

On the Meaning of Masked Dances in Kagura

By

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*Introduction**

Speaking about the kagura of Mount Horoha Yasuji Honda says that it resembles the *yoriai kagura* of Ise, which used to be given in November, but has disappeared completely since the early Meiji Period (Honda 1974: 386). He then goes on saying that within the *yoriai kagura* tradition the kagura of the *fuyu matsuri*, the Winter Festival,** that is celebrated at Sakabe hamlet of Shimoina county in Shinano, follows a particularly old tradition. I shall use the term *shimotsuki yutate kagura* to indicate this tradition.

In this article I do not wish to go into the question of whether this Winter Festival belongs to the *yoriai kagura* of Ise or not. It is rather the problem of dances performed by masked dancers in the Winter Festival, that has occupied my mind for some time, and which I wish to address here. Such dances, although performed at the Winter Festival are not found in the kagura of Mount Horoha. The *Mi-kagura* (*shimotsuki yutate kagura*) or the *Hana Matsuri* (*hana kagura, shimotsuki yutate kagura*) of Ōtani in Kitashitara county of Mikawa, which are said to belong to the same tradition, also have dances performed by masked dancers.

In an article entitled “Matsuri and kagura” Yasuji Honda touches on the question of how such masked dances, that are also called the *nō* of kagura (Gorai 1972: 9), were introduced into the kagura, and says:

* Translator's note: I wish to express my gratitude to Rev. John Brinkman, MM. for the time he has taken to check the English version of this article.

** Translator's note: some of the recurring expressions have been translated in order to give the general reader a more concrete feeling of some of the festivals or characters spoken of in the article.

“ Maybe it is something that for one reason or another has been introduced into the ritual performances by *sarugaku* or *dengaku* groups, who had penetrated deep into these mountains ” (Honda 1969: 103). The words “ for one reason or another ” have been a problem to me for quite a long time. But this year, at the occasion of a visit in order to observe the rite, the remark of an old man, a *kamiko*,¹ provided me quite unexpectedly with something like the key to the problem’s solution. In an old text quoted by Honda, the “ Grand festival at the village’s Suwa shrine on the occasion of the shrine transfer according to a time honored rite, especially the ceremony entrusted to the *kamiko* and the *myōto* ”² we find the following lines:

“ Concerning the *onyu* (water boiling ceremony) at the Hie and Yasaka shrines: there is one *yutate* rite followed by four [maskless] dances. Then the dances with masks are performed in order to inform one of the meaning of the *yutate* rite and the accompanying dances. These dances, however, must be performed at night.” (Honda 1942: 28-29)

As it can be seen here, these masked dances had to take place at night, a fact that was also taken up in the words of my elderly informant.

If we want to understand the *nō* dances within the *kagura* from this point of view, I am convinced that we have to take them as endowed with religious meaning, and not simply as an entertaining or dramatic embellishment. In other words, taking the reason in the expression “ for one reason or another ” to be a religious one, I wish to inquire about the role of *nō* in the *kagura* focusing my attention mainly on the *shimotsuki yutate kagura* of Mikawa and Shinano.

1

It is generally accepted that most of the popular *kagura* owes its existence to *shugendō* (Gorai 1980: 22). For example the Izumo tradition of *kagura* and the before mentioned *kagura* of Mount Horoha have been passed on by *yamabushi*, mountain priests (Honda 1974: 386). Hayachine *Kagura*, also called *Yamabushi Kagura*, is known to have been transmitted by the mountain ascetics. It is clearly a religious artistic performance. Jōzō Kisho, one of the great founders of *shugendō*, is thought to have been an excellent performer on the traditional instruments used to accompany chanting. Nichizō (i.e. Doken), who dedicated himself to severe asceticism at Mount Kimbu, learned the *bugaku* dance “ *Banshūraku* ” in the Pure Land, the realm of the departed.³ It is also said that the *bugaku* dance “ *Somakusha* ” is the dance which the mountain deity performed on the tune played by En-no-gyōja, when he

