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## A Study of Girl Psychics : Young Ladies who Toy with their Schools

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## A Study of Girl Psychics: Young Ladies who Toy with their Schools

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### 1. THE "SEVEN WONDERS OF THE SCHOOL"

Ghost stories are widespread amongst schoolchildren. Most of them center around the schools, where they spend the greater part of their day. I would like to begin by introducing some of the aspects of the ghost stories which I have collected from schoolchildren concerning their alma maters.<sup>1)</sup>

#### Himeji Municipal Yasumuro Elementary School (Kondō Eri and Ayami)

- 1) A "blue hand" and a "red hand" with blood flowing from them appear in the first-year students' toilet.
- 2) "Hanako-san" (a ghost) is in the third cubicle in the toilet and you will have a spell cast over you if you go inside.
- 3) You will have a spell cast over you if you don't walk two paces in front of one of the toilets called the "Shining Toilet."
- 4) People going into the fourth cubicle from the front or the fourth from the back lose their hair. Hair drops down from above this cubicle.
- 5) Acorns drop down from above one of the boys' toilets even though there is no one up there.
- 6) If you tread on the second step on any of the school's staircases, you get dirty, and if you leave out the third step, you will meet with misfortune. If you tread on the fourth step or leave out the first, you will die an early death.
- 7) If you say "Hanako-san" or "Kokkuri-san" (the name of an ouija board spirit), you will have a spell cast over you unless you get someone to slap you on the back three times.

1) On the case studies that follow, please see appendix.

- 8) There are lots of spirits in the school at night. Friends have said they have seen them.
- 9) A human bone lies in the middle of the playground at midnight.

#### **Higashi Nose Village Higashi Nose Elementary School**

(Utsuro Masako, Kōshien Junior College)

- 1) Some graves were smashed when the science room was built. After dark, the dead people, angry at this, move the specimen model of a human skeleton about.
- 2) If you go to sleep in the sick-room, people's shadows flit about.
- 3) The piano in the music room plays at night.
- 4) If you go into the second toilet from the front at four o'clock in the afternoon, "Hanako-san" appears.
- 5) The statue of Ninomiya Kinjirō's eyes move.
- 6) There is an extra stair in the staircase at night.
- 7) At night there is the sound of someone laughing at the swimming pool.
- 8) At nightfall a soldier comes out of the nearby memorial tower and walks around the school.

#### **Kakogawa Municipal Kamino Elementary School**

(Kuwano Emiko, Kōnan University)

- 1) The piano in the music room plays early in the morning. It is a plaster of Paris hand from the art room that is playing it.
- 2) There was a photographic portrait of someone hanging at the back of the lecture hall. Apparently if you walked fifty paces away from it and turned round, its eyes lit up. Since this was a well-known story lots of children tried it.
- 3) There was an old Japanese-style toilet where one of the cubicle doors wouldn't open—"the unopening toilet"—and there was a rumor that if you peeped through the keyhole there was someone peeping out from inside. A lot of children tried this out too.
- 4) There was a story that there used to be a graveyard under one of the classrooms in the North Building. This was odd, however, because the room in question was on the first floor and I don't see why it was only this room that it should have been under.
- 5) There was a story about the gym store-room, although I don't know what it was.
- 6) It was said that if you knew all the "seven wonders of the school" you would die unless you spoke to fifteen people within three days.
- 7) As a result, I don't know what the seventh story was. None of my friends know all seven stories either.
- 8) There were variations in what the "seven wonders" were. There were also

various other ghost stories in addition to the “seven wonders”, and with these as well you would apparently die unless you spoke to people, although the number of days and the number of people involved varied.

### **Hirakata Municipal Hirakata Dai-ichi Junior High School**

(Takayama Kaori, Kōshien Junior College)

- 1) Before I entered the school there were rumours about ghostly apparitions that were called the “Seven Wonders of Dai-ichi Junior High.” There seem actually to have been more than seven.
- 2) It had once been the site of a battle.
- 3) You could hear the sound of a piano coming from the music room.
- 4) A girl in a sailor’s uniform [the uniform that school girls wear] with a red ribbon would appear.
- 5) There was a story about a clerk who died in an accident and the bicycle he was riding at the time. This bicycle was old and didn’t work and was painted white. It had originally been left outside, but was at some point moved into the basement under the gym. It was very chilly down there, and it really felt as though there might be a ghost. No one talked about this bicycle and as a result the “white bicycle” story was all the creepier.

### **Tokushima Prefectural Ikeda High School**

(Ikawa Yuri, Matsuyama University)

- 1) A mounted *samurai* in full armour rides along the road in front of the school. Perhaps because the school had been built on the site of the old Ōnishi Castle and a young noblewoman had been buried at Ikeda Junior High School next door, this story was the one that was most believed.
- 2) The head of someone that died during training goes round in the washing machine beside the martial arts gym. The torso runs round the playing field. I don’t know whether there ever was an accident where somebody died.
- 3) In the music room the eyes in the picture of Beethoven move and he plays the piano.
- 4) The model of the skeleton in the science room walks around the school grounds.
- 5) There is an extra stair in the staircase in the North Building.
- 6) The stone steps in front of the school get longer with extra steps.

### **Kagawa Prefectural Takamatsu Nishi High School**

(Kuramoto Noriaki, Matsuyama University)

- 1) Someone hanged himself in the gym store-room, apparently in the year the school was founded. Blood subsequently started spurting out of one of the

pillars. It was painted over, but however many times it was painted blood still spurted out again. It has now been filled in with concrete so it can't be used. There is another story, that you can see a face instead of blood.

- 2) The ghost of a soldier appears round where there used to be an air-raid shelter.
- 3) There is the sound of someone changing in the ballet room at night.
- 4) Archery arrows fly around at night even though there is nobody there.
- 5) An old boy's voice can be heard at night behind the backnet used for baseball practice.
- 6) Tears come out of a statue.
- 7) A ghost with a bag in its hand runs along Yamaguchi Route One.

