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Superstitions, magic and mantic practices in the Heian period - part one

Analecta Nipponica 1, 139-202

2011

REPRINTED WORKS OF POLISH JAPANOLOGISTS

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CONTENTS

The bibliographic data of all primary sources are given in the Bibliography. In quotations within the text in case of diaries and chronicles only the dates of entries are given. In case of tales in such collections as the *Reiiki* or *Konjaku monogatari*, the number of the scroll is given in Roman numerals followed by the number of the tale in Arabic numerals. It follows the custom prevailing in Japanese editions.

The names of the governmental organs are written with capital letters, whereas the titles of officials – with small letters. But whenever a title forms the second component of a cognomen (e.g. Sei Shōnagon, Izumi Shikibu), it is written with a capital letter.

If not stated otherwise, all translations within the text are by the present author.

Jolanta Tubielewicz

I. INTRODUCTION

The epoch known in the Japanese history as the Heian period lasted about four centuries. There is no agreement among the historians at which dates exactly the period began and ended, and it seems that there is no hope of any agreement to be ever reached. For the beginning of the epoch the years 782, 784, 794 are often suggested, and for the ending 1167, 1185, 1191, 1192 and some others.

Any discussion of the periodization problem is beyond the scope of this work. We shall not deal with great political events nor with the economic conditions of the period, at least not extensively. It will be enough for our purpose to deal with those aspects only which shaped the vast body of superstitions and helped to form manifold magic and mantic practices. In this meaning, the present work must become, to some extent, a study in syncretism, because all the religious and semi-religious beliefs from abroad reaching the archipelago contributed greatly to enriching old native superstitions and magic practices, or to forming the new ones.

Every student of the Heian history is taught how great a role played many kinds of superstitions in everyday life of the Japanese people. All the standard books on history deal with the topic by giving many examples of superstitious fears and taboos which ruled the society and put constant restrictions on every person's behaviour. Especially impressive is the excellent study of Ivan Morris in his *World of the Shining Prince*. In two chapters (*Religions* and *Superstitions*) he gives such a convincing picture of everyday horrors ensuing from the presence of demons, possessive spirits and vengeful ghosts, that while reading it one begins to wonder how it was possible for anybody to survice in one's right mind. After some consideration, grave doubts begin to sprout: perhaps those beliefs were not so deep, after all? Perhaps all those frightful, hair-raising stories served the same purpose for the Heian people as in our times serve various novels and films labelled as "horror" or "suspence"?

The Heian literature is full of super-natural events and apparitions. It is quite easy to form a comparatively clear opinion on the imagery, pantheon, and practices.

But the main question remains: how far the belief in super-natural powers penetrated into people's mental processes, and to what extent it monitored people's behaviour? The present study will be devoted to an attempt at answering these questions.

1. The primary sources

When beginning this work and having the questions in mind, the present author wanted to limit the scope of research to diaries of the period and historical novels only, in order to get the most reliable evidence, not coloured with the individual fantasy of any fiction-writer.

At first, we selected five representative diaries of ladies[1] and one of a gentleman[2] and besides, two historical novels: the *Ōkagami* and *Eiga monogatari*.

After some very cursory reading it soon appeared that the historical novels do not differ much from pure fiction in dealing with such fashionable topics as demons and possessions by evil spirits. The diaries, on the other hand, are strikingly laconic in such matters. So much so that there does not appear in all six diaries even one small demon, not even a dwarf.[3] This is especially interesting in case of the *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, as lady Murasaki was the authoress of the novel *Genji monogatari* on which Ivan Morris based his description of all the horrors in the *World of the Shining Prince*.

The lack of devils in the six diaries does credit to the authors' truthfulness but, at the same time it does not mean that the authors did not believe in devils. They did, in fact, believe. It is evident from many remarks scattered all over the texts. They believed in, and were afraid of, devils even if they actually did not meet any. In order to understand what they were afraid of, one must look into the fiction of the time. Reading the diaries only, one may have some glimpses of the world of superstition, but vivid picturesque descriptions of miracles and super-natural apparitions may be found, almost exclusively, in the works of literary fiction. The materials are plentiful to such an extent that the only trouble is not in finding but rather in selecting the most proper sources.

For our purpose the most important ones are two collections of legends, opening and closing the Heian period, namely the *Reiiki* and the *Konjaku monogatari shū*.

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[1] *Kagerō nikki* by Michitsuna's mother, *Makura no sōshi* by Sei Shōnagon, *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* by lady Murasaki, *Izumi Shikibu nikki* by Izumi Shikibu and *Sarashina nikki* by Sugawara Takasue's daughter.

[2] *Midō kampaku ki* by Fujiwara Michinaga.

[3] The authors did not meet any. Some of the authors heard them or were informed about their appearance, which will be explained later on.

The *Reiiki* (full title: *Nihonkoku gempō zen'aku reiiki*) consists of 116 stories collected and written down by a monk of the Yakushiji temple, Keikai (Kyōkai). Little is known about the author. From one of the stories (III,38) in the *Reiiki* it appears that, before entering the service in the Yakushiji, he had been married and had had children. From other stories it seems that for some time he had led half-secular and half-monkish life. He collected his stories for many years and, finally wrote them down about 823. He was apparently a man with a mission because his collection has a very strong moralistic flavour. The *Reiiki* became the first native collection of Buddhist stories, although the influence of Chinese sources is quite pronounced in the text. The stories are arranged in roughly chronological order. The first volume contains 35 stories describing various events from the legendary Emperor Yūryaku[4] up to 727. The 42 stories of the second volume are located in time between 729 and 763. The last volume begins with a story belonging to the years of Shōtoku tennō's reign (764–770) and ends with a story belonging to the reign of Saga tennō (809–823). There are 39 stories in the third volume.

As is evident from the dates, the majority of the stories concerns the pre-Nara and Nara periods. Only a very small portion of them belongs to the Heian period. This facts does not exclude the collection as a whole from our examination for two reasons. Primo – the author put the final touches to the *Reiiki* probably in the third decade of the 9th century, i.e. in the formative years of the Heian period. Secundo – the ideas, legends, convictions expounded by him did not lose their actuality up to the end of the Heian period, and even much later. This is quite apparent from the Heian literature, and especially from the *Konjaku monogatari* and other similar collections.

The main motif of almost all the stories may be expressed as *zen'in – zenka* and *akuin – akka*, i.e. "good actions lead to good rewards" and "sowing evil leads to reaping evil". This was the most popular formulation of the complicated Buddhist law of causation, and Keikai was not very subtle in his didactics. He expounded the idea in the crudest fashion, giving many examples of terrible suffering and most cruel death as a result of bad deeds, and on the other hand, of mundane happiness and prosperity gained by virtuous people. But, certainly, this kind of moralization was much more easily accepted than sermonizing on abstract Buddhist principles. Keikai was the first, but not the only one, to use such a method of simple story-writing for didactic purposes. The moral stories of evil punished and virtue rewarded have become one of the most favoured instruments of Buddhist preaching. Even now there appear in Japan various publications (issued by Buddhist organizations and temples) of the character very similar to the *Reiiki* stories. Some of them are in the form of comics and can be perused even by children and illiterate people.

[4] According to the traditional chronology he reigned from 457 to 479.

To Keikai belongs the honour of pioneering. His was a great work, written earnestly and not without a literary ambition. But for our purpose Keikai's preaching zeal, or literary merits of his work, are of the least interest. The *Reiiki*, for us, is very important in these fragments which reflect superstitions of the period, not necessarily connected with any form of cult or religion, and also customs and beliefs being by-products of various religions. Even at this early stage of the development of syncretism there are in the *Reiiki* some elements of several religious or semi-religious systems, with the obvious predominance of Buddhism. Keikai was a fervent Buddhist, and even when telling the stories taken straight from the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*[5] or from the Taoist tradition, he felt obliged (consciously or unconsciously) to dress them up in Buddhist terminology. Hence, almost all his stories – even those of non-Buddhist substance – he finished up with a moral from a sutra.

As it was stated above, the *Reiiki* was written in the initial decades of the Heian epoch, and chronologically we will begin our investigation from there. We will finish it at the *Konjaku monogatari* which appeared about 300 years later, when the Heian society had already passed the peak of its prosperity and its culture was on the wane.

The *Konjaku monogatari* consisted of 31 scrolls, but three of them have been lost (VIII, XVIII, XXI). In its present form there are more than 1000 legends extant. The authorship is much discussed and no reasonable conclusion is in sight. As for the date there is no agreement, either, but it may be safely assumed that the work was finished between the years 1110 and 1130. It is the greatest collection of legends in Japan. All the stories are arranged in three big groups forming the geographic division, and within the groups they are further divided thematically.

The scrolls I–V describe the life of Shaka and his disciples, various events demonstrating the spiritual power of Buddhism and exploits of many prominent monks in India. The climate of the stories is purely religious.

The scrolls VI–IX may be classified as Buddhist legends of China, but here are some stories of a strong Confucian coloration (e.g. scroll IX, devoted to the discharge of filial duties). The scroll X groups anecdotes on various persons in China not connected with any religious system (or, at least, not directly).

Prom the scroll XI begins the Japanese part of the collection. It is also divided into the Buddhist stories (up to XX) and the lay stories (XXII–XXXI), and further sub-divided thematically. Inside the thematic groups there is evident another systematic division into: historical, apologetic and moralizing stories.

For an average Japanese in the 12th century India, China and Japan formed the whole world. A small educated elite or those few who travelled abroad heard

[5] The *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* are sacred books compiled in 712 and 720 respectively. They relate myths, legends and semi-historical accounts based on oral tradition, and centered around the imperial court. Shinto theology has developed largely through the interpretation of their mythology.

about Persia and perhaps some other countries on the silk road, but the countries were mysterious and so far away as not to be of the slightest concern for them. Thus, from the geographical point of view, the *Konjaku monogatari* had the ambition to collect the stories from the three countries forming the Japanese universe: India – the birth-place of Shaka and other Buddhist patriarchs; China – the great mentor in all kinds of arts; and Japan – the centre of the Japanese cosmos.

From the social point of view the *Konjaku monogatari* is remarkable in its wide range of presented dramatis personae. There are people from every strata of society: persons of royal blood, aristocrats, courtiers, officials from the capital and from provinces, soldiers, physicians, learned astrologers, fishermen, carpenters, beggars, monks and nuns, courtesans and many many others. Side by side with them there appear innumerable strange apparitions, ghosts and devils, and animals endowed with super-natural powers.

The materials for the stories were obtained partly from the oral tradition, but mostly they were drawn from earlier collections and Buddhist scriptures. There are, for instance, over 70 stories taken from the *Reiiki*. Some of the non-religious stories come from the collections compiled by Miyoshi Kiyotsura and Ki no Haseo.

The *Konjaku monogatari* collection, from the moment of its appearance up to the modern times, has exerted a strong influence on many writers and playwrights. Many stories have been utilized as the themes of novels, short stories and theatrical plays. For our purpose, it is indispensable as a rich source of descriptions concerning superstitions of the Heian period. The fact that the descriptions are not limited to the upper classes only is of special value, as most of the Heian literature (romantic and historical novels, diaries, etc.) was created by representatives of aristocracy and tended to be rather limited in its scope, clinging to the world and affairs of the aristocrats. In this respect the *Konjaku monogatari* is similar to the *Reiiki*. It may be very interesting to compare the same stories in both collections. It becomes evident then that the main thread of the stories has been left unchanged (in most cases even the proper names remained the same) but the economic conditions and institutions have changed markedly during those 300 years[6].

Both collections, invaluable as sources of our knowledge of superstition and magic, have the same disadvantage; they show the world as a place where miracles happen all the time, where every mountain and lake is inhabited by super-natural creatures ready to intervene into people's affairs at a moment's notice, and where live crowds of holy men "stopping the birds in flight with their powerful spells".

The intentions of the authors may be summarized as preaching and moralizing in the *Reiiki*, and entertaining in the *Konjaku monogatari*. There were no such intentions in diaries of the period.

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[6] For the institutional changes from the *Reiiki* up to the *Konjaku monogatari* period, see *Nihon reiiki* 1976.

The authors of the diaries described the actual world and their own lives in a more matter-of-fact way, without escaping into the world of pure fantasy. Even romantic ladies indulging in day-dreaming kept themselves within the limits of probability. Because of that common feature of the diaries we would like to place them on the opposite pole from the tendentiously written collections devoted only to miracles, strange creatures and extraordinary events.

The diaries chosen for our purpose, from the chronological point of view, fall between the *Reiiki* and the *Konjaku monogatari*. The earliest of them, *Kagerō nikki*, written by a lady known as Michitsuna's mother, is also the earliest of existing diaries of ladies in Japan.

The authoress was a daughter of Fujiwara Tomomasa. She was born possibly in 936 and died probably in 995. Her father, although a Fujiwara, belonged to the not highly respected class of provincial governors, and thus he was quite satisfied when, in 954, Fujiwara Kaneie of the most powerful Hokke branch of the clan, began to court his daughter. After a very short period of courtship the girl was given to Kaneie as his secondary wife. In the next year she gave birth to her only child, the boy Michitsuna. As Kaneie was a person of a very capricious and amorous disposition, the lady suffered long periods of loneliness and most bitter jealousy. In her diary she recorded mostly facts and emotions connected with her unhappy marriage. The first scroll of the diary covers the years 954–966. It was written in retrospect at the time when the authoress had already been embittered by Kaneie's coldness. The next scroll covers the period from 969 to 971 and, judging by the narrative, it was written currently, though not as a day by day record of events, but as reflections and descriptions jotted down from time to time. The last scroll covers also a three years period and ends rather abruptly in 974.

Next of the diaries is the famous *Makura no sōshi* – a splendid collection of various notes and essays written by the lady known as Sei Shōnagon, a lady-in-attendance who served at the court of Empress Sadako (Teishi)[7]. Sei Shōnagon was a daughter of Kiyohara Motosuke, a renowned poet. Many members of the Kiyohara family were well known for their literary achievements, and Sei Shōnagon was perhaps the most brilliantly gifted of the talented family. Unluckily, many basic facts of her life, not covered by the time-span of the diary, are still obscure and are much discussed in the scholarly world. The diary itself was written during the authoress's period of service at the court, but it is not known exactly when, although there exist many theories on the point. Anyhow, the entries concerning life at the court, though not recorded in any chronological order, and mostly in retrospect, describe various events between 986 and 1000.

[7] There is no agreement among the Japonologists how to pronounce many names – mostly female ones. In order to satisfy both parties to the discussion, we shall give two forms of disputable names, the Japanese, and the Sino-Japanese ones.

The *Izumi Shikibu nikki* is the diary of another talented lady born into another famous family of literati, the Ōe. The lady's father, Masamune, was once employed in the Ministry of Ceremonies (Shikibushō), and her first husband (Tachibana Michisada) was the governor of the Izumi province – hence her cognomen, Izumi Shikibu. She was a renowned beauty, and was known as a very warm-hearted lady. Her love-affairs were a common topic of conversation in the aristocratic society of Heian kyō. So much so, that she was even called *ukareme* – a floating woman. The *Izumi Shikibu nikki* is the chronicle of love between the authoress and Atsumichi shinnō during ten months of 1004. Some modern scholars[8] express doubts concerning the authenticity of the diary. According to their theory the diary was not written by the heroine herself, but by somebody else, somebody who used poems exchanged between the lady and her lever, and the lady's notes and correspondence. For our purpose, the diary is a document of the epoch, regardless of who was its author. From the point of view of superstition and magic it is rather futile and colourless, but that feature in itself forms a valuable negative evidence, and besides, it may be treated as evidence contradictory to other historical sources[9] on one interesting point, namely the superstitious fear displayed by Atsumichi shinnō of evil spirits. The prince of the diary looks like a person afraid only of his powerful relatives, but not of any super-natural powers.

The diary of Murasaki Shikibu is the shortest one, and it describes the events at the court of Empress Akiko (Shōshi) from 1008 to 1010. It is supposed to be written one or two years later than the recorded events, but it creates a most vivid picture of life at the court just at the time when the Empress gave birth to her two sons. Thanks to that, the diary contains invaluable evidence of magic practices in such important moments as the confinement of the Empress. Besides, the personality of lady Murasaki emerging from her diary is very interesting to us because she was greatly influenced by Buddhist thought and was rather inclined to scorn and ridicule some native religious customs. Nevertheless, she was not free from superstitions originating in the primitive Shintoist tradition. She was perhaps the most inteligent among her literary lady-rivals, she had strongly developed powers of observation and of description, and her erudition was unrivalled in that small but important circle of ladies-in-attendance. Due to that, her works give the most reliable picture of the Heian society, 'but the picture is limited to the class which the authoress knew best, i.e., to the aristocracy.

Lady Murasaki was born into a minor branch of the Fujiwara family. Her father, Tametoki, served for long periods as a provincial governor, but he did not neglect his scholarly pursuits, either. He was determined to give a good education to his son, but it transpired that his daughter who assisted at the lessons, was much

[8] Cranston 1969 and *Heian chō bungaku jiten* 1972: 265–6.

