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## Animating Objects

### *Tsukumogami ki* and the Medieval Illustration of Shingon Truth

*Tsukumogami* are animate household objects. An *otogizōshi* (“companion tale”) titled *Tsukumogami ki* (“Record of tool specters”; Muromachi period) explains that after a service life of nearly one hundred years, *utsuwamono* or *kibutsu* (containers, tools, and instruments) receive souls. While many references are made to this work as a major source for the definition of *tsukumogami*, insufficient attention has been paid to the actual text of *Tsukumogami ki*. The work is entertaining, and I believe that the principal motivation of the author(s) in writing it was to spread the doctrines of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism to a variety of audiences, ranging from the educated to the relatively unsophisticated, by capitalizing upon pre-existing spiritual beliefs in *tsukumogami*. In this article I examine *Tsukumogami ki* and the popular practices and beliefs that are reflected in its text and illustrations. A complete translation of the work is included as an online supplement to this issue of the *JJRS*, at [www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/publications/jjrs/jjrsMain.htm](http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/publications/jjrs/jjrsMain.htm).

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THE RECENT pop culture boom in *yōkai* 妖怪 (monsters) in Japan has brought about renewed interest in various native supernatural creatures, among which are *tsukumogami* 付喪神, or “tool specters.” Although animate tools appear sporadically in the literature of the late Heian period (794–1185), the application of the name *tsukumogami* to animate objects is largely a medieval phenomenon, and portrayals and descriptions of *tsukumogami* increase notably in works of the medieval and Edo periods.<sup>1</sup> According to a text entitled *Tsukumogami ki* 付喪神記 (Record of tool specters) dated to the Muromachi period (1336–1573), after a span of one hundred years *utsuwamono* or *kibutsu* 器物 (containers, tools, and instruments) receive souls, and, like all things with individual souls, develop independent spirits and thus became prone to tricking people. These spirits are called *tsukumogami*. Resentful after having been abandoned by the human masters whom they so loyally served, the tools and utensils in *Tsukumogami ki* become vengeful and murderous specters. With imperial and Buddhist support, however, the wayward spirits learn to repent their malevolent ways, enter lives of religious service, and, in the end, attain Buddhahood through the Shingon sect of Esoteric Buddhism. The text emphasizes that the Shingon teachings enable even such nonsentient beings as tools and containers to attain enlightenment.

While many references are made to this text as a major source for the definition of *tsukumogami*, due attention has not been paid to the actual text of *Tsukumogami ki*. The *tsukumogami* story belongs to a genre called *otogizōshi* お伽草子, or companion tales—short stories written from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century for the purpose of both entertainment and moral or religious edification.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Kabat writes that tool specters thrive in eighteenth-century *kibyōshi* 黄表紙 (yellow-backed comic books) of the early modern period. In many cases, these specters are little helpers to humans, and not the abandoned, aged objects that bear grudges against people. In that sense, as Kabat suggests, it might be better not to call them *tsukumogami* (KABAT 2000).

2. The definition of *otogizōshi* as a genre is still controversial among literary scholars. For studies of *otogizōshi* in English, see KIMBROUGH 2008; KEENE 1993, 1092–1128; SKORD 1991; CHILDS 1987; ARAKI 1981; RUCH 1977; STEVEN 1977; MULHERN 1974; PUTZAR 1963, 286–97.



FIGURE 1. The abandoned objects are transformed into *tsukumogami*. From *Tsukumogami emaki*, property of Kyoto University Library 京都大学附属図書館所蔵. Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

Befitting the *otogizōshi* genre, the story, while quite amusing, is markedly religious in tone. The Shingon tradition developed a sophisticated materialist cosmology, but outside the monastic institutions and the highly trained and educated few, the philosophy of objects was probably not so easily accessible or understandable to even the elite, let alone the majority of the medieval population. KOMATSU Kazuhiko (1994, 338) writes that the text could have been employed to enhance Shingon Buddhist power. Indeed, I argue that the text was more than likely created to (re)claim Shingon's influence by highlighting the notion of *sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏 (realizing buddhahood in this very body), as exemplified in the case of Kūkai 空海 (774–835), and asserting that the Shingon teachings enable even such nonsentient beings (*hijō* 非情, *mujō* 無情) as tools and containers to attain enlightenment.

#### *Texts and Summary of Tsukumogami ki*

The *Tsukumogami ki*<sup>3</sup> story appears in a number of extant manuscripts with titles such as *Hijō jōbutsu emaki* 非情成仏絵巻 (Illustrated handscrolls on the attainment of buddhahood by nonsentient beings), *Tsukumogami ki* 付喪神記 (Record of *tsukumogami*), *Tsukumogami* 付喪神, and *Tsukumogami emaki* 付喪神絵巻

3. Following TANAKA Takako (1994b, 163), who views the variety of extant *Tsukumogami ki* texts as parodies of traditional Chinese *ki* 記 (descriptions, records), I use the title *Tsukumogami ki* to refer collectively to all *Tsukumogami ki* manuscripts discussed in this article.

(Illustrated handscrolls of *tsukumogami*). Essentially, there are two versions of the *Tsukumogami ki* story: Type A, represented by the *Hijō jōbutsu emaki*, which is written on two scrolls and owned by Sōfukuji 崇福寺 in Gifu Prefecture, and Type B, represented by all the other surviving manuscripts, which are written on either one or two scrolls.<sup>4</sup> The major difference between Types A and B is that A does not contain several narrative scenes; these are placed in box brackets in the following summary:

During the year-end *susuharai* 煤払 (sweeping soot, housecleaning) events in the late tenth-century capital of Heian,<sup>5</sup> old tools and objects are discarded in byways and alleys. The abandoned goods become angry at the humans who discard them and plan, as specters, to torment their former owners. One discarded object, the rosary Ichiren Novice (*Ichiren nyūdō* 一連入道), chides the others for their desire for revenge, but he is beaten up by the club of Rough John (Aratarō 荒太郎) and barely escapes with his “life.” Another discarded object, Professor Classical Literature (*Kobun sensei* 古文先生), who, in the picture, is depicted as a scroll, proposes that they should all transform themselves into specters. With the help of a creation god (*zōkashin* 造化神), they do so on the day of *setsubun* 節分, the lunar New Year’s Eve.

