



Tsuchigumo sōshi The Emergence of a Shape-Shifting Killer Female Spider

Tsuchigumo sōshi is a fascinating *otogizōshi* story of a haunted house full of strange creatures that extols the prowess of Minamoto no Raikō (or Yorimitsu, 948–1021), recounting how he vanquished a gigantic earth spider. Although spiders appear in ancient Japanese texts, this picture scroll is the oldest extant work in which a spider is portrayed as a supernatural creature. I speculate that the spider’s transformation to an evil, uncanny creature is due to its association with an *oni* (demon, ogre). During the early modern period, the earth spider was notorious in literature and theatrical performance as a shape-shifting killer. The *Nihon shoki* and the “Swords chapter” of *Heike monogatari* are widely recognized sources for an influential Noh play, *Tsuchigumo*, which is rightfully cited as a work that greatly influenced later *tsuchigumo* literature and performance. I believe *Tsuchigumo sōshi* should be regarded as a source for the Noh play and for the emergence of an image of *tsuchigumo* as a killer shape-shifter. A complete translation of *Tsuchigumo sōshi* accompanies this article.

KEYWORDS: Earth Spider—*oni*—picture scroll—*otogizōshi*—Noh

T^{SUCHIGUMO SŌSHI} 土蜘蛛草紙 (Picture scroll of an earth spider, ca. early fourteenth century) depicts an encounter that Minamoto no Raikō 源頼光 (or Yorimitsu, 948–1021) and Watanabe no Tsuna 渡辺綱 (953–1025), leader of Raikō’s *shitennō* 四天王 (four heavenly guardians), have with some strange creatures in a dilapidated mansion. The owner of this haunted house, a beautiful woman, is a giant earth spider in disguise. Minamoto no Raikō and Watanabe no Tsuna kill the spider and find numerous skulls inside its body. The work is well regarded primarily because of its high-quality illustrations in the style of the orthodox *yamato-e* 大和絵 school (or classical Japanese) decorative paintings (NAGASAKA 1929, 18–19; UENO 1984, III). Unfortunately, the work tends to be neglected in the field of literature in spite (or perhaps because) of its entertaining content. *Tsuchigumo sōshi* belongs to the genre called *otogizōshi* お伽草子 (Muromachi-period fiction)—short stories written from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries intended as both entertainment and moral or religious edification (TOKUDA 2008, 2–9).

I speculate that this picture scroll plays a significant role in the emergence of *tsuchigumo* as a killer female shape-shifter, an image perhaps created through its association with *oni* 鬼 (demons, ogres). A medieval Noh play entitled *Tsuchigumo* 土蜘蛛 (Earth spider; ca. beginning of the fifteenth century)¹ greatly influenced subsequent works featuring an evil, shape-shifting earth spider in literature and the performing arts. The *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (Chronicles of Japan, 720) (ASTON 1956) and “Tsurugi no maki” 剣の巻 (Swords chapter) of *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (Tale of the Heike) are the widely recognized sources for this famous Noh play. Perhaps *Tsuchigumo sōshi* should also be credited as a text that helped create an image of a female killer earth spider in Noh’s *Tsuchigumo*. Acknowledging *Tsuchigumo sōshi* as a source for the Noh play leads to an interpretation of a maiden attendant named Kochō, who briefly appears at the opening of the play, as a shape-shifting killer spider, and this interpretation makes the Noh story more logical and coherent, giving depth to the play.

THE GENRE OF OTOGIZŌSHI

There are well over four hundred *otogizōshi* 伽草子 (lit. “tales of a companion”). The name *otogi* was acquired in the eighteenth century when an Osaka publisher called Shibukawa Seiemon 渋川清右衛門 published an anthology of

twenty-three short medieval stories under the title of *Goshūgen otogi bunko* 御祝言御伽文庫 (Auspicious companion library). An individual story of this collection was called an *otogizōshi*, and later short stories written from the Muromachi period (1333–1573) to the early Edo period (1600–1867) came to be called the umbrella term *otogizōshi*.

An *otogizōshi* is a fusion of a written text and illustrations. It takes a variety of forms such as *emaki* 絵巻 (picture scrolls), *nara ehon* 奈良絵本 (picture books), and woodblock-printed books. According to Mulhern, *otogizōshi* are literary works “distinguished from transcribed folk tales by their substantial length and scope; sophistication in plot structure, characterization, and style; gorgeous appearance in binding and illustration; and wide circulation. The origin, date, authorship, readership, means of circulation, and geographic distribution of the *otogizōshi* tales... remain largely nebulous” (MULHERN 1985, 1).² Still, *otogizōshi*’s anonymous authorship, brevity, and context indicate an oral-derived literature (STEVEN 1977, 303–31). Standardized expressions and the mnemonic repetition of key words and phrases often typify this oral-derived literature. Another indicator of *otogizōshi*’s origin in oral tradition is the “emphasis on events and comparative lack of concern for details typical of auditory literature” (STEVEN 1977, 305).

There are a number of ways to categorize *otogizōshi*. According to Ichiko Teiji, who exerted a great influence on medieval literature and the scholarly development of *otogizōshi*, the works of *otogizōshi* are classified into six categories: the aristocracy, the priesthood and religion, warriors, common people, foreign countries and strange lands, and nonhuman beings (ICHIKO 1955, 69–70). The picture scroll of *Tsuchigumo sōshi* belongs to the categories of warriors and nonhuman beings.

THE *TSUCHIGUMO SŌSHI* PICTURE SCROLL

The *Tsuchigumo sōshi* picture scroll, which is currently housed in the Tokyo National Museum, dates back to the first half of the fourteenth century.³ The scroll consists of nine sections of writing and illustrations. In the process of transmission from one family to another, the paper has been damaged, causing lacunae, and the order of the sections has been misarranged. Fortunately the order of the story and illustrations were restored to the original from a copy of *Tsuchigumo sōshi* dated 1764. The writing on the box that contained the picture scroll and a certificate written by Tosa Mitsuyoshi 土佐光芳 (1700–1772), a chief court painter and head of the Tosa school, states that Priest Kenkō 兼好 (1283–1350) wrote the text and Tosa Nagataka 土佐長隆 (late thirteenth century) made the illustrations, but there is no proof to back up this assertion (NAGASAKA 1929, 18–19; UENO 1984, 106–111).

PLOT SUMMARY OF *TSUCHIGUMO SŌSHI*

One day, the brave warriors, Minamoto no Raikō and Watanabe no Tsuna, saw a skull floating through the air. They followed the skull and it led them to an ancient, decaying mansion. Raikō entered the house alone, and found the house

haunted with strange creatures including a two-hundred-and-ninety-year-old woman, a three-foot-tall woman with a remarkably large head, and animal-like objects. But among this supernatural *mêlée* was a singular gorgeous female figure. Raikō was dazzled by the woman's beauty, yet she threw a cloud-like white ball at Raikō. In response, Raikō unsheathed his sword and wielded it through her as she vanished into thin air. As Tsuna rushed to Raikō's side, they found a huge puddle of white blood on the floor. Following the trail of blood, they found themselves far off in the western mountains where they met a gigantic creature nearly two-hundred-feet tall. The monster seemed to have no neck but had numerous legs. It said, "What has happened to my body, it's so painful." As the warriors approached the creature, the monster fiercely resisted the warriors' attack. But Raikō unsheathed his sword and decapitated it. When they cut open its flank, numerous small spiders about the size of seven- or eight-year-old children spilled out. In the creature's great belly, they found numerous skulls. The warriors dug a grave in the ground and buried the skulls, and then set fire to the monster's den.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

With its skillful portrayal of architecture and figures using delicate lines, the artwork is often praised as a work produced by first-class orthodox *yamato-e* painters. The explanation of *Tsuchigumo sōshi* on the website of Tokyo National Museum describes it as follows:

