WINDOWS ONTO THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE EDO PERIOD: FROM THE *GAZU HYAKKI YAGYŌ* (1776) BY TORIYAMA SEKIEN TO THE *E-HON HYAKU MONOGATARI* (1841) BY TAKEHARA SHUNSEN[1]

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Supernatural creatures - that in Japanese are often referred to as *yōkai* (妖怪)[2] - represent a highly mysterious world that can scare, and at the same time, charm men. Such dichotomy is consistent with their own nature which is rich in shapes and colours that constantly blend in order to create new combinations. The scholar Abe Masamichi refers to ghosts and spirits (*yūrei* 幽霊) as "Time Fugitives" (*jidai no sogaisha* 時代の疎外者), meaning either creatures who have not managed to integrate in the society of their time or those who, on the contrary, have not been welcomed by the community.[3] The anthropologist Komatsu Kazuhiko offers a Freudian interpretation of *yōkai*.[4] In his view, the latter must be seen as representations of the darkest aspects of humankind, as expressions of "Japanese people's hidden psychological life" (日本人の隠された精神生活).[5] Halfway between traditions, spirituality and art, supernatural creatures represent a world that can be seen from numerous angles. Thanks to their important symbolism, they are often more effective in conveying fears and feelings than the human protagonists of literature throughout history. They thus prove that a strong connection exists between *yōkai* and "society" and, at the same time, between "old" and "modern". Over the last two centuries, anthropologists and scholars have often attempted to draw a systematization method and have thus reached numerous and often contrasting results. This is probably due to the nature of the creatures itself which often swings between "good" and "bad", but never permanently settles in either one of the two spheres.

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[1] We would like to thank the reviewer for his service and the helpful advice offered in evaluating this article.

[2] There are numerous lexical possibilities of which *bakemono* (supernatural creatures that can change shape 化物) and *kaibutsu* (monster 怪物) are merely some of the most frequent, but the latter is prevalently used for monsters of the contemporary age, such as Godzilla or Gamera. For further details see Komatsu Kazuhiko 2007, pp. 9-98 and Foster 2009.

[3] See Abe Masamichi 1999.

[4] Komatsu's research activity often compares with freudian psychoanalysis, in particular when treating the relationship with the Supernatural and possessions (*hyōi* 憑依). See Komatsu Kazuhiko 2009.

[5] See Komatsu Kazuhiko 2003, p. 8 [english translation by the author].

In 1878, Inoue Enryō (井上円了, 1859-1919)[6] founded the Yōkaigaku Kenkyūkai (the Association for the research on supernatural creatures 妖怪学研究会). Since then, many different points of view have joined the debate and have gradually created the framework for *yōkaigaku* (妖怪学), the discipline that studies *yōkai*.[7] Particular attention has then been paid to past literary and iconographic production – especially to *emakimono* (picture scrolls) based on the theme of *yōkai* and to *kaidan* (ghost stories 怪談) of the Edo period (1603-1867) -, which are essential tools in order to better understand those superstitions profoundly rooted in Japanese society at the beginning of Meiji Restoration (1868).[8]

The "supernatural" finds its place in Japanese literature from the very beginning. However, if in the Nara period (710-794) it is the accomplishments of *kami* (divinities 神) to represent the focus of the narrations,[9] in the Heian period (794-1185) the dominant culture is represented by a refined court who ascribes these apparently inexplicable phenomena to the activities of vengeful spirits – *onryō* (怨霊)[10] - or to human eating ghosts – *mononoke* (suspicious presences 物怪), *jikininki* (食人鬼) and *gaki* (餓鬼)[11] -, the belief in which becomes more and more rooted. Following the decline of the Heike clan and the consequent weakening of political stability in the country,[12] picture rolls are more and more frequently produced and they are often populated by grotesque figures that become formal expression of uncertainties and fears of the time. These are very well mirrored in the "Scrolls of the Hells" (*jigoku zōshi* 地獄草紙).[13] A new dimension in figurative art, which also introduces stylistic features that will be adopted in later periods, is represented by a rich production of *emakimono* depicting the buddhist hell and its inhabitants - such as *Jigoku zōshi* (Scroll of the Hells 地獄草紙, late 12th century) and *Gaki zōshi* (Scroll of the Hungry Ghosts 餓鬼草子, late 12th century) - or diseases typical of buddhist tradition – as *Yamai zōshi* (Disease Scroll 病草子, late 12th century).[14]

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[6] For a survey about Inoue Enryō's scholar activity see Staggs 1983.

[7] See Foster 2009, pp. 77-114 and Cucinelli 2013.

[8] For a complete study about *yōkai* culture in Meiji period see Figal 2000.

[9] We are here thinking about works such as *Kojiki* (An Account of Ancient Matters 古事記, 721) and *fudoki* (風土記), collections of reports on the natural resources, geophysical conditions, and oral traditions of each of approximately 60 Japanese provinces. As a matter of fact, in these we find ample space dedicated to narrations on divine deeds such as the stories of Izanagi and Izanami or the epic narrations of Amaterasu no Ōmikami and Susanoo. See Keene (1999), pp. 33-84.

[10] In fact, in the course of the era, superstitions that consider the *onryō* as the main cause of diseases and pestilences are widespread. The cause of particularly violent deaths or serious illnesses, instead, is attributed to the action of "living spirits" (*ikiryō* 生霊) – the soul of a living being that has detached from the body -, that would cause the person towards who grudge is felt to endure atrocious sufferings or, sometimes, their death. Among the most famous literary cases are those in the Aoi no Ue (葵の上) and Yūgao (夕顔), female secondary characters in *The Tale of Genji* (Genji Monogatari 源氏物語, early 11th century). Ibid., pp. 477-514 and Abe Masamichi 1999, pp. 110-134.

[11] *Gaki* are hungry demons with a visibly enlarged abdomen, a long and thin neck and very tight mouth. Their aspect is particularly grotesque and their expression move to compassion. Victims of many endless sufferings, they are often portrayed while ripping the flesh of those fallen in the battlefield. In modern Japan, the term *gaki* has acquired a derogatory connotation and is used to refer to children who are considered to be "tykes" or "brats". On the other hand, *momonoke* evokes both the danger and the mystery of "unknowable external thing". About *gaki* see Mizuki and Murakami 2006, pp. 81-82; and for *momonoke* see Foster 2009, pp. 6-7.

