

R. Keller KIMBROUGH

Battling *Tengu*, Battling Conceit

Visualizing Abstraction in *The Tale of the Handcart Priest*

The sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century *Tale of the Handcart Priest* tells of an eccentric Zen practitioner's encounter with the legendary Tarōbō, a *tengu* of Mt. Atago who is attracted to the priest because of the priest's excessive pride. This article provides a close reading of *The Tale of the Handcart Priest* in its historical and literary context, drawing upon such related works as the *noh* plays *Kuruma-zō* and *Zegai*, the *otogizōshi Matsuhime monogatari* and *Itozakura no monogatari*, and the puppet play *Shuten Dōji wakazakari*. I discuss the significance of *tengu*, carts, and handcart priests in Japanese textual and pictorial sources from the twelfth through eighteenth centuries, as well as the possibilities for psychological realism in the larger world of medieval Japanese fiction. Taking a psychoanalytic interpretive approach, I argue that in *Kuruma-zō sōshi* and other medieval and Edo-period literary sources, characters' struggles with *tengu* can often be read allegorically as externalized depictions of those characters' internal struggles with their own "demons" of conceit.

KEYWORDS: *tengu*—Zen—*otogizōshi*—*nara ehon*—*setsuwa*—*noh*—Tarōbō—Zegaibō—medieval Buddhist fiction

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AT SOME time in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, an anonymous author composed a short work of fiction known as *Kuruma-zō sōshi* 車僧草子, “The Tale of the Handcart Priest.” Classified today as an *otogizōshi* お伽草子, an amorphous and eclectic genre of medieval Japanese prose literature, *Kuruma-zō sōshi* survives in a single illustrated manuscript in the possession of the Kyoto University Library: a colorful, likely seventeenth-century *nara ehon* 奈良絵本,¹ the pages of which were unbound at an unknown time and mounted to form an exquisite hand scroll. In 1941, the manuscript was reproduced in a fine facsimile edition (with a total of three hundred numbered copies), and in 2002, it was photographically reproduced in a series of books devoted to the Kyoto University Library collection of *otogizōshi* (KYŌTO TEIKOKU DAIGAKU 1941; KYŌTO DAIGAKU BUNGAKUBU KOKUGOGAKU KOKUBUNGAKU KENKYŪSHITSU 2002, 80–116). Yet despite its relative fame in Japan, *Kuruma-zō sōshi* is almost wholly unknown in the English-speaking academic world, where, along with most *nara ehon*, it has been neglected by literary and art historians alike.

Kuruma-zō sōshi is the fantastic tale of an eccentric Zen Buddhist practitioner by the name of Kuruma-zō, “the Handcart Priest,” who is said to have wandered Japan in a rickety two-wheeled cart. The story is based, in part, upon the *noh* play *Kuruma-zō* 車僧, the first recorded performance of which was held in Nara in the tenth month of 1514,² a century or more before the transcription of the Kyoto University *Kuruma-zō sōshi* manuscript. Like its source play, *Kuruma-zō sōshi* concerns a day in the life of an itinerant “handcart priest,” a type of low-level Buddhist renunciant of whom little is now known, but who Tokue Gensei argues was a relatively common figure in late-medieval Japan. Tokue posits that these mendicant beggar-priests employed their carts as both rolling homes and platforms from which to preach, and that in their sermons, they expounded upon the metaphorical implications of their carts as vehicles of Buddhist Truth

1. *Nara ehon* (“Nara picture books”) are hand-copied manuscripts with colorful hand-painted illustrations, mass-produced as bound booklets by usually anonymous artists and calligraphers in the late Muromachi and early-to-mid Edo period.

2. Although *Kuruma-zō* is attributed to Zeami 世阿弥 in *Nōhon sakusha chūmon* 能本作者注文 (1524) and *Nihyakujūban utai mokuroku* 二百拾番謡目録 (1675), scholars remain unconvinced. Tokue Gensei has recently observed that the naming of a play after the *waki*—in this case the Handcart Priest—is typical of the style of Kanze Nobumitsu 観世信光 (1435–1516), but Tokue doubts that *Kuruma-zō* is by him, either (TOKUE 2006, 158). *Kuruma-zō* is annotated in SANARI 1942, 963–73; on its attributions to Zeami, see SANARI 1942, 963.

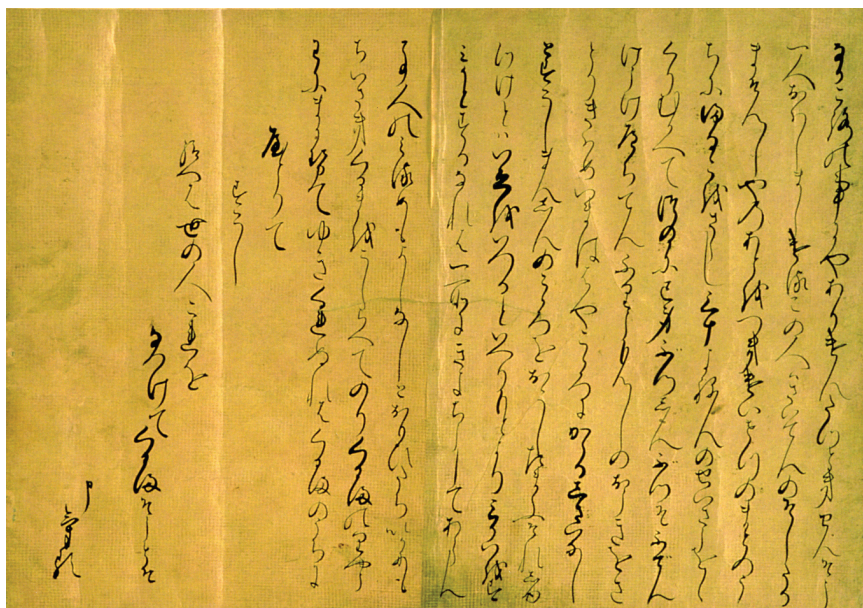


FIGURE 1. Introduction to the Handcart Priest. From *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, ca. seventeenth century. Courtesy of the Kyoto University Library.

(TOKUE 1962; TOKUE 2006, 150 and 164). In *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, the Handcart Priest confronts a succession of hostile *tengu* 天狗 (anti-Buddhist, supernatural demon-bird-men) who challenge him on the significance of his cart and seek to punish him for his pride. After a protracted battle of wits and magic—a struggle that extends well beyond the range of the *noh* play *Kuruma-zō*—the Handcart Priest succeeds in driving off the *tengu* horde.

Like many *otogizōshi*, which are often concerned with otherworldly creatures, magical settings, and improbable events, *Kuruma-zō sōshi* can be seen to function on a symbolic level by depicting Buddhist and psychological abstractions as external, concrete phenomena, allowing audiences the privilege of visualizing the invisible, or seeing the unseen. The story's rich and sustained use of symbol invites a variety of interpretations concerning both the contested meanings of the Handcart Priest's cart and the significance of the many *tengu* in the tale, whether as fanciful representations of *yamabushi* 山伏 mountain ascetics, or, as I will argue, as externalized projections of the priest's own inner demons of conceit. By considering *Kuruma-zō sōshi* from a loosely allegorical perspective, we may expand our notions of the functions and implications of the *tengu* motif in popular medieval discourse, as well as the broader possibilities for psychological realism in the larger world of medieval Japanese fiction.