This scroll is considered to be one of the pioneering works leading to *otogizoshi emaki* (picture scrolls of popular short stories) that became prevalent in the Muromachi period. While most of the paintings in *otogizoshi emaki* were simple in style, the paintings in this picture scroll bear characteristics of the authentic painting styles of the Kamakura period and traditional *yamato-e* (classical Japanese painting style), making this valuable historical material.⁴

In contrast to the dignified Raikō, strange creatures such as a large-headed woman and animal-like beings are humorously depicted. Interestingly, the animal-like beings (see FIGURE 3) are portrayed like *tsukumogami* 付喪神 or objects with features of animals, such as birds and cows. A cow-man has a tripod on his head, and a wicker basket has a smiling face on it holding a basin with handles (*tsunodarai* 角盥). This portrayal reminds me of an illustration in *Fudō riyaku engi* 不動利益縁起 (The benevolence of Fudō Myōō 不動明王; ca. fourteenth century). One illustration in *Fudō riyaku engi* portrays a scene of a yin-yang diviner or practitioner of *onmyōdō* 陰陽道 (the way of yin and yang) praying, and five unidentifiable creatures that represent illness. Among the five creatures, two look like types of containers: one is a furry *tsunodarai*, and another looks like a large furry bowl (REIDER 2009, 246–50). Such strange creatures seem to have been a popular subject to portray.

There is one noticeable mismatch between an illustration and a text. When Raikō and Tsuna follow the spider's blood trail and see the earth spider, the written text is rendered as "the monster seemed to have no neck but had numerous

legs.” But the illustration portrays two gigantic figures with necks and two legs (see FIGURE 8). This kind of mismatch is not uncommon in *otogizōshi* works. In the case of *Tsuchigumo sōshi*, this mismatch seems to reflect the close relationship between an *oni* and *tsuchigumo*, or even the fluid nature of *tsuchigumo* as I explain later.

Tsuchigumo IN ANCIENT LITERATURE

What is *tsuchigumo*? Mark Hudson considers the *tsuchigumo* “as an example of the Yamato language of political allegiance, whereby people who opposed the state were assigned the status of barbarian” (HUDSON 1999, 201).⁵ It is commonly accepted among scholars that *tsuchigumo* refers to the less-cultivated indigenous people of Japan who inhabited the islands after their creation by Heavenly deities but before the arrival of the Imperial family’s ancestors, who claimed authority to rule Japan and these indigenous people as descendants from Heavenly beings. The term *tsuchigumo* is used derogatorily in ancient Japanese literature to refer to those who defied Imperial (central) authority (TSUDA 1963, 188–95). For instance, in *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) (Ancient matters; PHILIPPI 1969), on his eastward expedition to claim his heavenly authority, Emperor Jinmu 神武天皇 and his men smite a great number of indigenous pit-dwelling tribesmen described as earth spiders (KURANO and TAKEDA 1958, 157; PHILIPPI 1969, 174–75). An overwhelming majority of earth spiders had fought and been eliminated in bloody battles, though a few survived by apologizing profusely for their resistance toward imperial authority and escaped capital punishment.⁶

As for the origin of the name, Urabe Kanekata 卜部兼方, a Shinto priest of the thirteenth century, writes in his *Shaku Nihongi* 釈日本紀 (Annotated edition of *Nihongi* or *Nihon shoki*), “According to *Settsu Fudoki* 撰津風土記 (Topography of Settsu province), in the reign of Emperor Jinmu, there was a villain called *tsuchigumo*—he was given the contemptuous name of “earth spider” because this person always dwelled in a pit” (URABE 1965, 132). Aston also writes,

The “short-bodies,” etc., of the “Nihongi” description I take to be nothing more than a product of the popular imagination working on the hint contained in the name *Tsuchi-gumo*, which is literally “earth spider”... [I]n one of the passages above referred to, the *Tsuchi-gumo* are described as inhabiting a rock-cave, but in others they are said to live in *muro* or pit-dwellings, and this is obviously the origin of the name. (ASTON 1956, 129)

A *tsuchigumo* is thus depicted in ancient literature as a villainous human being whose living customs differ from mainstream conventions.

Tsuchigumo (EARTH SPIDER) IN *NIHON SHOKI*

One of the most important descriptions of *tsuchigumo* during the development of the *tsuchigumo* story appears in *Nihon shoki*. During Emperor Jinmu’s eastern expedition in Katsuraki 葛城 (or sometimes “Katsuragi”),

There were... *tsuchigumo* at the village of Taka-wohari, whose appearance was as follows: They had short bodies, and long arms and legs. They were of the same class as the pigmies. The Imperial troops wove nets of dolichos, which they flung over them and then slew them. Wherefore the name of that village was changed to Katsuraki.

(ASTON 1956, 130; SAKAMOTO et al. 1967, 134; KOJIMA et al. 1994, I: 228–29).

Dolichos (*katsura* 葛) is a general term for a creeper or vine, and Katsuraki literally means a dolichos castle. In the Noh play, the *tsuchigumo* introduces himself as the spirit of an earth spider who lived on Mount Katsuraki in ancient times.

This episode of an earth spider in *Nihon shoki* has perhaps influenced *Tsuchigumo sōshi* in that a main character, a person or a spider, throws threads to capture its enemy, a spider or a person. In both cases, the *tsuchigumo* is killed in the end, although the subject who throws the threads is either the imperial army or *tsuchigumo*, depending on the work. In *Nihon shoki*, the imperial army murders the defiant earth spiders by throwing the net of dolichos. On the other hand, in *Tsuchigumo sōshi* (and other later literary and performing arts) it is the earth spider that throws the strings to catch the prey. It is understandable to see a supernatural spider throwing silk threads when one considers the nature of a physical arthropod spider that catches its prey by extruding silk and to make cobwebs. The gender of Mount Katsuraki's *tsuchigumo* is not known, but the spider of *Tsuchigumo sōshi* is presumed to be a female. When Raikō and Tsuna “cut open its flank, numerous small spiders about the size of seven- or eight-year-old children noisily trotted around.” She is a large mother spider. This should not come as a surprise because, as many scholars point out, there are a number of female *tsuchigumo* in ancient literature (see, for example, NAGAFUJI 1991, 175–96).

The physical description of *tsuchigumo* in *Nihon shoki* as “pigmies” or dwarfs (*shuju* 侏儒) is interesting in that one of the strange creatures that appears to Raikō in the haunted house of *Tsuchigumo sōshi* is a three-foot-tall nun. Perhaps the author of *Tsuchigumo sōshi* has made the nun short to show his knowledge of the Tao-chou 道州 people who appear in Po Chü-i's 白居易 poems,⁷ but it is amusing to imagine that the author may also have alluded to the short height of the *tsuchigumo* who were killed in the battle at Katsuraki. For that matter, a floating skull that leads Raikō and Tsuna to a dilapidated mansion at the beginning of the *Tsuchigumo sōshi*, a decoy to entice Raikō into the house, may have been one of the skulls of *tsuchigumo* killed by the imperial army in ancient times.

KUMO (SPIDER) IN NIHON SHOKI

One noticeable element in regard to *Tsuchigumo sōshi* is that despite the title, the word *tsuchigumo* does not appear in the text. The spider is introduced as *yamagumo* 山ぐも (mountain spider).⁸ Some scholars speculate that people may have given the title *Tsuchigumo sōshi* later on (UENO 1984, 106). Hence, strictly speaking, a spider in the text may not in fact be an earth spider. While the earth

spider is a derogatory name for anti-establishment forces (or perhaps individuals), a physical spider in ancient literature is by and large considered a good sign in that it brings the person one waits for (SAKAMOTO et al. 1967, 334; KOJIMA et al. 1994, II: 119; SUDŌ 2002, 70–71).