The *Konjaku monogatarishū* (Anthology of Tales from the Past 今昔物語集, late 12th century) is one of the best examples of buddhist anecdotes (*setsuwa*) of the late Heian period. It is in this anthology that we find for the first time episodes about *hyakki yagyō* ("night parade of a hundred demons" 百鬼夜行), a parade of a multitude of grotesque creatures. According to the superstitions of the time, this menacing parade fills the streets of the capital city at night thus causing havoc among members of the court whose curiosity is, however, also famously aroused.[15] As stated by some, this image originates from patrols of infantrymen on horses during their night rounds, holding torches to find their way in the dark.[16] After its success among the members of the aristocracy and the monastic class, the *hyakki yagyō* also reaches the collective imagination of the masses, thus being appreciated by all levels of society. During the Muromachi period (1336-1573), the *Hyakki yagyō emaki* (Picture Scrolls of the Demons' Night Parade 百鬼夜行絵巻, first half of the 16th century) exposes images that were once feared and treated with the utmost respect, to public scorn and criticism by giving them a new humorous aspect, namely the *yōkai-ga* (妖怪画) - the "art of *yōkai*" -, the artistic trend that uses supernatural figures as the subject of aesthetic research.[17] It is this series of picture scrolls that heavily contributes to the crystallization of images identified with the term *hyakki yagyō*: with a blaspheme tone and a sophisticated sense of humor it deeply marks the cultural history of the country, starting from the woodcut works of the Edo period, through the painting of Meiji period,[18] to the *kamishibai* (紙芝居) of the postwar period[19] and, from the second half of the 1960s, to the world of *manga* and *anime* of Mizuki Shigeru (水木しげる, 1922-2007).[20]

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[12] The Heike clan is particularly important in the history of Japan between the 12th and 13th century: their rise and decline are the subject of the famous epic work *The Tale of the Heike* (Heike Monogatari 平家物語, early 13th century).

[13] In the buddhist world, as underlined by Komatsu, this iconographic production takes on a particular meaning within the context of proselytism and validation of what is sacred. This is because it visually describes the dynamics that have led to building a temple thus strengthening the aura of mystery around it. See Komatsu Kazuhiko 2007, p. 15 and also Migliore and Pagani, ed., 2012.

[14] One of the illustrations included in this work depicts a man who is obsessed with visions of little creatures: we are referring to a unique image in the series as it represents the hallucinations of a person who is being possessed by a fox (*kitsunetsuki* 狐憑き). Since this typology of possession - like those connected to other animals such as the badger (*tanuki* 狸) and the cat (*neko* 猫) – have never been taken into consideration by psychology until the Meiji period, in this context the *Yamai sōshi* can be seen as a ground-breaking work. See. Figal, 2000, pp. 10-30.

[15] *Konjaku monogatarishū* includes the episode of a nobleman who decides to ignore the bans imposed on going out at night and, together with his entourage, bumps into a diabolic horde. See Nakano Takaji 1996, pp. 30-35.

[16] See Komatsu Kazuhiko, 2009.

The *hyakki yagyō* theme from this moment onward is no longer presented as a text, but rather takes on an illustrated form. With an uncommon abundance of shapes and colours, it effectively expresses the varied parade of demons and creatures, presenting them to the reader as a constant flow of images. The most important example of this, which most scholars have agreed to attribute to Tosa Mitsunobu (土佐光信, 1434?-1522?),[21] is kept in the Shin'juan (真珠庵) - the *stūpa* of the Daitoku (大徳寺) temple in Kyoto -, where it can still be admired today in certain periods of the year.[22] The *Hyakki yagyō emaki* includes mainly representations of *tsukumogami* ("animated objects" 付喪神), century-old artifacts that have been transformed into supernatural creatures but which still keep a strong link to their original image.[23] Also known as the "ninety-nine hairs" (*tsukumogami* 九十九髪),[24] they can be divided into four main typologies: a first group is represented by objects that belong to the military sphere (*buki* 武器) - such as helmets, armours and swords; a second is represented by musical instruments (*gakki* 楽器), such *koto* (琴) and *biwa* (琵琶); a third group includes objects used in a home (*kagu* 家具), such as candleholders and mirrors, and finally the fourth group includes extremely particular ornaments that are believed to have strong supernatural power, the artifacts used during buddhist rituals (*butsugu* 仏具).[25] The long parade of animated artifacts is interrupted by numerous *oni* (demons 鬼) that are generally red or blue skinned and interact in various ways with the numerous creatures in order to create the demons' parade:[26] some of them ride grotesque animal creatures, others are instead portrayed while holding banners or other artifacts that correspond to those used by human beings during public performances.

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[17] Among the best examples is the *Chōjū Jinbutsu Giga* (Animal-person Caricatures 鳥獸人物戲画, 12th-13th century), traditionally ascribed to Toba Sōjō Kakuyū (鳥羽僧正覚猷, 1053-1140). This work is fundamental in the further development of manga in Japan. Differently from the "Hell Rolls", in this work we find mostly fantastic animals assuming human behavior, such as rabbits (*usagi* 兎), frogs (*kaeru* 蛙) and monkeys (*saru* 猿) – this is considered one of the forerunners of *manga.* See Papp 2010a and 2010b. Also Addiss 2001.

[18] As example, we find representations of *hyakki yagyō* in the paintings of Kawanabe Kyosai (河鍋暁斎; 1831-1889) e Utagawa Yoshiiku (歌川芳幾, 1833-1904). See Tanaka and Komatsu 2007.

[19] It is a sort of itinerant theatre narrated on panels of comic strips Cf. Addis 2001.

[20] Mizuki Shigeru is one of the best interpreters of *yōkai-ga* today. He has influenced different generations of Japanese people with his *Gegege no Kitarō* (Kitarō of the Graveyard ゲゲゲの鬼太郎, 1960), a series whose main character is a boy who is half human half *yōkai* and that came out first as *manga* and later was remade into *anime.* See Papp 2010b.

[21] We do not have sound biographic data on this figure, but we suppose him to have been a painter who worked between the Muromachi period and "the Warring States Period" (*sengoku jidai*, 1467-1573). See Tada Kazumi 2009, pp. 130-139.

[22] See http://www.kyotokanko.com/t_daitokuji.html.

[23] See Tosa Mitsunobu 2009.

[24] In this case, the "ninety-nine hair" must be understood as "white hair" thus referring back to the idea of "old age", in order to underline the number of years that have passed for the object

In fact, the great dynamism, the powerful expressions in the creatures' faces and the highly human-like behaviours of these grotesque figures mirror and satirize the world of humans, in a dimension where the natural mask that is the body disappears to give way to the essence described in its most comical, brutal, weak and – ironically - real aspects.

