

Kano Motonobu's *Shuten Dōji Emaki* and Anti-demon Rituals in Late Medieval Japan

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Shuten Dōji emaki in the Suntory Museum was produced by Kano Motonobu (1477–1559) and assistants along with noble calligraphers in the first part of the sixteenth century. It presents in text and illustration a highly influential version of the story of the defeat of the demon king Shuten Dōji and his followers by a band of human warriors. Earlier scholarship has established that anti-demon rituals had an impact on the origins of the story. This study takes that as a starting point and draws upon key findings, but focuses on a single work, the Suntory scrolls, with the goal of better understanding its particular emphases and nuances, especially as seen in the pictures and overall structure. It argues for the profound importance of anti-demon rituals in the production and reception of the text. In particular, it shows how the images of key figures in the narrative are overlain with those of ritual performers such as *yamabushi*, *miko*, and *onmyōji* and even those of supernatural protectors such as *shikigami* and *gohōdōji*. While some parallels are so striking that they suggest a certain level of intention in their inclusion, the larger argument is that both producers and consumers witnessed and took part in numerous anti-demon rituals annually and that they were, inescapably, a major part of their cultural imaginary.

Keywords: Kano Motonobu, Shuten Dōji, Minamoto Raikō, Abe no Seimei, *emaki*, *oni*, *yamabushi*, *miko*, *shikigami*, *gohōdōji*

The ancient and medieval Japanese saw demons (*oni* 鬼) as causes of natural calamities as well as of the illnesses and afflictions that brought suffering to individuals and families.¹ Diaries record their efforts to combat these entities through demon-expulsion rituals performed at shrines and temples and through private exorcisms conducted on individuals. At the same time, there emerged numerous tales that featured the taming or vanquishing of demons, which would have provided another sort of benefit. Since ills and calamities continued to occur despite the performance of rituals, such stories of the defeat of demons

¹ “Demon” (*oni*) is used here in its broadest sense and so refers to a broad range of entities including “plague gods” (*ekijin* 疫神), and so on. The bibliography for the study of *oni* is far too extensive to list here so I will limit mention to the pioneering works of Baba Akiko 1971 and Chigiri Kōsai 1978; the edited volume by Komatsu Kazuhiko 2000; and, in English, Reider 2010.

no doubt had a cathartic effect and provided psychological bolstering and reassurance by modeling an ultimate triumph over the agents of misfortune. Given that themes of defeating supernatural causes of human suffering as embodied in demons are common to the rituals and narratives, it seems natural that the two would share a number of significant formal and conceptual elements.

This essay closely examines *Shuten Dōji emaki* 酒吞童子絵巻 (hereafter the Suntory scrolls), a set of three illustrated handscrolls from the first half of the sixteenth century in the Suntory Museum of Art, to argue that it does indeed possess such shared elements. In doing so, this study reaches beyond superficial similarities that might be shared by any number of works to analyze and discuss specific, sometimes subtle, textual, pictorial, and structural elements in the Suntory scrolls to show that they parallel and echo those found in a variety of anti-demon rituals. We can no longer fully recover the intentions of those who produced this work of art, but we can gain a deeper insight into sources that likely inspired them and resonated with its viewers. By showing the number and variety of overlaps with anti-demon rituals, this study supports the conclusion that those rituals were significant parts of the visual cultural imaginary of medieval Japan.

The main body of this essay has three sections. The first introduces the Suntory scrolls, presents what we know about the circumstances of their production, and offers a summary of the story as recounted in its text. The second identifies textual and pictorial elements in the Suntory scrolls that evoke components of anti-demon rituals, including those who performed them, whether in actual practice or legend. It shows that characters in the Suntory scrolls echo figures such as the old man (*okina* 翁), who provides blessings in a variety of rituals, the famous yin-yang master (*onmyōji* 陰陽師), Abe no Seimei 安倍晴明, mountain ascetics (*yamabushi* 山伏, *shugenja* 修験者), demonic-looking helpers of diviners and exorcists (*gohō dōji* 護法童子 and *shikigami* 式神), and various dancing ritualists. The third section takes a closer look at the actions and depictions of the warrior heroes of the story and argues that, in some cases, they strongly echo those of *yamabushi*. It then addresses key depictions of certain captive ladies to show that they should not be read simply as “damsels in distress” since they play active, vital roles in their own rescue. In doing so, they echo the figure of the *miko* 巫女, a female shrine attendant who aided *yamabushi* as mediums at some shrines.

1. An Introduction to *Shuten Dōji Emaki*

As noted above, *Shuten Dōji emaki* is a set of three illustrated handscrolls, which are designed for horizontal viewing from right to left as they rest on a flat surface, and are gradually unrolled by the left hand, slid to the right, and temporally rerolled by the left hand. The most common layout, as in the Suntory scrolls, is the alternation of segments of text and pictures. Each of the illustrations in this case takes up from one to three sheets of paper. Like all illustrations, those in the Suntory scrolls are always more than simple pictorial equivalents of the associated texts, necessarily providing specifics such as color or spatial relationships even if they are not mentioned. They often draw primarily on visual sources.

The Suntory scrolls contain the second oldest extant version of the story of Shuten Dōji, the first complete one, and also the first for which we have evidence regarding at least the basic circumstances of its production. What is more, the paintings are by Kano Motonobu 狩野元信 and members of his atelier. Motonobu was the second-generation

head of the Kano school who set it on a path of rapid expansion that led to its dominant position in the painting world by the early Edo period. His compositions, including those for the Suntory scrolls, were treasured, copied, and disseminated far and wide, first to school members and later to outsiders. The result is that the overwhelming majority of the more than ninety illustrated handscroll sets and books and at least five screen paintings that survive today are either copies or close variants, or they owe at least some debt to the pictorial compositions of the Suntory scrolls.²