By night schools are filled with ghosts like this. It is not only among elementary school pupils that these school-based ghost stories cause fear. As we have just seen, there are many ghost stories in junior high and high schools also. The same holds true for universities. Matsutani Miyoko gives examples of university-based ghost stories from Tōhoku University of Dentistry, Tsukuba University, Kyōritsu Women's University, Hōsei University, Aichi University, Kansei Gakuin University and so on [MATSUTANI 1987]. I have myself also collected a number of ghost stories told by today's university students at lectures I have given. A few of them follow.

#### **Kōnan University**

(1) Maekawa Noriko, 2) Nakano Satoko, 3) Hashimoto Takuya, 4) Koderia Mika)

- 1) The ghost of someone who committed suicide by jumping out of Building Ten still wanders around. A member of the judo club training early one rainy morning said that he had heard a woman's voice laughing round one of the toilets on the floor this person had jumped from. There are others who say that they have seen someone's shadow.
- 2) The first cubicle one comes to in the girls' toilet on the ground floor of the student union is nowadays locked shut and is used as a sort of cupboard, but it was originally a very smart toilet. About twenty years ago, when the student movement was at its peak, some middle-aged man who was a staff member of the university killed himself there. The rumor subsequently spread that a ghost appeared. When one sees how it has been boarded up and shut tight with wire and a lock, one cannot just say that it is a silly rumor.

One day in 1991 some boy students belonging to one of the literary clubs concluded a discussion they had been having about wanting to check the authenticity of the rumor by sneaking into the toilet just after 11 p.m. But they found it frightening, and only two of them witnessed what actually happened. These two, wanting to find out what the pale blue light seeping out from a crack in the door was, tried to prise the door open. It would not open, however, and one of them lost his temper and kicked the door. As he did this, there was ap-

parently a flash of light like a will-'o'-the-wisp. That night someone went round knocking on and opening the doors of all the rooms in the building. This was testified to by people who had stayed up all that night in the building. Two days later, as the rumor was circulating that it was the ghost or whatever retaliating for being kicked, the boy responsible for kicking the door appeared in the school. Both his cheeks were painfully swollen. The boy himself claimed just to have fallen over, but it did not look like that at all.

- 3) Buildings Five and Six have their toilets in the same pattern. The only difference is that in Building Five the boys' toilets are in the East and the girls' are in the West, while in Building Six it is the other way around. Up until just over twenty years ago both buildings had the same set-up and the girls' toilets were in the west in Building Six too. It was the time when the student movement was at its peak (even though some say it wasn't all that strong in this particular university) and there were internal schisms—sectarian strife—which led one day to a boy being beaten to death in the girls' toilets in the west of Building Six. Rumours subsequently spread that a voice could be heard even though there was nobody there and that there was the sound of somebody running water and in the end a succession of girls appeared who said that doors would not open and were being kept locked from inside. The toilet was closed up after this and the distribution of the boys' and girls' toilets was switched around again to how it is today.
- 4) The ghost of a child haunts the corridor that connects Buildings One and Three, following people as they use the corridor and laughing. As a result there is a sign saying "No Thoroughfare!"

### **Matsuyama University**

(1a) Izumi Kazue, b) Suda Toshimitsu; 2a) Nakaya Yoshitake, b) Takeuchi Hiroki, c) Ochi Takashi; 3a) Morimoto Hiromasa, b) Sassa Naohiko; 4a) Nakaya Yoshitake, b) Izeki Norisuke, c) Kataoka Miyuki, d) Ochi Kenji; 5 Sekiya Naoto; 6a) Machihane Ryōta, b) Shimizu Shin'ya, c) Izeki Norisuke)

- 1a) There was a boy who had finally managed to make the rugby team but who fell ill and died the day before the match was due to take place. He had requested that his bones be buried on the playing field and this was done just as he had asked. Thereafter one could hear the sound of him practicing on the rugby pitch.
- 1b) I tried asking a friend of mine in the rugby club in an attempt to find out whether the story was true or not. I felt a cold shiver run down my spine when I was told that someone had actually died during a game and that his memorial picture hung in the club room. Rumor has it that he changes in the room and then goes out to the playing field to train. My friend once went to collect his kit from the room at two o'clock in the morning, but he said that nothing had appeared.

- 2a) The way in and out of the parking lot now has a chain slung across it but it used to have wire. The ghost of a student appears who, hurrying home after being busy till late at a society meeting, sped off on his scooter and caught himself on the wire, cutting his head off.
- 2b) There used to be a chain slung between two poles at the bike park by the west gate. This was at exactly head height if you were on a scooter. One night a student who was on his way home after finishing a society meeting caught his neck on the chain by mistake and died. Ever since, if you go past the front of the bike park at night, there has been a man with no head sitting there.
- 2c) There was a student on his way out on a scooter who lost his head on the chain that was stretched across. The night it happened was apparently a full moon. They say that even now some people when they look up at the full moon get temporarily paralysed from the neck upwards.
- 3a) In the boys' toilets in the basement of Building Two there was until recently a door that would not open. You could apparently hear the voice of a fourth-year student who killed himself there long ago. The reason he killed himself was because he failed to get a credit in one of the teachers' classes. Another strange thing is that people say that since then it has become easy to get a credit in that teacher's class.
- 3b) It was several years ago, in the basement toilets in Building Two. Two students went in. One used the urinal and when he had finished he waited outside, but the other one, who had wanted to use a cubicle, took ages coming out. Thinking this rather odd he peered in, but his friend who should have been inside had disappeared. The door has been shut ever since. It is the third from the east and it has become familiar to everyone that while all the others are open this one alone is shut. If you pushed it, of course, it would open. People say that the student's disappearance was the work of Akaman-to ("Red cloak"—a type of ghost) or that he was taken by the gods.
- 4a) Katō Hall, an old two-storey building, was where the student council and so on were. Preparations often went on late into the night for meetings of committees to welcome freshers or to organise the student fair, and one day someone said that as they had been going down the stairs on their way home alone at night, the woman in the picture hanging on the landing had been watching them. The story spread and everyone started feeling weird, so they tried burning the picture in the incinerator, but then they noticed that it was back in its original place.
- 4b) Shortly after I entered the university, I was told by someone in one of the years above that there was a portrait in Katō Hall which laughed when it struck midnight. Wherever you looked at it from, it was looking at you. It was creepy so they had shut it away in the cupboard, but in no time at all it was back in its original place. If you threw it away it just came back, and it always did so however many times you tried. Someone had said that it definitely looked as though it was laughing if you looked at it at night, so