As tool specters, the *tsukumogami* kidnap humans and animals for consumption, and they celebrate their new lives with such merrymaking as drinking, gambling, and poetry recitations. [In the Type B *Tsukumogami ki*, they then decide to worship their creation god, naming it the Great Shape-Shifting God (*Henge daimyōjin* 変化大明神). They propose to hold a Shinto festival in honor of their god, as other Shinto shrines do. In spring, while they are strolling through the capital for the Great Shape-Shifting God’s festival procession, they

4. I follow KAKEHI’s classification (1989, 5). There is only one Type A manuscript: the Sōfukuji scroll, dated to the sixteenth century (OKUDAIRA 1982, 180–87; SHINBO and KANEKO 1978, 121–29 [pictures] and 222–32 [text]); and GIFUSHI REKISHI HAKUBUTSUKAN 1989, 67–73). As for Type B texts, several Edo-period scrolls exist, including manuscripts in the possession of the National Diet Library (MJMT 9: 417–25); Kyoto University Library (KYOTO DAIGAKU BUNGAKUBU KOKUGOGAKU KOKUBUNGAKU KENKYŪSHITSU 2001, 337–47; KYOTO DAIGAKU FUZOKU TOSHOKAN 2000, <http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/tsuroll/indexA.html> and <http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/tsuroll/indexB.html>); Iwase Bunko in Nishio City; Tokyo National Museum; and Waseda University Library. Except for the Waseda University manuscript, in terms of illustrations and language, the Type B scrolls are all very similar. See SHIBATA 2001, 392–93.

5. *Susuharai* is not only a large annual housecleaning event, but also a part of the preparation rituals for welcoming a Shinto god of the coming year, or a harvest god. It is the day to remove the accumulated misfortunes of the year (*yaku* 厄), as well as to expunge one’s defilements and crimes. See KAGIWADA 1981, 120. An entry for the sixth day of the twelfth month of 1236 in *Azuma kagami* 吾妻鏡 (Mirror of the east, ca. thirteenth century) records the *Susuharai* event at the Kamakura military court. It also recounts that *Susuharai* activities were not carried out in a newly built residence for three years (KT 33, 185). Later, commoners are said to have followed this custom.

encounter the Prince Regent's party. A *Sonshō darani* 尊勝陀羅尼 (Skt. *dhāraṇī*) charm that the regent carries with him suddenly flares up and attacks the *tsukumogami*,<sup>6</sup> whereupon the *tsukumogami* scatter. The emperor hears of this incident, and summoning the bishop who wrote the *Sonshō darani* charm, he has him perform ceremonies in the Imperial Palace. In response to the prayers and rituals held by the bishop and other Buddhist priests, several Buddhist divine boys (*gohō dōji* 護法童子)<sup>7</sup> appear above the palace, after which they fly off to the *tsukumogami*'s den.] The divine boys immediately subdue the *tsukumogami*, and the wayward spirits swear to convert to Buddhism. Repentant, the *tsukumogami* seek the guidance of Holy Ichiren (formerly Ichiren Novice) to help them embrace the Buddhist teachings and enter the priesthood. After some time as priests, the *tsukumogami* ask Ichiren how they might attain Buddhahood quickly, whereupon Ichiren describes the Shingon teaching of realizing Buddhahood in this very body. The *tsukumogami* thus become devotees of the Shingon sect, and after assiduous ascetic practices, they all become Buddhas. The story ends with the moral, "If you wish to know the deep meaning of [the tale], it is that we should quickly escape from the net of Exoteric Buddhism and enter Shingon Esoteric Buddhism." (MJMT 9: 425)

I should note three other points regarding differences between the Type A and B scrolls. First, some illustrations and textual passages are located in different places. For example, in the Type A text, the scenes of the objects' discussion of revenge and Ichiren Novice's beating by Rough John are inserted before Professor Classical Chinese Literature's lecture on the art of yin-yang transformation, whereas in the Type B texts, the scenes are described after the Professor's lecture. Second, the Type A narrative is generally more descriptive (that is, it includes more poems and verses in its banquet scene). Third, the Type A text tends to be more specific. For example, it includes the explanation that "[*tsukumogami*] join a branch of Tōji 東寺 and practice with the Yataku 野沢 schools" (OKUDAIRA 1982, 185).<sup>8</sup> This sentence is not seen in the Type B texts, which do not contain specific references to any particular subset of the Shingon school. As it has often been suggested, the author of the Type A text may have been a Tōji temple priest, or

6. The *Sonshō darani* is more properly known as the *Butchō Sonshō darani* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼 (*Dhāraṇī* of the victorious Buddha crown). It was widely used to prevent natural disasters, secure longevity, and ward off evil.

7. Guardian spirits who protect the Dharma from its enemies. Regarding *gohō dōji*, see BLACKER 1963.

8. Tōji is the head temple (*daihonzan* 大本山) and central training center (*konpon dōjō* 根本道場) of the Shingon sect of esoteric Buddhism located in Kyoto. "Yataku schools" refers to the Ono 小野 and Hirosawa 広沢 schools. Combining the second character from each school's name, that is, 野 and 沢, they are together called "Yataku" 野沢. They arose within the Shingon sect in the mid-Heian period. Each school was further broken down into six sub-schools.

someone otherwise associated with the temple. Type B texts, on the other hand, could have been used for more general preaching upon the Shingon teachings, and more easily modified to suit an individual priest's purpose.

### *The Date of the Texts*

The issue of whether the aforementioned scenes were deleted from the Type A text or added to the Type B texts raises the question of which came first. Some scholars consider that the Type A Sōfukuji version predates the Type B texts, and that the Type B texts are copies of the Sōfukuji text. For example, Shinbo Tōru argues that the format of the Type A scrolls follows that of early literary works that lack the additional *setsuwa* tale (in the preceding summary, the bracketed account of the Prince Regent's encounter with the *tsukumogami*) (SHINBO 1982, 88). Likewise, Shibata Hōsei compares the language of the texts with that of *Kōbō daishi gyōjō ekotoba* 弘法大師行狀絵詞 (Illustrated history of Kōbō Daishi/Kūkai; ca. fourteenth century), a work predating *Tsukumogami ki*, and he reaches the same conclusion based upon the similarity of Type A's language to that of *Kōbō daishi gyōjō ekotoba* (SHIBATA 2001, 395–99).<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, scholars such as Kakehi take the opposite view, because the Type B tale flows more smoothly, and the first and second scrolls are almost equally long.<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult to judge which came first. But in an entry for the tenth day of the ninth month of 1485 in *Sanetaka-kō ki* 実隆公記, the diary of Sanjōnishi Sanetaka 三条西実隆 (1455–1537), Sanetaka writes that he saw a set of *tsukumogami* scrolls (Parts One and Two) at the study hall of the Imperial Palace (SANJŌNISHI 1931, 621). While it is not known which text Sanetaka saw, by 1485 at the latest, one set of *tsukumogami* scrolls had already been produced and was in circulation among aristocrats.

9. Similar to the Sōfukuji text, *Kōbō daishi gyōjō ekotoba* (owned by Tōji) includes a paragraph describing the Tōji school's superiority. The paragraph explains that in response to a prince's command to summarize the teachings of the Shingon sect, Priest Seison (ca. early eleventh century) of the Ono school of the Shingon sect wrote that "there are various schools that teach esoteric Buddhism. But the Tōji school follows the teachings of Kōbō Daishi and possesses ten aspects that are superior to other schools" (KOMATSU 1982, 114). On the other hand, *Kōbō daishi gyōjō ekotoba* also includes the following explanation of Kōbō Daishi writing a *waka* poem at Muroto: "as a custom of Japan [my emphasis], [he] wrote the following *waka*" (KOMATSU 1982, 109). The sentence is similar to a sentence in the Type B texts, to the effect that "[composing] *waka* is a traditional Japanese custom."

