

# Kitsune Lore

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1997

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## **1 Content**

### **Foreword**

After three years of studying kitsune, I feel confident enough to try to make an organized list of kitsune lore, a bit of culture, and some theories on the background and reasons for many of the kitsune myths and legends. It would be hard to separate speculation from the legends of kitsune. There is no 'guide to kitsune society' out there, all we have are the legends and stories, really, and as such, each person has to make their own conclusions to what all these stories mean.

Personally, I think looking at the legends themselves only scratches the surface of what makes a kitsune do what they do. It also requires an understanding, to some extent, of kami, oriental traditions, and customs, as well as a knowledge of oriental spirituality. Calling a kitsune a simple ‘spirit fox’, or ‘demon fox’ isn’t enough. Finding out why is also important.

My first two attempts at making this thesis on the kitsune were met with mixed reactions, though overall, I feel it was taken well enough, to warrant me attempting to make the information more organized for those who care to use it.

To those of you who have read this, and given your own insights into the kitsune, I thank you. This is for you, for the most part. Your support and words of advice mean a lot, and have helped me continue to learn and understand what the kitsune are about, in spite of criticism and words of contempt.

To those who are reading this for the first time, I hope this answers a lot of questions, and I also hope that you don’t take this as gospel. I’ve been given the compliment of being one of the more knowledgeable people online in matters of the kitsune, but as I mention above, and later, a lot of personal opinion has crept into this work. I am not, in my opinion, an authority. Yes, I have read a lot of work, and yes, I have tried my best to answer a lot of my own questions, as well as those of others, but this doesn’t mean I have all the answers, or that I have come to all the right conclusions. A lot in here, I still question myself.

Reader beware.

Instead, please read this, and then make your own conclusions. If they don’t match mine, so be it. If you can aid me, or help me find more insight, then you have done me a great favour, and I thank you.

So welcome, read on, and enjoy.

Foxtrot

December, 1997

## **2 Prelude: Who helped out, and how this is possible.**

The legends of the kitsune are filled with contradictions and mystery. From their origins in India, through the orient, to Japan, they have gone through many changes, and have evolved from trickster spirits into priests, heroes, protectors, lords, and family guardians. They are the lowest villain, tormenting peasants for food and sport, to the personal aides of Emperors, protecting them from threats that could mean the death of all their people.

This thesis is for those who wish to know the kitsune, whether for personal use, or perhaps as a background for a story, or a game. I add to this

as I learn, and while I do not claim to be an expert, I am willing to stand by what I have written here.

### Sources

*Kitsune: Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance, and Humour*  
– by Kiyoshi Nozaki

This, perhaps, is the largest source of information of kitsune lore I've ever seen. If it wasn't for this book, I would not have even a tenth of the information I do have.

This book has many, many legends of kitsune. It also mentions the 13 races of kitsune, though it was through research that I learned that this *may* be tied to the thirteen elements.

*FoxKnight (Ben Ludwig) – A friend on alt.horror.werewolves*

FoxKnight is someone who deserves special thanks when it comes to my gaining of critical information. From him, I have learned of the kitsune's role in modern Japan, I have learned of how kitsune are different from province to province, and we have had long discussions about their theological and cultural significance. He has studied the religion of Japan, and has looked into the kitsune's place there, so I list him here as a source. To him, I give thanks.

*Anthony – Kitsune from FurryMUCK*

Anthony has done an amazing effort in collecting information on not only the kitsune, but on the fox's role in cultures in the West as well. Unfortunately for me, I am biased to attempt to keep my data limited to the kitsune, and the East, but I do suggest that others contact him if they wish another point of view on the kitsune, and the fox.

*Kij Johnson – Author of the short story 'Fox Magic'*

This was a wonderful short story, showing how things could have looked from a kitsune's point of view. She has, from what I heard, written an actual novel now that follows in the footsteps of this short story, but I've yet to read it.

*ShadowFox*

I don't know who ShadowFox is, but he was nice enough to give some terms for the different types of kitsune out there. I will list the names later, but I wish to give him the credit he is due. So, to you, ShadowFox, special thanks!

*Myrla (<http://myrla.tripod.com>)*

Myrla gets a very special thank you, for giving me the book 'Kitsune' that's listed up above. If it was not for her, I would have none of the information you see here. Thank you!

### 3 Introduction: What kitsune?

Note: As far as this thesis is concerned, the word ‘fox’ and ‘kitsune’ are interchangeable. This is because *kitsune* means ‘fox’ in Japan. Better to mention this now, and save confusion later, ne?

The best way to start this is by using an excerpt from *Kitsune*, the book mentioned earlier. It is simple, and right to the point.

