

Shaping Darkness in *hyakki yagyō emaki*

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Abstract

In Japanese culture, the *yōkai*, the numinous creatures inhabiting the other world and, sometimes, the boundary between our world and the other, are obvious manifestations of the feeling of fear, “translated” into text and image. Among the numerous *emaki* in which the *yōkai* appear, there is a specific type, called *hyakki yagyō* (the night parade of one hundred demons), where all sorts and sizes of monsters flock together to enjoy themselves at night, but, in the end, are scattered away by the first beams of light or by the mysterious *darani no hi*, the fire produced by a powerful magical invocation, used in the Buddhist sect Shingon. The nexus of this *emakimono* is their great number, *hyakki*, (one hundred demons being a generic term which encompasses a large variety of *yōkai* and *oni*) as well as the night—the very time when darkness becomes flesh and blood and starts marching on the streets.

Keywords: *yōkai*, night, parade, painted scrolls, fear

Izveleček

Yōkai (prikazni, demoni) so v japonski kulturi nadnaravna bitja, ki naseljuje drug svet in včasih tudi mejo med našim in drugim svetom ter so očitno manifestacija občutka strahu “prevedena” v besedila in podobe. Med številnimi slikami na zvitkih (*emaki*), kjer se prikazni pojavljajo, obstaja poseben tip, ki se imenuje *hyakki yagyō* (nočna parade stotih demonov), kjer se zberejo pošasti različne vrste in velikosti, da bi uživali v noči, vendar jih na koncu preženejo prvi žarki svetlobe ali skrivnosten *darani no hi*, ogenj, ki se pojavi z močnim magičnim zaklinjanje in se uporablja pri budistični sekti Shingon. Skupna vez na teh slikah na zvitkih je številčnost *hyakki*, (sto demonov, generičen termin, ki označuje veliko različnih prikazni in demonov), kot tudi noč – vsakič, ko tema postane meso in kri in začne korakati po ulicah.

Ključne besede: *yōkai*, noč, parada, poslikani zvitki, strah

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Liminality and the Birth of *hyakki yagyō*

Human experience has always set an invisible boundary between familiar and unfamiliar space, between known and unknown. The existence of this liminal space has undoubtedly shaped our sense of reality, and, as a result, people have tried to fill in the blanks and picture the other world by means of their imagination: a realm inhabited by completely different creatures which bear only a slight remembrance of the human world (Komatsu 2003, 7). The average man can only reach the boundary between the two worlds, but a person invested with special powers is able to go beyond it. Consequently, the stories about the other world are actually tales about the liminal space between the two worlds. For instance, demons (*oni* 鬼) would appear in the mountains or by the gates or bridges because such places have turned out to be portals to the other world. Moreover, the other world does not necessarily points to a certain space, but it also refers to a peculiar time. The roads on which people go back and forth in daylight can easily change into travel routes for supernatural monsters at night (Komatsu 2003, 14–15).

One of the most notable examples in this respect is *hyakki yagyō* 百鬼夜行 (the night parade of one hundred demons). The notion of *hyakki yagyō* (alternatively pronounced *hyakki yakō*) provides a metaphor that transcends historical contexts and serves as a useful point of view through which to interpret many discourses (Foster 2009, 8). The idiom usually indicates a procession of numerous demons and *yōkai*¹ who flood the town streets at midnight. The term also refers to the painted scrolls (*emakimono* 絵巻物) which depict such a nocturnal parade. It was advisable to avoid venturing out on evenings when the *hyakki yagyō* was known to be on the move. Such times and places represent danger: they were forbidden, unpredictable, beyond the control of human culture (Foster 2009, 9). The *Rekirin mondōshū* 暦林問答集 (*Collection of Discussions of the Forest Almanac*), composed by the historian Kamo Arikata (?–1444), advises people against leaving their homes between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. Arikata also identifies the nights when the *hyakki yagyō* are likely to go out: the nights that follow the days of the first, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and eleventh

¹ *Yōkai* 妖怪 is often translated in English as monster, spirit, goblin, ghost, demon, phantom, specter, fantastic being, lower-order deity, or more amorphously, as any unexplainable experience or numinous occurrence. The term *yōkai* is more like a contemporary choice; other words are also invoked such as *bakemono* 化け物 (changing thing), the more childish *obake* お化け, and the more academic-sounding *kaii genshō* 怪異現象 (strange phenomena). (cf. Foster 2009, 5)

zodiac signs. Besides washing one's hair or cutting one's nails at the wrong time on the wrong day, venturing out at certain moments of night was a common interdiction among the numerous taboos observed in ancient Japan (Lillehoj 1995, 16).

Hyakki yagyō in Literature

The *Ōkagami* 大鏡 (*The Great Mirror*), a fictionalized history from late 11th or early 12th century, refers to an episode in which Fujiwara Morosuke² (908–960) came across a parade of demons while traveling through Kyoto one night in his ox-drawn carriage:

I have not heard what the month was, but he lowered his carriage blinds late one night near the Nijō intersection, while he was traveling south from the Palace along Ōmiya Avenue. “Unyoke the ox and get the shafts down. Get the shafts down”, he shouted. The puzzled attendants lowered the shafts, and the escorts and outriders came up to investigate. Morosuke lowered his inner blinds with meticulous care and prostrated himself, baton in hand, as though paying someone every possible mark of respect. “Don’t put the carriage on the stand”, he said. “You escorts stand to the left and right of the shafts, as close to the yoke as you can, and make your warnings loud. You attendants keep shouting too. Outriders, stay close to the carriage.” He began a fervent recitation of the *Sonshō Dharanī*. The ox had been led out of sight behind the carriage. After about an hour Morosuke raised the blinds. “Hitch up now and go on”, he said. His attendants were completely at sea. I suppose he kept quiet about this incident until much later, and then spoke of it only in confidence to close friends, but a queer tale is bound to get out. (McCullough 1980, 136)