some others and I talked about going to have a look, but in the end we didn't because we were scared of having a curse put on us.

- 4c) Our club room was on the first floor of Katō Hall. When I said that I felt scared if I looked at that picture at night, someone in one of the years above told me that the space behind the wall where the picture was hung had been used to store dead bodies during the war and that I would get hurt if I did anything like point at the picture. Later on I was telling the story to a friend of mine when I realised that I had been pointing at it. A few days later I fell down the stairs in front of the picture. Luckily I didn't really hurt myself, but I shuddered when I remembered what the senior had told me.
- 4d) The student co-op was on the ground floor of Katō Hall and the student council was on the first floor. There was also a basement, but the only people who would have known it was there were people to do with the co-op or the student council. The door to the staircase which went down to the basement was always kept shut. If you didn't open the door, you would not know there was a basement. There was also a big oil painting of a young woman sitting on a chair hung in front of the door. When I entered the university, I was told by a senior that the basement actually contained the corpses of people who had died in the war and that the picture had been put up there to prevent people from going down. There are several people who say that they have seen the eyes of the woman in the picture light up when they have passed in front of the picture late at night. I think most people say this sort of thing is superstition and do not believe it, but I suppose you don't know until you have actually experienced it yourself. The school is apparently built, by the way, on a place where they buried people that died in the war.
- 5) It would seem that the basement of Katō Hall used to be a library. Some years ago, on the day the first-term examinations finished, a girl was doing some research on her own late into the night. Engrossed in her reading she failed to notice the watchman going round. He, meanwhile, failed to notice her as he locked the door... Then the long school summer holidays began.

When the summer holidays were over and the watchman opened up the library door again, there inside lay her festering remains. On the door were countless marks where she had been scratching desperately to get out. People say that every night in Building Eight, which was built on top of where Katō Hall used to be, you can hear a voice calling "Let me out, let me out!" and the sound of scratching. When I heard this story, from a senior in my social group, I had goose-pimples all over my body.

- 6a) The university's student dormitory has been rebuilt and is now a new building, but they say that a ghost used to appear in room 36 of the old Yūshiryō dormitory. I asked some people in the dormitory about the story and a senior, Mr. Kanohara, said that the ghost was apparently a male foreigner, most probably a Russian. At a place nearby called Miyuki Mikiji-yama there used to be a Russian cemetery where officers and soldiers were buried who had died



after being brought to a camp at Matsuyama as prisoners during the Russo-Japanese War. It seems that that is why people thought the ghost should be a Russian. A classmate of mine, however, Mr Namisaki, told me that the story was about the ghost of a fugitive warrior which appeared in a room above the line running between Matsuyama Castle and the Russian cemetery at Miyuki Mikiji-yama.

- 6b) The haunted room is supposed to be at the place where the line between the Russian cemetery and Matsuyama Castle went through the old Yūshiryō dormitory. People in the dormitory said that although they had never seen the ghost directly, there were incidents where things that didn't normally fall down fell down and things that didn't look as though they were about to fall over did fall over. People who entered the dormitory after it was rebuilt, however, only had a fragmentary knowledge about how it used to be.
- 6c) I live in the dormitory. Room 27 in Yūshiryō dormitory is haunted. All the people in Room 27 suffer temporary paralysis or meet with misfortunes. The room lies above the line between the Russian cemetery and Matsuyama Castle. Rumors tell of how the ghosts of Russians still wander about the Russian cemetery, while Matsuyama Castle, also known as "Throat-Cut" Castle is a place where time after time lovers who visit the castle suffer catastrophes.

Perhaps because of the influence of the "Seven Wonders," which have been popular in recent times, many school ghost stories are prefixed with the name of the school, as for instance with the "Seven Wonders of Dai-ichi Junior High" which we find at Hirakata Dai-ichi Junior High School. The story combinations are by no means fixed, with parts being substituted one for another and the particulars of the same story varying depending on who the narrator is. The Matsuyama University ghost stories given here are called the "Seven Wonders of Commercial Uni." and are part of what has been handed down from former times at the university, when it was Matsuyama Commercial University. Perhaps all the variations we can see stem from differences in the social groups passing the stories on. Let us meanwhile simply refer to the numerous stories being told in schools which are not only about one school alone as "school ghost stories" or the "Seven Wonders of the School." These school ghost stories adopt the same salon style as the "Hundred Tales," which mediums used to test one's courage. They have been passed around and down as short dramatic sketches in the extracurricular "intervals between acts" found when students were spending the night in the same place or when they were on field trips, or during the breaks between lessons or after school, or otherwise in the dormitory. It is the same even nowadays. Seniors pass them on to juniors as though they are completely true. These ghost stories, with the abundant and graphic facial expressions that accompany them, have an appeal as an oral literary tradition which never fades. I am not, however, now about to make a comparative assessment of what each individual story says. In my opening statement I indicated that "ghost stories are widespread amongst schoolchildren." The issue here is why

should that be so.