‘Kitsune is an animal supposed to be mysterious, fascinating, and mischevious. And he is believed to be very grateful for the kindness done to him, as seen in many tales, and is also affectionate as revealed in some dramas. He is enshrined as a god because of his supernatural power. He is endowed with the subtle art of metamorphosis, and he is able to bewitch men in the guise of a charming girl. An exceedingly interesting and entertaining beast Kitsune is.’ (preface, page vii)

It is interesting to note that in this introduction, he mentioned ‘*he is able to bewitch men in the guise of a charming girl.*’ This is not a mistake at all. The kitsune are an effeminate race. Almost all kitsune, in the first place, are female, and those who are male are not shown to be overly so. The occupations that the kitsune take, and their mannerisms, are traditionally those of women in the orient.

The author also states that kitsune, in their current manifestation, were introduced to Japan from China and Korea. The Japanese liked the kitsune so much, that it was adapted to the Japanese culture, and went through an amazing metamorphosis.

The kitsune were first found, though, in India. The spiritual ties the kitsune have, and their role as tricksters are a part of Indian spirituality, very similar to the Ruksasha. In fact, the ‘White Ghost Tiger’ of China, an enemy of the Chinese kitsune, is most likely a translation of the enmity the Indian fox and the Ruksasha most likely had. The kitsune’s powers of illusion are also in common with the powers the Ruksasha had. As a last point of reference, the Ruksasha were known to devour mortals. The kitsune, according to some legends, also has vampiric tendencies, though instead of for mortal flesh, it is for mortal spirit. More on this later.

The word *kitsune* comes from two sounds in the Japanese language, *kitsu*, which is the sound of a fox yelp, and *ne*, a word signifying affectionate feeling. In ancient times, *kitsu* meant ‘fox’.

Depending on where you look, the kitsune have many forms, or appearances. This includes being foxes with magical powers, spirits who possess humans, the spirits of the dead, choosing the form of a fox instead of resting eternally, or simply spirits in their own right.

Trying to place a common thread on this, I decided to look at the kitsune from the spiritual point of view, and follow the thread as to why there are

so many differences in the stories. This required a look at possession, at first, and then at some other myths and legends dealing with the spirits of nature, and of the dead.

An excerpt from a recent email I recieved:

The new religion known in Japan as the Dancing Religion recently published an article which accuses Asahara Shoko, founder of the religion Aum Shinrikyo (the religion which gassed the Tokyo subway in March 1995, resulting in twelve deaths and thousands of serious injuries) of forcing his followers to become possessed by fox-spirits independent of Inari. The writer of the article remarks that Aum Shinrikyo followers exhibit “obvious signs of fox possession” and lists a few, including moving like a fox and “having the look of one’s soul being drawn out of one’s eyes.”

## 4 Kami: Kitsune and their spiritual nature

Kitsune, if accepted in their role as spirits, are at their core, *kami*. Kami are spirits of nature, in tune with the elements of the realm, and as such possess many abilities. A lot of the common folk in Japan would give offerings and worship the kami that resided nearby, and the kitsune were no exception.

Many legends, however, also place a lifespan on kitsune. From 900 years to 1000 years. From what I can guess, this is how long a kitsune can keep a mortal form. After this, the kitsune has gained enough wisdom/power, that they leave, and rejoin the Celestial Courts. Kitsune of over 900 years are few and far between, and very, very powerful.

As a spirit, kitsune require a connection to their element. This, from what I can gather, means that the kitsune usually stays in a domain bearing the kitsune’s element, or at least a natural representation of it. The kitsune’s connection to the element fuels the kitsune, giving them powers associated with the element. By drawing on the domain, the kitsune stays healthy.

Some restrictions would apply to kitsune, due to their nature, and because of their presence in Japanese society. These include some of the more traditional taboos of the orient:

1. As spirits, the kitsune are expected to serve the people who live on or near the land. In exchange, the people offer gifts, and prayers to the kitsune, to keep them happy. This is sort of a pact, where the kitsune follow a code of etiquette, in exchange for being tended to.
2. Kami, even with the strength of immortality, and all their powers, were still considered a ‘lesser race’. As such, they were restricted in what they could do to mortals, and how much they could influence

mortal lives. Mortals were the heroes of Japan, and kami, demon, or god could not sway a mortal, unless the mortal broke tradition. As long as this unwritten pact was kept, the mortal would win. This was, in part, something of a celestial balance, which the orientals firmly believe in.

For a kitsune to actively get involved, one strong requirement would be for either a prayer or offering to be made to the kitsune, or for someone to accept, willingly, the kitsune's presence and aid. Barring possession or taking mortal form, the kitsune has the option of simply just 'appearing', like any kami might. The kitsune's interference in mortal life in such a direct manner would have to be few and far between, however, since doing so is a disruption of the natural order, and would also take its toll on the land and people around it.

Being summoned, or manifesting, takes a lot of power, to allow the kitsune to 'be there' on the physical world. This is probably the most rare form of kitsune appearance. Very few legends have the kitsune in her full power, without a tie to the physical world. *Vampire Princess Miyu* has a kitsune possessing a mortal, and being forced out to combat the main character in it's natural form, and some kitsune, like Tamamo-no-mae require the death of many people.

