New Years and festivals for the village deity; its offering to the wolf therefore appears to be a striking expression of the belief in the wolf’s benign character (indeed, in some cases the *ubumimai* practice included the belief that the wolf, in return, would make a congratulatory offering [deer, wild boar, hare, or even bear’s paw] on the occasion of a human birth in the village [ISHIZAKI 1991, 236; NOMOTO 1996, 224]). One interpretation of this custom is that it expresses a folk recognition of the powers of fecundity of the mountain spirit, and of the importance of the village assisting, when necessary, to ensure that this fecundity continues (NOMOTO 1996: 224). In any case, this Japanese celebration of the increase in wolf numbers contrasts starkly with the above Iberian celebration of the decrease in wolf numbers!⁸

In practice, wolves were on occasion killed in Japan. Indeed, there are tales of villages organizing wolf-hunts (*inugari*) in response to livestock predations (e.g., MATSUYAMA 1994: 137–40; TOGAWA 1995). However, through his actions the wolf-killer exposed himself, and his family, to the risk of spiritual retribution. There are stories from the Kitayama area of the Kii Peninsula of wolf killers who subsequently met great misfortune, from successive sudden deaths in the family to dissipation of the family wealth and property (YOSHINO SHIDANKAI 1963, 10). Moreover, the death of the last recorded Japanese wolf in Yoshino in 1905 is annually remembered in the form of a

kuyō 供養 (requiem) ceremony carried out in the local temple at the time of the Bon midsummer festival. Thus the existence of wolf killing in Japan seems to reinforce, not undermine, the cultural status of the wolf as an animal that should not be killed.

A common reason given for the positive view of the wolf in Japan is that, far from being a threat to village livelihoods, it helped to protect them from farm-raiding forest animals such as wild boar, deer, and hares (KANEKO et al. 1992, 22). The autumn incursions of the wild boar have long been a major source of anxiety among upland farmers on account of the devastation the animals can cause to maturing crops. The prefectures of the Kii Peninsula, particularly Wakayama and Mie, are among the most seriously affected in all of Japan by such destruction (SUDŌ 1991, 172–74). Preventive measures include physical barriers or traps at the village perimeter, and even the physical guarding of crops by dogs posted nearby or family members sleeping next to the fields.

Wolves were another form of farm protection, as they mitigated losses by keeping down wild boar numbers. Whenever a wolf was sighted, villagers in the Sendai area would beseech it thus: “Lord Wolf [*oinu tonō* 御犬殿], please protect us and stop the ravages of the deer and wild boar” (CHIBA 1995, 42). But even when a wolf was not physically present its power could be invoked through a charm. Some villages in the Hongū area enshrined a wolf *ofuda* 御札 (charm)—known as a *shishiyōke* しし除け, or “boar deterrent”—in the village shrine to guard against wild boar predations. There are, as noted above, Shinto shrines throughout Japan that have the wolf as their *otsukai*, the most famous of which is Mitsumine Shrine 三峯神社 in Saitama Prefecture, whose *ofuda* (see figure 2) were used throughout the nation to locally enshrine the Mitsumine kami as a means of ritually defending fields against wild boars (CHIBA 1995, 217–19; for Yamasumi Shrine 山住神社 see HAYAKAWA 1974, 41–42). A significant number of such shrines are to be found on the Kii Peninsula.⁹

In this way, the wolf played the role of guardian of the fields and therefore of village livelihoods. The wolf was a benign animal because of this perceived symbiotic relationship with mankind (see also MIYAZAWA 1994).

The earlier benign character of the wolf was therefore related to its identity as a spirit: the beneficial *ekijū* was also a *reijū* 霊獣, a “spirit beast” (MARUYAMA 1994, 139). Indeed, the wolf has often been more specifically identified with the *yama no kami* (mountain spirit) in rural Japan (KANEKO et al. 1992, 22; SATŌ 1990, 153–55; NAUMANN 1994, 34–35). NAKAMURA Teiri suggests that in ancient Japan the wolf was viewed as “the dog belonging to the mountain spirit” (*yama no kami ni shitagau inu* 山の神に従う犬) (1987,

