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Japanese Demon Lore

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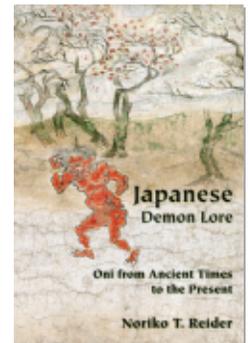
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Shuten Dōji (Drunken Demon)

*A Medieval Story of the Carnavalesque and the Rise of Warriors
and Fall of Oni*

Legends of Shuten Dōji

From Simple to Complex: Troubling the Demon

MORE THAN ANY OTHER TIME IN JAPANESE HISTORY, the medieval period was the oni's time. "Shuten Dōji and Ibaraki Dōji, so infamous that they are considered oni's pronoun, were born in this era," Komatsu Kazuhiko writes, "...many oni in performing arts and literature were also born during this time [the medieval period]" (*Shinpen Oni no tamatebako* 306). The story of Shuten Dōji is one of Japan's most renowned legends,¹ with its title character possessing all the oni's characteristics delineated in chapter one. The tale belongs to the genre *otogi zōshi* (companion stories), short stories written from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century for the purposes of both entertainment and moral or religious edification.²

According to legend, during the reign of Emperor Ichijō (r. 980–1011), people begin to disappear mysteriously from the royal court. Abe no Seimei (921?–1005), an official diviner of the Heian court, discovers that it is the

1 The many versions of "Shuten Dōji" are the most famous monster-conquering stories in the genre of *otogi zōshi* and have exerted more influence on later literature of monster-conquerors than any other work of *otogi zōshi* (Ichiko and Noma 78). See also Sakakibara, "Ōeyama ekotoba shōsai" 144; Nomura 72.

2 The definition of *otogi zōshi* as a genre is still controversial among literary scholars. For the study of *otogi zōshi* in English, see Kimbrough, *Preachers, Poets, Women, and the Way*; Steven 303–31; Mulhern, "Otogi-zōshi" 180–198 and "Analysis of Cinderella Motifs" 1–37; Keene, *Seeds in the Heart* 1092–1128; Skord; Childs 253–88; Araki 1–20; Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of a National Literature" 279–309; Putzar 286–297.

work of the archfiend, Shuten Dōji, the chieftain of the oni. Shuten Dōji and his cohorts abduct and devour young Kyoto maidens. The warriors Minamoto no Raikō (or Yorimitsu, 948–1021) and Fujiwara no Hōshō (or Yasumasa, 957–1036), as well as Raikō's *shitennō* (the four heavenly guardians) are charged by the imperial court to destroy Shuten Dōji and his evil minions. The warriors, with the help of their attending deities, carry out their mission, ultimately slaughtering the oni, rescuing the surviving captives and restoring peace and the security of the country. While on the surface Shuten Dōji provides a potent literary example of “good” triumphing over “evil,” internal tensions in the text blur these distinctions. Although praise for some central authority³ is clear, especially when the virtues of the emperor and his warriors are extolled, the voice of the marginalized “other” also resonates throughout the text in the form of the arch demon himself. Thus, the representation of the Japanese imperial court and the noble warriors fighting on its behalf as the force of all that is “good” becomes a troubled one. To explicate this alternate viewing of the drunken demon and to prize out these tensions within the text, Shuten Dōji will be examined through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the *carnavalesque*.

Taking its name from the raucous medieval celebration of Carnival, carnivalesque literature inverts power structures, demystifying and lampooning that which a particular culture holds serious or sacred. The carnivalesque upsets the structures of everyday life by its flagrant violations of class, gender, and religious boundaries. Examining the carnivalesque elements of *Shuten Dōji* sheds new light on certain aspects of Japanese culture, and a subversive and marginalized group identified as threatening “evil” by Japan's central authority becomes more familiar and sympathetic. Who is Shuten Dōji and what is his identity within Japanese society? In spite of socio-cultural

3 In the texts of *Shuten Dōji*, the “central authority” signifies the Heian imperial court with the emperor and the Fujiwara regency as its center. In the extra-literary context, during the fourteenth century when *Ōeyama ekotoba*, a picture scroll, was produced, tension existed between the imperial court and military government in terms of political power, with the latter increasingly exerting influence on the former. In the ensuing periods, while the imperial court clung to its cultural heritage as the main source of tradition, its political power declined precipitously. The political power rested completely in the military government at the time of the Shibukawa version of *Shuten Dōji*. Thus the central authority of the Shibukawa version in the extra-literary sense indicates the Tokugawa government. Whether the central authority signifies the imperial court, military governments, or both, depending upon the periods, the *oni* remain in varying degrees outsiders or strangers.

differences⁴ between medieval European and Japanese traditions, the confluence of discursive practices in this medieval Japanese text and Bakhtin's theoretical ideas regarding the carnivalesque offers striking parallels. The application of Bakhtin's insights to Shuten Dōji yields a deeper understanding of the Shuten Dōji story and of the way society, in the world of the text, functions.⁵ Thus viewed, the texts of *Shuten Dōji* offer possibilities of multilayered readings, on multiple levels of significance, into the complexities of what might otherwise be dismissed as a simple moral story from a distant time. The texts of *Shuten Dōji* offer people of this current age a chance to rethink and repossess these tales, breathing new life into heroes, demons, spirits, and texts that would otherwise be lost in too simplistic a reading.

Texts of Shuten Dōji

Although we know of the tale of Shuten Dōji through the written texts, evidence suggests that the story derives from a much older oral folk tradition.⁶ As is the case with popular stories with an oral origin, the story of Shuten Dōji has an array of textual versions, interpreted and presented differently. Essentially, though, there are two versions of Shuten Dōji: the Ōeyama (Mt. Ōe) version and that of Ibukiyama (Mt. Ibuki). The major differences between them are twofold: one is the location of the oni's fortress. In the

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- 4 There may have been no equivalent carnival festivities in Japan where the carnival laughter lampooning the serious (religious) rituals and customs in society were openly practiced. And yet, in Japan similar epistemological concepts of heaven and hell were strongly forwarded by Buddhism. Importantly, I believe, binary concepts of sacred and secular as well as distinctions of high and low strongly existed, although this binary concept is similar to yin and yang rather than water and oil. As Barbara Ruch comments, the world of commoners (*shomin*) portrayed in *otogi zōshi* is cheerful and hopeful as a whole. Authorship of *otogi zōshi* is not known, but contributors to the creations of the texts must have included not only educated people but also itinerant performers of low social status (see Ruch, *Mō hitotsu no chūseizō* 34, 143–84.) Bakhtin's utopian "folk" is unspecified, but I would interpret that it would include religious and secular itinerant performers who help the creation of *otogi zōshi*.
- 5 Bakhtin's *carnavalesque* is applicable across barriers of culture, time, and language. A twentieth-century Russian, he wrote about medieval French works; *carnavalesque* is certainly a useful tool in examining medieval Japanese literature.
- 6 *Otogi zōshi's* anonymous authorship, brevity, and context indicate an oral-derived literature (Steven 303–331). Many works in this genre originated in history or legend and evolved in the oral tradition before being recounted in written form. This is characteristic of a folklore process (Honko, *Textualising the Siri Epic*). Standardized expressions and the mnemonic repetition of keywords and phrases often typify this oral-derived literature. Another indicator of *otogi zōshi's* origin in oral tradition is the "emphasis on events and comparative lack of concern for details typical of auditory literature" (Steven 305).

