Shiori Watanabe, *Jirei*
Statement

Large ceramic vessels lie buried beneath the Noh stage, or so I had occasionally heard. I wanted to see these vessels in the darkness under the stage, hidden from view, with their pitch-black mouths gaping open. I believe it was that image that set this work in motion. And when I considered the relationship between what lies above and below a Noh stage, it occurred to me that the formation of Noh and the formation of the Japanese state might follow a similar pattern.

In the Noh play *Tsuchigumo*, retainers of Minamoto no Yorimitsu defeat the Tsuchigumo, a monstrous spider that torments their lord with sinister magic. Research on the Tsuchigumo, however, reveals that the name referred to groups that had inhabited the Japanese archipelago before the rise of the Yamato polity, resisted its rule, and were eventually conquered. They were said to have unusually long shins, a physical trait that was the source of the derogatory term Tsuchigumo ("earth spiders").

The same pattern repeats throughout the Japanese archipelago, the names shifting with period and region, and the figure we know best today is surely the *oni* (ogre or demon).

Noh has always had a pronounced ritual dimension, in which possession serves to pacify the dead, and unquiet souls, spirits, and ghosts are summoned or driven away through foot-stamping. The downward, trampling motion of the stamping and the unseen vessels trembling in resonance beneath the stage can be seen as analogous to the state built atop the dens of the Tsuchigumo, stamped down and compacted beneath it.

This work is a 24-hour sound installation comprising recordings related to these subjects, made primarily in Tokyo and locations to its west. Every three hours the "character" changes, and an original fairy tale, narration, music, or other material

plays from a single vessel as the “main audio track.” Two other vessels play supplementary tracks corresponding to that character, while the remaining four are programmed to play further tracks at random throughout the 24-hour cycle.

The “characters” are as follows:

1. Tsuchigumo of Mount Katsuragi
2. Ura (ogre said to have been defeated by Momotaro)
3. Raiho-shin (visiting deity)
4. Tsuchigumo of Kyushu
5. The Hayato (a people of southern Kyushu who were brought under Yamato rule)
6. Nagasunehiko (insurgent leader who resisted Emperor Jimmu)
7. Ma (malign being)

Local power structures embedded in stories like these recur throughout the archipelago. By seeking out the stories of those defeated and omitted from official histories, we may be able to reexamine the true nature of the Japanese state.

Even so, the Tsuchigumo, ostensibly the enemy to be vanquished in Noh, is portrayed with such compelling force that I sometimes wonder whether the deeper truth lies on its side. Konparu Zenchiku, a Noh performer and playwright of the Muromachi period (1336–1573), wrote a text to the effect that Okina, the figure at the center of the most important Noh play, is an *oni*. Those branded as *oni* may have slipped beyond the reach of power, become “shadows,” and survived within the sanctuary of the performing arts. As *jirei*, spirits rooted in the land, they may have formed an underground spiritual network in the depths of the Japanese islands, disrupting the order (the official, superficial history) imposed by sovereign power.

Shiori Watanabe

## “Characters” and Synopses of the Main Audio Tracks

1. Tsuchigumo of Mount Katsuragi

In the tale of Jimmu’s Eastern Expedition, Nagasunehiko, thought to have been one of the indigenous Tsuchigumo people originally inhabiting the region, once defeated Emperor Jimmu at Mount Katsuragi (on the border of present-day Osaka and Nara prefectures). However, in a subsequent encounter Nagasunehiko was caught in a net of kudzu vines, called a *katsuraami*, from which the region came to be called “Katsuragi.” This story was eventually recast as the Noh play in which Minamoto no Yorimitsu’s retainers slay the monstrous Tsuchigumo. Numerous sites around Katsuragi are known as “spider caves,” while tradition holds that the dismembered remains of the Tsuchigumo are buried at Katsuragi Hitokotonushi Shrine.