[9] *Eiga monogatari* 1964: 113.

more talented, and learned faster than the son. It was a cause for regret, as the girls indulging in learning were frowned upon. The daughter, in her later years, was forced to hide from the world the knowledge gained in her childhood. When she was about twenty she was married (probably in 999) to Fujiwara Nobutaka. After some two years of seemingly happy married life she was widowed in 1001[10]. Few years later she entered the service at the court of Empress Akiko, It is not known how long she stayed there, if, afterwards, she became a nun of not, and, finally, when she died. There are many theories and conjectures but no conclusive evidence. It is also unknown when her greatest work *Genji monogatari* was written. The description of this great opus in a few sentences is extremely difficult, as the *Genji monogatari* is considered the greatest and the longest of Japanese novels, and holds a unique position in the literary history of the whole world. It consists of 54 scrolls forming separate chapters but the story unfolds itself consistently from chapter to chapter. The novel is sometimes qualified as a saga (there are four generations described in detail), sometimes as the first psychological novel in the world. The action of the novel stretches for about 80 years. Apart from the persons belonging to the immediate family and relatives of the main hero (Hikaru Genji) and his descendants, there appear several hundred other persons[11], and almost every one of them is invested by the authoress with an individual character and motivations of his or her deeds.

From our point of view the *Genji monogatari* is the most comprehensive description of the Heian period. It is a work of fiction, that is true, but it was intended as a realistic novel, and it reflects everyday life of aristocracy in the capital as well as in the provinces, and deep convictions of the authoress concerning also those spheres of life that are called today superstition or magic. Lady Murasaki's beliefs are of a special value because she was a very serious-minded and sober person, and in regard to super-natural apparitions she was more sceptical than many of her contemporaries. There are more unorthodox ideas expressed in her work of fiction than in personal, intimate diaries of other ladies[12].

The last and latest of the ladies' diaries, we would like to mention as one of our primary sources, is the *Sarashina nikki* written by a person who is known as Sugawara Takasue's daughter. Her father belonged to the same class of provincial governors as Fujiwara Tametoki, and there was also a long literary tradition in the family. She was born in 1008. At the age of ten she went with her father to a far-away province and returned to the capital in 1020. The first part of her diary describes her return journey in a great wealth of detail. For a long time after

[10] According to Ivan Morris, it is "the first fairly definite date in her life", see Morris 1964: 254.

[11] According to Morris "four hundred and thirty", see Morris 1964: 265.

[12] Nevertheless, we do not try to include the *Genji monogatari* into the category of diaries. It seemed proper to mention it in this place only because of the person of the authoress.

settling in the capital she lead a not very happy life and her only joy she found in reading romantic novels. Among others, she read the *Genji monogatari*, and her admiration for the novel knew no bounds. At the advanced age of 32 she became a lady-in-attendance at the court of princess Yūshi naishinnō, but the life at court did not suit her. She married Tachibana Toshimichi, who also belonged to the class of provincial governors. He died in 1058 and left her greatly depressed and engrossed in religious thought and visions. Her diary written mostly in retrospect covers a considerable space of time. It begins in 1020 and ends in 1062.

The five diaries considered together spread over one century. They show the Heian society on the aristocratic level as seen through the eyes of five completely different ladies: oversensitive, jealous and neurotic lady Kagerō; tender, romantic Izumi Shikibu; vigorous, self-conceited and sarcastic Sei Shōnagon; over-indulging in introspection but otherwise very straightforward Murasaki; and humourless, embittered and visionary lady of the *Sarashina nikki*.

Such a collection of characters and events shown in the diaries is good for research undertaken by the sample method. It guarantees different approaches to the same problems. But it seems necessary to compare the ladies' diaries with some masculine approach. For this purpose we chose the most representative (from the personal point of view) diary of a statesman, Fujiwara Michinaga.

The *Midō kampaku ki* is the oldest diary of which some parts have survived in their original form. There are 14 scrolls in Michinaga's own brush (kept as a "national treasure" in the Yōmei bunko library), 12 scrolls of an old copy traditionally ascribed to Michinaga's son, Yorimichi; 5 scrolls of extracts from the original diary; and many other old copies made at various times (some of them were copied from the original, and some from later copies). The original and the copies taken together cover a period of about 27 years from 995 up to 1021, but there are long gaps not covered by any of the existing texts.

The diary has a special value as a historical document because its author was the most powerful statesman of the Heian period. He was born in 966 as the fifth son of Fujiwara Kaneie (the unfaithful husband of lady Kagerō). In 995 "Michinaga thrust aside the real head of the clan, his nephew Korechika, and carried the autocracy of the Fujiwaras to its apogee. For more than thirty years (995–1027) his word was law, if not in Japan, at least in the capital (...). He thus became the father-in-law of four Emperors and the grandfather of as many"[13]. The diary of such a powerful man can provide us with many clues to the life of the period at the highest hierarchical level. Of a special interest to us are the entries concerning various rites performed at the court for the sake of the Emperor and his closest family. Besides, there are some illuminating notes on the black magic of the time: Michinaga was not universally admired, and there were persons whose hate of him

[13] Murdoch 1910: 259.

prompted them to magic practices intended as means of destroying him (in fact, not very effective ones, as he lived longer than most of his bitterest enemies).

The historical tales (*rekishi monogatari*) are treated by historians as veritable historical sources but with some reservations. They describe mostly events that really happened at some time, even if they are often hazy about dating, proper names or places. But very often they add quite unbelievable interpretations or embellish the stories with super-natural apparitions and influences. As the material for our study they may be placed between the diaries and pure fiction. At present there exist eight such works covering together an expanded period: from the legendary "age of gods" up to 1603. For our purpose the most important ones are, already mentioned, *Eiga monogatari* and *Ōkagami*.

The *Eiga monogatari* was probably the first in this group to be written. It consists of 40 scrolls (chapters). Scrolls from 1 to 30 describe various events at the court during 140 years beginning in 889. The final ten chapters were added probably as an afterthought. It is a generally accepted opinion that the original work consisted of those 30 chapters only, especially as there is a lapse of three years between the 30th and 31st chapter. A similar gap occurs between the 37th and 38th chapter, which also gives a ground for supposition that here is a demarcation line between the works of different authors. The last date mentioned in the *Eiga monogatari* is the year 1092. The authorship and the date of composition are still under discussion. The overriding opinion is that the first 30 scrolls were written after 1027 but before 1033, and the rest of the work after 1092, but before 1107.

The *Eiga monogatari* is rather verbose, the dates are often not clear or incorrect, but it gives a detailed picture of everyday life, especially in those portions of the narrative which repeat facts and gossip preserved in the oral tradition among the court ladies.

The *Ōkagami* is composed in the form of reminiscences of two very old men, Shigeki and Yotsugi, who tell stories of fourteen Emperors (from Montoku[14] to Goichijō[15]) and biographies of twenty Fujiwara ministers. The stories begin in 850 and the last confirmed date is the year 1025. The author is unknown and the dates of composition proposed by scholars range from 1025 up to the late 12th century.

The text repeats in a mere condensed and factual form most of the facts given in the *Eiga monogatari*. The style is more fluent and not without humour and irony. The *Eiga monogatari* has all the marks of literature for ladies, while the *Ōkagami* has all the marks of a masculine approach.

In addition to the above mentioned eleven primary sources, there are some others, occasionally quoted in this work. Among them are the *Nihon kiryaku* and *Shōyūki* which deserve a few words of explanation.

[14] Reigned 850–858.
[15] Reigned 1017–1036.

The *Nihon kiryaku* is a historical work describing the history of Japan from the legendary period of gods up to the reign of Goichijō tennō. It is unknown when and by whom the work was compiled. Up to the reign of Kōkō (884–887) the materials were drawn from the Six National Histories (*Rikkokushi*). Since the reign of Uda (857–897) the court chronicles and private diaries were used for compilation.

The *Shōyūki* is the diary of a statesman, Fujiwara Sanesuke (957–1046). He kept it between 978 and 1032 but the existing text covers 31 years only. Sanesuke was a man of upright character, he was very serious-minded, and he was endowed with the making of an excellent historian, He was engrossed in the matters concerning the court ceremonial and court rites, and besides, he was always very well informed about all strange or scandalous happenings in the capital.

2. The scope of the work

We do not intend to describe all the religious systems which co-existed in Japan in the Heian period. Quite to the contrary, we would like to avoid any encroachment upon purely religious grounds and, if possible, exclude from our description any rites or forms of magic that were performed in the enclosures of temples and shrines. It is not an attempt at simplifying matters for the writer but only a practical consideration. The religions (Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Tantrism, Hinduism, Shintō) have such a vast bibliography in all possible languages of the world that writing about them in this work seems to be, mildly speaking, superfluous. On the other hand, as far as the present author knows, there is no monograph devoted to the superstition and magic of the Heian period (except for separate chapters in various standard histories and works on Heian culture and religion). And thus, the present study is an attempt at collecting various informations on that subject and presenting them by means of samples from primary sources with general conclusions drawn in the final chapter.

But, certainly, while concentrating on our subject we cannot turn our back at religions as a whole. It is generally known that many superstitions have been by-products of a religion, that magic or divination have been practised in close contact with religious rites, while many soothsayers and sorcerers have been priests belonging to some ecclesiastical body.

The greatest difficulty lies in defining what belongs to a religion and what is beside it, because the line of demarcation is often so thin as to be almost, or completely invisible. It is especially true in all matters connected with Shintō – hare the difficulty is greatly enhanced by the elusive nature of the religion itself. The nature is so deceptive that one may hesitate to call Shintō a religion. The term "a complex of cults and beliefs" seems to be more appropriate.

Under the term "religion" we are inclined to understand those socio-cultural phenomena which embraces 1. a common doctrine (based on a belief in supernatural powers) as the theoretical side of the religion; 2. a common cult expressing the practical side of the religion; 3. an ecclesiastical organisation as the institutional side of the religion.

As superstitions we would like to treat the irrational fears and beliefs, including practices based on them, not accepted by officially recognized religious systems or not incorporated into the doctrines of such systems.

We would like to approach them in this manner but with Shintō and. to a great extent, with the Heian Buddhism, the problem does look next to hopeless.

It is true, though only partly true, that Shintō became to some extent codified in the 8th century by formulating its Holy Bible in the shape of *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*. Both works contain the official mythology and official concepts of the universe (by "official" we mean here the concepts sponsored, and even forced upon the nation, by the then ruling elite). The official cult, centered around the goddess Amaterasu as the heavenly ancestress of the imperial family has not been identical with more general, but at the same time much more primitive, animistic beliefs spread in many variants all over the archipelago. Even observing festivities and other customs of numerous small shrines today we can easily recognize the remnants of those very old and primitive beliefs. Up to this day most of the local divinities have no concrete forms, and they are worshipped as the powers of nature, as spirits (shapeless and often nameless) of water, wind, thunder and rain. Up to the present they have remained bodiless, since the remote past, from before the time when the ruling class began to propagate a universal belief in anthropomorphic gods and goddesses of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*. It should be noted, however, that the court compilers did not try to undermine the whole fabric of local beliefs. It was sufficient for their purposes to emphasize the dynastic aspect of the cult. The official mythology and official cult of Amaterasu, and of many other deities have been accepted but they have never penetrated so deeply into the very substance of local cults as to be able to blot out the older and more primitive forms. The mixture of the official and local cults came to be known as Shintō, but the doctrine has never been clearly defined[16]. As for the cult and ecclesiastical organization there were some attempts undertaken to put them into order. The Engi shiki regulations (927) formulated some rules concerning the hierarchy of shrines and priests, rules concerning rites, prayers and offerings. But the regulations were issued already at the time when Buddhism became more like the national religion

[16] According to Yamakami Izumo it is possible to speak about purley native cults in Japan up to the 6th century. The author proposes for them the term gen-Shintō (original Shintō). Later on, the native cults became more and more syncretic, being mixed in varying proportions with imported ideas of Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist provenience. Yamakami 1975: 6.

than Shintō, and the regulations (still barely touching the surface of local cults) were limited to the circles interested in the dynastic aspects of the cult, that is to the imperial court, and not very much further.

Buddhism in the Heian period was not unified as well. There were many schools and sects, great reformers displayed fervent activity, new trends were gaining ground. The religion as a whole flourished – the doctrine had the official approval and financial support of the imperial court and aristocracy, its clergy was numerous and well organized, its temples were full of treasures. Through the medium of didactic literature various Buddhist ideas began to infiltrate from amongst the educated elite into the deepest strata of human minds. The process of infiltration was not rapid outside the aristocracy, but even to the remote villages reached at least some of the ideas, though they were soon distorted and sucked into the amorphous body of local beliefs.

Popular Buddhism of the Heian period has already had a long history on the archipelago, but the old schools of the Nara period (the 8th century) were not as flourishing at that time as new sects brought directly from China at the beginning of the 9th century. These new sects belonged to the esoteric fraction of Buddhism (*mikkyō*). In Japan they were known as Tendai and Shingon. Both sects had strong admixtures of magic practices and rites peculiar to Tantrism and Hinduism with a dash of Taoism. Their profound philosophic foundations were beyond the grasp of majority of their followers, while their mystic rites, spells and incantations found many ardent admirers.

As the time passed the *mikkyō* sects began to lose their character of closed religious bodies guarding the nation as a whole (which they had had at the beginning). The clergy mingled freely with their rich patrons, great temples became monopolized by the most powerful families (e.g. Tōdaiji by the imperial, family, Kōfukuji by the Fujiwaras). Prayers for the prosperity of the country gave way to prayers for happiness of rich clients. Many monks were treated (and highly respected) in the role of quack-doctors curing people with their magic formulae.

In this respect Buddhism found its point of contact with the most popular aspects of native shamanism. There were, certainly, successful attempts at combining Buddhism and Shintō on a higher level, which slowly developed into various syncretic doctrines. But they could not have a large popular following, while the rites of exoneration or spells and charms were attractive to the simplest minds. Not only attractive, but also intelligible on the basis of comparison with traditional Shintoist rites, spells and charms.

Finally, those lowest forms of practices of both the Buddhist and Shintoist provenience, mixed together to such an extent that they formed variegated, tangled mass of superstitions and magic. Taking all that into account it is really difficult to find a line of demarcation between Buddhist religion sensu stricto and superstitions or magic practices connected remotely with Buddhism and not included into its doctrines. For this reason we would like to limit the scope of our work to

those beliefs and practices that were popular among people not connected directly with any religious body. In case of monks and priests we shall not be interested in persons belonging to temples and shrines and behaving in the orthodox manner within their enclosures. But there were many monks who lost contact with their mother church and engaged themselves in forbidden practices. Their activities will be of interest to us. Close attention must be also paid to those exorcists and other sacerdotal magicians who did not sever their ties with their church, and were employed by private persons, outside their temples or shrines. They are quite important from our point of view because they exerted a direct influence on great masses of laic people, and they were mainly responsible for spreading and strengthening many kinds of superstitious belief and practices. Without them it would be impossible to form any picture of the Heian society.

3. The historical background

The Heian literature was created by the representatives of one class only, by the aristocrats. This aristocratic society, over-important as it was, formed a very small and tightly closed circle. Through the literature of the time we can get from time to time only brief glimpses of the other world, the world of labourers, peasants, robbers, fishermen (the *Reiiki*, *Konjaku monogatari*). The Heian gentlemen sometimes wrote in their diaries about riots, petitions, and demands (the *Midō kampaku ki*, *Shōyūki*). The ladies who had no direct encounters with rioters, from time to time watched furtively peasant performances or labourers working near their mansions. They looked at them as if at strange exotic creatures, half amusing and half frightening, but most certainly not belonging to their sublime world. But even this sublime world was not unified. Far from it. There existed a strict hierarchy with many social levels according to birth, rank and office. At the top of the social ladder was the imperial family. Next to it *kuge*[17] families and other officials of high ranks, then – innumerable lower officials, then – provincial governors, and at last – the landed gentry regarded with mild contempt by the highbrows from the capital. Many members of the landed gentry were immensely wealthy but wealth itself was not enough to open for them the palace gates. There was a chasm between the capital and provinces. For this reason the present study must be necessarily limited geographically to the capital and socially to the aristocracy, with only occasional excursions to other regions and other classes.

The Heian period was remarkable in many ways. One of the characteristic features was the above-mentioned growth of that tightly-knit class of aristocracy

[17] *Kuge* – a generic name for persons of the highest ranks (mostly from the third rank up, but some persons of the fourth rank were also included).

and the gap between the capital and provinces. It would have been impossible for the aristocracy to dominate the country if there were wars going on. But one of the most important characteristics, distinguishing Heian from any other period, is a long span of time of comparative peace. The northern frontiers were never quite free from danger, but after subduing the Ainu at the close of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century there were no big campaigns launched against them. There was a piracy rampant at the shores along the Inland Sea but the central government was not interested in this problem leaving it to the local authorities. In the first half of the 10th century there was in the south a revolt of Fujiwara Sumitomo, and in the north of Taira Masakado. Both rebels were captured and killed in their own areas of operations, and they did not disturb the tranquility of the capital. The elegant life in Heian kyō could float without bloody intervals. With no immediate danger from outside, the high society could and did concentrate all its efforts on purely intellectual and cultural pursuits. It is the next feature distinguishing Heian from the preceding and following periods – that unique atmosphere of aesthetic activity taking precedence over any other kind of activity. The high degree of aesthetization of everyday life would have been impossible at that stage of historical development without a strong influence brought from the continent. The sinization of institutional, economic and social life forms another characteristic feature of the Heian period. But, certainly, it should be kept in mind that the continental influence in its manifold shapes had reached Japan much earlier, long before the Nara period. The 8th century was a period of adjustment during which many of the institutions borrowed from China began to break down and they were gradually replaced by purely Japanese ones. During that century the imperial rulers began to lose their real authority because of an uncontrolled growth of huge tax-exempt estates. The state revenue shrinked rapidly and the economic strength shifted from Emperors to their subjects – to the most powerful among the holders of tax-exempt estates.