Driving the Single Vehicle

Carts, or simply “vehicles” (*jō* 乗, as in *norimono* 乗物), are fraught with significance in traditional Buddhist contexts as a result of their use in scripture as key religious metaphors. In the “Expedient Means” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, for example, Shakyamuni speaks of the Buddhist teachings as “a single Buddha vehicle” (*ichi butsu-jō* 一仏乗), which the buddhas “employ in order to preach the Law to living beings” (T 9 [262]: 7b, line 2; WATSON 1993, 31; translation here by Watson). Shakyamuni explains that he himself “dwells in this Great Vehicle,” and that although the buddhas preach a variety of lesser doctrines in accord with the principle of expedient means, the teachings are all actually one; “there is no other vehicle, neither a second nor a third” (T 9 [262]: 8a, line 23, and 7b, line 3; WATSON 1993, 35 and 31).³ Later, in the “Simile and Parable” chapter, Shakyamuni speaks of carts (*kuruma* 車) in order to illustrate the unity of the Dharma and the nature of expedient means. In his famous parable of the burning house, he tells of how a wealthy man once lied to his sons, promising them toy goat-, deer-, and ox-carts, each according to his wishes, if they would exit their burning home. The children rush outside, saved from the flames by their father’s deceit, but insofar as there are no three vehicles of the Law—only one—there are no goat-, deer-, or simple ox-carts to be had. Instead, in the open space beyond their mansion, the father presents each of his sons with a magnificent jeweled carriage, the Single Vehicle of the Dharma, drawn by a fine white ox (T 9 [262]: 12b–13c; WATSON 1993, 56–62).

In *Kuruma-zō sōshi* and the *noh* play *Kuruma-zō*, the handcart is central to the identity of the Handcart Priest. In its opening passage, *Kuruma-zō sōshi* begins by introducing the priest as a follower of Bodhidharma, traditionally recognized as the founder of the Zen school of Buddhism:

At a time in the not-so-distant past, there was once a venerable Zen priest. Following in the steps of the reverend Bodhidharma, patriarch of the west,⁴ he passed more than thirty years in diligent study, straining his eyes by the light of fireflies and the snow. He eventually awoke to the nature of the individual’s and the Buddha’s body, the non-transmitted teachings of the buddhas and the patriarchs, the extra-scriptural instructions, and those truths that are not expressed in words. He began to feel a little pride because there was now nothing, he thought, that weighed on his mind.

The priest pondered: “To take monastic vows means ‘to leave the home.’ So if the three worlds are our home from the start, then it won’t do for me to live

3. “Expedient means” refers to the buddhas’ practice of tailoring their messages to their audiences’ abilities to accept or comprehend them.

4. Because Bodhidharma was a sixth-century monk of Central Asian extraction, “west” in this case means west of China, hence India and Central Asia.



FIGURE 2. The priest and his cart. From *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, ca. seventeenth century. Courtesy of the Kyoto University Library.

in any one place, or to bother with what other people think.” Having thus made up his mind, he built himself a small cart upon which to ride. He would wander where his two wheels took him, and when night fell he would sleep where he parked. Because he lived in his cart, people called him the Handcart Priest.⁵

By referring to the priest’s realization of “the extra-scriptural instructions” (*kyōge betsuden* 經外別伝) and “those truths that are not expressed in words” (*furyū monji no hōgi* 不立文字の法義), the narrator establishes the Handcart Priest as an accomplished practitioner of the Zen sect, which maintains that Buddhist Truth can only be conveyed by direct mind-to-mind transmissions that transcend human language. The priest reasons that as the word for taking vows, *shukke* 出家, is written with the characters for “leaving the home,” and as the Three Worlds, *sangai* 三界, constitute the natural home within which all sentient beings transmigrate according to their karma, there is in fact no one place in which he can reside. He therefore takes to living in a two-wheeled cart as an act of uncompromising religious devotion, a means of adhering to his unusually literal interpretation of the monastic condition.

In its first illustration (FIGURE 2), *Kuruma-zō sōshi* depicts the Handcart Priest seated before a decorated alcove in a private home or a small temple hall. Hold-

5. This and the following *Kuruma-zō sōshi* excerpts are translated from the annotated text in KYŌTO TEIKOKU DAIGAKU 1941, *kaisetsu* vol., 15–34, and from the unannotated text in MJMT 4: 273–81. *Kuruma-zō sōshi* is translated in its entirety as a digital supplement to this article, at <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/publications/jjrs/pdf/894a.pdf>.



FIGURE 3. Chūjōdono and the ghost of his murdered wife. From *Matsuhime monogatari*, dated 1526. Courtesy of the Tōyō University Library.

ing a rosary in his hands, he faces an ink painting of Bodhidharma mounted upon an orange hanging scroll. Two adults and a child look on from behind. Snow covers the bare branches of a tree outside, indicating the season. Strangely, the priest's cart is parked upon the veranda to his left, rather than on the ground below, increasing its prominence within the colorful scene.

The *otogizōshi Matsuhime monogatari* 松姫物語 and its variants tell of yet another mendicant handcart priest, in this case a Pure Land Buddhist devotee with a particularly tragic past. In its earliest extant version, *Matsuhime monogatari* survives as a small picture scroll dated the twenty-fifth day of the eighth month of 1526.⁶ It tells the tale of Chūjōdono, the fifteen-year-old son of Middle Counselor Shigetada in the capital, who courts and marries a thirteen-year-old girl named Matsuhime. Chūjōdono's parents are unhappy with the match, and when Chūjōdono visits Kiyomizu Temple for a week to pray, they have the girl murdered in a field near Kitano Shrine. Upon returning home, Chūjōdono asks after his wife, but his mother claims not to know where she is. Chūjōdono therefore sets out to find her, searching the capital and all the provinces. Later, near Kitano Shrine, he converses with Matsuhime's ghost (FIGURE 3). She tells him her tale, and Chūjōdono is inspired to take Buddhist vows. He spends three years praying

6. The scroll measures a mere sixteen centimeters in height, and is thus classified as a *ko-e*, or "small picture" scroll. It is photographically reproduced in OKUDAIRA 1982, 104–15, and typeset in MJMT 12: 604–13. For a discussion of the *ko-e* pictorial genre, see MCCORMICK 2009.



FIGURE 4. Chūjōdono in his carriage. From *Matsuhime monogatari*, dated 1526. Courtesy of the Tōyō University Library.

on Mount Kōya, after which he eventually returns to the capital, where he passes his days tending to abandoned corpses and chanting the name of Amida Buddha. At its conclusion, *Matsuhime monogatari* explains that Chūjōdono took to riding about in a small cart, for which reason people called him the Handcart Priest.

In *Itozakura no monogatari* いとざくらの物語, an unillustrated variant of *Matsuhime monogatari* transcribed around the early seventeenth century, Chūjōdono is said to have once expounded upon the significance of his cart. His explanation differs from that of the Handcart Priest in *Kuruma-zō sōshi* and the noh play *Kuruma-zō*, and it is thus intriguing for the additional light that it can shed upon the Buddhist implications of a rolling home:

“Why do you ride in a cart?” a certain person asked. The priest replied: “A cart relies on things called ‘linchpins’ to stop and go. The human heart harbors a variety of wicked impulses, but they are checked when we secure the linchpins of right concentration. When we don’t, those impulses flourish. That’s why we say that you should never loosen your linchpins. Now a cart never rolls sideways—it goes straight ahead, which is how a person easily enters enlightenment. I ride in a cart in order to demonstrate these truths.”

(MJMT supp. 1: 242b–43a.)⁷

7. *Matsuhime monogatari* contains a similar passage, in MJMT 12: 613. Although the handcart priests of *Kuruma-zō sōshi* and *Matsuhime monogatari*/*Itozakura no monogatari* appear to be different people, the issue of their identity is complicated by *Itozakura no monogatari*’s incorporation of a poetic exchange between the *Kuruma-zō* Handcart Priest and the *tengu* Tarōbō from the noh play *Kuruma-zō*. WASHIHARA Kuniko (2002, 444) has taken the two handcart priests to be the same. However, their only shared feature is their name.

The priest equates his linchpins, which secure the wheels to the axle, with the stabilizing effects of “right concentration.” He states that he rides in his cart in order to demonstrate both this and the principle of non-deviation from the Buddhist path. By the priest’s own admission, then, his cart is intended to function as a “vehicle” of Buddhist instruction, a dais from which to figuratively “turn the Dharma wheel” (*tenbōrin* 轉法輪), an expression for Buddhist preaching.⁸

Matsuhime monogatari contains an illustration of the priest in his cart, which, in this case, is an elaborate ox-carriage of a kind favored by the nobility (FIGURE 4). Although crudely drawn, it is obviously an elegant conveyance, with long curving carriage shafts and a patterned green roof. Tokue Gensei argues that the carriage is in fact totally inappropriate to the priest’s description as a lowly itinerant, and that rather than helping to illuminate the actual lives of sixteenth-century handcart priests, its presence in *Matsuhime monogatari* serves only to demonstrate the disjunction between text and image that so often appears in illustrated *otogizōshi* (and which likely resulted from the frequent division of labor between professional illustrators and calligraphers in the late medieval and early Edo periods) (TOKUE 2006, 178).