FIGURE 2. Mitsumine Shrine *ofuda*

66). Yet it would also seem to have been viewed as a *kami* in its own right, as one obvious etymological interpretation of its name *ō-kami* (大神 rather than 狼) might suggest. An elevated status would also seem to be indicated by the use of the honorific “*ō*” in the various names of the wolf (some of which date back to the *Man’yōshū* and the *Fudoki*), such as *ōkame*, *oinu*, and *ōkuchinoma-kami* 大口真神 (literally, “the true god of the large mouth” [see KANEKO et al. 1992, 22]). In Japanese folk religion the *yama no kami* is often a protective deity, guarding the village boundary from demons and other evil or harmful influences (YAGI 1988, 137–38). As guardian of the village fields against forest animals, the wolf accorded well with this logic. TANIGAWA Ken’ichi suggests that the wolf, as the *tsukaimono* 使者, or messenger, of the *yama no kami*, and the fox, as the *tsukaimono* of the

ta no kami 田の神 or ricefield deity, form a unity, just as the two spirits are seasonal transmutations of one another (1980, 32).¹⁰

In some cases, such as among villagers in Gifu, a wolf’s skull, standing for the *yama no kami*, was an object of worship (MIYAZAWA 1994, 5). Even where no such explicit association was made, the wolf skull or wolf charm was used in folk religion to expel harmful animal and other spirits that possessed human beings (KITAJŌ 1994; KOMATSU 1988, 37; MATSUTANI 1994, 161, 163). NOMOTO presents a photograph of a wolf leg nailed to a post at a house entrance to deter evil or harmful spirits from entering the house (1994, 167).¹¹

KANEKO et al. suggest that this symbiosis of wolf and man forms the basis for the positive religious identity of the Japanese wolf (1992, 22–23). If the Iberian wolf, as a livestock menace and thus a threat to human liveli-

hood, is accorded a diabolical status by a Manichean Christianity in Spain, the Japanese wolf's status as a farm protector makes it a guardian of human livelihood and therefore assimilates it, in religious terms, to the mountain spirit, the source of village fertility in Japanese folk religion.

Not only does the wolf rid villagers of farm pests, it even leaves behind part of its prey for villagers, something known as *inu'otoshi* 犬落とし or *inutaoshi* 犬倒し (dog-prey) (NOMOTO 1990, 65–66). While *inu'otoshi* tends to be cited as evidence of the wolf's benign disposition towards human beings, it is important to remember that when this happens villagers are expected to leave something behind for the wolf in return, whether this be a limb of the animal (in the case of a whole carcass) or some salt, lest they incur its anger (TABUCHI 1992, 79–80). (But KOYAMA suggests that any “stealing” of the wolf's prey is likely to anger the animal and provoke it to retaliate by preying on the hunter's cow that very night [1992, 247].)

The principle of reciprocity also works the other way around, as we saw with the *ubumimai* custom above. When a human is kind to a wolf the animal will give something in return, for the wolf is *girigatai* 義理堅い, that is, it possesses a strong sense of duty (MARUYAMA 1994, 139). One story from Hongū tells of a wolf that falls into a pit used for trapping wild boars. On finding the wolf sometime later the villagers, after their initial fear has been overcome, take pity on the beast and decide to help it out of the pit rather than leave it to a slow death. The wolf is released to return to the mountains. A few days later the villagers hear a wolf-howl from the direction of the pit, in which they discover a large deer (in some versions a large wild boar). The wolf has made its return gift (*ongaeshi* 恩返し, *oreigaeshi* 御礼返し, *ōkami hō'on* 狼報恩) (HONGŪ-CHŌ 1969, 12–13; IBARAKI 1993, 118–19). Kindness to the wolf is ultimately to the villagers' benefit because it obligates the wolf to make a return of some kind. Similar examples of the wolf's sense of reciprocity can be found elsewhere on the peninsula and beyond.¹²

Offerings to and worship of the wolf notwithstanding, we should be wary of simply attributing a “benign” character to the animal in neat contradistinction to the “evil” of Mediterranean wolves. The Japanese wolf does not have an essential or fixed character, either good or evil. Rather like a human being, a wolf can be good or bad, helpful or dangerous, depending on how the relationship with it is conducted and managed. Provided that a relationship of reciprocity is properly and faithfully maintained, the wolf is a benign beast. It is only when this principle is not observed by humans—when, for example, all the *inu'otoshi* is taken and nothing is left for the wolf—that the positive relationship with the animal breaks down and it develops an *ada* 仇 (enmity) towards human beings. In Japan, whether the relationship is with other people, with spirits, or with animals, great stress is

placed on preventing the rise of such feelings. The disposition of the wolf to mankind, whether benign or malign, is an expression of the state of the moral relationship with it. Dangerous wolves are more a sign of human infidelity than of the animal's bad nature. Summing up the folklore on wolves, CHIBA remarks that it is only bad people—never good people—who are killed and eaten by wolves (1995, 48–49). Japanese wolf lore tells not of good or bad wolves but of good or bad people.