Gazu Hyakki yagyō *by Toriyama Sekien*

The *Gazu Hyakki yagyō* (The Illustrated Night Parade of a Hundred Demons 画図百鬼夜行, 1776) by the painter Toriyama Sekien (鳥山石燕, 1712-1788)[27] is the rightful heir of the *Hyakkiyagyō emaki,* as well as the first reference book (*zukan* 図鑑) of *yōkai* to have been produced in Japan. This discursive genre, the *yōkai* catalog, is indicative of the movement from “pandemonium” - the *hyakki yagyō* depicted on scrolls, as the *Hyakki yagyō emaki* – to “parade” , the carving out from the undifferentiated mass of mysterious things a controlled and ordered pageant with identifiable, named characters. Indeed, during the first half of the Edo period, the intellectual and popular was informed by an approach the Foster calls the “encyclopedic mode”.[28] The word “mode” is purposefully broad – akin to “consciousness” or “mentalitè” - and indicates an approach that informs writing as well as ways of acting. As a discoursive and pratical method, the

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to be transformed into a *tsukumongami*. See Lillehoj 1995, pp. 7-34.

[25] The *Tsukumogamiki* (Tales of Animated Tools 付喪神記, mid 16th century) focuses on the peculiar world of *tsukumogami*. This is one of the main sources of information for the extent of “animated tools” it contains. See Tanaka Takako 2007.

[26] The most common iconography concerning *oni* describes them as dressed in animal skin and as holding a weapon in one hand, usually a club. They also have horns on their head that normally vary in number- from a minimum of one to a maximum of three- the colour of the skin ranges from blue to red and green. See Kondō Yoshiharu 1966, pp. 9-34.

[27] See Toriyama Sekien 2006.

[28] See Foster 2009, pp. 30-33.

encyclopedic mode signifies the serious undertaking of collecting and codifying, of pinning things down and labeling them. Another characteristic of the encyclopedic mode is that the knowledge it provides is generally perceived as having a certain utility within a given society. In Tokugawa Japan, encyclopedic expression was part of a broader development of a vibrant commercial book industry influenced by numerous factors, including new methods of production, rising literacy rates, urban development, and the growth of a reading public.[29] The encyclopedic mode was also intimately connected with neo-Confucianism and state ideologies. In particular, a belief that all things were worth investigation promoted a desire to record and order the natural world, fostering the development of indigenous natural history studies and guidebook accessible to people in different social strata. While its roots may be found in government-sanctioned philosophies and programs, encyclopedic discourse reflected and inspirated a popular curiosity about the natural and supernatural world and quickly became an intrinsic part of the cultural imagination of the Tokugawa period.[30]

The painter Toriyama Sekien was a member of the Kanō school of Japanese painting,[31] and later teacher of many other great artists of *yōkai-ga*.[32] If the favour bestowed upon figurative arts by the Ashikaga family allowed to broaden the scope of aesthetic research so as to call into question the heritage from previous periods by applying new models, during the Edo period the path thus undertaken leads to a rich production which sees its peaks in the publication of encyclopedic volumes that flourish thanks to the *hakubutsugaku* (博物学), the "science of cataloguing".[33] The *Gazu hyakki yagyō* is a milestone of *zukan.* However, at the same time, the formal choices of the author satirize the palimpsest in which it is possible to observe immediate superimpositions in the choice of the title and the partial equivalence of the portrayed creatures. The series is composed of four sections each of which is divided into three volumes: even though the number of illustrations often varies, as a whole, the series includes 196 *sashi-e* (illustrations 挿絵), for a total of 207 *yōkai* portraits. The author separates the individual creatures from the legends they belong to and offers a cataloguing system that allows him to simply add the name of the supernatural creature represented in the graphic interpretation. Out of all the *sashi-e*, 47 of them lack a text aimed at giving details concerning the portrayed *yōkai,* while in the remaining cases we find some brief notes, often made up of just four or five characters which inform us about the important details of the different superstitions. This organization is the direct result of the influence of pre-Ming Chinese encyclopedic texts – one of the most famous of which is the *Shanhaijing* (The Classic of Mountains and Seas 山海経) composed between the 4th and the 1st century[34] -, thus making Sekien's work a hybrid product between continental science and the indigenous art connected to the culture of the *hyakki yagyō*.

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[29] See Rubinger 2007.

[30] See Gluck 1997, p. 234.

[31] The Kanō school has been one of the most important schools of Japanese painting throughout four centuries, from the 15th to the 19th century. For further details see Watson 1981.

[32] Among the many pupils, he also taught Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (月岡吉年, 1839-1892) and Kawanabe Kyōsai, both famous for their representations of *yōkai.* See Ibid.

[33] It is a scientific school of thought that developed in Japan in the wake of the *honzōgaku* (本草学), herbal medicine flourished in China during the period of the Six Dynasties (220-589): once introduced in Japan, this current begins to resemble western "natural sciences" (*shizenshi* 自然史), thus producing an important number of catalogues in which every form of animal and vegetable life known to men is recorded. Pillars in this sector during the Edo period are the *Tashikihen* (General Encyclopedia 多識編, 1612) by Hayashi Razan (林羅山, 1583-1657) and the *Yamato Honzō* (Japanese Compendium of Medical Sciences 大和本草, 1709) by Kaibara Ekiken (貝原益軒, 1630-1714), which also begins to underline the first formal differences between the Chinese supernatural creatures and the local ones. See Unschuld 1986 and Higashi Ajia Kaiigaku Kai, eds., 2003.

Even prior to the publication of *Gazu hyakki yagyō,* new *emakimono* on the topic of the parade of demons were produced – such as the *Hyakkai zukan* (The Illustrated Volume of a Hundred Demons 百怪図巻, 1737) by Sawaki Sūshi (佐脇嵩之, 1707-1772) and the *Bakemonozukushi* (Monsters scroll 化物づくし, early 18th century)[35] which was published a few years earlier[36] -, milestones that have surely contributed to its success. However, a typical aspect of Sekien's organization, which differentiates him from his predecessors, is the technique of isolating the single creatures, meaning that he does not portray them as a single flow but frames them in a dedicated segment, thus giving each one of them total independence. In line with *fukuro toji* publications (bookbinding style 袋綴じ) typical of the Edo period, each page includes a *sashi-e* which portrays a creature and its background. There are in fact only a few cases in which the individual illustration describes a higher number of figures: one of the rare exceptions in this sense is represented by the graphic representation of *inugami* ("dog-god" 犬神), a dog portrayed adopting man-like behaviours of which we find many examples in the popular traditions of the south of Japan.[37] This creature - which is also portrayed in the *Hyakkai zukan* and the *Bakemonozukushi*[38] – is represented by Toriyama Sekien as a dog dressed as a noble man that gives orders to a *shirachigo* (白 児), a sort of child *yōkai* whose origins and abilities have not been properly identified. Compared to Sawaki Sūshi's work, the silohuette in Sekien's *inugami* is thinner, the lean snout stands out between the big dress and the headgear placed on top of its head. An aura of nobility, that was unknown to its predecessor, surrounds Sekien's *inugami.* This is enriched by a panel decorated with a water based theme and placed behind him as well as by the deferential position of the *shirachigo* next to him. The latter does not appear in the two previous works and in the *Gazu hyakki yagyō* is busy writing with a brush on a piece of paper what the owner is dictating, the *inugami* [Fig. 1].