Schools are not short of “raw materials” for ghost stories. Special school-rooms, such as the music or science rooms in particular, and places like the toilets and the gym provide likely settings for them. The paraphernalia are also provided there, with pianos, specimen models of skeletons and dissected human bodies. As they come into contact with these “raw materials,” the children recreate ghost story “narratives” and pass them around.

The school founders provided the children with the equipment to make ghost stories and thereby helped a “school culture” which they could never have imagined would blossom in this way. The founders were also indirectly responsible for unexpected “educational consequences” as, when the stories were passed on over generations, the schoolchildren came to recognise them as “school traditions” and this strengthened the feelings of solidarity within the school.

A sample of some of the students’ attitudes to and thoughts about all this reads as follows:

**Amagasaki Municipal Tachibana Junior High School**  
(Suyama Yukari, Kōshien Junior College)

- 1) There weren’t just “Seven Wonders”—I alone knew fifteen stories. I was told that if you knew them all you died, so after I had heard six stories I was scared about what might happen. But then after that I heard another two—I was surprised there had been two more and became interested in hearing how many others there were.

I think it is good that schools have these “Seven Wonders.” I reckon that they become one of the ways that children of any period in time enjoy themselves. The contents of the stories that are passed down are bound to change little by little I suppose, while I think that even after we are grown up we will still get excited about them.

**Matsuyama University**

(1) Suzuki Miho; 2) Arai Masahiro)

- 1) The “Seven Wonders” one finds in universities are not just plain ghost stories; as they spread from seniors to juniors and around classmates, they breed a sense of solidarity. One really feels that, as one becomes a senior and tells the stories to the juniors, one is a Matsuyama University student if one knows the “Seven Wonders of Matsuyama Uni.” The “seven wonders of the school” are important for this. Katō Hall, which had been here since before the war, was knocked down in 1989. I am interested to know how “Miss Hikaru’s Picture” will be passed on now that the setting and the object concerned have been destroyed.
- 2) The “Seven Wonders” that were popular when I was a first-year seem to have

weathered badly recently and the juniors don't seem to know them at all. This is probably because the settings and the paraphernalia featured in the stories—that extremely scary thing, for example, “Miss Hikaru's Picture!”—have disappeared along with the building and the feeling of authenticity about what was in the stories has diminished. The ghost stories lost their power when the building that had been right there amongst us all was destroyed. Still, the narrative tradition will no doubt adopt some new tales and revive itself in due course. Since the university itself is a cultural institution, the tradition will be maintained inside it.

**Kōbe Municipal Yamada Junior High School**  
(Mizuta Kaoru, Kōnan University)

- 1) The “Seven Wonders” were passed around as if they were completely true. Female students who killed themselves and male students who died in accidents seem always to feature—it is strange that so many dead people should appear in every school and university. It does seem, however, that knowing the same story about the same school or university helps to create a feeling of solidarity.

The idea behind education was to raise promising youngsters healthy in both mind and body. To this end a full array of institutional facilities and equipment was set up together with a graded educational curriculum, but the equipment became instead the “paraphernalia” for ghost stories while the system became the “ranks” that exist between the youngsters with their senior/junior relationships (particularly important in dormitory life and social groups). Thus relations between the children developed in ways which had nothing to do with the founders' intentions and the equipment and systems that constitute the school environment were adapted and underwent stratification.

The “hardware” of a school as a set of equipment and systems designed for education exists to input information (the “software”) into schoolchildren, whilst the children must have the rudimentary circuitry necessary for them to receive it installed in them in advance. These rudiments—basic attitudes to life and so on—are provided for them before they start going to school and come from what we may call folk society. Amongst the information inputted at this time there is something forcing its way in, like a computer virus attacking a program. Obviously this something is to be found in folk society, while it is of a nature that readily infects other receptor bodies similar to its initial carrier. By the time children enter school they are already contaminated by folk culture.

Ghost stories customarily reflect religious and spiritual views. One would expect as a result that differences in folk and racial customs would naturally be expressed in the “Seven Wonders of the School.” Fairies and witches, for example, do not appear in Japanese ghost stories. One mainly finds the dead spirits of human beings and animals (in particular domestic animals, pets and foxes, badgers and

snakes). There are hardly any riotous, violent spirits like poltergeists. It is clearly evident that modern ghost stories convey deep-dyed traces of the evil spirits and revengeful ghosts of former times, of *kappa* (water imps) lurking in the toilet making mischief and all sorts of possessor spirits. Yet on the other hand there are also modern ghost stories and other stories which have no specific national characteristics.

Japanese education in the modern period was a practical observance of the ideology of westernization. In order to provide education about western music and concepts in natural science there was a need for the facilities and equipment of music rooms and science laboratories as well as all kinds of western instruments and scientific specimen models. Even architecture was westernised. From this environment was born a variety of ghost stories revolving around the piano, the specimen model of the human body and the mirror on the landing. Today even ghost stories, which used to reflect the race's peculiar spiritual world, have largely lost their nationality, as rumors circulate about psychic photographs and telephone cards where you can hear dead people's voices. Appearances are even made by UFOs and other cosmic apparitions.

We cannot, meanwhile, ignore the role played by private crammer schools in the dissemination of ghost stories, when school ghost stories are told where the story is not peculiar to any one particular school, as with for example "The Third Hanako-san," "The School Ghost Pata—pata (an apparition lacking the lower part of its body)," "The Mouth—Splitting Woman" and "The Dog with the Human Face." Large numbers of children who belong to different schools congregate at private crammer schools. There they exchange information on the various ghost stories circulating at their school and at the schools of other children. In this sense the significance of private crammer schools does not simply stop at the aims of extra study and work for exams. With their comprehensive market share, private crammer schools have a function as a "forum" to satisfy the children's vigorous curiosity, while we can see their role as a terminal, bringing groups of schools together.

