

poets created new meaning as they selected and combined elements from a variety of textual sources (historical, unofficial, and anecdotal) in *yongshi* poems and how different poets adopted different approaches to these sources.

Zhang's study carefully draws and expands on a broad array of existing scholarship and opens up new venues for exploring the interplay among political, historical, social, and literary forces in the development of a poetic subgenre in early medieval China. It is to be commended for its well-presented arguments, lucid exposition, accurate and literary translations, and utilization of less well-known as well as familiar sources. This welcome contribution should be of great interest to scholars of early medieval Chinese poetic culture and memory studies.

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#### Note

1. See Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

## NORTHEAST ASIA

### More than a Woman: Illuminating the Multifaceted Nature of *Yamauba/Yamamba*

*Mountain Witches: Yamauba*. By Noriko Tsunoda Reider. Logan: Utah State University Press, an imprint of University Press of Colorado, 2021. xiv, 224 pp. ISBN: 9781646420544.

*Yamamba: In Search of the Japanese Mountain Witch*. Edited by Rebecca Copeland and Linda C. Ehrlich. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge, 2021. 151 pp. ISBN: 9781611720662.

With these two publications, 2021 was a bounteous year for scholarship on the *yamauba* (or its nasalized equivalent *yamamba* or *yamanba*), an enigmatic but familiar figure in Japanese folklore, religious narratives, literature, performance arts, and more. Traditionally considered to be a *yōkai* (supernatural creature), the *yamauba* is most closely associated with an old woman dwelling alone in the deep recesses of mountains, feared for her anthropophagus and insatiable appetite, especially for men and boys. At the same time, she is appreciated for offering succor to those in need of temporary shelter and performing domestic chores such as spinning. The two 2021 publications—the first scholarly monograph in English on the topic by Noriko Tsunoda Reider and an original collection of multifarious narratives and voices in English “for the yamamba” (8) edited by Rebecca Copeland and Linda C. Ehrlich—together open up new ways of engaging with this centuries-old figure, a multifaceted embodiment of the problematic relationship between women and the structure of power. Beyond the confines of Japanese society and culture, the significance of these publications richly resonates more broadly with ongoing critical discourses on the fear of and desire for women, as well as women's persistent resistance

against the ideological forces that have denied and limited their power to occupy the position of the subject in their own lives.

In the introduction, Reider states that “this study investigates the attributes of *yamauba*, and offers an interpretation through the examination of *yamauba* narratives including folklore, literary works, legends, modern fiction, manga, and anime” (4). From the outset, Reider thus renders it explicit that this monograph does not aim to argue for a particular theoretical position on, or interpretation of, the *yamauba*. Rather, her work is exploratory in nature (and at times speculative), presenting a holistic view of *yamauba* narratives as they have been transmitted to the present, while illuminating how the *yamauba* is constantly reimaged, transformed, and represented. With an overarching goal of “situating the *yamauba* within the construct of *yōkai* and archetypes” (4), the outcomes of Reider’s exhaustive scholarly investigation take the form of six chapters, bookended with an introduction and a brief conclusion, which are broadly organized chronologically, each chapter delineating a set of related major aspects of the *yamauba*. In these chapters, moving through and crisscrossing times between the primordial era as captured in the creation myth in *Kojiki* or *The Chronicle of Japan* (712) and contemporary Japan as reflected in popular culture including anime and manga, Reider, in her multiple roles as a captivating storyteller, a well-informed critic, an expert translator, and an enthusiastic admirer of the *yamauba*, regales the reader with the multidimensional images of the *yamauba* and their varying significance.