The oldest extant example of such usage appears in *Nihon shoki* in the poem composed by Sotoori Iratsume 衣通郎姬 on the second month of the eighth year in the reign of Emperor Ingyō 允恭天皇 (SUDŌ 2002, 70). The poem is preceded by an explanatory note: “The emperor went to Fujiwara and secretly observed how matters were with Sotoori Iratsume. That night Sotoori Iratsume was sitting alone, thinking fondly of the emperor. Unaware of his approach, she made a song, saying:

This is the night	<i>Waga sekoga</i>
My husband will come.	<i>kubeki yoi nari</i>
The little crab–	<i>sasagane no</i>
The spider’s action	<i>kumo no okonai</i>
Tonight is manifest	<i>koyoi shirushi mo</i>

(ASTON 1956, 320; SAKAMOTO et al. 1967, 443)

Aston noted that, “it was considered that when a spider clung to one’s garments, it was a sign that an intimate friend would arrive. Little crab is another name for spider” (ASTON 1956, 320). Consequently, scholars discussed how a spider, a good omen, becomes a shape-shifting supernatural creature of *tsuchigumo* in medieval Japan.

THE APPEARANCE OF SUPERNATURAL *TSUCHIGUMO* IN MEDIEVAL JAPAN

Sudō, who writes (SUDŌ 2002) that the spider in the *Tsuchigumo sōshi* is the first appearance of a supernatural spider in Japanese literature, considers its shape-shifting ability to come from its venom, especially of the *jorōgumo* 女郎蜘蛛 (*nephila clavata*, which literally means a “prostitute spider”). Although a *jorōgumo* as a supernatural creature starts to appear in Edo-period literature, she speculates that a prototypical image of *jorōgumo* must have already existed in the preceding period. She conjectures that the word *jorō* 女郎 (prostitute) in *jorōgumo* is associated with the word *jōrō* 上臈, which refers to a lady-in-waiting, but in the Muromachi period also referred to a prostitute. Thus, she suggests that the image of a prostitute may be behind the creation of the female shape-shifting spiders (SUDŌ 2002, 68–69).

Watase Junko speculates on the influence of Chinese literature primarily because the name *tsuchigumo* or “supernatural spider” does not appear in any Japanese texts between ancient times and the *Tsuchigumo sōshi* or the “Swords chapter” of medieval times, and that *Shaku Nihongi* of the thirteenth century describes *tsuchigumo* as a human being, not as a spider. Watase writes that the study of *Nihon shoki* during the medieval period focuses on the “Divine Age” book of the *Nihon shoki* and

readers probably did not read *Nihon shoki* in its entirety; consequently it is hard to imagine from the annotations of *Nihon shoki* that the educated people of that time developed an image of *tsuchigumo* as a harmful supernatural being (WATASE 2003, 78). Likewise, Sudō writes that she sees no ancient image of *tsuchigumo* as defiant people in *Tsuchigumo sōshi* (SUDŌ 2002, 67–68). It seems to me, however, that the image of defiance is present in Raikō’s statement:

Our kingdom is a divine country. The gods protect our country, and the emperor rules the country with the help of his subjects. I am a subject and a grandson of a prince.... Now when I look at this creature, it is a beast. Beasts... bring disaster to the country and are the foes of all humans. I am a warrior sworn to protect the emperor, and his compatriot, sworn to help him rule the country. How can you disobey? (YOKOYAMA and MATSUMOTO 1981, 440)

Important poems such as the above-mentioned poem by Sotoori Iratsume—the poem cited in *Kokin wakashū*’s 古今和歌集 preface and the subject of serious studies in the medieval period—do appear later, that is, after the “Divine Age” book of the *Nihon shoki*, so it is hard to imagine that the scholars overlooked the descriptions of the *tsuchigumo* of *Nihon shoki*. Perhaps with the notion of a creature injurious to the country, the scroll was titled *Tsuchigumo sōshi*. It does not mean, however, that I deny the influence of spider’s venom and Chinese literature. But in my opinion, it is hard *not* to visualize the real spider from the name, *tsuchigumo*, of ancient literature such as *Nihon shoki*, “[T]hey have short bodies, and long arms and legs. They are of the same class as the pigmies.” Indeed, as Nagasaka Kaneo notes, it is easy to replace a human being with a real spider later from such descriptions (NAGASAKA 1929, 19–20).

Further, I speculate that the image of the killer female spider also came from the *tsuchigumo*’s association with *oni*—supernatural creatures that are known for shape-shifting and cannibalism. I assume that *tsuchigumo*’s association with *oni* became tangible enough to be visualized in *Tsuchigumo sōshi*. The mysterious, beautiful woman in *Tsuchigumo sōshi* is a spider—a female earth spider—in disguise, and indications suggest that the beautiful woman in *Tsuchigumo sōshi* is the first, or one of the earliest portrayals, of an earth spider as a female killer shape-shifter. In examining the image of the cannibalistic earth spider of *Tsuchigumo sōshi* and its relation to the “Swords chapter” of *Heike monogatari*, we can see the development of the image leading to its fruition in the Noh play, *Tsuchigumo*.

ONI VS. TSUCHIGUMO

Although *oni* and spiders are completely different creatures with different visual images, they have one major commonality—they both represent those who defied imperial (central) authority. A brief explanation of *oni* may be helpful here.

Ancient Japanese literature assigns a number of different written characters such as 鬼, 魑魅, and 鬼魅 to express *oni* (TSUCHIHASHI 1990, 95). Among them, the character used now is 鬼, which in Chinese means invisible soul or spirit of the

dead, both ancestral and evil. The early examples of 鬼 appear in *Nihon shoki* and in *Izumo fudoki* 出雲風土記 (Topography of Izumo province, 733), describing evil or antagonistic beings. In *Nihon shoki*, for example, when Takamimusuhi 高皇產靈神, one of the central deities of the Plain of High Heaven and an imperial ancestor, desires his grandson to rule the Central Land of Reed-Plains (that is, Japan), he pronounces, “I desire to have the evil Gods of the Central Land of Reed-Plains expelled and subdued” (ASTON 1956, 64; SAKAMOTO et al. 1967, I: 134).⁹ He calls the inhabitants of the Central Land who are not subjugated *ashiki* 鬼, or evil gods. Another example is that when Emperor Keikō 景行天皇 tells Yamato Takeru 日本武尊 to conquer the rebels in the east, he says, “So by cunning words thou mayst moderate the violent Deities, and by a display of armed force sweep away malignant demons [*kadamashiki* 鬼]” (ASTON 1956, 204; SAKAMOTO et al. 1967, I: 302). The corresponding phrase in *Kojiki* is “the un-submissive people” (*matsurowanu hito-domo*) (PHILIPPI 1969, 81; YAMAGUCHI and KŌNOSHI 1997, 223). In *Izumo fudoki*, a one-eyed 鬼 appears on reclaimed land in the community of Ayo of Izumo Province (present-day Shimane prefecture) and devours a man (AKIMOTO 1958, 238–39). KOMATSU Kazuhiko writes, “people who had different customs or lived beyond the reach of the emperor’s control” were considered some form of *oni* (1999, 3).