Sakakibara Satoru 榑原悟 has securely dated the Suntory scrolls to the early sixteenth century and established the key participants in the project.³ The only extant version that is older is the *Ōeyama ekotoba* 大江山絵詞 in the Itsuō Art Museum (hereafter, the Itsuō scrolls), which is attributed to the fourteenth century. Some scholars believe that the Suntory scrolls are closer to an even earlier text, with or without images, based on its partial derivation from Chinese stories of the *White Monkey*.⁴ Nobles of high status brushed the main texts: Konoe Hisamichi 近衛尚通 (1472–1544) the first scroll; Jōhōji Kōjo 浄法寺公助 (dates unknown) the second; and Shōren-in Sonchin 青蓮院尊鎮 (1504–1550) the third. Another distinguished nobleman, Sanjōnishi Sanetaka 三條西実隆 (1455–1537), added the colophons. Kano Motonobu was one of the two leading painters in the capital. The powerful feudal lord Hōjō Ujitsuna 北条氏綱 (1486–1541) commissioned the set. While no documentary evidence clearly establishes Hisamichi as a general overseer of the project or editor of the handscrolls, his rank and cultural accomplishments, and the fact that he brushed the texts on the first scroll, suggest that he played a significant role.⁵ He was head of one of the five regent (*kanpaku* 関白) families, and at the time of the project held the exalted honorary title of *jusangū* 准三宮, which gave him an honorary rank equivalent to an empress, after having twice been regent.

*A Summary of the Text of the Suntory Scrolls:*⁶

Scroll One

Prologue: The land of Japan is blessed, and well-ruled down to the current day, but now there has been a disruption of order.

Young ladies are disappearing from the capital. One distraught nobleman, Middle Counselor Ikeda Kunikata (Ikeda Chūnagon Kunikata 池田中納言国方), engages the great yin-yang master (*onmyōji*), Abe no Seimei, to find out what has happened to his beloved

2 This count was related to me informally some years ago by Okamoto Mami 岡本麻美, now at the Yamaguchi Prefectural Art Museum. For studies in the screen format, see Phillips 1996 and Minobe and Minobe 2010.

3 Sakakibara 1984a; for more on the *emaki*, see also Sakakibara 1984b. The precise date of the completion of the project is unclear. While there is documentary evidence that the text of the first scroll was brushed in 1522, we have no such evidence for the second and third, and the colophon was brushed in 1531.

4 Takahashi 1992, p. 384. Takahashi further develops the research of Kuroda Akira (1987).

5 Watada 2017 has presented a narrative that gives a larger role for Jōhōji Kōjo and presumes that only Hisamichi's work on the first scroll dates to 1522 while the other texts and the paintings date closer to the time of the colophon in 1531. That is about the time Ujitsuna married Hisamichi's daughter, and Watada sees it as commissioned as a gift for her. It is not yet possible to assess his argument since it has been presented only in an informal manner without citing specific historical sources.

6 This summary is based on my own reading of the original, aided by a modern Japanese translation of a nearly identical version owned by Tōyō University Library (Ōshima 2002). Until very recently, there were English translations only for a quite different print version of the *Shuten Dōji* story published in the seventeenth century: Reider 2005 and Kimbrough 2007. Kimbrough (2018) has just published a translation of the text of the Tōyō University version.

daughter.⁷ Seimei presents a report identifying the culprit as Shuten Dōji, who lives with his demonic gang deep in the mountains and notifies Kunikata that he has insured his daughter's survival using his divination cards. The father reports this to the emperor, requesting action. The emperor gives the task of quelling the demon to Minamoto Raikō (Yorimitsu) 源頼光, and his band of four great warriors called the Shitennō 四天王 (Four Heavenly Kings): Watanabe Tsuna 渡辺綱, Sakata Kintoki 坂田公時, Usui Sadamitsu 臼井貞光, and Urabe Suetake 卜部末武.⁸

Raikō and his men split up and go to visit their ancestral shrines to pray for aid against their supernatural enemy. Next, Raikō adds one more warrior, Fujiwara Hōshō 藤原保昌, to his band, and they all set out in the guise of *yamabushi*.

After being dazed and lost in the mountains for a time, they meet three men, whom they later discover to be the gods (*kami* 神) of the shrines that they had visited. Their leader, an old man (*okina*), gives Raikō a magical helmet that would hide the wearer's thoughts from Shuten Dōji and protect his head from demonic physical attack. The men from the capital also receive poisonous saké to serve to the demons. The three men then guide the warriors through the mountains, using superhuman prowess to help them accomplish their journey. Eventually, they lead them through a cave and, on the other side, tell them to follow a stream. They promise to appear again at some point inside the demon stronghold, identify themselves as the gods of the three ancestral shrines, and vanish.

Scroll Two

Upstream, the warriors meet a young woman washing bloodied garments in a stream. She tells them of the circumstances in the demon's great castle with stone walls, iron gates, and a four-seasons garden. With horrifying regularity, the demons seize one of the many ladies they hold captive and take her to a place called the "jail" (*hitoya* 人屋), where they press her body for blood. They then serve this, calling it "saké." A magic potion keeps the woman from dying, so that they can press her several times, but eventually, they butcher her and serve pieces of her flesh, calling them "tidbits" (*sakana* 肴). She also describes Shuten Dōji and his main henchmen, two in the form of huge youths (*dōji*), and four more who are also called Shitennō. The warriors make their way up to the gate of the castle, where they are met by fearsome looking beings in various forms. Alerted to their arrival, Shuten Dōji gives orders to the henchmen at the gate to invite the visitors in since they might have valuable information about the capital, but promises his demons that they can devour them one by one starting the next day. The demons install the visitors in a waiting room, and Shuten Dōji comes out with a retinue to greet them, appearing in his daytime form of a giant youth.

Later, Shuten Dōji reclines before the visitors as they all gather in a nearby room. The men need to convince him that they are not his enemies, so they drink human blood when it is offered, and Raikō and one of his men eat human flesh as well. The demon lord is taken in and greatly pleased when the men offer him saké from the capital. He even summons

7 Seimei and other characters in the tale are based on historical individuals, but the focus here is on their roles in the story, so no dates are given.