A kitsune just 'appearing' means either the walls of the spirit world and the physical world are weak, or could possibly be taken as an omen. Whatever the reason, a manifested kitsune is a very rare and very noticeable event. Such a creature would require offerings, prayers, or some source of energy to be able to appear, or to remain for long periods, and is most likely in their domain.

Since the appearance of the kitsune is disruptive to nature's balance, the area they are in will most likely suffer. Sickness, blight, and other such plagues would be part and parcel of the kitsune's ongoing existence. This is one example of the kitsune's vampiric nature, as it drains the region to fuel itself.

Different forms of manifestation include the true foxform, the human form, or a combination of the two. In all cases, the kitsune is supernaturally attractive. Also, considering that the kitsune is a spirit, it could transform into any shape desired. Legends of kitsune transformation include trees, stones, an entire forest, and other such phenomenon.

## **5 Inari: Kitsune, the different types, and the religion that surrounds them.**

Kitsune in Japan are tied very close to Inari, the Shinto Fortune of Foxes and Rice. The association of Inari and the kitsune have made kitsune very

pervasive, since the Inari shrine is one of the most famous, and most numerous of any shrine in Japan. The symbol of Inari is the red torii (religious gateway), with the image of two white foxes. The white fox was the messenger of Inari, and shrines to Inari were found in almost every town, village, private manor, garden, and geisha house.

Inari is the Fortune of Rice, as well as kitsune. The suffix 'ri' is used in many religious words, and was used with the word *ine* (rice crop), to show the respect and reverence that the Japanese had for Inari. The lines between the deification of Inari, and his messengers, the kitsune, eventually became blurred. It became practice to build shrines to the kitsune themselves, instead of to Inari himself.

To quote Kitsune (page 12)

'Some people think that the white foxes, the guardians and messengers of the shrine, are identical with the diety Inari...'

Kitsune themselves are not dieties, but kami, spirits. It was almost inevitable, though, that they would be given praise and have shrines built to them, since this became standard practice to win the favour of all kami in the region. With the known fickleness of the kitsune, and their whimsical ways, it simply made sense to try to please them. The kitsune's ties to Inari just paved the way.

'... the god of foxes has never been deified in the Inari shrine as the object of worship, though there is a tributary shrine dedicated exclusively to the sacred white foxes in the precincts of the shrine...'

The kitsune of Inari became important enough that even at Inari shrines, they were given their own, special shrines. These white foxes are called *myobu*. The word *myobu* is the name of a court-rank for ladies in Japan. The kitsune were given special favour in Japan, including a caste within the courts, for those who served Inari. This has a lot of significance, because it means that kitsune are capable of being part of the royal lines during the Fuedal Japan, or even earlier.

Kitsune gained the title, according to a legend, when a woman named Shin-no-myobu proclaimed that her luck in finding a husband was granted by the messenger kitsune of Inari. Since then, they have been named *myobu*.

The temple of Inari became first associated with kitsune, when a kitsune couple sought shelter in the temple. They, and their five children, were given sanctuary and protection by Inari, in exchange for their servitude. Each swore ten oaths to Inari, and were given positions in the temple. Since then, decendants have served Inari faithfully.

The temple of Inari has two levels, the upper level, and the lower level. The Upper Temple was served by the male kitsune, and the Lower Temple was served by the female kitsune.

The male kitsune's name was *Osusuki*, and the female's name was *Ako-machi*. In some art depicting kitsune, the male is black, while the female is white. Either the black fox or the white fox are good omens in oriental culture, with the black fox being called *genko*, and the white fox being called *byako*.

These oaths allow the kitsune to gain power through the shrine itself, and to be able to live there, and find shelter. The kitsune, in turn, protects those who work and live near the shrine, and aid those who come to them for help. This especially applies to other kitsune. When a kitsune who doesn't serve Inari, a *nogitsune*, starts harassing the people near an Inari shrine, they can come to the kitsune of Inari for aid. The *myobu* then track down the offending *nogitsune*, and deal with it.

Following the culture of Japan, I can guess some of the other restrictions of the *myobu* and other kitsune.

*Myobu* would be restricted from 'getting involved' in mortal affairs. In Japan, it is considered rude and improper for someone to get involved in another's matters. It insinuated that the offended party could not handle their own affairs. The *myobu* would, being even more of an outsider than most folk, have to either not get involved, or find a way to be 'asked'. Unlike the *nogitsune*, kitsune of the Inari temples were not the tricksters and mischievous spirits of most legends. Instead, they were considered good omens, and guardians. Hence the term 'guardian kitsune'.

### **The Different Types of Kitsune**

In the book *Kitsune*, there are listed thirteen different types of kitsune. The named types, Celestial and Wild, are mostly associated with the kitsune who follow Inari, and those who don't. In other words, the *myobu* and the *nogitsune*.