Synopsis

As the Yamato court built the state through the ordered geometry of wet-rice agriculture, indigenous people who revered the mountains and were proficient in working ores were branded Tsuchigumo (“earth spiders”) and excluded from official histories. Like underground waterways, however, they have continued to flow beneath history in altered forms. Among their possible manifestations are the *oni* (ogre or demon) who served the ascetic Shugendo founder En no Gyoja, the white fox of Shinoda Forest said to be the mother of court diviner Abe no Seimi, and the *shikigami* (conjured familiar spirits) of Abe no Seimei. These legendary figures endowed with uncanny powers may have been descendants of the indigenous Tsuchigumo, inheritors of ancient memories and technologies. From the surveyed grids of Makimuku, an early settlement in the Yamato region, to the concrete that covers Namba, the modern face of ancient Naniwa (Osaka), state-led urban development has functioned as a mechanism for containing the disorder of nature. However, the suppressed energy of the earth keeps erupting in the

fevers of contemporary life, beneath the palimpsest of history and the sprawling spaces of the modern city.

## 2. Ura

Ura is said to have inspired the *oni* (ogre or demon) in the tale of Momotaro. Texts such as the founding legend of Okayama's Kibitsu Shrine describe Ura as a four-meter-tall *oni* who lived in Kibi (present-day Okayama). In reality, one theory goes, he represents a powerful immigrant group from Baekje on the Korean Peninsula that possessed ironworking technology, built Kinojo Castle on Mount Niiyama, defied the Yamato throne, and was defeated as a result. *Momotaro*, which had circulated as regional folklore, was retold as children's literature by Sazanami Iwaya during the Meiji era (1868–1912), establishing the version familiar today. Around the same period, Tsuyoshi Inukai, who later became prime minister, identified himself with the dog among the dog, pheasant, and monkey who served Momotaro (representing Yamato, or the Japanese state). This implicitly identified him with the Inukai-be, a hereditary guild of dog keepers, and thereby cast him as a leading player in the formation of the state. At Kibitsu Shrine,where Kibitsuhiko, who defeated Ura, is enshrined, Ura's head is said to be buried. The shrine continues to conduct the Narukama Shinji, a ritual in which Ura's groans from beneath a cauldron are interpreted as omens.

### Synopsis

Ura, a prince of Baekje, drifted ashore in the land of Kibi. He taught the villagers to smelt iron, married a local woman, and lived peacefully until the Yamato court branded him an *oni* and killed him. Threatened by Kibi's prosperity, Yamato reframed its invasion as a "righteous war." This logic survived in the tale of *Momotaro* and was later incorporated into the state-authorized textbooks of modern Japan, giving rise to numerous pieces of wartime animated propaganda,

including *Momotaro, Sacred Sailors*; *Momotaro in the Sky*; and *Momotaro's Sea Eagles*. Meanwhile, Tsuyoshi Inukai, a descendant of the "dog" who served as Momotaro's obedient retainer, lost his life in the May 15 Incident, a 1932 coup attempt led by young naval officers. Throughout a history in which absolute justice is wielded as a merciless blade, the soul of the slain Ura has continued to make itself heard beneath the cauldron at Kibitsu Shrine.

3. Raiho-shin

Drawing on the folklorist Shinobu Orikuchi's theory of *marebito* (deities from beyond the sea), this section positions the *raiho-shin* (visiting deity) beliefs of Okinawa's Yaeyama Islands as a primal form of both Japanese performing arts, represented by the Noh play *Okina*, and the figure of the *oni* (ogre or demon).

Synopsis

Because I concluded that the *raiho-shin* could not be represented, this is the only character that uses no language. Instead, I composed a musical work from sounds that evoke the tremors of life coming into being, such as a fetal heartbeat and a pregnant woman murmuring, together with sounds associated with phenomena that transcend human perspectives, including earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

4. Tsuchigumo of Kyushu

This character is modeled on the indigenous peoples of Kyushu portrayed in the *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicles of Japan) and the *fudoki* (early records of the lands, climate, and customs of each province) as Tsuchigumo ("earth spiders") who resisted the Yamato court. These historical texts describe them as monsters or

rebels with abnormally long limbs who lived in caves. They are presented here as a powerful force that had established its own networks throughout Kyushu before the advent of the Yamato polity. Theirs is said to have been a matrilineal society governed by female leaders who interpreted oracles from the earth, including Taburatsu-hime of Yame and Hisatsuhime of Hita. Because this order stood in direct opposition to the patrilineal, centralized system introduced by the Yamato throne, which centered on rice cultivation and taxation, they were brutally suppressed by the forces of Emperor Keiko and Empress Jingu. In Oita, leaders such as Uchizaru and Yata exploited their knowledge of the terrain and resisted so fiercely that the emperor was driven to seek divine assistance. They were ultimately subdued, however, and their forests were cleared and forcibly converted into rice fields that generated wealth for Yamato, including places such as Chida ("blood field").