When we come to the Heian period we can observe the Emperors presiding over literary contests, viewing blossoming flowers of the season, absorbed in calligraphy and painting or playing the flute, but rarely bothering about sordid details of administration. In their name ruled regents or chancellors of the Fujiwara clan, who had amassed great riches and had gained a hegemony over the political life of the country.

As it has already been stated, the 8th century was a period of adjustment. The process was going on and the next century saw many important developments, the most important being a reaction against the direct Chinese influence, China ceased to be the great mentor in the matters of state. It finally led to withholding official missions at the end of the 9th century. Since then, although a fashion for things Chinese did not disappear, there was a marked tendency to turn towards more Japanese forms in administration and economy. In social and in religious life

the Chinese influence was still very strong, but without fresh impulses from the continent there came time for various already imported ideas to penetrate into the spiritual life of the people, and subsequently, to push aside or mix together with the indigeneous cults and customs. In that respect, a particular emphasis should be put on the development, under the official sponsorship, of pseudo-scientific theories brought from China and known as the Ommyōdō (or On'yōdō) – the way of *on* and *yō* (Chinese: *yin* and *yang*), that is two principles: passive (dark, feminine) and active (light, masculine) which produce all phenomena of the universe by their operation upon the five basic elements (fire, water, wood, metal, earth). The theory of mutual interaction by two principles and five elements (*ommyō gogyōsetsu*) has had a very long tradition in China and from it have sprouted various Chinese philosophic and religious systems. It has also given an impulse for pursuance of such scientific studies as astronomy, meteorology and mathematics. Under a steady pressure of popular magic and mantic practices astronomy deteriorated into astrology and into other pseudo-scientific branches like geomancy, reading celestial and earthy portents, fortune-telling and quackery.

To Japan this already syncretic mixture of science, superstition, magic and divination came during the reign of Suiko tennō (592–628). It was warmly welcomed as a scientific system much more superior to native, primitive methods of shamanic nature. The Taihō code of 701 established a bureau called Ommyōryō as one of the bureaus of the Nakatsukasashō (Ministry of Central Affairs). The Ommyōryō was divided into four departments:

1. The most important of them was that which dealt with divination and geomancy. It was the Ommyōryō proper. Its staff consisted of five officials with administrative authority, six masters of divination (*ommyōji* or *ommyōshi*), one high master of divination (*ommyō hakase*[18]) and ten apprentices.
2. The second department of Ommyōryō consisted of 11 persons preparing calendars: one *reki hakase* (high master of calendar-making) and ten apprentices.
3. The next department was devoted to astronomical observations with the special task of looking for omens. It should be noted that the observations were conducted without any instruments. The staff of the astronomical division consisted of 11 persons, too: one *temmon hakase* (high master of astronomy) and ten apprentices.
4. In the last department there were two *rōkoku hakase* (high masters of the water-clock) whose duty was fixing the time and proclaiming it. Under them were 20 people.

There was no rigid division of professional functions. One man could work in two or three departments of the bureau. The chief of the bureau (*ommyō no kami*) was even obliged to supervise personally the works on calendar, he had to observe

[18] *Hakase* is often translated as "doctor".

wind and clouds, he had to interprete celestial and earthy omens, which functions belonged to three of the four departments. Other people could specialize in various functions, too. But since the middle Heian there came about to a virtual division of specializations between two families. From the 8th century onwards, the Kamo family practically monopolized astronomy and calendar-making. One of the most prominent practitioners was Kamo Yasunori (917–977), who conveyed his knowledge of calendar-making to his son Kōei (939–1015), and his knowledge of astronomy to his pupil, Abe Seimei (921–1005). After Yasunori's death the Kamo family specialized in calendar, while the Abe family monopolized astronomy.

The achievements of Kōei and Seimei (and other official practitioners) in their respective official functions were not as famous as those in divination and magic. And also their official salaries were not as big as their profits from private persons. The Ommyōdō of the Heian time has already been very far advanced in the process of deterioration from scientific, or even pseudo-scientific systems into crudest forms of magic and a source of superstition. As a science it was dying, as a magic it was very much alive. But the official soothsayers had to strive hard not to be ousted by unofficial competitors. The learning of Ommyōdō had been kept as a secret knowledge inside the *ommyōji* families, but gradually some elements of it crept outside and penetrated into other people's cognition. They mixed with elements of Buddhist mystic practices, Shintoist practices of shaman tradition, and other sundry forms of magic. This strange medley entered the life of aristocracy as well as of common people and created a favourable climate for activity of various magicians, sorcerers and fortune-tellers. On the other hand, many popular beliefs and various kinds of magic penetrated into the officially sponsored Ommyōdō. *Ommyōji* were forced to broaden their scope of activity because they were often summoned by the imperial family and other high personages demanding advice in matters being beyond the official responsibilities of the Ommyōryō.

One of the most common forms of superstition propagated by *ommyōji* was the belief in auspicious and inauspicious days, months, and years; auspicious and inauspicious directions; auspicious and inauspicious omens. Very interesting documents of the epoch constitute the so called, *guchūreki* calendars. They were prepared by the *reki hakase* in every 10th moon for the following year and distributed among the members of the imperial family, among all the officials, and also sent to the provincial governors. In the calendars there were entered all the inauspicious days presaged by the *reki hakase* in cooperation with the *ommyōji* and *temmon hakase*. The days were determined by interpretation of portents and by other mantic methods based on belief in influence of celestial bodies and celestial and earthy divinities on people's destinies. There were more than eighty inauspicious days in every ypar.

Another source of officially sponsored superstition was the noble science of medicine. The bureau of medicine (Ten'yakuryō) was also established by the Taihō

code. The original learning came from China before the Nara period. Many Chinese books were imported – in the catalogue compiled by Fujiwara Sukeyo between 889 and 898 there are mentioned 1309 scrolls of medical treatises. In the 9th century this flow was stopped by the interruption of official relations between the countries (in 894). The Japanese began to pursue their own studies and write their own treatises.

The scientific level of medicine was so low that it should be more properly called quackery. The anatomy was almost unknown. The diagnostics was based on superstitious beliefs, and the treatment on magic. In diagnostics there were three theories applied:

1) *fūdoku setsu*, a theory based on the belief in poisonous miasma entering a body;
2) *kijin jajin setsu*, a theory of evil spirits possessing a body (in this theory there was room for all the mononoke, shiryō, ikiryō, demons and animals possessing people);
3) *shidai fuchō setsu*, a Buddhist theory of incompatibility of four great elements (earth, water, fire, air). Any disturbance of harmony among the elements caused an illness which had to be treated in such a way that the original harmony would return.

The treatment was often painful, prolonged and, certainly, not effective. Besides, it was quite exclusive, reserved only for persons from the highest level of society. The rest of the world had to be treated by shamans, Buddhist monks, *ommyōji* and other quack-doctors.

The Ten'yakuryō was under the Ministry of Imperial Household (Kunaishō) and it was organized along the same lines as the Ommyōryō. There were five officials bestowed with the administrative authority and quite a large staff of physicians (*ishi*, *i hakase*), masseurs (*ammashi*, *amma hakase*), pharmacists (*kusushi*, *yakuenji*), specialists of curative spells (*zugonji*) and specialists of acupuncture (*shin hakase*). Acupuncture and moxibustion developed at the beginning of the Heian period. The first *hakase* was nominated in 844.

The Ommyōryō and Ten'yakuryō worked under the governmental patronage and thus had a special position, a very favourable one for spreading superstitions and magic among the people able to arrange for their services. That is why we considered it important enough to dwell so extensively on their role in the otherwise short historical introduction.

II. SUPERSTITIONS

The Heian people inherited from the preceding periods many kinds of beliefs – native and foreign – concerned chiefly with highly diversified manifestations of supernatural powers. The beliefs mingled in varying proportions and amalgamated into popular forms of superstition. People of the Heian period believed in a great variety of evil influences, strange apparitions, ghosts and spirits of mixed pedigree whose presence was felt and feared. It is not our aim to sort them according to their origin. It would be a task beyond our ability and beyond the needs of this study. Nevertheless, for the sake of expediency, we would like to introduce a classification (or rather an order of presenting our material) which may look at the first sight inconsistent with the above declaration. The proposed classification consists of four categories.

Into the first category we would like to include all those kinds of ghosts and spirits which, although not free from foreign admixtures, were evolved directly from old native beliefs. These we shall call "spirits of native derivation" even if they are sometimes quite ecclectic in their nature. Setting them apart from other manifestations is dictated by their character, and also by the terminology involved. Into the second category would fall all kinds of demons brought to Japan in the wake of great religions. We shall call them "imported demons" although they are not always pure-bred foreigners. The third category includes animals endowed with supernatural powers, and the fourth category – inanimate objects also endowed with supernatural powers.

1. Spirits of native derivation

There has existed in Japan a concept of the universe as inhabited by myriads of spirits. The nature-worship and ancestor-worship well known from the remote post up till the present are the best evidence, For the primitive Japanese the world was inhabited by spirits of trees, streams, mountains, of thunder and rain, and of

their dead, "...in Old Japan, the world of the living was everywhere ruled by the world of the dead – that the individual, at every moment of his existence, was under ghostly supervision. In his home he was watched by the spirits of his father; without it, he was ruled by the god of his district. All about him, and above him, and beneath him were invisible powers of life and death"[19].

1.1. The terminology

In the Heian times there were several words used for "spirits", "soul", or "ghost" in the meaning expressed above. This is a little complicated because the English-writing authors (like above quoted Lafcadio Hearn) use freely such terms making no distinction among them. The words often used in Japanese are:

tama or *mono* or *tamashii* (Sino-Japanese: *ryō*, *rei*) – soul, ghost, spirit;
tama (Sino-Japanese: *sei*, *shō*) – soul, ghost, spirit;
tama, *tamashii* (Sino-Jap.: *kon*) – soul, ghost, spirit;
ke or *kai* – spirit, apparition;
ke or *ki* – breath, aura, spirit, mind, illness.

The distinction among them, and especially among the first three and between the last two, has never been quite clear in Japanese either, and it often happened that they were used interchangeably. As a good illustration of this point may serve the story taken from the *Konjaku monogatari*.

When the Higashi Sanjō dono was a residence of prince Shigeaki there happened many strange things. The inhabitants called a specialist of divination. He explained that the strange happenings were caused by an evil influence (*mononoke*). He was asked then where this spirit (*tama*, *ryō*), came from and whose soul (*tama*, *shō*) it was. The specialist answered, that it was the ghost (*tama*, *shō*) of a copper pot buried under the ground in the garden[20].

In this example two words read *tama* and the word *mononoke* are used in regard to the same supernatural power. The situation is further complicated in the story where it appears that the spirit of the pot was able to materialize and hovered over the garden in a human form. We shall assume that all the terms mentioned on page 34 in certain situations can be used interchangeably, although some, rather vague, rules may be suggested.

The word *tamashii* (*kon*) is used mostly in the sense nearest to our "soul"; the word *tama* (*rei*, *ryō*) as a spirit of a person living or dead; the word *tama* (*sei*, *shō*) for spirits of nature and of inanimate things[21], and it seems that all spirits of the

[19] Hearn 1960: 133.
[20] *Konjaku mnogatari* 1975: XXVII, 6.
[21] But also, in the Buddhist terminology, it means the spirits of the dead.

tama group have this ability. Of "ghosts" we can speak when a spirit becomes visible (in this sense the copper pot in its material existence had quite a different form than its ghost which materialized in a human form. This is an original idea.). The words pronounced *ke* are used more often in connection with invisible powers, mostly evil influences, but there is an entry in Michinaga's diary where the word *ke* is used for the ghost of the late Emperor Reizei who appeared in the palace on the 29th day of the 4th moon of 1015[22]. The most elusive ideas are expressed with the word *mononoke*. The word itself is a compound form of *mono* and *ke*, but which *mono* and which *ke*?

The simplest explanation seems the best: *mono* – the spirit, and *ke* – "breath", because the *mononoke* were regarded mostly as evil influences exerted by spirits of living or dead persons, and also of other things endowed with a supernatural power (e.g. the copper pot), causing illness and other damages. And we mean here the word *mononoke* itself, not its representation in script. In script the word was written in different hieroglyphs, and often in the *kana* characters only. In the majority of cases, however, for the first component was used the hieroglyph for *mono* – "thing", and for the second *ke* – "apparition", rarely *ke* – "breath".

There was in the Heian period a popular conviction that the soul (*tamashii*) could leave the body of its owner and roam freely about the world. The soul left by the mouth (such conviction is described in the *Utsubo monogatari*, scroll *Toshikage*). In older times there had been an idea of a double soul composed of two elements: benign and rough, called respectively: *nigimitama* and *aramitama*. In the Heian period the concept has already been blurred, and the attributes of both components were separated and given to different spirits. The attributes of *nigimitama* went to various gods of benevolent character, while the attributes of *aramitama* became acquired by devils, demons, and other bad spirits.

1.2. Vengeful spirits (public enemies)

Among the derivatives of aramitama the greatest role played spirits of malevolent, vengeful persons. There were spirits of living persons called *ikiryō* or *ikisudama*, and spirits of dead people called *akuryō*, *ryō*, *onryō*, *shiryō* or *bōkon*. Both kinds were also called *mononoke*, but it should be noted that various evils were often qualified as *mononoke*, not necessarily human in their origin but mostly connected with all sorts of diseases.

There were in the history of Heian several famous vengeful spirits. Chronologically the first was a very angry spirit of prince Sawara. The prince died before

[22] Such words as: *yōkai*, *obake* for ghosts are later derivatives. They were not used in the Heian period.

Heian kyō was founded, but it is not improbable that his death became a reason (one of several others) for moving the capital from one place to another. In 784 the old capital from Nara was transferred to a new site in Nagaoka. The Emperor took his residence there while the work on other residences, dwelling houses, temples, shrines, roads etc. was still conducted. It was continued for ten years, and then, quite abruptly the works were stopped and the Emperor ordered removal of the capital from unfinished Nagaoka to a new capital that was to be constructed as Heian kyō. This sudden move is not explained clearly. As one of the reasons the story of unfortunate prince Sawara, the Emperor's brother, is given. The prince had been suspected of a plot against his brother and in 784 he was banished to Awaji (where he died of starvation or perhaps was murdered on the way there). Soon afterwards various misfortunes began to fall on the imperial family and were interpreted by diviners as results of vindictive activity of the late prince. Many steps were taken in order to pacify the angry spirit, but he was obstinate. When in 794 a consort of the crown prince died suddenly, the Emperor decided that the atmosphere in Nagaoka was unhealthy and then he ordered the removal. In the new capital the spirit from time to time gave to understand that he still did not feel appeased. At last he was posthumously made Emperor and his tomb, transferred from Awaji to Yamato, was promoted to the rank of imperial mausoleum. It seems that the spirit was pacified by that action, or perhaps other new spirits were more bothersome and blotted out the memory of the prince.

Another famous vengeful spirit displayed his malevolent activity from the beginning of the 10th century onwards. The spirit, while still in the body, was a scholar, poet and a statesman, Sugawara Michizane (845–903). Through intrigues incented by members of the Fujiwara family (especially by Tokihira) Michizane was in 901 removed from the political scene in Heian kyō and banished to Kyūshū. Soon afterwards he died there (of broken heart as the legend says) and his spirit (*onryō*, *mononoke*) began mischlevious activity. That activity is recorded in many documents of the period (*Nihon kiryaku*, *Kuge bunin*, *Ōkagami*, *Eiga monogatari* and others). To favourite methods of the spirit belonged setting fire to mansions of his enemies, striking them with thunderbolts, causing madness or grave illness, and throwing a curse (*tatari*).

The word *tatari* belongs also to the category of poorly defined terms. It seems that before the Heian period the term had not had a peiorative sense. It had meant a signal given by a supernatural being, an attempt at calling people's attention to the needs of a god or a spirit. But because methods of calling attention to themselves displayed by gods were rather violent (thunder, thick fog, illness, sudden death[23]) the word *tatari* became associated with misfortunes only and developed into the idea of a curse or a result of the curse. There are many words for "a curse"

[23] Cf. chapter *Interpretation of dreams*, the story of Sukemasa and the god of Mishima.

or "to curse" in Japanese and we shall discuss them in the chapter on magic. But *tatari* belongs to this chapter because the word was used exclusively for curses thrown by supernatural beings (i.e. gods, demons, spirits and animals endowed with supernatural power) and never by living people.

Returning to Michizane's story, we would like to show the spirit at work, giving only few samples as recorded in some of the documents. According to the *Ōkagami* Emperor Suzaku[24] was considered to be especially exposed to evil influence of the spirit. Suzaku inherited the imperial dignity from his father, Daigo tennō[25], who had been instrumental in sending Michizane to Kyūshū. The wrath of the spirit could have been very easily turned against the off-springs of Daigo. Thus, "... when this Emperor (Suzaku) was born, the lattice door (to his room) was not raised and until he was three years old both by day and by night he was nurtured within a bedstead beside a fire. This was because of fear of (the deity of) Kitano"[26]. Suzaku was a sickly child and his condition was ascribed to Michizane's vengeful activity.

Fujiwara Tokihira (871–909) and his descendants were also haunted by the spirit. Tokihira died at the age of 38, and his sons did not prosper, which was interpreted as a result of *tatari* in revenge for Michizane's banishment (*asamashiki akuji wo mōshiokonai tamaerishi tsumi ni yori kono otodo no misue wa owasenu nari* – "On account of the sin committed by perpetrating that wretched bad deed, the descendants of this minister (Tokihira) could not live long"[27].