The author only touches on the thirteen clans, unfortunately, and it took much work to find out any more. The two hypotheses that came from further research are either a) the kitsune are connected to the thirteen elements, or b) there are thirteen provinces in Japan, and the kitsune are from each province.

To be honest, I have *no idea* how many provinces are in Japan. If there are thirteen, that doesn't rule out the idea of the kitsune being connected to the thirteen elements.

All my research so far have come to the agreement on the kitsune being connected to the thirteen elements, since the author of *Kitsune* has identified *Heaven* and *Dark* kitsune. (Celestial kitsune and Void kitsune). Other research has explained how other animal kami have connections to the other elements, with *tengu* being connected to *mountain*, *thunder*, and *heaven*, and *tanuki* being connected to *forest* and *river*. Finding information on

the *tanuki* and *tengu* have been hard, and I am certain if I gained more information, other parallels would come up.

Below is the list of the thirteen elements, and what I have been able to learn of kitsune who fall under these categories. There is little that actually comes out and says directly whether this is true or not, but from what I have read on kitsune, and from what I have learned of kami, Japanese mysticism, Chinese mysticism, and popular belief in the Orient, this is probably as close as I will get to the truth for the present.

*Heaven:* Also known as *Celestial*, or *Prime*, this is one of the examples of the ‘High’ elements mentioned in *Kitsune*. Celestial kitsune are listed as one of the two most numerous types to exist, and most, from what I gather, serve Inari. *Tenko*.

*Void:* Also known as the *Dark* kitsune, Void kitsune are the second of the ‘High’ kitsune. Where Celestial kitsune are *myobu*, void kitsune are *nogitsune*. *Reiko*.

The rest of the kitsune fall under ‘wild kitsune’, or ‘low’ kitsune. They were not singled out, but since these are the other elements found in oriental legends, and in legends of the kami, it is safe to assume that the kitsune also fall under these elements.

*Wind:* Also known as air kitsune, or *kuko*. Most *kuko* are considered ‘bad’. Kitsune have been known to appear as wind, or create mists or fog.

*Spirit:* *Kiko* or *koryo*, another of the ‘bad’ kitsune, also called ‘ghost foxes’ or demon foxes.

*Fire, Earth, River, Ocean, Mountain, Forest, Thunder, Time, Sound:* While these are the other elements that are listed in the orient as ‘low’ elements, I have no names for the kitsune of these regions. As I have mentioned, the *tanuki* and *tengu* are connected to some of these elements, however, and they can be used to draw parallels.

I have made speculations on how kitsune interact with these elements, and possibly their manner of drawing on such to grant them their abilities. Due to wanting to keep speculation to a minimum here, and due to general opinion on such matters, I will not go into depths on the subject in this version. Instead, I ask those who are interested in oriental magic to look up legends on the kami, spirits, and heroes of the orient, or to look up Japanese magic.

### **Kitsune Behaviour**

Many things about the kitsune is mercurial, from their moods to their treatment of humans, to even the abilities some possess. Kitsune have a depth of personality as deep or even deeper than those of other Japanese characters. The reason for this, according to one source, is that the kitsune is the Trickster, in Japanese culture. They are there to teach those around them lessons.

Kitsune are not truly good or evil. Quite literally, as spirits, they embody the concept of the *amoral*, those who do not accept, or understand, the idea of Good or Evil, instead, paving the way of balance between the two.

With the kitsune, instead, the concept of right and wrong becomes the deciding factor. What they consider ‘right’, or ‘wrong’, though, depends on the culture, the region the kitsune’s in, what type of kitsune is there... many different factors.

Kitsune follow their own code of ethics, though they adapt the morals of those around them, more for the sake of being accepted than for any other reason. Unless they are *myobu*, they can be both allies and enemies to the mortals around them. If someone offends what a kitsune considers ‘correct’, they can become evil, malicious, and disruptive. If someone behaves according to their ethics, they will become polite, kind, and helpful.

This contradiction is evident in the sheer number of legends of kitsune, how they were feared and hunted on one hand, and revered and worshipped on the other. There are legends of kitsune guarding samurai for a favour done, while there are others of kitsune taking the desired lover of another samurai. There are legends of kitsune aiding the peasantry, while there is another of a kitsune stealing food from a lowly traveler.

Here are some common things the kitsune believe in:

Kitsune tend to live in families, and work together as much as possible. Lone kitsune tend to try and make families. Even *myobu* prefer to drive away *nogitsune*, instead of killing them.

Kitsune are notorious for seeing a weakness in someone, and aggravating the weakness, until others see it. To those who are ‘immoral’, they tend to ‘help’, making the person more immoral, or guiding the person down the path of self-destruction. To the ones they consider ‘moral’, they become friendly, and helpful, though they may still play a trick, or show a small flaw in the person, to teach them humility.

Kitsune have to keep their promises, and especially follow their word of honour. They become self-destructive if they break a promise, and when someone else breaks a promise, they become deadly enemies.