BAD BEAST

There are very few documented wolf attacks in Japan prior to the seventeenth century. Three main reasons are given for the emergence of *rōgai* 狼害 (wolf damage): rabies, deforestation, and changes in farming practices (ANON. 1990b, 1). Rabies entered Japan in the late seventeenth century, and the early reports of *inukurui* 犬狂いぬくるい (dog madness) were soon followed by reports of rabid wolves, foxes, and *tanuki*. The first report of rabid wolves (in Kyūshū and Shikoku) occurred in 1732, and the disease then spread eastwards (MARUYAMA, KAJI, and KANZAKI n.d., 3). CHIBA points out that for Tokugawa Japanese the word *yamainu* became synonymous with the rabid dog that attacked people (1995, 51).

The urban development that took place from the late sixteenth century, involving the construction of castles, temples, shrines, mansions, bridges, and roads, consumed vast amounts of wood. In addition, rapid population growth led to sharp increases in the use of the forests for fertilizer, fuel, and fodder, and to the conversion of woodland to tillage. The result was widespread deforestation (see TOTMAN 1989, chapter 3). While deforestation, insofar as it leads to grassy new growth, may have been initially favorable to deer, the subsequent establishment of timber plantations ultimately meant less forage, with a resultant fall in deer numbers that reduced the amount of prey available to wolves. This is the background, it is argued, to the rise of wolf predation of village livestock in the later Tokugawa period (ANON. 1990c; MARUYAMA, KAJI, and KANZAKI n.d., 4).

There also occurred a shift of farming away from the mountains towards the reclaimed land of river valleys. Often this meant that fields, though originally adjacent to, if not actually within, the mountain forests, were later separated from the forest by the village itself. While this arrangement did not preclude field-raiding by animals like deer and boars, it did make it more difficult given the wariness of forest animals to extensive clearings, especially when there are humans about. If the wolf was looked to for protection from forest farm pests before, in these new circumstances it was no longer needed.

Not only did this change in farming patterns make obsolete the wolf's

earlier, protective role, it also led to a new form of predatory relationship between the wolf and the village. As noted above, the earlier pattern of farming in the area of the *satoyama* created gatherings of deer and wild boar, providing the wolf with a highly successful hunting ground. Thus, while scholars beginning with Yanagita Kunio have long assumed the Japanese wolf to be an animal of the *okuyama* 奥山 (remote mountains), “in practice it was often in the vicinity of mountain villages” (ANON. 1989a, 1; CHIBA 1995, 52). But with the passing of this earlier *satoyama* swidden farming, the wolf’s opportunity for such easy predation was lost. Not only were deer fewer than before, but those that did exist were not so easily caught.

SIGHTINGS

There have been many claimed sightings of wolves in Japanese rural areas after the date at which they supposedly became extinct. Wolf sightings continue right up to the present day. At a 1994 conference in Nara, it was reported that no less than seventy people had recently either seen a wolf themselves or heard wolf-howls.

HIRAIWA (1992, 250–83) gives details of twenty-six separate claims made between 1908 and 1978. Twelve of these claims are distributed fairly evenly across the country from Aomori in the northeast to Oita in the southwest. All of the remaining fourteen claims are from the prefectures of Nara and Wakayama on the Kii Peninsula. These are either sightings or the finding of the remains of animal prey, and such figures do not include the countless claims of having heard wolf howls or having found wolf tracks (said to be twice as big as dog tracks) or wolf faeces (distinctive because of the conspicuous presence of the matted hair of the animal prey).