In chapter 1, tantalizingly titled “Man-Eating, Helping, Shape-Shifting Yamauba,” Reider explains these three key aspects of the *yamauba* that have been firmly established, while underscoring the intrinsic duality of this figure by tracing her positive and negative aspects as delineated in canonical materials from premodern times, including two seminal Noh plays, *Yamamba* and *Kurozuka*, from the Muromachi period (1336–1573). In chapter 6, “Yamamba Mumbo Jumbo: Yamauba in Contemporary Society,” Reider throws into high relief the enduring but altered figure of Yamauba, or “yamaubaesque” (145) embodiments, as shown, for example, in the short-lived subculture “yamaguro-gyaru” phenomenon from the late 1990s to the early 2000s in Shibuya, a popular Tokyo urban market space where teenaged girls congregated, self-fashioned markedly as “the other” with their signature dark heavy makeup and outfits. In Japanese anime and manga with their increasing global appeal, old women characters such as Yubaba in *Spirited Away* (2001) similarly harken back to the larger-than-life figure of the *yamauba*, which appears in the intervening chapters through an expanded and expanding palimpsest of her images that Reider meticulously delineates. This palimpsest includes *oni* (“demons, ogres, monsters,” to borrow Reider’s English equivalents [6]), *oni*-woman, selfish stepmother, self-sacrificing wife, devouring mother, sake-loving crone, clairvoyant, helpless pregnant woman, femme fatale, flying witch, abandoned old woman, spider, spinner, and other gender-norm-defying heroines against the dramatic backdrops of piled-up skulls and corpses, fragmented body parts, terrifying thunderstorms, bloody births and deaths, apparitions, and so forth that disrupt the rhythms of mundane everydayness in villages, mountains, and urban dwellings along the edges of haunting dreamscapes.

A plethora of *yamauba* manifestations as such are easily accessible to the reader, as the table of contents includes both descriptive chapter titles and detailed

subheadings. On the one hand, each subsection (and at times sub-subsections), about one to three pages long, offers the reader a bite-size, as it were, encounter with *yamauba* narratives and the author's interpretations of the critical discourse surrounding them. On the other hand, the overall picture of the associated images and ideas surrounding the *yamauba* comes into focus when this monograph is read in its entirety. This work as a whole reveals that the *yamauba* is an integral aspect of the Japanese cultural imagination—one that Reider has illuminated in her previous publications: *Tales of the Supernatural in Early Modern Japan: Kaidan, Akinari, Ugetsu Monogatari* (2002); *Japanese Demon Lore: Oni, from Ancient Times to the Present* (2010); *Seven Demon Stories from Medieval Japan* (2016); and numerous other book chapters and articles on the same and related topics.

One of the many meaningful takeaways is how Reider elucidates the linked concepts of the *oni*, *oni*-women, and *yamauba* through a temporally conceived spectrum. On one end of this spectrum, Reider places the oldest term, *oni*, to underscore the originary provenance of the cannibalistic aspect of what came to be known later through the appellation, *yamauba*, marking the other end of the spectrum. *Yamauba*, a compound noun, underscores an intimate link between the female gender and the mountain topos (i.e., outside social norms and communities), not readily apparent in the hyphenated expression, “*oni*-woman,” which marks the in-betweenness of the spectrum's two ends. Reider singularly emphasizes that the female-mountain link emerged in the Muromachi period, one of the darkest periods for women in the history of Japan. In other words, the implicit ideological thrust that sustains Reider's overall engagement with the *yamauba* in this publication is that, however fantastical and contradictory this figure might appear to be, she exists not in a vacuum but in relation to the lived reality and conditions that governed and shaped the perception, conception, and representation of women specifically as those of the other. Reider concludes the monograph by pointedly turning to Japan's imperial institution as a clear embodiment of persistent patriarchy that still denies in the twenty-first century the imperial family's female members their birthright to ascend to the throne. As such, this enduring institution represents the conditions in which the *yamauba* will continue to manifest herself in Japan.

Whereas Reider's monograph paints the portrait of *Yamauba* with all her layered complexity over the centuries, *Yamamba: In Search of the Japanese Mountain Witch*, edited by Copeland and Ehrlich, is “an homage” (8) to the *yamamba*. More than simply representing “the first work in English to be written for the *yamamba* (8),” this homage demonstrates the process through which new *yamamba* accounts can emerge and converge—accounts that further amplify the symbolic significance of the *yamamba* while shedding new light on seminal *yamamba* narratives. The homage proffered comprises “eclectic responses engendered by the *yamamba*” (8). Each contributor, who responded to the coeditors' call for “their quest for the *yamamba*” (10), is in their own right a modern *yamamba*, or “*yamaubaesque*,” to borrow Reider's expression, unfettered from the geo-spatiotemporal specificities of the traditional *yamamba* deeply rooted in the figure of a lone Japanese crone roaming through the mountains. In that sense, this collection represents various kinds of shapes an homage can take, especially when contemporary *yamambas* (both male and female) from, or “shuffling” between, Japan and North America conjoin their

creative visions and raise their voices to pay tribute to the *yamamba* apart from, and intersecting with, their varied scholarly and artistic endeavors, as well as educational engagements.