## 2. HENSACHI AND IDOLS

Since there are targets to be reached in education, assessment is inevitable. When the purpose is simply to proceed to the next level of education, without regard to any possible love of learning in the future, thoughts turn to which universities the student can be sure of getting into. The introduction of *hensachi* (evaluation by points calculated by systematic relative appraisal), in which students are graded in relation to their contemporaries, made it easy to select in a mechanical fashion the paths that the children were to follow, whilst promoting the efficient management of private crammer schools and preparatory schools and thus reducing education to a selection system like the quality controls that exist for merchandise. Faced by circumstances where everything in life is weighed, barcoded and predetermined, schoolchildren, whose will to do well was thus weakened, discovered a

pleasure in “bullying” brought on by the lack of fulfilment of their desires. Meanwhile, the desire to be able to turn into someone or something else grew, and this strengthened their susceptibility to idols. The number of modern animation programmes where the hero is not a wonderchild but a normal boy or girl is increasing and such programmes are popular. I believe that these facts reflect the situation today in which schoolchildren find themselves. The A-grade students who appear in supporting roles in these programmes are rarely given important roles, and I believe that this trend also reflects disillusionment at a society regulated by *hensachi*.

One day these ordinary boys and girls have a chance encounter with visitors from another planet when they are given unique powers, thus going on to become superhuman heroes and heroines. Usually they are extremely ordinary, or rather in most cases they are if anything close to being blundering drop-outs, with the conventional pattern being that when emergency strikes they bring their miracle powers into play and leap into action. When they do this, they invariably metamorphose, but this metamorphosing is different from that practiced by the heroes of former times (“Gekkō Kamen” and “Superman”, for example), who took pains in their everyday lives to conceal their powers as they pretended to be ordinary people. If we compare this “superhuman” type (in addition to the characters just quoted, we could cite “Maboroshi Tantei” [“The Mystery Private Eye”], “Mahōtsukai Sally” [“Sally and her Magic Spells”] and so on) with the “ordinary person” type (for example “Pāman” [“The Miracle Kids”], “Sailor Moon” [“The Miracle Girls in Sailor Suits”] and so on), the metamorphosing of the second group originates in the separation from ordinary reality caused by some unexpected encounter, for instance as they are “scouted” in the street one day. To put this a completely different way, this kind of unexpected encounter is like what happens if one is turned into a vegetable in an unexpected road accident. The possibility of metamorphosis through unexpected encounter thus exists equally for anybody. The appearance of so-called “*jari-tare*” or child celebrities, meanwhile, made people feel the reality of the metamorphoses of this “ordinary person” type and made them realise the futility of making an effort to do things. “Ordinary person” type animation embodies the environment experienced by school children in the modern age and their longings for metamorphosis. I wonder whether this situation is a phenomenon that can also be found amongst schoolchildren in other countries.

In an environment where education has become an exam-taking industry, schoolchildren are hoping for an encounter with a world whose value system is different from their own society, which uses *hensachi* as its yardstick. The world of *geinō*, or public entertainment, is one of these worlds. Getting in touch with or close to the spirit world is in fact similar. The fondness for and telling of ghost stories comes from a search for relief which the superhuman powers that issue from other worlds can provide. The children believe in (or at least imagine) the manifestation of these mysterious powers and in order to strengthen their belief they repeat stories of strange happenings as proof that other worlds do exist.

In folk societies there is an escalation in the materials used to affirm the ex-

istence of other worlds, from tales to pictorial representations to three-dimensional models or statues. The appearance of faked objects such as the remains of *kappa* or of mermaids is one example of this escalation. The various depictions of hell scenes, from *rokudō-e* (illustrations of the other world) and *nozokikarakuri* (picture-story show-scope) to haunted houses, are also of the same type, while the film industry is another extension and refinement of the process. Likewise with the "Seven Wonders of the School" we can see a trend whereby usually the higher the prestige of the school the more complicated and intricate the contents of the "tales." The need for credibility in the storytelling is perhaps what causes this and stories whose plausibility is poor and interest level low are rooted out while substitutions are made for paraphernalia which do not fit the period concerned.

### 3. THE UNWITTING CONSPIRACY OF GIRL PSYCHICS

Hopes for another world are also represented in beliefs in the efficacy of fortune telling (divination) and magic. In recent years a large number of specialist fortune telling shops, decked out with folky clothing and décor, have appeared around the busy areas in cities. This folky style shows that the main group of customers at whom the fortune-tellers are aiming their business is girls and young women not yet set in their adult lives. Since they are businessmen, the fortune-tellers think of what their customers would like, staking their survival on the adoption of the most up-to-date skills and knowledge available and of course always making changes to their own outfits and the décor of the shop. Yet however many the changes and whatever form they take, the fortune-tellers demonstrate no ideas of their own. They are incorporated into society as a means and system for rejuvenating (or reforming) the existing state of affairs, and while they do make some contribution towards directing society, they have absolutely nothing to do with looking into the future or searching for truth.

As they enjoy their "Kokkuri-san" fortune-telling (ouija-board-style, directed by the ghost Kokkuri-san), girl psychics create a play world following the exact procedures found in the fortune-telling and divination activities of the adult world. They act as advisers, telling friends' fortunes and making predictions to show off their psychic power, yet they are not trying to help anyone. With their fortune-telling, predictions and psychic encounters many sacrifice friends for the sake of an egocentric display of their own might. Meanwhile they project their basically pre-modern, esoteric world views—of spirits and other worlds, including views on the karmic significance of curses and so on—onto the set-up which the school presents and spread news of their exploits to all their fellows. I would like to give a few examples of some of these girl (and boy) psychics. Examples number 14 and 15 are of girl psychics with whom I had contact when I was at Musashino University of Art.