wandered through the mountains of the Ōmine range.⁴ Further, in the *nō* song “*Ataka*” Benkei the monk from the Musashibō is referred to as “the young lad of the time, when the artist monks (*yusō*) of the *santō*⁵ danced the *ennen*.” This *ennen* is a Buddhist form of entertainment which was performed at a *hōe* or at other celebrations. And “the young lad of the time” would mean a young priest who had accumulated some fame at that time (Gorai 1979: 216). In this way we come to know that the *yamabushi* and with them *shugendō* were linked with such artistic performances, particularly through the channel of ceremonies called *ennen* (Gorai 1972: 4). Further proof of a *shugendō* connection lies in the stages of the *torimono* dances⁶ of *shimotsuki yutate kagura*, which are called “the ‘hand’ of the *shushi*”. These dances are performed in a certain order determined by the object held in the dancer’s hand. A *shushi* is the same as a *yusō*, an artist monk, namely a *yamabushi* who dedicates himself to artistic performances (Gorai 1979: 389). There are altogether sixteen ‘hands’ of the *shushi*, among them ‘hand’ of demons, ‘hand’ of Ryūten, ‘hand’ of Bishamon, etc. A *shushi* then performed also *sangaku*. *Sangaku*, however, consisted partly of amusing acts, a fact that is suggested also by the other name *sarugaku*, by which these performances were known. In his book on folk traditional entertainment Gorai says that “by performing dances of the *sangaku* type and by presenting *kyōgen* plays of the same type the *shushi*” created the dramatic form of kagura (Gorai 1972: 9). This then is the form that finds its expression in the performances of masked dancers in the *shimotsuki yutate kagura* or the *nō* of kagura and the comical acts like “*Kaidō kudari*” (“Walking down the road”) and “*Io tsuri*” (“Fishing”).

Kagura is a “playful action that pleases even gods”⁷ or it is something that “imitates the customs of the age of the gods and makes them into the celebrations of our country”.⁸ Although it had undergone changes in later periods, kagura is originally a rite for the repose of souls of the departed, a *chinkon* rite. As such it appears in *Nihonshoki* and *Kojiki*. Shigeru Gorai has demonstrated this in great detail. If we argue in this way, the fact, that the purification rite performed at ‘the end of summer’ (*nagoshi*) is called “summer kagura” (*natsu kagura*),⁹ takes on special importance, particularly if we think of kagura as of something that has the character of *chinkon*, of appeasing the spirits of the departed. The etymology of the word “*kagura*” is said to be “*kami kura*”, which means the “seat of the *kami*” or the “site where the *kami* is received”. It is therefore important to know, what this word *kami kura* had meant in ancient times. Gorai defines the beliefs of those ancient times as *kannabi* beliefs and thinks, that these beliefs

were the ground from where mountain worship had originated (Gorai 1970: 133). If we accept this argument, we may look at a text, where we find such a *kannabi* mountain mentioned. It is from the paragraph on the county of Aika in the *Izumo-no-kuni Fudoki*:

“ *Kannabi yama*: it lies in the northeastern direction, about 9 *sato* and 40 *ashi*¹⁰ from the county's administrative center. It is 230 *tsue*¹¹ high, and has a circumference of 14 *sato*. At the foot of the mountain lies the sanctuary of the great deity Sata.” (Akimoto 1970: 159)

The *kannabi* mountain mentioned here is said to be Mount Asahi (342 m) on the border between the city of Matsue and the town of Kashima. The sanctuary of the great deity Sata, which lies at the foot of the mountain is nothing else than that Sata shrine, which is famous for its *nō*, called *Sata shinnō*. All of this then means that Mount Asahi, being the place where the great deity Sata resides, is a *kannabi* mountain, and the locality itself, where the deity is encountered, is the *kami kura*. It goes without saying, that this is then the same as what is called *kanza* at the Hana Matsuri.