As we have seen, the narrator of *Kuruma-zō sōshi* states at the outset that the Handcart Priest “had begun to feel a little pride, because there was now nothing, he thought, that weighed on his mind.” Pride is a dangerous thing in medieval Japanese literature, because it is known to attract *tengu*. A short Buddhist tract by the name of *Hirasan kojīn reitaku* 比良山古人靈託 (Oracles of an elder of Mt. Hira; dated 1239), which purports to be a transcription of the priest Keisei’s 慶政 interview with a *tengu* in the fifth month of 1239, touches upon the issue. Keisei writes that the Great Tengu of Mt. Hira once possessed a 21-year-old woman in the household of Keisei’s younger brother, Kujō Michiie 九条道家, when Michiie was ill. Keisei spoke with the *tengu*, who explained to him through the woman that it is “the arrogant, and those with deep attachments” who are prone to become *tengu* (SNKT 40: 472).⁹ In the Engyō-bon 延慶本 text of *Heike monogatari* 平家物語, transcribed in 1309 and 1310, the Sumiyoshi Deity expands upon Keisei’s *tengu*’s revelation, explaining to Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa that “the arrogant and impious who are certain to become *tengu* after they die” actually attract swarms of *tengu* in the present life as well.¹⁰

8. For a discussion of wheels as Buddhist metaphors, see EUBANKS 2011, 177 and 225, note 9.

9. Keisei is best known today as the author of the Buddhist *setsuwa* anthology *Kankyo no tomo* 閑居友 (A companion in solitude; 1222).

10. KITAHARA and OGAWA 1990, 224–25 (from a discussion of *maen* 魔縁, those who are “demon-linked,” in a section of the Engyō-bon titled *Hōō go-kanjō no koto* 法皇御灌頂事, “The Priestly Emperor’s Initiation Ceremony”). The thirteenth- or fourteenth-century *Genpei jōsuiki* 源平盛衰記 contains a similar passage; see MATSUO 1993, 67–68. Concerning the Engyō-bon *Hōō go-kanjō no koto* section, see BIALOCK 2002–2003, 246–51.



FIGURE 5. Tarōbō and the Handcart Priest. From *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, ca. seventeenth century. Courtesy of the Kyoto University Library.

In *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, the Handcart Priest's incipient pride draws an especially famous *tengu*: the legendary Tarōbō of Mt. Atago, who the Sumiyoshi Deity identifies as “the greatest *tengu* in all of Japan,” and to whom the fourteenth-century *Taiheiki* 太平記 (A chronicle of peace) refers as a *tengu* “of whom everyone speaks” (KITAHARA and OGAWA 1990, 226 [Engyō-bon]; MATSUO 1993, 69 [*Genpei jōsuiki*]; NKBT 36: 65 [*Taiheiki*]).¹¹ Tarōbō approaches the priest near the foot of Mt. Atago on the northwestern edge of the capital. The second *Kuruma-zō sōshi* illustration (FIGURE 5) shows Tarōbō dressed as a *yamabushi* mountain ascetic, sporting a black *tokin* 頭襟 cap and a *yuigesa* 結袈裟 surplice with four pom-poms on its two front bands, and carrying what appears to be a sword or a curved *kongōzue* 金剛杖 staff.¹² Although he is said to be disguised, his wings are clearly depicted

11. According to *Taiheiki*, the *yamabushi* Unkei once conversed with Tarōbō at a gathering of *tengu* on Mt. Atago in 1349. From a section in vol. 27 titled *Unkei miraike no koto* 雲景未來記事, “The Matter of Unkei’s Prophecy,” NKBT 36: 59–66.

12. For a discussion of these and other articles of traditional *yamabushi* attire, see MIYAKE 2001, 80–84, and 2005, 97–100.

in the painted scene. His nose is also abnormally large, betraying his inner *tengu* nature for the reader to see. The narrator explains:

Once when there had been a lovely snowfall, the Handcart Priest rolled his cart to the Saga Plain. As he was gazing upon the surrounding scene, Tarōbō of Mt. Atago saw him there and thought, “This person looks a little happy with himself! I might as well fool with him a bit.” Manifesting as a fellow priest, Tarōbō descended Mt. Atago and approached the edge of the plain. “Hello there, you Handcart Priest!” he shouted. “I’d like to have a word.”

“Who are you?” the priest replied. Without the slightest explanation, Tarōbō intoned:

<i>ukiyo wo ba</i>	Why do you roll
<i>nani to ka meguru</i>	around this world of sorrow,
<i>kuruma-zō</i>	you Handcart Priest?
<i>mada wa no uchi ni</i>	You look to be caught up still
<i>ari to koso mire</i>	in the cycle of wheels.

“A delightful turn of phrase!” the Handcart Priest replied, and he said:

<i>ukiyo wo ba</i>	I do not revolve
<i>meguramu mono wo</i>	in this world of sorrow!
<i>kuruma-zō</i>	The Handcart Priest
<i>nori mo urubeki</i>	could ride in a cart (receive the Law) only
<i>waga araba koso</i>	if there were a self (if there were wheels).

The *tengu*'s poem is relatively straightforward. By equating the Handcart Priest's rolling progress with the plight of sentient beings trapped in the sam-saric cycle of birth and death, Tarōbō implies that the priest's cart is emblematic of delusion. In its “Expedient Means” chapter, the *Lotus Sutra* speaks of those who “fall into the three evil paths, revolving wheel-like through the six realms of existence and undergoing every sort of suffering and pain,”¹³ and it is to this, or at least to metaphors like this, that Tarōbō alludes.

The Handcart Priest's reply is a marvel of insight and complexity, an example of what Tokue Gensei describes as an *uta kosoku* 歌古則, a Zen *kōan* 公案 in the form of a Japanese poem (TOKUE 2006, 160–64).¹⁴ As Sanari Kentarō has explained it, the verse suggests that as there is no self, there is also no cart upon which to ride, and thus, by extension, no world in which to revolve and

13. T 9 (262): 8b, lines 12–13; WATSON 1993, 36. Translation here by Watson.

14. Tokue argues that such poems were likely employed in street preaching by handcart priests and other low-level proselytizers in medieval Japan. As further examples of *uta kosoku*, he cites two verses from *Kosoku kigigaki reihon* 古則開書零本 (transcribed in 1622), which are based upon the case of “The Oak Tree in the Front Garden” in the thirteenth-century *Wumenguan* 無門関 (Jp. *Mumonkan*; SHIBAYAMA 1974, 259–64).

no Dharma to obtain (SANARI 1942, 966 [headnote]). The poem contains plays on the words *nori* 法, the Law, and *nori* 乗り, a form of the verb *noru* 乗る, “to ride”; on *waga araba* 我あらば, “if I am,” and *wa ga araba* 輪があらば, “if there are wheels”; and, possibly, on *uru* 得る, to receive, and *uru* 売る, to sell. An unattributed variant is included in the Tendai *Lotus Sutra* commentaries *Hokekyō jurin shūyōshō* 法華經鷲林拾葉鈔 (Gathered leaves of the *Lotus Sutra* from a grove on Eagle Peak; ca. 1510–1512) and *Hokekyō jikidanshō* 法華經直談鈔 (Straight talk on the *Lotus Sutra*; ca. 1546), indicating that it was employed in Tendai preaching upon the *Lotus Sutra* throughout much of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ In both commentaries, the poem is cited within a discussion of the various vehicles in the parable of the burning house.

