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## Japanese Demon Lore

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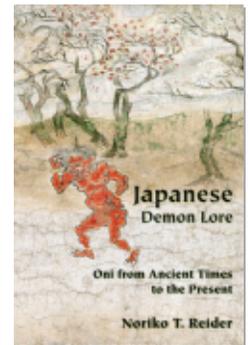
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## Oni and Japanese Identity

*Enemies of the Japanese Empire in and out of the Imperial Army*

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER, WE SAW THAT THE EDOITES, on some level or other, seem to unite in their belief in the supernatural. While in urban life, oni were fictitious, existing purely for the carnival sideshow-like entertainment of city dwellers, it is noteworthy that at the highest levels of government, officials paid due respect to select types of the supernatural. With the coming of the Meiji period (1868–1912), Japan imported and adapted many Western cultural and political institutions, as well as scientific and military technologies, in its attempt to build a modern nation and catch up with the West. Railroads were laid and gaslights erected in rapid succession. Belief in the supernatural looked to be quashed in the wave of modernization; but as Gerald Figal contends, it was re-conceptualized with the return of the emperor. Figal writes, “The Meiji emperor, who as a manifest deity was perhaps the most fantastic creature of all in Japan, became a kind of ideological lightning rod to rechannel, focus, galvanize, and control the outlet of worldly thoughts and sentiments as well as otherworldly fantasies and desires that coursed through Japanese bodies” (5). As the emperor—with his supernatural status—was restored to the position of power, the labeling of those who had “different customs or lived beyond the reach of the emperor’s control” as oni was back in use, both metaphorically on real people and for imaginary creatures in a fictional world. Throughout Japanese history oni have been employed to describe Japan’s military enemies. In the face of foreigners, the idea of outsider or other promotes a sense of unity among the Japanese.<sup>1</sup> This became especially true during the ongoing wars of modern times when Japan had been established as a nation-state. The oni foregrounds the mentality of “us” versus “other.” Native Japanese look

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1 See an interesting article by Nakar about visual representation of the other.

upon the non-Japanese races as “different,” and when the non-Japanese defied the Japanese imperial authority, the foreign force became a certified oni. If the wars had ended with Japan on the victorious side, the labeling of oni may have stayed as it was. Yet, as it turned out, the Japanese learned that they were the oni from the viewpoints of enemy forces. This problematized the naming of oni: the concept of oni essentially came to define how a Japanese identifies him- or herself. This identification of oni became a focal point in some post-war fiction such as *Teito monogatari* (Tale of the Imperial Capital, 1983–89).

### Reconfiguration of the Supernatural in Modern Japan

Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904) writes in Matsue, Shimane prefecture, of the Japanese belief in “Ghosts and Goblins” (1894):

“Kinjurō, those goblins of which we the ningyō have seen—do folk believe in the reality thereof?” “Not any more,” answered Kinjurō—“not at least among the people of the city. Perhaps in the country it may not be so. We believe in the Lord Buddha; we believe in the ancient gods; and there be many who believe the dead sometimes return to avenge a cruelty or to compel an act of justice. But we do not now believe all that was believed in ancient time. (*Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* 643–644)

It is noteworthy that while Japanese city folk of 1894 did “not now believe all that was believed in ancient time,” they did continue to believe in select supernatural beings such as the “Lord Buddha . . . ancient gods” and avengers of injustice. Indeed, talking of avengers of injustice, on the day following Emperor Meiji’s enthronement in 1867, the emperor invited the vengeful soul of the Retired Emperor Sutoku (1119–64) from Shiromine in Kagawa prefecture to Kyoto (Tanigawa, *Ma no keifu* 21). More than seven hundred years before, the Retired Emperor Sutoku and his supporters revolted in their attempt to depose Emperor Goshirakawa from the throne, causing the Hōgen disturbance in 1156. Sutoku and his supporters lost the battle and, according to the legend, he was transformed into an evil spirit while he was still alive and became a King of Darkness to avenge his enemy. The dramatic life (and afterlife) of the vengeful spirit of Retired Emperor Sutoku is familiar to many Japanese in both oral and print traditions.<sup>2</sup> Sutoku’s

2 As early as the thirteenth century, Sutoku’s lonely life in exile and his obsession with revenge were described in a war tale entitled *Hōgen monogatari* (Tale of Hōgen). *Hōgen monogatari* is a historical prose narrative that describes *Hōgen no ran* (Hōgen Rebellion)

spirit influenced not only literary and performing art, but also real court life and the central government. Seven hundred and five years later the Emperor Meiji's invitation letter to Sutoku's soul is written as if to curry Sutoku's favor and in the process affirms not only his predecessor's supernatural status but, by extension, his own as well. Thus, at the beginning of the modern era, Emperor Meiji seeks to pacify the angry spirit of his own clan (Tanigawa, *Ma no keifu* 41–43).