The *Sonshō Daranī* 尊勝陀羅尼 (San. Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī) is an incantation praising the protective powers of the deity Butchō Sonshō 仏頂尊勝 (San. Vikīrna-uṣṇīṣa), revered as a manifestation of one of the five aspects of the Buddha's wisdom. In Japan and China, the recitation of this *dharanī* was considered effective in warding off evil. The magic of the *Sonshō Daranī* is narrated in a *setsuwa* 説話 from the *Konjaku monogatari* 今昔物語集 (*Collection of Tales of Times Now Past*), early 12th century, according to which a young courtier named Mitsuyuki witnessed a procession of demons one night at the Shinsen-en, a large garden in Kyoto. Fortunately, Mitsuyuki's nurse had sewn a copy of the *Sonshō Daranī* into the collar of his robe, and this saved him from the malevolent power of the nocturnal spirits (Lillehoj 1995, 16–18).

² Minister of the Right under Emperor Murakami

Coined at the end of Heian and the beginning of Kamakura period, the word *hyakki yagyō* also appeared in the *setsuwa* collections *Uji Shūi Monogatari* 宇治拾遺物語 (*Collection of Tales from Uji*), early 13th century, *Kohon Setsuwashū* 古本説話集 (*A Collection of Old Tales*) in which demons and monsters emerge one by one in front of the travelers who dare stay overnight in a deserted temple or mansion (Komatsu 2009, 9). In *Uji Shūi Monogatari* the *oni* do not come forth in the town or in the deserted temples, but gather in the mountains and partake in a banquet, as in the famous fairytale *Kobu-tori oni tachi* (*The Demons Who Removed the Old Man's Lump*) (Ikeda 1971, 503A). In the account from *Uji Shūi Monogatari*, a monk is travelling alone through the province of Settsu (near the present-day Ōsaka) and he comes upon a deserted temple. He decides to stop there overnight and starts chanting an incantation to the deity Fudō. But all of a sudden, a crowd of one hundred people with torches in hands appears out of thin air, marching into the temple. When they get closer, the monk realizes that they are not actually humans, but very weird creatures, some with only one eye, or some with horns. The monk is terrified and he spends the whole night praying to Fudō to protect him. At sunrise, when the group of *oni* leaves, he is shocked to discover that actually the place he stopped overnight was not a temple at all. He can hardly find his way back, but, eventually, meets some travellers who inform him that he is in the province of Hizen (an area corresponding roughly to Saga and Nagasaki prefectures), miles away from Settsu (Foster 2015, 16).

According to the above examples, we can identify three types of plots within the *hyakki yagyō* series: the type of the nocturnal march across the streets of the capital (*miyako ōji kōshin-gata* 都大路行進型), the haunted house type (*bake yashiki-gata* 化け物屋敷型) and the type of the demonic egression in the mountains (*sanchū shutsubotsu-gata* 山中出没型) (Komatsu 2009, 13). The *otogi zōshi* 御伽草子 (companion tales) of the Muromachi period conjured up other *hyakki yagyō* episodes. In the same period, about 60–70 kinds of *emaki* and *e-hon* 絵本 (illustrated books) translated into image this anthropomorphic invasion of *yōkai* (Tokuda 2009, 29).

Multiplicity and Mutability in *hyakki*

The term *hyakki* 百鬼, literally meaning one hundred demons, does not necessarily encompass a clear-cut number (one hundred), but it refers to a multitude of *oni* and ill-shaped beings called *bakemono* (shape shifters), including *yōkai* (Komatsu

2010, 8). The traditional image of a Japanese *oni* is that of a creature with horns, bulging muscles, skin tinted in red, blue or even green, wearing tiger-skin loincloths and carrying an iron club. The *oni* taking part in the *hyakki yagyō* in the *setsuwa* collections are portrayed as: beings with three hands and one foot or with one eye; fierce beast-like creatures with horse/bull/bird/deer heads; demons with two long growing horns from their heads, dancing on one leg; naked creatures of eight *shaku*³ high with the skin so black that it seemed coated with lacquer (Komatsu 2009, 9). In the 14th century *emaki*, *Ōeyama e-kotoba* 大江山絵詞 (*Picture scroll of Mt. Ōe*)—Itsuo Museum of Art in Osaka—, the head of the terrifying *oni*, Shutendōji⁴, is being carried by several warriors.