8 The name Shitennō comes from the fierce Buddhist guardians of the four directions, typically represented treading on demonic figures.

his two favorite ladies, one of whom is the daughter of Kunikata. He and the other demons drink the poisonous saké prodigiously. Inebriated, Shuten Dōji tells something of his history and relates his fear of the one called Raikō and his companions. As he speaks, he suddenly realizes that the men before him might be the very ones he most feared, but Raikō is wearing the special helmet that hides his thoughts, and the warriors convince Shuten Dōji that they are not the feared Raikō and his band.⁹

The party continues and one of the demons dances and sings a song that suggests the visitors will be eaten. Raikō's follower Kintoki answers the taunt with his own dance and a song suggesting that the demons' castle will be destroyed. Shuten Dōji is so befuddled by drink, and Kintoki's steps so intricate and skillful, that he fails to understand the threat even though his henchmen do. He retires, urging that the party continue. Raikō and his companions note the power of the demons and begin to press the poisonous saké on them. They become violently ill and oblivious to what is going on. The warriors then speak with the two ladies, revealing their mission and finding out from them the situation in the castle. The two young women agree to guide them to Shuten Dōji.

Scroll Three

The warriors then put on their armor and the two ladies show them the way to the demon lord's chamber. They come to Shuten Dōji's inner chamber, where he lies beyond a door in his huge, fully demonic form being soothed in his poisoned state by a group of captive ladies. The warriors cannot force open the door to Shuten Dōji's chambers and are despairing when the three deities reappear. The deities force open the door, give the warriors magic chains to bind the demon lord, and tell them how best to attack him. The companions bind Shuten Dōji as he sleeps and proceed to strike him with their weapons. He springs awake, breaking two of the chains, but the others hold. Raikō attacks his neck, and on the third stroke severs it. The demon's head flies up into the air and comes back down to kill Raikō, but the magical helmet under his own protects him. The men then battle with the demonic Shitennō and slay them. They then face and defeat those demons that were at the castle gate and remain sober.

With the death of Shuten Dōji, a spell is broken and the towers and gardens of the castle change back to natural boulders and grottoes. When they investigate the ruins, they find the skeletons of hundreds and thousands of people and bodies dried and pickled. They also find the remains of the daughter of Horie no Nakatsukasa 堀江の中務, whose limbs provided the "tidbits" that evening. Finally, they fight and capture the last two demons, who, like their master, have the forms of giant acolytes. The companions make their way out of the territory of Shuten Dōji with over thirty ladies.

The capital receives the warriors as heroes as they march into the city carrying the heads of Shuten Dōji and several of his henchmen along with the captive demons. The families of the returning ladies greet them with joy. The Horie family, however, are distraught when they find that their daughter has been killed. Horie no Nakatsukasa invites the ladies who were closest to her to come and tell them all that happened. The ladies have brought back a lock of her hair as a focus for mourning and memorial rites. Afterwards, her father dedicates himself to Buddhist practices.

9 The small headgear he is wearing in the relevant illustrations would not actually cover the special helmet.

Epilogue: extols the virtues of the major participants and notes that the emperor is a manifestation of the bodhisattva Miroku 弥勒, Raikō of Bishamonten 毘沙門天, and Shuten Dōji of the demon king of the sixth heaven in the realm of desire (*daïrokuten no mao* 第六天の魔王). It ends by saying how the story shows the miraculous benefits of Buddhism.

2. Defeating Demons: Ritual and Narrative

Previous scholarship has laid firm groundwork for studying the Shuten Dōji story through the lens of anti-demon rituals, primarily to show that they contributed to the formation of the Shuten Dōji story and its visual representation, especially as seen in the Itsuō scrolls.¹⁰ Takahashi Masaaki 高橋昌明, for example, sees rites to protect the capital and the realm from plagues as a key early factor.¹¹ Hashimoto Hiroyuki 橋本裕之 has argued for the importance of the ritual music-and-dance performance called *dengaku* 田楽, even suggesting that the name “Shuten Dōji,” which scholars generally ascribe to the demon’s excessive love of saké and which may be translated “Drunken Acolyte (or Youth),” originates with the youths (*dōji*) who play drums, called *shitten* してん and thus are *shitten dōji*.¹²

This study, which is not concerned with the origins of the Shuten Dōji story, looks at *dengaku* and other rituals involving dance, but pays particular attention to *onioi* 鬼遣い (driving away demons) and to the exorcistic and spiritually protective practices of *onmyōji* and *yamabushi*. The latter will be taken up in the next part of the essay.¹³

Onioi, which is also known as *tsuina* 追難 (chasing away evil spirits), *oniyarai* 鬼遣 (driving out demons), and *onibarai* 鬼払い (purifying of demons), is a type of ritual for driving away malignant spirits that survives today. The actual performances vary significantly, but they nearly always involve one or more figures who wear demon masks and clothing, as well as monks, priests, and/or ritual specialists who drive them away by such actions as shooting arrows, stamping, ringing bells, and throwing beans.¹⁴ By the Nara period, the demon expulsion rituals were established in the imperial court’s annual cycle of ritual under the name *tsuina* and, over time, came to be performed at innumerable shrines and temples.¹⁵ Some of the earliest documentation of temple performances relates to *onioi* as the culmination of the *shushōe* 修正会, a multi-day series of rites performed early in the New Year to achieve renewal and provide blessings.¹⁶ A wealth of evidence tells us that *onioi* rituals were, without question, part of the lived experience of the majority of Japanese people of most, if not all, social ranks.¹⁷

On the simplest level, the fully demonic form of Shuten Dōji (figure 1) links the Suntory scrolls, conceptually and visually, to the rituals through the similarity of his visage

10 The tale has been studied from a variety of other perspectives—including notions of “inside and outside” and the maintenance of royal authority—by Komatsu Kazuhiko (1997); affirmation of royal authority and the *kenmon* 権門 system by Irene H. Lin (2002); the carnivalesque by Noriko T. Reider (2008), with deep connections to the legendary figure of Ibuki (Kashiwabara) Yasaburō 伊吹 (柏原) 弥三郎; the figure of the abandoned child by Satake Akihiro (1977); and resistance to authority by Minobe and Minobe (2010), and so on. Kamei Wakana (2005) has taken politics and gender as the focus of her study of the Suntory scrolls.