An earth spider defies central authority and has different physical features from other beings in mainstream culture. In this sense, the earth spider is considered to be one of the most ancient types of *oni* (BABA Akiko 1988, 170). One account that tells of an intertwined relationship between *oni* and *tsuchigumo* is the legend of Kugamimi no mikasa 陸耳御笠 in the areas of Mount Ōe 大江山 and Ōemachi 大江町 in present-day Kyoto. According to *Tango Fudoki zanketsu* 丹後風土記殘欠 (Account of the topography of Settsu province), Hiko imasu no miko 日子坐王, a stepbrother of Emperor Sujin 崇神天皇, led a force to smite the *tsuchigumo* named Kugamimi no mikasa and Hikime 匹女. Hikime was killed, but Kugamimi no mikasa escaped. Hiko imasu no miko consulted a shaman to ascertain the whereabouts of Kugamimi no mikasa, and it was revealed that Kugamimi no mikasa went into hiding in Mount Ōe of Tanba Province [the rest of the story is missing] (MINOBE and MINOBE 2009, 141). Mount Ōe is famous for Shuten Dōji 酒吞童子 (Drunken demon), Japan’s most renowned *oni* of the medieval period. Minobe Katsushige and Minobe Tomoko consider that the legend of Kugamimi no mikasa, that is, a *tsuchigumo*, is a source for the famous *oni* story of Shuten Dōji (MINOBE and MINOBE 2009, 141–42).¹⁰ Also, Araki Hiroyuki reports the legend of Onihachi 鬼八 (lit. *oni* eight) in Miyazaki prefecture and concludes that Onihachi, who is believed to have rebelled against Emperor Jinmu’s younger brother, is a *tsuchigumo* and an indigenous person of that area (ARAKI Hiroyuki 1999, 4–8). This report suggests a close relationship between *oni*—as it appears in the name Onihachi—and a *tsuchigumo*.

Another aspect of commonality between *oni* and *tsuchigumo* is their perceived power to cause illness in ancient and medieval times. For example, Takahashi Masaaki identifies an *oni* as an epidemic deity (TAKAHASHI 1992, 4);¹¹ a *mushi* 虫 (insect, bug, worm) was also believed to cause illness. Peter Knecht writes,

Under the influence of Chinese medical treatises, early medieval Japanese practitioners of medicine argued that the causes for human diseases are certain entities active inside the human body. These causes were conceived as *oni*, but at that time *oni* were not yet the terrifying figures they became later. However, in later interpretations it was thought that a kind of *mushi* (an imaginary “insect”) were active in the different parts of the body. Challenged by some outside being, these *mushi* were believed to cause a disease together with the intruder.

(KNECHT 2010, xiv).

Further, KNECHT et al. (2008) report an interesting contagious disease called *denshi-byō* 伝尸病 (illness caused by *denshi*), in which a person is emaciated by the time of death. The modern diagnosis of this illness is pulmonary tuberculosis, although this interpretation is open to debate. Fascinatingly, this *denshi* was considered both a *mushi* and an *oni* from the ancient through the early modern periods, and consequently a remedy was sought from both medicine and religion. As will be mentioned later, Raikō’s illness is caused by a spider’s spirit in the earth spider story of the “Swords chapter” and the Noh play. I speculate that through the symbolic similarity as an enemy of imperial authority and perhaps some resemblance as a vector of illness, *tsuchigumo* came to adapt some of the characteristics of *oni*, namely transformational skills and cannibalism (REIDER 2010, 27–50).

Just as *oni* famously eat humans in one gulp, the spider on its way out of the decayed mansion in *Tsuchigumo sōshi* eats “the old woman in one gulp.” And as *oni* transform into men or women to get their targets, the spider shape-shifts to a beautiful woman and dazzles Raikō to capture him. The *Tsuchigumo sōshi* text seems to offer a close relationship between *oni* and *tsuchigumo* or perhaps a fluid intermingling of the two creatures. As mentioned earlier, there is a mismatch between the text and the figure when Raikō and Tsuna meet the spider after Raikō injured it. According to the text, “the monster seemed to have no neck but had numerous legs.” But the accompanying figure portrays two creatures depicted more like gigantic *gozu* 牛頭 (ox-headed demons) and *mezu* 馬頭 (horse-headed demons), both types of *oni*. Minobe Katsushige and Minobe Tomoko believe that these creatures are the *oni*, although they understand the *oni* to be a relative of *tsuchigumo* (MINOBE and MINOBE 2009, 142) rather than the *tsuchigumo* itself. The *tsuchigumo*’s association with *oni* becomes clearer in the “Swords chapter,” one of the sources for the Noh play.

TSUCHIGUMO SŌSHI AND THE “SWORDS CHAPTER”

The similarities between *Tsuchigumo sōshi* and the “Swords chapter” are remarkable, especially the sequence of the events and the relationship between the *tsuchigumo* and *oni*.

In the “Swords chapter,” an episode of the earth spider (ASAHARA, HARUTA, and MATSUI 1990, 522–23; SADLER 1921, 331–32) comes immediately after the *oni* episode (ASAHARA, HARUTA, and MATSUI 1990, 518–22; SADLER 1921, 326–31) as the following summaries show. The *oni* episode is as follows:

[Minamoto no Raikō inherited a pair of treasured swords, *higekiri* 鬚切 (beard-cutting) and *hizamaru* 膝丸 (knee-cutting), from his father.] During the time of Minamoto no Raikō, people begin disappearing in the capital. Raikō sends Watanabe no Tsuna to the capital on an errand. Thinking that the capital is dangerous given the many disappearances, Raikō lends his famous *higekiri* sword to Tsuna to protect himself. At Modoribashi Bridge, which is in the capital, Tsuna encounters a beautiful woman of about twenty years of age who asks him to escort her to her home. Tsuna agrees and lifts the lady on his horse, just as she reveals her true identity—a monstrous *oni*. Grabbing Tsuna’s topknot and flying in the air, the *oni* declares that s/he is going to take Tsuna to Mount Atago [愛宕山]. In rapid self-defense Tsuna manages to cut off one of the *oni*’s arms, causing the *oni* to flee without Tsuna. Tsuna and the *oni*’s severed arm fall on the southern corridor of Kitano Shrine [北野ノ社]. Later, the same *oni*, disguised as Tsuna’s foster mother, attempts to enter his house. The foster mother-*oni* asks Tsuna to show her the famous *oni*’s arm. Believing that the woman is actually his foster mother, Tsuna takes the disguised creature to the chest where he has placed the *oni*’s arm. Seeing the severed arm, the creature reveals its true identity, grabs the limb, and flies away with it. In light of the incident with Tsuna, Raikō’s renames his sword *onimaru* [鬼丸; demon sword].

The *oni* episode is immediately followed by the *tsuchigumo* episode:

In the summer of the same year, Raikō becomes ill. All the incantations and prayers by the monks and priests fail to cure his illness. Raikō’s intermittent fevers continue for more than thirty days. One night a seven-foot tall priest unfamiliar to everyone approaches Raikō’s bed and tries to restrain him with ropes. Raikō takes up his *hizamaru* sword and strikes the priest, who then vanishes. As his *shitennō* and others rush to Raikō’s room they find a trail of blood that leads to a mound in Kitano where there is a giant spider. Raikō realizes that his illness has been caused by this spider. Raikō and his men impale the spider and transport it to the riverside as a warning. Raikō renames his *hizamaru* sword *kumogiri* [蜘蛛切; spider-cutting].

Raikō and his *shitennō*’s encounter with an *oni* and a spider is sequentially similar to Raikō and Tsuna’s encounter with the *oni* (that is, the spider illustrated as *oni*) and the spider in *Tsuchigumo sōshi*. The *oni* and spider in *Tsuchigumo sōshi* are effectively the same creature because the *oni* returns as a projectile aimed at Raikō—the sword tip Raikō lost in an earlier struggle with a spider in the shape of an alluring woman. The *oni* and the spider in the “Swords chapter” could be related, too. One indication is that the *oni*’s arm is dropped on the southern corridor of Kitano Shrine and the earth spider’s mound is located in Kitano. Kitano Shrine is dedicated to the spirit of the famous scholar-statesman, Sugawara no Michizane (849–903). Before he was worshiped as the deity of scholarship, he was an extraordinarily powerful vengeful spirit—who posthumously fought imperial authority as the king of *oni* (REIDER 2010, 12–13). The *oni* that escapes Tsuna may have appeared as an earth spider to torment Raikō.