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[34] It is a compendium that describes customs and strange traditions in various regional areas.

[35] It is an illustrated roll containing 30 *yōkai,* the author of which is uncertain. See Tada and Kyōgoku 2009, pp. 130-139.

[36] See Foster 2009, pp. 55-56.

[37] Superstitions regarding the *inugami* are particularly strong in the Kyushu area, where it is believed to be a creature as able to practice possession as the fox (*kitsune* 狐) and other supernatural animals. According to tradition, it would seem possible to evoke a *inugami* performing a particular ritual which would consist of severing the head of a dog after having buried it up to its neck. See Mizuki and Murakami 2006, pp. 36-37.

[38] See Anonymous 2009 and Sawaki Sūshi 2009.

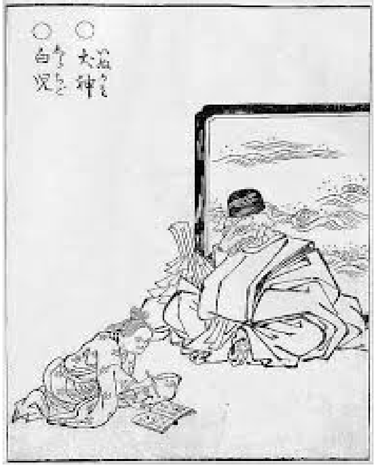

Fig. 1 Toriyama Sekien's *inugami* and *shirachigo*

In most cases, the illustrations derive from the oral local tradition concerning *kappa*, *oni* and fantastic creatures. However, we can also find elements of the continental culture: in the case of the creature called *ubume* ("ghostly parturient" 産 女)[39] for example, Sekien reiterates the fact that this descends from the Chinese bird-woman - the *kokakuchō* (姑獲鳥)[40] - and therefore carves her hair in such a way so as to call to mind the feathered wings of the continental counterpart. It is however possible to ascribe some of the portrayed creatures directly to Sekien's creativity. Through the use of some *kotoba asobi* (“play on words” 言葉遊び) or funny onomatopoeias, he has been able to properly balance text, illustration and, of course, imagination. In the case of *buru buru* (*buru buru* 震震), a ghost whose *sashi-e* is found in the second element of the series, the idea of “thrill” expressed by the sound and the Chinese characters used to transliterate the term, perfectly mirrors the wavy outline that defines the quivering shape of the portrayed ghost [Fig. 2].[41] As the scholar Katsumi Tada points out in his commentary to the *Gazu hyakki yagyō*, thanks to numerous cultural exchanges with poets of his age, Sekien mastered a sense for *tanka* – the Japanese short poem – which reflected in the texts on the side of the *sashi-e*. One of the best examples of his art can be found in the lines about *buru buru*, in which the *kaigyaku* (諧謔), the “poetical humor”, is well expressed by the combination of onomatopoeias and pathos: “The *buru buru* is know also as *zozogami* or “ghost of depression”. When a human being is given heebie-jeebies, the *buru buru* shows up with his *brrr brrr*.”[42]

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[39] According to local tradition, the *ubume* is a woman who has died without having been able to give birth to her child and has then been buried while still carrying her baby in her womb: *post-mortem* her spirit becomes a *yōkai* portrayed with her body covered in blood while holding her infant tightly in her arms. According to superstition, she usually manifests herself to male passers-by near some crossroads or a bridge, at sunset or sunrise, and asks them to save, or more commonly, to hold her child. The latter seems to possess particular powers: according to the situation, he can make huge fortunes appear or disproportionately increase his weight so as to become an unsustainable burden for the unlucky man who has happened to accept the *ubume*'s request. In other cases, he may even end up killing him. See Tada and Kyōgoku 2009, pp. 151-152.

[40] It is a woman who uses the powers of a feathered rope to kidnap children and bring them up as if they were her own. Presented in the iconography as a hybrid creature, half woman half

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bird, her name is composed of three characters: the first (*ko* 姑) defines a higher class woman or an older lady, depending on the situation, it may be interpreted as “mother in law” (*shūtome*). The second (*kaku* 獲) represents the idea of “predator”, while the third (*chō* 鳥) is a “bird”, with reference to its features that are partly similar to a bird. The same creature appears also as “celestial girl” (*tentei shōjo* 天帝少女) and “night girl” (*yakōūjo* 夜行女). Cf. Komatsu (2009) e (2010).

[41] See Toriyama Sekien 2010, p. 120.

[42] Ivi. The English translation is by the author.

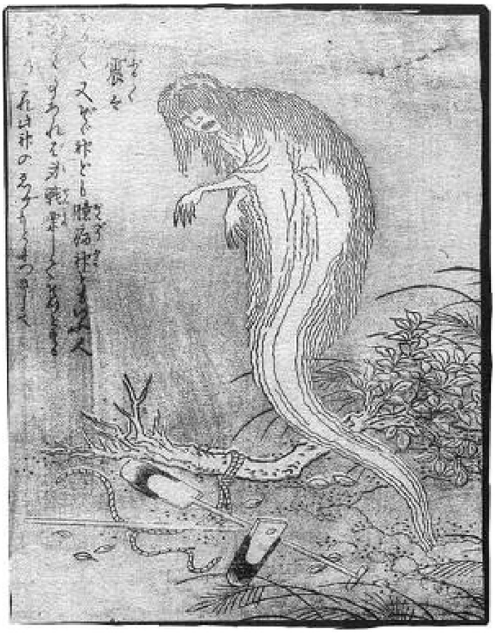

Fig. 2 Toriyama Sekien's *buru buru*

The result is a sort of rhetoric that includes more than one dimension and is characterized by a refined sense of humor: in short, through the *zukan*, the *yōkai* begins to take on a comical aspect that stands side by side with their more terrifying image. In this sense, they are in total disagreement with the Confucian scholars' *kishinron* (鬼神論) "essays on demons and gods".[43]