As *Kuruma-zō sōshi* continues, Tarōbō engages the Handcart Priest in a Zen *mondō* 問答, a question-and-answer-type Buddhist debate:¹⁶

Tarōbō spoke: “How about it, Handcart Priest? To which school’s teachings do you subscribe?” The Handcart Priest stared. “What a lot of nerve!” he thought. “He must have come to disturb me because he thinks I’m full of pride.”

The Handcart Priest replied: “Well, sir, since the tenets of my school are transmitted outside the written scriptures and not set down in words, they cannot be spoken or explained. We reject the various sects because they point to written words to teach. Just consider the course of the breeze that flutters a single leaf—now that is intriguing!”

“Then what is the message of the Buddha?” Tarōbō inquired.

“To abstain from all evil deeds, and to perform every goodness.”¹⁷

“Then why are there dharma companions in hell?”¹⁸

“Because if people like me didn’t venture into hell,” the Handcart Priest said, “then how would wicked people like you who are sunken down in the evil realms ever obtain release?”

15. In the *Lotus Sutra* commentaries, the poem reads “*ukiyo wo ba meguru hodo koso oguruma no nori ete nochi wa waga araba koso.*” *Zōho kaitei Nihon daizōkyō* 1974, 140b; *Hokekyō jikidanshō* 1979, 56 (“Simile and Parable” chapters of both works). See also TOKUE 2006, 165. For a discussion of the two *Lotus Sutra* commentaries, see KIMBROUGH 2008a, chapter 4.

16. As Tokue Gensei has noted, the first part of the *mondō* is nearly identical to a *mondō* in the noh play *Hōkazō* 放下僧 (author unknown); see TOKUE 2006, 172; NKBT 41: 405b–6a.

17. The Handcart Priest recites the first two lines of the oft-repeated *Shichibutsu tsūkai no ge* 七仏通誠偈 (Seven buddhas’ verse of admonition). In *Shasekishū* 沙石集 (ca. 1280), Mujū Ichien 無住一円 similarly cites this verse as one that articulates the most fundamental principles of Buddhism (NKBT 85: 179, line 11; MORRELL 1985, 142).

18. A dharma companion (*zenchishiki* 善知識) is a being that leads others to the path of the Buddha. Tarōbō suggests that dharma companions go to hell in spite of their good deeds.

“Well, as the Founder said, ‘it is easy to enter the world of the buddhas, but difficult to enter that of evil.’¹⁹ So enter an evil realm for a while—come over to where I live!”

“Where you live? You’re that Tarōbō who lives on the peak of Mt. Atago!”

“And where’s your home?”

“No one place.”

“Then what’s that cart of yours?”

“The carriage of the burning house.”

Faced with the Handcart Priest’s allusion to the Single Vehicle of the Dharma in the famous *Lotus Sutra* parable, Tarōbō recognizes his defeat. The priest has seen through his disguise and parried his crafty questions. “I need to take this up with the twelve *tengu*,” Tarōbō decides, and he replies: “It’s as you say, Handcart Priest. I live on Mt. Atago. There’s no carriage road, but do come. I’ll be waiting.” He then summons a single black cloud and flies away.

In the *otogizōshi Itozakura no monogatari*, which includes a poetic exchange between Tarōbō and Chūjōdono identical to the one in *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, the *mondō* consists of a single question and answer drawn from the noh play *Kuruma-zō*:

Tarōbō inquired: “Then who is it that could ride in a cart [receive the Law] only if there were a self [if there were wheels]?”

“A cool breeze blows through the cavern,” the Handcart Priest replied.

Tarōbō ceased his interrogation and clasped his hands in reverent admiration.

(MJMT supp. 1: 243b)

By calling attention to the emptiness of all phenomena, including logical, rational thought, the Handcart Priest denies the existence of a self while simultaneously skirting Tarōbō’s rhetorical trap. With this (in *Itozakura no monogatari*, at least), his victory is complete.

Battling Tengu, Battling Conceit

Tengu are well-known for their hostility to Buddhism, despite their demonstrated knowledge of the Dharma. The Sumiyoshi Deity explains in the Engyōbon text of *Heike monogatari* that many scholars and wise men become *tengu* after they die, not because of ignorance, but because in addition to being arrogant, they lack passion or devotion (*dōshin* 道心, literally “a heart for the Way”) (KITAHARA and OGAWA 1990, 223).²⁰ In the early twelfth-century *setsuwa* anthol-

19. Tarōbō’s allusion is unclear. His words resemble the koan capping phrase, “To clarify the mind of nirvana is easy, / But to enter the wisdom of discrimination is hard” (HORI 2003, 21 and 429 [10.406]).

20. The Sumiyoshi Deity explains that as “heavenly demons” (*tenma* 天魔, a synonym for *tengu* 天狗), these people will have the faces of dogs (*inu* 狗), the bodies of humans, and wings,

ogy *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 (Tales of times now past), an unnamed Indian *tengu* is said to have once heard a Buddhist verse echoing from across the ocean, and recognizing its profundity, to have followed it to Mt. Hiei in Japan in order to make it stop. He is reported to have failed, and to have been converted instead. According to another *Konjaku* story, the Chinese *tengu* Chirayōju once traveled to Japan to test his strength against the Buddhist priests of that land—he had already subdued all the priests of China—and he, too, was defeated (*Konjaku monogatari shū* 20:1 and 20:2, in SNKT 36: 220–26). Based on these and other *tengu* tales, Komine Kazuaki has argued that because *tengu* troublemakers are always eventually thwarted by the Buddhist forces whom they oppose, their seemingly seditious stories actually function to validate Buddhist authority rather than to diminish or undermine it in any way (KOMINE 1991, 36).

Although *Kuruma-zō sōshi* and other *tengu* tales can certainly be read politically—as stories designed to buttress Buddhist authority, that is—they can be read in alternate ways as well. Considering the allegorical implications of most demonic transformations in medieval Japanese fiction, it is useful to remember that people become *tengu* as a result of their arrogance. In *otogizōshi*, characters are routinely made to embody their intangible failings, becoming ruddy demons and human-headed snakes, for example, as a result of their drinking and their jealous rage.²¹ Personalities may be similarly warped by conceit, and recognizing this is key to recognizing that the trope of the human-*tengu* transformation is most commonly employed in premodern Japanese sources as a metaphor for the psychological changes that may be wrought in an individual as a result of excessive pride. The satiric picture-scroll *Tengu zōshi* 天狗草紙 (The book of *tengu*), dated 1296, which describes how the monks of several great temples in Japan have all become *tengu* as a result of their conceit, exemplifies this metaphorical use of the trope. As Abe Yasurō has explained, by depicting priests as

and that in addition to being able to fly, they will be cognizant of events spanning a hundred years in the past and the future. There is a similar passage in *Genpei jōsuiki*, in MATSUO 1993, 66. The term *dōshin* is a synonym of *bodaishin* 菩提心 (*bodhicitta*), implying both the “mind of wisdom” of buddhahood and the aspiration for it. In the *kōwakamai* 幸若舞 *Miraiki* 未来記 (ca. mid-sixteenth century), the Great Tengu of Mount Hira explains to his fellow *tengu* that “there is a reason why we are called *tengu*. Long ago we were human, but upon learning the Buddhist Law, we came to think that there was no one wiser than ourselves. Because of our great arrogance we were unable to become buddhas, and we fell into the *tengu* realm (*tengu dō* 天狗道) instead” (SNKT 59: 306).