What happens in the *tsuchigumo* episode of the “Swords chapter” and the *Tsuchigumo sōshi* are quite similar. Raikō in the *tsuchigumo* episode was alone and sick—not alert—when the strange priest attacked him with ropes. The gorgeous woman in *Tsuchigumo sōshi* attacks Raikō with white balls or strings when Raikō is alone and not alert—he is dazzled by the woman’s beauty. The action of this woman—throwing the white balls or strings at Raikō—is the same as that of the strange priest who throws ropes at Raikō in the “Swords chapter.” Kuroda Akira, who considers *Tsuchigumo sōshi* an important work in terms of the development of the *tsuchigumo* episode of the “Swords chapter,” speculates that the beautiful woman in *Tsuchigumo sōshi* is an antecedent of a beautiful woman whom Tsuna meets at the Modoribashi Bridge in the “Swords chapter” (KURODA 1994, 325).¹² That is quite possible, although I am inclined to think the peerless beauty is a precursor of the eerie priest in the “Swords chapter.” The rest of the plot of the *tsuchigumo* episode is the same as *Tsuchigumo sōshi*—Raikō unsheathes his sword and slashes his opponent, who vanishes, leaving copious blood behind; Raikō’s loyal retainer(s) follow the blood trail, find a gigantic spider, and kill it.

MAIDEN AND SPIDER IN THE NOH PLAY *TSUCHIGUMO*

The Noh play *Tsuchigumo* has had a great influence on later performing arts and literature such as *Kanhasshū tsunagiuma* 関八州繫馬 (Eight provinces tethered horse; a Kabuki piece), *Kumo no ito azusa no yumihari* 蜘蛛糸梓弦 (Spider’s thread catalpa bow; a Kabuki piece), *Tsuchigumo* (Earth spider; a Kabuki piece), and *Shiranui monogatari* 白縫譚 (The story of Shiranui; a *gesaku* 戯作, or popular literature of the late Edo period). In all of these, an earth spider appears first as an attractive female figure.

According to the Noh text, Minamoto no Raikō is stricken by an unknown illness. His maid, Kochō, brings medicine but it does not help. One night, a strange priest¹³ appears at Raikō’s bedside and begins casting silken threads across Raikō’s body. Surprised, Raikō strikes the creature with his renowned sword and the being disappears, dripping blood behind it. It turns out that Raikō’s illness was caused by this strange creature, whose real identity is the spirit of the spider who had been killed by the emperor’s army at Mount Katsuraki. Raikō’s vassal follows the trail of blood and kills the spirit of the spider.

A number of scholars consider Kochō to be a mere human maid and that the section on Kōcho at the beginning of the play should be deleted as extraneous (SANARI 1931, 2056). But I believe it is an important section, especially in foreshadowing the priest-spirit in the form of a female. It gives depth to the Noh play if we interpret that Raikō has been weakened slowly and steadily by Kochō, a spirit of the spider. As Ikenouchi Josui speculates, Kochō is not a mere human maid of Raikō. Ikenouchi explains that an interpretation of Raikō’s phrase, “*iro o tukushite yoru hiru no*” (SANARI 1931, 2059; my emphasis) should be “exhausting love day and night” rather than the conventional “exhausting various [methods of healing] day and night” (my translation); that is, *iro* 色 should be interpreted not as

“various” (*iroiro* 色々), but to mean the *iro* of “love, lust, sensuality” (IKENOUCHI 1903, 14). Ikenouchi writes that even a great hero falls for a supernatural beauty in the transient world and this concept of human weakness goes along with a Buddhist message of the Noh play too (IKENOUCHI 1903, 14–15). Ikenouchi’s interpretation is insightful and I agree that Raikō feels for Kochō, just as Raikō in *Tsuchigumo sōshi* let down his guard and was dazed when he saw the beautiful woman. But I believe that Kochō is a spirit of the earth spider primarily because of the influence of *Tsuchigumo sōshi* as a female transformer who casts threads to trap the warrior and the poem that the priest recites when he reveals his identity as the spirit of a spider.

The poem the priest recites is the aforementioned poem by Sotoori Iratsume, the version that appears in *Kokin wakashū* (A collection of poems ancient and modern, ca. 905; see OZAWA and MATSUDA 1994 and the translation by McCULLOUGH 1985). In number III0 of *Kokin wakashū*, Sotoori Iratsume’s poem appears as “Waga seko ga, kubeki yoi nari, sasagani no, kumo no furumai, kanete shirushi mo” (“This is the night, my husband will come, the little crab, the spider’s action, it manifests in advance”)—it is a love poem (OZAWA and MATSUDA 1994, 28 and 421).¹⁴ As mentioned earlier, the spider in the ancient literature is by and large considered a good omen, ushering in a person one pines for (SUDŌ 2002, 70–71; SAKAMOTO et al. 1967, 334; KOJIMA et al. 1994, II: 119). The poem in the Noh play reveals: 1. the priest’s identity as a spider; and 2. the priest-spider’s identity as Kochō. When the eerie priest appears to Raikō, Raikō asks who he is. The priest replies by reciting the first three lines, “Waga seko ga, kubeki yoi nari, sasagani no.” While this poem discloses the identity of the priest as a spider, it also carries an image of a female composer as a woman waiting—if one recalls, Sotoori Iratsume was pining for the emperor. In other words, through the poem the priest implies his true identity as a spider and further, Kochō, a woman who waits on (and awaits) Raikō. Perhaps what she gives Raikō is not medicine but venom to make him sick. This Kochō was once the stunningly beautiful woman who waits for Raikō in the haunted house. As the beauty turned out to be a gigantic female spider, Kochō in the Noh play is a spirit of the spider who also shape-shifted into the priest. But of course, Raikō does not recognize the priest, so he continues the fourth line “kumo no furumahi” (the spider’s action), but changes the last line to “kanete yori shiranu to iu ni nao chikazuku” (in advance I know not, but it still approaches) (SANARI 1931, 2060), as the spider’s spirit Kochō is an important part of the play.

The Noh play *Tsuchigumo* is categorized as a demon play.¹⁵ According to TERUI Takeshi (2008), a Noh performer, it is the most popular piece among demon plays. The popularity does not necessarily stem from the plot, but rather from the lead actor-*tsuchigumo*’s spectacular performance of throwing numerous spider’s threads on the stage. Kanze Kasetsu (1884–1959), a famous Noh performer of the Kanze school, says of *Tsuchigumo* that it is a small, light piece, and there is nothing special to learn and no secret transmission to perform (KANZE 1952, 33). I believe that when one realizes the relationship between Kochō and the earth spider, it not only deepens the plot layers but also that the play’s level or status will rise, requiring better skills to perform Kochō, the priest, and the spider.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Tsuchigumo in ancient times were both men and women who defied the sovereign authorities. The imperial conquerors who claimed to rule Japan as descendants from High Heaven labeled them as such. *Tsuchigumo* in the medieval period also defied the imperial authorities, yet the conquerors were not the emperors or princes, but rather, warriors who were the subjects of the emperor. The significant difference is that medieval *tsuchigumo* are not human beings but shape-shifting supernatural creatures. Minobe Shigekatsu and Minobe Tomoko write that Japanese medieval tales such as *Tsuchigumo sōshi* could have become a mythology of the warriors of the Seiwa Genji 清和源氏 clan's regime to claim their legitimacy to rule Japan.¹⁶ Instead, the tale turned into a monster-conquering story because the image of the spider as a monster was foregrounded while the symbolic meaning of "recalcitrant unsubmitive people" became weak (MINOBE and MINOBE 2009, 148).