In the first element of the series – almost entirely made up of creatures found in previous *emakimono,* and therefore already largely known -, and except for the two -page illustration that opens the short volume and a few other *sashi-e*,[44] the number of captions is rather small. However, from the second – *Konjaku gazu zoku hyakki* (Illustrated One Hundred Demons from the Present and the Past 今昔画図続百鬼, 1779) – this trend seems to change and texts increase a great deal. We therefore gradually reach a new format within the series itself in which a caption accompanies most of the illustrations of the short volume, and in some cases this text appears quite long. Captions are enriched with toponyms and personal names, which often make specific reference to places of worship . The most striking element, however, is the scarcity of references to previous works. It looks almost as if the author wants to convey the idea that his work is mostly linked to superstitions of the oral tradition rather than those traditions that have been passed on through writing. It is in any case possible to trace some exceptions from which it is possible to infer how Sekien is addressing both the local literature and the Chinese sources in the same way. We find, for instance, the creature *sansei* ("mountain spirit" 山精) - a one -legged demon with human features from the ancient prefecture of Ankoku (安国),[45] who Sekien portrays in the clumsy attempt of leaning against the wall of a house – in the caption we find an old Chinese chronicle of the 4th century, the *Eikaki* (Notes of Yongjia 永嘉記).[46] In addition, in the text that accompanies the *sashi-e* of the *itsumade* (*itsumade* 以津真天), a monstrous predatory bird, that according to Sekien takes its name from the sound it makes [Fig. 3],[47] reference is made to the *Taiheiki* (Chronicle of the Great Peace 太平記, 1372), a war tale (*gunki monogatari*) narrating historical events from 1318 to 1367.[48] "It is big. Its voice makes a noisy *itsumade itsumade*. Sometimes, it hunts monstrous birds. It is also mentioned in the *Taiheiki*."[49]

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[43] For details about *kishinron* see Foster 2009 and Cucinelli 2013.

[44] This *sashi-e* deals with the *kodama* (木霊) - or "spirit that lives in a tree" - which, according to Sekien's text, is the expression of the god (*kami*) that lives in a centenary tree . See Toriyama Sekien 2010, pp. 10-11.

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[45] It is the Anguo region in China. It has long been famous for the production of medicaments.

[46] This work includes historical and traditional events under the reign of Emperor Jongjia (永嘉, 307-313) of the Western Jin dinasty (265-316).

[47] See Toriyama Sekien 2010, p. 111.

[48] See Keene (1999), pp. 868-920.

[49] Toriyama Sekien 2010, p. 111. The English translation is by the author.

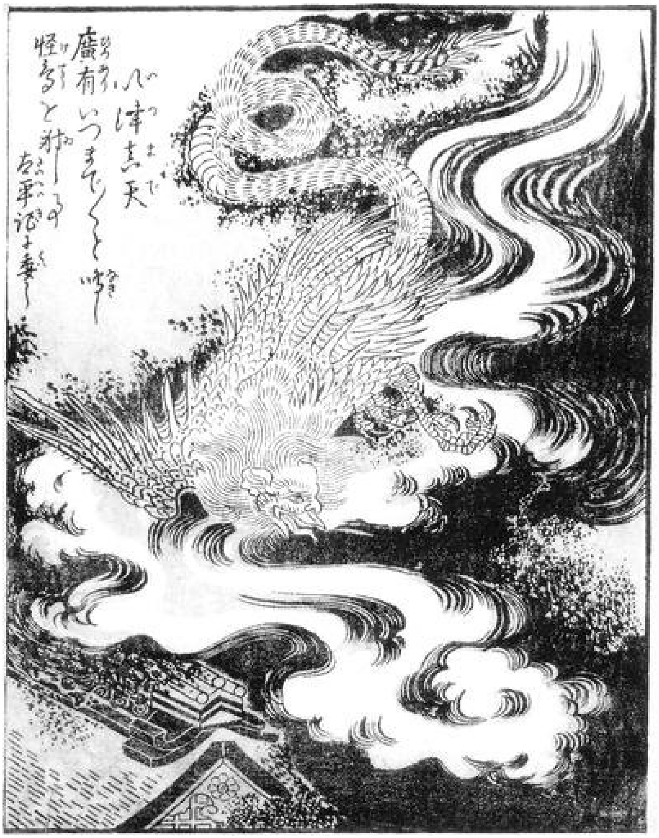

Fig. 3 Toriyama Sekien's *itsumade*

Takehara Shunsen's Ehon Hyaku Monogatari

Most of the illustrations portraying supernatural creatures available today date back to the Edo period. During this period, in fact, there was a profound interest for such topics both in literary and artistic fields. A strong preference was at the time expressed for narrations and representations that had as their main characters ogres, demons and ghosts. A very common practice during this period was the *hyaku monogatari kaidankai* ("a gathering of one hundred supernatural tales" 百物語怪談会), a sort of séance held in semidarkness by a group of people gathered in a room. The *setting* included one hundred *andon* (行燈)[50] placed in a circle and within which every participant would take a seat and tell a story about their hometown or a macabre personal experience. After finishing the story, the narrator had to put out a lantern: this custom was considered as a ritual in which stories and lights were able to channel the spiritual energy towards the circle, thus turning the room into a "lighthouse" for the dead people's souls. According to tradition, in fact, after even the last light was muffled, it would have been possible to witness a supernatural display that may have had tragical consequences for some of the participants.[51] Even though it is still not possible to know its exact origins, the *hyaku monogatari kaidankai* tradition seems to have been developed by *samurai* like *kimodameshi* (肝試し) - to "prove one's courage" - in order to assess the soul's strength and resistance. Despite being rooted in the world of samurai, the "Gathering of One Hundred Stories" were very soon adopted by other social classes, thus including also farmers, merchants and wandering monks. This led to the production of a multitude of ghost stories that embrace different worlds. An example of a work that has kept much of the original spirit of the tradition is the collection *Tonoigusa* (*Nursery Tales* 宿直草, 1678), otherwise known as *Otogi monogatari* (Tales for comfort 御伽物語): compiled by Ogita Ansei (荻田安静, ?-1669). The work's main characters are young samurai who are taking part in a session of *hyaku monogatari* which must nominate the strongest in the group. One after the other, the young men tell their stories, and after the last lantern has been put out, an inexplicable phenomenon takes place and shocks the young warriors: a huge hand that has appeared from nowhere breaks into the circle. In the midst of a widespread sense of panic, only one of them proves he has the nerve to face the situation and with a quick stroke of his sword, he breaks what ends up being a mere distortion of perception, the shadow of a spider that the moonlight has made look gigantic.[52]

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[50] The *andon* is a traditional Japanese lantern.

At the same time, the *hyaku monogatari* stories show affinities with other collections of "tales of the weird" written in China in the same period, as for the Yuan Mei's (袁枚, 1716-1798) *Zibuyu* (What the Master Would Not Discuss 子不語, 18th century), a collection of 746 short stories about demons, ghosts and other supernatural creatures.[53] As for Yuan Mei's work, also in the *hyaku monogatari* stories «the borders between the world of the living and the dead seem impassable but in fact can be crossed from both sides» (Santangelo, 2013, 2). Moreover, as for the *Zibuyu*, even though many described figures are connected with Buddhism, the *hyaku monogatari* stories do not have a religious attitude or a didactic intent, as its main target is the amusement of readers. The collections composed under this name, together with Ueda Akinari's (1734-1809) *Ugetsu Monogatari* (Tales of Rain and the Moon 雨月物語, 1776) and *Harusame Monogatari* (Tales of Spring Rain 春雨物語, late 18th century), constitute the best examples of the “tales of the weird” genre in the late Tokugawa period, the word that becomes an inspiration also for 19th century *ukiyo-e* painters, such as Katsushika Hokusai (葛飾北斎, 1760-1849).