21. In the *otogizōshi* *Ibuki Dōji* 伊吹童子 (British Museum and Tōyō University Library texts), the son of Ibuki no Yasaburō is said to have become the demon Shuten Dōji as a result of drinking saké and eating meat (KIMBROUGH 2008b). In *Dōjōji engi* 道成寺縁起 and its many variants, a woman becomes a giant murderous snake after she is spurned by a handsome young priest for whom she had yearned.

tengu, *Tengu zōshi* “attempts to articulate the diverse forms of arrogance that constituted the condition of corrupt monks” (ABE 2002–2003, 217).²²

In *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, while the cart can be seen to function as a potent symbol for a variety of Buddhist abstractions, the Handcart Priest’s battles with Tarōbō and his fellow *tengu* may be read on a similarly allegorical level, as highly dramatized representations of the priest’s own internal struggle with conceit. For although the feud is depicted on the one hand as a kind of supernatural showdown between the forces of Buddhist Truth and delusion (or, interpreted in an altogether different way, as a Buddhist sectarian squabble between representatives of the Zen and Shugendō monastic communities),²³ it may also be understood as an externalization of the irreconcilable conflict within the mind of the Handcart Priest between the priest’s substantial spiritual achievements and his resulting pride. In the latter case, Tarōbō should be seen within the story as an apparitional representation of a particular aspect of the Handcart Priest’s psyche: “a dissociated complex,” to borrow Freud’s expression, “which confronts him as a person” (FREUD 1955, 232).²⁴ The *Kuruma-zō sōshi* illustration (FIGURE 5) seems to support this interpretation, because it depicts the priest in an apparent state of sleep or meditation, hinting that his confrontation with Tarōbō is internal.

Before Tarōbō can return for a rematch with the Handcart Priest, a group of lesser *tengu* (*konoha tengu* 木葉天狗, or “tree-leaf *tengu*”) decide to challenge the priest by themselves. Like Tarōbō before them, they make an issue of the Handcart Priest’s pride, citing it in their invitation to join them in the *tengu* realm. Tokue Gensei identifies this scene with the *kyōgen* interlude in the noh play *Kuruma-zō* (TOKUE 2006, 172), which serves to provide a light-hearted respite from the central, more serious confrontation of the play. The *Kuruma-zō sōshi* narrator explains:

Flocking together like clouds or mist, the tree-leaf *tengu* made their way before the Handcart Priest. The priest watched. “Whatever they are,” he thought, “they’ve surely come to meddle with me.” He carefully cleared his mind.

The tree-leaf *tengu* spoke as one: “Hello, you Handcart Priest! You’ve gotten so proud of yourself, why don’t you step into our world for a while?” They flew this way and that before his very eyes, demonstrating all their supernatural

22. *Tengu zōshi* is typeset and photographically reproduced in UMEZU 1978. Its author is unknown.

23. MIYAMOTO Kesao (1989, 51) writes that Japanese textual sources begin identifying Shugendō *yamabushi* with *tengu* from around the time of the fourteenth-century *Taiheiki*.

24. In discussing the related concept of “the double,” which is also applicable to Tarōbō in *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, Sau-ling Cynthia Wong writes that “the double is symptomatic of a crisis in self-acceptance and self-knowledge: part of the self, denied recognition by the conscious ego, emerges as an external figure exerting a hold over the protagonist that seems disproportionate to provocation or inexplicable by everyday logic” (WONG 1993, 82).



FIGURE 6. The Handcart Priest drives away the tree-leaf *tengu*. From *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, ca. seventeenth century. Courtesy of the Kyoto University Library.

skills, but the Handcart Priest meditated upon the surrounding scene and was not perturbed in the least.

The *tengu* drew closer, wondering what to do. They took hold of his carriage shafts and began to climb on board. “Little pests,” the priest growled, and swinging his *hossu* flapper, he struck one hard on the wings. The *tengu* tumbled to the ground. “You hateful Handcart Priest!” the remaining *tengu* cried, and they fell upon him in a swarm. The priest chanted an invocation to Fudō,²⁵ sweeping clear a space all around. Frightened by the priest’s power, the tree-leaf *tengu* scattered and disappeared.

The corresponding double-spread illustration—one of only two in the *nara ehon*—shows the Handcart Priest driving off several of the tree-leaf *tengu* while others stand, point, and watch (FIGURE 6). Most of the *tengu* are bearded; they wear black *tokin* caps, and three of them carry either a *kongōzue* or a *shakujō* 錫杖 pole, like *yamabushi* with wings. Four of them are painted with pointed beaks, and most of the others have large human noses. The image is playfully appealing, but it is at odds with the narrator’s description of the scene, for rather than brandishing a *hossu*, a Buddhist ritual implement resembling a wooden-handled hemp or horsehair duster, the Handcart Priest is shown wielding what appears

25. This refers to Fudō Myōō 不動明王, leader of the Five and Eight Great Mantra Kings (*go, hachi dai myōō* 五、八大明王).



FIGURE 7. Tarōbō convenes a conference of *tengu*. From *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, ca. seventeenth century. Courtesy of the Kyoto University Library.

to be a white wooden paddle or an oar (as suggested in TOKUE 2006, 179). Furthermore, the cart lacks carriage shafts, suggesting that the illustrator may have worked from simple written or oral instructions rather than a copy of the text itself.

As *Kuruma-zō sōshi* continues, Tarōbō convenes a conference of *tengu* at his home on Mount Atago. The accompanying illustration (FIGURE 7) is vaguely reminiscent of the famous gathering of *tengu*—including Tarōbō—in the Nezu Museum’s Miidera scroll of *Tengu zōshi*.²⁶ In *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, Tarōbō announces: “I’ve invited you all here to discuss a certain scoundrel known as the Handcart Priest. He’s got himself full of pride at Saga, where he’s meditating on the views.” The other *tengu* are incensed, and after considerable deliberation, they decide to take him on:

The sun slowly dipped behind the western mountains. The Handcart Priest watched as cawing crows sought out their nests, and he thought to himself, “There’s no use in spending a snowy night like this in such a forlorn field. I suppose I’ll make my way toward some village.” He was redirecting his carriage shafts when he heard a voice from the sky:

“Hello, Handcart Priest! Where are you going? As they say, ‘there’s no path through the snow,’ so you’ve got no way to return! You’re so conceited, imagining that there’s no one as lofty as you, but do you think that your pride won’t leave a trace? Will that non-attachment-desire-for-the-Dharma business push or pull your cart? Turn your heart toward evil! Good and bad are like the two wheels of your cart: if there’s the Buddhist law, there’s the worldly law; if there’s delusion, there’s enlightenment; if there are buddhas, there are non-buddhas; and if there’s the Handcart Priest, then there’s Tarōbō the ascetic. Conjure if you will, and I will too. You can use your magic powers, but mine are just as strong! How about it, Handcart Priest—shall we test our skills for fun?”

As a Zen practitioner, the Handcart Priest takes pride in his spiritual insights and accomplishments, and it is on the basis of these that Tarōbō frames his attack. Instead of simply seeking to intimidate or physically overpower the Handcart Priest as the lesser tree-leaf *tengu* do, he first engages him on the level of Buddhist philosophy by invoking the concept of nonduality (employing a metaphor from the cart, again, in order to do so). He then challenges him to a contest of magical Buddhist powers, which were widely understood in medieval Japan to accrue as a result of diligent religious practice,²⁷ and which the Handcart Priest,

26. See the color reproduction in UMEZU 1978, plate 10, and the transcription of the ten *tengu*’s names in UMEZU 1978, 93b.

27. The Tendai priest Shōkū Shōnin 性空上人 (910–1007), for example, is widely reported to have achieved wondrous powers as a result of attaining a state of purity of the six senses (*rokkon shōjō* 六根清淨) through his practice of chanting the *Lotus Sutra* (*Hokekyō jikidanshō* 1979, 283; KIMBROUGH 2008a, 120).



FIGURE 8. Zegaibō visits Tarōbō on Mt. Atago. From a *nara ehon* edition of the nōh play *Zegai*, ca. seventeenth century. Private collection, courtesy of Takahashi Tōru.