Japan's hierarchical system goes beyond this world. The system is applied to the realm of the supernatural, or one might say that the hierarchical order of the supernatural world has always been reflected in this world. In modern Japan, the emperor's supernatural status was publicly asserted, and with the imperial court once again at its center, the status of various supernatural beings was (re)examined; some were affirmed and others were simply dropped from the cosmic map.

San'yūtei Enchō (1839–1900), a famous storyteller of the modern age, lamented over these teachers of the Age of Enlightenment because many “thought that the supernatural was the product of the mind, a neurological pathology, and *kaidan* or ghost stories, an extension of that neuropathy” (7). His lamentation reveals a pensive discontent with the denial of the (selected) supernatural advocated by Meiji intellectuals. While the modern nation with heavy industry was rapidly established, many folk beliefs, some of which had been undoubtedly exploited by swindlers, were considered by the central government and progressive intellectuals as a hindrance to civilized thought, superstitions, the product of an unenlightened mind, or simply a form of mental disorder. While laws and regulations may change relatively quickly, manners and customs are slow to alter. Various thinkers and educators such as Inoue Enryō (1858–1919) made a concerted effort to convince the Japanese populace that, by and large, *yōkai* did not exist and that they were simply the products of imagination. It is important to note, however, that they did not deny the supernatural in its entirety.

Figal writes, “When necessary, modern reason had its imaginary allies. While officials and public intellectuals worked to center a modern national

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with Minamoto no Tametomo (a samurai on Sutoku's side) as its center. Recited by the blind musicians called *biwa hōshi*, *Hōgen monogatari* had a large following during the medieval period. Continuing into the Edo period, professional storytellers frequently narrated Sutoku's legend, and it was also performed in both the kabuki and puppet theaters. For the text of *Hōgen monogatari*, see Yanase et al. 205–405. For an English translation, see Wilson.

citizenry on a supernatural emperor, folklorists were sympathetically studying ‘outmoded’ forms of supernatural beliefs throughout the Japanese populace” (15). Ishibashi Gaha, a folklorist of modern times, writes that there are no physically existing oni, but the belief in such has, itself, been long in existence. Based upon this belief, Ishibashi enumerates the literary incidents of oni of the past “in order to learn the essence of Japanese culture, i.e., the reverse side or background of overt cultural activities such as politics, economics, literature and art” (2). Indeed, studying the oni reveals an interesting flow of Japanese thought and also reveals much about the human psyche.

### Oni as Foreign Enemy in the Second World War

It is common knowledge among Japanese that during the Second World War the appellation oni was used to describe the Japanese enemies: the American, British, Russian, and Chinese leaders of the allied forces. As the war intensified, government censorship tightened. Even cartoonists and caricaturists were having their works scrutinized. In fact, various organizations of cartoonists were forced to reorganize to suit the needs of the government. Backed by the government, *Shin Nippon mangaka kyōkai* (New Association of Japanese Cartoonists) published the monthly, *Manga*, the only cartoon magazine that existed during the war. The editor, Kondō Hidezō (1908–1979), depicted evil demons Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin (Lent 227). Addressing the cultural function of *Manga*, writer Kobayashi Nobuhiko says:

There is hardly any other magazine which expresses the Japanese popular culture during World War II [than *Manga*]. Writers and thinkers cooperated during the War, but none were more vocal than cartoonist, Kondō Hidezō, who instigated the populace [to support the War]. His simple style and his ability to connect with ordinary people were truly outstanding. (179)

One of *Manga’s* cartoonists, Fujii Tomu (1912–1943) depicts Roosevelt with horns on his scalp.<sup>3</sup> The caption reads “oni wa washi, oni wa washi” (I’m the oni, I’m the oni), which is a play on the phrase “oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi” (Demons out, Fortune in), the customary expression uttered on the day of the *setsubun*. In this cartoon, a super-sized Roosevelt in a western shirt and traditional samurai upper-garb is scattering bullets on Japanese towns. In another cartoon, Sugiura Yukio (1911–2004) draws an attractive

3 Reprinted in Shimizu Isao, *Taiheiyō sensō ki no manga* 29.

Japanese wife, holding a pocket book, looking to buy materials for clothes in a store window. The materials have three faces embroidered on them, those of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang Kai-shek. Each man is drawn with horns, the primary feature of oni. The caption reads, “The Spirit of Saving” (6). This was a powerful juxtaposition of imagery. Similarly, the slogan, “Luxury is enemy,” speaks to the theme of saving encouraged by the Japanese government. In this cartoon, the ordinary housewife is smiling because instead of buying materials for new clothes, she decides to save her money. The small caption reads, “My saving spirit is quite something. Even things started to look like this [oni].” This certainly encouraged many wives to save, while subtly reinforcing the image of the Allied forces as demons and true enemies of Japan, and by association the cartoon demonizes wasteful luxury as well.