Ōeyama version, the fortress is located on Mt. Ōe whereas the Ibukiyama version situates the oni's den at Mt. Ibuki. The second difference is that the Ibukiyama version includes a section of explanation on Shuten Dōji's *honji*, that is, an explanation of their "true nature" or "original form." Thus, in the Ibukiyama version we are told that Shuten Dōji is *dairokuten no maō* (the evil king of the Sixth Heaven in darkness) and the archenemy of Buddha. Likewise, the text tells us that Raikō's *honji* is Bishamonten (Vaiśravaṇa); Emperor Ichijō's, Miroku (Maitreya); and Seimei's is Kannon-satta (Kannon Bodhisattva).⁷ The Ōeyama version does not contain this section, with the exception of the oldest text of this type entitled *Ōeyama ekotoba* (Picture Scroll of Mt. Ōe, early 14th century).⁸ It is now generally accepted that the Ōeyama version came first. Satake Akihiro asserts that the Ibukiyama version was formed by incorporating a historical incident, the murder of a bandit named Kashiwabara Yasaburō at Mt. Ibuki in 1201, into the Ōeyama version (*Shuten Dōji ibun* 119). The earliest extant text of the legend is the above-mentioned picture scroll *Ōeyama ekotoba* made during the fourteenth century, which is kept in Itsuō Museum of Art in Osaka, Japan,⁹ and depicts the Ōeyama version of the legend. Another picture scroll treating this story, *Shuten Dōji emaki* (Picture Scrolls of Shuten Dōji), owned by Suntory Museum of Art, in Tokyo, dates to the early sixteenth century, and represents the latter, the Ibukiyama version.¹⁰ There are a number of copies and versions of the story, but it was the eighteenth-century printed version of the Shuten Dōji story that reached the broadest audience, thanks to a bookseller by the name of Shibukawa Seiemon.¹¹ For all intents and

7 See for example, "Ibukiyama Shuten Dōji" in Yokoyama and Matsumoto, 2: 426.

8 Separate sheets, presumably written in the middle of the Muromachi period, are believed to be copies of the *Ōeyama ekotoba*, and have a *honji* section. Satake Akihiko assumes that the *honji* section of the Ōeyama versions may have been eliminated as exposure to the audience became more frequent. *Shuten Dōji ibun* 152.

9 The scroll is also referred to as Katori-bon because the work was formerly in the possession of high priest of Katori Shrine in Shimofusa Province. It is reprinted in Yokoyama and Matsumoto 3: 122–140; Komatsu Shigemi, Ueno, Sakakibara, and Shimatani 75–103, 144–160, 171–178.

10 For various Ibuki versions of texts, see Yokoyama and Matsumoto, 2: 357–426; Matsumoto *Muromachi jidai monogatari taisei hoi* 1: 245–68, 335–59.

11 The Shibukawa edition is almost identical to a *tanroku-bon* (a picture booklet illustrated in green and orange), which was published during the Kan'ei era (1624–1643) (Matsumoto, "Otogi zōshi no honbun ni tsuite" 172). Regarding the text of Shibukawa version, see Ichiko, *Otogi zōshi* 361–84. For an English translation of the Shibukawa version, see Appendix A.

purposes, the popularity of the Shibukawa edition put an end to creations of further variations (Amano, “Shuten Dōji kō” 16). The location of the fortress in the Shibukawa edition is on Mt. Ōe, and Shibukawa published the “Shuten Dōji” story in an anthology of twenty-three short stories under the title of *Goshūgen otogi bunko* (Auspicious Companion Library).

The Shuten Dōji Story

According to the oldest extant text titled *Ōeyama ekotoba*, the story is set in the late tenth or early eleventh century in the Japanese capital of Heian. As mentioned earlier, Abe no Seimei’s divination that the oni living on Mt. Ōe are abducting people sets the plot in motion. When the emperor commands the famous warriors to assemble their men and conquer the demons, Raikō and Hōshō are at first alarmed by the formidability of their mission, for oni possess supernatural powers and are able to transform into anything, making them difficult to hunt down, much less destroy. Despite their uncertainty, the warriors set out on their quest taking with them several loyal retainers. The troupe stops to pray for success at four separate shrines. Their faith is rewarded, for while on their way to the oni’s lair on Mt. Ōe, the group encounters four deities disguised as priests. The old priests advise Raikō’s party to disguise themselves as *yamabushi* (mountain priests), providing the men with the necessary clothing. Thus attired in what one might view as an inversion of their royal livery, the warriors, now joined by the deity-priests, continue on their quest, disguised as *yamabushi*. At a river on Mt. Ōe, the group meets an old woman who had been kidnapped by oni. She warns the heroes about the activities of Shuten Dōji and his band of oni. She tells the ersatz monks that Shuten Dōji forces kidnapped maidens into domestic servitude, and at the whim of the oni, they are dismembered, their flesh devoured, and their blood imbibed. Thus warned, the heroes are prepared to confront the arch demon in his lair. Arriving at the demon’s mountaintop palace, the royal troupe lies to the oni guard, telling him that they are a band of lost *yamabushi* in need of lodging for the night. Shuten Dōji promptly allows them into his palace and jovially regales the men with stories from his past; he entertains his guests, offering them unknown flesh to eat and a detestable liquid to drink. In turn, one of the deity-priests offers Shuten Dōji his own *sake*, which causes Shuten Dōji to fall into an inebriated stupor.