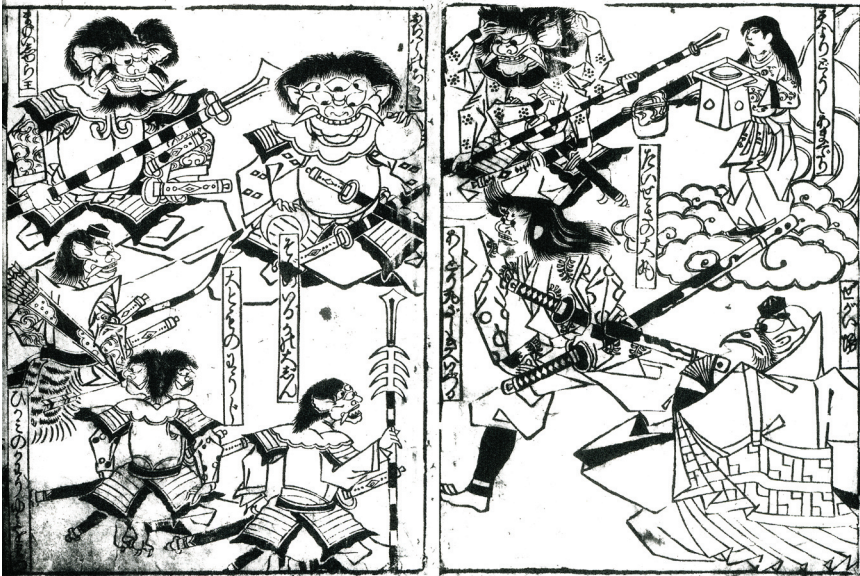


FIGURE 9. Zegaibō (bottom right) introduces Akudōmaru (middle) to Maheśvara (top left). From *Shuten Dōji wakazakari*, 1660. Courtesy of the National Diet Library.

as an accomplished Zen practitioner, might have been expected to have attained. Thus, like other *tengu* in other tales, Tarōbō appeals to the specific source of his victim's pride.

In the puppet-play *Shuten Dōji wakazakari* 酒典童子若壯 (Shuten Dōji in the prime of youth), attributed to the Edo chanter Satsuma Dayū 江戸さつま太夫 and published by Yamamoto Kuhei 山本九兵衛 of Kyoto in the eighth month of 1660, the Chinese *tengu* Zegaibō 是害房 similarly assails the villainous Akudōmaru—the demon Shuten Dōji in his human childhood—by playing to his vanity.²⁸ *Shuten Dōji wakazakari* tells of Shuten Dōji's younger years: how he was born in response to his father's prayers to the Togakushi Deity in Shinano province; how he slaughtered one hundred and sixty monks at Kugami Temple and burned down their institution when he was sent there to study; how he became the leader of a murderous band of ruffians and terrorized the land; and how he was eventually caught and imprisoned by the Emperor's men, only to escape with the aid of the Togakushi Deity. Satsuma Dayū explains that after breaking out of jail,

Akudōmaru returned to Mt. Togakushi in Shinano province. Pondering the impermanence of this world, he thought to himself, "Truly, since the creation of Japan, there has never been anyone mightier than I, and there probably never will be. I can't count the number of brawny men I've put away since the age of nine! I must have crushed a hundred thousand. Even in India and China, there's no one whom I fear!" Thus he was inflated with the most colossal pride.

A small fourteen- or fifteen-year-old monk suddenly appeared. "So you're that Akudōmaru," he said with a smile, "the one I hear is so proud of being stronger than ten-thousand men. But you're not destined for fame—there are mightier men than you. Let's see who's stronger, you or I!"

Enraged, Akudōmaru grapples with the monk, who suddenly carries him up into the sky. When Akudōmaru looks at the monk again, he sees that his eyes shine like mirrors, and that he has a beak like a bird. "I am a *tengu* from China," the stranger says. "My name is Zegaibō. Because of your deep-seated arrogance, you have crossed into the *tengu* realm" (YOKOYAMA 1964, 99 [Act 4]).

Zegaibō is best known in Japanese literature as the protagonist of the picture scroll *Zegaibō-e* 是害房絵 (ca. 1308), and as the leading character (*shite*) of the noh play *Zegai* 是界, attributed to Takeda Jōsei 竹田定盛 (1421–1508) and apparently inspired by the earlier picture scroll.²⁹ According to *Zegaibō-e*, the story of which is based upon the aforementioned *Konjaku monogatari shū* tale of the

28. The National Diet Library text is typeset in YOKOYAMA 1964, 86–104. As KOMINE Kazuaki (2000, 67) has observed, although the play was published in 1660, its story is likely older. The name Akudōmaru might be translated as "evil child"

29. *Zegaibō-e* is typeset and photographically reproduced in UMEZU 1978; *Zegai* is annotated in SNKZ 59: 521–32.

Chinese *tengu* Chirayōju,³⁰ Zegaibō first came to Japan in 966, during the reign of Emperor Murakami, in order to obstruct local Buddhist practice. The noh play *Zegai* explains that upon arriving in Japan, Zegaibō immediately visited Tarōbō on Mt. Atago to seek his advice. (In *Zegaibō-e*, Zegai visits a *tengu* named Nichirabō on Mt. Atago.) Tarōbō directs Zegaibō to Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei, headquarters of the Japanese Tendai sect, where he suffers a series of comical and ignoble defeats. Although Zegaibō may be the greatest *tengu* in China, he is shown to be no match for the Tendai monks of Japan, and as he flies back home at the end of the play, he cries out that he “will never come again” (SNKZ 59: 532).³¹

In *Shuten Dōji wakazakari*, which is set more than one hundred and forty years before Zegaibō’s disastrous visit to Japan in 966, Satsuma Dayū makes no mention of Zegaibō’s later misadventures on Mt. Hiei. However, audiences are likely to have recognized his name, which may account for his inclusion in the play. In the way that Tarōbō challenges the Handcart Priest on the level of Zen insight and professional Buddhist accomplishment, which are the sources of the Handcart Priest’s pride, Zegaibō challenges Akudōmaru on the basis of pure physical strength, of which Akudōmaru is himself so proud. The personal nature of these attacks, as well as the fact that they are precipitated, in both cases, by Akudōmaru’s and the Handcart Priest’s own arrogant thoughts, suggest that for Akudōmaru and the Handcart Priest the attacks of *tengu* are not unlike attacks of pride. In Akudōmaru’s case, the struggle with Zegaibō is one that he will lose: upon carrying Akudōmaru away from Mt. Togakushi, Zegaibō delivers him to the fire-breathing Maheśvara (Makeishuraō 摩醯首羅王), a Buddhist incarnation of Śiva, the Hindu god of beneficence and destruction.³² Maheśvara is so impressed by Akudōmaru’s courage that he chooses to make him an *oni* 鬼 (a demon), rather than a *tengu*, so that he may wreak further havoc in the human world. Transformed as a result of his pride, Akudōmaru returns to Japan as the fearsome Shuten Dōji.

In *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, the Handcart Priest proves to be a wiler opponent than Akudōmaru, because in addition to recognizing his adversary, he maintains his

30. The unknown *Zegaibō-e* author writes in a colophon dated 1308 that his story resembles one in the eleventh-century *setsuwa* anthology *Uji Dainagon monogatari* 宇治大納言物語, which is now lost. That tale is believed to correspond to *Konjaku monogatari shū* 20: 2 (UMEZU 1978, 98a [plate 107], 15–17, and 101a).

31. At the end of *Zegaibō-e*, Zegaibō makes a point of inviting Nichirabō to visit him in China, where he promises to show him all the sacred sites (UMEZU 1978, 100b). *Zegaibō-e* and *Tengu zōshi* are thematically related: while *Tengu zōshi* explains how the leading priests of Japan have become *tengu* because of their pride, *Zegaibō-e* describes how a visiting Chinese *tengu*, himself inflated with pride, is humbled by those same priests.

32. Maheśvara is also known in Japanese as Daijizaiten 大自在天. In *Shuten Dōji wakazakari*, he is identified as a *maō* 魔王, or “evil king.”

equanimity—for a while, at least—in the face of Tarōbō and the other *tengu*'s ranting provocation. As always, the contest between the *tengu* and the priest revolves around the cart:

The Handcart Priest gazed up toward Mount Atago, where he saw a black cloud trailing in the sky. It contained Tarōbō and a multitude of other *tengu*, too numerous to count. The priest had been expecting them, however, and he was not disturbed in the least. “You can’t move my heart,” he said, “no matter how you try. So just go home.”