11 Takahashi 1992.

12 Hashimoto 2002.

13 Okamoto 2008 addresses the impact of *onmyōdō* beliefs on imagery in the Itsuō scrolls.

14 For more on this topic, see Suzuki 2014.

15 Nakamura 2018.

16 Yamaji 2000.

17 In addition to Yamaji 2000, see Nakamura 1978 for a more extensive treatment.



Figure 1. Shuten Dōji in his demonic form reclining and his limbs being rubbed by his attendant ladies inside. Kano Motonobu and workshop, *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 3, ca. 1522 or 1531. Set of three hand scrolls, color on paper, h. 33.1 cm. Suntory Museum of Art.

to the demon masks, such as those preserved at Takisanji 瀧山寺, with their large bulging eyes, bristling brows, and bestial mouths.¹⁸ The masks were usually accompanied by wigs of unruly hair similar to Shuten Dōji's. The representations of the “heroes” of the story, on the other hand, suggest more complex and nuanced connections to rituals and deserve close attention. They include the deities of the ancestral shrines, Abe no Seimei, Raikō, his men, and a number of the captive women.

In the Suntory scrolls, the warriors visit their ancestral shrines to seek divine aid, Raikō going to Iwashimizu Hachiman 石清水八幡, Tsuna and Kintoki to Sumiyoshi 住吉, and Suetake and Sadamitsu to Kumano 熊野 (figures 2, 3, and 4). The Suntory scrolls' depictions of the three shrines as well as of the deities offer insights into a fuller understanding of their roles. The text states that Raikō had stayed at his ancestral shrine for three days and received a prophetic dream, and the accompanying picture shows him seated in intense concentration in front of the inner shrine (figure 2). Oneiromancy—the interpretation of dreams to foretell the future—was certainly one means for finding solutions to crises, including plagues, in premodern Japan.¹⁹ The textual account of the other shrine visits says only that the warriors supplicated themselves and sponsored prayer rites, but the Kumano scene shows the two warriors sitting in the inner courtyard facing the sanctuaries while a *miko* dances to their right and a *yamabushi* sits to their left (figure 4). Thus, the textual account of Raikō's visit to Iwashimizu Hachiman specifies what happens and what benefit he receives, while the illustration of the visit to Kumano depicts a specific ritual performance that seems to go further than a “prayer rite,” and will be discussed below. What of Sumiyoshi? Visually, it stands in striking contrast to the other two, depicted as if seen from a more distant vantage point with a *torii* 鳥居 and bridge the only shrine

18 For images of the Takisanji masks, see https://takanji.net/jihou_tsuinamen.html. Viewers of the Suntory scrolls would also likely have been exposed to such visages in depictions of tormenters in the Buddhist hells, which helped establish the general appearance of the oni. See Kuroda 2000, pp. 340–44.

19 Dreams provide guidance multiple times in Motonobu's earliest narrative handscroll project, *Anbagaiji engi emaki* 鞍馬蓋寺縁起絵巻, surviving today only in a copy. For an introduction to this work, see Aizawa 2000.



Figure 2. Raikō visiting Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 1.



Figure 3. Tsuna and Kintoki visiting Sumiyoshi Shrine. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 1.



Figure 4. Sadamitsu and Suetake visiting Kumano shrine. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 1.



Figure 5. Sumiyoshi giving one of the warriors the chains and the other two gods pushing at the door. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, Scroll 3.

structures visible (figure 3). Furthermore, the warriors have not yet passed over the bridge or entered the shrine precincts proper. Thus, the illustration does not offer details comparable to those for the other shrines.

Considering the depictions of the three shrines together suggests an explanation for this distinction. Each appears on one of three sheets of paper with only clouds to mark one off from the other. This continuity invites viewers to open the scroll more widely than usual and view them together. What they see then is an arrangement that evokes Buddha (and other deity) triads, in which the flanking entities, here places, are the ones that most actively aid human beings, while the one in the center—here Sumiyoshi—is a more powerful source of blessing and benefits. In other words, the scrolls' depiction of the visit to Sumiyoshi does not stress a particular rite or action, but instead the shrine's all-permeating sanctity and power of blessing.

The distinctiveness of Sumiyoshi recurs later in the first scroll, when the warriors meet the deities themselves in the mountains not knowing who they are. The three kami provide critical aid in various forms, but Sumiyoshi never joins the other two in physical acts, such as helping the men up the mountains or forcing open doors. Instead, he provides advice and gifts, such as a magical helmet and chains to bind Shuten Dōji (figure 5). In addition, the scroll represents him in the form of an old man (*okina*). The *okina* appears in rites as a giver of blessings, as in two of the most common ritual performances of the medieval period (1185–1573), *dengaku* and *sarugaku* 猿樂.²⁰ The *okina* is also strongly associated with the *jushi* 呪師 (also *shushi* and *sushi*), or spell master, who performed in the *shushōe* rites mentioned above.²¹ The visual image of the *okina* in Shuten Dōji illustrations thus

20 Amano 1998.

21 For more on the emergence of this figure, see Omote and Amano 1987, p. 331.



Figure 6. Demons confronting the warriors at the gate. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 2.

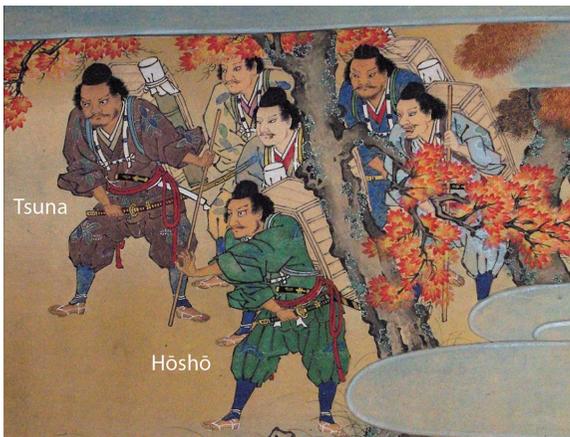


Figure 7. Detail of warriors at the gate. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 2.