Kitsune are also a victim of their own feelings. A kitsune’s emotions can cause them harm, or distract them. The Sin of Regret can even kill a kitsune outright.

Kitsune do not accept aid from those who are not willing. Those who wish to aid a kitsune, must do so of their own free will. Kitsune are very loath to ask for help, and as such, most aid must come from another’s initiative.

Kitsune are emotional and very vengeful. Kitsune will lose their temper at the slightest provocation. Once someone has earned a kitsune’s enmity, the kitsune will begin enacting revenge that can become quite extreme. On the other hand, those who have earned a kitsune’s trust and loyalty will see a friendship that can last through many trials.

Freedom is very important to the kitsune. They do not accept being forced into something they do not wish, and do not like being bound or trapped. Doing so weakens the kitsune, and is frowned upon by other kitsune.

## 6 Possession: Different means to interact.

The tales involved with kitsune interaction among mortals is full of contradictions. As listed earlier, you had manifesting fox-spirits, women seducing samurai, foxes that scampered around and played tricks, and people possessed. This section deals with what I think is involved in all of this, and why kitsune legends have more than one reason for these stories. This comes from many sources.

Kitsune, being spirits, aren't expected to just 'appear'. Doing so is a risk to a spirit, leaving them vulnerable to attack. Also, considering the kitsune gains power from the land they are in, they risk harming the land by taking too much power, just to be 'there'.

As such, kitsune have learned a few ways to 'cheat', and show up more often. The following ways are possible tricks the kitsune have learned:

Possession – Simple taking over a target for a period of time. Possessing someone was not a long-term event as far as kitsune were concerned. A kitsune usually required the permission of the target, to be able to possess them, but that doesn't seem to always be the case. When the target was possessed, their will was completely taken over. When the kitsune left the target, they had no memories of what had transpired.

Possessing an unwilling target would mean taking over the person's will. This could result by the kitsune draining the target's will, or perhaps driving them insane. In either event, the kitsune is now inside a mortal body.

From an email, recounting a very recent kitsune possession:

Possessions by foxes include violent seizures in which the afflicted speak "in the voice of the fox", deriding humans and making demands of priests and practitioners through the body of the possessed. One ongoing story within the religion tells of a girl in Tokyo who was possessed by two hundred and fifty foxes at once... After being possessed by the fox and making demands of the priest for sake and food, the girl's priest ritually banished the fox, converting it to a kind of universal doctrine and sending it back to the shrine of Inari... It then possessed the girl again and attacked the priest, who "killed" it using **okiyome**, the practice of a kind of purifying ray from the hands. For months after, the girl would attack the priest suddenly, crying "Attack! Attack!" Reportedly these attempts were being made by the two hundred forty-nine in an attempt to avenge their master.

Kitsune who possess a mortal don't seem to retain most of their abilities. The taking of a mortal body gives the kitsune a semblance of mortality, themselves. One exception I read is that a kitsune possessing someone had on them a small object, called a 'kitsune ball'. This ball, when taken from the kitsune, caused them to whine and plead for it back. From what else I've read, the kitsune ball is a portion of their spirit, and could be the only means for them to regain their freedom, or it could hold the soul of the person they are possessing. I don't know for certain, either way.

Kitsune do not have to possess only mortals, mind you. A kitsune can just as easily possess a fox's body, and wander around as a fox.

Taking an Avatar – Possessing either a dead body, or an unborn child. This would be a more permanent means of being able to stay around. There are stories that mention when a person dies, they can become a kitsune. This could either be a kitsune possessing the body, or it could be a literal transformation, where the person steps 'outside' the cycle of birth-death-rebirth, becoming immortal instead. In any case, a kitsune can take the dead body of someone, and animate it since it has no soul inside it. Doing so would require that the body was not properly buried, and had not been consecrated.

While inside the body, the kitsune has some abilities that it would possess as a true spirit. This would mean shapeshifting to a lesser extent, and more often than not, the person would have a fox's tail. Kitsune illusions would still be available, as would causing bad luck.

Possessing an unborn child is another matter. While doing so, the mother would most likely become sick, or weak, as the kitsune invades her unborn child. When the child is born, it would most likely be sick too, until either it died, or the kitsune was successful in possessing it. The kitsune would be able to grow and adapt to mortal life, and eventually gain most of it's powers. A kitsune with a mortal body would be able to shapeshift, and live fairly well as a mortal.

From what I have read, most kitsune, when taking a mortal body, prefer to take the fox's form, instead of the mortal form. I think the conflict between the spirit of the kitsune, and the mortal soul, is inherently, to the oriental culture, 'bad karma'. With their belief in a natural order, anything that would disrupt this natural order causes sickness and pain. The possession of a mortal, especially the unborn or the dead, is an example of this disruption.

Aiding someone into becoming a kitsune – This is a draining process, but the results include fertility, the breeding of more kitsune, and a mortal, physical body. The transformation of a mortal into a kitsune is a rare legend, but has been mentioned in the past, and is still used in stories written in the present day. Other legends recall a mortal being *seduced* (mind controlled), and fathering children by the kitsune. The children have

always been kitsune, and are usually in foxform when born, though this latter is not always the case.