After Shuten Dōji retires, a number of oni, disguised as beautiful women, visit Raikō and Hōshō in the palace guest quarters. The oni-women

fail, however, to entice the warriors. Raikō gives the oni-women an intense glare, and the demons scurry off. Soon after, another group of oni disguised as a *dengaku* (field music) troupe emerge to entertain Raikō and his band. Again, Raikō's fierce stare wards them off. Raikō and Hōshō then decide to scout out the palace compound, an impressive structure described as a place where the splendor of heaven and the torment of hell simultaneously exist. In their search, the men discover a cage holding a kidnapped page of the Tendai sect's head priest. Although protected from death by Buddhist deities, the page remains trapped alongside the other captives. Raikō's and Hōshō's troupe moves quickly to Shuten Dōji's grand bedchamber. There, they find the entrance to his quarters blocked by a seemingly impenetrable iron door; but as the deity-priests pray and chant mystical incantations, the once impervious door magically melts away. Inside, Shuten Dōji lies in drunken repose, fully reverted to his true monstrous form. He is a giant, over fifty feet tall and with his red body and five-horned head, the epitome of demonic appearance. He has one black leg and one white, a yellow right arm and a blue left. The fifteen-eyed oni sleeps peacefully, oblivious to the fate that awaits him. While the four deity-priests hold each of Shuten Dōji's colorful limbs, the warriors behead him. Shuten Dōji cries as he is decapitated, "*Korewa ni hakararete, ima wa kou to miyuru. Teki uteya!*" (Deceived by these men, I am now to be done with. Kill these enemies!). As Shuten Dōji's head hurls through the air, his mouth tries to bite Raikō. Thinking quickly, Raikō dons his helmet, and is thus saved from Shuten Dōji's final blow. With Shuten Dōji dead, Raikō's band kills the rest of the oni and frees the surviving captives. Before parting with the warriors at Mt. Ōe, the four deities reveal their true identities: they are the same deities to whom Raikō and Hōshō prayed at the shrine. The deities also show the heroes their own *honji* (true nature or original form): Raikō is a reincarnation of *Daitoku* (Yamantaka, Great Awe-Inspiring Power) and Abe no Seimei, that of Ryōju bosatsu (Nāgārjuna).

On the troupe's return to the capital, Shuten Dōji's head is placed, by imperial command, in Uji no hōzō (Treasure house of Uji). Both Raikō and Hōshō are generously rewarded for their heroic deeds. Fulfilling the *otogi zōshi* genre's function of providing moral edification as it entertains, the Shuten Dōji story reveals how, with the help of holy deities, warriors faithful to the emperor can defeat even the most monstrous of villains and reap rich rewards.



Figure 3. Shuren Dōji entertains Raikō and his vassals with human flesh. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Purchase – Friends of Asian Art, F1998.26.2 (detail).

Carnavalesque Festivities

Shuten Dōji is a story rife with festival scenes and therein lies one of the most essential of its many connections to Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin describes the medieval carnival as a form of pressure release from the political, class, and religious restrictions of everyday medieval folk life. The physical and rhetorical practices of defamation and inversion underlying the carnivalesque embody grotesque laughter at the official "real" world. This "carnavalesque laughter" differs sharply "from the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonies" of the day. The carnival experience produces "ever-changing, playful, undefined forms. ... It is to a certain extent a parody of the extra-carnival life, a world inside out" (5–11). The carnivalesque is, however, dependent upon the very forms it mocks for its critical efficacy. Carnavalesque laughter, according to Bakhtin, is "ambivalent laughter" because it both "asserts and denies" the object of its laughter and because, unlike modern satire that assumes some place "above the object of [its] mockery, ... [t]he people's ambivalent laughter. ... expresses the point of view of the whole world; he [*sic*] who is laughing also belongs to it" (12). Which is to say, that the critical efficacy of the carnivalesque rests in this very ambivalence, in the idea that the official form implies its own mockery and vice versa. The low implies the high. The yin implies the yang. Such distinctions are inextricably caught up in one another in the interplay of life and text. Thus (and this is paramount to this analysis) the self, or in this case the ideal, is caught up in the other in the grotesque mockeries and inversions that characterize the carnivalesque. It is pertinent at this juncture to state that all that follows in this analysis probably lies outside the realm of the original author's intention.

In one of the festival scenes from Shuten Dōji, he eats a human servant without an inkling of hesitation—remember, cannibalism is a fundamental attribute of oni. The old woman at Mt. Ōe recounts that Shuten Dōji dismembers abducted humans with a kitchen knife, in much the same fashion that one prepares a meal. Shuten Dōji and his followers seem to fête regularly and human flesh is an important part of their banquets. The feast that the arch demon serves to Raikō and Hōshō, in *Ōeyama ekotoba*, the "unknown flesh and detestable liquid," we can assume is of human origin. Indeed, many *Shuten Dōji* picture scrolls contain vivid depictions of severed human legs (thigh meat) on a cutting-board in the banquet scene.¹²

12 See for example, *Shuten Dōji emaki* (illustration by Kanō Motonobu, 1476–1559)

The portrayal of preparing and eating human flesh is certainly grotesque in a carnivalesque sense. And, if we follow Bakhtin's logic, it is precisely this grotesqueness that lends this scene its carnivalesque ambivalence. Thus, while fearing and sympathising with the plight of the kidnapped maidens, in the portrayal of the banquet's beverage and entrée, the author(s) (and possibly the readers as well) of "Shuten Dōji" may be simultaneously amused by the grotesquery, goriness, and inebriated merriment of the oni's feast. This banquet scene displays the very characteristic that Bakhtin calls grotesque realism. Bakhtin writes:

The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity.... Degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time.... it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. (19–21)

Bakhtin further stresses that "Folk humor denies, but it revives and renews at the same time.

Bare negation is completely alien to folk culture" (11). Shuten Dōji boasts of his supernatural power and material wealth. Indeed, it is implied that feasting on a varied diet, including blood and human flesh, helps him maintain his supernatural longevity. His longevity, in turn, is demonstrated by the fact that the story takes place during Emperor Ichijō's reign (r. 980–1011) and by Shuten Dōji's own confession, he was active before the time of Priest Dengyō, who died in 822. The old woman that Raikō meets on Mt. Ōe says that she has served Shuten Dōji for more than two hundred years. Much in the same vein as Bakhtin sees culture consumed and renewed in the carnivalesque, human flesh is consumed and renewed in the regeneration of Shuten Dōji's power and his realm.

This scene functions inter-textually on another level of significance as well. The proto-image of the aforementioned human legs on a cutting-board in *Shuten Dōji* is found earlier in a scene from *geshin jigoku* (hell of pulverized flesh) in *Jigoku sōshi* (scrolls of Buddhist Hell) in the twelfth century

in Suntory Art Museum, *Shuten Dōji e* (ca.17th century) in Tōyō University Library, *Shuten Dōji* (1700) of Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution [illustration in the main text], and *Ōeyama emaki* (ca. 17th century) in the Chester Beatty Library. Also, the widely distributed Shibukawa woodblock version (ca. 18th century) contains the similar picture of a severed leg.