Figure 8. Seimei with his two *shikigami* preparing to conduct a healing rite. *Legends of the Weeping Acalanatha (Naki Fudō engi)*, 15th c. Color on paper, two handscrolls, h. 32.5 cm. Shōjōke-in, Kyoto. After Kyoto National Museum, *Dai emaki ten*, 2006, p. 28.



transcended any simple identification with Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin 住吉大明神 for viewers with deep experience in protective and exorcistic rituals.

Turning to Abe no Seimei, we have a figure of both history and legend. The historical Seimei (921–1005) did what was expected of an *onmyōji* by reading the heavens and performing divinations, and also by conducting a variety of protective rituals. Those included the Taizan Fukun sai 泰山夫君祭, an invocation of deities of the land of the dead in order to extend life, bring good things, and prevent calamities, which incorporated *henbai* 反閉 (反閉, 反陪) namely, the ritual treading of the ground to the accompaniment of incantations in order to ensure personal safety.²² The latter term is still used for the dance of the *okina* and performances during *tsuina*. By the fourteenth century, however, Seimei's image had become more and more that of a magician with all sorts of powers. In the Suntory version he performs the divination needed to reveal the identity of the abductor of young ladies from the capital, including Lord Kunikata's daughter, and he also tells Lord Kunikata that he has used his divination cards (*fu* 符) to save his daughter's life and that she will see her parents again.

Seimei's promise invites the reader/viewer to consider him in relation to Raikō. It is, after all, the martial actions of Raikō and his men that ostensibly bring about the return of Kunikata's daughter and the other women. One might see Raikō, then, as the instrument for fulfilling Seimei's promise, and be alert to possible visual links between the two. One such link comes in the series of three scenes at the start of the first scroll. Uninterrupted by text, the tight sequence shows Seimei reporting to Lord Kunikata, Lord Kunikata petitioning the emperor, and the emperor delivering his commission to Raikō through Lord Kunikata. The first and last links in this chain of actions are Seimei and Raikō.

In addition, there are visual representations of Raikō together with two of his followers that evoke depictions of Seimei as well as En no Gyōja 役行者, the legendary founder of the *yamabushi*, and more broadly evoke anti-demon ritual performers. In the scene where the warriors confront Shuten Dōji's followers at the gate, Watanabe Tsuna and Fujiwara Hōshō stand out in front, hands on swords, with Raikō just behind them as if they were his protectors (figure 6).²³ Later, while the warriors wait for the appearance of Shuten Dōji, they sit closest to him, and the three converse. On closer inspection, especially in the scene at the gate, the eyes of Tsuna and Hōshō appear larger and rounder than those of the other warriors, tending somewhat toward the bulging eyes of demons and demonic-looking protective beings (figure 7). They are also dressed in green and reddish brown.

In paintings of Seimei and En no Gyōja, we see corresponding paired servants in actual demonic form. In a handscroll of the fifteenth century, *Naki Fudō engi* 泣き不動縁起 (Legends of the Weeping Acalanatha), they appear on the veranda as Seimei engages in a healing ritual (figure 8), and in a hanging scroll from the fourteenth or fifteenth century, they accompany En no Gyōja (figure 9). In the former case, these entities are referred to in the text as *shikigami*, which literally means "rite deities," while *gohō dōji*, literally "boys (or acolytes) who protect the (Buddhist) law," is a more common term in lore related to

22 For more on Abe no Seimei and his roles, see Shigeta 2013.

23 All of the warriors are labeled with inscriptions in an earlier picture, and their clothing remains consistent throughout the scrolls, so this identification is straightforward.



Figure 9. Jakusai, attributed,
Portrait of *En no Gyōja*, 14th–15th c.
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk.
Metropolitan Museum of Art. Public
Domain.

yamabushi.²⁴ The two types of beings would seem to have merged somewhat over time, at least in their visual representation, including the depiction in green and red. In other words, the Suntory scrolls present Hōshō and Tsuna in a way that echoes the visual representation of paired, supernatural protective figures with their bulging eyes and green and red (or reddish) color contrast. This is another visual link between Raikō and Seimei though not necessarily an exclusive one.

Paired green and red figures also evoke *onioi*. For example, a list of treasures at Mirokuji 弥勒寺, a shrine temple of Hachiman Hakozaikigū 八幡宮崎宮, includes several items used in such a ritual.²⁵ It lists costumes for two performers in the roles of *oni*: masks—red for the husband and green (*ao* 青) for the wife—and formal clothing (*shōzoku* 装束) appropriate for rituals. Also listed are costumes and accessories for performers in the roles of the dragon king and Bishamonten: masks of green and red, leggings (*fugake* 踏懸), helmets (*kabuto* 冑), long swords (*tachi* 大刀), formal clothing (*shōzoku*), jackets (*hō* 袍) of red (*beni* 紅) and green, trousers (*hakama* 袴), and overrobes (*uchikake* 打懸) with grounds of red and deep

24 For more on *shikigami* and *gōhō dōji*, see Blacker 1975, p. 77; Lin 2004, and Koyama 2003.

25 Hachiman Hakozaikigū goshinpōki, p. 180.



Figure 10. Kintoki dancing. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 2.

blue (*kon* 紺) silk, and spears (*hoko* 鉾).²⁶ Thus, the costuming of both exorcist and demon performers featured red-and-green pairings. This practice has continued in many *onioi* rituals down to the present day, as at Shoshazan Engyōji 書写山円教寺 in the mountains above the city of Himeji.²⁷ In the darkened main hall, the Maniden 摩尼殿, two demonic-looking figures, masked and dressed in red and green, circumambulate, pausing and loudly stamping on the plank floor in the corners as a priest in the middle sits before the altar reading sutras and manipulating various ritual implements, such as bells. The red figure has a large hammer strapped to his back and carries a burning torch in his left hand and a bell in his right, while the green one carries a sword held out in both hands. The temple does not identify the two figures as demons but as *gohō dōji*. The sword is thus for driving away unseen evil spirits, and the temple considers this figure to be a manifestation of Fudō Myōō 不動明王, himself a sword wielder, and the other of Bishamonten.²⁸ These identifications conform with the legends of the temple's founder, Shōkū 性空, which say that avatars of Fudō and Bishamon in the form of *gohō dōji* served him.²⁹ Thus, the visual echoes of *gohō dōji* and *shikigami* that we see in depictions of Tsuna and Hōshō offer links to performers in *onioi* rituals as well as to the supernatural servants of Seimei and En no Gyōja. It is hard to imagine that these echoes are simple coincidences or that they would have evoked no

26 While “ao” today tends to be used to refer to colors in the English “blue” range, in earlier periods, the range was much broader, and included most shades of green as in the case of the pairing of red and green *oni* (*aka-oni* 赤鬼, *ao-oni* 青鬼). For a discussion of the masks as ritual implements, see Yamaji 2000, pp. 68–69.