The enormous head has, obviously, horns, many eyes and a toothy grimace that stretches from ear to ear. While the shape-shifting powers of the *oni* made it possible for them to take on human form, their gruesome appearance would reflect their evil dispositions, including their penchant for human flesh. (Reider 2003, 133)

Nevertheless, the word *hyakki* does not only refer to demons, but also applies to *yōkai*. *Oni* and *yōkai* do share certain similarities, but they are different creatures. All *oni* bring to life the negative human emotions such as envy, jealousy and hate and are able to materialize the strange phenomena that could be neither seen nor described by the human beings. In other words, they give substance to human anxiety. They are supposed to look frightening or aggressive (with horns, claws and fangs) because they are the very embodiments of man's worse fears. Such creatures have crystallized the negative aspects of the shadows and death, while their diversity, typology and the manner in which people perceived them showed meaningful insights into the human history, as well as into the Japanese imagination and creativity (Komatsu 2008, 125–26). Buddhist eschatology never fails to show us the image of hell (*rokudō-e* 六道絵), inhabited by hordes of

³ Eight feet (about 243.84 cm)

⁴ Shutendōji, the chief of a band of *oni*, lives on Mt. Ōe, abducting people, particularly maidens, enslaving them and eventually feasting on their flesh and drinking their blood. The concerned Emperor Ichijō orders the warrior hero Minamoto no Raikō and his men to stop the abductions by vanquishing Shutendōji and his followers. When he receives the imperial order, Raikō is a little alarmed because *oni* are known as powerful transformers who can turn into any being or thing. But the warriors disguise themselves as *yamabushi* (mountain ascetics) and, with some divine help, they find the *oni*'s Iron Palace where through guile, deception, and with some divine help, they eliminate Shutendōji and his *oni* band. (cf. Reider 2003, 139–40)

demons who induce even more terror and dread to the sinners⁵. According to Anesaki, the Japanese *oni* “belongs to a purely Buddhist mythology” (Anesaki et al. 1928, 283). However, *oni* was also the term used in *onmyōdō* 陰陽道 (the way of *yin* and *yang*) to describe any evil spirits that harm humans. In early Onmyōdō doctrine, the word *oni* referred specifically to the invisible evil spirits that caused human infirmity (Komatsu 1999, 3). Ancient Japanese literature has assigned a number of different Chinese characters to express the term *oni*. Among them, the character used now is 鬼, which in Chinese means invisible soul/spirit, both ancestral and evil, of the dead. According to the *Wamyō ruijushō* 和名類聚抄 (Japanese names—for things—classified and annotated) (ca. 930s), a primitive Japanese encyclopedia, *oni* is explained as something that is hiding behind things, not wishing to appear. It is a soul/spirit of the dead (Reider 2003, 134–35). Moreover, Yutaka Tsuchihashi assumes that the word *oni* came from the pronunciation of *on* 隠 (to hide) plus “i” (Reider 2010, 5).

On the other hand, *yōkai* were, in the first place, called *obake* and they referred to tools, objects or animals animated by a spirit. As both *oni* and *yōkai* lurked in the darkness, at first glance they were easily mistaken for one another and the painted scrolls depicting the *yōkai* (*yōkai emaki*) were commonly known as *hyakki yagyō emaki*⁶, although, in some cases, no demons appeared in the scrolls (Tokuda 2009, 26-27). From the Kamakura period onward, a prevalent concept was that of

⁵ The *Jigoku zōshi* 地獄草紙 (*Hell scroll*) and *Gaki sōshi* 餓鬼草紙 (*Scrolls of the Hungry Ghosts*) produced at the end of the Heian period under the influence of Buddhist thought and the belief in *rokudō* articulated people’s fascination with the unknown and out of ordinary things as unique ways of perceiving fear. To put it simply, these paintings were guided tours of hell. In the 12th and 13th century Japanese stopped fearing hell and *rokudō-e*. Creatures like the ox-headed *gozu* 牛頭 or the horse-headed *mezu* 馬頭, the demons that guarded the entrance to the afterlife, became mere literary characters that gave testimony for the general preference for *setsuwa*. Across the ages, the numinous fear was sublimated into earthly laughter and the *emakimono* started to be painted as a means of entertainment (Komatsu et al. 2009, 52). In pre-modern Japan people viewed the unknown world either as terrifying or surprisingly charming (Komatsu 2009, 3), but the plot in *hyakki yagyō* became redundant in the Edo period. The *yōkai* were no longer perceived as characters in a contextualized story, but as wondrous “things” that are worth looking at. In the middle of the Edo period, a new field of study became prominent: the *hakubutsu-gaku* 博物学 (lit.: museum science). This new science started to index and label almost all things in the known world, animals, plants or minerals. Illustrations were attached to the explanations to make the description true to life. A new trend started and there were even requests for paintings or drawings representing *bakemono* (Kagawa 2009, 45).

⁶ Some *emaki* belonging to Sūfuku-ji in Gifu Prefecture (referred to as the Sūfuku-ji scrolls) are thought to be the earliest surviving examples of the *tsukumogami emaki* genre (illustrated painted scrolls of transfigured objects), a genre that is similar to the *hyakki yagyō emaki* but that does not depict the *tsukumogami* in night parades. (cf. Lillehoj 1995, 21)

tsukumogami 付喪神, animated household objects with arms and legs. According to *Tsukumogami-ki*, a Muromachi *otogi zōshi*, when an object reaches one hundred years, it transforms, obtaining a spirit (*seirei* 精霊) that can deceive people's heart. The word is thought to be a play on *tsukumogami*, with *tsukumo* indicating ninety-nine and *gami* (*kami*) denoting hair; the phrase can refer to an old man's hair as an indication of old age (Foster 2009, 7). Sometimes, the *tsukumogami* have been placed at the crossroads between humorous and grotesque.