- 1) I saw a sort of ghost when I was at high school. One day I was on my way home from school and as I passed by this house there was an old man standing

there. But when I turned round to look back, there was nobody there. This happened three days in a row and then the next day there was a funeral ceremony going on at the house. I also saw something like an elf in a corridor at school. This thing looking like a man, about twenty centimetres tall, went past in a sudden gust of wind. At the time I was close to a girl who had good psychic powers and I think maybe my own psychic powers got stronger after they were touched off through contact with this girl. (Nishikawa Tomomi, Kōnan University)

- 2) I can sort of feel things and I know for example that whatever it is is “over there” and I can recognise the signs of something coming towards me. Since my second year at junior high school I have had plenty of premonitions in dreams. One of them, the most frightening, was when I had a dream that bridge girders in Hiroshima were falling down. I thought that it was scary the next morning, and then there were the pictures on television. When I am unhappy or worried about something, I often see a cat—if it is black, then things won’t work out; if it is white, then it will be all right. I sometimes get scared of my own powers, but I don’t know whether the powers are real or not. (Matsui Megumi, Kōshien Junior College)
- 3) One day a friend of mine who says she can see her guardian spirit told me exactly what my dead grandfather’s distinctive features were. She did the same for a pet that I used to have long ago. I was frightened because there was no way she could have known. (Murakami Tomoko, Matsuyama University)
- 4) He says that ever since he was temporarily paralysed by a ghost in his second year at junior high school, his psychic sense has become stronger and, although he doesn’t like it, he can see ghosts that are tied to particular places and ghosts that haven’t realised that they are dead wandering around. I think he is quite scared in fact. Apparently all his family have strong psychic powers. According to him, when he crosses level-crossings he often gets possessed by ghosts—he gets a terrible headache which doesn’t go away even if he takes medicines for it. So he gets his grandmother to chant Buddhist sutras for him. (Yamashita Yūji, Matsuyama University)
- 5) Miss T has strong psychic powers. One snowy night she was on her way home with Miss W by bicycle and there were two old women wearing white *yukata* (unlined cotton *kimono*) standing on a footbridge chatting. After they had gone past, she said to Miss W who was behind her “Those old women just now were odd, weren’t they?” but Miss W replied “What old women just now? I didn’t see them.” Then, as Miss T realised that it was odd to be wearing just *yukata* on a night when it was snowing, she said she thought she saw them again. (Kotō Taeko, Kōshien Junior College)
- 6) In my second year at high school I had two classmates, Miss A (a close friend of mine) and Miss B, both of whose psychic powers were strong. The two of them were always saying how it wasn’t nice to be able to see what they could see. We went off on a field trip to Hokkaido and stayed in this hotel. That

evening we were invited by some of our classmates to go to another room. For some reason, however, these two would not go in and in the end we went back to our own room. The next morning they were saying how there had definitely been ghosts in the other room and that was why they had not gone in, remarking on how the room had been far too cold.

One morning in our classroom Miss A said that there was a little girl with bobbed hair by the door behind us all. Ghosts and things are not very nice, so I quietly ignored her, but then during break Miss B said that a girl, five or six years old, had just been sitting next to me. I was surprised and instinctively looked over to Miss A who said that it was true. I felt deeply grateful then that I was not at all psychic myself. (Matsui Tae, Kōnan University)

- 7) An old childhood playmate of mine often says: "You shouldn't go over there, there are people sitting down there" when there is nothing there. She only ever tells me bad things, like that she can feel spirits gathering around or that she feels she can see a bad future for someone from a photograph. So I asked her to say something good because all she ever said was full of gloom. She replied that she only ever sees bad scenes and then told me some bad things that would happen when I was twenty-five. (Nagata Maho, Kōnan University)
- 8) There was a classmate of mine at junior high school who kept mumbling about there being a ghost next to people during lessons. She would say that the ghost was in the seat at the back or that now it was laughing and then in break she would sit facing the wall at the back of the classroom, saying that she was talking to the ghost. Rumors about her spread all through the school. (Morita Sawako, Kōshien Junior College)
- 9) Throughout the time I was at elementary school and junior high school I remember that there was always someone I knew who said that they had strong psychic powers. Whenever I was told all the details about what a ghost looked like, I thought what fun it would be if I could see them too. I don't think I was the only one who thought that either, as everyone was jealous of people who were psychic. (Ryōno Shiho, Kōshien Junior College)
- 10) A girl in the fourth year at elementary school who I tutor at home sometimes says that she can see a ghost behind my back. This happens when she is annoyed at something I have done or am making her do something she doesn't like. Actually I think she puts it like that because she doesn't want to vent her hatred on me directly. (Satō Miyuki, Kōnan University)
- 11) When Miura, the man who had his wife killed in Los Angeles, was busy gathering public sympathy for himself, there was a psychic person who was saying that he would be found out to be guilty. Apparently this person's house was full of poltergeists and knocking noises. From what I know, if you go to a place where ghosts appear with someone who is psychic, spectacular things happen. (Yanagihara Yoshiki, Matsuyama University)
- 12) There is someone in one of the years below me who says he has strong psychic powers and one day when he was at a friend's house he said that there were



lots of ghosts there. We later found out that he seems to say that wherever he goes. (Kuroshima Enji, Matsuyama University)

- 13) Whenever I am walking with him, we inevitably come across dead dogs and cats. He has realised that this is because he has psychic powers. He says he once saw someone drown themselves in the sea off Shio-no-misaki (Headland). He immediately ran over to the edge of the cliff, but apparently all he managed to do was to take a photograph of the person who had jumped. He has shown me that photograph. It looked to me like a doll, but he explained that the sea looked like a huge face with a mouth where the man fell in.