These children are mortal, but possess the usual 900+ year lifespan. This is probably the easiest way for a kitsune to be able to stay on the physical world, without disrupting the balance of nature.

**Cultural Note:** The crossbreeding of foxes and mortals was not really frowned upon by the oriental culture. To them, animal spirits often attempted to breed with humans, and often succeeded. The concept of ‘bestiality’ did not apply to these spirits, since most agreed, and a good number still do, that kitsune, tanuki, and other such creatures are not animals, nor are they mortal, but instead, are something very different.

With almost all cases of kitsune appearance, the kitsune wants something from the mortals around them. Kitsune are hedonistic and demanding for the most part, and are willing to ask or just take from those around them. Things could be as simple as a lemon-rice ball, which is a kitsune delicacy, to a simple kimono, to a samurai’s favourite geisha, or even to a samurai as a husband. If the kitsune is powerful enough, or old enough, it could even be an empire, and everyone inside it.

The reasons the kitsune are so demanding could be that with the sensations the physical world has to offer, the kitsune may be enraptured, and want to experience more. The more jaded kitsune, on the other hand, become demanding of more extreme things.

## 7 Feeding: Tapping the land, and vampirism.

To start this on the right note, I want to address something that I have come across often when I mention kitsune are *vampires*. The reactions I get when this is mentioned are varied, and are often either amusing, or aggravating, depending on the person spoken with.

There are many different sorts of vampires all over the world. Every society in existence has vampire stories, and each has their own unique twist on it. There are the blood-drinkers of Europe, to the vampires of the Native Americans which drain the warmth from the human body, to the Roman vampires who bite noses off.

Kitsune are none of these. Kitsune, like everything else, have their own place, and are unique. There are reasons why the kitsune are ‘vampires’, and it has nothing to do with our modern interpretation or the recent increase in the ‘gothic’ movement.

The kitsune have been compared with the European *Succubus* and *Incubus*, and with good reason. Kitsune are notorious seducers. In fact, the term for the entrancing effect of the kitsune on it’s target, whether this is mind control, or sometimes possession, is ‘*seduction*’.

Kitsune, as spirits, have a link to the land. This is a tie to the element the kitsune is ‘attuned’ to. As such, the longer a kitsune spends in the area, the more that element is noticed. When the kitsune becomes ‘real’, manifesting, it causes an effect on the environment. The gifts placed at shrines, or out in the open for kami are a way of giving the spirit power, and as such, the negative effects of the spirit being there are lessened.

Kitsune have been known to feed off of many things, including words, knowledge, writing, music, the land, and the people around them. Legends have people who take a kitsune lover, and waste away, needing a priest to separate the ‘link’ between the kitsune and her intended. This link allows the kitsune to drain the person, even when not in the same area as their lover, and the severing of the link doesn’t necessarily mean the death of the kitsune.

One of the most common forms of feeding from a target is through sex. Since kitsune are creatures who enjoy sensations in the first place, so this makes sense. The effect of lovemaking for a kitsune’s partner is, according to many sources, more pleasurable than most mortals can handle.

Kitsune seem to prefer willing partners. Those more willing to be with a kitsune do not seem to be affected as much by the effects of lovemaking, and if the kitsune and her mate are happy together, the mortal stands a very good chance of staying alive, if not entirely sane.

A case where a kitsune has taken from someone not willing has been listed in *Kitsune*, though this was done because a certain lord had been trying to have an affair with his maid, but couldn’t because of a jealous wife. The kitsune, instead, transformed into the lord, met the maid, and had sex with her in the samurai’s stead.

It is also mentioned that when a *nogitsune* does feed, they will tell their partner what is needed to alleviate the pleasure/pain, as a recompense for the service the victim provides. The reason behind this is that the sensations mating with a kitsune causes does not go away after the kitsune has finished. This tale, and the treatment, is listed in *Kitsune*, page 167-8 (the treatment was listed as ‘decocted buckwheat’, but I’ve since learned, from a book called *Kwaidan*, that this mixture is called *soba*, and was usually peddled at the side of many roads as a remedy.)

Kitsune who have mortal bodies most likely do not have the same effect on their partners as kitsune who are manifested or summoned. It could be, mating with a spirit has a detrimental effect on the mortal, and other legends of spirits would attest to this.

## 8 Magic: Kitsune abilities, foxmagic, and foxtails.

Kitsune were known for many abilities. The list of things kitsune were capable of seemed to change from story to story, but for the most part, many

things were common enough to warrant being listed as ‘kitsune powers’. These powers are called ‘fox magic’.

### **Illusion**

To a kitsune, their illusions are reality. What they make, for them, and for others, is as real as anything found or crafted in nature. Anything that a kitsune builds or transforms, becomes what the kitsune desired. A kitsune can make people, animals, and objects, which can’t be distinguished from the real thing.