The oni’s adaptability becomes increasingly apparent when one examines how they were used in the Japanese war effort when applied to the “evil allied forces.” A good example of this appears in the folktale, “Momotarō,” or “Peach Boy.” Momotarō is so named because he was born from a peach, which was divinely sent or which floated down a stream. As the boy grows older, he begins to demonstrate miraculous strength. At that time, oni from a distant island frequent the capital, looting treasures and abducting people. A young Momotarō decides to confront and subjugate the oni. His elderly parents provide him with dumplings for food. En route, Momotarō meets a dog, a monkey, and a pheasant which all become his vassals in exchange for his remarkably delicious dumplings. Momotarō and his three vassals go to the oni’s island, defeat the oni, and take back all the island treasures with them. Momotarō’s goodness, affection, and filial piety toward his elderly parents, provide the perfect model for good conduct for young Japanese.

To explain how the seemingly innocuous story of “Momotarō” could be exploited during wartime requires some background information. Named as one of the five most famous folktales in Japan in the pre-war period, one would be hard-pressed to find a Japanese youngster not familiar with Momotarō’s story, most probably because it was included in the textbooks for elementary language instruction issued by the Ministry of Education. The Momotarō story was first adopted in the elementary language text during the Meiji period—in 1887 to be precise—and was continuously printed until the end of World War II (Namekawa ii).<sup>4</sup> Also,

4 The Momotarō story disappeared from textbooks after the Second World War.

Iwaya Sazanami (1870–1933), an author and a scholar of children’s literature, wrote an immensely popular and financially successful children’s literature series titled *Nihon mukashibanashi* (Japanese Fairy Tales, 1894–96); “Momotarō” is the first in the series.<sup>5</sup> After a phase of almost indiscriminate adoption of Western technologies, medicine, literature, etc., there was a tendency in the latter part of the 1890s to reconsider Japan’s traditions, a response, no doubt, to unchecked westernization and a string of unequal treaties imposed by Western powers. Iwaya began writing *Japanese Fairy Tales* amidst this trend (Ueda Nobumichi 474). The traditional folktale “Momotarō,” from which Iwaya derives his *Nihon mukashibanashi*, originated sometime between 1550 and 1630, but Momotarō’s imagery, shared by contemporary Japanese, is relatively new, set in the eighteenth century (Namekawa 2–3, 206). Namekawa notes that in older texts, there is no explanation given for Momotarō’s subjugation of oni on the Oni’s Island (*Oni ga shima*). They were subjugated simply because they were oni. In earlier eras oni as a symbol of all that is evil sufficed as excuse enough for their elimination. However, as Momotarō increasingly became a symbol of the ideal Japanese boy in the Meiji period, educators started to ascribe more contemporary moral reasons for the oni’s extermination (17–18). The ideal hero just does not exterminate someone without any good reason; or more to the point, a reason that does not reflect the values of the period. Thus in Iwaya Sazanami’s *Nihon mukashibanashi*, oni are eliminated not simply because they are wicked, but because “they don’t obey the benevolent rule of imperial Japan and do harm in Japan. They take people and eat them, seize their valuable property, and they are the most hateful creatures in the world” (*Nihon mukashibanashi* 19).

Given the time of the texts’ production—the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) in which Japan emerged as an industrial nation in the eyes of Western powers—one is tempted to read Momotarō’s description as an allegory for Japanese imperialism. Note how Momotarō’s first and foremost reason for destroying the oni is that they are the enemy of imperial Japan. Using the term “oni” as an appellation for a different race that is to be subjugated, or to single out people with different traditions and manners, is an old custom as we have seen. In this instance, one might argue, this custom is brought to the foreground by the geopolitical events of the era, as Iwaya Sazanami’s

5 For the text of Iwaya’s “Momotarō,” see Iwaya, *Nippon mukashibanashi* 15–30. For an English translation of “Momotarō,” see Iwaya, *Iwaya’s Fairy Tales of Old Japan* vol. 1.