He later told me that when he is driving he feels scared that he is being followed. What clinched it was something that happened in the tunnel after you come off the Meishin Expressway heading towards Uji and Ibaraki, apparently at about one o'clock in the morning. There was a noise like a motor-bike which he could hear distinctly even though he had his car stereo on. There weren't any cars or anything around him though. He became frightened and tried to get out of the tunnel to escape. Just then, he says, for an instant he saw a headless motorcyclist. Another time there was apparently a dead cat lying on top of his car, which he really treasures. After that he says his psychic powers became stronger and he started finding dead dogs and cats. (Tsutsumi Daisuke, Kōnan University)

- 14) One day when we were giving a party in honor of the freshmen in our club at Mr K's apartment Miss M, who had just moved into an apartment for the first time, was there. She was a fresher at Musashino Junior College of Art, which is next door to the University, and had been invited by a classmate who was a member of the club. She was quiet, maybe because she felt shy about not being a member of the club. After being rowdy for a bit, because we were all young, single boys and girls, we started as usual telling silly love fortunes. I say fortune-telling, but really it is meant for boys and girls to be able to have some physical contact with each other, particularly the seniors and the cute freshers. Suddenly, however, Miss M burst out crying. Everyone looked over at her.

I was the one who was holding her hand. Paying no attention to the fact that everyone was looking, tears rolled down her cheeks as Miss M said: "I am terribly lonely. I haven't got any friends. I want someone to like me. I have a double inside my body called Reika, who died a terribly sad death. In her loneliness she is borrowing my body and looking for love. Please, I beg you, give me a hug." As she made this appeal she moved over and hugged me. We waited, but Miss M didn't really calm down. Someone suggested that we should put her to bed and we all ended up spending the night there together.

The next morning when we woke up Miss M had disappeared and in the end she didn't join our club.

- 15) One of the old girls from our club was a girl with striking big eyes and black

hair. After she graduated from Musashino Junior College of Art, she was working at a snack bar in the city and going to an art college in Kichijōji City. The seniors called her Ariko-san. This was what she was called at the snack bar. We called her that because we were all very fond of her. One night someone suggested going to see her because it was her day off, and a few of us went to pay her a visit. In her lodgings in Kokubunji City there were several half-finished oil paintings of Sōtai-dōsojin (a kind of guardian angel statue), known for his nature poems about her home town Azumino. As soon as we came into her room, she started talking about Kokkuri-san, the ghost and ouija board spirit. "A while ago this friend of mine, X, did a Kokkuri-san ouija. A and B and C were there and they said it was a really good one. They started off asking what all their names were and apparently it got them all right."

She did lots of tarot and palm-reading for us. Apparently with palm-reading she had only ever seen things for a girl in one of the years below who was very fond of her, but she explained all about fortune-telling for us and as she was now glad, now sad at each card she turned over, she had real authority over the gathering. With just the right look of innocence on her face she exuded a mysterious charm.

Girl psychics often say: "I am possessed by such-and-such a ghost." Perhaps we could call them background spirits or guardian spirits. After these spirits appear, the girls seem to realise that they are now fully-fledged girl psychics. Whether they discover by themselves or they are told by someone else, when they find out that they are ghost-carriers, it would seem that they are extremely moved. Miss M, for example, who blurted out about her double, Reika, says herself that she "was told about it through divination done by a classmate." If one pieces together what the excited Miss M says, she was apparently "given a detailed account of the way a girl called Reika had died" by her classmate and then when it was revealed to her that Reika after her tragic death had stolen into her own body, it had a deep impact on her. When I asked: "Is the name Reika written with the characters for 'spirit' and 'lustre'?", Miss M replied: "Yes, it is." This may be somewhat sentimental, but for her, having someone detect, or to put it another way accept, the existence of another girl within her body was important. She was also, according to her, "reminded" of an encounter she had had with Reika. This too she says was "correctly guessed in a divination." I sense some trick here. The finishing touches were all prepared for a psycho-operation to be performed on a girl who had lost any calm sense of judgement. It is too well thought-out for just a piece of mischief.

What, meanwhile, are the girls looking for with their insistence that they are girl psychics?

The answer is surprisingly simple. As it becomes a topic of conversation they have in common with others, they can easily be accepted into a group. As we find in example 9), where "everyone was jealous of people who were psychic," "having

psychic powers" attracts people's attention and provides the key to acquiring authority at a gathering and becoming the central figure. In an environment where boys and girls are assembled at an age when they are moving away from their parents, "having psychic powers" is an extremely useful expedient, allowing one to make fresh social connections, to stand in a prominent position amongst others and to be seen as an attractive person. In the admission that one is a girl psychic and in one's behavior as such, there is surely also a strong sex appeal aspect.

With the boy in the fable who cried wolf, when the wolf actually appeared he became the wolf's prey, but how is it with girl psychics? With them there is no entity that corresponds to the wolf. There is therefore no attendant risk to their lives. The girls often say, for instance, that they were visited by a ghost the night before, relating what happened with a weary look on their faces, but they have in fact suffered no harm, and as proof of that, they are actually coming to school every day. Like the little boy who lied about the wolf, the girl psychics disturb order and create trouble, but since they are playing in an imaginary world, they sustain no actual harm. In the way, however, that their minds get thrills of pleasure out of playing an agitative role for just that moment, they are just the same as the boy who cried wolf.

When one is absorbed in play, one becomes excited and carried away. In acting and direction one puts oneself at the head of a group. Just as the cock of the roost uses brute force to dictate to the flock, the girl psychics use their insistent claims that they are mediums to control the group and fulfil their self-centered desires for power.

The strange manifestations one comes across in schools disturb the actual location where education is being practiced. When classrooms slide into panic and the teachers are unable to deal reasonably with the situation, the hoop around the barrel—the pressure that has been clamped on the children—slips off and the humanness that has been forcibly kept under by the system bursts out free. It does not last long and everything quickly quiets down again, but the damage suffered by the school as it exposes its panic is, on the surface at least, extensive, while authority does not easily heal itself once scarred. In the middle of the night in headmasters' rooms there are as ever generation after generation of headmasters' portraits laughing smugly to themselves in testimony to this. The following are some concrete examples.