(Amano, “Shuten Dōji” 105).¹³ *Jigoku sōshi* was produced with the purpose of serious religious edification in mind, ostensibly so that the observers of the imagery would be awakened to the presence of abhorrent hell. In the *geshin jigoku* scene three oni are slicing men’s bodies into pieces on oversized cutting boards. Conspicuous are the big legs placed on the boards. Other oni sit nearby, placing the neatly cut flesh onto plates. Although it appears that the demons intend to make a meal of the human flesh, they are punishing mortal sinners through the pain of dismemberment. *Geshin jigoku*’s sinners are priests who break the Buddhist precept against killing and therein resides its moral precept. While in the story Shuten Dōji and his minions consume human flesh for pleasure as well as sustenance, and while Shuten Dōji’s victims are innocent, one can readily perceive Shuten Dōji as a carnivalesque inversion of *geshin jigoku*. Bakhtin asserts that in “the folklore of primitive peoples, coupled with the cults that were serious ... were other, comic cults which laughed at the deity” (6).

Shuten Dōji considers the great Buddhist priests, Kōbō Daishi (774–835)¹⁴ and Dengyō Daishi (d. 822)¹⁵ as villains. In the Ibukiyama texts, he is the evil king of the Sixth Heaven in darkness, an avowed enemy of Buddha. In this sense the character, Shuten Dōji, can indeed be said to mock the deity. Also, if we accept the depiction of Shuten Dōji’s banquet scene as a folk repossession and comic inversion or parody of the serious text of the *geshin jigoku* scene, and by its extension, the Buddhist concept of hell, and if we recall that Shuten Dōji, as *otogi zōshi* has as its purpose religious and moral edification as well, we see again how that which is moral and that which seeks to mock it are caught up in the ambivalent flux of carnivalesque laughter.

Bakhtin writes that a leading role in the banquet image is played by the gaping mouth, which is related to the theme of swallowing (*Rabelais and His World* 279, 325), symbolizing not only death and destruction, but also regeneration. Likewise, Shuten Dōji, with his huge mouth, swallows human flesh and blood, leading not only to the destruction of human lives but of the Heian capital as well. One of Shuten Dōji’s victims, the daughter of Lord Munenari, laments that she “was appreciating the moon in a past autumn,

13 For the picture of *geshin jigoku*, see Komatsu Shigemi and Akiyama, 72–73.

14 Kūkai. The founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism; he founded Kongōbu-ji on Mt. Kōya in present-day Wakayama prefecture.

15 Saichō. The founder of the Tendai sect of Buddhism; he founded Enryaku-ji on Mt. Hiei in present-day Kyoto.

when she was suddenly kidnapped.” She cries of the “uncertainty in her life, for at any time she could be the oni’s next victim.” But the perpetuation of the oni’s power is the ultimate result—destruction and regeneration ever in flux—Shuten Dōji’s consumption of humans helps maintain the oni’s realm and his supernatural power.

We see similar examples of the carnivalesque in the scenes where Shuten Dōji’s oni minions attempt to ensnare Raikō, Hōshō, and their men through their awesome powers of transformation, one of the signature characteristics of the oni. We are told in the story that five or six oni transform themselves into beautiful maidens in layered costumes and appear in front of the *yamabushi*. Without saying anything, the oni eagerly cast amorous glances at them (see Yokoyama and Matsumoto 3: 132). But Raikō’s penetrating eyes reveal their true identity and the oni flee. Indeed, one might argue that this scene and the very characteristic of transformation and gender switching mark the oni as the ultimate embodiment of the carnivalesque as the transformed demons represent the comic inversion of what ought to be the warriors’ objects of sexual desire and at the same time are the objects of the oni’s own appetites. The scene, depicting the oni in various costumes running away from Raikō, is quite amusing. A more intriguing and complex scene follows this humorous scene when the oni transform into a *dengaku* troupe.

Dengaku in its broad meaning refers to all rituals related to agriculture and thus to fertility and regeneration (Plutschow 169).¹⁶ In more limited terms, it is a dance form whereby people play musical instruments such as drums, flute, and *binzasara* (wooden clapper-type instruments) while dancing in various combinations. *Dengaku* is considered a most typical performing art of medieval Japan (Moriya 39). As we shall see, the art itself has many elements of the carnivalesque and as we shall also see, the juxtaposition of distinct *dengaku* scenes within the text is yet another example of the carnivalesque in *Shuten Dōji*.

Earlier in the *Ōeyama ekotoba* picture scroll, at Hie Shrine, when Raikō and Hōshō visit the shrine to pray, they are entertained by *dengaku*. A child

16 *Dengaku* is broadly divided into two categories. First, as the rites of actual planting in paddy fields are performed in spring, dance and music are presented to pray for a good harvest. The other, as a ritual performed at shrines, is designed to pray for a good year’s harvest by artistic imitation of routine agricultural tasks such as sowing, planting, and harvesting. *Dengaku* became fashionable for urban dwellers at that time to parade around the city in various costumes, imitating the *dengaku*’s actual movements used in the planting of rice in the paddy field (Honda 359; Plutschow 169–80).

performer is pictured dancing *dengaku* at the shrine, while other performers play music and dance in the yard in front of the Hall of Worship. Similarly, in the scene at Shuten Dōji's palace, the oni also perform *dengaku*. In both cases, the location of the performance shares the same depiction—outside, in a courtyard in front of the building. The angle of the buildings, the Hall of Worship and Raikō's and Hōshō's quarters in the Shuten Dōji's palace is also the same. Significantly, three of the oni's postures and costumes are portrayed identically to the *dengaku* performers depicted in front of the Hall of Worship; only the face is changed from human to oni.¹⁷ The oni's *dengaku* is clearly a parody of the earlier more wholesome dance at Hie Shrine. The performance at Hie Shrine is to pray for the success of Raikō's quest to kill the oni, whereas that of the oni-*dengaku*'s is to trick Raikō's group and to kill and to eat them.¹⁸ One need not push the scene any further to see its carnivalesque aspects.