27 Author's personal observation on 18 January 2009.

28 The local people today treat the *gohō dōji* as kami, offering worship at a small hall up the mountain. They comfortably insist that they are not oni of any sort because they have no horns on their otherwise demonic masks. (Kaneko Shunyū 金子俊邑, Steward of the General Affairs Office at Engyōji, personal conversation with the author, 18 January 2009.)

29 For a detailed discussion of Shōkū and his *gohō dōji*, see Koyama 2003, pp. 122–30; for a brief discussion in English, see McCormick 2009, p. 201. For discussion of a painting of Shōkū and his *gohō dōji*, see Hikonejō Hakubutsukan, entry 36, pp. 100–101.

sense of recognition from medieval viewers of the Suntory scrolls such as Hōjō Ujitsuna, his family, and elite retainers.

Another warrior to look at more closely is Kintoki. In the Itsuō scrolls, Raikō goes to Hie 日吉 Shrine, where he receives spiritual aid through a *dengaku* ceremony that includes an ecstatic dance. While we may see the performance of the *miko* at Kumano in the Suntory scrolls as something of a parallel, I would argue that Kintoki also enacts the role of ritual dance performer in one scene. While Shuten Dōji is entertaining Raikō and his companions, one of his servants exchanges insults with Kintoki in the form of chanted poems accompanied by dances. The demon says, “Whatever sort of straying of their feet brought them here, the men of the capital will become saké and bits to eat.” Kintoki replies with, “Spring has come to the cave of the old *oni*; it appears that the wind will blow things away in the night” (figure 10). The exchanges are like spell and counter spell. Kintoki’s performance is described as beyond comprehension or expression (*kokoro kotoba mo oyobazu maikereba* 心詞も不及まいければ).

3. Warriors and Captives, *Yamabushi* and *Miko*

Raikō and his followers ostensibly defeat the demons through their martial prowess as sword wielders, but, as shown above, textual and visual clues suggest that, on some level, they succeed by supernatural means as well. This section takes this argument further by focusing on the *yamabushi* guise they take. These mountain ascetics were credited with great supernatural powers, including the ability to control and exorcise demons based on their knowledge of esoteric Buddhist practices and the yin-yang rituals that had spread beyond the confines of the imperial court over time.³⁰ This section proposes that the *yamabushi* guise of the warriors in the Suntory scrolls amounted to more than deceptive costuming. It also examines the portrayals of the captive ladies to argue that we can see at least some of their actions as echoing those of *miko* and other female mediums.

First, there is the arduous journey the warriors take. The practices of the *yamabushi* included two types of difficult journeys. One was travel in high and remote mountains as part of their training for becoming adepts. Another was the trance journeys of adepts to “the other world,” which often took the form of visiting hell in a cave or a dragon palace in the mountains.³¹ In both cases, the *yamabushi* depended on guidance: for physical journeys they chose *sendatsu* 先達 to lead them, and for spiritual ones, they had supernatural guides.³² The difficult journey of Raikō and his followers through the mountains to the otherworldly land of human suffering controlled by Shuten Dōji shows clear parallels to both these practices. The Suntory version, perhaps only because it is more complete than the Itsuō version, highlights the rigors of their journey.

In the final stage of the journey through the mountains, they require the aid of the three gods: Sumiyoshi to lead and the other two to perform stupendous feats that make it possible for the warriors to cross ordinarily impassible mountains. At the same time, the text evokes the image of more mundane *sendatsu* guides, who lead others on pilgrimages into the mountains. In repeated passages, the warriors find themselves at an impasse until they

30 Miyake 2001, pp. 68–69, 104–107.

31 Iwasaki 1977.

32 Ōshima 2002, esp. p. 281, note 6.



Figure 11. Ladies leading the now-armored warriors through an open gate. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 3.

“take the three men as *sendatsu*” (*sannin no hitobito o sendatsu ni shite* 三人の人々を先達にして). Thus, the three entities parallel both the human and supernatural guides and protectors that *yamabushi* depended on.

Likewise, their vanquishing of the demons coincides with the exorcistic healing practices of *yamabushi*. Most tellingly, when the men have dressed for battle, only Raikō dons a helmet; every other warrior keeps on his *token* 兜巾 (figure 11), the cap which is one of the most distinctive elements of the mountain ascetic’s apparel, representing a lotus-cap or the head protuberance apparent on representations of the Buddha.³³ The *token* also functions as a protective item for monks practicing mountain rituals. To the viewer who understands the *yamabushi* garb merely as a disguise, this pictorial element makes no sense: a samurai helmet would afford better protection from physical harm, as it does in the Itsuō version. The clear implication is that the battle ahead is not merely physical, but has some elements of an exorcism, for which the men require mystical protection. They are, on some level, clearly to be understood as *yamabushi*.

There is a subtler suggestion of this in the warriors groups’ adherence to the esoteric Buddhist principle of the conversion of five elements to six. Among mountain ascetics, this finds visual and material expression in the *yuigesa* 結袈裟, a sort of surplice comprised of sashes running down each side of the torso and joined at the back into one that runs down the spine.³⁴ The *yuigesa* is adorned with a set of six circular attachments—four in front and two in back—that sometimes take the form of small pom-poms, but in the Suntory illustrations are medallions. There are five elements of the universe—water, fire, wood, metal, and earth—but, according to the esoteric Buddhist beliefs that were part of

33 Takahashi (1992, pp. 148–49) also stresses the identification with actual *yamabushi* and made the important observation about the warriors wearing the *yamabushi*’s *token* in battle. However, his focus is on constructing an argument about the formation and spread of the story and does not pay close attention to differences between the Suntory and Itsuō versions.