In his study of the folk history of Totsukawa Mura in southern Nara Prefecture, TSUDA Matsunae found many people who claimed to have encountered a wolf in the past (1987). He was shown the toggle of a pill-box said to be made from a wolf’s fang. He was told of distant wolf howls and of the discovery of wolf tracks and faeces mixed with hair. He even spoke to people who claimed to have actually seen a wolf (cf. NKKI 1961, 235–46). These claims leave him unimpressed, however. He notes that the claimed sightings occurred at dusk or at night, and not in broad daylight when the chances of mistaking another animal for a wolf are much less. Even sightings that occurred in broad daylight were made by members of a generation that had never actually seen a wolf before, making the chances of error so high as to render the claim unreliable (TSUDA 1987, 107).

Let us consider some of the claimed wolf encounters in more detail. In the 1930s numerous encounters with wolves were reported from the southern area of the peninsula. In 1932 in the Hongū area a man saw a wolf on a

mountain peak, at which point “a shiver went down his spine” (KMG 1985, 280). In 1934 in Ryūjin Mura, to the northwest of Hongū, a group of foresters encountered a pack of wolves (five or six animals) when out hunting deer (UE 1994, 214). In 1936, again in the Hongū area, a man is said to have captured a wolf cub in the mountains, but decided to release it straight-away lest the parent wolf come after him to retrieve it (KMG 1985, 280–81).

UE Toshikatsu, a local forester-turned-writer, challenges the official extinction chronology by detailing wolf encounters claimed by members of his immediate family, relatives, and other acquaintances (1984, 62–67; 1990, 159–61). While many claims may be “made up, exaggerated, and lacking in credibility,” others “are much more persuasive.”

In around 1935 [my father] encountered a wolf as he was crossing Kasasuteyama. At the same time, another forester saw a wolf on the same mountain. There is absolutely no evidence that the creature seen was definitely a wolf and not a dog or a fox After the war, in 1950, G-san, a friend of an older female cousin of mine, heard a wolf howling. At that time G-san lived in a charcoal burner’s hut in the Hatenashi Mountains. On one September night, he heard howling nearby. The cry startled him. . . . Fearing for his life, G-san stoked up the *irori* fire in the hut. In the morning, he found that the urine bucket outside, though full the night before, was now half empty. It has long been said that the wolf comes to the toilet to get salt [by drinking urine].¹³ Again when G-san was passing along a mountain path through the Hatenashi Mountains, he heard wolf-howling from the dense natural forest. At that time he saw a small wild boar running away, and afterwards heard a low, faint growl [*unarigoe*] that gradually became louder until the leaves of the trees started reverberating. But it remained hidden by the trees and could not be seen. I think these claims are true, first because I trust G-san’s character—he is not a liar—and then because there were many other claims to have seen and heard wolves at this time. (UE 1984, 65)

Ue’s point is that just as he has heard, within his own kinship circle, of a number of claimed sightings, so most upland dwellers of his generation would have similar stories to tell, and that, taken together, this amounts to an impressively large set of testimonies.

Ue argues that the spate of wolf sightings in the late 1940s and early 1950s is highly significant. For at that time, he claims, there were many wild boar, deer, and serow in the mountains. On account of conscription, the war effort, and the general displacement of upland villagers, relatively little hunting took place in the mountains before, during, and immediately after

the Second World War, and the numbers of forest animals multiplied accordingly. This in turn meant that there was more food available for the wolves, which were therefore able to increase in number (UE 1984, 66).

By the late 1950s the sightings had greatly diminished in number, and most of the claims at this time, Ue accepts, lack credibility. By then the ecology of the mountains had changed fundamentally.

As the postwar recovery got under way forest wildlife as a whole came under pressure. The demand for timber increased and the remote mountain forests were felled and forest roads extended. If the wolf has become extinct, I think it happened at this time, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. (UE 1984, 66)

If the wartime mountains suited the wolf, postwar ecological changes were such that within two decades the wolf effectively lost its mountain home. Although much of the forestry at this time was directed to replanting the tree cover lost in the overcutting, there were continued felling incursions into the remote mixed forests of the interior in order to supply the contemporary timber demand.

Ue offers a contrasting historical context for wolf extinction from that of the existing orthodoxy: the tragedy of the wolf is part of the larger tragedy of forest wildlife brought about by the overexploitation of the *yama* for wood to support urban industrial recovery in the early postwar period. Thus the extinction of the wolf belongs to a more recent time than is officially claimed, and responsibility for it resides firmly with postwar industrial Japan rather than with contagion by an exogenous disease introduced through the international contacts of Meiji Japan (as the official history maintains). According to Ue's interpretation, the final blow against the wolf came not from the hunter but from the forester. The resumption of wild boar and deer hunting in the postwar period may have reduced the number of prey animals, but it was the spread of extractive forestry at this time that was decisive. Moreover, the eventual large-scale transformation of the mountain forests into industrial timber plantations brought about a new artificial upland environment in which the wolf was unable to live.