10. Kakehi surmises that the length of the original first and second scrolls would have been more or less the same. While the first scroll of the Type B texts is slightly shorter than the second scroll, the first scroll of the Type A text is considerably shorter than the second scroll (KAKEHI 1989, 7). Tanaka follows Kakehi's assumption.

*Tsukumogami ki: Entertainment and Edification*

Without a doubt, the *Tsukumogami ki* author enjoyed writing the story, as we can see from the profusion of puns and parodies within the work. A prime example is the appellation of the protagonists, identified as *ki* or *utsuwa* 器. At the very beginning of *Tsukumogami ki*, the author defines *tsukumogami* as follows: “According to *Miscellaneous Records of Yin and Yang*, after a span of one hundred years, *utsuwamono* (*kibutsu*) 器物 receive souls and trick people. They are called *tsukumogami*” (MJMT 9: 417). Thus, *tsukumogami* are said to be the specters of *utsuwamono*: old containers, tools, and instruments. Yet in the very next paragraph, the author explains that the custom of “renewing the hearth fire, drawing fresh water, and renewing everything from clothing to furniture at the New Year is ... to avoid the calamity of *tsukumogami*” (MJMT 9: 418). The term *tsukumogami* is therefore apparently more inclusive than *utsuwamono*, embracing both clothing and furniture. Why, then, does the narrator use the word *ki* 器, as in “containers”?

I believe that it is for the sake of metaphorical edification through wordplay. According to one metaphor used in *Kōbō daishi gyōjō ekotoba*, the master transmits the esoteric teachings to his disciple just as one fills an earthenware pot 瓶 full of water and then transfers that water to another container, *without spilling a single drop*.<sup>11</sup> The earthenware pot is, of course, a container, or *ki* 器. Hence the narrator says, “*Tsukumogami* are by nature big containers [to hold great knowledge],... so the Shingon Esoteric teachings were transmitted to them completely” (彼等、生得の大器ともなれば、両部理智の法門、のこる所なくそ授られる; MJMT 9: 424). This quoted sentence also contains another pun: “*tsukumogami* are by nature *taiki* 大器 (big containers),” precisely because they are *utsuwa* or containers. *Taiki* 大器 signifies a person of great talent, and in this case, “talented containers that can hold a great amount of knowledge” (OKUDAIRA 1982, 185; MJMT 9: 424). The *kanji* compound 大器 further suggests another *kanji* compound, 大機. *Ki* 機, a homonym of *ki* 器, is an important Shingon term meaning “sentient being(s),” and although 大機 is pronounced *daiki* rather than *taiki*, it, too, signifies a large *ki*. The author may have wished to express through 大器/大機 that the sentient protagonists (機), who are themselves quite literally “containers” (器), have exceptional capacities for understanding and exercising the Buddhist teachings.

Various Japanese Buddhist sects profess the possibility of *sōmoku jōbutsu* 草木成仏 (the attainment of buddhahood by plants), which means that not only animate sentient beings (*ujō* 有情), but also nonsentient beings, represented by

11. The transmission of Shingon teachings from Huiguo 惠果 (746–806; the seventh patriarch in the lineage of Shingon esoteric Buddhism) to Kūkai is sometimes said to have resembled “[water] pouring into an earthenware pot” (KOMATSU 1982, 114).



FIGURE 2. Detail of a *hyakki yagyō zu*. Property of Tokyo National Museum. Courtesy of DNP ART Communications. Image: TNM Image Archives. Source: <http://TnmArchives.jp/>.

plants, can attain buddhahood.<sup>12</sup> This is related to *hongaku shisō* 本覚思想, or “original enlightenment thought,” a vital concept in the medieval period according to which both sentient and nonsentient beings contain buddhahood within them and can all attain enlightenment. The notion of *hongaku*, central to Tendai teachings and to the later sectarian developments of Kamakura Buddhism, is in fact influenced by the secret transmission of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism in which *hongaku* is said to be privately transmitted from master to disciple.<sup>13</sup> It should be noted, as Stone writes, that conceptions of Buddhahood for plants “originated not as responses to ‘nature,’ but in doctrinal debate over the implications of claims for universal Buddhahood, and developed as a specific example of a larger tendency” (STONE 1999, 30).<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Rambelli writes:

[I]n most premodern doctrinal tracts a term such as *sōmoku* usually did not refer literally to plants only but rather indicated the entire realm of the non-

12. For a discussion of enlightenment for plants and trees, see LAFLEUR 1990, and chapter one of RAMBELLI 2007.

13. See STONE 1999, especially chapters one and three. Also see KUSHIDA 1964, 720–31.

14. The question of “universal Buddhahood” has been an important issue in Japanese Buddhism, eventually encompassing the idea of the attainment of buddhahood by non-sentient beings. A major example of this debate is that between Saichō 最澄 (d. 822), the founder of the Tendai sect of Buddhism, and Tokuitsu 徳一, Saichō’s contemporary and a revered priest of the Hossō sect 法相宗. The former contended that every person can attain Buddhahood, whereas the latter argued that the attainment of Buddhahood depends upon the individual.





FIGURE 3. *Tsukumogami* eat human flesh. Detail of *Tsukumogami emaki* (Sōfukuji). Courtesy of Sōfukuji Temple in Gifu prefecture. Photograph by Kaneko Keizō.

sentients; the latter comprises inanimate objects of any kind, including human artifacts. This synonymy was indeed strengthened by esoteric ideas on the all-pervasiveness of the absolute body (Sk. *dharmakāya*, Jp. *hosshin*) of the Buddha Mahāvairocana (Jp. Dainichi)... Therefore, “plants” in the Buddhist theoretical vocabulary does not generally refer to nature alone, and doctrines on the possibility for plants to attain salvation, known as *sōmoku jōbutsu* (lit., “plants become buddhas”) . . . refer rather to the Buddhist philosophy of objects and the material world in general. (RAMBELLI 2007, 12)

That is, the term “nonsentients” (*hijō, mujō*) includes the “realm of objects” (*kikai* 器界), “territory” (*kokudo* 国土), and “plants” (*sōmoku* 草木), which are the most concrete and specific of all the nonsentients (RAMBELLI 2007, 12). The protagonists of *Tsukumogami ki* who are in the realm of objects, *kikai* 器界 or *kisekai* 器世界, are, according to Esoteric Buddhist teachings, rightfully capable of being awakened.<sup>15</sup> Kūkai (774–835) was the first in Japan to mention the possibility of the salvation of plants, and “on the basis of Kūkai’s groundbreaking conceptualization, the Shingon tradition developed a sophisticated materialist cosmology according to which . . . objects became the legitimate subject of philosophical speculations precisely because of their status as particular manifestations or embodiments of the Buddha-body” (RAMBELLI 2007, 19–20).