The more complex functions of the *dengaku* scenes and of the very art of *dengaku*, however, require a closer look. The dance scenes in *Ōeyama ekotoba* are actually a reflection of a contemporary folk belief portrayed in art form. Much like the festivities of carnival, *dengaku* were popular festivities for all classes, and, amusingly, an account in *Azuma kagami* (ca. 13th century) indicates that it was popular among non-humans as well.¹⁹ In medieval Japan, the sudden surge of *geinō* (performing arts) such as *dengaku* had an ambivalent reception. Indeed, this fertility ritual was considered a bad omen by some segments of medieval Japanese culture (Moriya 7–37, 79).²⁰ An interesting example of this is the demise of Hōjō Takatoki (1303–1333), the ninth regent to Minamoto Shogun, who was much taken with *dengaku*. As

17 For the pictures, see Komatsu Shigemi, Ueno, Sakakibara, and Shimatani 80, 88.

18 The oni's intention to kill Raikō's group is clear in the Shibukawa version of *Shuten Dōji*. In the Shibukawa version, after the exchange of *sake* between Shuten Dōji and Raikō, Shuten Dōji commands his minions to entertain Raikō's party. One demon named Ishikuma Dōji rises to sing out, "From the capital what kind of people lost their way to become condiments of *sake*? How interesting." Ishikuma Dōji's song suggests that the demons should make condiments and *sake* out of the *yamabushi*.

19 An entry dated 16 Ninth month of 1247 of *Azuma kagami* records that the villagers of Nakayama in Sagami province reported strange creatures (*bakemono*), and that the creatures danced and sang in the costumes of *dengaku* every night (Kuroita 395).

20 Historically *dengaku*'s enormous popularity among the high and low plunged the capital of Kyoto into chaos in 1096. This affair or disturbance is called "Eichō ōdengaku." The extraordinary *dengaku* fever which engulfed the whole capital was put to an end by the sudden death of Princess Ikuhōmon'in (1076–96). People considered in retrospect that the impulsive vogue of *dengaku* foreshadowed the Princess' death (Moriya 15).

some graffiti at Nijō Riverside (Nijō gawara) in 1335 tell it, “Dogs and *dengaku* have caused the Hōjō downfall, but *dengaku* is still thriving” (Hanawa 504). It is commonly considered (and even satirized) that *dengaku* caused the collapse of the Kamakura shogunate,²¹ and the demise of Hōjō Takatoki. Conversely, in *Taiheiki* (Chronicle of Grand Pacification, ca. 14th century), the *dengaku* is described as being feverishly welcomed by all classes for its ecclesiastic fund-raising ability. An itinerant monk organized a *dengaku* competition to raise funds for the building of a bridge. On the day of the performance, in the sixth month of 1349, everyone from members of the imperial court, the regent, and the shogun on down to commoners were equally rapt and enthralled by the *dengaku* performance at the Shijō Riverbed (Shijō gawara). That is, of course, until the reviewing-stand galleries collapsed, claiming the lives of men, women, and children of all backgrounds. The contrast between this celebratory atmosphere of a fertility ritual, marked by excitement and merriment, with the grotesque deaths of innocent people, is indeed pertinent, for it is the carnivalesque festivity itself that inherently and concurrently embodies elements of both destruction and renewal.

Thus, just as the surge of performing arts was for some segments of Japanese society considered a bad omen, the sudden appearance of oni as a *dengaku* troupe in the story can be interpreted as the harbinger of Shuten Dōji’s doom. One might argue that the carnivalesque ritual contributes to the demise of Shuten Dōji at the peak of his prosperity just as the Shijō Riverbed *dengaku*, at the height of its performance, foreshadowed the destruction of Hōjō Takatoki and the Kamakura shogunate. In the Shuten Dōji story, the oni’s defeat ushers in an era of peace in Japan, marked by a renewal of imperial authority, and eventually contributes to greater power and recognition for the nation’s warrior class, creating the shogunate. Thus in its carnivalesque way, the dance is at once the dance of death and rebirth.

Shuten Dōji as Other

Inasmuch as the carnivalesque characterizes the narrative, rhetorical, and/or discursive structures of *Shuten Dōji*, it also defines the way images of

21 See the head note of Hasegawa 1: 254. According to *Taiheiki* (Chronicle of Grand Pacification, ca. 14th century), around the time of the Genkō era (1331–1333) in the capital, “men made much of the dance called field music [*dengaku*], and high or low there was none that did not seek after it eagerly.” (Translated by McCullough. *The Taiheiki* 131; the original text is found in Hasegawa, 1: 254.) It is recorded in the *Taiheiki* that Hōjō Takatoki was dancing inebriated at a banquet with various specters.

marginalization and otherness are transacted. Kidnapping innocent people and eating them is enough, perhaps, to suggest that Shuten Dōji is evil. As we witness in the various versions of the Shuten Dōji legend, the archfiend brings disaster to the land of Japan sometimes as storms, sometimes as famine (see, for example, Yokoyama and Matsumoto, 3: 130). Abe no Seimei, who sets the plot in motion and who protects Japan from the capital with his divination and prayers, calls Shuten Dōji a *tenma* (demon). Lest we wonder what the tale proposes as its ideal, and where our sympathies are supposed to rest, an imperial counsellor asks, “Living in the imperial land of Japan, how could even a supernatural creature not obey the imperial wishes?” (Komatsu Shigemi, Ueno, Sakakibara, and Shimatani 159).

It is refreshing and entertaining, perhaps, to see a monstrous creature dangerous to one’s country completely smashed by good, heroic warriors. A close examination of the texts, however, reveals a different picture of Shuten Dōji, the monster. During the festivities, Shuten Dōji is presented as overly naïve and trusting. Although he is presumably a mighty and shrewd creature, the arch demon fails to see through either the disguises of his enemies or the ruse they use to gain admittance to his palace. He cheerfully talks about his personal history without doubting Raikō’s true intentions, and even shares his favorite food with him, human flesh.²² At his dying moment, Shuten Dōji cries out, “Deceived by these men, I am now to be done with. Kill these enemies!” In other versions, including the Noh text entitled “Ōeyama,” his righteous claim is even stronger, for he laments, “How sad, you priests! You said you don’t lie. There is nothing false in the words of demons.”²³ While it is clear that as readers we are asked to admire and identify with the deities, the mighty warriors, and above all, the imperial authority, a carnivalesque rupture of this trend toward the hegemonic is occurring throughout the story and in this scene in particular. After all, if the story at its core seeks the reader’s moral edification, one cannot help but sympathize with a character that is brought to its ultimate demise through lies and deception. Since in the carnivalesque good and evil coexist in

22 In the Shibukawa version, Shuten Dōji is more cautious. But after a while, Shuten Dōji apologizes to the disguised Raikō that he mistook the latter for his archenemy (i.e., Raikō) and tells his minions to entertain Raikō’s troop while he sleeps.