“Momotarō” reflects the spirit of the Japanese Empire. Momotarō claims that the oni have snatched away treasures from the people; however, he also declares before he embarks upon the adventure that he is going to take all the oni’s treasure. Recall from chapter one, that an oni’s treasure includes a straw raincoat of invisibility, a hat of invisibility, and a mallet of fortune (*uchide no kozuchi*). Those magical items certainly do not belong to people. Needless to say, Momotarō as a victor confiscates every single one of the treasures from the oni, but Iwaya Sazanami’s Momotarō remains silent about what to do with them after returning to Japan. (It is expected that Momotarō will dispense them fairly.) In any case, Momotarō becomes a Japanese hero partly because of his enterprising, adventurous spirit. An examination of this spirit reveals not only his brave willingness to go to unknown places to subdue evil supernatural creatures, but an imperialistic mind as well to take (loot) someone’s prized property.

Thus Momotarō was used as an instrument to promote nationalism during the Meiji period, but as John Dower explains, the message was taken to the extreme during the Second World War. Momotarō’s divine appearance on Earth symbolizes Japan, a divine country. His animal vassals, a dog, monkey, and a pheasant, symbolize other Asian countries under the umbrella of Japan’s ambitious Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The cartoons, magazines, and animated films for the Momotarō story were made to help support the Japanese cause and encourage nationalism (Dower, *War without Mercy* 250–258).<sup>6</sup> The concept of an oni Allied force was spoon fed to Japanese youth, quickly disseminating into the larger populace. Unlike the medieval period when the anti-establishment oni took shape gradually over hundreds of years, the oni as enemy during wartime in Japan was quickly and artificially created by Japanese leaders and enthusiastic nationalists. Far from an image that evolved over time, this use of oni was a ploy that exploited fearful associations and thus advanced the Japanese wartime ultra-nationalist agenda. In the case of the war, the oni’s evolution was entirely a product of machination. While the Japanese propaganda machine was projecting the image of oni onto the enemy camp, the Japanese army was acting like oni in various Asian countries, their acts exemplified in the atrocities of Nanking in 1937 and the Bataan Death March in 1942.

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6 For the detailed account of how the *oni*’s island is identified as an uncultivated, barbaric land far from the center of Japan, see Antoni.

From the Allied viewpoint, Japan was itself a “disenfranchised” oni, deemed an emergent threat to Asia and the West, “... a ‘racial menace’ as well as a cultural and religious one” (Dower, *War without Mercy* 7). For Americans (who as citizens of a relatively young nation had much less colonial experience than their European allies), Japan was indeed foreign—its people and customs, different. To Japanese at the time, however, the perception was completely reversed. Americans were the evil oni: an elite, imperialistic cultural and economic invasion force with interests already firmly wedged in Asia. Americans were “people who had different customs or lived beyond the reach of the emperor’s control.”

Notwithstanding this blindness to one’s own imperialistic tendencies (which was, unfortunately, all too common among all parties in this period) Momotarō became a Japanese hero by virtue of an enterprising, adventurous spirit that enabled and inspired him to seek and seize the oni’s treasure. In this instance one can read Momotarō as the very personification of Japanese imperialism exemplified by Japanese aggression in Manchuria in 1931, China in 1937, and continuing on to the Pacific War of 1941. Japan had hoped to take control of China swiftly, but met with unexpectedly strong resistance from Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang army.

Japan soon found itself depleting its already strained natural resources on two simultaneous fronts—domestically, as well as in the war effort in China. With many essential imports from the West decreasing, particularly oil, Japan began to eye with increasing appetite the rich raw materials in the southeastern colonies of the Dutch East Indies. One may compare these raw materials to an oni’s prized treasure of a straw raincoat of invisibility, a hat of invisibility, and a mallet of fortune. Japan, to justify aggressive moves throughout Asia, aimed at replacing Western control of Asian countries with its own system of colonial control, and advocated the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. In Japan’s plan for the acquisition of resources, the Army wanted to acquire the resource-rich regions of Northern Asia while the Japanese Navy wanted to appropriate the resource-rich territories of Southeast Asia. Machines of war are dependent on technology, processed raw materials and fuel (Dyer 39). The greater the population of any given territory, the greater the strain placed on its natural resources. In September 1940, Japan joined Germany and Italy in signing the Tripartite Alliance Pact. The Pact stipulated (Article One), “Japan recognizes and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in the establishment of a new order in Europe,” and (Article Two), “Germany and Italy recognize and respect the

leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in Greater East Asia” (Morley 298). Japan had defined its territorial spoil—Asia. In 1941, Japan’s Navy required 2,000,000 tons of oil, the Army, 500,000 tons and the civilian population 1,000,000 tons (Stinnett 121). The American embargo of 1940 originally allowed sales of oil to Japan. In 1941, however, the United States placed a full embargo on the sale of oil to Japan. It was an ultimatum. Japan was appropriating other nations’ natural resources and knew this would result in conflict with the United States. As Emperor Hirohito (Showa emperor) wrote in retrospect, “the war against the United States would be started with oil and ended with oil” (112). Oil, an oni’s most prized treasure, was not Japan’s or Momotarō’s. An unsuccessful enterprise of appropriation thus ended in disaster, making one reconsider what an oni is.