During his life, it may seem from another fragment, Tokihira was not aware that his existence was endangered by Michizane's spirit. One day Michizane made his appearance in the form of lightning and thunder; and then Tokihira whipped out his sword and made a short but powerful speech to the effect that Michizane while yet in the body had been his, Tokihira's subordinate. Why, therefore, after becoming a god would he not obey his superior in the matters of this world? The speech evidently took effect, as there was no thunderbolt following the lightning[28].

The deification of Michizane (as a god of calligraphy and learning) was regarded as the strongest possible expedient of appeasing the angry spirit. But even as a god Michizane did not stop his evil activity. Many misfortunes falling on the descendants of his former enemies were explained as his misdeeds. Even up to the fourth and fifth generation of Tokihira's brother Tadahira (880–949) the curse was still feared. In the *Eiga monogatari* there is an opinion expressed that the pitiful, down-

[24] Reigned 930–946.

[25] Reigned 897–930.

[26] *Ōkagami* 1967: 30. The deity of Kitano is a popular appellation of Michizane after his deification and enshrinement in the Kitano shrine (Kitano Temmangū).

[27] Ibid., 79.

[28] Ibid., 81.

fall of Michikane's family resulted, too, from the *tatari* thrown by the Kitano deity[29]. Michikane (955–995) became chancellor, and died seven days later, before he had time to enjoy the taste of highest authority. His family did not prosper afterwards, in spite of excellent connections at the court.

Even the Emperor's family was not free from the troublesome spirit up to the fifth generation. During the reign of En'yū tennō (969–984) the palace burnt a few times and had to be rebuilt. Once during the works in one of the pavilions the carpenters found an inscription on the ceiling. It was a message from the deity of Kitano in a form of a warning poem[30]. In his role as the god of learning Michizane had his good points. In the *Konjaku monogatari* it is related that Michizane left a Chinese poem that was unintelligible for other people. After some time there appeared in somebody's dream a gentleman of noble aspect and explained the meaning of the poem. It was, certainly, Michizane himself. He was in his ghostly life very fond of lecturing on poetry through dreams[31].

The posthumous activities of Sawara shinnō and Michizane have been described here in some detail because these two spirits were most vexing and caused far-reaching results. But there were many others, among them women as well, especially up to Michizane's time, who were also feared and who demanded strong pacifying measures. All of them had at least one feature in common; they suffered injustice being punished for unperpetrated offences (anyhow their spirits claimed injustice, which means that people must have been uneasy and felt pangs of conscience). Such spirits of persons who had died with a grudge against the world generally, and against the authorities particularly, were especially dangerous because their wrath turned often into forms perilous for a bigger community (e.g. earthquake, flood, pestilence, drought). The spirits became to be called *goryō* (honourable spirits) and in order to placate and entertain them there were organized special festivals called *goryōe*. Up to 863 these were organized by communities directly affected by a calamity. Later on (since the grand *goryōe* in the imperial garden Shinsen'en) they were sponsored by the government and big shrines. The faith in malevolent spirits causing public damage (*goryō shinkō*) has surivived up to the modern times.

There is a story in the *Konjaku monogatari* throwing light at the ideas connected with this faith. Once during a pestilence in the capital an official (*kashiwade*)[32] left his home at night. In front of his gate he met a man dressed in a red costume and ceremonial hat. The man asked if *kashiwade* knew him. "No, I do not" – answered

[29] *Eiga monogatari* 1964: 147.

[30] *Ōkagami* 1967: 75–76.

[31] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXIV, 28.

[32] *Kashiwade* – officials in the bureau of Imperial Table under the Ministry of Imperial Household (Kunaishō).

the *kashiwade*. "Long ago I was a *dainagon*[33] in this country. My name was Ban no Yoshio[34]. For unperpetrated crimes I was banished to Izu and I died there very soon. After that I became a deity spreading pestilence (*gyōyaku rugyōjin*)[35]. The present misery is also of my doing, but you may be easy, I will not harm you" – saying that the man in red disappeared. *Kashiwade* reported his adventure to other people, and Yoshio since then was worshipped as a god[36].

1.3. Vengeful spirits (private enemies)

Up till now we have dealt with spirits which caused public damage and, in consequence, found their way to the official cult. Their place in the cult was not as prominent as the position of older gods but, nonetheless, they were officially recognized.

To another and a larger class of sinister spirits belong all those ghosts and invisible souls which wreaked their rage upon individuals. They exerted their influence in forms of *shiryō* and *ikiryō* (both these phenomena were also called *mononoke*) and their most favourite weapons were causing illness and madness, while their greatest triumph was in killing their victims.

The most popular *mononoke* (*shiryō*) in the Heian literature are Fujiwara Motokata (884–949) and his daughter Motoko (Genshi). Motokata died as a very embittered man because he had not been successful in his career (at least, in his own opinion). His daughter, a concubine of Murakami tennō[37] was not successful, either. She was not blessed with an offspring who could have aspired to imperial dignity. She was neglected by the Emperor, while other concubines prospered. The most beloved of them was Yasuko (Anshi) of another branch of the Fujiwara family. Against her and her descendants and the descendants' families turned the wrath of Motokata's *shiryō* and *shiryō* of Motoko (who died soon after her father).

In the *Eiga monogatari*[38] at some length and in great variety of detail the examples are given of Motokota's and Motoko's evil deeds. They haunted two sons of Yasuko who came to the throne as Reizei[39] and En'yū, and then, Reizei's son, the Emperor Kazan[40]. But, certainly, the spirits began their revengeful activity

[33] *Dainagon* – officials of the Council of State.

[34] Ban no Yoshio (Ōtomo no Yoshio) was banished to Izu in 866.

[35] In the *Konjaku monogatari* XX, 18 there is also a god called *yakujin* (deity of illness); it is a non-anthropomorphic deity causing illness of individuals. The same story appears in the *Reiiki* II, 25. *Yakujin* are mentioned in other stories, too.

[36] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 11.

[37] Reigned 946–967.

[38] *Eiga monogatari* 1964: I, 36–37, 42, 43, 51, 54, 84–85, 98, 113.

[39] Reigned 967–969.

[40] Reigned 984–986.

from Yasuko herself and Emperor Murakami causing them indescribable suffering. Later on, Reizei all his life was not quite normal, his concubine suddenly died, his son Kazan was slightly mad, and Kazan's beloved concubine also died suddenly. All that was ascribed to *mononoke* of Motokata and Motoko. The spirits were so frightening that other sons and concubines of Reizei had to be particularly cautious. Reizei himself was afraid to such a degree that he did not perform the rites of enthronement in the usual pavilion (Daigokuden), but performed them in a place that seemed safer from evil spirits (Shishinden).

The *Ōkagami* also adds some interesting particulars. Some time after the enthronement, Reizei was to go outside for a ceremony of purification and people were uneasy about his excursion dreading the usual *mononoke*. But the Emperor went and returned unharmed. It was explained by the presence of another spirit who had kept the Emperor under his protection. That guardian-spirit was the late Morosuke, Yasuko's father[41].

Fujiwara Morosuke (908–960) was a much more successful statesman than his cousin Motokata. Once, at the time when Yasuko was with child, Morosuke played dice and suddenly he exclaimed: "If she is to bear a son, let two sixes come"! and, in fact, as soon as he threw the dice, there came two sixes. Soon afterwards Yasuko gave birth to a son. Some time later there appeared Motokata's ghost and told that" on that day a nail had been driven into his heart" (*sono yo yagate mune ni kugi wa uchiteki*[42]).

During the reign of Goichijō tennō (the 6th Emperor after Murakami) Motokata's spirit was still active. Prince Atsuakira shinnō after Sanjō tennō's abdication[43] was proclaimed the heir to the throne, but he resigned the honour and retired soon after Sanjō's death. People thought him possessed by Motokata's *mononoke*. Even his mother could not understand the son's strange decision and ordered prayers against the *mononoke*[44].

Emperor Sanjō was haunted by a *mononoke*, too. In his case it was not indefatigable Motokata, but a monk called Kansan. This spirit caused that Sanjō was a very sick man almost all his life. There were long periods when he was blind and deaf and so weak in his legs that he could not walk. Kansan has not been identified. He appears in the *Ōkagami*[45] and, again, much later in the *Heike monogatari*.

The primitive level of medical science was the strongest foundation of the *mononoke* faith. Almost every illness was explained as the result of an activity of some spirit. But it should be noticed that *mononoke* of the *shiryō* kind were always connected with a person who had been wronged or destroyed by the victim, or

[41] *Ōkagami* 1967: 131.
[42] Ibid., 129.
[43] Reigned 1011–1016.
[44] Ibid., 102, 104.
[45] Ibid., 56.

victim's family and predecessors. Thus the faith had greatest support in remorse and uneasy conscience.

Monk Kansan's identity has been lost. We do not know if he was once a living person wronged by Sanjō (or somebody connected with him), or if he was a figment of imagination. There is a strong probability that he indeed was an authentic person but so insignificant that his memory has survived in one Heian tale only (and later was repeated in the *Heike monogatari*). All other *mononoke* of official chronicles (*Nihon kiryaku*, *Kuge bunin*) and historical tales (the *Ōkagami*, *Eiga monogatari*) have more or less clear identity and their relations to their victims can be easily tracked down. The majority of stories concerning *mononoke* were woven around rivalry between officials and rivalry among the Emperor's concubines. As it has been written above, Emperors, too, were not free from evil. It may be even said that the higher somebody stood in hierarchy the more prone he was to become a victim of a *mononoke*. For instance, Michinaga, whose career was very swift and whose authority was most ruthlessly exercised, was many a time haunted by *mononoke*. Among the spirits were his nephew Korechika (974–1010), his elder brother Michikane, his cousin Akimitsu (944–1021), and Akimitsu's daughter Nobuko (Enshi), Because Michinaga was the first dignitary in the country the *mononoke* haunting him were of particular interest for all his rivals and friends. Thanks to it these *mononoke* appear in historical tales and also in diaries of the time (the *Shōyūki*, *Gonki*[46] and, of course, in the *Midō kampaku ki*). Especially Akimitsu and his daughter have got quite a formidable bibliography. It appears that there was a rivalry between Nobuko and Michinaga's daughter Hiroko (Kanshi). Both were given to Atsuakira shinnō, but Hiroko's position was much stronger. Nobuko died nursing a grudge in her heart. Akimitsu was crestfallen and filled with so strong emotions that in one night his hair turned white. There are some hints that he became *akuryō* (evil spirit) even before his death (posthumously he was popularly called *akuryō*). As a *shiryō* he did not lose time and very soon began doing mischief. His daughter's *shiryō* acted together with him. Their attacks were directed against Michinaga himself and against his children, but especially against Hiroko. In consequence, Hiroko became very ill. When she was already in agony, there was heard a peal of laughter and a voice telling "Well done, well done. What a relief now"! (*Shietari, shietari, ima zo mune aku!*[47]). Thus Nobuko and her father crowed over the helpless rival.

There are so many similar stories in the Heian literature that it is impossible to present even a small fraction of them. It proves that the faith was very popular, indeed. Although the popularity is especially evident in pure fiction (of the *Genji monogatari* type), there are also many scattered remarks in the diaries. Beside those

[46] The diary of Fujiwara Yukinari (971–1028) written between 991 and 1011.

[47] *Eiga monogatari* 1962: II, 197.

mentioned above, there are some nameless *mononoke* referred to in the *Kagerō nikki*, *Izumi Shikibu nikki*, *Makura no sōshi* and others, but they do not appear in such abundance as in literary fiction.

As for the *mononoke* of *ikiryō* group there is no explicit testimony in the diaries, and we must look for them in literary fiction.

Once upon a time an official from the capital was leaving for a province. At a cross-roads he met a lady, young and well-mannered. She asked him to send her off to the mansion of a certain Mimbu no daibu[48]. The man consented. On the way she told him that she was a daughter of such-and-such in Ōmi and invited him to her parents' home. When they reached the mansion of Mimbu no daibu the young lady expressed her gratitude and passing through the closed gate she disappeared. The man's hair stood on end. He could not move and, thanks to it, a moment later he heard lamenting voices risen inside the mansion. Upon inquiry it turned out that the Mimbu no daibu had just been killed by an *ikiryō*. Later on the man found himself in Ōmi and visited the house of the lady's parents. He was informed that the lady had been the Mimbu no daibu's mistress, but jilted by him she had become an *ikiryō*[49].

In the conclusion of the story it is written that a woman's heart is terrifying. The Japanese of the Heian time shared the conviction that "there is no fury like a woman scorned" and they suspected some of their women of ability to turn into living ghosts if prompted by jealousy. The most famous among all the *ikiryō* of Japan was lady Rokujō no ue, the unhappy mistress of Hikaru Genji,

Murasaki Shlkibu, with her unusual flair for psychological observation, gave a deeply moving description of lady Rokujō's torment and bewilderment when she became aware of her soul's wanderings. Her jealousy was so intense that as the *ikiryō* she killed two of Genji's beloved ladies (Yugao and Aoi)[50]. The description of Rokujō's jealous soul at work is the longest description extant concerning an *ikiryō*. It is continued on many pages through more than two chapters[51].

The main conclusions on the problem of *ikiryō* may be summed up in the following points:

1. an *ikiryō* was a soul (*tama*, *tamashii*) of a living person leaving the person's body (*akugaru*);
2. the owner of the soul had to have a grudge against the victim;
3. the soul could do mischief as a *mononoke* and be invisible;
4. the soul could take shape and appear in a visible form;

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[48] Mimbu no daibu – a high official in the Ministry of People's Affairs (Mimbushō).

[49] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 20.

[50] The *Genji monogatari*, scrolls: *Yugao*, *Aoi*; lady Murasaki, the most beloved among Genji's women, was killed by lady Rokujō's spirit too, but not by her *ikiryō*, only by her *shiryō*.

[51] *Genji monogatari*, scrolls *Yugao*, *Aoi* and others.

5. the soul itself was not quite happy about its own deeds as well as the owner if she became aware of the soul activity;
6. the soul could speak through the mouth of a victim;
7. the soul could speak through a medium (*yorimashi*);
8. the owner could be quite unaware of the soul's activity. Some of the points are self-explanatory, but some others need an addition of a few comments.

Ad.1, The word *akugaru* expressed the ability and the process of leaving the body by the soul. There existed a belief that it was possible to catch and return to the owner a wandering soul if one bound a fold of one's underlaying skirt (*shitagai no tsuma*).

Ad.4, In the case of Rokujō, her soul appeared as a vague shape of a handsome woman in the desolate cottage where Genji made love to Yugao. Genji, scared out of his wits, drew his sword (which is the only instance of such a harsh behaviour in his whole life). The shape disappeared but poor Yugao died a moment later[52].

Ad.5 and 6. When lady Aoi was on her death-bed tormented by a *mono no ke*, she seemed to regain consciousness for a short time, and then she spoke to Genji in the voice of lady Rokujō reciting a poem: "Binding your garment, catch and return to me my poor soul soaring in the sky, lamenting and wretched" (*nagekiwabi sora ni midaruru waga tama wo musubitodomeyo, shitagai no tsuma*[53]).

Ad.8. Lady Rokujō for a long time did not know that her soul was in the habit of leaving its owner and killing the owner's rivals. She only felt a vague uneasiness, sometimes she had bad dreams and her health was steadily declining. She became aware of the reason when all the city had already been gossiping and openly making fun of her.

1.4. Benevolent spirits

All the spirit belonging to *goryō*, *shiryō* and *ikiryō* groups are of sinister character. It seems that they were much more numerous than spirits of benevolent nature. From amongst those mentioned previously, we may qualify as benevolent Morosuke only. In the above quoted story from the *Ōkagami* Morosuke is called *omabori* which means "honourable protective (spirit)". From time to time, though not often, there appear in the Heian literature mentions of protective spirits called *shugo no kami* or *shugo no ryō*. They are very near to ideas of the old ancestor worship but their ecclectic character is also evident.

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[52] *Genji monogatari* 1974–75: I, 146–8.

[53] Ibid., 334. Arthur Waley s translation of the poem: "Bind thou, as the seam of a skirt is braided, this shred, that from my soul despair and loneliness have sundered". Waley 1960: 165.

The story of Morosuke as a protective spirit has its further sequence in the *Ōkagami*, where somebody listening to the tale asks the narrator Yotsugi; "Why then Morosuke's spirit did not subdue Motokata's and Kansan's *mono no ke*"? Yotsugi answers that it was impossible because of the "karma from previous life" (*saki no miyo no mukui*[54]), which is clearly a Buddhist idea.

There possibly existed a belief in protective gods similar to the Christian guardian angels, but it is not very pronounced in the Heian literature. One of such stories may be found in the *Konjaku monogatari*. One day Minamoto Yorimitsu (Raikō) sat with some friends in front of a pavilion within the palace ground. The Emperor made his appearance, too. They saw very far away a silhuette of a fox and the Emperor asked Yorimitsu to show his skill with the bow and shoot the fox. Yorimitsu refused claiming that the distance was too big. Then the Emperor ordered him to shoot. There was no escape for Yorimitsu and he had to obey. He took his bow and shot. The fox was killed instantly to the great satisfaction of all present. But Yorimitsu told them that he would have never hit the mark if his protective spirit (*shugo no kami*) had not led the arrow[55].

Here the identity of the protective spirit is unknown. One may only suppose that it could have been Yorimitsu's father or grandfather, but this supposition is based only on some analogies, like the case of Morosuke or the case of Korechika who before departing for his place of banishment went to his father's grave and prayed for his protection[56].