Taking into account the large variety of the characters in the *yōkai emaki*—ranging from man-made objects (*tsukumogami*) to mammals, fish, shell fish and plants—we can pinpoint several major categories of *yōkai*: animals (as in *Chōjū jinbutsu giga*⁷ or in *Tawara no Tōda*⁸ *emaki*, Konkaikōmyō-ji, Kyoto); plants (the tree-like *yōkai* painted by Kanō Tan'yū in *Hōshakukyō zukan*⁹, Kyoto National Museum); objects (as in *Fudō Riyaku engi emaki*¹⁰, Tokyo National Museum; *Tsuchigumo sōshi emaki*¹¹, Tokyo National Museum; *Yūzū Nenbutsu engi emaki*¹², The Art Institute of Chicago, first scroll/Cleveland Museum of Art, second scroll); and *oni* (Komatsu 2008, 166, 175–76).

The discourse of *yōkai* is hybrid: it weaves together strands from other discourses—encyclopedic, scientific, literary, ethnographic, folkloric, visual—to create a form of its own (Foster 2009, 3).

Because history and folklore could be passed on in both written and oral form, and because people live in a multi-layered culture, the image might sometimes convey the meaning more accurately than the text¹³ (Komatsu 2009, 2).

⁷ Belonging to the Kōzan temple in Kyoto, *Chōjū-jinbutsu-giga* 鳥獣人物戯画 (lit. Animal-person Caricatures; English: *Scrolls of Frolicking Animals and Scrolls of Frolicking Animals and Humans*) is a famous set of four *emakimono* drawn at the mid-12th century.

⁸ *Tawara Tōda* 俵藤太 (*My Lord Bag of Rice/Rice-bag Tōda*) is a fairy tale about a hero who kills the giant centipede Seta to help a Japanese dragon princess and is then taken to the underwater dragon palace to be rewarded with rice bags.

⁹ *Hōshakukyō zukan* 宝積経図巻 (*Illustrated Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*).

¹⁰ *Fudō Riyaku engi emaki* 不動利益縁起絵巻 (*Narrative Picture Scroll of About the Priest Shoku's Devotion to his Master Priest in a Serious Illness*) (E Museum).

¹¹ *Tsuchigumo sōshi emaki* 土蜘蛛草紙絵巻. This scroll chronicles the adventures of Minamoto no Raikō, ending in the slaying of the Tsuchigumo, a monstrous spider.

¹² *Yūzū Nenbutsu engi emaki* 融通念仏縁起絵巻 (*Illustrated Scrolls of the History of Yūzū Nenbutsu*).

¹³ When we refer to artistic works such as *Chōjū jinbutsu giga*, we tend to place more emphasis on the visual element than on the narrative, but if we underline the importance of the text, *iruibutsu* 異

Yōkaika—Creating yōkai

Along the ages, Japanese artists have tried to picture demons or other creatures dwelling in the Dragon Palace, in hell, or in the upper realm. At the beginning they imagined demons with growing horns, claws and tiger-skin loincloths, but, above all, merciless and dreadful. Secondly, they picked up a certain animal, be it fish or insect, and they altered its realistic depiction by adding human-like features. In the third place, the objects were painted in motion (walking, talking, dancing), as transfigured objects. The specters of the other world were regarded with a considerable amount of fear, therefore, the paintings deliberately boosted the violent aspect of *yōkai*.

One of the visual means to stimulate fear was to paint the monster as big as possible, especially in contrast with humans (exaggerating its size and dimensions). The menacing figure would loom on helpless, tiny human beings threatening their life with its dark presence. Moreover, the notion of mutability provides an important key to the ontology of the mysterious (Foster 2009, 6). Hybridization is another method employed to wipe out the distinction(s) between species and to cause uncertainty, insecurity and anguish. For instance, by painting two eyes, a nose and a mouth on a *tsunodarai* 角だらい¹⁴ whose shape resembles a human head, the artist conjured a *yōkai* that is both human and object or, to be more specific, that is neither human, nor *tsunodarai*. Or, by drawing men's heads and putting them in a tree, the humans and the fruit fuse together into the uncanny anatomy of *jinmenju* 人面樹. This operation is called *yōkaika* 妖怪化, the transformation into *yōkai* (Wakasugi 2009, 18–19), by means of which the traditional rules of Arithmetic and Biology are partially or totally abolished: two eyes become one, three or even multiple eyes; the head is placed on the torso or the eyes are relocated on the palm of the hand. Besides hybridization and hyperbolization, *yōkaika* can be achieved by many other ingenious strategies such as increasing or decreasing the number of the body parts; the standard Mathematics plays tricks on the onlooker by multiplying or reducing the number of body parts. A suggestive example could be *Hitotsume kozō* 一つ目小僧—a *yōkai* with the appearance of a child with only one eye in the middle of the forehead, dressed in Buddhist garments. Another effective method is that of

類物—types of *otogi zōshi* depicting strange beings or phantasms—are more relevant in this respect (cf. Komatsu 2008, 234–35).