It is perhaps not so ironic, given the oni’s power and predilection to transform, that the American oni would turn into Japan’s strongest strategic ally and economic partner in the postwar period, showing its kind side immediately after the war by providing much needed food and democratic guidance. In this light, the oni enemy was transformed into a liberator from Japanese militarism and fascism; as “gifts from heaven,” democratic revolution was given to the Japanese from the American occupation force (Dower, *Embracing Defeat* 65–84).

Labeling another person or group as oni could be easily exploited to create and enhance a unity within to defeat a targeted group as we have seen repeatedly in history. But the Japanese experience of wars in modern times, especially the Second World War, makes one think, “who are/were the ‘people who had different customs or lived beyond the reach of the emperor’s control’”? The use of oni as a label thus becomes problematic. It becomes a matter of perspective.

After the War, the emperor declared himself a human being, and the whole supernatural paradigm of the Japanese Empire collapsed. The branding as oni of those against the establishment or the imperial authority lost its physical target in the real world, but the war experience and its memories offered fertile ground for fiction—again, as entertainment to arouse people’s nostalgic imagination. We have seen the entertainment value of oni in the previous chapter, and will see it in the following chapters as well; among recent examples, the novel entitled *Teito monogatari* (Tale of the Imperial Capital, 1983–89) stands out because it exemplifies the theme of “naming of oni is a matter of perspective” by insinuating that the fictional Showa emperor is also an oni. In addition, the protagonist of the story is an oni

who is an officer of the imperial army. Further it summarises the modern theory of oni in the form of a novel, and brings back some weight to oni albeit in a fictional world.

### *Teito Monogatari* (Tale of the Imperial Capital)

It has been quite a while since Abe no Seimei (921?–1005), an *onmyōji* or official yin and yang diviner of the Heian court, became an icon in Japanese pop-culture. While various things, no doubt, have contributed to the recent boom in interest in the oni, Aramata Hiroshi's work *Tale of the Imperial Capital* (1983–89)<sup>7</sup> is widely credited as the beginning.<sup>8</sup> *Tale of the Imperial Capital* is a science fiction involving science, magic, grudges, incest, and eroticism. The work is remarkable in its skilful weaving of the supernatural into both modern and contemporary Japanese historical landscapes. The backdrop of time for *Tale of the Imperial Capital* ranges from the late Meiji through 1998, 73<sup>rd</sup> year of the Showa period. *Tale of the Imperial Capital* gives an excellent explanation of what oni are in the context of the novel, and is important for the study of oni in that it establishes the oni as a major serious character/creature in Japan's popular culture.

The story's main character, Katō Yasunori, is a mysterious human with formidable supernatural powers that enable him to manipulate oni. An oni himself, Katō is bent on destroying the imperial capital of Tokyo with help from Taira no Masakado (903–940). Taira no Masakado, a descendant of the Emperor Kammu (reign 781–806), is a historical figure. He was a rebel leader who, after gaining control of the Kanto region in central Japan, proclaimed himself the new emperor. He meets a violent death at the hands of the imperial army sent from Kyoto.<sup>9</sup> Needless to say, Masakado—

7 *Tale of the Imperial Capital*, which has sold 350 million copies, received the Japan Science Fiction Award in 1987.

8 The prominent contributors to the boom include all of the following works. Aramata Hiroshi's *Teito monogatari*, Yumemakura Baku's *Onmyōji* and Kyōgoku Natsuhiko's *Kyōgokudō* series are enormously popular. Then Okano Reiko's graphic novel, *Onmyōji*, based upon Yumemakura's series, ignited the explosive boom. Riding the popularity of *Onmyōji* and Abe no Seimei, the film of the same title was created. Regarding scholarly activities, Komatsu Kazuhiko's various works on the supernatural of the dark side influenced various fiction writers. See Komatsu Kazuhiko, *Abe no Seimei "yami" no denshō* 204–5; Seimei jinja 28–61.

9 This incident is called *Tengyō no ran* (Tengyō Disturbance). For Masakado's story, see *Shōmonki* (Story of Masakado's Rebellion) in Yanase et al. 13–94. For an English translation, see Rabinovitch.

who went against imperial authority—is considered a major oni both by the narrator and in the context of Japanese history. In *Tale of the Imperial Capital*, Masakado's head is buried in central Tokyo. Katō seeks to awaken Masakado's spirit from its deep sleep to use his wrath to destroy the capital of Japan.