Elsewhere Ue has likened the plight of the bear to that of mountain village (male) youth. The bear and the young villagers both find themselves brideless and forced to leave their mountain home (UE 1983, 366–67). The mountains of the Kii Peninsula have become a place of disorder in which those animals traditionally of the *okuyama*—serow and bears in particular—increasingly descend on the villages in search of food. The disappearance of the wolf is perhaps the starkest evidence of this environmental change.

Ue's claims suggest that for the foresters and hunters of an earlier time the disappearance of the wolf is seen not as an accidental occurrence resulting from the spread of an infectious disease, but rather as something related to the postwar metamorphosis of the nation into an economic superpower. The Honshū wolf—whether extinct or not—continues to symbolize something much larger than itself, something about modern Japan as a whole.

SCEPTICISM

Outside experts have not confirmed local claims. There now exists a long inventory of local wolf observations extending over decades, yet the local witnesses see their claims dismissed by scientists and the government as mistaken and unreliable. A number of wolf-like animals have actually been caught and killed over the years, including two notable examples on the Kii Peninsula in 1908 and 1948. While in some cases one or two zoologists may have affirmed the wolf status of the remains, professional opinion has generally been negative (see OBARA 1984, 57).

There was an incident more recently, in the 1970s, when the remains of an animal locally believed to be a wolf were taken away by experts for examination (UE 1987, 133–34). This apparent discovery was a cause of great local excitement at the time, attracting considerable regional media coverage. However, as with other such incidents, nothing more was heard. UE attributes this nonconfirmation to the timidity of experts deeply reluctant to oppose the prevailing extinction orthodoxy, no matter how solid the evidence presented to them (1987, 134; see also 1988, 189).

In the very uncertainty of the wolf's existence, and the doubt that is locally cast on the extinction orthodoxy, there is the sense of a struggle between two conflicting claims to knowledge of the forest.

More than half a century has passed since a creature certified as being a wolf was captured. Therefore, it can be said that most people are faced with little choice but to accept the extinction thesis. But I do not accept that the wolf can be said with one hundred percent certainty not to exist. While I live in the mountains, I would like to shield the hope [that it exists].... Of course, I do not have the ability to disprove [the extinction orthodoxy]. But I feel that those people known as zoologists have gone only fifty of a hundred steps. We have entered an age where, even if a wolf was placed before their very eyes, they would not confirm it. (UE 1984, 67)

Scepticism is not, however, confined to zoologists and other outside experts. Claimed wolf sightings meet with local scepticism too. I recall a

conversation on the subject with S, a Hongū man in his early 40s, a former schoolteacher and now town councillor. When I explicitly referred to the possibility of the existence of the wolf and the local belief in this, he reminded me that superstition is rife, that country people, especially older people, believe in all manner of mountain spirits and demons, and that some people even claim to have seen a *tsuchinoko*¹⁴ in the mountains. The point he was making was that many fantastic beings are thought to inhabit the *yama*, and that wolf beliefs must be viewed in this context.

On another occasion this same man warned me not to take too seriously a lot of the old folklore about strange creatures in the *yama* (which indeed is what largely fills the local folklore collections published by the peninsula municipalities) because many of these frightening tales of meetings with ghosts, with *tengu* 天狗 (bird-men), and with one-eyed, one-legged monsters were actually stories made up by people with reasons for discouraging others from visiting a particular mountainside or valley. He had in mind the *matsutake* mushroom picker seeking to protect a favored spot from rival pickers, or the hunter wishing to keep secret a wallowing ground or other spot where wild boars gather.¹⁵

Other sceptical reactions include that of the forest landowner who dismisses the wolf-spotters as the same sort of “uneducated” (*mugaku* 無学) people who join new religious sects and believe in things like laying-on-of-hands healing or ancestral curses that bring misfortune on descendants, notions that this man dismissed as foolish.

It is against this background of growing scepticism that efforts have been made to prove that wolves still exist in the mountains. There have been a number of expeditions into the *okuyama*, the remoter parts of the mountains associated with wolves, as well as baiting experiments in which meat or even caged live animals are placed at observation points in the mountains in the hope of drawing out the animal.

