

Spring 2021 Arts of Asia Lecture Series
The Power of Images in Asian Art: Making the Invisible Visible
Sponsored by the *Society for Asian Art*

Beyond Life as We Know It:

The Wondrous and the Monstrous in Japanese Notions of the Afterlife

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March 26, 2021

Part One: Official and Unofficial Narratives

1. Native Japanese religious traditions

- a. organized Shinto
- b. folk religious belief and need

2. Imported religious traditions

a. Organized Buddhism

- 1. nonself, no permanent soul
- 2. everyone is reborn many times in one of 6 realms of existence or “destinies” (*gati*), and there is a way to ritually direct your store of good karma toward particular destinies, such as a heaven or a realm where a buddha resides.
- 3. There are many different heavens and many different hells, but all the beings reborn there have a fixed and limited lifetime, so none are permanent states of existence.
- 3. There are 49 days between death and conception and this is when most rituals pertaining to death are done. This is because the dead person’s karma can change in this interim.
- 4. One postmortem destination has dominated Japanese religious culture since 9th century: the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. A great many art objects depict aspects of this conception: how you die, how you are reborn there, what the buddha looks like, your state of mind before you die, etc.
- 5. Enormous number of different categories of occult beings in Buddhism, most stemming from popular Indian culture. In Buddhist scripture, all of them can be converted, and sometimes the buddha himself has been reborn in their state to convert others.

b. Beliefs in popular Buddhism

- 1. near universal appeal of Amida’s Pure Land in all sects of Buddhism.
- 2. family has obligation to prevent its members from being reborn in bad/unfortunate destiny. there are many activities connected with this
 - a. ordaining the dying or dead individual

- b. reciting scripture before home altar and dedicating merit to the deceased.
 - c. paying a priest to perform rituals in honor of the deceased on death anniversaries, up to 100 years later.
3. In Japan, demons and ghosts are not always dangerous. Some are depicted as simply being clueless, in need of “the dharma” to educate them. many stories about people talking down demons, priests converting them.

Part Two: What the Art History Shows Us

1. Shinto Visual Imagery

- a. Statues of deities first appear in Heian period; most modeled on Buddhist icons
 - 1) Gongen, especially Zao Gongen.
 - 2) A few deities
 - 3) most forms based on Buddhist precedent.
- b. Paintings begin in Kamakura period (1185-1333)
- c. *onryō* = tormented human spirits in the occult world
- d. *kami* (deities), local and national, individually and in pantheons, in *mandala* forms usually defined by the tradition of a local shrine.

2. Buddhist Visual Culture

- a. Buddhism brought statues to China from India and Chinese continental styles dominate Japan for first 300 years.
 - b. Late Heian and Kamakura periods mark Japanese forms, some utterly iconic, some hyper-real
 - c. Kamakura period explosion of new art forms
 - d. Large temples included “art office” to supervise image creation
3. “Monsters” in Popular Religion take *many* different forms. They are often stupid and only dangerous because they are emotionally unstable. They are scary to look at but not necessarily to be feared. If you talk to them, they can become your friends, or if not you can talk them out of their fierceness, even steal their stuff.

- a) tengu
- b) oni
- c) gongen
- d) yōkai
- e) tsukumogami

Reading List

Folk Religion & Shinto

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	
“ <i>Shuten Dōji</i> ‘Drunken Demon’”	Noriko Reider	<i>Asian Folklore Studies</i> , 64 (2005): 207-231
“Animating Objects: Tsukumogami ki and the Medieval Illustration of Shingon Truth”	Noriko Reider	<i>Japanese Journal of Religious Studies</i> 36/2 (2009): 231–257.
“ <i>Onmyōji</i> : Sex, Pathos, and Grotesquery in Yumemakura Baku’s <i>Oni</i> ”	Noriko Reider	<i>Asian Folklore Studies</i> , 66 (2007): 107-124
“ <i>Tsuchigumo</i> <i>sōshi</i> : The Emergence of a Shape- Shifting Killer Female Spider”	Noriko Reider	<i>Asian Folklore Studies</i> , 72 (2013): 55- 83
<i>The Kappa Legend</i>	ISHIDA Eiichirō	171 page monograph, available at: https://asianethnology.org/articles/1947
“Demonology and Eroticism: Islands of Women in the Japanese	D. Max Moerman	<i>Japanese Journal of Religious Studies</i> 36/2: 351–380. (2009)