¹⁴ A two-handled keg for water

wiping off certain body parts: the *yōkai* Dō no tsura 胴面 underwent such a “operation” only to become a headless creature with the nose, eyes and mouth located on the torso. *Yōkaika* can also reshuffle certain body parts, placing them in the most unexpected places of abnormality. As the name suggests, the *yōkai* Tenome 手の目, has his eyes on the palm of his hand in an original attempt to reverse the two perceptions (sight and touch). The artist’s skill can create many other *yōkai*-like shapes by putting grotesque emphasis on certain body parts. The *oni* in *rokudō-e* have bulgy muscles or the neck of Rokurokubi 轆轤首¹⁵ stretches uncontrollably during sleep. There are some animals, like the cats or the dogs that walk freely on their four paws, but a biped position will push them closer to the human beings. The cat Nekomata 猫又/猫股 is famous for its biped position as well as for its spirit that may haunt humans with visitations from their dead relatives. Needless to say, animals can easily turn into *yōkai* if they are dressed in human-like clothes and walk on two legs. The same holds true in the case of plants (trees), which fundamentally cannot move, but, by means of *yōkaika*, are endowed with legs to roam from one place to another (Komatsu 2008, 194–95) (as Tolkien’s famous ents—middle-earth plants). Actually, the *yōkai* in the *hyakki yagyō emaki* are pictured as having animal-like characteristics (*dōbutsuka*) or demon-like features (*onika*) rather than being personified (Komatsu 2008, 1998).

The representations of *yōkai* have numerous other examples in literature as well as in fine arts. Such works were indexed into three major types: the other world type (*ikai emaki taipu* 異界絵巻タイプ) such as *Urashima Myōjin emaki* 浦嶋明神縁起 (*The Tale of Urashima*) or *Amewakahiko zōshi* 天稚彦草子¹⁶ (*The Companion Tale of Amewakahiko*); haunted house type¹⁷ (*obake yashiki taipu*) such as *Tsuchigumo sōshi* 土蜘蛛草紙 (*Picture Scroll of an Earth Spider*) and one hundred demon parade type (*hyakki yagyō taipu*). Above all, *Chōjū jinbutsu giga* had, obviously, a major influence on *hyakki yagyō emaki* since the two *emaki* caricatured the human life style, the everyday tools, the human garments and speech (Komatsu et al. 2009, 54).

¹⁵ A type of female-*yōkai* whose neck might stretch or even come off and fly around during sleep.

¹⁶ According to *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, Amewakahiko was first sent from the Plain of High Heaven to the residence of the earth *kami* Ōkuninushi, to pacify the Central Land of Reed Plains and engage in negotiations for its transfer to the Heavenly Grandchild.

¹⁷ The *obake yashiki* お化け屋敷タイプ (haunted houses) were once places inhabited by humans and then abandoned. After that, they no longer belonged to civilization and the human realm, becoming the dwellings of *yōkai* and *oni*.

Procession and the Night (*yagyō*)

The procession theme is not singular in the Japanese fine arts and originated in a 12th century illustrated record of the Emperor Go-Shirakawa (1127–1192) travelling from one place to another, but maybe the most famous procession examples are *Nenjū gyōji emaki* 年中行事絵巻 (*Scroll of the Rituals in Daily Life*) and *Ban Dainagon ekotoba* 伴大納言絵詞 (*The Tale of Great Minister Ban*). The image of the procession was either part of an illustrated story (*monogatari-e* 物語絵) or an independent representation of a festival parade. In the 14th century, the image of the procession (*gyōretsu-zu* 行列図) became a well-known motif in painted scrolls, thus *hyakki yagyō emaki* followed the general trend of picturing such processions (Wakasugi 2009, 22–23). At the beginning, the procession had aristocratic overtones, but later on, in the Muromachi and the Momoyama periods, common people were able to take part in many festivals and to enjoy the flamboyant parades.

Text and Image—a Fading “Matrimony”

Gradually, the story behind the image became so shallow that it almost faded away, since the artist’s major concern was to depict as many *yōkai* and *oni* as possible in a colourful display of shapes, forms, ages and moods. The *hyakki yagyō* in Spencer Collection at the New York Public Library [Spencer #112] is one of the rare scrolls that still have written explanations (*kotoba-gaki* 詞書) accompanying the drawings. The *emaki* opens with forty-four lines telling of a man besieged one night by a horde of demons in a deserted house east of Sujaku Avenue, south of the Central Gate in Kyoto. The house belonged to a *chūnagon* 中納言¹⁸ who had abandoned it when the capital was moved to Fukuoka in the summer of 1180. Before leaving, the counselor entrusted the house to the care of an old servant.

One day, a visitor arrived at the mansion. Rejoicing in his newfound company, the old caretaker sat the visitor down and began telling him stories. He continued into the early hours of the morning. As the night deepened the old man dozed off, and at the hour of the ox [2:00 a.m.] the visitor began to sense a strange presence at the center of the house. Then, from outside, a weird creature called out in an eerie voice, “Excuse me!” “Who’s there?” came the answer, and from the back of the house emerged the frightening sound of footsteps, the likes of which the visitor had never heard before. Terrifying

¹⁸ Middle counselor

forms appeared. There were the beings who had been making the strange sounds. The creature who had called out explained, “I was living in the Ōmiyadono of Konoe Kawara, but with the recent move of the capital I lost my home. I wanted to find another place to live. That’s why I came here.” Immediately an unearthly voice answered, saying, “Welcome!” and the creatures all rolled about in delight. One had the appearance of a man, while the others had assumed all sorts of frightening forms. In fact, they were so terrifying that they took the visitor’s breath away. Following the first segment of text is a painted scene of the *chūnagon*’s estate, with a garden at right and a dilapidated mansion at left. The artist has rendered the structure with tattered bamboo blinds and *fukinuki yatai*¹⁹, allowing us to see straight down into the room in which the visitor and the servant sit face to face. This inclusion of human figures and landscape details is another feature that makes the Spencer scroll unusual as a *hyakki yakō emaki*. The calm of this first scene is shattered in the second scene by two bizarre creatures that rush across the threshold of the *chūnagon*’s home. (Lillehoj 1995, 11–13)

Later on, in the 19th century, we encounter another variation the night-procession in an *emaki* painted by Egawa Buson (1887–?), property of the Boone Collection of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago (referred to as the Boone scroll [Boone #266010]). In this *emaki*, Buson transplanted the fantastic shapes of the creatures in earlier scrolls and arranged the demons in an original manner. The story is revealed exclusively through images, but the text no longer exists.