34 Miyake 2001, pp. 80–85.

shugendō's syncretic mix, the five elements on their own are inanimate. It is only when a sixth element—mind—is added that life exists, and *yuigesa* are a constant reminder of this. The Suntory version appears to put additional emphasis on the principle of a sixth element being added to five. The party begins as a group of five, but without explanation, Raikō adds Hōshō, who appears in the Itsuō version as his fellow general with his own retainers. I would argue that this is a visual representation of the need to bring the benevolent powers of the universe into alignment so as to support the exorcism of Shuten Dōji.

Another possible link to actual *yamabushi* is a subtle reference to Fudō Myōō, the divine exorcist and a major deity in the *shugendō* pantheon. Unlike the text of the Itsuō scrolls, that of the Suntory scrolls does not mention him directly. However, the weapons that the men wield when they attack Shuten Dōji, swords and binding chains, distinctly parallel those of Fudō, with his sword and binding cord.

I would also argue that the actions of some of the captive ladies parallel those of *miko* and other women who served as mediums, although less obviously.³⁵ To begin with, they serve as guides for the warriors/*yamabushi*, while they are in the realm of Shuten Dōji, a place separate from that controlled by human beings. In the Itsuō scrolls, the deities perform this function, but the deities in the Suntory scrolls vanish before their entry, appearing briefly only once to provide needed gifts and advice. The Suntory scrolls, textually, pictorially, and structurally, emphasize rather the role of the women as guides.

The importance of the *miko* as a ritual performer is suggested early on in the first Suntory scroll in the scene at Kumano Shrine, which shows one dancing and shaking a rattle with a *yamabushi* seated nearby. Various accounts make it clear that the pairing of *yamabushi* and *miko* was a mainstay of divinatory and exorcistic rites at Kumano. For example, an early episode in *Hōgen monogatari* 保元物語 shows a coordinated effort between a *miko* and forty *yamabushi* at Kumano to summon and communicate with a deity.³⁶ According to that account, the retired sovereign Toba-in 鳥羽院 (1103–1156) went to Kumano in 1155. While there, he received a disturbing omen and decided to petition the shrine deity Kumano Gongen 熊野権現. A “peerless *miko*” was given the task of calling down the deity. Although she started in the morning, she was not able to call the deity down into her by noon, so forty old *yamabushi* of great merit recited the *Wondrous Hannya Sutra* and prayed for a long time. At the same time, the *miko* threw her body on the ground and prayed, and the deity descended. After various manifestations of the deity’s presence in her, he/she faced Toba, showed that he/she knew the nature of the omen, and explained that it meant that Toba-in would die the next autumn.

A key point here is that the role of a medium necessitated suffering on *her* part in order for the exorcist to relieve the suffering of others. We see the violence of possession even more clearly in the *noh* play called “Makiginu” 巻絹, which is generally thought to date to the fifteenth century and may be based on a much earlier tale.³⁷ Certainly, it would have been well known to military men and aristocrats. The *miko*/medium under possession danced and performed the divinity of the god, and then woke from her madness after the god had ascended. The suffering of non-*miko* female mediums appears in accounts of exorcism in

35 For a thorough introduction to the varied roles of *miko* in premodern Japan, see Meeks 2011.

36 Cited in Wakita 2001, pp. 35–36. A translation of the episode in full can be found in Wilson 2001, pp. 4–5.

37 Cited in Wakita 2001, p. 36.



Figure 12. Raikō and his men coming upon a woman washing bloodied garments in the stream. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 2.

Makura no sōshi 枕草子, where the effect of possession by a malignant spirit on the medium is related in some detail.³⁸ The *Makura no sōshi* text asserts that the suffering is the spirit's rather than hers, but it is difficult for the reader to separate the two. The young woman serving as medium trembles before she falls into a trance and is possessed. The text notes that she would be ashamed of her possessed self, and those who know her feel pity as she wails and writhes and cannot keep her clothing straight while the possessing spirit is being exorcised. The suffering of the *miko*/medium clearly makes it possible for the exorcist to engage with the possessing spirit and ultimately conquer it: she serves as an instrument for releasing others from suffering. Let us look at the relevant pictures more closely, beginning with the scene at the river.

In the Itsuō version, the men encounter an old woman at the riverside beside a tree on which hang simple pieces of cloth. It has been noted that this is close to the depictions of Datsueba 奪衣婆, the old hag who, in some East Asian belief systems, takes the clothes of those who have begun their journey after dying and that, on some level, the men are heading into the land of death itself.³⁹ In the Suntory version, in contrast, the men come upon a beautiful, distressed young woman in the act of rinsing blood out of a robe in the river (figure 12). The picture emphasizes the horror of what is happening to the young ladies abducted from the capital and introduces the image of the youthful victim. It also holds an important place in the development and structure of the narrative. In the Itsuō version,

38 Sei Shonagon 1971, pp. 460–63.

39 Takahashi 1992, p. 127, cited and elaborated upon in Komatsu 1997, pp. 26–27. For an introduction to Datsueba in English, see Saka 2017, especially pp. 191–93.



Figure 13. The men and the young ladies leaving the mountains with the ladies in the lead. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 3.

the gods accompany the men up the river and remain with them as guides throughout their entire sojourn in the realm of Shuten Dōji. In the Suntory scrolls, however, the gods depart before the men arrive at the river, and it is the young washerwoman who provides the warriors with information about the demons' dwelling and leads them to it. She does so at the start of the second scroll. This combination of a young woman wearing robes and red trousers (*hakama*) guiding men dressed as *yamabushi* evokes not just a medium but a *miko* and her role in revealing the causes of afflictions and means of curing.⁴⁰ The fact that she is possessed in a physical sense by a demon and is suffering merely heightens the association.