None other than Reider's brief account of the *yamamba* constitutes one of the eclectic responses included in the publication, providing at the outset a scholarly introduction to this figure. In the subsequent eight responses, her multifarious attributes are newly delineated and freshly crafted in the form of interview, poetry, short story, and commentary. Following Reider's introduction, for instance, there appears an interview article by Ann Sherif, which shares her exchanges with two contemporary Japanese women Noh actors, Uzawa Hisa (mother) and Uzawa Hikaru (daughter), in this traditionally male-dominated theater, about their views on *Yamamba*, a seminal Noh play also discussed by Reider in chapter 1 of her monograph. The play, attributed to Zeami (1363–1443), concerns Hyakuma Yamamba, a young dancer, who has made a name for herself in the capital by performing the dance of a *yamamba* (or by “dancing the *yamamba*” [125] to borrow the title of the collection's final piece, another interview article that circles back to this Noh play and the female itinerant dancer) and who encounters a real *yamamba* during her pilgrimage and witnesses her formidable dance. Hisa and Hikaru generously share their accounts of encountering the *yamamba* in their full or partial performance of the piece, which entails a judicious selection of the mask, the costume including a wig, as well as control of the energy and tempo of delivery when reciting, chanting, or dancing. Through this interview, the reader gains a fresh understanding that the *yamamba* is not merely associated with the mountain but that she herself is the mountain, representing the power of nature and the Buddhist cosmology pertaining to the cyclicity of nature itself. To embody the *yamamba* on stage as such takes nothing less than the energy to move the mountain, both figuratively and literally. The realm of *Yamamba* thus transcends the modern notion of gender expressed through the binary terms male and female, though the *yamamba* character takes the form of a woman on stage.

Hisa and Hikaru's deep engagements and encounters with the *yamamba* both on stage and throughout their professional journeys as Noh practitioners emblematically represent the nature of all the other contributors' encounters (as well as those of their fictional counterparts) with the *yamamba* in their respective artistic endeavors and pursuits, be it, for example, Ehrlich's poetic reflections, *Yamamba's Mountains*, accompanied by Ohmori Kayo's Japanese translation; Copeland's novella, “Blue Ridge Yamamba,” featuring a fifty-seven-year-old professor of Japanese mythology and her recurring encounters with a *yamamba* at her family cabin in the Appalachian Mountains; Laura Miller's commentary on her own creative process of constructing a mixed-media collage, in a vein similar to shadow boxes in Mexican and South American folk art, which functions as a veritable shrine to “Yamamba-chan” (72). Miller whimsically and purposefully celebrates the heterogeneous, contradictory, and supernatural aspects of *Yamamba* with variegated elements adorning the shrine, including a fellow supernatural creature known as the *kappa* and cosplaying animals (the bunny *Jizō* and the cat *kitsune*), not to mention photos of *yamamba* girls, the focus of Reider's final chapter mentioned earlier, and David Holloway's short story, “An Encounter in Aokigahara,” building up to a fatal meeting between the protagonist K with a *yamamba* during his suicide trip disguised as

a dissertation research excursion to Aokigahara (“the so-called ‘Suicide Forest’ of eastern Japan” [10], a site long associated with death and the *yamamba* as discussed in Reider’s publication).

The last three contributions in the collection seem to form a cluster of their own through the authors’ sustained and interconnected engagements with the *yamamba*, further underscoring the conditions from which creative *yamamba* narratives can newly emerge. The first piece of this cluster is “The Smile of a Mountain Witch,” an English translation of Ōba Minako’s (1930–2007) 1976 novella, “Yamamba no bishō,” which was originally translated by the contemporary scholar-poet, Noriko Mizuta Lippit (b. 1937), and published by M. E. Sharpe in the 1991 anthology of *Japanese Women Writers* coedited with Kyoko Iriye Selden. A story about a modern-day *yamamba* leading a life of self-denial from childhood to old age as daughter, wife, and mother, this English translation is what Copeland and Ehrlich identify in the editors’ preface as the genesis of their collaborative pursuit of and engagement with the *yamamba*. Reider analyzes the same novella in her publication, tracing its textual sources for the protagonist’s *yamamba*-derived mind-reading ability. Following this short story is Mizuta’s contribution of ten poems introduced by Copeland and presented under the titles of “Yamamba of the Sato” (three poems translated by Copeland) and “Yamamba of the Mountains” (seven poems translated by Marianne Tarcov), which together highlight the two antithetical topoi associated with the *yamamba*—“village” and “mountain,” respectively signifying the locus of her domestication and freedom.