23 In Noh’s text, Raikō responds to this utterance: “You are lying. If that is true, why are you capturing people in this imperial land and injuring people?” Sanari, 1: 568. The Noh play of the Shuten Dōji story is titled “Ōeyama.” For the Japanese Noh text, see Sanari, 1: 553–571. For an English translation, see Horton.



Figure 4. Shuten Dōji's head. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: Purchase—Friends of Asian Art, F1998.26.3 (detail).

grotesque flux, we come to identify not only with that which is heroic but that which is “other” as well.

The carnivalesque voice that emerges in Shuten Dōji’s death scene may well be called the voice of the other, which needs a little explanation. The other represents those marginalized persons or groups who are partially or entirely excluded from participation in the political, historical, and cultural affairs of hegemonic society, and who suffer from cultural, intellectual, legal, geographical, and/or physical disadvantages attached to their status. While we see this in the text, we can see it also in the extra-literary context that surrounds the text.

According to Komatsu Kazuhiko, there are four categories of other or “strangers.” First, people who visit a community and stay in the community for a brief period of time, such as itinerant priests, artisans, merchants, beggars, travelers, and pilgrims. Second, people who come from outside a community and settle more or less permanently, such as refugees of wars and natural disasters, merchants and priests for their professions, and criminals banished from their homeland. Third are those who are native to the community but shunned by community members; they include ex-convicts, the physically and mentally handicapped, and criminals who are going to be banished from the community or executed. Last, there are strangers who live spatially far away from a community, and are thus known to the community only through their imagination; examples are foreigners who live overseas, and supernatural creatures who live in the other world (“Ijin ron –‘ijin’ kara ‘tasha’ e” 177–78).²⁴ As supernatural creatures, oni are not only firmly ensconced in this fourth group but as embodiments of the carnivalesque they are arguably all of the above.

Shuten Dōji as marginalized other potentially subverts the narrative of political domination in which a central authority commands the brave warriors to eliminate him. The carnivalesque underlies this subversion. Indeed, carnivalesque ambivalence permeates how otherness is transacted throughout the Shuten Dōji texts. Shuten Dōji resided in Mt. Hiei long before Priest Dengyō claimed the area. He is relocated from his native place to another, from where he is again expelled. He even explains that he causes the natural disasters because he bears a grudge against humans whom he views as usurpers of his various homes.²⁵ There is certainly room for sympathy

24 For the discussion of “other” also see Goodich; Dallery and Scott; Huffer.

25 The idea that Shuten Dōji brings disasters to the land and people in Japan because of

in this case where the strong take the possessions of the weak. And again, the reader's sympathy is drawn away from the ideal as it falls victim to carnivalesque ambivalence and as she or he finds her or his sympathy drawn toward a demon.

Amano Fumio conjectures that Shuten Dōji may have originally been a local deity from Mt. Hiei whom Priest Dengyō first encounters when Dengyō enters Mt. Hiei to establish the Tendai sect of Buddhism. This local deity came to be considered an oni, because Mt. Hiei is located away from the capital in the direction of *kimon* where oni are said to reside ("Shuten Dōji kō" 16–27). The Tendai Buddhists were strongly linked to the imperial authority and as such were widely viewed as protectors of the nation.²⁶ Effectively, Shuten Dōji, the local deity forced to leave Mt. Hiei, is disenfranchised by imperial authority. Baba Akiko takes this a step further surmising that oni are a representation of those suppressed people and/or those who were not a part of the Fujiwara Regency (from the 10th century through the 11th century) (141). The Fujiwara Regency reached its peak with Fujiwara Michinaga (966–1027). Michinaga attained supreme power in court through his position as Emperor Ichijō's regent. Importantly, Emperor Ichijō's reign is the period setting for *Shuten Dōji*. The abducted page Raikō seen in Shuten Dōji's palace is the son of Michinaga. It is not surprising then that the page becomes the target of Shuten Dōji's wrath. And it is probably even less surprising that he is safe, protected by Buddhist deities because he is the page of the head of the Tendai sect. So, even in these historical, extra-literary contexts that surround the production of the text, it is possible to see Shuten Dōji as the marginalized other. But, what then of the carnivalesque?

his grudge against humans (including the emperor and influential priests) is similar to what Sugawara no Michizane did, as seen in chapter one. According to *Dōken shōnin meido ki* (Record of Holy Priest Dōken's Travel to the Realm of the Dead), evil deities cause disasters in Japan and good deities protect Japan from disasters. If an evil deity like Michizane intends to destroy Buddhism because of a grudge, then it brings disasters to the land and people of Japan. Imahori Taitsu writes that this view that calamities are caused by evil deities' actions is in accord with *Konkōmyō saishō kyō* (Golden Splendor Sutra), a scripture for defending a country. *Record of Holy Priest Dōken's Travel to the Realm of the Dead* was produced by the priest(s) of Shingon esoteric Buddhism who were in search of measures against and prevention of disasters based upon the *Golden Splendor Sutra* (26–40).

26 Needless to say, not all the Buddhist sects rejected local deities. The Sōdō sect of Zen Buddhism, for example, recognized local deities to provide religious justification for villagers to support new Zen temples (Bodiford 174).

It is exactly the carnivalesque ambivalence of Shuten Dōji, both the character and story that makes credible the demon's position as marginalized other. As noted above, delineations of ideal and other are placed in flux as either comes to define both, as exemplified by the story's treatment of Shuten Dōji's severed head. We are told that by imperial command it is locked away in the fastness of Uji no hōzō, the treasure house built by Fujiwara no Yorimichi, the eldest son of the regent, Michinaga. Furthermore, for the people in the medieval period, Uji no hōzō was the treasure house which stored invaluable objects such as *busshari* (Buddha's ashes), *nyoi hōju* (wish-completing Jewels) which symbolize imperial authority, and imaginary priceless items including *Genji monogatari's* "Kumogakure" (Vanished into the Clouds) chapter. The belief in the existence of the treasures increased precisely because the objects were hidden in Uji no hōzō and nobody, except for the Fujiwara regent and a limited number of imperial family members, could see them (see Tanaka, *Gehō to aihō no chūsei* 115–147). Obviously Shuten Dōji's head belongs to the annals of folklore, rather than historical fact, for Uji no hōzō, part of Byōdōin buildings, was built in 1053, thirty-two years after the death of Raikō. Emperor Ichijō, who, in the story, issues the imperial order to store the head at Uji no hōzō, had been dead since 1011, so it is impossible that he could have issued such a command. But the important thing here is the folk nature of this belief; by the time the tale is produced, people *believe* that the severed head of Shuten Dōji, a symbol of anti-imperial resistance, is in Uji no hōzō, protected by the Yorimichi's spirit.²⁷ This can be viewed as another carnivalesque inversion, just as Shuten Dōji takes in the flesh and blood of the young maidens to maintain his power and vitality, so too the imperial court takes in the head of the demon to do the same. Indeed, Komatsu Kazuhiko interprets *Shuten Dōji* from the perspective of a medieval *Ōken setsuwa* (narrative prose concerning sovereign authority). In medieval *Ōken setsuwa*, the "central" sovereign authority appropriates "outside" power through a symbolic jewel. In the case of the "Shuten Dōji" story, the symbolic jewel is represented by the demon-leader's head. With Shuten Dōji's head coming into the capital, "the outside power" is incorporated into the capital, i.e., to the central authority.²⁸ The

27 Yorimichi, the founder of Uji no hōzō, is said to be transformed to a dragon king to protect the treasures of Uji no hōzō.