That association becomes stronger in the context of another scene of critical transition. At the beginning of the third scroll, when the warriors are heading off to find Shuten Dōji's sleeping chamber (figure 11), they are led by the two women who remained with them, their gestures of guidance clearly depicted. This scene is described in the text, but of itself this hardly meant that it had to be illustrated; in fact, later versions based on the Suntory scrolls often omitted depictions. Thus, we have both the second and third scrolls beginning with young women directing the men as they first penetrate into Shuten Dōji's realm, and as they set out to slay him, respectively. Such a structural parallel between scenes in which women provide guidance to warriors dressed as *yamabushi* in the first case and still wear the headgear of *yamabushi* in the second hardly seems the result of coincidence. One could, in fact, argue that a female figure plays a critical role even at the start of the first scroll, only in this case, it is through her absence. The entire motivation for the initial scene of divining by Seimei is the disappearance of Kunikata's daughter, and his findings about her ultimately set the warriors on their journey.

⁴⁰ The trousers alone do not, of course, demand a reading of the women as stand-ins for *miko*. Trousers (*hakama*) were, in fact, required dress of all female palace attendants and the ones for ladies-in-waiting were generally red. See Takeda 1999, especially pp. 56–59. Further, there are studies that focus on the red trousers' relation to sexuality, for example Fujiwara 2002.



Figure 14. The Horie family mourning over the lock of hair. *Shuten Dōji emaki*, scroll 3.

Another transitional scene in which women take the lead appears near the end, when the party is coming out of the mountains after the men have completed their mission (figure 13). For no immediately apparent reason, the rescued women walk ahead of the men, something not called for by the text. It is as if to emphasize yet again the warriors' dependency on the women for guidance the entire time they are in this "other" place. After all, they do not have the direct guidance of the gods as in the Itsuō version.

Finally, the illustrations of the Suntory scrolls end not with the triumphal return to the capital, but with a scene of mourning over a lock of hair from the young woman whose body provided the flesh consumed by the men in order to deceive the demons (see figure 14). Its placement at the end just after the scene of the warriors' triumphal entry puts a final emphasis not on the men's achievement, but on the necessary, even sacrificial, contribution of a woman. Her physical consumption parallels the temporary spiritual consumption of the *miko* or other female medium as she is taken over in the rites of possession. Furthermore, the text tells us that her father devotes the rest of his life to Buddhist practices.⁴¹ His daughter's sacrifice thus leads him on a spiritual quest of his own.

The scene by the river appears in the great majority of multi-scenic paintings of the story in handscroll or book format. However, the scenes of the two ladies leading the warriors to Shuten Dōji's resting place, the rescued ladies preceding the men out of the mountains, and the Horie family mourning are the ones most often omitted in later Suntory-inspired versions. Even the next oldest extant version, which is attributed to Motonobu's great-grandson, Takanobu 孝信 (1571–1618), and which closely follows many of his illustrations, omits all three scenes. This suggests that the ritual echoes had become less significant to

41 This resonance with the figure of the sacrificed woman with that of the *miko* should be seen in juxtaposition with, rather than contradiction to more Buddhist readings of dead female bodies serving as reminders of impermanence as discussed in, among other places, Kimbrough 2013, p. 40.

later producers and consumers, while the simple narrative of heroic men saving young women continued to hold attention. Such fading may also explain why the well-known figure of Seimei is replaced as diviner in some later versions by an obscure character named Muraoka no Masatoki 村岡政時.⁴² Another possible explanation for the fading is that the connection with Kumano, famed for its *miko* mediums and *yamabushi* healers, was much more meaningful to those who worked on the Suntory version than to those who produced the many later variants. At the time that the Suntory scrolls were produced, Kumano was certainly one of the most prominent sites of *shugendō*, the religion of the *yamabushi*, and had close ties to the high echelons of the nobility. Konoe Hisamichi's own uncle Dōkō 道興 had been overseer (*kengyō*, *kenkō* 検校) in Kumano from 1465 to 1501, and his son, Dōzō 道増, held the same position from 1515 to 1551 while his father was working on the Suntory scrolls.⁴³ Dōkō had held great sway over Kumano pilgrimage guides (*sendatsu*), and himself practiced austerities in the mountains.⁴⁴ While Hisamichi's intentions are not the main concern of this essay, we can certainly see that his close relationship to Kumano helped give the Suntory scrolls their ultimate shape. Finally, the image of the Kumano *miko* was perhaps fading from the scene as other women, like the well-known Kumano *bikuni* 比丘尼, gained much more public prominence.

Conclusion

In choosing anti-demon rituals as a point of focus for this study of the Suntory scrolls, I drew inspiration from the work of Takahashi Masaaki, Hashimoto Hiroyuki, and others. I took their observations and conclusions about the Shuten Dōji story in general as a starting point for performing a close reading of one highly influential work with the goal of understanding its particular emphases and nuances. I believe that this analysis has shown that anti-demon rituals, experienced both directly and in literary accounts, such as tales of Seimei, played a significant part in shaping the work, especially in its illustrations and overall structure. While some features of the work are so striking that they suggest a certain level of intention in their inclusion, the larger argument is that the echoes of anti-demon rituals were there because they were meaningful as shared components of the medieval cultural imaginary.

This essay has expanded on Takahashi's observation that the *yamabushi* guise of the warriors is more than simply a disguise and that their demon quelling on the physical plane parallels those of the *yamabushi* exorcist on the spiritual one. It has shown that the gods served as *sendatsu* and that Fudō Myōō was evoked through the devices of binding chains and swords. The analysis of the visual representations of Raikō and two of his followers demonstrates that they overlap with those of Abe no Seimei and En no Gyōja and their paired supernatural assistants. Those assistants in turn have parallels in anti-demon figures in *shushōe* rituals such as Bishamonten and the Dragon King and paired *gohō dōji*. Finally, to the best of my knowledge, this study suggests for the first time that the female figures represent not only the victims of demons, but agents in their destruction. In doing so, they parallel the *miko*, even if they do so in a less obvious way than the warriors parallel the

42 I am grateful to Keller Kimbrough for this suggestion.

43 Shingū-shi 2018.

44 Kornicki and McMullen 1996, pp. 132–33.

yamabushi/exorcist. This role is instantiated in the very structure of the handscrolls and in the women's critical roles as guides, something not seen in the earlier Itsuō scrolls.

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