**Takarazuka Municipal Ryōmoto Elementary School**

(Niizawa Yūko, Kōshien Junior College)

- 1) A rumor spread about the second tap from the right in the quadrangle, that the third person to use it has water dyed red with blood come out, and it became forbidden to use it.

**Elementary School**

(Name Unclear) (Shimizu Shin'ya, Matsuyama University)

- 1) The science block, which was built on an old graveyard site, appears to be cursed. People say that when you go near it at night something appears. There were apparently two suicides there. Not even twenty years had passed since the school had been founded, but several science teachers had killed themselves. The headmaster apparently had an exorcism done with Shinto purification prayers.

**Elementary School**

(Name Unclear) (Okamoto Tetsuya, Matsuyama University)

- 1) There was a rumor about the picture in the music room laughing and quite a few people had seen it. The music teacher, who was a woman, was frightened and went for purification at a local temple before having the picture removed.
- 2) "Pokkuri-san" (same meaning as Kokkuri-san) was very popular at the school. One day three girls who were meant to have strong psychic powers and who often saw ghosts were doing "Pokkuri-san" in the toilets on the first floor. When they tried to draw it to a close, however, the ouija board spirit would not return to where it had come from. They therefore ignored it and stopped, but suddenly two of the girls flew out of the window. According to the remaining child the other two had seemed to float out of the window as though they were being pulled by something. This became a big problem and thereafter "Pokkuri-san" was banned.

**Hyōgo Prefectural Miki Higashi High School**

(Toyofuku Akiko, Kōshien Junior College)

- 1) Between ten and twenty years ago, after a pond had been filled in to build an extra school building, the headmaster, head teacher and dean all died one after the other in order of seniority. In order to soothe the anger of the pond's god a small shrine was built between a normal block and the special block and this brought the matter to an end.

**Kagoshima Prefectural Kikai High School**

(Taira Chizuko, Kōshien Junior College)

- 1) Several years ago someone drowned in the swimming pool and after that, if you went swimming outside lessons, your leg would get suddenly tugged by something. This continued to happen, until the after-class voluntary practice sessions were stopped. I was very upset because I liked swimming.

### High School

(Name Unclear) (Miyamoto Yoshiya, Matsuyama University)

- 1) People used to say there were lots of ghost stories at our school because it was on land that had belonged to someone who had died with no surviving relatives. Once when we were practicing for the Culture Festival a commemorative photograph was taken in the martial arts gym, but someone's head didn't show up in the print. Soon after a new school building had been finished, one of the seniors went to pick up something he had left behind after class and saw a cat dying, with blood coming out of its mouth. There was also another person who saw this. The next morning the senior, who was on day duty, went into the classroom, but the dead cat and the bloodstain had completely vanished. Some time later this senior and the other person who had seen the dying cat coincidentally happened to hurt the same part of their body and were put in the same ward in the same hospital. This is a true story. Whether the school grounds were cursed or there were ghosts wandering around I don't know, but it is different from the average fishy ghost story. I definitely think that "school ghost stories" constitute a hidden school tradition, while the "Cat's Curse" that I have just told actually did happen.

The school has had a purificatory exorcism done on it. Since our school was full of ghost stories, there was always one "witch doctor" among the students.

### High School

(Name Unclear) (Ōnishi Kiyofumi, Matsuyama University)

- 2) Our school was built about twenty years ago. Before that there had been a large pond. People had often drowned themselves in it. The sports teacher would often say that he had been running around on the playing field during lessons when his ankles were "grabbed from the ground." I am not too sure about this, but certainly people said their ankles would become suddenly heavy and that their Achilles tendons would start hurting.

### High School

(Name Unclear) (Umeda Ayako, Kōshien Junior College)

- 3) Our school buildings all look the same apart from the library on the first floor which has a different façade, and it is dark there even when you put the light on. There were many teachers and security guards who said that they had seen the ghost of a woman there. However, the teachers and other people didn't really talk about it to us students.

Education cannot set human beings free. The reason for this is because education is about managing people and training them. People who are somehow unusual are thus not welcome. The schoolchildren subconsciously want to disempower this kind of education. Ghost stories and divination like the "Seven Wonders of the School" and Kokkuri-san therefore become a form of recreation for them and command great interest. In his analysis of school ghost stories Tsumemitsu Tōru saw the toilet, where young rebels gather to smoke, as a place of symbolic defiance against the system and a stronghold of resistance [TSUNEMITSU 1989]. In fact, however, the stage set and props which the children use extend to incorporate everything within the school, and all these things are put to effective use exactly as their imaginations run. For the schoolchildren the school is a veritable fairyland, a natural theatrical space. In this theatrical space meanwhile, the self-centered desires for power of the girl psychics, who hold dominion over the realm of mystery, emerge as a demonstration of the individuality which is so often checked. As they play with the system in gay abandon, the girls are from the school's perspective offensive while they become at the same time objects of dread.

## APPENDIX

The ghost stories recorded in this paper and the many case studies about girl (and boy) psychics are all extracted, with the exception of the Himeji Municipal Yasumuro Elementary School examples and the experiences I had myself from association with girl psychics with whom I came into contact when I was at university, from reports which I assigned each period to students at universities and junior colleges where I was lecturing. I would like to express my warm gratitude to all the many students who kindly provided information.

The university and college names and the lecture titles and years are as follows:

Matsuyama University	Ethnological Studies 1991,1992 (collected lectures)
Kōnan University	A Special Study in Cultural Anthropology 1992 (second term)
Kōshien Junior College	Japanese Racial Studies 1992 (second term)

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