It is symbolic that the narrator in the prologue, entitled “Oni is Coming,” comments on a carnival show in which the monsters at the show cannot break from their confinement, so citizens can enjoy them without fear (Aramata 1: 17).<sup>10</sup> This effectively sets the novel at the beginning of modern times, when the oni's existence was primarily confined to the carnival show as we saw in the previous chapter. The narrator then warns that the citizens (and readers) do not realize that an uncontrollably atrocious oni strides freely in the imperial capital of Tokyo (Aramata 1: 17). This oni is Katō Yasunori, who is tall and has an unusually elongated face. Instead of an old-fashioned tiger skin, he wears the crisp uniform of the imperial Army—he is a first lieutenant. Katō Yasunori is directly referred to as an oni in various places of the main text. For example, when Katō wants to use Yukari, an attractive young woman with strong mystic abilities, to awaken Masakado's wrath, Kōda Rohan, whose character is based upon the historical writer and scholar with the same name, says “she is targeted by an oni” (Aramata 1: 20). Further evidence comes from the fact that many of Katō's actions are derived from a number of familiar oni stories. For instance, Aramata incorporates a Kabuki version of Rashōmon entitled “Modoribashi” (Modori Bridge, 1890)<sup>11</sup> into his story. To recap the familiar story, according to “Modoribashi,” Watanabe no Tsuna is sent by his master, Minamoto no Raikō, on an errand. At Modoribashi Bridge in the capital Tsuna encounters a beautiful young woman—a theme that should be quite familiar to us by now. She says that she is going to Fifth Avenue, but she has become separated from her servants on the way. Tsuna offers to accompany her. Looking at her lovely face in the moonlight, he is charmed by her beauty. But then he realizes from her shadow reflected on the water that she is in fact an oni. In the course of conversation, Tsuna points out her real identity. The oni

10 The prologue does not appear in the 1985 version of the text.

11 Authored by Kawatake Mokuami (1816–93), “Modoribashi” is a dance piece first performed in 1890 by Onoe Kikugorō V (1844–1903). It has a subtitle, “Rashōmon, Meiji period version.” The story is based upon the sword chapter of *Heike monogatari*. Interestingly, the supernatural creature referred to as oni in *Heike monogatari* and Noh is labeled as *yōkai* in this 1890 text.

grabs Tsuna's topknot and flies off into the air, but Tsuna manages to cut off one of the oni's arms causing the oni to fly off leaving Tsuna and the oni's severed arm behind (Kawatake 141–51). In Aramata's work, when Kōda Rohan attempts to challenge Katō's attack to protect Yukari, the description of their encounter brings the reader back to the familiar story of Tsuna at Modoribashi Bridge. Grabbing Yukari, Katō tries to fly away, but Kōda jumps to stop him. As Katō keeps flying higher, however, now with Kōda attached to him, Kōda takes a dagger and cuts off Katō's arm to free himself (Aramata 1: 280). Kōda is equated with Tsuna, and Katō is oni.

Importantly, while Katō is human, he has an oni's appetite for human organs. In order to obtain a passport for his lover and secure her safety, he performs an esoteric magic act of rejuvenating himself at Shanghai. However, to recuperate and nourish himself after the magical performance, he eats human organs. In this story, human organs are an important ingredient to prolong an oni's life—a familiar trait of oni that is described in the story of *Shuten Dōji* in chapter two. Unlike the description in *Shuten Dōji*, however, Katō's diet is more selective, limited to organs while Shuten Dōji drinks blood and eats the meat of human thighs. Katō's diet is presented in an analytical manner. This macabre diet is enjoyed by another character in the story as well, Narutaki.

Katō is described as the personification of the avenging oni, born from the grudge of one thousand five hundred years of Japan's hidden history (Aramata 1: 377). Masakado is later explained as a collective entity rather than an individual person. Apparently, those who rebel against the ancestors of the contemporary ruler are uniformly called Taira no Masakado (Aramata 5: 242). Further, Masakado's grudge is not his personal grudge, but the curse of the entire earth (6: 480). In the end, Katō is identified as Masakado himself. This is predictable since, again, anyone who goes against the present ruler is considered Masakado. Katō, by virtue of his burning desire to destroy the imperial capital, thus is also identified as Masakado. Interestingly, however, some characters in the novel consider Taira no Masakado as the guardian spirit of Tokyo, a gracious deity. Some believe that Masakado has already transformed from a cursing deity into a salvation oni (1: 166). As in the case of *yōkai* in general, when humans worship an oni, the oni becomes a deity. The negative association turns into a positive one.