1.5. Miscellaneous spirits

Another big group encloses various spirits of complex character. They could be malevolent or benevolent depending on the situation, or they could be without any specific character at all. They could be visible or invisible, sometimes heard only and sometimes felt only. The variety is such that it is impossible to classify them, and we shall give several examples of the most interesting spirits.

Kawara no in was the name of a residence belonging to minister Minamoto Tōru (822–895). After his death the residence went to his children, but later on it was given to the imperial family. The Emperor Uda (887–897) and Daigo (897–930) used it from time to time for parties and clandestine meetings. After Uda's retirement he went one night to Kawara no in and late at night sat in the central chamber. All of a sudden there appeared before him an old but very elegant man.

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[54] *Ōkagami* 1967: 132.
[55] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXV, 6.
[56] *Eiga monogatari* 1964: I, 165.

– Who are you? – asked the ex-Emperor.
The old man who is the host of this mansion answered the spectre.
– Are you minister Tōru?
– Yes, I am.
– What is your business?
– I live here, for it is my home. Because of the estimable Presence I feel highly honoured but on the other hand it has become too cramped here. And so, how will it be?
– Why? – exclaimed the ex-Emperor indignantly.
– What are you talking about? Have I grabbed somebody else's house? Your descendants have given it to me and because of that I have lived here. Even being a ghost (*mono no ryō*) you should understand such matters.
The scolded ghost disappeared and has never been seen again[57].

A very similar story may be found in the *Kōdanshō*[58], but there are some differences. The ghost of Toru comes for the lady whom the frivolous ex-Emperor had brought with him to Kawara. Scolded by Uta, Toru prostrates himself, embraces Uta's legs and then disappears.

Another story about a ghost appearing in its former bodily shape goes as follows. A girl from Yamato married a young flutist from Kawachi. They lived happily for three years and then he died suddenly. The widow was faithful to his memory and did not receive any suitors. Another three years passed, and then one autumn night, while staying at home, she heard outside the well-known voice of flute. The sounds reached the door and her husband's voice was heard demanding to be let in. She was so frightened that she did not open the door. Peeping through a window she saw her husband's silhuette enveloped in smoke. The husband expressed his regret that she would not let him in and complained about his suffering in hell (which is a very obvious buddhist element), but as a well-mannered Japanese ghost he recited a poem and disappeared playing his flute[59].

The next three stories may be classified as the stories demonstrating high aesthetic valours of Japanese spirits. In the first Yoshimine Moroki, a sad young man, disappointed in his career, composed once a poem leaning on a withered orange tree. The deity (of the tree?) took pity of him and caused the tree to blossom suddenly. Soon after that Moroki advanced unexpectedly in his official life[60].

The second story tells that when the ex-Empress Akiko (Shōshi) lived in the Kyōgyoku dono mansion there was "something" which in divine voice sang *Koborete niou hanazakura kana* ("oh, scattered, fragrant cherry flowers"). The voice

[57] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XVII, 2.
[58] *Kōdanshō* – a collection of various tales of Ōe Masafusa written down by Fujiwara Sanekane about 1104–1109.
[59] Ibid., XXVII, 25.
[60] *Ōkagami* 1967: 26.

was heard on the southern gallery of the mansion but nobody was seen. There was nothing menacing in the voice nor words. Nevertheless the ex-Empress was frightened suspecting that the voice belonged to a *kijin* (or *onigami* – bad deity). At the end of this story it is said that it must have been a spirit (*ryō*) who admired flowers so much. But why he did it in broad daylight and why so loudly?[61]

The third story describes a man who was once crossing a mountain in the Hitachi province. He sang in a clear loud voice. At one moment he distinctly heard the words "Oh, how beautiful"! spoken to him, but nobody else in his entourage heard them. Soon afterwards the man fell ill and died. It is explained in the story that the man's singing enchanted a local deity (*kuni no kami*). The deity wished to keep the singer for ever and thus it had to cause his death[62].

1.6. Materialised powers of nature

To the last group of spirits of native derivation belong powers of nature which can materialize in a human form like, for example, the spirit of water (*mizu no tama*) which appeared in the form of an old man[63]. An interesting story of a very faint Buddhist flavour is in the *Reiiki*. The story must have been old at the Keikai's time and thanks to that it is similar in its climate to old animistic beliefs although in Keikai's hands it became dressed up in Buddhist imagery. It is a long story and we shall give only the first, most interesting part.

The action of the story begins at the time of the legendary Emperor Bidatsu. A peasant in the Owari province went to his patch of land. While he was working, there was a terrible sound of thunder and a moment later a thunderbolt fell at his feet. The thunderbolt changed itself into a boy. The peasant demonstrated his aggressive intentions towards the boy, and the latter begged to spare his life. The peasant consented finally and the thunder-boy returned to heaven. Later on, out of gratitude, the thunder-god caused the peasant's wife to bear a son endowed with miraculous powers[64]. From the further narration it appears that the boy-prodigy became a famous holy monk known to posterity as Dōjō hōshi.

There probably existed a belief in momentary manifestations of animistic spirits – the story of Moroki and the orange tree may also be put into this category, if in the author's intention the *kami* was *ki no kami* (a deity of the tree). But in this case it would have been a manifestation through action, not in a human form.

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[61] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 28.
[62] Ibid., 45.
[63] Ibid., 5.
[64] *Nihon reiiki* 1975: I, 3.

Summing up this chapter we would like to point out that among the spirits of native derivation the most popular ones in the Heian time were all the malevolent kinds (*goryō*, *shiryō*, *ikiryō*) with one reservation: *ikiryō* were believed in but not so popular as to find their way into diaries of the period. The belief in *mono no ke* (nameless, or *shiryō* of recognised persons) was very strong but it came to the surface only in cases of illness, sudden death, mandess or some personal calamity. Otherwise people were not obsessed with fear. In the literary fiction *mono no ke* appear often, but it depends on the author, in fact. In the *Genji monogatari* there are comparatively very few spirits and ghosts and that fact throws a light on lady Murasaki's mental prowess. She even expressed explicitly her opinion of the matter by writing In the *Genji monogatari* that *mono no ke* and similar are phenomena which exercise their powers towards weak people only.What fills one with admiration for the lady living one millenium ago is the fact that her words correspond exactly to the opinion of Dr Baelz, who at the close of the 19th century examined many cases of possession in Shimane[65] and came to a similar conclusion: "... Among the predisposing conditions may be mentioned a weak intellect, a superstitious turn of mind, and such debilitating diseases as, for instance, typhoid fever...".

2. Imported demons

There were many different kinds of demons in the Heian period. Although the word "demon" in the colloquial language is associated most often with bad and terrifying beings, in the science of demonology it is not necessarily so[66]. To the category of demons may be included also various fairies, gnomes and goblins – not especially sinister in their aspects or activities. The demons of Japan we shall divide into: demons in human form, demons invisible, devils, goblins (*tengu*) and heavenly maidens (*tennin*). The category of demons in human form is the biggest and highly variegated one.

2.1. The terminology

In Japanese the generic term for demons is *oni*, but in a narrow sense it is used mostly for "devils". It should be stipulated again that the terminology in Japanese is entangled very much and therefore we will include into the category of demons in human form also some apparitions which in Japanese texts are called *mono no ke*, *ryō*, or *tama*. Only the character of an apparition will decide which category it falls under.

[65] For Dr E.Baelz's investigation see Chamberlain 1905: 115–8.

[66] See Moszyński 1934: 604.

It is instructive to compare the entry *oni* as given in three dictionaries of classical Japanese. The *Kogo jiten* published by Ōbunsha (1965) gives the following meanings:

1. spirit of a dead person (*shisha no ryō*); Chinese devils;
2. imaginary monsters of frightful appearance, killing and eating people; (quotation from the *Izumo fudoki*[67]: "one-eyed devil came and devoured men working in the fields"); other points are omitted here as they are metaphors or later derivatives.

The Kadokawa *Kogo jiten* (1972) entry explains:

1. souls and spirits of dead persons (*shisha no ryōkon*; *bōkon*);
2. monsters of frightful appearance casting curses (tatari) on people; mononoke;
3. imaginary monsters endowed with supernatural powers and eating people.

The Iwanami *Kogo jiten* (1975) gives the etymology of the word *oni* as the Sino-Japanese reading *on* of *kakusu*, *kakuru* (to hide, be hidden) plus *i*, and it states that the word *oni* appeared at the beginning of the Heian period. In the *Man'yōshū*[68] the hieroglyph for *oni* was pronounced *mono*. At that time *mono* meant all supernatural powers still formless. Later on, under the influence of Buddhism and Ommyōdō the formless powers took shapes similar to *gokusotsu no oni* (devils employed in Buddhist hell) and *jaki* (demons of Hinduistic derivation). As the synonym of the word *oni* the dictionary gives: monsters of frightful appearance. It quotes also the entry in the *Wamyōshō*[69] "spirits of dead persons".

As it may be seen from the above quoted entries there is some confusion in understanding the meaning of *oni*. In the present author's opinion the etymology given in the Iwanami dictionary is unconvincing. And not very convincing, either, seems another etymology proposed by Ikeda Yasaburō (who follows Origuchi). Ikeda expounds the idea that the origin of Japanese *oni* ought to be sought at the period of subjugation by the Yamato tribes. The aborigines retreating under the impact of conquerors' pressure, escaped into the mountains. They were called by the Yamato people *yamabito* (mountaineers) or *kyojin* (giants) and they became associated in popular imagination with something big, they became "big people" – *ōhito*. And from the word *ōhito* evolved the word *oni*[70]. Interpreting Ikeda s exposition we may conclude that the word itself had associations with the word *onryō* (vengeful spirit) and at last the words and ideas merged into the idea of demons which had the physical characteristics of *ōhito* and spiritual characteristics of *mono*, *ryō*, *tama* and others.

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[67] *Izumo fudoki* – a collection of local legends, customs, geographic and economic conditions of the Izumo Provence compiled after 713.

[68] *Man'yōshū*, the first great compilation of Japanese poems collected soon after 759.

[69] *Wamyōshō* – a dictionary of Japanese words compiled in 957 by Mineimoto Shitagō.

[70] Ikeda 1974: 77.

Some modern Japanese authors[71] suggest various classifications of demons according to their form, or to the place they appear in, or to the purpose of their appearance, etc. These classifications, interesting as they are, will not be followed in this study because:

1. they concern all phenomena belonging to the category of oni in the broad meaning of the word;
2. they concern *oni* up to the modern times.

For us *oni*-devils have their distinct form, which shall be explained later on, and every other apparition will be classified as *oni*-demon (in a human or inhuman form). Because among demons in human form there is still evident a trace of the old idea of *shisha no ryō* (spirit of a dead person), in Japanese texts they' may be called *mononoke*, *tama*, *ryō*, but they too may be called *oni*. For us they will be simply demons.

2.2. Demons in human form

In this category we can meet demons of both sexes, male as well as female, with no limitations on age – children, adults and very old persons. The majority of them was connected with some definite place (a house, temple, bridge, mountain. etc.) and did not venture beyond it. These were frightful but easy to avoid – in the *Konjaku monogatari* there are often expressed warnings against entering unknown houses or the places known to be haunted. A smaller group of demons in human form was more capricious and liked to appear in the most unexpected places. These were impossible to be avoided. Some demons were of known lineage, others not. Some were only vaguely sinister, others were purely cannibals. Some of them could be killed or expelled. There are many examples in the Heian literature, and we shall choose the most typical ones only.

In the province of Harima a master of divination (*ommyōji*) was called to one wealthy residence. He predicted that on such-and-such day a demon (*oni*) will come to the mansion, and people living there should be extremely cautious. The people were terrified and asked "Prom whence will it come? What form will it take"? The *ommyōji* answered that it would come in a human form and would enter through the gate. On the appointed day they closed all the doors and windows and applied various magic precautions. They waited in silence. At one moment they saw a well dressed, ordinary-looking man standing at the gate and peeping inside. At first the demon tried the doors and windows but all were shut, and at last he entered through the chimney. Those all present in the house lost their heads completely and could only lament. But a young son of the host, thinking that it is better to

[71] Yanagida Kunio, Origuchi Shinobu, Ema Tsutomu, Ikeda Yasaburō and others.

fight than to be eaten by the demon without a protest, took his bow and shot an arrow with tremendous strength. The demon wanted to flee the same way as he had entered, but pierced by the arrow he simply disappeared[72].

The demon of this story was vaguely sinister but he might have been suspected of cannibalistic intentions. He was not connected with the mansion and his origin was unknown. Confronted with a determined defence he made his escape by becoming invisible. The next story will show a demon who was killed.

The boy born out of the thunderbolt's gratitude to the peasant of Owari[73] became a servant in the Gankōji temple. Just then there operated in the bell tower some awesome demon killing servants one after another. Our boy was determined to catch the demon and he stayed for the night at the haunted tower. The demon came and was at once attacked fiercely by the boy. After a prolonged struggle the demon at last fled away. In the morning the boy found a bloody track going from the tower to a grave in the temple compounds. In the grave had been buried a bad servant of the temple[74]. This demon's origin became clear for everybody. It haunted only one place, the bell tower, but it is not evident from the text if he ate his victims. He may have been a killer only but not a cannibal.

No such doubts will arise in the next examples. In the village Amuchi of Yamato there lived a beautiful young girl. She had many suitors, but her parents were very particular and for a long time did not consent to her marriage. At last a young man sent such a lot of presents that the parents' hearts softened. They agreed to his suit and settled the date for his coming. He came and not wasting time he withdrew with the girl to the bed-chamber. At night the parents heard terrible shrieks of their daughter but did not pay any attention to them believing it only too normal in the circumstances. But in the morning they entered the nuptial chamber and found only the head and one finger left of their daughter. The son-in-law disappeared end his presents turned into horses' and cows' bones[75].

This particular demon was of the worst kind. He was a killer and cannibal, he was not connected with any specific place, he came in a form raising no suspicions and it was impossible to find protection against him. Very similar demon is that of the next story.

On the 17th day of the 8th moon of 887 three girls serving inside the palace enclosure were on their way home and while passing a pine-forest near the Butokuden paivlion they saw a man standing under a tree. The man took hold of a hand of one girl and pulled her into the shade of the tree. Two other girls discreetly drew away and for some time waited quietly for their friend. She was not coming

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[72] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 23.
[73] *Nihon reiiki* 1975: I, 49.
[74] *Nihon reiiki* 1975: I, 5.
[75] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XX, 37, *Nihon reiiki* 1975: II, 33.

so long that they decided to investigate and returned to the tree. But there was no man and no girl, only bloodstained parts of female body[76].

This story is important from our point of view because the *Konjaku monogatari* tale was woven around an entry in the chronicle *Sandai jitsuroku*[77] (under the date given above). It is therefore based on something more solid than oral tradition.

All those demons were individual, lonely figures acting for their individual purposes. This is typical for the Heian period. But here and there may be found strange creatures appearing in crowds. Here are two examples:

One man with his family moved to a house not knowing that the new residence had been haunted by demons (*ryō*, *tama*). When the night came the nurse went to sleep with a small baby in one of the rooms. She saw, all of a sudden, a panel in one wall opening and from there ten small men came out into the room riding small horses. The riders were 5 inches tall. The nurse scattered rice on the floor and the riders disappeared. On the grains of rice there were left particles of blood[78].

Another man, Miyoshi Kiyotsura, moved to a mansion at the corner of Gojō and Horikawa streets. He was well aware that the mansion had been haunted, but he was a very courageous man, not easily scared and he consciously took the risk. At night he witnessed more elaborate performance than the nurse of the previous story, but in some features it was similar. At first there were human heads looking at him from behind boards in the ceiling. Later on there came galloping forty or fifty riders of a very small stature. Next, there entered a lady 3 *shaku*[79] tall, made a parade in front of Kiyotsura and then left. At last, from the garden came an old man who tried to frighten Kiyotsura away by telling him about dangers of living in the mansion. But Kiyotsura answered him that even demons must listen to reason, while against foxes a dog is sufficient protection. Finally, the demons abandoned any hope of scaring the new host and quieted down or left. Anyhow, Kiyotsura stayed in the mansion and nothing bad happened to him[80].

In both stories we can see small riders – an interesting variant of demons in human form, and in one of them additionally a small lady and human heads. As the horses were only accessories for the riders we shall not create for them a new category of "demons in animal forms".

Up to now there were examples of male demons only, hut the company of demons in Kiyotsura's story is of both sexes and for this reason we put it as a bridge between the stories concerning male and female demons.

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[76] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 8.

[77] *Sandai jitsuroku* – one of the Six National Histories, compiled in 901. It describes the history of three reigns (from 858 to 887).

[78] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 30.

[79] *Shaku* – about 30,3 cm.

[80] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 31.

Among the most famous female demons of the Heian period is the demon of Rashōmon, but the extant written versions belong to the next period. As we would like to limit our description to legends recorded only in the Heian literature, we shall omit the demon of Rashōmon (though with some regret)[81]. There are enough demons left without it.

There was in the capital a young unmarried woman. She became pregnant and the nearer the time of childbirth was, the more troubled she became, because she could not find any means for keeping the child. At last she decided to bear the child somewhere in the mountains and then to abandon it there. With this intention she went to the mountains. She found an old shack and entered it. But it turned out that the shack was not uninhabited. It belonged to an old woman who received the pregnant woman hospitably and was even very helpful at the time of confinement. Then the young mother found out, unexpectedly for herself, that she lost the wish of abandoning the baby. Presently she wanted to keep it and enjoy looking at its growth. Being very weak the mother stayed in the shack for a few days. Then one morning she awoke suddenly and saw the old woman leaning over the baby. She looked horribly changed, with hungry eyes and distorted face. She was murmuring to herself "what a dainty tidbit"! (*ana, umage*). The mother in that instant understood that her kind hostess was a demon with an appetite for her baby. She waited till the old woman went somewhere and then she escaped taking the baby with her[82].