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[51] A further aspect of the superstition connected to this practice is the fact that supernatural rituals may cause the death of one of the participants. The contemporary novelist Kyōgoku Natsuhiko (京極夏彦, b. 1963), for instance, in his series of tales *mystery hyaku monogatari* uses this aspect of the ritual to stage apparently mysterious deaths. See Kyōgoku Natsuhiko 1998.

[52] See Takada 2007, pp. 220-223.

[53] For the complete English translation of this work see Santangelo 2013.

The list of works compiled in the wake of this tradition is very long. So much so that it has been possible to identify a specific literary genre born out of the impressive activity of intellectuals and writers who took part in the meetings. A market connected to *hyaku monogatari* develops, in which wealthy clients commission scholars collections of ghost stories that they intend to tell during such meetings of a gothic nature. The first book in which the term *hyaku monogatari* is used is the *Shokoku hyaku monogatari* (One Hundred Tales of Many Countries 諸国百物語, 1677), a collection of ghost tales published in 1677 by an author who is still unknown to this day:[54] as the title suggests, the work is a collection of ghost stories from different regions of the country. Very often, in the course of the narration, the author underlines how the content of the texts is the result of direct experiences, thus making the reader believe that the phenomena described in the book are based on reality. However, the work can only partially be considered original as a big number of stories are a copy of tales narrated in previous works, such as the *Sorori Monogatari* (Sorori's tales 曽呂利物語, about 1668) by Sorori Shinzaemon (曽呂利新左衛門, ?-?) - a storyteller under Toyotomi Hideyoshi[55] – and the *Otogibōko* (Hand puppets 御伽婢子, 1666) by the famous Asai Ryōi (浅井了意, 1612-1691).[56] The particular characteristic of *One Hundred Tales of Many Countries* is rather represented by the fact that it has contributed to the crystallization of the term *hyaku monogatari* which, since the collection was published, has been chosen to describe a particular narrative style that has greatly developed both in the field of romance and in the field of storytelling of *kōdan* (講談) and *rakugo* (落語).[57] The works that have been compiled after the *Shokoku hyaku monogatari* have mostly shown to be compliant with the more characteristic and consolidated forms : the circle of people who, one by one, share further ghostly events they have witnessed or that they have learnt from direct sources, usually entitle every single story after the name of the supernatural phenomenon described and have a tendency to mix “tradition”, meaning tales that have already been told in other collections, with “innovation” represented by a number of inedited narrations and re-interpreted *sashi-e*. Among the works most worthy of mention it is possible to include the *Kokon hyaku monogatari hyōban* (One Hundred Tales from Past and Present 百物語評判, 1686) by Yamaoka Genrin (山岡元隣, 1631-1672), a collection of forty-two tales in which the narrators, who are mainly scholars and intellectuals of the time, propose “scientific” explanations to the phenomena described above.[58] Examples of this are the *Otogi hyaku monogatari* (One hundred stories for comfort 御伽百物語, 1706) by Aoki Rosui (青木鷺水, 1658-1733), a work that presents a miscellaneous of stories drawn from the Chinese literature and the local heritage,[59] and the *Kindai hyaku monogatari* (One Hundred Recent Tales 近代百物語, 1770) by Torigai Suiga (鳥飼酔雅, 1721-1793) which often adds to the narrations a comment on the moral they contain and can be distinguished for the use of the color gold that decorates the first two lines of the text.[60]

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[54] See Takada, ed. 2007.

[55] See Sorori Shinzaemon 2007 and Ichiko 1978.

[56] It is a collection of 68 ghost stories, some of which are old tales inspired by Chinese works. See Asai Ryōi 2007.

[57] See Morioka and Sakaki 1981.

Despite the substantial number of collections of "One Hundred Tales", the one that critics agree to describe as the most representative of the genre is the collection *E-hon hyaku monogatari* (*The One Hundred Illustrated Tales* 絵本百物語*,* 1841) - otherwise known as *Tōsanjin yawa* (*Tōsanjin's Night Tales* 桃山人夜話) -, which is the fruit of a cooperation between the painter Takehara Shunsen (竹原春泉, 1774?-1850?) and the mysterious Tōkasanjin ("the man from the peach flower mountain" 桃花山人). While we have always known the biography of the first, the author of the illustrations, we do not have as much information regarding the author of the texts, and have only recently discovered that he might be Tōkazono Michimaro (桃華園三千麿, ?-?), a *gesaku* and *kyōgen* writer of the Edo period and a contemporary of Shunsen.[61] As a matter of fact, as the critic Tada points out, it might have been Michimaro himself who supplied the material on which to develop the work. This interpretation is based on the subtitle to the work: from this perspective, the *Ehon hyaku monogatari* could even be considered as Tōkasanjin 's (Tōkazono's pen name) repertoire of ghost stories.[62] As far as Shunsen is concerned, instead, we can rely on more detailed information: he was probably a pupil in the *atelier* of Matsumoto of Nobushige (松本信繁, ?-?), also known as Takehara Shunchōsai (竹原春朝斎). In addition to his production on supernatural topics, he also proved to possess an important talent for landscapes, as demonstrated in his famous *Tōkaidō Meisho Zue* (*Pictorial Guide to the Famous Places on the Tōkaidō* 東海道名所図絵, 1797) where his marked taste for a realistic rendering of the portrayed subjects is clearly evident.[63]

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[58] See Yamaoka Genrin 1993 and Takada 2002.

[59] See Aoki Rosui 1991.

[60] See Torigai Suiga 2007 and Takada 2007.

[61] In a study published in the volume *yōkai no hon*, Higashi Masao shows us that the *pen name* "Tōkasanjin", written on a copy of the original work and accompanied by the writing *haijin* (*haiku* poet 俳人), corresponds to the scholar of the second half of the Edo Tōkazono Michimaro period. The soundness of such study is then confirmed by Tada Katsumi in the afterword of *Night Tales of Tōsanjin* that he edited. See Higashi Masao 1999 and Tada Kazumi 2010, pp. 184-191.

[62] See Tada 2010, p. 185.

[63] For further details on Takehara Shunsen paintings please see Watson 1981.