The more kitsune team up to make things, the more can be made. A handful of kitsune can build a city if they desired.

### **Realms**

Kitsune, as spirits, have abilities that are hard to explain. One is the kitsune’s domain. Kitsune are able to make small pockets in reality, folding space and time to suit their needs. They can turn a hole under a floorboard into a small estate, and turn a small field into a kingdom, complete with people, animals, and weather. Time seems to flow faster inside these realms. For every day in the real world, up to seven years can pass in the realm, for those who are in it.

### **Kitsune Seduction**

A form of mind control, the kitsune ability of ‘seduction’ is one of the most commonly-mentioned skills in legends. By using their tail or tails in a swaying manner, or by meeting the gaze of a target, the kitsune is capable of taking over their mind. While under the control of the kitsune, the victim sees, thinks, and lives in a world designed by the kitsune, all inside the target’s mind. The target is controlled until someone breaks the magic the kitsune’s using. This mind control is purely by magic, mind you, and can be broken by certain magics, or wards.

### **Foxfire (Kitsune-bi)**

By rubbing their tails together, a kitsune can make lightning or fire. The kitsune can also, to a small range, breathe out fire. Kitsune can also make small ‘fox lanterns’, by producing small balls of fire to float around them, and guide their way. This fire can be used as a weapon, or as a toy.

### **Possession**

We went into detail about kitsune possession earlier, but to mention again... kitsune, being spirits, can possess things...

### **Shapeshifting**

A kitsune can transform into anything found in nature. This means they can turn into trees, forests, rocks, water, or other people. The limits are that the transformation does not give them the innate abilities of the form they have taken, and they are vulnerable to what can harm that form. Kitsune who are possessing someone can not use this form of transformation, unless they are doing it through illusions.

### **The Kitsune’s Ball**

Kitsune have things called kitsune balls. What this is, is a small white ball. It doesn't glow, and doesn't appear to have any powers. The kitsune guard this ball closely, and if you can get your hands on one, you can have the kitsune promise to aid you.

Most kitsune use the ball just like it appears... a normal children's ball. One theory, though, is that the kitsune places a portion of their power into this item, while possessing mortals, or while in human form.

### **Kitsune tails**

Kitsune are usually depicted as having more than one tail. The most commonly depicted are one-tails, five-tails, and nine-tails. For most kitsune, the number of tails shown is usually one. This could be for a number of reasons, though, including the idea that a kitsune could be in a human or fox, possessing it, or may have been born in a mortal body. In either case, why would the kitsune suddenly sprout more tails?

Some of the legends say a kitsune gains a tail every hundred years. Another myth says that a kitsune gains all nine tails when they reach nine hundred years old. When a kitsune becomes a nine-tail, their fur becomes either silver, white, or gold. This isn't a strong and fast rule, but it's what is seen most often.

To the kitsune, the number of tails they have are a show of prestige, skill, age, and rank. A kitsune may gain a tail for bringing honour to their family and clan, or could lose one for breaking kitsune law. A kitsune may also lose a tail, by dying, but this isn't always the case, considering Tamamo-no-mae was killed more than once, and was still a nine-tail.

Kitsune don't ask for extra tails. Instead, they are simply rewarded for their actions, or punished. Some kitsune train under others, hoping to gain wisdom and favour with their teachers. Some kitsune even take quests or go on journeys, to gain wisdom or power, hoping to find ways to gain in prestige and rank among the other kitsune, or with The Lady or Inari.

### **The Lady**

The Lady. Either a ten-tailed kitsune, or a thousand-tailed kitsune. Either can be correct, but I am not certain. As it stands, she is unique. There are no other kitsune with more than nine tails. She is the mother of the kitsune race, and all serve her in one manner or another.

I can understand her having a thousand tails, since having so many can make sense, from the Indian origins of this race. As it stands, she is unique, and she is the archetype of all kitsune.

From FoxKnight, when we discussed The Lady:

This rings of the Indian "Ten-thousand-armed-god" philosophy. This would also make sense if the Kitsune myth was originated in India, as you have said before.

New question: tail philosophy. The multi-armed god image is fairly easy to understand, as a metaphor of the multi-faceted

ways which the supreme being could interact with the earth (i.e. an arm for each member of the spirit hierarchy under the deity's control, or possibly an arm for each element or power it possesses) but what is the symbol behind the tail? This is certainly the driving force behind the mythological power of the Kitsune. Why the multi-tails?

FoxKnight raised a very good question when he asked me this, and I have yet to come up with a good answer. One theory someone presented to me, is that each tail is a step of enlightenment. They used this theory to argue that since there is only nine steps, there is no Lady, since she has ten (or more) tails. Hmm... could being truly enlightened surpass each step? If so, The Lady could have surpassed the nine-steps. It's worth debating, but not here.