The third piece in this cluster and the final eclectic response to the *yamamba* in the collection is Copeland’s conversation with the award-winning choreographer and dancer Yokoshi Yasuko (b. 1961). The interview centers around Yokoshi’s 2019 multimedia production, “Shuffleyamamba,” an experimental work coproduced with Gelsey Bell (an American composer, vocalist, and actor), which Yokoshi, an appreciative reader of Copeland’s essay on the *yamamba*, invited her to attend at the Eirakukan, the oldest Kabuki theater in the Kansai region. Sparked by the Noh play *Yamamba*, the focal point of Sherif’s aforementioned interview, Yokoshi approaches this “women-centered” (128) piece through her metaphorical reimagining of the encounter between Hyakuma Yamamba and a real *yamamba* as “the passing of knowledge, wisdom, and artistry among the female performance artists” (133). Yokoshi’s vision is realized on stage through the bodies of dancers, whose choreographic storytelling is layered with, transformed by, and shuffled between Yokoshi’s personal history (an immigrant who has resided in New York for over three decades) and her highly controversial contemporary dance production “Shuffle” (2003), a piece based on the goddess Izanami. Copeland’s interview article brings into clear focus the relevance of the centuries-old figure of Yamamba to contemporary multimedia artistic pursuits across the Pacific Ocean and completes the kaleidoscopic homage that this collection pays to the *yamamba*, while reflecting each contributor’s encounter with the *yamamba*, as well as the encounters between these contemporary *yamambas* linked through their shared passions for what the *yamamba* symbolizes to them individually and collectively.

Despite their differing modes of engagement with the *yamauba/yamamba*, the two 2021 publications reviewed here resonate richly with one another, rein-

forcing and amplifying the potency, shape, and meaning that have been attributed to this figure, while opening up new ways of reimagining and rethinking the complexity of such critical notions as gender, body, creativity, knowledge, life, death, society, nature, and others beyond the delimited space of Japanese culture. At the same time, these publications in English render the *yamamba* accessible to a wide range of new audiences, inviting them in a compelling way to further explore the ideas presented therein. Complete with informative back matters (Reider's with a list of Japanese and Chinese names and terms, detailed notes, references, and index; Copeland and Ehrlich's with glossary, endnotes, and recommended reading), these two publications will productively serve as essential resources for a broad range of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary studies, including gender studies, folklore studies, religious studies, performance arts, media studies, translation studies, and many more within Japanese studies as well as their counterparts without. As such, the author and the coeditors of these *yamauba/yamamba* publications have made invaluable contributions toward nurturing the next generation of scholars, artists, dancers, writers, and poets by sharing not only the outcomes of their scholarly and creative endeavors but also their own personal engagements with the *yamamba* as an unlimited source of inspiration for self-exploration and discovery.

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*A Fictional Commons: Natsume Sōseki and the Properties of Modern Literature.* By Michael K. Bourdaghs. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021. xii, 235 pp. ISBN: 9781478013693. doi: 10.1215/9781478021926.

In *A Fictional Commons*, his latest contribution to Sōseki scholarship, Michael K. Bourdaghs organizes previous materials and elaborates further on some of the issues raised therein, most notably the author's relevance as a major figure in Meiji literary theory. While Sōseki's stature as a writer is unquestioned, his lifelong commitment to literary theory was hardly explored in English-language scholarship throughout the twentieth century. Bourdaghs undertook this endeavor more than a decade ago, and it has led him to, among other things, the publication (with Atsuko Ueda and Joseph A. Murphy) of a scholarly edition of Sōseki's most important critical writings, including *A Theory of Literature* (1907), in 2009.

It is indeed following the path traced by Sōseki himself in *A Theory of Literature* that Bourdaghs reads some of his most representative novels, such as *I Am a Cat* (1905), *The Gate* (1910), *The Spring Equinox and Beyond* (1912), and *Kokoro* (1914). *A Fictional Commons* presents a compelling argument for looking at Sōseki's oeuvre with an integrated approach that brings together literature, psychology, economy, history, and sociology, an approach that is grounded in his very notion of literary taste as socially and historically determined and in the emphasis he placed on the necessity of looking at literature through a wider lens than a literary frame of reference. Bourdaghs analyzes Sōseki's novels on