The supernaturalness of *tsuchigumo*, which I believe is partly caused by the *tsuchigumo*'s association with *oni*, makes the story more entertaining and more appealing, especially as it involves an attractive woman. Indeed, at a time when the power of the supernatural was still real and influential in everyday life, the subject of a striking beauty attacking a renowned warrior—whose descendants held influential and important positions in the shogunate of the time—or a loyal warrior conquering a humongous earth spider must have been excellent material for author, painter, and audience.

Tsuchigumo sōshi may have some didactic messages for the reader, such as to be mindful of a beautiful woman whose allure is powerful enough to lull even the strongest man into a false sense of security, or warnings of the dangers of curiosity, just as Raikō was led by a strange floating skull. What with the illustrations of the orthodox *yamato-e* school and allusions to various classical Chinese poems and verses, *Tsuchigumo sōshi* is an entertaining work.

Importantly it is a work in that *tsuchigumo*, *oni*, and a beautiful woman become one entity. The image of a female killer spider took shape in *Tsuchigumo sōshi*, influencing the Noh *Tsuchigumo*. Kochō, whose appearance was considered more like an appendix to the plot, is an important part of the play as a mysterious shape-shifting spider's spirit with vengeance. Later stories of the earth spider follow the role *tsuchigumo* in the Noh play, making the maiden figure more Machiavellian.

Translation of *Tsuchigumo sōshi*

This translation is based upon *Muromachi jidai monogatari taisei* (YOKOYAMA and MATSUMOTO 1981, 436–41) and *Zoku Nihon emaki taisei* (KOMATSU Shigemi 1984, 19: 161–64). *Muromachi jidai monogatari taisei* is the standard work for *otogizōshi* written texts, with the sections reorganized to be read as a coherent story. Some lacunae are supplemented in *Zoku Nihon emaki taisei*, which provides full illustrations.

A TALE OF AN EARTH SPIDER

Minamoto no Raikō, descendant of the emperor [Seiwa 清和],¹⁷ was renowned as a courageous, daring, and resolute warrior. Around the twentieth of the tenth month, he journeyed to Kitayama 北山,¹⁸ reaching as far as Rendaino 蓮台野.¹⁹ He was [...] ²⁰ accompanied by his loyal retainer, Tsuna, a skilled, renowned, and courageous warrior in his own right. Raikō wore a three-foot sword, and Tsuna wore armor with a bow and arrows. During their journey, they saw a skull floating through the air. The skull rode upon the winds, soaring in and out of the clouds. Raikō and Tsuna pondered the strange matter for some time, and then followed the skull all the way to Kaguraoka 神楽岡,²¹ where it suddenly disappeared. There, before their eyes, was an ancient and decaying mansion. As they traipsed through... the wild and spacious yard, their sleeves became wet from the heavy dew on the tall, neglected grass. The gate was terribly decayed with vines entangled all over. Even in its ruined state the warriors could clearly see that at one time this must have been the residence of an aristocrat. To the west of the ruined mansion stood a mountain, resplendent in autumn colors. A lapis-lazuli-colored pond lay to the south. Orchids and chrysanthemums bloomed in wild profusion in the untended garden while the garden gate had become the nests of birds and small animals. When they reached this garden gate, Raikō ordered Tsuna to stay behind and then, carefully, proceeded alone through the gate to the ruins of the once stately mansion.

The kitchen was separated by *shōji*, and upon reaching the threshold Raikō could feel the lurking presence of someone, an old woman, moving slowly behind the door. He knocked on the door and entered the house. “Who are you?” Raikō asked. “This house seems strange; I don’t understand this.” “I have been living here for a long time” the wretched old woman replied. “I am two hundred and ninety years old, and have served, in their turn, nine lords of this house.” Her hair was ghostly white. She used a tool called a *kujiri*²² to lift her eyelids, which were flipped over her head like a hat. She pushed her mouth open with what looked like a long hairpin, and her lips were [enlarged]²³ and tied around her neck. Her breasts sagged to her lap as if they were [clothes]:²⁴

“Spring comes and autumn goes,” the old creature mournfully continued, “but my sad thoughts remain the same. Years begin and end, but my misery is eternal.



FIGURE 1. Raikō and Tsuna enter the dilapidated mansion. All images courtesy of Tokyo National Museum Image Archives.



FIGURE 2. Raikō meets an old woman.



FIGURE 3. Spirits and goblins visit Raikō.



FIGURE 4. A small woman with a big head smiles at Raikō.

This place is a demons' [den];²⁵ no human dares pass through our gates. My sorrowful youth has gone, but my old self sadly remains. I lament that bush warblers depart and swallows on the beam fly off.²⁶ To meet you here is like a singing girl of Ch'ang-an 長安 meeting Po Chü-i in the Yuan-ho era 元和.²⁷ People and places may be different, but the sentiment is the same. Over there whenever the singing girl saw the moonlight reflected on the river, she wept tears.²⁸ I see that I have met a wise man at last. Please kill me. I wish to pray for Amida Buddha ten times and look for the coming of three Buddhas.²⁹ There could be no better favor than this."

Raikō soon realized the futility of questioning the old crone any further so he left her to chatter as he went on in search of his own answers. In the meantime, Tsuna made his way to the kitchen area to see what had detained his master for so long.

As dusk gathered and the sky turned an ominous gray, leaves whirled furiously off the trees. The fierce wind blew ever harder, and lightning flashed and thunder roared in the sky. Tsuna did not think that he could survive and pondered what exactly he should do. "If I stay here, and if some monsters should swarm about us, my lord and I can surround them and kill them from various directions. But if we cannot surround them, so be it, it can't be helped. On the other hand," he thought, "it is folly to stay on one spot waiting for an attack to come, though to run away is a cowardly disgrace." He sighed to himself, "they say, 'a loyal subject never serves two lords; a filial daughter does not have a husband.' How can I ever disobey my lord's order and forget his favors?" So loyal Tsuna stayed there beaten by heavy rain and wind. As he stood steadfastly at his lone watch, Raikō calmly continued his quest of the ruined house. As he listened carefully, he could hear the sound of footsteps resembling the sound of a hand drum (*tsuzumi*). Soon numerous spirits and goblins of various shapes and sizes entered the room from the opposite side and stood in Raikō's path with only a pillar in the center of the room to hold them at bay. As he looked in the direction of a lamplight, his eyes shone brightly like the precious stones engraved in the middle of the forehead of a



FIGURE 5. A woman of striking beauty pays a visit to Raikō.

Buddha image. To Raikō’s consternation, the creatures suddenly burst out laughing and left, closing the sliding door behind them.

Then a small creature dressed as a nun entered the door from where the goblins and spirits had just departed. She was small, like a person of Tao-chou. She could not have been more than three feet tall.³⁰ Her face was two feet long and her body less than a foot in height; her legs, therefore, were extremely short. When she sidled up to the lamp and tried to put out the light, Raikō glared at her, and she smiled. Her eyebrows were thick, and her parted deep red lips revealed her two blackened front teeth. She wore a purple hat poised precisely on her head and wore a red *hakama* (A long divided skirt worn over a kimono), but there was nothing on her body. Her arms were as thin as string, and her skin was as white as snow. [Stillness]³¹ filled the room. She then disappeared as if the snow and haze of her white body had simply melted.

It was almost the time when the “rooster man” cried out at dawn,³² when the loyal subjects waited at court.³³ “What could happen now?,” Raikō thought, when he heard some strange footsteps and a sliding door facing Raikō [opened]³⁴ slightly and through the small gap of the doors, he saw something come into and out of sight—the being looked more tender than a spring willow swaying in a gentle breeze. It stood up feebly, opened the sliding door, and a woman leisurely entered the room. She looked distant and unapproachable, as she gracefully sat on a *tatami* mat. Indeed, her beauty was so superlative that Yang Guifei 楊貴妃 or Lady Li 李夫人³⁵ would have envied her. Raikō held her in his gaze, thinking that she must be the mistress of the house come out to greet him. A cool breeze drifted through the room; outside was growing light. The woman calmly stood up and appeared to retire. Her hair was swaying to the front, and her eyes, staring at the light, shone brightly like a reflection of fire on black lacquer.