### **Kitsune Weaknesses**

#### Religion

Those of certain faiths who actually possess faith (read: Clerics, Priests, Monks, Healers) do not see kitsune illusion. In fact, if they touch an illusion made by a kitsune, the illusion will dissolve. The destruction of a kitsune's illusions by faith is a traumatic event to a kitsune, as their concept of reality gets destroyed.

Continuing on this vein, members who have faith can also remove the connection a kitsune has with someone who has been fed from, preventing the kitsune from being able to drain them again. They can also ward themselves from a kitsune's innate abilities, or protect someone from said abilities.

## **9 Names and Famous Kitsune**

Kitsune come up with the most fascinating names. Each name is a mark on the country, stating the kitsune heritage, and what they have done. Many kitsune in legend have their names.

A kitsune with 'ri' in their name is most likely myobu, or tenko. Many words that are considered holy have 'ri' at the end of the name.

Ikari:	Anger of god
Okori:	Origin (also means 'power of Mother Nature')
Hikari:	Holy Light
Akari:	Light of god, Power of god
Inori:	Prayer
Mamori:	Protection
Minori:	Crops

### **Famous Kitsune**

*Kuzu-no-ha* (Arrowroot-leaf) was a kitsune in a 5-part play of the same name. She fled her family when her son learned of her true nature. Her son, once he had tracked her down, was rewarded with the ability to speak with all creatures.

*Cultural Note* The kitsune were so respected that in the No plays, where all actors wear masks, forcing them to use their bodies to tell the play, **nobody** wears masks when the play involves kitsune.

*Tamamo-no-mae*, also went by the name *Hua-yang*. She was a nine-tailed kitsune, and was responsible for the destruction of the king Pan-Tsu, in India, and has over a thousand innocent people killed by him. Later, Hua-yang fled to China, calling herself *Pau-ssu*. She joins the harem of Yu, king of the Chou dynasty. She eventually becomes his queen, and just to see her smile, Yu goes through unspeakable acts of cruelty. Under her guidance, the Chou dynasty falls.

Pau-ssu eventually fades/dies, only to be reborn in Japan, calling herself *Tamamo-no-Mae*. She joins the emperor's court, and the deaths continue. When she is discovered, she takes her true form, a golden kitsune with nine tails.

As an amazing coincidence, she is discovered by *Abe-Yasuchika*, a descendant of *Abe-Seimei*, who was the son of Kuzu-no-ha, the kitsune listed earlier. Kuzu-no-ha was more than likely *myobu*, and her child, of course, would be protecting of the emperor, as would his descendants.

She flees after she is discovered, and transforms into a large rock in the moor of Nasuno. In this form, she kills anything that approaches. Birds, people, and plants wither and die around her. It takes a priest with a magic hammer to kill her.

*Genkuro* is a kitsune, who's parents were 1000 years old, and were hunted to form a magical drum called a *tsuzumi*. The drum was used to seduce the Fortune of rain into producing storms at the sound of it. It is through a play about Genkuro that it is learned that kitsune are feminine in nature.

*Koan* (buddhist priest) was a kitsune, who would wander around, telling others he was a Buddhist Priest. He would be invited into homes, where he would tell sermons, and be treated as a proper guest. When he wrote his name for others, he would write his name, age, signature, and seal, along with the character of LONGEVITY.

*Jingoro* (enshrined) was recored as possessing someone when he thought the man was going to try to kill him. The man, to escape possession and not come to harm, had a shrine built to Jingoro, calling it Jingoro-Inari.

*Gengoro* (express messenger) was a kitsune known for having the strength, speed, and vitality of three people, and was known to do farmwork, and send messenges for the people he protected. He was later killed by a wild dog.

*Genkuro* (hair-cutter) was a kitsune who made a habit of tracking down women in Tokyo (then called Edo), and cutting off their hair and breaking pans.

*Hakuzo* (learned) took the form of a Buddhist scholar, and would talk and answer religious dialogues in the temples. He was seen as very wise, and very scholarly. When he was discovered to be kitsune, he vanished, but would later be seen hanging around outside the temple, preaching the doctrine of Buddha in the dark. Later, the temple was renamed Hakuzo Inari.

*Kojoro* (little maid) was the mate of Gengoro, and appeared to be a young maid of around 12 to 14. She would do duties for the temple she lived in, and seemed to be quite popular among the children of the region. She vanished after four years.

As is seen, kitsune do not use their real names when among mortals. The true name of a kitsune can be used to bind the kitsune, banish it, or work spirit magic on it. For the most part, the kitsune will take a name appropriate to the task at hand, or as a joke.

Kitsune are spirits, and can be controlled or manipulated as such, though the stronger the kitsune, the more dangerous it is to try this without their name.

## The End of the Tail

This essay you're reading is the end result of two and a half years of study. I hope you find it informative, and a lot better organized than the last two editions. Thank you for your patience, and please, if you would like to offer information, insight, or ask questions, contact me at:

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Thank you, and enjoy.