Buddhist Imagination”		
“Hachikazuki: Revealing Kannon’s Crowning Compassion in Muromachi Fiction”	Monika Dix	<i>Japanese Journal of Religious Studies</i> 36/2 (2009): 279–294.
“On the Wings of a Bird: Folklore, Nativism, and Nostalgia in Meiji Letters”	Charlotte Eubanks	<i>Asian Folklore Studies</i> , 65 (2006): 1–20
“Revisiting the Dragon Princess: Her Role in Medieval <i>Engi</i> Stories and Their Implications in Reading the <i>Lotus Sutra</i> ”	Ryuichi ABE	<i>Japanese Journal of Religious Studies</i> 42/1 (2015): 27–70.
“Haunting Modernity: Tanuki, Trains, and Transformation in Japan”	Michael Dylan Foster	<i>Asian Ethnology</i> 71:1 (2012), 3–29
<i>The Book of Yokai: Mysterious Creatures of</i>	Michael Dylan Foster	U. California Press. 2015.

<i>Japanese Folklore</i>		
<i>Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai</i>	Michael Dylan Foster	U. California Press. 2008
<i>Japanese Ghosts and Demons: Art of the Supernatural</i>	Stephen Addiss	George Braziller (2005). classic in both hard and paper; now hard to find
<i>Namazu-e and their themes : an interpretative approach to some aspects of Japanese folk religion.</i>	Cornelius Ouwehand	E.J. Brill (1964)
<i>Introduction to Yokai Culture: Monsters, Ghosts, and Outsiders in Japanese History</i>	KOMATS U Kazuhiro	Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture (2008)
<i>Yokai: Ghosts, Demons & Monsters of Japan</i>	Felicia Katz-Harris	Museum of New Mexico Press (2019)
<i>Yokai: Strange Beasts & Weird</i>	Ringo YOSHIDA	Shinbaku Books (2018)

<i>Spectres: 100 Japanese Triptychs (Ukiyo-e Master Series)</i>		
<i>Tales of Japan: Traditional Stories of Monsters and Magic (Book of Japanese Mythology, Folk Tales from Japan)</i>	no author given, Kotaru CHIBA is the illustrator	Chronicle Books. SF-based publisher of popular books. inexpensive.
<i>Kitsune: Japan's fox of mystery, romance & humor</i>	NOZAKI Kiyoshi	Hokuseido. First published 1961.

Buddhism with Japanese Characteristics

<i>Pure Land Buddhist Painting</i>	OKAZAKI Joji	Hokuseido. Kodansha America. 1977
<i>Hell in Japanese Art</i>	Yoshitoshi TSUKIOKA	PIE International; Bilingual edition (2017)
<i>Heian Temples: Byodo-In and Chuson-Ji</i>	Toshio FUKUYAMA	Heibonsha Survey of Japanese Art, v. 9. 1976
<i>Heaven Has a Face; So Does Hell: The Art of the Noh Mask</i>	Stephen E. Marvin	Floating World Editions. 2010. 800-page detailed study of Noh masks and how they are used in performance

<i>Religion in Japan: Arrows to Heaven and Earth</i>	P.F. Kornicki, I.J. McMullen, eds.	Univ. of Cambridge Oriental Publications. Illustrated Edition
<i>History of Art in Japan</i>	Nobuo TSUJI	Columbia Univ. Press. 2019. 664 pages, available in paperback.
“Hōnen’s Senchaku Doctrine and His Artistic Agenda”	Fusae C. Kanda	<i>Japanese Journal of Religious Studies</i> 31/1 (2004): 3–27.
The Jōdoji Amida Triad: How Its Iconography Advanced Chōgen’s Mission	Yoshiko KAINUMA	Ch. 11 in <i>Land, Power, and the Sacred</i> , ed. by Janet Goodwin and Joan Piggott
“Bridging the Realms of Underworld and Pure Land: An Examination of Datsueba’s Roles in the Zenkōji Pilgrimage Mandala”	SAKA Chihiro	<i>Japanese Journal of Religious Studies</i> 44/2 (2017): 191–223.
“Cracking Cauldrons and Babies on Blossoms: the Relocation of Salvation in Japanese Hell Painting”	Caroline Hirasawa	<i>Artibus Asiae</i> 72:1 (2012), 5–51.
“The Phenomenon of Invoking Fudō for Pure Land Rebirth in Image and Text”	Karen Mack	<i>Japanese Journal of Religious Studies</i> 44/2 (2006): 297–317.