28 See Komatsu Kazuhiko, *Shuten Dōji no kubi* 9–55; Abe Yasurō, "'Taishokukan' no seiritsu" 80–195, and "Hōju to ōken" 115–169. Komatsu notes that Raikō's group disguised themselves as mountain priests, who, as mountaineering ascetics live in a

swallowing of the jewel, (the head of Shuten Dōji) into the body of the capital gives a renewed life to the Heian central authority. From the point of view of the oni's attributes, Shuten Dōji gave wealth and prosperity to the Capital of Heian and imperial authority with his own head.

Recognizing oni as the embodiment of the carnivalesque and as the representation of the marginalized other is a key to understanding Shuten Dōji's naiveté as seen in the enigmatic death cry in which he bewails Raikō's lack of honor while extolling the higher values of the demons. Rosemary Jackson asserts: "the fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture; that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent'" (4). In this light, Shuten Dōji's exclamation can be seen as the voice of the disenfranchised other—marginalized and preordained for elimination by a powerful and hegemonic culture. Shuten Dōji's body as he lies sleeping is an example of carnivalesque grotesqueness and otherness. Recall that he is described as a fifty-foot tall giant with a red body, five-horned head, fifteen eyes and variously colored limbs. He is the epitome of the carnivalesque. And herein lies the critical efficacy of the carnivalesque: a gross and vulgar parody of the human form. Shuten Dōji is of human form, nevertheless, and thus our sympathy is drawn once again to the demon through its grotesque affinity to the ideal. Just as Shuten Dōji's otherness is manifest in the extra-literary historical context of the legend, it is also found in various theories concerning Shuten Dōji's origins.

Origins of Shuten Dōji

Although he is widely perceived as a supernatural being with extraordinary powers, one popular theory put forward during the medieval period has it that Shuten Dōji and his fellow oni were nothing more than a gang of bandits who lived on Mt. Ōe (see, for example, Takahashi Masaaki; Baba). The Kamakura military government's edict, issued in 1239, was designed to suppress the "villainous robbers" living on Mt. Ōe, and is cited in support of this view. Similarly, Kaibara Ekken (1630–1714), a Confucian scholar,

human world, and therefore, belong to the "inside." Yet at the same time, mountaineering ascetics were socially and spatially located on the periphery, and sometimes, they fluxed from "inside" to "outside." From the point of view of the oni, mountaineering ascetics belonged to the "outside." Yet, there were some who broke away from "inside" and became oni. As oni were often based in the mountains, inevitably some would stray into their territories, particularly mountaineering ascetics (boundary beings) who could go back and forth between the two worlds of humans and oni (*Shuten Dōji no kubi* 20–21).

asserts, “Shuten Dōji was originally a robber who donned the appearance of a demon to scare people so that he could steal their wealth and abduct women” (qtd. in Takahashi Masaaki 48).²⁹ Takahashi Masaaki asserts that the prototype of Shuten Dōji was originally a deity of smallpox (vi). He explains that in and after the Heian period (794–1185) a ceremony of *onmyōdō* (way of yin and yang) called *shikai no matsuri* (ritual at the four demarcations) was held every time an epidemic of smallpox broke out in Kyoto. The ritual was designed to prevent the epidemic deity from entering Kyoto and was held at four locations simultaneously in the suburbs of the capital. A series of magical activities designed to appease these epidemic deities sought to turn the invisible, shapeless spirits into fully formed corporeal beings with a sense of reality, i.e., oni of Mt. Ōe (see Takahashi Masaaki 1–53). At this time, quarantine as a public health measure was widely used to stop the spread of disease. Not surprisingly, a stigma was associated with forced isolation (Lederberg et al. 22). The diseased were effectively disenfranchised, much as the oni were in later mytho-historical treatments.

Another intriguing theory of the origins of Shuten Dōji put forth by several modern-day scholars is that the oni stories were actually based on the unconventional lifestyles of a group of metal or mine workers living in the Ōe Mountains. The metal workers were travelers who were purportedly well versed in magic and medicinal practices. It is because these men led such different lifestyles that they were feared and ultimately regarded as heathens by many of the local townsfolk. There exists ample literary and historical proof that people living in the mountains were often referred to as the descendants of oni. Because the customs and manners of these mountain dwellers were different from those of the people living on the flatlands (Miyamoto Masaaki 10; Wakao 46), they were frequently branded for their otherness. Yet another take on the Shuten Dōji story involves the tale of a Caucasian man who drifted to the shore of Tanba Province, in what is present-day Kyoto (Takahashi Masaaki ii). He apparently hailed from Mt. Ōe and drank red wine, a veritable parallel to Shuten Dōji’s predilection for blood *sake*.³⁰

29 Ekken also remarks that the story of Shuten Dōji resembles fiction of the Tang Dynasty entitled *Hakuenden* (Story of White Monkey). For the relation between *Shuten Dōji* and *Hakuenden*, see Kuroda Akira 374–388.

30 These folk beliefs of Shuten Dōji as a Caucasian and/or bandit living in Mt. Ōe have been actively utilized in modern fiction. One such story is entitled “Oni no matsueri” (Descendants of Oni, 1950), written by Mihashi Kazuo (1908–1995) for young people. In this story, the protagonist is a twenty-year-old Spanish language major who discovers that he is a descendant of Shuten Dōji’s cohorts. Shuten Dōji and his cohorts

Although distinct from each other, all these theories share a profound sense of otherness: a sense of someone or something forced to live on the periphery of hegemonic culture being different and feared, so thus vilified and made monstrous. Underlying these various viewpoints is an unspoken yet palpable feeling of sympathy for the otherness of those vanquished by the mighty. These Er-stories—one or the other or perhaps all—get consumed by folk culture swallowed into the carnivalesque, consumed and renewed as the substance of legend.