Raikō was dazzled by the woman’s beauty, when she kicked up the hem of her *hakama* and threw at Raikō something resembling balls of white clouds, approximately ten in number. He was momentarily blinded by them, but soon unsheathed



FIGURE 6. Raikō strikes the beautiful woman.



FIGURE 7. Raikō and Tsuna proceed with an effigy as their shield.



FIGURE 8. A gigantic creature with numerous legs (or two *oni*?) challenges them to a fight.

his sword, and in a single slash from draw to strike passed his sword through her as she vanished into thin air. Raikō's sword had cut through the wooden floor and clove a foundation stone in half.

As the image of the beautiful woman faded from his sight, he heard the sound of a familiar voice. Tsuna had come to Raikō's aid. "You have done splendidly, my Lord," he said, "but I'm afraid that the tip of your sword must have broken." As Raikō drew the sword out of the floor, indeed, it was broken. On the floor was a huge puddle of white blood, part of which had stained Raikō's broken sword. The warriors followed the trail of blood, and came to the place where Raikō had encountered the old woman the day before. Although there was white blood, not a soul was visible. "The creature must have eaten the old woman in one gulp," they thought. Following the blood trail out of the room, they reached the western mountain, far off. There, white blood flowed like a stream from a dark cave.

Tsuna said to Raikō, "The way the tip of your great sword broke brings to mind the story of filial Mikenjaku 眉間尺 (Mei jian chi) of Sokoku 楚国 (Chu guo), who [broke]³⁶ the tip of his treasured sword to avenge his father's death.³⁷ May I suggest we make an effigy from rattan and vines, and adorn it with a court robe and an *eboshi* 烏帽子 headdress,³⁸ and carry the thing before us?"³⁹ So they prepared the effigy.

Thus armed, they proceeded into the dark cave but after what seemed like only four or five hundred yards, they had reached its farthest recess. There stood an old hut that looked like a storehouse. The tiled-roof was [covered]⁴⁰ with pine needles and moss grew on hedges. It was a deserted and desolate place. There they found a gigantic creature nearly two-hundred-feet tall that to all appearances wore brocade on its head. The monster seemed to have no neck but had numerous legs. Its eyes shone brightly like the sun and the moon together. A heavy, thunderous voice resounded, "Damn! What has happened to my body, it's so painful." As the warriors expected, no sooner had the creature uttered these words when something shiny shot out from white clouds at the effigy, and the effigy collapsed.

They examined the shiny object—it was the tip of Raikō's sword. "What Tsuna said is true. This is an extraordinary creature indeed," Raikō thought. The creature had ceased to make noise, so Raikō and Tsuna soon approached the creature and began to drag it out of the cave.

The monster was, however, strong, and fiercely resisted the warriors' attack, attempting to destroy them. Indeed the monster's force, it seemed to the warriors, could move a huge boulder. Raikō prayed to the Sun Goddess Amaterasu 天照大神 and Shō Hachimangū 正八幡宮.⁴¹

Our kingdom is a divine country. The gods protect our country, and the emperor rules the country with the help of his subjects. I am a subject and a grandson of a prince—I was fortunate enough to be born in the line of an Imperial family. Now when I look at this creature, it is a beast. Beasts are born to this world as such because of heinous, atrocious, and destructive actions in their previous lives; they bring disaster to the country and are the foes of all humans. I am a



FIGURE 9. Raikō and Tsuna kill the monstrous spider.

warrior sworn to protect the emperor, and his compatriot, sworn to help him rule the country. How can you disobey?

As the two warriors pulled the roaring creature, the monster first struggled to fight, but soon succumbed and collapsed on its back to the ground. In a lightning flash, Raikō unsheathed his broken sword and decapitated it. As Tsuna moved to open the creature's great belly, he found a deep gash in the middle of [...]. It was the slash made by Raikō at the old house. They felt sure that the monster was a *yamagumo* [mountain spider]. From the sword's incision, one thousand nine hundred and ninety heads poured out. When they cut open its flank, numerous small spiders about the size of seven- or eight-year-old children noisily trotted about. When they looked further into its stomach, they found very small skulls numbering around twenty. The warriors dug a grave in the ground and buried the skulls, and then set fire to the monster's den.

The emperor, when he heard the story, was impressed and grateful to his retainer for his valiant service. So he appointed Raikō the governor of Tsu 津 Province⁴² and bestowed upon him the court rank of Senior Fourth Lower. Tsuna was given the province of Tanba⁴³ and was given the rank of Senior Fifth Lower.

NOTES

* I would like to thank Charlotte Eubanks and an anonymous reviewer for their valuable comments. An early draft of this article was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society at Indiana University in October 2011. Last but not least, I would like to thank Anne Morris Hooke, my friend and neighbor, for her invaluable assistance.

1. The date is given by BABA Kazuo (1990, 62; 80). For the Noh text of *Tsuchigumo*, see SANARI (1931, 2055–67). For an English translation, see SUZUKI (1932, 87–92).

2. For studies of *otogizōshi* in English, see KIMBROUGH (2008); STEVEN (1977); MULHERN (1974, 1979, 1985); KEENE (1993, 1092–128); SKORD (1991); CHILDS (1987; 1991, 14–22); James ARAKI (1981); RUCH (1977); and PUTZAR (1963, 286–97).

3. I have followed the date given by Komatsu Shigemi and UENO Kenji (1984). For the printed text, see KOMATSU Shigemi (1984, 19: 1–11 [pictures and writing] and 161–64 [writing]); YOKOYAMA and MATSUMOTO (1981, 436–41 [writing]); and NAGASAKA (1929, 31–38 [writing] and 54–66 [pictures]).

4. See the website of the Tokyo National Museum—they give the date of the scroll (*Tsuchigumo no Sōshi Emaki* [Narrative picture scroll of the story of earth spider]) as the thirteenth century during the Kamakura period (1192–1333). See http://www.emuseum.jp/detail/100257?x=&y=&s=&d_lang=en&s_lang=ja&word=%E5%9C%9F%E8%9C%98%E8%9B%9B%E8%8D%89%E7%B4%99&class=&title=&c_e=®ion=&era=&cptype=&owner=&pos=1&num=1&mode=simple¢ury= (accessed 12 January 2013).

5. Japanese scholars seriously and heatedly discussed *tsuchigumo* as part of the debate on indigenous Japanese before World War II, especially in the first two decades of the twentieth century (OKIURA 2002, 37–39). For a summary of various theories on *tsuchigumo*, see MATSUMOTO 1952.

6. For example, one *tsuchigumo* named Ōmimi 大耳 in the district of Matsuura 松浦 of Hizen 肥前 Province promised to give food to the emperor as a tribute (UEGAKI 1997, 335–36). Another *tsuchigumo* called Utsuhiomaro 鬱比表麻呂 in Sonoki 彼杵 district of the same province even saved an imperial ship (UEGAKI 1997, 345).

7. Po Chū-i (772–846) was a gentleman poet and government official of the Tang Dynasty.

8. The same thing applies to the “Swords chapter”—the spider in the “Swords chapter” is also called *yamagumo*.

9. In *Kojiki*, Amaterasu, rather than Takamimusuhi, makes this announcement. The corresponding section is written as “Kono kuni ni chihayaburu araburu kunitsu kami domo” (unruly earthly deities in this land). See YAMAGUCHI and KŌNOSHI (1997, 99). For an English translation, see PHILIPPI (1969, 121). The 鬼 character is not used in *Kojiki*.