Enshrined in Kanda district of Tokyo, Masakado becomes a guarding spirit of Tokyo. In *Tale of the Imperial Capital*, the meaning of oni is completely a matter of perspective that the author uses at his convenience—a

theme familiar from history as described above. Perhaps what is most intriguing is that the head of Masakado turns out to be enshrined within the compound of the imperial palace, and the narrator suggests the Great Chief Priest of Masakado's shrine is the Showa emperor (i.e., Emperor Hirohito). The people surrounding the aged and frail emperor keep him alive with the help of a life-prolonging nostrum, the indispensable ingredient of which is a human organ; logically it follows that both oni and the emperor equally practice cannibalism, or more to the point, both Katō and the emperor qualify as oni. Just as Minamoto no Raikō, the killer of Shuten Dōji and his cohorts, is related to an oni,<sup>12</sup> the emperor and oni are related. Or, as it is insinuated, the emperor is a chief oni, which makes the labeling of oni problematic. Who calls an oni "oni" and when is an oni NOT an oni? Again, the story makes the naming of oni a matter of perspective.

While Katō is an oni himself, he is simultaneously an *onmyōji* who manipulates oni. The author, Aramata Hiroshi (b. 1947), explains that he wanted Katō to symbolize the mysterious group of *onmyōji*, encompassing both the official and heretical ones (Seimei jinja 32). In the story, Katō practices heretical magic from the viewpoint of the official, legitimate *onmyōdō* that is practiced by Hirai Yasumasa, the head of the Tsuchimikado clan. Historically the Tsuchimikado clan, which traditionally practiced official *onmyōdō* at the imperial court until the middle of the nineteenth century, had Abe no Seimei, the great yin and yang diviner at the Heian court, as their founder. Yasumasa is the direct descendant of Abe no Seimei and his action is based on one of Abe no Seimei's stories. In a story that appears in *Uji shūi monogatari* (A Collection of Tales from Uji, ca. 13<sup>th</sup> century), old Seimei sees a handsome young chamberlain cursed by a crow-shaped genie. The genie is sent by an enemy yin and yang diviner and the young man's life is in danger. "After sunset Seimei kept his arms tight around the chamberlain and laid protective spells. He spent the night in endless, unintelligible muttering."<sup>13</sup> Seimei's protection is so strong that the genie is sent back to the enemy diviner and kills him instead. In *Tale of the Imperial Capital*, old Yasumasa protects young Yukari, holding her like a parent crane and praying the magical words to keep her from the enemy diviner, Katō. Unlike Seimei's story, however, the genies Yasumasa sent previously were

12 See "Origins of Shuten Dōji" in chapter two.

13 Translation by Tyler. *Japanese Tales* 82–83. The original text is found in Kobayashi and Masuko 83–85. Another English translation is found in Mills.

defeated by Katō, and Katō's genies in the shape of birds would attack them in return. Yasumasa, the official diviner, lost to Katō, the heretic diviner (Aramata 1: 272–73). Intriguingly, although Katō is described as a heretical *onmyōji*, his handkerchief has a pentagram, the hallmark of Abe no Seimei, on it. Later in the novel Katō is considered part of Abe no Seimei's clan and is described as Great *onmyōji*. Indeed, Yasunori in Katō Yasunori coincides with the name of Abe no Seimei's master, Kamo no Yasunori (917–77). Considering these descriptions, Katō may be a descendant of a marginalized line of the Abe no Seimei clan, that is nonetheless considered pedigreed.

Aramata Hiroshi, a critic, commentator, and writer, explains that while he was taking part in the project of *Heibonsha World Encyclopedia*, he was in constant touch with Komatsu Kazuhiko, an anthropologist. Komatsu Kazuhiko told Aramata about many sources of the strange and mysterious, and Aramata wanted to share that knowledge with general readers as a form of fiction. That is how he started his career as a writer (Seimei jinja 30). Hence various concepts of oni, many of them familiar, are introduced throughout his text. For example, Kadokawa Gen'yoshi, a character based upon a historical figure of the same name who founded Kadokawa Publishing Company, says:

Oni were, in short, inhabitants of remote regions. They were different from Yamato people and those who were labeled as water people, mountain people, and earth spiders. By the end of the Heian period, rebels like Masakado, vengeful spirits like Sugawara no Michizane, and in fact all those oppressed by the central government came to be called oni, and, over time, came to be regarded as Night species. (Aramata 5: 122)