15. Furthermore, according to Buddhist cosmology, the natural world (*shizenkai* 自然界) is also called the material world or container world (*kisekai* or *kikai*), in accord with a view of the universe as a container. Thus, *ki* 器 encompasses not only the natural world, but also the environment in which we live. By casting “containers” as the story’s protagonists, the *Tsukumogami ki* author cleverly incorporates a Buddhist metaphor of the universe.



FIGURE 4. Shuten Dōji entertains his guests with human flesh. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC: Purchase—Friends of Asian Art, F1998.26.2 detail. Courtesy of Freer Gallery of Art Library.

Although the concept of nonsentients attaining enlightenment may have been familiar to Esoteric Buddhist practitioners, it was perhaps not so for most medieval people, even though their belief in the supernatural tended to be much stronger than that of those in later periods. Also, for many people outside of monastic institutions, tools and utensils were probably perceived as less sentient than plants. With the long-standing tradition of ancient Shinto's nature worship, it is conceivable that people outside of monastic institutions could easily accept the notion of universal Buddhahood in natural objects such as stones and mountains, where Shinto deities traditionally manifest.<sup>16</sup> Material objects are, in contrast, day-to-day implements which do not immediately inspire awesome feelings, let alone achieve enlightenment of their own accord. But, precisely because the idea of an object realizing Buddhahood is extraordinary, Shingon's teaching in the *Tsukumogami ki* scrolls is attractive and effective. Fortunately for their author(s), there was an existing belief in *tsukumogami*, and thus the message of *Tsukumogami ki* is that even lackluster material objects—or worse,

16. Shibusawa Tatsuhiko calls material objects *dai ni no shizen* 第二の自然, or Second Nature. He explains that as material civilization progresses, man becomes more skeptical and souls/spirits become separated from the materials in which they were believed to reside. With technological progress, more complex tools are produced and the souls/spirits find their homes in those artifacts. Shibusawa writes that man's attitude toward the tools resembles the relationship between man and nature, and tools become substitutes for nature. The producers of the objects are excessively fond of what they create, and the objects easily become a fetish. See SHIBUSAWA 1977, 89–92.

vengeful ones—can realize enlightenment in their very bodies by the power of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism.

The fact that *tsukumogami* are initially evil, and yet eventually able to attain Buddhahood, speaks all the more eloquently to the efficacy of the Shingon teachings. The narrator of *Tsukumogami ki* says that “while other sects advocate only *sōmoku jōbutsu*, the Shingon sect alone goes so far as to say *sōmoku hijō hosshin shugyō jōbutsu* 草木非情発心修行成仏 (plants and nonsentient beings become Buddhas by arousing the desire for enlightenment and performing ascetic and religious practices)” (MJMT 9: 425). These object-specters are considered demonic, and are thus doubly challenged—they suffer from both artificiality and malevolence—but they still attain Buddhahood, thanks to the Shingon teachings. Thus the message of the text is that if such trivial objects can achieve this ultimate state, then it is even easier for people like the viewer and/or reader to attain Buddhahood by means of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism.

There is yet another pun on the character *ki* 器. From the Muromachi period, several picture scrolls titled *Hyakki yagyō emaki* 百鬼夜行絵巻 (handscrolls of night processions of one hundred demons) were created, many of which are generally considered to be portrayals of a festival parade scene from *Tsukumogami ki*.<sup>17</sup> This *hyakki yagyō* (night procession of a hundred demons), too, could be a play on the character *ki* 器. The author of *Tsukumogami ki* was conscious of *hyakki yagyō* when he wrote the story. For example, in the Sōfukuji text, the narrator says, “I thought that *hyakki yagyō* and the like were just fictions made up by ancient people. How terrible to see one before my very eyes!” (OKUDAIRA 1982, 182). Although the preceding line does not appear in the Type B texts, it is clear that the author made use of Heian literary works such as *Ōkagami* 大鏡 (The great mirror, ca. 1085–1125) and *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 (Tales of times now past, ca. 1120) that describe *hyakki yagyō*.<sup>18</sup> Just as the Japanese *on* reading of the character *utsuwa* 器 is *ki*, the Japanese *on* reading of the character *oni* 鬼 (demon) is *ki*. In other words, *ki* 器 and *ki* 鬼 are homonyms. Thus, *hyakki yagyō* 百鬼夜行, “the night procession of one hundred demons,” could also be written or pronounced *hyakki yagyō* 百器夜行, “the night procession of one hundred tools.”

17. For a study of *Hyakki yagyō emaki*, see LILLEHOJ 1995.

18. The *tsukumogami*'s encounter with the Prince Regent on his way to the Imperial Palace refers to the story of Fujiwara no Morosuke 藤原師輔 (908–960) in *Ōkagami* (SNKBZ 34: 166–67; McCULLOUGH 1980, 136). Further, the *Sonshō darani* charm on the regent that protects him from the demons is described in *Konjaku* 14: 47 (“*Sonshō darani no genriki ni yorite oni no nan o no garuru koto*” 依尊勝陀羅尼驗力遁鬼難語), in SNKBZ 35: 508–12 and TYLER 1987, 237–39). KOMINE (2007, 12) asserts that the various *Hyakki yagyō emaki* are parodies of Heian *hyakki yagyō*, while Tanaka considers them to be just variant representations of Heian *hyakki yagyō* (TANAKA 1994b, 160–61).

The *Tsukumogami ki* illustrations are also parodic. For instance, some of the pictures in the Sōfukuji scrolls portray human tidbits—dismembered human flesh in a serving bowl, and a human thigh on a plate—in the banquet scene. The thigh is quite similar to the one that is often depicted in picture scrolls of the demon Shuten Dōji, the infamous chief of a band of *oni* that lived on Mt. Ōe.<sup>19</sup> In fact, I believe that parts of the *Tsukumogami ki* narrative (from the section in which the old tools become *tsukumogami*, through the later banquet scene) constitute a parody of Shuten Dōji and his cohorts. Indeed, both the time and place setting are the same as those in the *otogizōshi Shuten Dōji*: late tenth-century Japan, in the capital of Heian.

In *Shuten Dōji*, the *oni* have supernatural powers and can thus transform into anything that they want. They enjoy drinking and dancing, and Shuten Dōji boasts, “I abduct ladies of my liking from the capital to use and enjoy as I wish,” which includes eating their flesh and drinking their blood. He has a great palace in which all of his pleasures are realized. Shuten Dōji brags, “How could any heavenly guardians surpass this?” Similarly, the *Tsukumogami ki* narrator claims that:

*Tsukumogami* ranged in and out of the capital to avenge their grudges. As they took all kinds of humans and animals for food, people mourned terribly. But since specters are invisible, there was nothing that people could do but pray to the Buddhas and gods. Unlike the mortals who had cast them aside, the vengeful specters were having a great time celebrating and feasting—building a castle out of flesh and creating a blood pond, dancing, drinking, and merry-making. They even boasted that celestial pleasures could not surpass theirs.