The combined talents of these two artists create an articulated and lively product which – even centuries later – clearly communicates the dynamism and the range of shades expressed through the portrayed *yōkai* which, differently from Sekien's works, use colour to convey an even stronger expressive force. The *E-hon hyaku monogatari* is composed of five *maki*, each one of which contains nine tales, each dedicated to a different *yōkai*.[64] In this work the narration is a constant feature and an integral part of the structure of the work: in fact, every illustration is accompanied by a complete tale in which we can distinctively observe toponyms, personal names, social positions and literary references, from Chinese chronicles to local texts. Moreover, we also find captions written directly on the *sashi-e* which sum up in a few words the essence of the nature portrayed or, in some cases, the dangers it may cause. For example, the lines which accompany the *sashi-e* of the *yanagi onna* (柳女) - the "willow woman" - tell the tragic story concealed behind the fascinating silhouette of the girl in the picture [Fig. 4]. "In a windy day, passing beside a willow with her baby in her arms, a young woman was pierced by a brach and died. Her spirit though became part of the willow and at night, possessed by resentment, she cries next to the willow."[65]

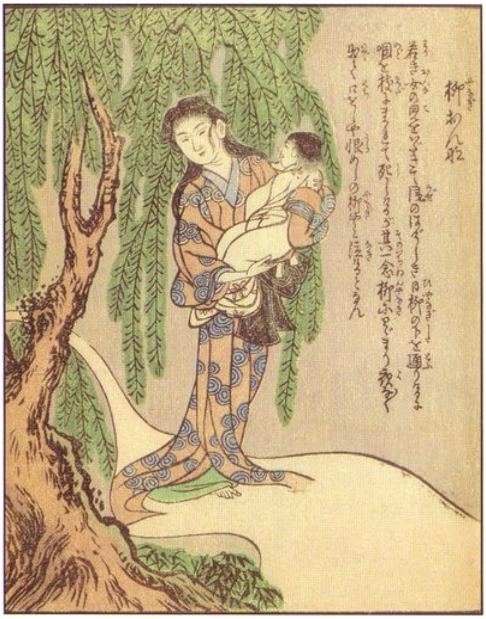

Fig. 4 Takehara Shunsen's *yanagi onna*

None of the creatures presented in Sekien's catalogue appear in Shunsen's illustrated anthology. Many of those figures seem instead taken from those who animate the collections of *hyaku monogatari* from the end of the 18th century, thus proving that the work originates from this current and not from the *hyakki yagyō* trend. The *E-hon hyaku monogatari's yōkai* range from the *hienma* (飛縁魔) - a female demon who hunts men- to the *yama otoko* (山 男), an anthropomorphic giant who inhabits the mountains, and the *funa yūrei* (舟幽霊), the "boat spirits". At the same time, however, we also find in this work heterogeneous beings such as the *kaze no kami* (風神) - the "*kami* of the wind" -, the *noteppō* (野鉄砲) - blood sucking bats that have come out of the body of a *tanuki* – and the *tenka* (天火) - the "celestial fire" -, thus showing how wide the *corpus* of creatures mentioned in the *hyaku monogatari* was even at the time when the work was first compiled. A particular feature is the scarce number of *tsukumogami*, that were instead so popular in previous works: the only representative of this category, in fact, is the narration entitled *Yoru no gakuya* (夜楽屋), the "Night Make-up Room", in which at the "Third hour of the ox" (*ushi mitsuji* 丑三時)[66] the dolls of the *jōruri* (浄瑠璃),[67] representing two warriors, would start a fierce fight [Fig. 5].[68] As told in the lines which accompany the *sashi-e* by Takehara Shunsen, "Even though they are only dolls, when the master infuses his soul in them, it will not leave the dolls but will become their spirit instead. […] One night, in the make-up room, the dolls of Kō no Moramao and En'ya Hangan continued their fight until the dawn."[69]

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[64] The only exception is the third *maki* that contains only 8.

[65] See Takehara Shunsen 2007, p. 71. The English translation is by the author.

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[66] It corresponds to the time frame between 2 and 3 am. In many *kaidan* of the Edo period we find the phrase *kusaki mo nemuru ushimitsudoki* (草木も眠る丑三つ時), meaning "the third hour of the ox, when plants and trees are also sleeping". See Yamamoto 2010, pp. 10-15.

[67] It is a traditional form of theatre in which actors are replaced by puppets.

[68] See Takehara Shunsen 2007, p. 51 and p. 181.

[69] Kō no Moronao (高師直) and En'ya Hangan (塩谷判官) are two dolls of the famous *jōruri* work *Kanadehon chūshingura* (仮名手本忠臣蔵) by Takeda Izumo (竹田出雲, ?-1747), presented for the first time in 1748 at the Takemoto-za in Osaka. Here is narrated the vendetta carried out by the forty-seven rōnin, formerly samurai of Lord Asano of Akō. See Keene, pp. 287-291. The English translation is by the author.

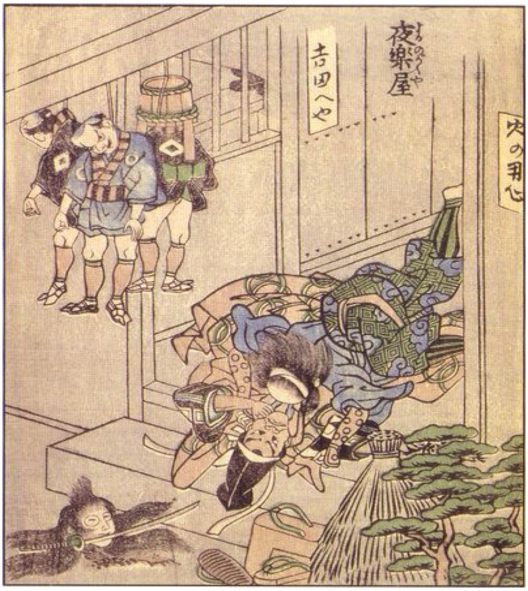
夜楽屋
よるのがくや
吉田へや
火の用心

Fig. 5 Takehara Shunsen's *yoru no gakuya*

Among the many narrations, the one that stands out for its originality is the one linked to the creature named *shio no chōji* (塩の長司) - the "king of salt" -, characterized by a curious cultural detail in the storyline, namely the consumption of horse meat (*baniku* 馬肉) by the main character (a human being). In buddhist Japan from the Nara to the Meiji period, in fact, a widespread superstition held that killing a farm animal and eating its flesh meant breaking one of the five vows of the non religious people (*gokai* 五戒),[70] thus risking to fall in the *tōkatsu jigoku* (等活地獄), the "hell of (repeating) resurrections".[71] Shunsen's narration recreates this situation through the myth of the *shio no chōji*: located in the area of Oshio no Ura (小塩の浦), the current prefecture of Ishikawa, the story describes a famous horse breeder (*umagai* 馬飼い) named Chōjirō (長次郎), whose farm can boast a great number of species. A great meat eater, as soon as one of his animals dies, he marinates its flesh in *miso* (*misozuke* 味噌漬け) or salt (*shiozuke* 塩漬け) and then eats it. One day, however, he runs out of his marinated meat supply and decides to kill one of the oldest horses in order to make some more. It is exactly this thoughtless act that transforms him from a *ningen* ("human being") into a *yōkai*. As Chōjirō deprived animals of their lives and fed on their flesh, he finds himself walking on a path that is different from "the way of Buddha": his behaviour arouses in animals a deep feeling of resentment that materializes in the shape of a "horse-like spirit" (*uma no rei* 馬の霊), able to take possession of a human being by entering their mouth. This spirit has the ability to come in and out of his host as he pleases, the revengeful animal spirit uses it to the point of even causing the person to die from inside.[72] This macabre scene is vividly depicted also in the lines that accompany the *sashi-e*: "It is said that after eating the horse he had nurtured for long time, the spirit of the horse started coming in and out from Chōjirō's body. This story has been handed down for centuries."[73]