This demon obviously had cannibalistic inclinations. It was connected with one place only and its origin was unknown. It was not an especially powerful demon, because it let its victims escape and did not try to go after them. The mother was, in the end, quite fortunate.

Another girl who came into contact with a demon was not so fortunate. The girl entreated by a young courtier agreed to go with him to a desolate old chapel in the vicinity of Shichijō and Ōmiya streets. The chapel looked dirty but the couple did not mind it. They entered and engaged themselves in making love when suddenly there came a little girl with a candle and soon after her an old lady of distinguished bat gloomy appearance. The lady in threatening language ordered the young couple to leave the chapel immediatelly. They left, but the girl died very soon afterwards because of the demon's influence[83].

The only characteristic feature of this demon was that it liked to stay home (the chapel) and nothing more. It is not even sure if the girl's death was caused by a kind of *tatari*. It is possible that she died simply of the shock. If so, then the demon must be classified only as a vaguely sinister one.

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[81] There is a good description of the Rashōmon story in *The World of the Shining Prince* by Ivan Morris, see Morris 1964: 131.

[82] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 15.

[83] Ibid., 16.

A demon operating on the river-crossing in the Watari village of Mino may be considered of the same kind. The demon in a form of a woman carrying a child accosted everybody crossing the river and asked to hold the baby. The story circulated among the local people and they avoided the place. Near the village there was a blockhouse full of brave warriors. One of them, Taira Suetake, promised to cross the river and come back unharmed. He went to the crossing riding a good horse and equipped with sword and a bow. His three friends followed him out of curiosity and hid in the bushes by the river. They heard him crossing the river and returning. When he was in the middle of the crossing on his way back, there came to them a faint voice of a woman and crawing of a baby and at the same time they felt a wave of stink enfolding them. Next they heard the voice begging Suetake to return the child. Suetake refused and galloping came to the shore carrying the baby in the fold of his sleeve. But when in the blockhouse he unfolded the sleeve there were only withered leaves inside. In the conclusion it is told that the woman could have been a vixen, but just as well she could have been a ghost of a woman who died in childbirth (*onna no ko umutote shinitaru ga tama ni naritaru* – "women dying in childbirth become ghosts"[84]). Here we are given a tentative indentification of the demon (if it was a demon, not a vixen) and the identification is for genus, not for the individual. But again the demon appeared in one place only and was only vaguely sinister.

In the next story there are two female demons of unknown parentage, both appearing on or near a bridge and both very much sinister (in action, not in appearance).

Ki no Tosuke on his way to the Mino province met on the Seta bridge a beautiful lady. After some conversation she asked him to deliver a box to another lady who would wait for him at the bridge in Mino. He hesitated but as he was begged earnestly by the lady, at last consented. Before parting the lady forbid him to open the box. Tosuke reached Mino but forgetting all about the box he went straight home. Unpacking his luggage he found the box and promised himself to deliver it at the nearest occasion. Meanwhile he placed it out of his wife's reach. He did not take into consideration his wife's inquisitiveness and her jealous disposition. She ferreted out the box and took it into her head that her husband kept in it some letters from a mistress. She opened the box and found in it several human eyeballs and penes cut with hairs. She shut the box and told the husband about her grisly discovery. He was extremely angry with her but the harm was done. There was nothing else to be done but to take the box out of the house and deliver it to the addressee. He went to the bridge and met a young lady who eagerly took hold of the box. She guessed that it had been opened and it arose her fury. True enough,

[84] Ibid., 43.

she let Tosuke go but it did not save his life. Soon afterwards he became ill and died saying that it was punishment for opening the fatal box[85].

The conclusion is quite unexpected: how terrible is a woman's jealousy! It brought poor Tosuke to the grave. It should be noted that the first lady-demon was visible to Tosuke only. The men of his retinue did not see her. To the second lady Tosuke went alone and it is not known if she would become visible to the others present.

The last of our demons in human form will be especially horrible on account of its one quite original aspect. There were two brothers who made their living by hunting. One night they went to the woods and took their positions on two adjacent trees. Hidden in the leafage they waited for a deer. At some moment the elder brother felt a human hand catching his head from above. He shouted to the younger brother asking for advice. The younger shouted back that it would be best to start shooting. "I cannot shoot" was the elder's reply "something is just pulling me up". "Then I will shoot, aiming by ear only". With the elder's consent, the younger brother shot and was sure that arrow hit the invisible target. The elder brother reached up end touched a human hand. He cut it with his knife. When the brothers saw the severed hand in the day-light they thought that it resembled their mother's hand. Boon after that their mother died and it turned out that, in fact, the hand had belonged to her body. The explanation of mother's strange behaviour is given in the following words: *hito no oya no toshi ito oitaru wa kanarazu oni ni narite kaku ko wo mo kurawamu to suru narikeri* – "it happens that when parents become so very old they turn inevitably into demons and can even devour their own children"[86].

2.5. Invisible demons

Among the invisible demons a prominent group was formed by *shikigami* (*shiki no kami*, *shikijin*) – demons in the service of *ommyōji* and other magicians. The *shikigami* could have been used by their masters for every kind of work – good or bad – from the commonest labors at home to putting a curse on or even killing somebody.

One of the most famous masters of Ommyōdō, Abe Seimei, called on his friend, monk Kancho. They sat in the garden and talked about the occult art when one boy listening to them asked Seimei, if it would be possible to kill a man by a *shikigami*. Seimei explained that it was possible but not quite easy: "Killing insects and other small animals is much easier. Nevertheless, it is a sin". The boy insisted on

[85] Ibid., 21.
[86] Ibid., 22.

demonstration of that power and at last Seimei consented to kill a frog. He took a blade of grass, murmured spells over it and then put it on the frog. The frog died instantly. It was killed by a *shikigami* summoned by Seimei. Seimei was in the habit of using *shikigami* as messengers and servants[87]. In the *Heike monogatari* and *Gempei seisui ki*[88] it is written that Seimei had twelve demons at his disposal, but his wife was afraid of them and one day she put the demons into a sack and hid them under a bridge. Nevertheless, the shikigami were still In contact with their master and whenever Seimei needed one of them, it spoke through the mouth of anybody at hand.

The same Seimei is mentioned in the *Ōkagami* as well. When the Emperor Kazan suddenly abdicated (in 986) and fled at night from the palace, he passed Seimei's house on the way and heard Seimei's voice ordering one of his *shikigami* to go to the palace. Then "something invisible to the eye pushed the door open and probably saw the Emperor's back" (*me ni wa mienu mono no to wo oshiakete, miushiro wo ya mimairaseken...*[89]). The voice of the *shikigami* was heard informing Seimei that the Emperor was just passing his house.

Here and in the *Heike monogatari* version *shikigami* are heard but not seen. In the first part of the "frog story" there is a tale showing that *shikigami* were able to assume a human shape if their master wished so. The tale is about a practitioner of magic who wanted to put Seimei to a test and came to him as a monk with two boys. Seimei guessed at once that the boys were *shikigami*. But it seems that the true figure of *shikigami*[90] belongs to the category of invisible demons vaguely associated with a human form because the classifier used for counting them is the same as for people (*hitori, futari*…).

In the *Makura no sōshi* the authoress mentions a *shikigami* in a rather strange context. One night the Empress asked her if she loved her. Just when Sei Shōnagon was answering "how could I possibly not love you" somebody sneezed loudly. Sneezing was considered to be a sign that the speaker was lying and the Empress pretended to take offence. Next day she sent a letter to Sei Shōnagon with allusions to the lie. Sei Shōnagon answered in a poem and added that the fatal sneeze had surely been caused by a naughty *shikigami*[91].

Apart from *shikigami* there were other invisible powers full of mischief. Some of them were only impish, others deadly. One night Fujiwara Kaneie sat in his mansion at the window with the lattice rolled up. He looked at the moon when suddenly "some-thing invisible" (*me ni mo mienu mono*) put the lattice down with

[87] Ibid., XXIV, 16.

[88] Quoted after Yamagiwa, *Ōkagami*, 1967: 271.

[89] Ibid., 52, 442.

[90] Speaking about a figure of something invisible is not quite logical but demons as a whole are beyond logic, and so we shall risk that phrase.

[91] *Makura no sōshi* 1958: 234.

a crash. The servants were terrified but Kaneie took his sword threateningly and very severely ordered the invisible something to roll the lattice up. The demon obeyed meekly[92].

Much more appaling stories about people devoured by demons circulated around the country. There are several such tales in the *Konjaku monogatari*.

One of them was obviously taken from the *Ise monogatari* (*dan* 6)[93], but with a very important deviation. In the *Ise monogatari* story a young man eloped with his beloved and at night found shelter in an uninhabited old house. There came a terrible storm and the young man posted himself at the door holding his bow in order to frighten away thunder from the lady. But when the storm quieted it turned out that the lady had disappeared. The brave young man was sure that she had been devoured by demons and lamenting returned to the capital. Then it appeared that the lady was still very much alive. She had not been devoured by demons, but had been rescued by her brothers who had had other plans for her. The lady in due course became a consort of Emperor Seiwa[94].

It was, certainly, a rational ending to the story because there were real persons alluded to and it was impossible to change their destinies in order to embellish the story. As the lady Takaiko was very well known in the Heian society she had to be – in the story – rescued by her brothers before anything improper happened. Her reputation could not have been blackened, hence the storm and the lover standing all night at the door without even speaking to her.

But the story itself had been so interesting that In the *Konjaku monogatari* it was repeated without the rational ending but the identity of the lady changed. It is under the heading of "The story of Arihara Narihira's beloved devoured by demons". Narihira is the young man of the *Ise monogatari* story. In the *Konjaku monogatari* story he found in the morning only the head and costumes of his paramour. The sounds of thunder are explained as the demons' voices[95]. But the demons themselves were invisible.

Other invisible demons were even more insolent as they devoured an official on duty in the imperial palace. Of the official himself only the head was found. But there were scattered around his blood-stained clothes, shoes, fan and other accessories[96].

As it has already been stated, the demons, so popular in the literary fiction, are scarce in diaries. There is only one mention of the presence of a demon in the

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[92] *Ōkagami* 1967: 169.

[93] *Ise monogatari* – a collection of short stories woven around poems. It was written at the beginning of the 10th century and comprises 125 episodes (*dan*).

[94] Reigned 858–876; the lady was Takaiko, a daughter of Fujiwara Yoshifusa, mother of emperor Yōzei.

[95] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 7.

[96] Ibid., 9.

Makura no sōshi and, in fact, the authoress herself did not see it, but was told about it (*moya wa oni ari tote*; "we were told that there was a demon in the main chamber"[97]). Either the intelligence was not very convincing or the authoress was too busy to write about it, anyhow she noted it down without any trace of panic. She added to the statement one sentence concerning changes made in arranging the Empress' room.

The word *oni* in the *Makura no sōshi* is used many times in different contexts but (except for that one instance) there is no actual presence of any demon seen or heard by a witness. Nevertheless the authoress noted down under the heading of "things with frightening names" (*na osoroshiki mono*) three things containing the word *oni* (*oniwarabi* – devil's yam; *onitokoro* – a kind of herb, devil's fern; *ushioni* – a cow-headed devil). Two of the things are quite innocent in themselves and were frightening only because of their phonetic associations[98].

As for "the demon in the main chamber" we may safely assume that it was an invisible manifestation. Perhaps a window closed by itself similarly to the story of Kaneie.

There was a belief in another manifestation on a more grand scale. It was called *hyakki yagyō* – the nightly march of hundred demons. In the literature of the Heian period there are tales about the march in several sources. The belief came from China and was advocated by masters of Ommyōdō. It was believed that there were nights in every month particularly dangerous for those who found themselves in the streets on the way of marching demons. The demons did not make their parades every night. The Masters of Ommyōdō knew their habits and could foresee the nights of migration.

Fujiwara Morosuke one night met the *hyakki yagyō* on his way from the palace. The demons were invisible and Morosuke's attendants could not understand their master's strange behaviour. He ordered to stop his ox-cart, to close the windows and to unhitch the oxen. The oxen were put in the shadow of the cart. Then Morosuke ordered the attendants to shout as loudly as possible. He himself sitting inside the cart bowed deeply and recited a sutra expelling demons. This peculiar performance lasted about one hour. When Morosuke perceived that the demons passed, he ordered to hitch the oxen again and returned home undisturbed[99].

Another kind of invisible demons had a specialized function; the demons by casting a spell *on* people caused them to wander aimlessly. They were called *madowashigami* or *madoigami* (deities leading people astray). A man who went to look

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[97] *Makura no sōshi* 1958: 112.

[98] *Among the things with frightening names Sei Shōhagon listed ikisudama, too.*

[99] *Ōkagami* 1967: 127–8. In later times the *hyakki yagyō* became a favourite subject of painting for such artists as Tosa Mitsunobu (1434–1525), Tosa Tsumetaka (13th c.), Toriyama Sekien and others. In their paintings demons have most fantastic forms, but it seems that in the Heian period the demons of *hyakki yagyō* were not depicted yet.

for a lost horse walked about the field very well known to him, but to his great surprise he suddenly saw a big tree standing in the middle of the field. He was completely sure that the tree had never been there and so he concluded that he became a victim of *madoigami*[100]. Another man returning at night from the palace lost his way and till the morning he wandered about the western part of the town. It was certainly another trick of *madowashigami*[101].

All unexplained events – people vanishing without trace, objects lost or stolen, unknown manifestations – could have been explained by interventions of supernatural powers. Life in the Heian period, so peaceful on the surface, was not free from dangers. Thieves operated in the whole capital entering even the sacrosanct precincts of the palace. Robbers waited for travellers in the mountains and woods. Killers were at large and many a time people disappeared without a trace to be found. Sometimes even in the palace such horrors happened. What today is qualified as an undetected crime, in the Heian period was often considered a result of supernatural powers at work. Hence, so many stories of demon thieves, demon-killers and demon-cannibals.

2.4. Devils

All the demons described above, in Japanese texts were named variously: *oni*, *tama*, *ryō*, *mononoke*, *kijin*, *kami*, *akki*, *akuryō*, etc. In many cases for the same apparition there could have been used two or three different names. There was no such confusion with malicious creatures which we would like to classify as devils. Devils in the texts were almost always called *oni*, although they sometimes could have been confused with another kind of demons, called *tengu*. Oni had distinct, though variegated forms, and could be divided into two big groups.

The first group consisted of devils which were in many respects similar to other demons in their character, manners and origin. They lived their individual lives, they were appearing in the people's world for their individual purposes, and they could have been transformed human beings. To the second group we would like to ascribe devils of purely foreign origin, namely the devils employed in hell. Sometimes they were sent to the people's world, but their usual habitation was in the kingdom of Emma[102] where they served as wardens, torturers and executioners of poor sinners' souls. They will interest us only marginally as they belong to the category of "theological devils".

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[100] He was mistaken, which will be explained in the chapter on animals endowed with supernatural power. *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 37.

[101] Ibid., 42.

[102] The supreme judge of souls, residing in the Buddhist hell.

The birth of a devil (of the first group) is illustrated by a story from the *Konjaku monogatari* about the madness of Empress Somedono. The Empress (her real name was Akirakeiko) was a daughter of Fujiwara Yoshifusa. She was a consort of Emperor Montoku and the mother of Seiwa. She retained great beauty even after her youth had passed. Unluckily, for a long time she was tormented by a strange illness. Many physicians and practitioners treated her but all in vain. It was undoubtedly some kind of possession. At last somebody told that on Mount Kongōsan lived a very wise monk who knew most powerful spells against any kind of possession. He was called to the palace and started his ministrations. While he was muttering the spells one of the ladies in attendance began to show signs of insanity and a moment later a fox came out of her womb. The fox was so old that it could not even escape. The monk bound it with a rope and informed Yoshifusa that the Empress would presently return to health. And, indeed, the next day the Empress was quite well.

But the story does not end here. It is just a beginning of something more sinister. The monk during the treatment saw the Empress and at once became enchanted with her beauty. She aroused such a passion in him that, forgetting everything in the world, he forced his way behind her courtains of state. Other ladies present in the chamber made a terrible uproar. The imperial physician, Taima no Kamotsugu, heard their shrieks and came running to the chamber. He caught the monk while the latter tried to escape. The monk was cast to prison where he began threatening loudly that he would curse the Empress should he die in prison. The Emperor was alarmed and ordered to set the monk free but to send him off to Mount Kongōsan. After return to his hermitage the monk, still enamoured, thought only of finding a way to see the Empress again. At last, he set up his mind on becoming a devil. He starved himself and died. After death he became a devil. His head became bald, his naked body was girded with a red loincloth, his skin turned black and shiny. He was 8 *shaku* tall, his eyes looked like amber saucers. His mouth was very wide and full of teeth sharp as knives. He had with him a magic hammer (*uchide no kozuchi*). In this impressive form he went to the palace and stood at the Empress' side. All the people who saw him were beside themselves with fear but the devil's spiritual power (*oni no tama*) caused that the Empress was fascinated with his male beauty. They made love to each other with no regard for the public. The devil did not forget his grudge for the physician Kamotsugu and speaking through the mouth of somebody (*hito no tsukite* – "possessing a man") declared his revenge. Soon afterwards Kamotsugu and his three or four sons died one after another[103].