(MJMT 9: 419)

While Shuten Dōji and his cohorts are *oni* with demonic appearances, feared by maidservants and the imperial authority alike, the *tsukumogami* look more weird than frightening. For although *tsukumogami* are also man-eating *oni*, they are the *oni* of tools and instruments, and thus lack the *oni*'s usual stature.

The parody includes their residence, too. The *tsukumogami*'s den is located behind Mt. Funaoka, a famous graveyard during the Heian period. One might therefore say that it is a convenient location for the *tsukumogami* who, after eating people, could easily dispose of the remains. But it is perhaps more likely that the *tsukumogami* selected Mt. Funaoka because of its proximity to the capital. The *tsukumogami* are said to have argued that if their home were “too far from human habitation, it would be inconvenient for obtaining food” (MJMT 9: 419). Mt. Funaoka is located northwest of the capital, and if one travels still farther

19. The *otogizōshi Shuten Dōji* constitutes one of Japan's most famous and popular medieval *oni* stories. For translations, see REIDER 2005 and KIMBROUGH 2007.



FIGURE 5. The *tsukumogami* worshipping the Great Shape-Shifting God. From *Tsukumogami emaki*, property of Kyoto University Library. Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

northwest, one reaches Mt. Ōe in Tango province, where Shuten Dōji is said to have lived. Shuten Dōji and his *oni* could of course fly through the air to get food from afar, but, sadly, the *tsukumogami* cannot. Thus, Mt. Funaoka represents a kind of compromise location, where the *tsukumogami*, like miniature *oni*, seem happy drinking and reciting poems.

But why does the author parody Shuten Dōji? It seems to me that he may have wished to draw attention to the fact that while Shuten Dōji and his cohorts were ultimately destroyed by the emperor's warriors, the *tsukumogami* were given a chance by the Shingon "divine boys" (*gohō dōji*) to lead lives as priests and attain Buddhahood.

Ironically, the *tsukumogami* are proud to be animate: after receiving souls, they consider themselves to be socially superior to plants and stones. Realizing their own failure to worship the creation god, the *tsukumogami* comment that they resemble "nonsentient beings like trees and rocks" (MJMT 9: 420). Furthermore, they opine that "Chinese poetry expresses one's heart. Without the talent for articulating the beauty of nature, we are no different from old tools without souls" (OKUDAIRA 1982, 182). Mimicking humans, the *tsukumogami* compose delightfully playful poems, one of which (in the *Sōfukuji* text) is a parody of a famous verse in *Kokin wakashū* 古今和歌集 (A collection of poems ancient and modern, ca. 905; poem 53) and *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語 (Tales of Ise, ca. late ninth century). The original *Kokinshū*/*Ise monogatari* poem reads:

Yononaka ni	If this were but a world
Taete sakura no	to which cherry blossoms
Nakariseba	were quite foreign,
Haru no kokoro wa	then perhaps in spring
Nodoka naramashi	our hearts would know peace. <sup>20</sup>

In contrast, a *tsukumogami* recites,

Yononaka ni	If this were but a world
Taete hito dani	to which humans
Nakariseba	were quite foreign,
Haru no kokoro wa	then perhaps in spring
Nodoke karashina	our hearts would know peace.

(OKUDAIRA 1982, 182)

The *Tsukumogami ki* author was obviously familiar with such famous works of Heian literature as *Ise monogatari*, *Ōkagami*, and *Konjaku monogatari shū*. He seems to have expected his readers to appreciate his humor as well, although of course those without the requisite knowledge of classical literature could still enjoy the story.

I believe that there may also be wordplay within the title, *Tsukumogami ki*. Tanaka considers it possible that the author(s) of *Tsukumogami ki* drew upon Chinese sources—Chinese *Zhiguai* 志怪 literature (Accounts of the strange) such as Gan Bao's 干宝 (fl. 317–322) *Sou shen ji* 搜神記 (In search of deities, ca. fourth to early fifth century), or Li Fang's 李昉 (925–996) *Taiping guang ji* 太平廣記 (Vast records of the Taiping era, 978)—for the idea of tool specters. For example, she points to the similarity between the quote from *Miscellaneous Records of Yin and Yang* at the opening of *Tsukumogami ki* and a story in volume twelve of *Sōshinki*: both works assert that things are formed through changes in the five *qi* 氣 of the celestial realm.<sup>21</sup> Tanaka suggests that the Chinese yin-yang concept may have been adapted and Japanized to allow for the invention of *tsukumogami* (TANAKA 1994a, 210–13; 1994b, 182–88). Considering the great influence of things Chinese in ancient and medieval Japan, it is certainly possible to imagine a Chinese origin for tool specters. After all, the text of *Tsukumogami ki* begins with a quote from the otherwise-unknown *Miscellaneous Records of Yin and Yang*, supposedly a work of Chinese classical literature. On the other hand, as no one is sure of the existence of *Miscellaneous Records of Yin and Yang*, it is equally pos-

20. Translation by Helen Craig McCULLOUGH (1968, 125).

21. For the original text of *Sou shen ji*, see GAN 1979, 146–48. For a Japanese translation, see GAN 1964, 232–35. A similar story of objects' transformations appears in an account of *yōkai* in volume six of *Sōshinki*. See GAN 1964, 105, and 1979, 67.

sible that the *Tsukumogami ki* author simply invented it in order to lend authenticity to pre-existing Japanese *tsukumogami* beliefs.

Because of the author's predilection for enjoying his writing, I believe that the title *Tsukumogami ki* 付喪神記 was in fact intended as a parody of the Chinese *Sou shen ji* 搜神記 (In search of deities).<sup>22</sup> In Japanese, *Sou shen ji* 搜神記 is pronounced *Sōshin ki*. Likewise, the Japanese *on* reading of *Tsukumogami ki* 付喪神記 is *Fusōshin ki*, which is homonymic with *fu Sōshin ki* 付搜神記, "addition to *Sōshin ki*." Moreover, the characters in *Fusōshin ki* mean something like "A Record (記) of Attaching to (付) and Parting with (喪) Deities (神)," which suggests the *tsukumogami*'s course of action—attaching themselves to their patron god—until they embrace the teachings of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism. To better understand this second meaning, one should recall that *tsukumogami* 付喪神 were created from the combination of two elements: the tools' own merit of existing more than one hundred years, and the external power of the yin-yang creation god. Although this god, given its name, must be deeply related to yin-yang concepts, it is important to note that it is worshipped as a Shinto *kami* 神 with the frivolous name of *Henge daimyōjin* 変化大明神, or "Great Shape-Shifting God." As one *tsukumogami* says, "Japan is a divine country where everyone believes in Shinto. While we have already received our forms from the creation god, we have not worshipped him, and this is as if we were nonsentient beings like trees and rocks. I propose that we make the creation god our patron and worship him" (MJMT 9: 420). Accordingly, they construct a portable shrine to the Great Shape-Shifting God and hold a Shinto religious festival by parading along First Avenue.