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[70] The five vows of nonreligious people - in sanskrit *upāsakasaṃvara* – are "do not kill", "do not steal", "do not commit adultery", "do not lie " and "do not swallow intoxicating substances". See Cornu, p. 708.

[71] The "Hell of (constant) Resurrections" - in sanskrit *saṃjiva* – is one of the eight hot hells in which the damn souls suffer continuous torment by cutting each other into pieces on a scorching floor. Ibid., p. 551.

Shunsen's graphic representation, which accompanies the narration, well conveys the ambiguity of the *shio no chōji* [Fig. 6]:[74] if on the one hand it may give the impression that it is the man who is swallowing the horse, of whom we only see the back, on the other hand it describes the animal busy penetrating the host in order to take possession of its body by using a practice known as *uma tsuki* (馬憑き), "equine possession".[75] The words that accompany the illustration clearly sum up the main features of the *shio no chōji*, the close correlation between a human being and a horse, which goes beyond the limitations of the body, and the ending with an "inversion of roles" which sees the initial tyrant become the victim.

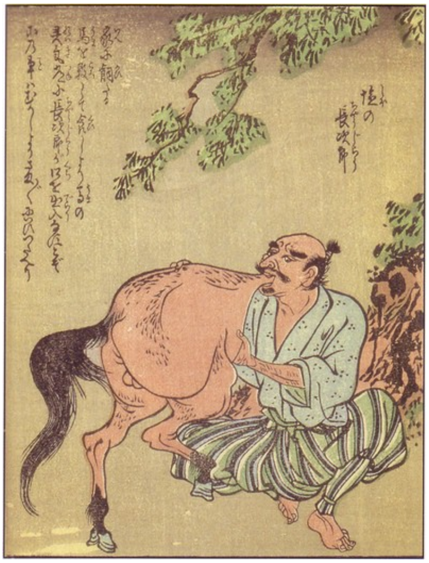

Fig. 6 Takehara Shunsen's *shio no chōji*

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[72] Takehara Shunsen 2010, pp. 128-129.

[73] Ibid., p. 10. The English translation is by the author.

[74] Ibid., p. 23.

[75] Ibid., pp. 125-126.

Final remarks

During the Muromachi period, the *Hyakki yagyō emaki* represents a peculiar attempt to approach horror topics from a humorous point of view. The following *yōkai-ga* developed in the second half of the Edo period claims to have developed from such a path. In an era characterized by the repressive morals of a shogunate based on Neo-Confucian ethics, representations of the supernatural are fully widespread at the moment the Tokugawa government enters recession, during the *bakumatsu* years (1853-1869): this conveys the anxiety felt by a population that does not feel properly led and represented by their administration as they felt in the past, and therefore chooses to express their psychological state through supernatural representations. In fact, the works of Toriyama Sekien and Takehara Shunsen prove how the grotesque creatures of Muromachi are replaced by a new typology of images characterized by a profound poetic sense and a romantic and sensual feel. What was originally considered a "mystery" coming from outside is now interiorized and able to transform into image the emotional dimension of the artist and the observer who both belong to the world of *chōnin* – the "citizens".[76]

Moreover, a further function can be ascribed to the movement to which the two works here analyzed belong. This is the ability of exorcising the fear of superstitions by using humor as a filter. As stated by the philosopher Henri Bergson,[77] irony can be the means through which self-realization is achieved, a sort of therapeutic intervention when confronting one's fears during a period of emotional turmoil, suffering and death. In this context, Sekien e Shunsen develop a type of artistic representation through which the mind gradually becomes familiar with the supernatural. The humorous approach in portraying the images certainly helps in this sense. With its static square framing, the *Gazu hyakki yagyō* allows for the first time to observe the *yōkai* in detail, thus contributing to unveil the mystery that has wrapped them for centuries. In fact, compared to the complex and indefinite mass of works proposed by the *Hyakki yagyō emaki* and the other *emakimono* which did not allow for a clear observation, Sekien places them within a certain and definite frame: this operation enables the artist to have control over the "supernatural", thus depriving it of the movement that, as observed by Zilia Papp,[78] represents the true essence of *bakemono* ("transforming/transformed creature" 化 物) in *emakimono* as in the case of contemporary *anime*.[79] Shunsen's work adds colour to all this, an element of fundamental importance which allows for a more complete framing of the creatures: these undergo a natural thickening due to the mass of pigmentation that covers them.

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[76] For details about Edo-period *chōnin* culture see Jansen 1986.

[77] See Bergson 2012.

[78] See Papp 2010a.

[79] The term *bakemono* was the most popular term among the people of the Edo period to refer to *yōkai*, much more informal than the scholarly *kishin* used by the Confucian intellectual

Moreover, the two works are the main products of two different trends in the art of the *yōkai,* the one connected to the *hyakki yagyō* culture, which originates in the late Heian period, and the *hyaku monogatari*, which can be dated back to the 17th century. The first is the expression of an aristocracy on the brink of decay. The second represents a population who share fears and are charmed by the shadows of the Supernatural.

From this point of view, the *Ehon hyaku monogatari* appears as a connection among the various dimensions, or, in any case, the work that best conveys the concept of layering of past experience: from the point of view of the setting it mirrors Sekien's work, which in turn originates from China. From the point of view of contents, instead, it draws from the repertoire of ghost stories typical of the tradition of *hyaku monogatari.* In the end, the rediscovered dimension of colour in one of the catalogues of *yōkai* reminds of the lively nuances that characterize the provocative *emakimono* of the Muromachi period, a dimension Toriyama Sekien and the editors of collections like the *hyaku monogatari* have not dared enter. It is exactly through these, from the *oni*'s red and blue bodies of the *Hell Scrolls* to the light blue of the Mizuki Shigeru's *Gegege no Kitarō*'s will-o'-the wisp that the *yōkai-ga* of all times conveys its terrifying and charming nature.

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