Ironically, in the legends it is only with *divine* assistance that the warrior-heroes beguile and defeat Shuten Dōji and his minions. Moreover, it is the evil oni who, evincing the ideal value of trust, open their palace up to the deceptive heroes. Shuten Dōji's trusting and thus, weakened, position foreshadows the end of his reign and the success of the "forces of good." It should be noted that the title, "forces of good," is bestowed upon the warriors by the emperor, foreshadowing the emergent power of the warrior class in medieval Japan. The Fujiwara regency boasted of its political power, but when it came to the physical subjugation of its enemies, the warriors were summoned into action. These same warriors eventually gained economic and political power befitting heroes of the imperial authority.

One final twist or irony is that Raikō, the killer of oni, is related to oni himself. Takahashi Masaaki offers an interesting interpretation as to why Raikō was chosen as the conqueror of the demons at Mt. Ōe. He writes that

are not "real" oni but bandits living on Mt. Ōe in the eleventh century. They are portrayed as Spanish pirates who drift to Japan—similar to other origin theories of foreigners who inadvertently drift to Japan. After Raikō and his *shitemō's* attack on their den, an escaped bandit impersonates a Japanese citizen and marries a Japanese woman. The protagonist's father, a renowned educator, turns out to be the murderer-robber who broke into houses and killed thirteen people twenty years earlier. Thirteen small Buddha statues that his father cherishes—the statues that eerily laugh at the beginning of the story—represent the people his father has murdered and for whom he has promised to pray. According to witnesses who escaped from the robbery and murders, the criminal (his father) said before killing, "I have been working hard since young, but I still cannot support my wife. There are many illiterate, shameless, and robber-like people out there leading a luxurious life without making family suffer." The killer explains that he needs money to support his pregnant wife and coming baby. Although the killer's justification that "There are many illiterate, shameless, and robber-like people out there leading a luxurious life without making family suffer" might apply in any society at almost any time, it seems particularly appropriate in the economic realities of Japan in the immediate wake of World War II. Thus the popularity of *Shuten Dōji* remains unchanged throughout Japan's history.

Raikō is associated with *Raikō* 雷公, the thunder god, and notes how the frightening effects of thunder and lightning were often required to eliminate similarly terrifying demons (34–35, 58–62).³¹ As seen in chapter one, Kondō finds the genesis of oni in the people’s fear of natural phenomena, the destructive power of nature’s fury manifest in such forms as thunder and lightning storms and earthquakes. Of all the natural forces, thunder and lightning are most strongly associated with the oni. In the story of Shuten Dōji, right before the appearance of the archfiend, “Suddenly, an odor of rotting fish seemed to carry on the wind and thunder and lightning began to strike.” Just as Sugawara no Michizane frightened people with thunder and lightning, Shuten Dōji emerges from a foreboding backdrop of thunder and lightning. In terms of Kondō’s theory, Raikō 雷公 is the thunder god who slays and conquers the demons of Mt. Ōe, despite his concurrent role as their progenitor.

The Rise of the Warrior Class and Fall of Oni

The rise of the warrior class correlated with the beginning of the fall of Shuten Dōji’s status as king of evil (Chigiri 473) in medieval Japan. A warrior’s true essence is to fight; he must engage in battles undaunted even when the enemy is as evil, frightening and seemingly indestructible as oni. The more demonic the opponent in this paradigm, the greater the warrior’s fame. In a nod to the carnivalesque we might say that, like Shuten Dōji himself, the warriors consume the oni and in turn, the oni feed the warriors’ power. According to Kumasegawa Kyōko, the first appearance of the appellations, oni and warrior (*bushi*), listed (or classified) together is in *Yowa no nezame* (The Tale of Nezame, ca. late 11th century) (210). It is described in *Yowa no nezame* that “*oni-gami, mononofu to iu tomo, namida otosanu wa arumajiki wo*” (Even gods, demons, or warriors would not fail to shed tears);³² the narrator referred to oni as daring and ruthless beings. Also, the narrator of the *Heike monogatari* (Tale of the Heike) tells that “[Oni-sado of the Hōrin’in] was a warrior worth a thousand, capable of meeting devils or gods with his strength and his forged weapons.”³³ Here,

31 Kondō Yoshihiro earlier cites an example of 頼光 written as 雷公 (See Kondō 171–72).

32 For the Japanese text, see Sugawara no Takasue no musume 132.

33 The English translation is by McCullough (*The Tale of the Heike* 150). For the Japanese text, see Ichiko, *Heike monogatari* 45: 310–11.

the physical strength of the warriors is considered comparable to the deities and oni. Most intriguingly, one of the warriors, Oni-sado, has oni as part of his name, signifying that he has corporal prowess equivalent to that of the oni. How the warriors should fight in battles is described in contrast to the aristocratic or courtly warriors (i.e., the Heike clan) in *Heike monogatari*:

Every big landholder can command at least five hundred horsemen. Once a rider mounts, he never loses his seat; ... if a man sees his father or son cut down in battle, he just rides over the body and keeps fighting. In battles fought in the west, a man leaves the field if he loses his father, ... a man who loses a son is too broken up to come back at all.... In summer, they think it's too hot to fight; in winter, they think it's too cold.³⁴

The warrior's ideal, a carnivalesque pastiche of the oni, is quite different from that of the aristocratic ruling class of the Heian period bound by sensitivities and taboos. With the warriors' increased mobility in political and economic circles, a concurrent weakening of the oni becomes inevitable, but also a weakening of the imperial authority itself and thus the imperial ideal that, on its surface, *Shuten Dōji* portends.

Shuten Dōji is an exemplary oni story of the medieval period, revealing the textual peak and decline of oni. *Shuten Dōji*'s demise symbolizes the rise of the warrior class and the fall of oni status. As carnivalesque literary figures, through their representation of otherness, the oni not only trouble the sacred and serious customs and manners of the imperial ideal, they also provide the underpinnings of those subversive elements challenging the established order from within. Thus, the *Shuten Dōji* story frames these moral dilemmas from the perspectives of central authority and the marginalized other. *Shuten Dōji*'s affable gestures during the banquet with Raikō and his exclamation at the moment of his demise are the carnivalesque voice of the disenfranchised. Although *Shuten Dōji* is preordained for elimination by the will of authority, in the carnivalesque world of the text he becomes entwined with the imperial ideal and thus, textually anyway, invincible. This timeless condition might offer some insight into the popularity and longevity of the *Shuten Dōji* story.

34 The English translation is by McCullough (*The Tale of the Heike* 188–89). For the Japanese text, see Ichiko, *Heike monogatari* 45: 402.