The *tengu* replied: “Say what you like, but we can take you if we want!” They all jumped down on the snow and began to lash the priest’s cart with switches. The priest watched and then exclaimed: “What an amazing bunch of creatures! Do you think the cart will move if you thrash it? Why don’t you whip the ox instead?”

“True” the *tengu* said, “the cart has no mind.” They wished to strike the ox, but there was none to strike. “Just beat the cart,” they cried, the same as before. They flogged it mercilessly, but the cart refused to budge. The priest watched. “Stupid fools on the path of man and ox!” he said. “Why don’t you strike the ox that you can see? Or are you blind to the man-ox before your eyes? Get away from there!”

The *tengu* were enraged. “So if we beat you,” they said, “then the cart will move?” “Of course!” the priest replied. “Now I’ll show you how I strike the white ox of the open space. Watch this!” The Handcart Priest raised his *hossu* flapper and struck the air. Strange to say, the cart, which until now had seemed to be a rickety contraption, wobbled forward with neither an ox nor a man to pull and instantly flew up into the sky. It circled around the mountains and rivers of Saga, Ogura, Ōi, and Arashi before returning. The *tengu* were stunned as they took in the sight.

The Handcart Priest refers to the “white ox of the open space,” alluding to the *Lotus Sutra* parable of the burning house. He implicitly equates his own humble cart with the Single Vehicle of the Dharma, represented in the parable by the marvelous jeweled carriages that the father presents to each of his sons.³³ The association is an immodest one, but it is not without effect. By invoking the power of the Single Vehicle, the Handcart Priest literally transcends his *tengu* opponents, demonstrating the primacy of the Buddhist Law. An illustration shows the Handcart Priest and his cart soaring on a cloud in the sky, while Tarōbō and another *tengu* watch from below (FIGURE 10, following page).

33. The *Lotus Sutra* explains that the carriages were “tall and spacious and adorned with numerous jewels,” and that “each carriage was drawn by a white ox, pure and clean in hide, handsome in form and of great strength, capable of pulling the carriage smoothly and properly at a pace fast as the wind” (T 9 [262]: 12c, lines 19 and 22–23; WATSON 1993, 57–58). Translation here by Watson.



FIGURE 10. The Handcart Priest flies upon his cart. From *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, ca. seventeenth century. Courtesy of the Kyoto University Library.

The priest's miraculous flight constitutes the final, climactic event of the noh play *Kuruma-zō*, which ends immediately afterward with Tarōbō clapping his hands in reverence. In *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, however, the Handcart Priest's triumph is short-lived, because the pride that he takes in his aerial demonstration leads him to challenge the *tengu* anew:

“So, how about your miracle?” the Handcart Priest inquired. The many *tengu* jostled and clamored that they, too, would show him a marvel, whereupon they split apart the earth in a rush of flames, revealing the realms of hell and eternal carnage. Before their very eyes they saw a Lord something-or-other face off against a Lord this-or-that and declare their names, ready to fight. The lords grappled and fell heavily between their horses, where one took the other's head and the other had his taken.

There were still others in retreat, sorely wounded, and others setting fires and battling as if this were their last. To the side there was a warrior declaring his name. He shouted, “Watch and learn how a fearless fighter ends his life! Take this as your model!” He slashed open his belly and pulled out his entrails. Other warriors could be seen locked in mortal combat, until flames again erupted from the earth and the snowy plain became as it was before.

If the Handcart Priest's cart represents the Single Vehicle of the Dharma in the *Lotus Sutra* parable, then the *ashura* 阿修羅 realm of eternal carnage sug-



FIGURE 11. The realm of eternal carnage. From *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, ca. seventeenth century. Courtesy of the Kyoto University Library.

gests the burning house. As one of the Three Evil Planes of Existence (*san akudō* 三悪道), the *ashura* realm is said to be a place of constant battle for those who die violent deaths.³⁴ The *Kuruma-zō sōshi* illustration (FIGURE 11), the second double-spread image in the work, shows a dozen barefoot men fighting with swords, halberds, and a bow, but it lacks the flames and grisly gore of the textual description.

In the *otogizōshi Matsuhime monogatari* and its variants, Chūjōdono’s “awakening to faith”—his *hosshin* 発心—is said to have been inspired by his wife’s brutal murder and her ghostly revelation that she had been reborn in the *ashura* realm as a result. “Although I am a woman,” she explains in the 1526 scroll, “I suffer the pains of the *ashura* world, day and night, without respite” (MJMT 12: 611b).³⁵ In *Itozakura no monogatari*, Chūjōdono’s dead wife urges him to abandon his grief and

34. The other two evil planes are the realms of hell and hungry ghosts. According to the 1603 manuscript of the *otogizōshi Fuji no hitoana sōshi* 富士の人穴草子, the *ashura* realm is a place where “tremendous flames rise up into the air, and warriors armed with bows and blades engage in ceaseless fighting.” The Great Asama Bodhisattva explains in that work that “people who die in battle fall into the *ashura* realm, where they suffer for two thousand, three hundred years” (MJMT 11: 446; KIMBROUGH 2006, 17).

35. The scene of Matsuhime’s revelation is illustrated in FIGURE 3 on page 280.



FIGURE 12. The *tengu* sit with the Handcart Priest. From *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, ca. seventeenth century. Courtesy of the Kyoto University Library.

pray for her salvation, and it is this that stirs him to take Buddhist vows and eventually become a handcart priest (MJMT supp. 1: 241b–42a). Although it is tempting to imagine that Tarōbō chooses to reveal the *ashura* realm in *Kuruma-zō sōshi* because he knows of the Handcart Priest’s former trauma (if we take the handcart priests of *Kuruma-zō sōshi* and *Matsuhime monogatari* to be the same), there is in fact no allusion in *Kuruma-zō sōshi* to a former wife or to any kind of grief, suggesting that the presence of the *ashura* realm in the two works is merely coincidental.

Whatever Tarōbō’s motivations may have been in conjuring the violent vision, his magical mischief can be seen to take a toll:

The Handcart Priest thought to himself, “This is amazing, fascinating!” His mind was slightly shaken. The *tengu* realized that they were succeeding. “Listen, priest,” they said, “we can show you sights like these for a hundred days and a hundred nights, if we choose.”

The Handcart Priest quickly regained his composure. “Once will be enough,” he said. “From now on, I’ll use my Buddhist powers to keep you from performing such feats.”

“But they’re easy to do!” the *tengu* shot back. “Shall we show you a vision of the Paradise World this time?³⁶ Here, take a look!”

36. The Pure Land Paradise of Amida Buddha.

The Handcart Priest pressed his palms together, bowed once to the open air, and recited a demon-quelling spell. Miraculously, purple clouds spread from the mountains all around, though the sky until then had been clear. First the Mantra King Fudō, then Kongara, Seitaka, the Twelve Guardian Deities, and a host of other demon-quelling gods and buddhas appeared from within the clouds. They compelled the free-flying *tengu* to kneel before the Handcart Priest and swear that they would never again perform their evil deeds.

Kuruma-zō sōshi lacks an illustration of the *tengu*'s defeat, but in its final painted scene (FIGURE 12), it shows Tarōbō and his cohorts sitting peacefully with their erstwhile enemy. For the first time, the Handcart Priest is depicted with what appears to be a smile on his face. In contrast, at least three of the five *tengu* look glum. A brown-robed *tengu* kneels before the priest in a gesture of submission, while a green-robed *tengu* looks away with an obvious frown. Surprisingly, the cart is nowhere to be seen.