As the introduction of the characters preceding the novel explains, Kadokawa Gen'yoshi studied Japanese folklore under Orikuchi Shinobu and revered Yanagita Kunio (Aramata 5: 10);<sup>14</sup> this explanation comes as no surprise. Similarly, the character of Hirai Yasumasa, head of the Tsuchimikado clan of *onmyōji* who has lost the battle against Katō, writes about Katō and oni:

From the viewpoint of *onmyōdō* of the Tsuchimikado line, an oni is a transparent genie that *onmyōji* manipulates. The term oni means the indigenous people of the water or mountain. It could be a descendant of Chinese, Korean or naturalized Japanese who did not worship

14 Kadokawa says himself, "what I call my teachers are, first Orikuchi Shinobu, then, Yanagita Kunio in the area of folklore" (Aramata 5: 121).

the imperial court. He is a descendant of those who rebelled against the imperial court in ancient times. Katō is a villain who inherited the grudge and heresy from them, and will endanger the unbroken Japanese imperial line. He is probably not a Japanese subject. (1: 368–76)

The tone becomes somewhat nationalistic, perhaps reflective of the official imperial court's pride. Again, one sees that anyone who goes against the emperor bears the name of oni. The assignment of the name oni shifts as the story progresses.

In its kaleidoscopic presentation of oni, *Tale of the Imperial Capital* evinces what Michel Foucault calls "heterotopia." In contrast to utopia, heterotopic sites are something like "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 24). Foucault gives a mirror as an example of a heterotopia: "it makes the place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through the virtual point which is over there" (24). We see this in the heterotopic relationship between Katō and the emperor, but it also occurs on several levels of significance throughout the novel. In the *Tale of the Imperial Capital*, heterotopic space is created in the basement of Narutaki Jun'ichi's mansion. It is a little Ginza, which mirrors the time and space of Ginza in 1923. Narutaki is in love with Yukari whose normal life is mercilessly taken away by Katō. Through the entanglement with Katō, Narutaki creates the nostrum that prolongs life, and amasses enormous wealth by selling it to the Showa emperor. In the 1970s, Narutaki is over one hundred years old, and obsessed by the idea of having young Yukari back from the other world. To satisfy his wish, he pours out his wealth to reconstruct, in his basement, the time-space at the end of the Taisho period (1912–26), before the Great Earthquake of Kanto hits Tokyo at noon of September 1, 1923. As a result of the earthquake, the rubble of Ginza city sank to the bottom of Tokyo Bay. Narutaki collects the rubble to reconstruct the Ginza, and the carefully collected materials take the wall of dimension away, and bring back not only the space but also the time of a little before noon of September 1, 1923.

Heterotopia creates "a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (Foucault 27). Narutaki's Ginza in the basement is one quarter of what it used to be. It occupies real space and it exists, but it is illusory.

As a heterotopic site is “linked to slices in time” (Foucault 26), Narutaki’s Ginza is strictly bound to that brief slice of time in 1923. Indeed, the time restriction contributes to catastrophe in Tokyo. Since different times cannot exist simultaneously, whenever Narutaki finds a new piece of Ginza’s rubble and places it in his basement, that part of the real Ginza falls (Aramata 6: 37), constantly causing accidents in the Ginza of 1970s Showa. Just as “the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place” (Foucault 26), Narutaki’s private residence is not freely accessible. As the project progresses, Yukari is prematurely summoned back from the other world, and is trapped in the heterotopic site where oni also attack.

Aramata’s novel, while an entertaining work, is in itself a heterotopic site where its contemporary representations of oni reflect past representations, where oni of the past are not simply superimposed upon the present but where both act as extensions of each other in an odd continuum. From the interstices of past and present emerges a narrative that not only highlights the machinations and actions of the mysterious contemporary *onmyōji* and the dark magic from the past with which they deal, but arguably paves the way for another equally successful work of contemporary fiction replete with oni entitled *Onmyōji*, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The end of the Second World War brought the collapse of the reconfiguration of the supernatural with Japan’s emperor as its center. World War II made clear to many mainstream Japanese that the branding of oni is arbitrary and could be easily used for war propaganda. While the physical enemies of the Japanese Empire with their oni label may have disappeared, the terrain of the imaginary oni remains rich—one may even say that the Japanese Empire has given more room for the oni to play. *Tale of the Imperial Capital* is an exemplary work of fiction that utilizes imperial Japan for its backdrop with a sub-theme of the emperor-oni paradigm. Freedom of speech brought about after World War II allows contemporary authors to connect the emperor directly to oni as part of an entertaining and complex plot. Now that the oni are entirely fictitious figures without leverage in real day-to-day life, their commodification (described in the previous chapter) peppered with sex and violence thrives all the more, as we will see in the next chapter.