The first scene of the Boone scroll shows two demons speaking excitedly, perhaps about events taking place on the other side of a large red gate that seems to mark the edge of a deserted temple compound. Scene two has a pair of demons crouching behind a birch tree staring at a small spirit, which flies through the air toward an ox-drawn carriage at the far left. Dark mists well up around the carriage as it makes a mad dash to escape. Its attendants glance over their shoulders as though sensing the presence of demons approaching from the rear. Scene three reveals that the clumsy, ox-drawn carriage was too slow—the malignant spirits descend upon the carriage en masse. In scene four, a swirling sea of dark mists and smoke part to show demons completing their destructive spree amidst the last remnants of the carriage. Only when the fifth and final segment of the scroll is unrolled do we find ourselves face to face with the person who was riding in the carriage: an elegant gentleman sitting in a meadow surrounded by long, bending blades of grass and pale wild flowers. The gentleman seems quite calm. Eyes closed, he fingers a string of white prayer beads. As dawn breaks and the gloomy mists lift, only one pitiful demon remains. This petite female demon crouches on the ground clutching at her horns, with her long, dark tresses flowing onto the earth in front of her.

¹⁹ 吹抜屋台, A blown-away roof

Far to the left, a sliver of the sun peaks out above a bed of clouds. Soft morning light warms the scene and sends the reassuring message that the world is now safe for its human inhabitants. (Lillehoj 1995, 14–16)

Two Polarities in the *hyakki yagyō emaki*

Historically speaking, the painted scrolls of *hyakki yagyō* came forth at the end of the Muromachi and the beginning of the Momoyama era, in a period when old literary productions were revived in form and style to compete with new works (Komatsu et al. 2009, 52–53). The above-mentioned Spencer scroll was particularly important because of the annotations about the uncanny invasion of the supernatural creatures into the human realm, but other *hyakki yagyō* versions could be found in Kyoto City University of Arts, Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of History, Ōkura Shūkōkan Art Museum and Tokyo National Museum etc. Besides these painted scrolls, there are two *hyakki yagyō emaki* that actually made history in Japanese fine arts: *Hyakki yagyō-zu* (found in Shinju-an, temple Daitoku, Kyoto), and *Hyakki no zu* (property of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto). The Shinju-an *emaki* seems to be one of the oldest *hyakki yagyō* scrolls, even if it is a copy. The original probably dates back to the Muromachi period (Tokuda 2009, 27–28).

According to a legend about its origin, an itinerant priest decided to spend the night in a deserted temple near Fushimi.

Shocked to hear an unearthly din around midnight, the priest discovered a party of demons and ghosts entering the temple. He fled from the startling sight, shutting himself in an empty room and staying there until daybreak. At dawn he made a hasty departure, heading for the nearest village where he told the villagers of his ordeal. Soon the news reached the artist Mitsunobu, who wanted to paint a convincing likeness of the demons and went straight to the haunted temple. But, though he sat up all night, he saw nothing unusual. In the morning, however, when Mitsunobu opened the shutters, he witnessed an amazing sight: the walls of the temple were covered with an intricate array of ghoulish images. He pulled out his sketchbook and began to copy the weird figures. As he was drawing, Mitsunobu realized that the images were caused by cracks in the damp walls filled with mildew and fungi in a variety of phosphorescent hues. Although enchanting, the tale of Mitsunobu and the haunted temple is probably fictional, invented decades or centuries after the Shinju-an scroll was painted. (Lillehoj 1995, 10)

Almost in the middle of the unfolding Shinju-an *emaki* there is an intriguing scene that drew the researchers' attention: a huge red demon who releases the other

yōkai hidden in a crate. The previous interpretations claimed that the demon was threatening the smaller *yōkai* locked in the box, but it is more likely that the demon was actually joining forces with the creatures, trying to take them out to parade on the streets of the town. There is also another important detail in the painted scroll: behind a screen, a few *yōkai*-ladies were painting their teeth black, a job to be carried out inside the house. This image appears before that of the huge red demon and it clearly reveals spatial indicators, exploring the double folded space of *soto* and *uchi*: the familiar place within the house, and the untamed vastness of the outside world. In other words, the crate filled with monsters struggling to break free marks the boundary between two kinds of spaces. Outside the box, the *yōkai* flock together into the darkness, infesting the streets of the city with terror and grotesque laughter (Tokuda 2009, 27–28). But their whimsical march comes to an end with the first beams of light. A sizzling red globe dominates the last part of the painted scroll, scattering the parading creatures and pushing them back into the darkness they came from. Some researchers interpreted the red ball of light as *darani*²⁰ *no hi* 陀羅尼の火, the fire produced by the magical invocation performed in the Shingon sect, whereas other scholars saw it as the representation of the rising sun.