Most ambitiously of all, there have even been attempts to communicate directly with wolves. In 1994 the Nara Prefecture Wildlife Protection Committee (*Nara ken yasei seibutsu hogo iinkai* 奈良県野生生物保護委員会) carried out the following experiment, known as *sasoidashi* 誘い出し (luring out), in the Yoshino area.

THE WOLF EXTINCTION ORTHODOXY IS MISTAKEN!

A tape of a Canadian wolf howling will be broadcast into all the mountain valleys throughout the night. Because it is the most territorial of animals [the wolf] invariably answers by howling back. We carry this out in the belief that it still exists.

Observers with tape-recorders were strategically placed in the mountains in the hope that the amplified howls would elicit a response from any real wolf present (ANON. 1994, 3). No response was heard. The experiment failed therefore in its avowed purpose of eliciting clear aural evidence of the wolf's presence (although the experiment did receive a good deal of publicity within Japan).

I attended a repetition of the experiment in 1995—this time in the area of Okuchichibu in Saitama Prefecture near the famous Mistumine Shrine, where, as mentioned above, the wolf is enshrined as the *otsukai*, or messenger. Speakers were strategically placed in two high-up locations on a steep north-facing mountainside overlooking a deep river valley. After this, the group with the tape recorders gathered at a spot further down the mountain. There the group spent the night, sleeping around a campfire. In the morning they carefully listened to the tape of the night before. The six-hour long set of tapes consisted of two-minute long amplifications of wolf-howls, followed by intervals of around eight minutes during which the tape recorder picked up any subsequent noises. They listened to the tapes at double speed, slowing them down when an interesting noise came up. But the interesting noises emanated from deer, birds, airplanes, and (at dawn) monkeys, rather than from wolves.

The experiment had failed for the second successive year. The experimenters cited a number of mitigating factors. One member of the group pointed to the strong wind, explaining that it may have obscured important noises. There was also talk of the need to improve the quality of the equipment used. Another group member wondered out loud if the problem might be the use of taped Canadian wolf howls; perhaps Chinese wolf howls would be better, he suggested. Although disappointed, the group vowed to continue the experiment the following year, returning to the Kii Peninsula.

CONCLUSION

In the wolf lore surveyed above, the wolf appears to serve as a natural symbol of society. Tales about exchanges between humans and wolves—as well as exchanges with the many other animals that feature in similar tales—can be understood in the first instance as a kind of *social* instruction or edification in which the importance of exchange between (different groups of) people is emphasized (see LÉVI-STRAUSS 1981, 459–60). Just as medieval Japanese tales of the human mistreatment of animals warn of the negative consequences of selfish, cruel behavior by showing the karmic retribution incurred by those responsible (LAFLEUR 1983, 34–35), so the tales of conscientious animals point to the future benefits of helping others.

However, the wolf is not simply a metaphor of society, but it is also a

metonym of nature. Underlying the ostensive references to the wolf are implicit references to the mountain forests. The controversy over the wolf's existence can be usefully viewed against the background of major changes in the upland natural environment. The question of the existence or extinction of the wolf seems to be bound up with that of the scale of change that has occurred in the mountains. Today these verdant mountains are becoming an important resource in upland tourist development, and nature a key idiom of tourism, despite the ubiquity of conifer plantations. It is as though the issue of the wolf's existence is animated by a local nostalgia for the *yama* of the past.

For some writers the wolf is a symbol of an earlier Japanese relationship to nature lost upon modernization. This sentiment is made explicit by the writer NOMOTO Kan'ichi, who concluded his survey of Japanese wolf lore as follows:

The relationship between man and wolf stands for the relationship between man and nature, for the wolf can be viewed as the symbol of animal spirits, the symbol of nature (*daishizen* 大自然). Nature brings all manner of blessings. When in return for those blessings and that protection man keeps his promises and obligations, the relationship will be one of harmony. But where such promises are broken and obligations forgotten, then only animal savagery (*mōjūsei* 猛獣性) emerges. It would be as well if the Japanese saw in the various tales of the wolf, with their emphasis on exchange between man and beast, the way in which the relationship between themselves and nature should be conducted. (1990, 68)