The story is much longer, but for our purpose it is enough to stop here. In this episode we saw the origin of that particular devil and his devilish looks and vengeful

[103] Ibid., XX, 7.

character. The story itself was probably quite a famous one, as there are mentions of it in the *Fusō ryakki*[104] and in the *Shingonden*[105].

The *Fusō ryakki* entry is under the date of the 9th moon of 878. It is based on the *Zenke hiki*[106] and it states that on the 50th anniversary of Empress Somedono's birth her son Seiwa tennō came to her with congratulatory gifts while she just copulated with a devil. The same story is repeated in the *Shingonden* (IV,17) with the addition stating that Sōō (a monk of the Shingon sect) through special prayers liberated the Empress from the bad influence of a *tengu*. That *tengu* was a spirit (*ryō*) of a monk Shinzai of the Ki family. The scandal started in 865.

Another point of interest in that story lies in the terminology. In the *Konjaku monogatari* version all through the text the devil is called *oni*, but in the title there is used the word *tengu*. The same word as in the *Shingonden* version. As it has already been mentioned, such confusion happened sometimes in case of people transformed posthumously into demons. It ensued from the belief that some *tengu* were the posthumous manifestations of bad people, especially of Buddhist monks (see: the next chapter), similarly to some devils.

But in the case of the devil possessing Empress Somedono it is rather obvious that he belonged to the devil class, as his form was quite typical for devils and quite unlike that of *tengu*. Another example of a typical devil may be found in the story of Agi no Hashi (the bridge of Agi).

The bridge (in the Ōmi province) had a very bad fame. It was haunted. Nevertheless, one courageous man decided to cross it at dusk. He chose a good horse and smeared its hind quarters with oil. He rode to the bridge and when he was in the middle of it, he saw an indistinct silhuette. "That's the devil" – he thought. But no! When he rode nearer he saw that it was a woman looking very forlorn and embarrased. She asked humbly to be taken on the horse and send off to some place. The man for a moment was seized with compassion and wanted to consent. But then he understood that at this time in such a place no honest woman could appear. Now he was sure that he met a demon and, turning his horse, galloped back. The woman at first tried to stop him by crying pitifully. When it did not stop him, she rushed after him and strove to catch the horse, but her hand slipped from the oily croup. The man hurrying to the shore prayed loudly. Hearing the sounds of pursuit he looked back and saw a devil. The devil was 9 *shaku* tall. His face was broad and red. His only eye was amber in colour. Above his head there floated a mass

[104] *Fusō ryakki* – a historical chronicle compiled after 1094, based on various documents private and official.

[105] Shingonden – a collection of documents and legends from India, China and Japan, concerning the Shingon sect. Compiled about 1324. Based on materials from particular periods.

[106] *Zenke hiki* – a collection of strange tales of the Miyoshi family. Compiled by Miyoshi Kiyotsura. The collection as a whole has been lost. Some tales survived in other collections (e.g. the *Konjaku monogatari*, *Fusō ryakki*, etc.).

of tangled hair. At every hand he had only three fingers but they were tipped with talons 5 inches long and sharp as knives. The skin of his body was bluish-green.

The man escaped safely from the devil, but he did not live very long. Soon afterwards the devil, assuming the shape of somebody else, killed the man[107].

The appearance of this devil is given by Ema Tsutomu under the heading of "Devils of typical appearance" (*ittei no sugata no oni*[108]). Further on Ema gives descriptions of devils in the Heian paintings. It seems that in earlier paintings the devils were half-naked and often one-eyed. Later on they had two or three eyes, their scantily dressed bodies looked withered, some of them had wings like dragons. The common features were cruel mouth with sharp teeth and long sharp talons. The horns did not appear yet in the Heian iconography.

The paintings must have been very impressive. Sei Shōnagon, invited by Empress Sadako to look at a screen with the pictures of hell, after one glance hid herself in fright. It was too much for her, she could not imagine "anything more terrible" (*yuyushū imijiki koto kagiri nashi*[109]). Lady Murasaki, on the other hand, was not so susceptible and through Genji's mouth she expressed her sarcastic opinion: the imperial artist paint "Mount Hōrai that nobody has ever seen, forms of monstrous fish in wild seas, shapes of fierce animals from China, or the faces of devils that the human eye has never seen; all the pictures are intended to make frightful impression" (... *hito no mioyobanu Hōrai no yama, araumi no ikareru io no sugata, Karakuni no hageshii kedamono no katachi, me ni mienu oni no kao nado no, odoroodoroshiku tsukuritaru mono wa*...[110]).

In the devil of Agi bridge we can suspect his origin although it is not explicitly told. It could have been in the mortal life a woman who died with hate in her heart and after death turned into a devil. But it is impossible to guess the origin of devils living in hell. Their generic name is *gokusotsu no oni* (lit. prison guards devils) and they are further distinguished (e.g. *shō*, *rasetsu*, etc.) according to their functions. Generally speaking they belong to the Buddhist religion, but from time to time they appear in not quite orthodox contexts, in stories with strong native admixtures. We would like to present one of such stories.

There lived in the Yamada district of Sanuki province a girl of family called Nunoshiki. She fell ill and her parents prepared many tasty looking offerings for the god of illness (*yakujin*). Instead of the god there came a devil sent by Emma. He was to deliver the girl's soul to Emma's kingdom, but when he saw the offerings he became attracted by them. He took the girl's soul to hell, but on the way he made an interesting proposal; he would save her life should she find a substitute

[107] Ibid., XXVII, 13.
[108] Ema 1976: 121.
[109] *Makura no sōshi* 1958: 114.
[110] *Genji monogatari* 1974–75: I, 69.

of the same name and age as hers. The girl informed him that, in fact, there was such a person in the Utari district. The devil went to Utari and took the soul of the other girl. Meanwhile the girl of Yamada returned to life.

When king Emma saw the girl from Utari he understood at once that he had been cheated; it was another person, not the one he had summoned and he ordered to bring the proper girl. Willy-nilly the devil went to Yamada and this time took the girl and delivered her to Emma. The king was satisfied and ordered to send back the girl of Utari. But then it appeared that the body of the Utari girl had already been burnt and her soul (*tama, kon*) had no abode to return to. Then Emma ordered the soul to enter the body of Yamada girl, which had not been cremated yet. The soul of Utari girl entered Yamada girl's body and the body returned to life. The girl sat on her bed, looked around and stated: "This is not my home. These people are not my parents. My home is at Utari". Hot listening to any persuasions she went to Utari and entered the other house. But, of course, she was not recognized there because she had the appearance of Yamada girl. For some time there was a general confusion in both families, but at last they found a modus vivendi and the girl lived happily sometimes with Utari's and sometimes with Yamada's families[111].

There are other stories about devils from hell who could have been bribed with offerings. It may be a naive attempt at explanation of lethargy, of unexpected return to life of persona assumed to have been dead. On the other hand, similar stories were told in China, as well, and they could have come to Japan straight from there. Nevertheless, the Yamada-Utari story has a climate of local legend dressed up in Buddhist vestment. It may be judged as one of the best, most charming tales in the *Reiiki.*

2.5. Goblins

Today the word *tengu* is associated popularly with red-faced, long-nosed goblins of dubious character, or with their messengers and servants called *karasu tengu*, equipped with wings and teaks. Such images have been formed as a result of long tradition. In the Heian period the *tengu* had not yet have such distinct features. As it has been written before, they could have sometimes been confused with devils. Their main charsctericticlied in the ability of assuming any form they wanted. Levitation was their speciality, by flying they could change places as they wanted, and they could as easily become invisible. They were spiteful on principle, without any special reason, and very fond of deceiving people. They were not as bad as devils because it was possible to reform them or to kill them. One story in the *Konjaku monogatari* gives India as their birthplace.

[111] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XX, 18, *Nihon reiiki* 1975: II, 25.

A *tengu* flew from India to China. He heard on the way waters of the ocean murmuring fragments of sutras about impermamence of everything in the world. He heard the same on his way from China to Japan. Wherever he flew over the Japanese islands, he heard all the rivers and streams whispering the same motives. The nearer he was to Mount Hieizan the louder sounded the song. At last the *tengu* comprehended the meaning of it and decided to become a monk on Hieizan. He became reborn as a son of Ariaki shinnō, Uda tennō's son and entered a cloister on Mount Hiei. He took the name of Myōgu. After many years of meditation and austerities he advanced in the temple hierarchy and became a bishop (*sōjō*)[112].

The story shows a *tengu* reborn as a holy man, which provides an interesting variety in demonology. But in the Buddhist demonology such an idea was not controversial to the concept of rebirths. In the chain of rebirths it was possible to fall down in one incarnation, and then to advance in the next one. In regard to *tengu* there existed a belief that sinful Buddhist monks after their death did not go to hell (on account of their holy orders) but became *tengu*. It seems that they had a chance to improve their prospects for the future life, even being a *tengu*.

Another *tengu* which was to become reformed appeared as a woman to the holy teacher Ninshō of the Butsugenji temple. Thanks to Ninshō's prayers and strong will the woman confessed to her past crimes (committed as a *tengu*) and afterwards became a pious person[113].

Such repentant *tengu* were fairly scarce. The majority of them were spiteful, but not without a sense of humour. They liked to scoff at religion and spared no pain in order to make fun of people, especially of monks.

At the side of a shrine at Gojō street there was a big persimmon tree. On the top of it there appeared a radiant Buddha. From all over the capital people came to admire the miracle. It became crowded under the tree from humble people coming on foot to aristocrats riding their horses or drawn in their carriages. There was at the time in the capital a wise minister, Minamoto no Hikaru. He suspected that the miracle was the work of a *tengu* and he knew that *tengu*'s magic (*gejutsu, gesu*) did not last longer than seven days. He waited up to the seventh day of the appearrance and then he went to look at the persimmon tree. As all the others, he saw the Buddha spreading golden radiance while beautiful flowers floated down like multicoloured rain. The minister waited for two hours and, at last, he was rewarded – the golden Buddha turned into a buzzard and tumbled down. A young page killed the buzzard. The minister summed up the incident telling: "It had to be so! Why should a Buddha climb the tree"?[114]

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[112] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XX, 1.
[113] Ibid., 6.
[114] Ibid., 3.

That *tengu* was rather unfortunate. Another one had more luck than he deserved. For a long time (much longer than seven days) he pretended to be a very powerful and holy monk-hermit. He was famous for his magic spells. People talked about him with awe and wonder that he could stop an animal bent on its pray and pull down flying birds. When Emperor En'yū was tormented by a *mononoke* the monk was summoned to the palace. There, was to be performed the ceremony of reading sutras at five altars and other four monks were present. All five entered behind their respective screens and the reading began. But very soon from behind the screen of the *tengu* there began to emanate a terrible stink of dog's excrements. It was an effect of the sutras, but it revealed the tengu's identity. He was caught but released, and nobody knew what became of him. Anyhow, he did not return to his hermitage[115].

Another story contains some interesting points of different nature. In the Sanuki province there was a big and deep lake called Mano. It was a habitat of dragons. One day a dragon left the lake and assuming the shape of a small snake basked in the sun. Just then a *tengu* living on Mount Hiei flew over the lake. He saw the snake and snatched it with his claws. The dragon-snake without water lost its magic power and let itself be taken. The *tengu* took his victim to his quarters on the mountain, hid the snake and forgot all about it. The snake stayed there for four or five days despairing its lot. As a snake it had no wings, and without water it could not change its shape.

Meanwhile the *tengu* wishing to get hold of a monk flew to Mount Hiei. He saw a monk who left his cell and went to piss in the bushes. He carried a bowl of water for washing his hands. The *tengu* fell on him, grabbed and carried him away. He deposited the monk in the same place where he had hid the snake and then flew away. The monk and the snake easily understood each other's predicament. Thanks to the monk's bowl of water the snake regained its supernatural power. It produced a tempest and escaped taking the monk. Later on, the snake killed the *tengu*[116].

In this story, side by side with the *tengu* there makes its appearance another creature endowed with supernatural powers. Dragons had had a long tradition in China. Implanted on the Japanese soil they easily mixed in popular imagination with native snakes. The belief in snakes endowed with magic powers had been strongly rooted in native folklore and mythology (see p. 81–82).

[115] Ibid., 4.
[116] Ibid., 11.

2.6. Heavenly maidens (*tennin*)

The Japanese word *tennin* (or *tennyo*) may be translated as "angel"[117] but we prefer the term "heavenly maidens" because the *tennin* were always female and had no ambitions of influencing people on their way to salvation. They came to Japan with Buddhism as one of the ideas borrowed from the Hinduistic pantheon[118]. In Japan their role was more ornamental then spiritual, and was more pronounced in the iconography than in the beliefs circulating among the laity. In the iconography, they were depicted as beautiful maidens hovering in the sky, dressed in flowing and flowery garments or in robes of feathers with feathery wings. They were believed to be fond of music and dancing.

They are not absent from the tales of the period, but most of the stories belong to the kind nearest to the nursery tales. The best known tale about *tennin* is to be found in the *Kōdanshō*[119] (scroll I): Temmu tennō, who was an accomplished flutist, one day climbed a peak of Yoshino mountains and there descended to him five heavenly maidens. They sang and danced to the accompaniment of his flute. A similar story may be found in the *Konjaku monogatari* (XXIV, 1) where it is said that two or three *tennin* came down to another famous musician, Minamoto Makoto. The heavenly maidens were about one *shaku* tall, and they radiated light.

In both stories there appear *tennin* who descended to human beings lured by their wonderful music, and later on returned to heaven. In both cases there is no mention of wings of feathers. It seems that the robes of feathers (*hagoromo*) were a native addition to the silhuettes of imported heavenly maidens and were not a necessary element in their picture. Or, perhaps (and we would be inclined to take that view), whenever we meet beautiful maidens in flowing garments without any feathers, we can suspect that they are *tennin* of Hindu-Buddhist origin, while the girls with feathers belong to the Japanese tradition with some foreign admixtures.

The robes of feathers have been one of popular motives in folk legends since the Nara period. Certainly, they could have been already a product of syncretism, but the climate of the stories they appear in[120] does not show a foreign influence to any marked degree. They look more like a native idea. In the Heian period

[117] Kotański 1963: 84.

[118] Ibid.

[119] A collection of stories by Ōe Masafusa written down about 1104–1107.

[120] In various existing *fudoki* (collections of local customs and legends) there are stories of *hagoromo* pointing to the popularity of the motive in Japan of the Nara period. The stories show similarities in quite distant provinces. E.g., the legends from Ōmi have eight heavenly maidens coming to the earth, one of whom married a man. In a legend from Tango there are also eight heavenly maidens and also one of them stays on the earth. The stories are not identical but the main features are common. In the *Hitachi fudoki* the heavenly creatures come to a lake in the form of swans. See *Heian chō bungaku jiten* 1972: 92.

the motive have been a very popular one as the *hagoromo* are alluded to in almost all novels and diaries of the time. It is a matter for speculation which elements – imported or native ones – played a greater role in that popularity, but in the Heian period the distinction between the elements has already been blurred beyond recognition. The most famous novel, classified as one of the so-called *hagoromo setsuwa*[121] (*setsuwa* – story, narrative) shows all the marks of highly syncretic literature. The novel, *Taketori monogatari*, was written probably in the first half of the 10th century by an unknown author. "It is what we should call a fairy-tale. The scene is laid in the neighborhood of Kiōto (Kyōto), and the personages are all Japanese. The language too is as nearly as possible pure Japanese. But there are abundant traces of foreign influences. The supernatural machinery is either Buddhist or Taoist, and most even of the incidents are borrowed from the copious fairy-lore of China"[122].

An old bamboo-cutter called Nuribe Maro found in bamboo stem a tiny girl, 3 *sun* in height. Taken to and cherished in Maro's home she very soon attained a normal human height, and became the most radiant beauty in whole Japan. She was named Kaguyahime (Shining One). She had many suitors, but to every one of them she gave quite improbable tasks. At last the Emperor himself asked for her hand. She refused explaining that she was not from this world. And, indeed, one night there came for her a chariot from heaven and she disappeared from the earth.

That story (in which the robe of feathers appears in the last part) repeats some fragments of native legends belonging to the *hagoromo* kind but with a rich embellishment of foreign motives. It has become a model for many later stories (hence, so many literary allusions in the novels and diaries of the Heian period). The *Konjaku monogatari* (XXXI, 33) looks like a short resume of the *Taketori monogatari*, but there is no *hagoromo* and the conclusion is a little different. In the original tale it is said that the girl came from the moon "whence it seems she had been banished for an offence which she had committed"[123] In the *Konjaku monogatari* version it is concluded: "It is not known, after all, who the girl was (...) People thought that the whole affair was rather quite inexplicable" (*sono onna tsui ni ikanaru mono to shiru koto nashi* (…) *subete kokoroenu koto nari to namu yo no hito omoikeru*).

The XXXI scroll of the *Konjaku monogatari* groups folklore tales, and it is evident that the author did not treat them seriously. It may be assumed that it was not his exclusive opinion, but he shared it with the majority of his contemporaries.

[121] Ibid.
[122] Aston 1972: 76.
[123] Ibid., 77.

3. Animals endowed with supernatural powers

Among the animals endowed with supernatural powers the most popular ones were undoubtfully foxes (*kitsune*). Quite often when something extraordinary happened, people were apt to suspect foxes or demons as the perpetrators. There was even a monograph written by Ōe Masafusa entitled *Kobiki* (A Chronicle of Foxes' Frolics). It was a collection of legends and stories compiled in 1101. Apart from that, mentions concerning foxes can be found in the whole literature of the Heian period.