On the other hand, the *Hyakki no zu*, became the property of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in 2007, therefore it has been a relatively new *hyakki yagyō* “discovery”. Since then, the debates about its accurate age have been going on among the scholars. For instance, Tsuji Nobuo considers that *Hyakki no zu* was a copy created in the Hōei period (1704–1711), but Hayakawa Monta thinks that it was drawn in the Genroku period (1688–1704). Wakasugi Junji, from Kyoto National Museum, estimated that the painted scroll had originated in the mid-17th century. This assessment makes it the second oldest version of *hyakki yagyō emaki* in the history of Japanese fine arts, after the Shinju-an version. Moreover, Wakasugi claims that the original work from which it was copied could be even older than the prototype from which the Shinju-an version was drawn (Komatsu 2008, 55–56).

²⁰ *Darani* (*dharani*) were known in Japan as supernatural incantations from the early 8th century. In the exoteric Mahāyāna sutras, *dharani* are most often represented as mnemonic devices for memorizing scriptural passages and as charms for the protection of those who recite the sutras. They often contain indecipherable phonic fragments, and in Chinese scriptures, they are invariably transliterated (rather than translated) from their original Sanskrit forms. (cf. Kimbrought 2005, 4–5)

The characters marching in *Hyakki no zu* play an important role in the multi-layered imagery of *yōkai*. In contrast with the Shinju-an *emaki*, in which more than half of the characters are tools and instruments (*tsukumogami*), the *yōkai* in the *Hyakki no zu* are quite diverse and some of them seem to have descended directly from the 12th century painted scroll, *Chōjū jinbutsu giga*. The first to appear “on the stage” is a bird-headed *tengu* 天狗, holding in hands two burning bones; he is followed by another *tengu/oni* with an *eboshi* 烏帽子²¹ on his head, carrying a halberd on his shoulder; a frog with an *eboshi*, riding a little dragon-headed turtle, is looking back in surprise at the *oni* with the halberd; a *yōkai* with a snail on his head is pulling the dragon-headed turtle by the string; a *nyoi* 如意²² that has taken on the form of a dragonfly is also looking back at the small group of riders; a little girl (probably a *hamaguri*²³-*yōkai*) with a shell on her head is pointing at the *nyoi*-dragonfly; her *sazae* サザエ²⁴-headed mother is holding her by her hand; in front of them, a pair of sharp clawed-legs are sticking out from under a white piece of cloth that covers a strange *yōkai*; a topless and furry *yōkai*-lady, dressed in a crimson *hakama* 袴²⁵, is smiling widely, showing her blackened teeth and pointing her finger at the characters behind her; a *baku* 貳²⁶-looking pet is marching in front of the female-*yōkai*, tied to a red string held by the strange, furry lady; a *yōkai* with *eboshi*, holding in his right hand a loquat leaf and half of a *shakubyōshi* 笏拍子²⁷ and in his left hand the other half, is moving forward, to the left of the *emaki*; a masked *yōkai* is trying to put on a wig while looking in a mirror; in the upper part of the *emaki*, two foxes clad in human garments are talking to each other (one wears a loincloth and an *eboshi* and the other has a topknot; in spite of his human appearance, the fox’s tail that comes out of the white loincloth reveals his true nature); the next in line is a red demon who is trying to threaten the character in front of him; a small dragon with the body covered by a white cloth is looking back at the red *oni* who is closing in; nearby, a dancing *tsunodarai-yōkai* is dipping his ladle in a *yōkai*-vessel full of blood; the *yōkai*-vessel is set on a small wheeled vehicle pulled by a wild boar, whipped by a black kettle-*yōkai*; a cat

²¹ Originally a headdress worn to indicate a man who had passed his “coming of age” ceremony.

²² A priest’s mace

²³ Clam

²⁴ Turban shell

²⁵ *Hakama* is a traditional Japanese clothing resembling a shirt, but with divided legs, similar to trousers; it is narrower in the waist and looser in the leg.

²⁶ Looking like a tapir, *baku* is a *yōkai* that is said to devour dreams and nightmares.

²⁷ A musical instrument

skeleton holding a *gohei* 御幣²⁸ is dancing, following a bony character with another *gohei* in his hand; a five-storied pagoda dressed in red clothes with *susuki* 薄²⁹ in his hand is accompanied by another five-storied stone pagoda, with a protruding belly; a tiger clad in priest's clothes is looking to his right, while a wolf dressed in a similar way, holding a folding fan, is looking to his left; a frog wearing an *eboshi* on his head, stares back half in terror, half in surprise; a red demon, screening his eyes with one hand, glances in the distance at the menacing black clouds; dark fog/smoke, blown by a huge black silhouette, covers the entire sky; the *yōkai* are terrified by the continuously spreading cloud: a monkey-*yōkai* is running for his life, with his *eboshi* slipping off his head; a rabbit dressed in human clothes is looking back in terror and a demon is desperately crawling back, trying to get away of the dark cloud. Black figures are sprouting out of the cloud, marching in a terrifying cavalcade. The wind is blowing hard in a menacing vortex that sweeps off any living creature. The dark stormy procession ends with a Satan³⁰-like image riding a horned animal.

In the painted scroll of *Hyakki no zu*, the dark cloud at the end spreads over almost one third of the *emakimono*. All *yōkai*, *bakemono* and *hyakki* are running desperately for their lives as the dark cloud is growing bigger and bigger, like a huge body of a dragon. Is there anything inside the black cloud that is even scarier than the *yōkai* themselves? Whirlpools are spinning chaotically within the cloud as the lightening is striking here and there in a dreadful symphony. A tornado is almost sucking in all the *yōkai* that dared stay nearby. At the end of the scroll a black warrior-like shape with a horned helmet is riding a horned animal (Komatsu 2008, 51). But do the *yōkai* and *oni* come forth in the shadows of the night or are they the very source of this gloomy turmoil?