This Shinto deity, the Great Shape-Shifting God, could be parodic of the emerging custom of professionals worshipping founding deities of their profession. Regarding this phenomenon, Rambelli writes that since at least the late Muromachi period, merchants and a number of professional households and guilds began to write narratives concerning their ancestors and the origins of their crafts and trades in order to draw connections between certain deities and professions (RAMBELLI 2007, 175–76). For example, the merchants' protector deity is Ebisu 恵比寿, a god of wealth. As a guild has its own protector deity, the *tsukumogami* have their own guardian deity, and thus the Great Shape-Shifting God's power is attached (付) to the *tsukumogami*. Then, during the procession,

22. Concerning the characters 付喪神, the commentary *Reizei-ke ryū Ise shō* 冷泉家流伊勢抄 (Reizei School annotations to *The Tales of Ise*; ca. thirteenth century) explains that "[the woman who appears in the sixty-third story of *Ise monogatari*] is not exactly ninety-nine years old. However, she makes nocturnal strolls, peeks at Narihira, and creates wretched, painful misfortune 喪 [glossed *wazawai* (misfortune or calamity) in small *katakana* characters]" (KATAGIRI 1969, 358). TANAKA (1994b, 175) surmises that the characters 付喪神 (*tsukumogami*; lit. adding/joint mourning deities) was created from つくも髪 (*tsukumogami*; lit. hair of *tsukumo*) by applying phonetically equivalent characters that look monstrous.



FIGURE 6. Five illness deities appear in response to a diviner's prayer. Detail from *Fudō riyaku engi*. Property of Tokyo National Museum. Courtesy of DNP ART Communications. Image: TNM Image Archives Source: <http://TnmArchives.jp/>

the revelers meet the party of the Prince Regent and are dispersed by the *Sonshō darani*. Prompted by the Buddhist “divine boys,” they eventually part with or mourn (喪) their *kami* (神), hence the term “parting with *kami* (喪神).”

Finally, it should be noted that the lessons of *Tsukumogami ki* pertain to not only spiritual, but moral and financial issues as well. Interestingly, the narrator does not criticize the custom of throwing away old things and replacing them. The narrator explains that “this custom of renewing the hearth fire, drawing fresh water, and replacing everything from clothing to furniture at the New Year is thought to have started from the well-to-do’s proud extravagance,” because replacing old tools with new ones requires wealth. But the narrator observes that this is not in fact the case; the real reason is “to avoid the calamity of *tsukumogami*.” As HANADA (1978, 435–36) points out, the fact that tools and objects were casually thrown away indicates that replacements were rapidly produced, suggesting a significant development in productivity in the Muromachi period.<sup>23</sup> It may be wise to avoid using old tools and armor, because they can break easily or fail with disastrous consequences. Still, it is a little odd not to frown upon the act of discarding things that are still useful—otherwise, the custom would not have been considered to have “started from the well-to-do’s proud extravagance.”

The Sōfukuji variant contains an additional statement, to the effect that “if one puts away old things at the year-end and uses new things in the New Year, one will live for several thousand years without illness” (OKUDAIRA 1982, 181). In essence, the Sōfukuji scrolls support a kind of proto-consumer culture by encouraging people to perform (or have a [Shingon] priest perform) memorial services for their discarded goods. Indeed, Rambelli has connected *Tsukumogami ki* with

23. HANADA (1978, 434) posits that the view of old tools as *oni* reflects a Muromachi-like materialistic interpretation of *hyakki yagyō*.



a particular kind of *kuyō* 供養, or memorial service. According to Rambelli, *Tsukumogami ki* “tries to reduce the effects of commodification by introducing a ritual dimension in the disposal of *used, exhausted objects*. De-commodification of objects was carried out through the development of new religious services.... In addition, by introducing a new ritual dimension, Buddhist institutions were able to expand their presence in society at the level of micropractices of consumption (and disposal) of objects” (RAMBELLI 2007, 246). By performing the memorial service, a priest would be able to exert influence on the client(s). For example, the priest bestows material benefits, such as peace in the household, to the clients. Equally importantly, a priest could earn income from his services. I imagine that financial factors as well as religious motivations may have been a great incentive for the creation of the text.

#### *A Thought on the Appellation “Tsukumogami”*

I have earlier discussed the author’s playfulness in creating the text of *Tsukumogami ki*. But an explanation of the appellation *tsukumogami* and how it came to be used for vengeful specters of material objects may be required. *Tsukumogami* is written 付喪神 (lit. “joined mourning deity”), but it is generally believed that these characters are a phonetic equivalent of the syllabic *tsukumogami* つくもがみ (see TANAKA 1994a, 205). Usually, when Chinese characters are applied to the syllabic *tsukumogami*, the characters 九十九髮 (hair of ninety-nine [years of age]) are employed. Written this way, the term signifies the hair of a ninety-nine-year-old person, and is deeply associated with the following poem in the sixty-third episode of *Ise monogatari* (SNKBZ 12: 164–66):

Momotose ni	The lady with thinning hair —
Hitotose taranu	But a year short
<i>Tsukumogami</i>	Of a hundred —
Ware wo kourashi	Must be longing for me,
Omokage ni miyu	For I seem to see her face.

(translation by McCULLOUGH 1968, 110; italics by author)

*Ise monogatari* includes the poem in an account about a love affair between a man (Narihira) and an old woman. The narrator does not specify that the woman is old, but she is known to be so from the man’s reference to her hair in the poem. Her hair is described as *momotose ni hitotose taranu tsukumogami* (*tsukumogami* [hair of ninety-nine], but a year short of a hundred). The word *tsukumo* does not necessarily mean “ninety-nine” years old; rather, it can signify “many” years. *Tsukumo* is said to derive from the resemblance between the woman’s white hair and a plant called *tsukumo*, an old name for *futoi* (*Sirpus tabernaemontani*), whose inflorescence resembles an old person’s white hair. It

also plays on the character *momo* 百 (one hundred). One hundred minus one equals ninety-nine, and minus its first, top stroke (the character for “one” 一), the character for one hundred 百 becomes “white” 白, signifying white hair. In both cases, the verse refers to an old person—that is, a person of ninety-nine years of age, and/or with white hair. It is generally considered that the appellation *tsukumogami* for the tool specters came from an image conjured up from 九十九髪. Indeed, part of the preceding poem is used in an explanation of the Sweeping Soot event that appears in the opening section of *Tsukumogami ki*: “*kore [Susuharai] sunawachi ‘momotose ni hitotose taranu tsukumogami’ no sainan ni awaji to nari* これ則、百年に一とせたらぬ付喪神の災難にあわじとなり” (Sweeping Soot is carried out so as not to meet with misfortune caused by *tsukumogami* tool specters but a year short of a hundred) (MJMT 9: 417).