Foxes had, it seems, two very disconcering attributes: they could bewitch people and they could change themselves into human beings (as well as into other forms). They were prompted to action by various motives which ranged from most sinister to quite innocent ones. Sometimes they were simply playful, sometimes they made fun of people. Some were dangerous and even lethal in their doings, others were frivolous and mischievious but not exactly harmful. There were also foxes very devoted to particular people and very helpful to them. But the majority of their pranks was quite troublesome and awe-inspiring, and people were afraid of them.

There was a strangely behaving woman (*monotsuki no onna*) who announced that she had become possessed by a fox. According to her words the fox did not come to make mischief (*tatari*) but to feed itself. Telling this the possessed woman took out a whitish ball of the size of orange and played with it. One of the men present there took it from her. She seemed then very excited and begged for the return of the ball, saying "If you do not return it to me we will be enemies. But if you do, I will protect you like a deity". Finally the man consented and returned the ball. Soon afterwards the fox was expelled from the woman by means of exorcism and it disappeared together with the whitish ball.

Some time passed and one night the man who returned the ball was passing the Ōtemmon gate. The atmosphere was oppresive and he felt very uneasy. He remembered the fox's promise and called *Kitsune*, *Kitsune*. The fox came at once and sent the man off to his house. Later on the fox was of great help to the man in many of his undertakings[124].

The story is valuable as it demonstrates several points connected with foxes (possesion, devotion to the benefactor, *tatari* and exorcism) and offers one more interesting observation – the first sentence of the story runs: *ima wa mukashi, mononoke yami suru tokoro arikeri* which means "long time ago there was a case of the *mononoke* – caused illness". Here the possession by a fox is identified with *mononoke*, and the *mononoke* with illness.

[124] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 40.

In the *Reiiki* there is a story belonging to those very few of a non-Buddhist climate. A man went to look for a wife and met a woman who was wandering with the similar intention of finding a husband. They married and in due time had a son. At the same time their bitch had a litter of puppies. When the puppies were three or four months old the woman entered the kennel where they were kept. All the dogs leaped at her with obviously malicious intentions. She took to flight and running she' turned herself into a fox. It appeared then that from the very beginning she had been a vixen and she had only pretended to be a woman. The story has an optimistic ending: the husband made the best of a bad bargain and did not divorce his fox-wife because of their son. The son was given the name Kitsune[125].

The above story could have been an archetype for many similar stories of later times of which the most famous became the tale of Kuzunoha, the vixen of Shinoda woods[126], a faithful wife and devoted mother. The children and even later generations of descendants often manifested some extraordinary abilities. Kuzunoha's son, Abe Seimei, was one of the most famous magicians of the Heian period. In the *Reiiki* there is also a story about a woman called Mino no Kitsune (the Fox from Mino) who was a descendant of a fox in the fourth generation. Her body was of gigantic proportions and she had the strength of a hundred people[127].

The stories described above may serve as examples of useful foxes. The following stories will be about foxes of playful but rather mischievious character.

East of the Ninnaji temple, on the shore of a narrow river Kōyagawa there often stood a girl who accosted men riding s horse and asked to be taken for a ride to the capital. If invited, she sat behind the back of the rider and after going some distance, she jumped down, turned into a fox and disappeared. The story became well known among men belonging to the imperial guard and one brave man decided to catch the insolent fox. He went to Kōyagawa, met the girl and took her for a ride. As soon as she sat behind him he took out a strong rope and tied the girl to the horse's back. They rode for some time in silence but then, all of a sudden, they were surrounded by a big group of guardsmen carrying torches, shouting and displaying enemity towards the man and his captive. The girl took advantage of the commotion and escaped changing herself on the way into a fox. At that instant everything disappeared: the guardsmen, torches and all. The man found himself in darkness, and without his horse, in the middle of the Toribeno cremation grounds. He returned home on foot and next day he was almost dying. But he was a sturdy young man and a very obstinate one. Three days later he was again in good enough condition to repeat his adventure. Again he went to Kōyagawa taking with him a company of other guardsmen and again he met a girl, but this

[125] *Nihon reiiki* 1975: I, 2.
[126] The story of Kuzunoha is played up to this day as a *kabuki* drama.
[127] Ibid., II, 4.

time another one. The story repeated itself up to the moment when they became surrounded by the group of excited riders. The man did not pay any attention to them but held fast the girl. In this manner they entered the city and at the Tsuchimikado street the man hauled his victim by heir into his house with no regard to her laments and entreaties. Even when she turned into a fox he did not let her go. With a torch he charred her fur and then most severely forbade to play tricks on people. She promised to be good from then on. Then he let her go. Ten days later he again went to Kōyagawa and the girl was there standing on the bank. She did not look well. "Would you like to go for a ride"? asked the man. "I would like that very much but I am afraid to be charred again" answered she and quickly disappeared[128]. In this story the poor fox was punished for its pranks.

But in the next one the fox will be more lucky. One man had a surprise of his life when he discovered one night that there were two identical wives of his. He was sure that one of them was a fox but did not know which one. He got hold of a sword and threatened both women with it. For a long time he was helpless because both of them claimed to be his true wife. At last the fox could not bear the suspense any longer and, taking its own shape, escaped through the window shrieking "koo, koo" and urinating on the way[129].

Another story is rather tragic for the fox. A man went at night to look for his lost horse. He was accompanied by a servant. Wandering in darkness in the fields they saw suddenly a solitary cedar tree. It was very big. They were convinced that in this place there had never been any such tree. They wondered what it might be and the master concluded that they encountered a *madowashigami*. The servant proposed to mark the tree with arrows and come the next day to see the thing in broad daylight. The master agreed and both of them at the same moment shot their arrows. The instant both arrows hit the three, it disappeared. The master and the servant ran away in panic, but next morning they returned and at the place where the cedar had stood they found a dead fox, so old that it had lost almost all its hair[130].

In most stories concerning foxes of mischievious but not lethal intentions the action takes place at night or in twilight. The most dangerous foxes, those casting spells and bewitching people, operated round the clock. The foxes were quite often victorious in their dealings with people although in many cases they had to seek safety in escape, and sometimes they were killed. People were afraid of them but it seems that the foxes should have been more cautious in their frolics, as people with their bows, swords and magic incantations could have turned into deadly adversaries. Woe to the foxes who were too old or too weak to defend themselves!

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[128] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 41.
[129] Ibid., 39.
[130] Ibid., 37.

The belief in bewitching foxes came to Japan in ready made form from China and it found good spiritual background on Japanese soil[131]. There have lived great many foxes on the archipelago pestering people and probably fascinating them with their sharp muzzles, clever eyes and agile movements. Besides, the thievish practices of foxes did not make them liked. There was still another factor, a very important one; the old faith in spirits and ghosts haunting people. The three elements – existance of real foxes on the archipelago, the Chinese folk-tales, and the faith in possessive spirits – merged together into the belief in supernatural powers of foxes. According to Ikeda, the belief in possession by foxes (or other animals) was a vulgarized form of older beliefs in *onryō* (vengeful spirits)[132]. Some traces of the merging process may be found in the Heian literature. For example, in one of the stories of foxes in the *Konjaku monogatari*, there is told in the conclusion that finally people were in doubt whether the strange trick they had witnessed was due to a fox or to some spirit (*mono no ryō*)[133]. In the *Genji monogatari* there is a scene where priests stand over the unconscious figure of Ukifune and are debating if she is a fox or a spirit, and similar instances of such a confusion may be found in other sources, as well.

The foxes in the service of god Inari, so popular even in the present-day Japan, seem to be of a later origin than the Heian period, although the legend explaining their appearance in this role is dated for the 9th[134] century. Anyhow, there is nothing about the foxes-messengers of Inari in all our sources, even in the *Sarashina nikki* (which describes among others, a pilgrimage to the Fushimi shrine)[135].

Wild boars (*i*, contemporary: *inoshishi*) were also endowed by people's imagination with some characteristics similar to foxes. Boars liked to change their shape, they could speak and they had a taste for making strange antics. But they did not do any harm to people. The stories about boars are not as popular as those about foxes. We will quote three of the *Konjaku monogatari* stories, as the most characteristic ones.

A hunter while hunting in the woods for several nights, was confronted by a very strange happening: an unknown voice called his name. At first he tried to find and catch the speaker but to no avail. Later on, thinking that it was some demon, he wanted to kill it. But whenever he let the reins on the horse's back and took his bow, the mysterious voice stopped calling at once, As soon as he put off the bow and took the reins in his hands, the voice was heard again. At last, after several very nervous nights, his clever brother made a trick with his bow and shot an arrow in the direction of the voice. When it became light he went to the spot

[131] See Noguchi 1961.
[132] Ikeda 1974: 150.
[133] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 29.
[134] Noguchi 1961.
[135] The Fushimi Inari taisha in the legend is claimed to have been the place of origin and the headquarters of fox-messengers.

where his arrow should have hit the unknown target and found traces of blood. Following the bloody track he reached a place where lay a dead boar[136].

Another frivolous boar chose the very worst place for playing its comedy. It emitted light which shone brightly at night above a house where a dead body was kept, scaring people out of their wits. A son of the deceased, a very courageous man, made an ambush and killed the boar[137].

The last story shows a more elaborate performance. Once a man on his way to the capital had to spend the night in an old shack in the fields. He became a witness to a ceremony of cremation. At first there came very near to the shack many people carrying a body and lamenting over it. Then they put the body on a pyre, set a fire to it and burnt it. Next they made a grave and constructed above it a memorial tower. Then the people left, their silhuettes and voices faded away in distance. While the man in the shack still peeped through the window, he saw the fresh grave heaving and a moment later an indistinct shape leaped from it. The man was horrified but did not panic. Thinking that it was a demon he decided to die in fight. With a naked sword he attacked the thing and cut it to the ground. In the morning it turned out that he had killed a boar. There was no trace of the pyre nor the grave and tower. People commented that the boar had seen the man entering his shack and it had wanted to play a trick on him[138].

In all three stories the boars were killed by people. The poor animals could not cast spells like foxes and were not sufficiently equipped for a war with the humans. No wonder that they became extinct as the animals of mystery and magic. Their place in later times was taken by badgers (*tanuki*), the cheerful jesters so very such alive in various folk-tales of today. Boars are still living in Japan, but as very average animals stripped of their former wit and supernatural powers.

With some hesitation we will mention two stories concerning monkeys, described in the *Konjaku monogatari*. The stories may be of Chinese derivation as they look quite alien to the Japanese tradition, although they are heavily draped in Shintoist accessories. In *The Religious System of China* de Groot quotes a legend of "the marriage of the Riverlord" which is very similar in character to the Japanese stories in the *Konjaku monogatari*. In the Chinese legends there are no monkeys, but "the River-lord", nevertheless the main idea, the sequence of events, and the endings show striking resemblance[139].

In one of the stories[140] the action takes place in the Mimasaka province, in the second story in the Hida province[141]. In both cases the heroes (a hunter and a monk,

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136 *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 34.
137 Ibid., 35.
138 Ibid., 36.
139 de Groot 1910: 1196–99.
140 *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVI, 7.
141 Ibid., 8.

respectively), come across villages worshipping monkeys as their gods. What strikes one in the worship is the fact that the gods of both villages demanded annually living sacrifices of young girls. The victims, purified and beautifully dressed, were led to the gods and left in the sanctuaries where already there had been prepared chopping boards, sharp knives and various spices. The stories are rather unusual on the Japanese ground as blood has always been abhorent to Shintoist deities, and the deities have always been kept on a strictly vegetarian diet. Anyhow, both stories have happy endings; the heroes after a long time of blood-curdling suspense succeeded in making terrible shambles of the sanctuaries and the monkeys. They lived happily ever after (with the would-be victims, most probably).

Our hesitation in mentioning the stories has come from the fact that the monkeys were only blood-thirsty and well-fed by their worshippers, but they had no supernatural powers. They could not even speak: in human language and were quite helpless in oase of real emergency. And so, they do not enter into the category of animals endowed with supernatural powers. On the other hand, the stories give a clue to a superstitious cult connected with animals[142] and on this account we decided finally to include them here.

In the story about the hunter there is mentioned another blood-thirsty deity appearing in the form of a serpent (*orochi*, *kuchinawa*; contemporary: *hebi*). Here we are on a more solid ground because serpents in Japanese folklore have had a long tradition reaching into the remote past. There had been many bizarre tales of serpents before the Helen times[143], but in that period, as well, there was a belief in supernatural powers of serpents. The serpents, in contrast to foxes and boars, were never joking. They were menacing animals and often licentious[144]. They liked to curse people, if they were disturbed. As an example may serve the case of a little boy Fukutari (a son of Fujiwara Michikane) who tormented a snake. The snake cast a curse on the boy. A lump popped out on Fukutari's head and soon afterwards the boy died[145].

Serpents found special pleasure in sexual intercourse with women. There are many stories on the subject and we shall present as an example one of the most drastic ones.

A young girl in the village of Umakai climbed a chestnut tree in order to pluck some chestnuts. She was not aware of the presence of a serpent under the tree. When

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[142] Even if there has never been such a cult in Japan, the stories are interesting enough on many points.

[143] As examples may serve: Yamata orochi, Ōmononushi and Yamatototo, Yamatotakeru and the god of Ibuki of the *Nihongi*, etc.

[144] Investing serpents with lustful impulses was probably connected with very old phallic cults. An interesting echo of those cults as symbolized in the form of serpent will be described in the chapter on magic (see p. 141).

[145] *Ōkagami* 1967: 200.

she jumped down the serpent entwined her in its coils and raped her. Other villagers seeing what was happening surrounded the scene of action and called a famous physician. The serpent, it seems, all the time did not stop its foul activity, even when the girl fainted. The physician ordered them – the serpent and its victim – to be taken to a garden and left there. When at last the serpent made its escape, the physician began his ministration over the unconscious girl. Finally he restored her to health. But, alas, three years later she was again raped by a serpent and that time she died. It was clear for everybody in the village that she had been destined to die in this horrible manner because of her karma from a previous life[146].

There are other stories[147] about girls promised to serpents as wives, but these girls were more fortunate that the one from Umakai because they were saved (always at the last moment) thanks to the intervention of crabs or other creatures which they had rescued before.

In the moralist literature of the *Reiiki* type one may frequently find various animals (turtles, oysters, frogs) saving people's life out of gratitude, and also animals behaving like human beings, speaking fluently in Japanese, and using the language mostly for preaching. The stories of such animals had not had any strong foundation in folklore. They served only as exponents of the Buddhist idea of retribution, and thus they are beyond our sphere of interest.

Almost all examples for this chapter we had to take from the *Konjaku monogatari* and *Reiiki*. In the historical tales and diaries the most often mentioned animals are foxes suspected of some mischief. Other animals of the bewitching group may appear sporadically but not too often. They were obviously not so popular as foxes which gained recognition in the capital as well as in the country.

4. Inanimate objects endowed with supernatural powers

In the Buddhist legends and moral stories there are many sacred objects endowed with miraculous powers: statues and pictures or scrolls of sutras radiating golden light or speaking in human languages. They belong to the category of religious didactics as they served the purpose of demonstrating the power not of the objects themselves, but of Buddhas, Boddhisattvas and sutras which they represented or symbolized. They are, therefore, beyond our interest. We can exclude also from this chapter flying bowls sent by hermits for alms. The bowls did not fly of their own volition but were propelled by magic powers of their owners. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Buddhist legends could have contributed to spreading beliefs in supernatural powers of inanimate things, even of non-sacral objects.

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[146] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXIV, 9. *Nihon reiiki* 1975: II, 41.
[147] *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XVI, 16. *Nihon reiiki* 1975: II, 8.

In the Heian period there are not many recorded cases of such objects but the belief existed, There is, for example, the story of the imperial lute (*biwa*) called Genjō. The lute played only for people who were in a good psychical condition. If somebody irritated or angry tried to play it, the lute did not give forth even the slightest sound. Once when the palace was on fire and when everybody forgot all about the lute, it marched out from the flames by its own power and waited quietly in a safe place till the furor subsided and it was rescued[148].

Into the category of inanimate things endowed with supernatural powers we would like to include two objects qualified by Japanese writers[149] as demons. This qualification follows the *Konjaku monogatari* where both stories appear in the chapter on demons (scroll XXVII) and where are used the terms *mononoke* and *oni* in regard to the objects.

The first story is about Fujiwara Sanesuke who saw a jar for oil rolling and bouncing along the street. Sanesuke thought it highly suspicious. He stopped his carriage and watched it. The jar halted in front of a mansion and then leaped over the gate. It tried many times to squeeze itself through *a* hole in the door and, at last, it succeeded and disappeared from Sanesuke's sight. Next day he sent a man to inquire at the mansion and was informed that the jar killed somebody there. In the conclusion of the story it is told that "there were such *mononoke* appearing in shapes of various objects" (*kakaru mono no ke wa samazama no mono no katachi genjite aru narikeri*[150]).

In the second story the malicious thing – a wooden board in this case – came flying from somewhere, entered a house and also killed a man. The board is called a "demon" (*oni*) in the title and at the ending[151].

It is possible to treat both objects as demons in the forms of inanimate things, especially in the light of the quoted sentence on *mononoke*. But then we would like to know something more about the spirits impelling the objects to action. Were they persons who had died with a grudge against the victims? Were they *tengu* taking such shapes, spiteful on principle? The stories give no clue and no answer to the questions. Therefore, we feel justified in treating the jar as a jar and the board as a board and they become for us the things endowed with supernatural powers.

148 *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXIV, 24.
149 Ema 1976. Ikeda 1974.
150 *Konjaku monogatari* 1975: XXVII, 19.
151 Ibid., 18.