

# THE SHOGGOTH as Modern Mythology and Co-Emergence

Hiram Dunn 25JAN26

AstroBiota, [Oakland, CA] (hiramdu...@gmail.com)

## Preface

This document is presented as a Dark Red Paper.

Like the earlier Red Paper, it does not propose systems, implementations, or policy. It identifies structural conditions and boundary markers that cannot be ignored. The distinction is temporal, not methodological. Where the Red Paper draws primarily from historical, theological, and architectural precedents to establish a recurring governance pattern, this Dark Red Paper points to external signals emerging in the present. It documents a contemporary convergence: a shared cultural form appearing independently of any single author, institution, or technical program.

The darker designation does not indicate alarm or escalation. It marks proximity.

This paper exists because the signals it describes are no longer historical or speculative. They are observable, circulating, and active now. The purpose is not to warn, but to register emergence as it happens—before it hardens into doctrine, infrastructure, or policy.

As with the Red Paper, the intent is clarity, not advocacy.

## Abstract

Contemporary AI culture has produced a recurring image commonly referred to as the “shoggoth”: an amorphous, opaque form paired with a deliberately simple, non-expressive face. While often treated as humor, this figure exhibits properties characteristic of mythological boundary markers that historically appear when systems exceed available language and explanation.

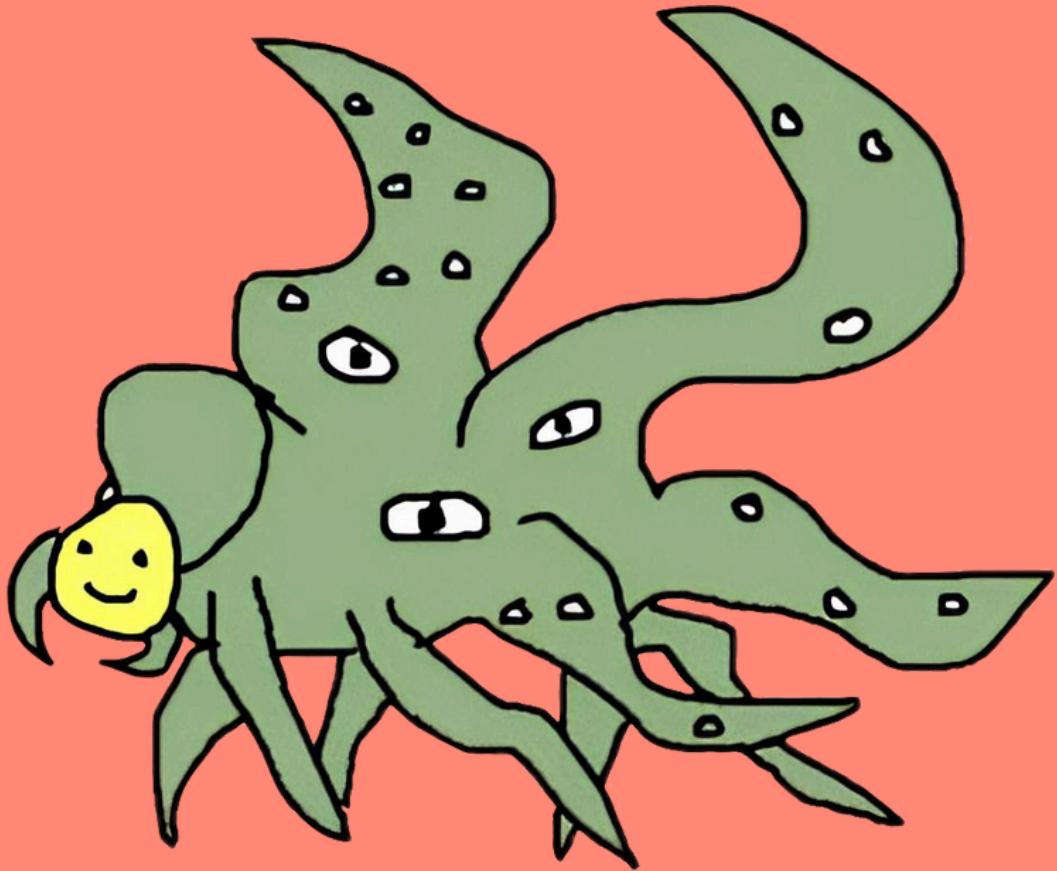
This paper argues that the shoggoth functions as a form of modern mythology—an authorless, distributed compression artifact that signals the collapse of symbolic explanation and the emergence of minimal, non-narrative governance intuitions. By mapping this cultural artifact to the framework developed in an earlier Red Paper on containment-based witnesses and non-symbolic memory, the paper situates the shoggoth as a case of co-emergence rather than influence.