Synopsis

Ancient Kyushu had a culture closely bound to nature, as seen in the navigational skill of seafaring peoples and in matrilineal societies centered on female chieftains. Seeking to centralize power and expand rice cultivation, however, the Yamato court labeled these peoples "Tsuchigumo" and subdued them. Their abundant forests were cleared and transformed into agricultural land that formed the basis of taxation. At the same time, Yamato's detailed account of its campaigns in the *Nihon Shoki* preserved the names and existence of the defeated in writing, allowing them, paradoxically, to reach us in the present day. What history lies buried beneath the beautiful terraced rice fields we see today? It is the story of indigenous peoples omitted from official chronicles.

5. Hayato

The Hayato, indigenous to southern Kyushu and renowned for their prowess in battle, were ultimately brought into complete submission after resisting the rule of the centralized administrative state in the Hayato Rebellion of 720–721. Otomo no Tabito was dispatched as commander-in-chief of the campaign to subjugate the Hayato, and an oracle came from Usa Shrine declaring, "I too shall go forth and strike them down." A *mikoshi* (portable shrine) into which the spirit of the deity Hachiman had been ritually transferred was constructed, and the campaign was waged as a magical rite. This is held to be the origin of the *mikoshi* seen at festivals throughout Japan today. Usa Shrine commemorates the event each October in its annual Hojo-e (life-releasing ceremony). Having crushed the Hayato Rebellion, the imperial forces decapitated the Hayato they had killed and brought the heads back to Usa as proof of their deeds in battle. Tradition holds that there were one hundred bodies (*hyakutai*), or perhaps even more. Their burial mound is venerated as Hyakutai Shrine, located on the extended axis of the approach to Usa Shrine. A *kugutsu* puppet dance is performed at Hyakutai Shrine once every three years to pacify the spirits of the Hayato, while vestiges of Hayato tradition, including the Hayato dance and imitations of dogs howling, are performed in parts of Kyushu.

Synopsis

Once upon a time, the elder of two brothers, Umisachihiko (representing the Hayato), who sped freely over the sea, was defeated by his younger brother Yamasachihiko (representing Yamato). He was then forced to serve as a loudly barking "watchdog" guarding the Yamato capital. Long afterward, the descendants of the Hayato took refuge in the formidable seven castles of southern Kyushu and rose in rebellion against Yamato, but they were defeated through a ruse involving a *mikoshi* (portable shrine) and jerking, dancing puppets. The shrines built to pacify them, and the *mikoshi* that had struck fear into them, evolved over time into fervent festivals that spread throughout Japan. The true identity of these maritime people is concealed within folktales such as *Urashima Taro*. However, along country roads in southern Kyushu, the Hayato deity Wodon

still rides in a pickup truck, quietly yet proudly sending his howl echoing through the mountains and towns.

6. Nagasunehiko

In the myths of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, Nagasunehiko is the leader of the indigenous forces of the Kinai region (the Yamato region, roughly present-day Nara Prefecture) who opposed Emperor Jimmu's eastern expedition. In his fierce resistance he struck down Jimmu's elder brother Itsuse no Mikoto, and once drove the emperor's forces into retreat. In reality, he is thought to have been a local ruler who governed the prosperous Kinai region before the rise of the Yamato polity. He fought to defend his homeland against outside invaders, but was ultimately killed by Nigihayahi no Mikoto, the heaven-descended deity he served as vassal, for refusing to submit, and official history painted him as "the arch-traitor." History is written by the victors, who cast him as a villain, but his defiant image survives as the memory of a powerful indigenous force that existed before the founding of Japan.

Synopsis

Nagasunehiko was a local leader branded the greatest traitor against the Yamato throne. Objective evidence suggests that, far from being a savage rebel, he was a highly capable military commander who established an advanced defensive network and coalition government in the Yamato Basin and once completely repelled Jimmu's forces. The situation changed radically, however, when it became clear that the invading army, which had circled around to attack again, and Nagasunehiko's own ally Nigihayahi no Mikoto belonged to the "same cultural sphere." When his ally sought to form a new governing coalition, Nagasunehiko refused to submit, determined to defend the land and its people to the end, and was assassinated by Nigihayahi no Mikoto. His death marked the beginning of the

Yamato throne's rational, cold-blooded system of rule, which would later extend westward into Izumo and Kibi. This work traces the resistance of a single leader who staked the pride of the local population on a confrontation with a rising order.