Komatsu Kazuhiko writes that the term *tsukumogami* 九十九髪 signifies longevity (as explained above), and he furthermore suggests that it refers to someone or something that has acquired special powers as a result of its extreme longevity. He explains that the syllabic *tsukumogami* can also mean 九十九神 (ninety-nine deities; note: *kami* 髪, hair, and *kami* 神, deity, are homonyms), signifying spirits that are impregnated in extraordinarily long-lived persons or objects. When the spirit does something mysterious, it becomes a specter of an old person or object (KOMATSU 1994, 330).

Stories about aged beings turning demonic are contained in various narratives. Notably, *Konjaku monogatari shū* contains an account of a woman who becomes extremely old and transforms into an *oni*.<sup>24</sup> At the end of the story, the narrator explains that “when parents become extremely old they always turn into *oni* and try to eat even their own children” (translation here by URY 1979, 165). Demonic old animals are described in the *otogizōshi Tamamo no mae* 玉藻の前 (Lady Tamamo) and the Noh play *Sesshōseki* 殺生石 (Killing stone), in which an extraordinarily old fox enchants a retired emperor.<sup>25</sup> KOMATSU (1994, 330) suggests that in addition to the *tsukumogami* of humans and animals, people in pre-modern times probably also believed in the *tsukumogami* of tools and

24. *Konjaku monogatari shū* 27: 23, “Ryōshi no haha oni to narite ko wo kurawamu to suru koto” (How the hunters’ mother became an *oni* and tried to devour her children), in SNKBZ 38: 76–78, and URY 1979, 163–65.

25. One day a mysterious young woman of peerless beauty and intelligence appears in the palace of retired Emperor Toba (1103–1156). The retired emperor falls in love with the woman, who is named Tamamo no mae, and he becomes seriously ill. A diviner attributes the retired emperor’s illness to the mysterious woman, whose real identity is an eight-hundred-year-old fox with two tails. The fox had earlier disturbed India as the malicious consort Huayang, who asked for the head of the king; in China, the fox had become the wicked consort Taji. In the end, Tamamo no mae was killed and turned into a stone. The stone then killed the living creatures that came near it by emitting a toxic gas from within.



FIGURE 7. The *tsukumogami* take the tonsure. From *Tsukumogami emaki*, property of Kyoto University Library. Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

utensils. I concur with Komatsu's suggestion, although unfortunately Komatsu does not provide any concrete examples of the old animals and objects to which he refers being called *tsukumogami*.

Tanaka on the other hand contends that there is a major difference between the living creatures called *tsukumogami* and the *tsukumogami* of nonsentient beings. She suggests that some medieval *Ise monogatari* commentaries may help to fill in the gap between the two. For example, according to the *Reizei-ke ryū Ise shō* (*Ise* episode 63), wolves, foxes, and *tanuki* that live for more than one hundred years have both the power to change their shapes and the will to harm humans; those transformed animals are called *tsukumogami*. Tanaka writes that calling an aging, shape-shifting animal a *tsukumogami* is just one step away from calling the shape-shifting specters of nonsentient beings *tsukumogami* (TANAKA 1994a, 206–8).

That one step between the *tsukumogami* of aging demonic animals and *tsukumogami* tool specters seems to be partially bridged by an illustration in *Fudō riyaku engi* 不動利益縁起 (The benevolence of Fudō Myōō; ca. fourteenth century).<sup>26</sup> In an illustration portraying a scene of praying by a yin-yang diviner or practitio-

26. The *Fudō riyaku engi* story concerns a monk who sacrifices his life in order to save his master. A revered monk is afflicted by a serious illness, whereupon a diviner reveals that the monk will be saved if someone takes his place in death. An obscure monk, who regularly prays to Fudō, volunteers. Fudō is so moved by the obscure monk's sincerity and physical suffering that he deigns to save both men.

ner of *onmyōdō* 陰陽道 (the way of yin and yang),<sup>27</sup> five unidentifiable creatures representing illness deities are depicted. Among the five, two look like some kind of containers: one is a furry basin with handles (*tsuno-darai* 角盥), and another one looks like a large furry bowl. They resemble containers made of animals. Indeed, all five deities have animal features—fur and paws. Above, I wrote “partially” because these creatures are considered to be deities of illness rather than spirits of tools. It could be the case that these illness deities possessed the tools (in the sense of “spirit possession,” rather than “ownership”), or were held in the containers, thus becoming vengeful tool spirits.

Peter Knecht, Hasegawa Masao, Minobe Shigekatsu, and Tsujimoto Hiroshige report an interesting contagious disease called *denshibyō* 伝尸病 (illness caused by *denshi*), in which a person is emaciated by the time of death (KNECHT et al. 2008, 40–95). The modern diagnosis of this illness is pulmonary tuberculosis, although this interpretation is open to debate. Fascinatingly, this *denshi* was considered to be both a *mushi* 虫 (worm) and an *oni* from the ancient through early modern periods, and consequently a remedy was sought from both medicine and religion. From the viewpoint of religious treatments, an esoteric Buddhist *denshibyō* healing ritual is particularly interesting. According to an entry titled *Ji denshibyō hiden* 治伝屍病秘伝 (Secret transmissions for healing *denshibyō*) in the *Sho kaji hihō* 諸加持秘法 (Various secret formulas of incantation), the ritual includes leaving a picture of a *denshi-oni* underneath the victim’s bed for three days, during which time a small amount of food is set aside from the patient’s meals. After the ritual prayer is over, the priest strokes the victim’s body with the picture to have the *oni* transfer to the picture, and further, he places the food set aside from each meal into designated utensils (*ki* 器). The priest then recites directly to the utensils, “attached spirits, eat this and leave this place” (KNECHT et al. 2008, 60). That night, the picture is buried together with the food in the utensils.

What is noteworthy about the ritual is that the priest speaks directly to the utensil as if it were a living thing. Presumably the *oni* is going to eat this meal, but [part of] the illness is already contained in the utensil through the victim’s contaminated food. Practically speaking, the illness is already inside the utensil or inherently part of the utensil. The illness deities that look like containers portrayed in the illustration in *Fudō riyaku engi* may have reflected that concept. That is, an *oni* or illness deity exists together with a utensil, and the utensil that

27. *Onmyōdō* is an eclectic practice whose roots are found in the theory of the cosmic duality of yin and yang and the five Daoist elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth). With the theory of yin and yang and the five elements that were formed in ancient China at its core, *onmyōdō* adapted elements from the Buddhist astrology of the *Xiuyaojing* 宿曜經 (Jp. *Sukuyōkyō*) and indigenous Japanese *kami* worship.

was earlier associated with the *oni* becomes an *oni* itself. The *oni*-utensil that harms humans could be a precursor of *tsukumogami*. In any case, I assume Esoteric Buddhist monks as well as yin-yang diviners played a role in the spread of, if not the birth of, *tsukumogami*, primarily through the use of objects in various rituals.