Kondo Yoshihiro asserts that *oni* were created by people's fear of the destructive power of nature, which manifests as thunder, lightning, storms and earthquakes (Kondo 1966, 14). This is probably a result of a combined visual and

²⁸ A staff with plaited paper streamers used in Shinto

²⁹ Japanese pampas grass

³⁰ According to Komatsu Kazuhiko, the painted scroll of *hyakki yagyō* found in Shinju-an and the painted scroll in the International Research Center for Japanese Studies were, at the beginning, distinct *emakimono*, but they appealed to the artists so much, that they were, at a certain moment, compiled into one painted scroll. This *emakimono* that unifies the two painted scrolls is nowadays property of Tokyo National Museum (cf. Komatsu 2008, 7). The red globe of light is still there, to scatter the *yōkai* procession, but on the left side, some black horned shapes linger in turbulent obscurity.

auditory intensity of the experience, coupled with the threat of potential, instantaneous destruction. Among the natural forces, lightning is most strongly associated with the *oni* (Reider 2003, 141).

In *Chōjū jinbutsu giga*, some frogs, rabbits and monkeys are having a party, but in the end all the fun is spoiled by the emergence of a snake that scares and chases away the animals. The whole magic melts away in an instant and the “enchanted” partying frogs return to their usual life. Similarly, the sun or the *darani no hi* or a dark menacing cloud puts an end to the merry *yōkai* procession. Even if it is not explicitly expressed in the *emakimono*, one can easily imagine that afterwards all the *yōkai* taking part in *hyakki yagyō* resume their ordinary shape, turning back into animals and household utensils, as if the magic spell had been broken (Reider 2003, 216–17).

Night processions of demons are also found in the early paintings from China. One of the most typical examples includes the commanding figure of Zhong Kui, in Japanese Shoki 鍾馗. In China, as well as in Japan, Zhong Kui has long been revered as the Demon Queller, the vanquisher of evil beings and ghosts, able to command 80,000 demons. He is regarded as a guardian spirit and his image is painted on the gates or on the tiles on the roof of houses. Scholars believe that the original legend of Zhong Kui dates back to the Tang period (618–907). In the 8th century Wu Daozi painted Zhong Kui. Although the original painting disappeared sometime before the Ming period (1368–1644), his dramatic portrayal of the Demon Queller was imitated by generations of Chinese artists who painted a procession of demons marching at night under the command of Zhong Kui (Lillehoj 1995, 19).

The Edo scholar Yamaoka Genrin (1631–1672) explains the *oni* as follows:

heaven and earth, mountains and rivers, trees and grasses, water and fire, stones and dirt, all sentient beings are *yin-yang*. The work of *yang* is called *kami*, and the work of *yin* is named *oni*. Since all the bad and evil belong to *yin*, the souls of wicked people are called *oni*...their [wicked] souls have nowhere to go and nobody worships them. So they linger in the air and cause various problems [to humans]. (Reider 2003, 144)

If we are to take into account Yamaoka Genrin’s definition of *yin-yang*, then we might anticipate two possible closures in *hyakki yagyō emaki*. The *yang* type emphasizes light and its apotropaic attributes. In the Shinju-an painted scroll, the light, associated with either the sun or the *darani no hi*, scatters the *yōkai*

procession and restores the human world. On the other hand, the *yin* type seems to reach its highest point by bringing on a gloomier view and by conjuring black, demonic silhouettes. The *yin* category could also be called the Shoki-type, because, the parade is dispersed by a more powerful demon who is able subdue the other *yōkai*. The *Hyakki no zu* belongs to the latter type. In this respect, both the Shinju-an version and *Hyakki no zu* seem emblematic because they offer different perspectives on the same phenomenon, the night procession of *yōkai* on the streets of the capital. The polarities of *yin* and *yang* herald either the qualities of light to prevent evil, or the overwhelming demonic force that vanquishes other lesser demons and *yōkai*, and cast them off in a whirl of growing darkness.

Night as the Locus of Creative Plurality

Night sets the *yōkai* on the move, but daylight disperses and weakens their evil forces. When the *yōkai* emerge in the dead of the night, the darkness is so deep that no moon and no stars can be seen up in the sky. However, in addition to the darkness of the night, there is also a different kind of darkness given off by the bodies of *yōkai*, like a black fog. If these creatures had shown up in the middle of the day, they would have screened the sunlight with a threatening dark cloud (Kagawa 2009, 43–46).

In the painted scrolls of *hyakki yagyō*, the darkness becomes the nexus of all possibilities, the locus of creative plurality. The dim light favours ambiguity, and ambiguity invites open scenarios. Darkness polarizes all known elements into new forms of gloomy imagination. The branches of a tree could easily pass for the arms of a voracious monster; the roar of a nearby waterfall becomes the wail of a huge phantasm that drives away the belated travelers. Within this quixotic process of re-creating reality, the imagination fills in the blanks whenever the eye fails. The glance picks up a couple of familiar elements, and the mind turns them into re-created *yōkai*-like certainties, invested with multiplicity and substance, even with personality and feelings. Mutability and emotional distress forge the very essence of *hyakki yagyō*. The night parade enables us to apprehend the plurality of darkness as if staring in the distance at numberless, hazy forms that might be there or that were never there.

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