The Handcart Priest wins in the end, and he does so in the same way that he did in his earlier confrontation with the tree-leaf *tengu*: by reaching out beyond himself and calling upon the “other power” of the Buddhist Mantra King Fudō. In Pure Land Buddhist discourse, the term *tariki* 他力, or “other power,” is used to refer to Amida Buddha’s saving grace, by which sentient beings may attain rebirth in Amida’s western Pure Land Paradise. The term also implies the notion that its correlate, *jiriki* 自力, or “self power,” is of no use in attaining salvation in the final age of the Dharma. While the self power/other power dialectic is most common to Pure Land Buddhist soteriology, it is sometimes employed in other contexts as well. In *Shuten Dōji wakazakari*, for example, which concludes with a similar contest of wizardly feats between Shuten Dōji and the Tendai priest Saichō (the famous founder of Enryakuji Temple), Saichō tells Shuten Dōji that he will overcome him with “the other-power of Buddhism” (*buppō no tariki* 仏法の他力) (YOKOYAMA 1964, 103b). Then, like the Handcart Priest, who appeals to Fudō for assistance, Saichō summons the Buddhist guardian king Bishamonten, who appears upon a cloud and drives Shuten Dōji away. (In a woodblock-printed illustration of the scene [FIGURE 13], we can see Bishamonten in the upper-right hand corner, firing flaming arrows at Shuten Dōji and his demon retainers, to the left.)

Among Buddhist divinities, Fudō is especially well-known for protecting against *tengu*—*Tengu zōshi*, for example, includes his name in a *tengu*'s list of “frightening things”³⁷—and this is surely why the Handcart Priest enlists his aid. (Zegaibō is similarly defeated in the *noh* play *Zegai*, when the traveling priest Imuro no Sōjō

37. The list is a transcription of a *tengu* song, according to TOKUE 2006, 148; see also UMEZU 1978, color plate 9, and 91c. In addition, as KOMINE Kazuaki has shown (1991, 30–31), an early tenth-century biography of the priest Sōō 相応 (d. 918) explains that Fudō once appeared to Sōō and told him how to exorcise a *tengu* that had taken possession of the Somedono Empress.



FIGURE 13. Saichō battles Shuten Dōji and his demons. From *Shuten Dōji wakazakari*, 1660. Courtesy of the National Diet Library.

chants an invocation that summons Fudō and his two attendants, Kongara and Seitaka, as well as the Twelve Guardian Deities [SNKZ 59: 531].) To beseech and then accept assistance is an inherently humbling act, and by appealing to Fudō for help, thus abandoning self power for the other power of the buddhas, the Handcart Priest can be seen to have finally succeeded in subjugating his inner demons of conceit. Furthermore, the absence of the cart from the final *Kuruma-zō sōshi* illustration suggests that in overcoming his opponents, both internal and external, the Handcart Priest may have transcended his attachment to his cart. Zen thought maintains that attachment to the Dharma—or in this case, to the Single Vehicle of the Dharma—can itself be an obstruction to enlightenment. And as Tarōbō and the tree-leaf *tengu* seem to have perceived, considering their fixation upon it throughout the tale, the cart was at the heart of the Handcart Priest's conceit.

In *Matsuhime monogatari* and its related texts, Chūjōdono, too, is presented as having abandoned his cart at the end of his life. The *Itozakura no monogatari* narrator explains that Chūjōdono came to realize that “the cart was of no benefit,” and that upon giving it up, he practiced his religious devotions in cloistered seclusion and eventually attained “Great Pure Land Rebirth” (*daiōjō* 大往生) (MJMT supp. 1: 243b).³⁸ Alternately, in the *otogizōshi Kuruma-zō* (the unillustrated Mikanagi and Kyoto University Library texts, which comprise two additional *Matsuhime monogatari* variants), Chūjōdono is said to have realized that it is “stupid” (*oroka*

38. Also see the related passage in *Matsuhime monogatari*, in MJMT 12: 613b.

nari おろかなり) to “roll around Buddhist paths in a little cart” in the hope of saving others (MJMT 4: 299b [*Kuruma-zō*, Mikanagi text]; KYŌTO DAIGAKU BUNGA KUBU KOKUGOGAKU KOKUBUNGA KU KENKYŪSHITSU 2002, 367 [*Kuruma-zō*, Kyoto University Library text]). Although the narrator of *Kuruma-zō sōshi* says nothing about the matter—he simply lauds the Handcart Priest for having plumbed the depths of the Dharma, and he praises the guardian kings for defending the Buddhist Law—perhaps the Handcart Priest also experiences an epiphany at the end of his tale, and gives up his own cart as well.

Conclusion

The Zen master Hakuin 白隠 (1685–1768), patriarch of the Rinzai sect, writes in his autobiographical *Orategama* 遠羅天釜 that at the age of twenty-four, upon penetrating the significance of “Jōshū’s *Mu*,” a koan with which many students begin their practice of Zen, his “pride soared like a mountain” and his “arrogance surged like the high tide.” Hakuin writes that in his own secret thoughts, he “felt that there had never been anyone in the past two or three hundred years who had experienced so intense and joyous a breakthrough” (HAKUIN OSHŌ ZENSHŪ HENSANKAI 1967, 35, line 4; DE BARY 1972, 385; translation here from DE BARY 1972).³⁹ Hakuin informed his master of his insight, but the master was not impressed; he teased him for his limited understanding, and then assigned him another koan. It was only later, at the age of thirty-two, that Hakuin came to realize the inadequacy of his former comprehension.

Although Hakuin does not report encountering any *tengu* at the age of twenty-four, one might suppose that his arrogance would have made him a natural target. Human-*tengu* transformations have been employed as metaphors in art and literature since at least the late thirteenth century (the age of *Tengu zōshi*’s composition, in 1296), but the physical threat of *tengu* has long been seen as a real one, too. In the miscellany *Kanden kōhitsu* 閑田耕筆 (The brush that tills the Kanden fields; completed in 1799 and published in 1801), the poet and author Ban Kōkei 伴蒿蹊 relates the harrowing tale of a monk who was attacked by a *tengu* when he went to visit Mt. Tsukuba. At the end of his story, Kōkei writes:

People are occasionally abducted [by *tengu*] on Mt. Atago and Mt. Yoshino, too. Some of them are later found torn to pieces and hanging in the branches of cedar trees. Others are said to come home, for no reason at all, several years after being taken. [Being attacked by *tengu*] is entirely different from being tricked and led away by field-foxes. It is a mysterious thing.

(NIHON ZUIHITSU TAISEI HENSHŪBU 1926, 598)

39. *Mu* is the first koan in the thirteenth-century *Wumenguan* (*Mumonkan*) (SHIBAYAMA 1974, 19–31). I am grateful to Victor Sōgen Hori for bringing this story to my attention.

Kōkei goes on to tell of a priest by the name of Fumonbō 普門坊 who himself became a *tengu* in the present life, but Kōkei cites no cause for the transformation and refuses to speculate.

As we have seen in *Kuruma-zō sōshi*, the Handcart Priest is attacked on the Saga Plain near the foot of Mt. Atago, where Kōkei says that people are indeed abducted from time to time. However, it is hard to imagine Tarōbō ripping apart the priest and scattering his limbs in a tree, because Tarōbō is depicted within the tale as not so much a ferocious beast (which he supposedly is), but as a cunning alter-ego of the Handcart Priest. The threat that Tarōbō poses is familiar. Rather than suggesting a dangerous “other” that inspires a fear of the unknown, he resembles an old and annoying acquaintance, or a chronic physical complaint.

Kuruma-zō sōshi is not alone in evoking profound psychological processes in the fantastic language of supernatural encounters and improbable events. *Matsuhime monogatari*, for example, is similarly concerned with the intangible phenomenon of a man’s spiritual awakening after the traumatic disappearance of his wife. Literally haunted by his past, Chūjōdono attains release from his desperate search and begins a new life as a priest only upon making peace with Matsuhime’s ghost. By conjuring the phantoms and specters of a troubled human psyche and externalizing them for the reader to ponder and review, these and other works of medieval fiction and drama allow for a depth of insight that more “realistic” works of literature often do not. With their playful illustrations and fanciful plots, they make visible the invisible and reveal the unseen.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- MJMT *Muromachi jidai monogatari taisei* 室町時代物語大成. 13 vols. Yokoyama Shigeru 横山 重 and Matsumoto Ryūshin 松本隆信, eds. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1973–85. Also 2 supp. vols. ed. by Matsumoto Ryūshin, 1987–1988.
- NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系. 100 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958–1968.
- SNKT *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 新日本古典文学大系. 100 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989–2005.
- SNKZ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集. 88 vols. Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1994–2002.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 85 vols. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932.

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