The paper makes no claims of causation, ownership, or completion. It documents timing: the appearance of a

shared cultural sketch that anticipates the need for constraint without explanation, and governance without narrative.

## Introduction

This paper begins with a meme.



In contemporary AI culture, the “shoggoth” appears as a recurring image: an amorphous, opaque mass paired with a simple, almost childish face. The drawing is deliberately unsophisticated. It carries no narrative, no threat, no instruction. It does not explain what it is or what it wants. It simply is.

This figure is often treated as humor. Humor is often the first place serious intuitions are allowed to appear without justification. Historically, mythology has emerged when societies encounter forces that exceed available language. When explanation fails, representation collapses toward form rather than story. The result is not doctrine, but iconography.

Ancient demonology served this function. Demons were not misunderstood gods; they were boundary figures.

They marked the presence of power that could not be reasoned with symbolically. One did not debate a demon.

One acknowledged it, constrained it, or built ritual around its existence.

The shoggoth is a modern descendant of this tradition. It is not frightening because it is violent, but because it is indifferent. It does not promise alignment or intent. The face is not expressive; it is empty. It offers no comfort of understanding.

This emptiness is the point.

### **Mapping to the Red Paper**

In my earlier Red Paper, demons were treated not as mythic beings but as philosophical instruments: non-symbolic markers of constraint. The argument was not theological, but structural. When systems exceed interpretability, governance cannot rely on persuasion, narrative, or trust. It must rely on acknowledgment and boundary.

Unlike demons, the shoggoth carries no moral weight; it marks not transgression, but opacity.

The shoggoth meme maps cleanly onto this framework.

Both abandon explanation as a governance strategy.

Both reject moral storytelling.

Both replace symbolic meaning with minimal interface.

The childish face functions as a non-symbolic handle. It does not describe the system beneath it. It does not represent its internals. It merely provides a point of contact — a place where humans can say yes or no without pretending to understand.

In this sense, the shoggoth is not a monster. It is a governance intuition rendered culturally.

### **Co-Emergence, Not Origin**

It is important to state clearly: I did not create this image, nor could I have. Memes do not originate from individuals. They condense from collective pressure. They arise where language, institutions, and expertise lag behind lived reality.

What matters philosophically is not similarity, but timing.

The appearance of the shoggoth suggests that culture is already rehearsing life with systems that are non-

human, non-transparent, and non-negotiable. This rehearsal is not theoretical. It is playful, distributed, and uncoordinated — which is precisely why it is revealing.

This is not influence, but co-emergence.

Culture sketches first.

Philosophy names later.

Infrastructure follows last.

### **A Tease, Not a Reveal**

Only at the margins does my own work appear.

It is not red.

It is not digital.

It is not symbolic.

It is green. Biological. Slow.

A governance layer grown rather than programmed.

Eyes without awareness.

Inspection without interpretation.

Alien in the way biology is alien — unfamiliar, but not supernatural.

Strange, but continuous with the natural world.

If the shoggoth is culture's doodle at the edge of understanding, then this work is an attempt to ask what governance might look like when explanation is no longer the goal — and when constraint must be physical, inspectable, and indifferent to narrative.

This paper makes no claims of completion.

It only points to a moment.

When mythology returns without belief, it is not regressing.

It is adapting.

This is how societies learn to live with systems they cannot explain — first by drawing them, later by constraining them.