There is a sense that the extinction of the wolf stands for the end of a whole tradition of upland settlement. This is a tradition epitomized by Ue, who has spent most of his life working in the mountain forests of the Kii Peninsula, first as a charcoal-burner, then as a forester, and today as a writer and champion of the disappearing way of life of the *yamabito* 山人 (mountain people). He decries the exodus from, and abandonment of, upland interior settlements that have occurred in the postwar period, and defiantly proclaims the virtues of a life in the mountains. There is in Ue's writings an undeniable tendency to romanticize an upland way of life. It coincides with the increasing popularity of the idea that Japan is more a *shinrin bunka* 森林文化 (forest culture) than an *inasaku bunka* 稲作文化 (rice-growing culture) (e.g., UMEHARA 1990).

Ue's writings can be read as forming a sustained critique of the *machizukuri* 町づくり (townmaking) developmentalism of recent decades.

Some Japanese present the spectre of a remorseless urbanization of the whole Japanese archipelago, but Ue indicates that this is not a trend that goes unquestioned. He challenges the assumption that the separation of upland dwellers from the surrounding mountain forests is inevitable. But the irony is that any reintegration of upland dwellers and the *yama* would depend on a revival of domestic forestry, the very industry that is responsible for the loss of wildlife habitat in the *yama*.

The progressive disengagement of the upland population from the *yama* that Ue laments makes for a peculiar situation. One effect of the postwar expansion of forestry has been the displacement of animals from their remote *okuyama* habitats onto timber plantations and farms, where they have now become pests. Although the present state of disorder coincides with the contemporary decline of forestry and the separation of the village from the *yama*, the animal parts of the *yama* have come to pose a threat to human livelihoods. The situation recalls the depredations of upland farming in centuries past by deer and wild boar, the very context in which villagers came to depend on the wolf's protective powers. In other words, an unexpected effect of the spread of industrial forestry in the mountains has been the simulation of the conditions associated with the earlier era of wild mountains. The *yama* has not become an orderly, manageable, and predictable environment as a consequence of its extensive postwar cultivation. Despite the formally anthropogenic character of much of it, the *yama* retains its capacity to disturb those who live near it.

It is against this background that in recent years there have been calls for the reintroduction of wolves to Japan (MARUYAMA 1995; MARUYAMA, WADA, and KANZAKI 1995; see KNIGHT n.d. for discussion). Premised on wolf extinction, the idea has of course been rejected by those who believe that wolves still exist in the remote interior. But the rationale is that, as a keystone species, the wolf would help restore order to the Japanese forest ecology by regulating the numbers of herbivores so destructive to forestry. Proponents argue that wolf reintroduction would simultaneously restore nature, reinstate human control, and make the Japanese mountains manageable once more. It is as though man has learnt that the *yama*, even in their nominally domesticated state today, can only be really managed with the assistance of the wild power of nature itself. The recovery of human control requires the return of the *yama no banken*, the "guard dog of the mountains." The wolf is a symbol both of the wild *yama* and of its control. Perhaps this is why a formally nonexistent animal continues to preoccupy upland dwellers. If the wolf is extinct, it is not obsolete.

NOTES

1. Other Honshū wolf carcasses exist in Japan itself. Three of them, one each at the National Science Museum, Tokyo University, and Wakayama University (OBARA 1984, 55), are generally in much better condition than the London wolf.

2. Indeed, the parallel between the *ōki*, or ocean deep, and the *oku*, or mountainous interior, is something that has long preoccupied Japanese folklorists.

3. In some parts of Japan the *ōkami* were believed to live near the coast and the *yamainu* to live in the mountains (see CHIBA 1972, 94; 1975, 149–59; 1977, 377). According to one local belief on the Kii Peninsula, the *yamainu* and the *ōkami* were different animals: the former was an intermediate animal between the *ōkami* and the domesticated dog (e.g., MURAKAMI 1987, 1992). This relates to the theme, prominent in Kii Peninsular mythology, of the wolf as the direct ancestor of the local hound, the *Kishūken* 紀州犬 (TAIRA 1982, 190; n.d., 118–19). The closeness of wolves and hounds is also emphasized in the stories from around the peninsula of the charcoal-burner who captured a wolf-cub and raised it to be a superlative boarhound (MURAKAMI 1992, 15–16; see KATSUKI 1995, 334 for Shikoku; see also TOGAWA 1995).