In fact, according to Tō Teikan 藤貞幹 (1732–1797), the author of *Kōko shōroku* 好古小録 (A minor record of a predilection for things old), the creatures portrayed in the *Fudō riyaku engi* illustration are *tsukumogami*. Quoting a line from *Sankaiki* 山槐記, the diary of Fujiwara no Tadachika 藤原忠親 (1131–1195), concerning a high Buddhist priest's ritual or magic for transferring a possessing evil spirit into a female medium and then depositing it into a *thing*, Teikan comments that Buddhist priests and yin-yang diviners are good at ritual and magical techniques (quoted in TAKASAKI 1980, 52). It is unclear what this “thing” was. It could have been a *hitogata* 人形 (paper or straw representation of a human), or some other object. But the idea of objects into which evil spirits and/or defilements are transferred reminds me of a purification ceremony in which a jar is used. According to *Engishiki* 延喜式 (The Engi codes, tenth century), the Ōharae 大祓 (Great purification ceremony) was held twice a year in the Imperial Palace when the emperor, empress, and crown prince transferred their impurities, as well as the accumulated impurities of the nation, into five bamboo scales, swords, and a pot into which they breathed (see KT 26: 26–28, and BOCK 1970, 83–85). These *agamono* 贖物, things into which pollution, defilement, and crimes are transferred for a purification ceremony, were then to be thrown away in the river or on the river banks. The discarded *agamono*—paper dolls, jars, and whatever was used for the purification ceremony—were to be abandoned with people's breath and impurities. These abandoned objects may have been thought to contain evil spirits and to act vengefully. Again, tools and utensils used in rituals seem to have had a deep relationship with the formation of *tsukumogami* beliefs.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this article, animate utensils are not unique to the medieval period. A utensil-transformation had already appeared in *Konjaku monogatari shū*, in which a copper decanter changed into a three-foot-tall man. According to a yin-yang diviner, this animate copper decanter was a harmless spirit (*mono no ke* 物の怪). The narrator concludes the story by stating that “even from this, people come to know that the spirit of an object manifests itself through a human shape.”<sup>28</sup> The comment indicates that the idea that objects are endowed with their own spirits existed by the end of the Heian

28. *Konjaku monogatari shū* 27: 6, “Higashi Sanjō no akagane no tama hito no katachi to narite horiidasaru koto (How the spirit of red copper on East Third Avenue took human form and was excavated),” in SNKBZ 38: 33–35.

period. It is interesting that this spirit of an object is simultaneously considered a *harmless* spirit, and appears not as an animate decanter but as a human.

Stories of animate objects that hurt humans also exist. For instance, the same collection contains a tale about a small oil pot that kills a sick girl. In this story, however, the offending spirit is said to have possessed an oil pot, rather than to have itself been the innate spirit of the pot (SNKBZ 38: 64–66). Again, these harmful utensils are not old material objects that receive souls and transform into vengeful spirits, but rather evil spirits or *oni* that take control of the objects. One can assume from these stories that by the end of the Heian period there was a belief that when an object does not harm people, the spirit of the object may manifest as a human being, but when it does harm people, the appearance of the object remains unchanged while the harm is believed to have been caused by an *oni* or evil spirit possessing the object. When we turn to the Muromachi-period *Tsukumogami ki* and look at the illustration of Holy Ichiren, he does look like a human, and he transforms without the help of the creation god. On the other hand, the other *tsukumogami* look like specters of tools or simply weird creatures. Apparently, Holy Ichiren's case represents a spirit-manifestation in human form.

Interestingly, the idea that inanimate objects can be possessed by evil spirits or *oni* rather than possessing their own intrinsic spirits is expressed in *Tsukumogami ki* as well, but, importantly, the narrator condemns this view as an explanation by the preachers of exoteric Buddhism. The narrator explains, “Scholars of the exoteric Buddhist schools say that according to the *Agongyō*, *oni* and deities reside on the streets and in the houses, filling every inch of space. The exoteric Buddhists believe that the transformation of old tools into specters is due to the deities and *oni* possessing them. They ask, ‘how could inanimate objects have souls?’” (MJMT 9: 425). Although this disagreement reflects the religious tone of the late tenth century, the differences between the Esoteric and Exoteric Buddhist schools of the Muromachi period were still distinct, and those schools maintained a fierce rivalry for predominance. So, the disagreement can also be interpreted as an aspect of an ongoing political and economic competition among the various schools of Buddhism during the Muromachi period. Indeed, Keller Kimbrough writes that “it is important to keep in mind that competition among temples and sects tended to be fierce, and that doctrinal and institutional rivalries were often played out in the realm of seemingly innocuous tales” (KIMBROUGH 2008, 24).

Perhaps the notion of demons and evil spirits possessing objects was still quite popular, while a belief in material objects receiving souls to do harm was simultaneously spreading. Buddhist priests and yin-yang diviners seem to have been at the center of *tsukumogami* thought, and, as we have seen, the author of *Tsukumogami ki* takes advantage of pre-existing *tsukumogami* beliefs in order

to emphasize the universal presence of souls in vegetation, tools, and other objects. Ironically, *Tsukumogami ki* then itself became a source for the definition of *tsukumogami*. According to the transcription of a *kyōka awase* 狂歌合 (comic *tanka* contest) held in the first month of 1508, a poet composed a *kyōka* about old clothes that did not transform into new ones on New Year's Eve. The judge is said to have commented that "extremely old objects receive souls and turn into a specters.... Lord Fujiwara no Saneyori [himself] met various specters on his way to the Imperial Palace" (HANAWA 1986, 615). As we can see from the judge's apparent allusion to *Tsukumogami ki* in his explanation of *tsukumogami*, popular belief in tool specters both inspired, and was itself later shaped by, *Tsukumogami ki*.

### Conclusion

As I have discussed in the body of this article, *Tsukumogami ki* is full of amusing wordplays and parodies, many of which are intertwined with Shingon Esoteric teachings. While entertainment plays an important role in the text, *Tsukumogami ki*'s principal purpose may have been to exert religious influence on a broad audience outside of monastic institutions. Highly sophisticated Shingon Buddhist materialist cosmology may have been too complex for ordinary people, but through the vernacular *Tsukumogami ki*, which drew upon existing *tsukumogami* beliefs, the Shingon teachings could have been disseminated. Educated audiences would have understood the story's parodies and wordplays, and although less educated readers might have missed most of these, they would still have been exposed to the Esoteric teachings through the vernacular story with its many illustrations. *Tsukumogami ki* also encourages people to sponsor memorial services for their abandoned objects, lest the vengeful spirits harm their former owners. And through the act of performing ceremonies of propitiation, Shingon priests could influence the daily lives of medieval people. While those who requested services would receive material benefits, such as peace of mind, priests who performed the services would also benefit from material compensation. Thus, *Tsukumogami ki* seems to have played important roles, both religious and financial, in wider Muromachi society.

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