## 7. Ma

This new Noh play is based on a legend from Iruma, in present-day Saitama, northwest of Tokyo. In it, two suns appear in the sky, and one is shot down, revealing itself to be a giant three-legged white crow.

### Synopsis

A monk (the *waki*, or supporting actor) about to cross the Iruma River meets a boatman (the *mae-shite*, or lead actor in the first half), who tells him the history of Koma and the legend of the *ma* (malign being) shot from the sky, from which the name "Iruma" is said to derive. The boatman asks the monk to perform memorial rites for a noble spirit, hints that he is himself "the spirit of an emperor," and vanishes. As the monk continues chanting sutras through the night, the spirits of a soldier killed in the most recent war and a woman wounded by the fighting (the *tsure*, or companion roles) appear and seek salvation. Then the spirit of Emperor Showa, the wartime emperor known abroad as Hirohito (the *nochi-shite*, or lead actor in the second half), reveals its true form. Renouncing his divine status, the emperor's spirit declares himself human. Through the monk's prayers and the Buddha's compassion, a moment seems to arrive when all lingering resentment, from that of the emperor, soldiers, and civilians to that of plants and the land itself, will disappear through the teaching that all beings, sentient and non-sentient alike, possess Buddha-nature. At that instant, however, the waters of the Iruma River begin to swell, and all those present rapidly sink beneath the surface.

## List of Recordings Used in the Supplementary Audio Tracks

・Ambient sound inside the spider cave within the precincts of Hijiri Shrine, forgotten and sealed off behind a construction-site barricade
・A lecture by Satoshi Mutsu at Shitennoji Temple
・A lecture by Satoshi Mutsu at Sumiyoshi Taisha Shrine
・Ambient sound in Shinoda Forest, home of the "white fox of Shinoda," said to have been the mother of the court diviner Abe no Seimei
・A reenacted interview with a local resident about the Tsuchigumo, recorded on the approach to Katsuragi Hitokotonushi Shrine
・A scene from the Noh play *Tsuchigumo* in which the Tsuchigumo appearing before Minamoto no Yorimitsu reveals its true form
・An interview with a local resident reenacted at Takagamo Shrine
・A reading from the middle volume of the *Kojiki* (Jimmu's Eastern Expedition): When Emperor Jimmu (Kamuyamato Iwarehiko) reaches Ossaka (present-day Ossaka in Sakurai, Nara Prefecture), he encounters the Yasotakeru, a band of Tsuchigumo with tails, lying in wait inside a great rock chamber, and has them all killed at a signal given in song.
・From the *Nihon Shoki* (the entry for the second month of the year before Emperor Jimmu's enthronement): an account of the Tsuchigumo of Yamato, in which the court (the imperial army) subjugates the indigenous people who refuse to submit, and renames the places where this occurred.
・The song of *suzumushi* bell crickets. In classical usage, the *matsumushi* (pine cricket) referred to today's bell cricket, and in Noh the start of the *matsumushi* sound signals the passage into the world of spirits
・Cutting and boring sounds recorded underground at the construction site of a massive building somewhere in Tokyo
・Ambient sound at Kinojo Castle, where Ura, the *oni* (ogre or demon) of the Momotaro legend, is said to have lived
・A lecture on Ura by Yuko Ban
・A lecture on Inukai Takeru no Mikoto by Yuko Ban