4. See KMG 1985, 294; ODMK 1981, 205; and HIRAIWA 1992, 183–89.

5. *Ōkami wa kayasube ippon attemo sugata o kakusu mono* 狼は茅すべ一本あっても姿を隠すもの (KMG 1985, 280). See also CHIBA, who recounts the expression, “It can hide itself with only three blades of grass” (1984, 854).

6. One of CHIBA’s informants from the Hongū area mentions that at a place called Higashi Tōge there exists a stone figure of a Jizō riding a wolf (1977, 143).

7. Examples of wolf-skin taxes include the tribute imposed by Edgar, the Anglo-Saxon king, on the king of Wales of 300 wolves in tenth-century Britain (HARTING 1994, 12–13), or again the calculation of court fines in medieval Sweden in terms of wolves’ tongues (ANON. 1995). In his discussion of wolf lore in Schleswig-Holstein, RHEINHEIMER mentions both wolf chases and the hanging of wolves on “wolf gallows” (1995, 281).

8. It does not, however, follow that this Japanese view of the wolf is unique; similar views have been documented among North American Indians—for example, tales of wolves that, in return for being saved by human beings, bring them hunting success (see GARFIELD and FORREST 1948, 20–21).

9. See GOSE 1991, 165–66; also RMHI 1987, 12 and KII MINPŌ 1972.

10. See also NOMOTO 1996 (223–25) and NAKAMURA 1987 (68). Implicitly, Tanigawa seems to be referring to the perceived physical resemblance of the two animals. I am reminded of my 1994 encounter with an old man in one of the remotest hamlets in Hongū who assured me that he occasionally saw “*ōkami*” nearby on the edge of the forest. He went on to say that he even caught them raiding the vegetable patch! Afterwards a local man who had been with me suggested that the old man was senile, a point of view I was inclined to agree with since the old man—despite his apparent robustness—could no longer tell the difference between wolves and omnivorous foxes. Nonetheless, it underlined the point about the physical resemblance of the two animals. This was further reinforced when I heard about a wolf figurine in another remote village, one that now looks to everyone like a fox. (On the interchangeability of the wolf and the fox, LÉVI-STRAUSS, in his discussion of indigenous myths of the Brazilian interior, remarks that “[t]he animal referred to as a “wolf” . . . seems to be almost always a kind of long-legged, long-haired fox” [1973, 83].)

11. See Scot (in PRESTON-ECKELS 1937, 23), who mentions the (European?) custom of nailing a wolf’s head to the door as a defence against witchcraft.

12. For regional examples, see NAKAMORI 1941, 30–31; HIDA 1970, 217–18; INADA 1975, 131–32; TOKUYAMA 1975, 142–43; WADA 1978, 265; WKMK 1987, 62; HYMKI 1992, 247–49;

and TMKI 1988, 208–11. See also MORITA 1994 and Sakai 1986 on the motif more generally.

13. There are many similar stories in the documented folklore of the region—see, for example, NAKAMORI 1941, 34–35; WKMK 1981, 82, 84; WKMK 1987, 59–60; ANON. 1991; and HYMKI 1992, 247. I have heard similar accounts of the urine bucket story from Hongū people. One Hongū woman in her twenties told me the following story that she had heard from her father. When he was about nine or ten, he woke up one morning and went outside to relieve himself, and he found the urine bucket, which was nearly full the night before, to be completely empty. At the time, the family believed that it was a wolf (which was known to like urine). As he was born in 1931, this would have been around the end of the 1930s.

14. The *tsuchinoko* is a legendary poison-spitting serpent-like creature whose existence is not officially recognized. One nearby municipality has adopted it as its emblem, holding annual *tsuchinoko* hunting expeditions for tourists, and generally using the creature as a symbol in tourist souvenirs (e.g., *tsuchinoko*-shaped *manjū* cakes, lampshades with *tsuchinoko* designs, etc.). This man has actually spoken to people there who claim to have seen such a creature.

15. What this man may well have had in mind is a wolf story associated with a place in a nearby village. Hokojima is a mountain shrine, just above Kawayu (a well-known spa resort), that reportedly has the wolf as its *otsukai* (KHI 1972, 72). It is said that the place in question—high up on the mountainside, where a large rock is found—used to be a place of illegal gambling. The villager suggested that the wolf story was probably used to keep other villagers away during gambling sessions.

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