10. A summary of the Shuten Dōji story is as follows: during the reign of Emperor Ichijō 一条天皇, Shuten Dōji and his *oni* band who live in Mount Ōe abduct people, particularly maidens, enslaving them and eventually feasting on their flesh and drinking their blood. The concerned emperor orders the warrior hero Minamoto no Raikō and his men to stop the abductions by vanquishing Shuten Dōji and his band of *oni* followers. Raikō and his men disguise themselves as *yamabushi* 山伏 (mountain ascetics) and by means of guile, deception, and some divine help, they eliminate Shuten Dōji and his *oni* band.

11. An epidemic deity is a deity responsible for causing epidemics, in particular smallpox.

12. Kuroda Akira uses the “Swords chapter” that is attached to *Taiheiki* 太平記 (Chronicle of grand pacification, ca. fourteenth century), rather than to *Heike monogatari*. Their contents are very similar.

13. It appears to be fairly common that a strange-looking priest or physician was blamed for the demise of a nobleman. Prince Fushiminomiya Sadafusa 伏見宮貞成親王 writes in his diary *Kanmon nikki* 看聞日記 that on the seventh day of the second month of the twenty-fourth year of Ōei (1417), a strange-looking doctor visits Prince Haruhito (Fushimi no miya Haruhito 伏見宮治仁王). The prince had seen him before and invited him into his room. The physician gave “good medicine” to the prince and left. Four days later the prince suddenly died (YOKOI 2002, 142–43; HANAWA 1985, 65).

14. The translation is mine, based on Aston’s translation of the poem. Helen McCullough translates as “I know in advance/from the acts of this spider/like a tiny crab/tonight is surely a night/when my beloved will come” (McCULLOUGH 1985, 248).

15. There are five types of plays categorized according to the role of the lead actor (*shite*). Sequentially, these categories are plays that focus respectively on gods, warriors, women, mad people, and demons. The five categories of plays are presented in a single day’s program, that

is, plays about gods, then warriors, women, mad people, and finally demons. This categorization was established in the seventeenth century.

16. The Seiwa Genji clan was the most powerful and successful line of the Minamoto clan and was descended from Emperor Seiwa (850–881). The founder of the Seiwa Genji was Minamoto no Tsunemoto 源經基 (894–961), Emperor Seiwa’s grandson, who was given the surname Minamoto. Many famous warriors such as Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝 (1147–1199), Ashikaga Takauji 足利尊氏 (1305–1358), and Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1542–1616) belonged or claimed to belong to this line.

17. There is a lacuna in the original text.

18. Kitayama is the area located on the north side of the capital of Kyoto (present-day Kitaku in Kyoto).

19. Rendaino is a famous ancient cemetery located at the western foot of Mount Funaoka 船岡山, which lies northwest of the capital of Kyoto. It houses the crematorium mounds for Emperor Goreizei 後冷泉天皇 (1025–1068) and Emperor Konoe 近衛天皇 (1139–55). *Rendaino* generally means cemetery or graveyard. In many places, Rendaino is also a place name.

20. There is a lacuna in the original text.

21. This is another name for Mount Yoshida located northeast of the capital of Kyoto (present-day Sakyō-ku in Kyoto). Together with Mount Funaoka, Kaguraoka was known as a cemetery in ancient times.

22. A *kujiri* is a tool that looks like an awl and is used to undo a knot.

23. There is a lacuna in the original text.

24. There is a lacuna in the original text.

25. There is a lacuna in the original text.

26. According to Kuroda, the old woman’s speech up to this point is based upon Po Chü-i’s New *Yüeh-fu* 新樂府, no. 7, “White-haired in the Shang-yang Palace: Pitying the unloved” 上陽白髮人 (KURODA 1994, 321). For the original poem see TAKAGI (1958, I: 41–47). For an English translation, see WATSON (2000, 25–27).

27. The Yuan-ho era was between 806 and 820 CE, during the Tang Dynasty. The meeting of the singing girl of Ch’ang-an with Po Chü-i took place at the P’en River in Chiu-chiang.

28. The three sentences from “To meet you here is...” onward are based upon “Song of the lute” by Po Chü-i (KURODA 1994, 321). For the original poem of “Song of the lute,” see TAKAGI (1958, 2: 116–32). For an English translation, see WATSON (2000, 77–82).

29. The three Buddhas (*Sanzon* 三尊) are Amida Buddha, Kannon Bodhisattva, and Seishi Bodhisattva.

30. This sentence is based upon Po Chü-i’s New *Yüeh-fu*, number 15, entitled “The people of Tao-chou.” For the original poem, see TAKAGI (1958, I: 79–82). For an English translation, see WALEY (1941, 168–69).

31. There is a lacuna in the original text.

32. This phrase refers to the first line of poem number 524, “The ‘rooster man’ cries out at dawn” in *Wakan röeishū* 和漢朗詠集 (Japanese and Chinese poems to sing, early eleventh century). A rooster man is a kind of night watchman who tells the time at court. For an English translation of the poem, see RIMER and CHAVES (1997, 160). For the Japanese text, see SUGANO (1999, 278).

33. This phrase refers to the second line, “Ah! such the loyal minister paying court at dawn,” of poem number 63, “The cock has crowed” in *Wakan röeishū*. For an English translation of the poem, see RIMER and CHAVES (1997, 42). For the Japanese text, see SUGANO (1999, 50).

34. There is a lacuna in the original text.

35. Yang Guifei (719–756) was the favorite concubine of Chinese Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗皇帝 (685–762) of the Tang Dynasty, and Lady Li was the favorite concubine of Chinese Emperor Wu 武帝 (157–87 BCE) of the Han Dynasty. This sentence refers to Po Chü-i's famous poems entitled "Lament Everlasting" 長恨歌 and "The Lady Li" 李夫人. For the original poems, see TAKAGI (1958, 2: 92–116 and 1: 165–170 respectively). For English translations of "Lament Everlasting" and "The Lady Li," see LEVY (1971, 136–42).

36. There is a lacuna in the original text.

37. There are various versions of this story. The story told in volume thirteen of *Taiheiki* is close to the episode in *Tsuchigumo sōshi* in that it includes an episode of the tip of the sword. According to *Taiheiki*, the king of So (Chu) ordered Kanshō (Gan Jiang), a famous swordsmith, to craft two swords. It took the swordsmith three years to produce a pair of swords, which he named after himself, Kanshō 干将, and Bakuya 莫耶 (Mo Ye). However, Kanshō presented only one sword, Bakuya, to the king who had commissioned the sword(s). When the king learned that two swords were manufactured but only one was given to him, the king ordered Kanshō's death. Before his arrest, Kanshō hid his sword and asked his pregnant wife to avenge his execution by the king through the child she carried if it were to be a boy. The baby was a boy and was named Mikenjaku (lit. eyebrows a *shaku* 尺 [one foot] apart) because his eyebrows were noticeably apart. Mikenjaku attempted to avenge his father's death with the sword, Kanshō, but without success. After a number of failed attempts, Kanshō's old friend offered help to Mikenjaku. In order to avenge Kanshō's death, the old friend told Mikenjaku to cut off the tip of the sword, hold it in his mouth, and then cut his head off. As the king stretched out his head to see Mikenjaku's head in the boiling water, Mikenjaku spat out the tip of the sword in the direction of the king, severing the king's head from his royal person. The king's head fell into the boiling water in the pot. See YAMASHITA (1989, 288–97). For English translations of the Mikenjaku story see URY (1979, 67–69), and LI (2009, 57–58). For a discussion of the story, see LI (2009, 56–65).

38. An *eboshi* is a ceremonial black-lacquered hat, a type of headgear worn by court nobles.

39. The effigy is used as a shield.

40. There is a lacuna in the original text.

41. The Hachiman deity/bodhisattva is the patron god of the Minamoto clan.

42. The area corresponds to present-day northwestern Osaka through to southeast Hyogo prefecture.

43. The area corresponds to present-day Kyoto through to eastern Hyogo prefecture.

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