・ The sounds of the Narukama Shinji, Kibitsu Shrine's boiling-cauldron divination ritual
・ *Norito* ritual prayers
・ Cicadas and bugle calls recorded at Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, the anniversary of World War II's end
・ A reenactment of the May 15 Incident, focusing on the exchange between the assassinated Tsuyoshi Inukai and the young officers
・ A reading of a passage from *The Voices of the Heroic Dead* (Yukio Mishima)
・ A reading of a passage from *Runaway Horses* (Yukio Mishima)
・ Recreated sound from the film *Momotaro, Sacred Sailors* (1945)
・ A reading of a passage from the *Kojiki* concerning the defeat of Ura, from the section on Emperor Sujin
・ A passage on Ura from the Kibitsu Shrine founding legend
・ A reading of the scene from the Kibitsu Shrine founding legend in which Ura, after being killed and dismembered, appears in a dream at the bedside of Okibitsuhiko no Mikoto
・ A reenacted interview about Ura with a resident of the Kibi region
・ At the harvest festival in front of Amaon (Amakawa Utaki), a sacred site in Okinawa
・ The *Mirokubushi* folk song, sung at the Shichi festival in Sonai to celebrate the appearance of the deity Miruku (a local form of Maitreya)
・ At Hoshidate, the laughter of the deity Ohoho, who appears alongside Miruku
・ The artist murmuring in a confused state during her pregnancy
・ The sound of Mt. Mihara erupting. During the 1986 eruption, Yoshinori Shirai recorded it inside a restricted area near the crater. Shirai, then an employee of NTT, used an umbrella as a sound-collecting device and captured the audio on a portable cassette deck. He titled the recording *Chikyu no meido* ("the rumbling of the earth") and made it available nationwide through a telephone service.
・ Birdsong in front of Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Camp Ishigaki
・ A protest speech in front of Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Camp Ishigaki
・ The Noh chant *Kamiuta*
・ The sound of the sea

・An exchange with a local resident speaking about the Tsuchigumo at Negino Shrine
・At Hayasuhime Shrine, the chief priest speaks about Emperor Jimmu's eastern expedition
・At the Oni no Iwaya tumulus, a voice recounts its origins, and the wind blows at Shiinetsuhiko Shrine. The shrine venerates Shiinetsuhiko, an ally of the imperial court who is also thought by some to have originally been a Tsuchigumo. The surrounding area is said to have been inhabited by many Tsuchigumo.
・An imitation of a dog's howl
・Dog howls at the Wodon Festival, regarded as preserving the original form of the howling once required of the Hayato at ceremonies including the Daijosai
・Ambient sound inside the Kyoshuzuka Tumulus, where 100 heads of Hayato brought back from the campaign against them are said to have been buried
・Ambient sound of the puppet stage at Hyakutai Shrine, which traces its origin to the puppet dance staged during the subjugation of the Hayato
・The sound of the *mikoshi* (portable shrine) at the Sanja Matsuri festival
・The sound of the *mikoshi* (portable shrine) at the Shitaya Shrine Festival
・A reading of Umisachihiko and Yamasachihiko from the *Nihon Shoki*, Book II, Age of the Gods, Part II, Section 10
・The sound of hail falling on the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage route
・A passage from the *Jikushu* mantra of the Buddhist deity Fudo Myo'o, recited by Sumiren Hayashi *Nomaku sanmanda basaradan sendan makaroshada sowataya untarata kanman*
・Sumiren Hayashi reciting a passage: *Tohokami emitame*
・Sumiren Hayashi reciting a passage: *Nenpi kannon-riki* (from the Kannon chapter of the Lotus Sutra)
・A passage from a song to drive birds away
・The calls of crows
・The sound of *pungmul*, a traditional performing art derived from Korean *nongak* (farmers' band music), at a memorial ceremony for the Korean victims of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 on its 102nd anniversary

・Ambient sound around the Shitatare River, where the giant white three-legged crow is said to have fallen, causing its blood to flow in torrents
・The sound of the Iruma River
・At Izumo Iwai Shrine, where the shot-down *ma* (malign being) is said to be enshrined, the sound of a *yabusame* (mounted archery) arrow striking its target
・Ambient sound at Koma Shrine
・A reenacted interview with a resident of the area around Koma Shrine
・A reading of the legend of Iruma from the *Koeki Zokusetsuben* (by Izawa Nagahide, 1715)
・A reading of remarks by then-Emperor Akihito, now Emperor Emeritus, during his visit to Koma Shrine on September 20, 2017
・Ambient sound at an undisclosed location within the Imperial Palace grounds
・The sound of an underground watercourse running through Nijubashimae Station
・Ambient sound at Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery
・The sound of a car driving through the Chiyoda Tunnel
・The sound of water inside the culvert connecting Chidorigafuchi and Hanzo Moat
・The hum of Japanese honeybees flying around the Imperial Palace

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