If the word *kagura* originated from *kami kura*, meaning the site where the deity is received, then the question still remains, what *kagura* itself really means. As Norinaga Motoori pointed out already in his book *Tamakatsuma*, the *kagura* songs in the twentieth volume of the *Kokinwakashū* have to be seen as “songs for divine entertainment” (Saeki 1971: 325–327). It is worth noting that he takes *kagura* here as divine entertainment. In the first volume of the collection of oral traditions in the *Ryōjinhisho* it says that “Kagura began in those days, when Amaterasu-ō-mikami pushed the heavenly rock-cave open.”¹² In the same manner Gorai notices that where the *Kojiki* mentions Ameno-Uzume's dance in the paragraph on the heavenly rock-cave, it describes her actions as “*eragi-asobu*”, and where the *Nihonshoki* mentions the same in the seventh paragraph of the volume on the age of the gods it calls it “*eragi-asobi*”. This “*asobi*” signifies the same as Amaterasu-ō-mikami's action. This action, Amaterasu-ō-mikami's hiding in the heavenly rock-cave, however, is a funeral rite. Therefore, the word “*asobi*” means a ceremony that was designed to appease the spirits of the departed, and which was conducted ahead of the funeral ceremony itself. Consequently, *kagura* is a rite of *tama shizume*, of pacifying the spirits of the departed. In the Heian Period this was one of the important rites at the Imperial Court and had found its fixed place in the *tama shizume* festival of the eleventh month. The important thing here is that *kagura*, being a funeral rite, was integrated into the *tama shizume* celebrations which at the Court preceded the Harvest Festival. If we

bring this together with the other fact we have mentioned already, that the purification rite of 'the end of summer' is called "Summer kagura", then we find that the meaning of all this is nothing else than what the people sing at the Winter Festival as accompaniment of the dances: "Depart! Depart! Be cleansed and go! Be purified and leave!"

Bon, another of those festivals for the departed souls, is nowadays celebrated mainly around the fifteenth of July (or the fifteenth of August), but it was formerly celebrated between the last day of June and the first day of July (Gorai 1975: 8). This was then the reason why the purification rite of 'the end of summer' (according to the old calendar it marks the end of summer) was called "summer kagura"

2

Let us now have a look at the order in which the masked dancers perform at the Winter Festival (*fuyu matsuri*) of Sakabe and at the Mi-kagura of Ōtani. For this purpose we shall base ourselves mainly on a number of articles written by Yasuji Honda. First we organize the dances of the two festivals in the order of their sequence, as shown in diagram 1.

Diagram 1

	<i>Fuyu matsuri</i>	<i>Mi-kagura</i>
Group 1	<i>taikiri</i> -demon mask	
Group 2	<i>shishi</i> (lion) mask <i>kijin</i> -demon mask (fierce demon) <i>tenkō</i> -demon mask <i>shōkō</i> -demon mask	<i>shishi</i> mask <i>kijin</i> -demon mask (fierce demon) 'demon brothers' { elder brother demon' younger brother demon'
Group 3	<i>mizunō</i> ('Lord of water') mask <i>hinō</i> ('Lord of fire') mask <i>okina</i> mask <i>nichi-getsu</i> -man mask <i>yorō</i> (woman) mask	<i>negi</i> <i>hana uri</i> ('flower seller') <i>shirami fukui</i> ('lice infested') <i>yorō</i> mask

In this way we can confront the dances performed by masked dancers in the Winter Festival and in the Mi-kagura with each other. The *taikiri* mask is found in the Winter Festival, but not in the Mi-kagura. In the Mi-kagura we find, however, a collective term "*kyōdai oni*" ("demon brothers") for what corresponds to the two masks of the

tenkō-demon and the *shōkō*-demon. The dances of the *mizunō* mask and of the *hinō* mask occur in the Winter Festival, but not in the Mi-kagura. In spite of this, the masks of both the 'Lord of water' and the 'Lord of fire' exist there, too. They are commonly called *okunai-sama* or *okonai-sama* (Hayakawa 1973: 83) and are taken out only in a leap year, when they are worshiped and cleaned (Honda 1941: 30). Because the two masks are still kept, we may assume that formerly a dance with them had existed and that now the masked dance of the *negi* has taken its place. I also think that the *okina* mask of the Winter Festival can be considered to correspond with the mask of the 'flower seller' (*hana uri*) of the Mi-kagura. The reason for this is, that the *nichi-getsu* mask of the Winter Festival cannot but be seen to correspond with the mask of the 'lice infested' (*shirami fukui*) in the Mi-kagura, and that the dance with the woman's mask is called by the same name in both places.

Now, I think that these dances by masked dancers can be divided up into three groups, as shown in diagram 1. Group 1 includes the dance of the *taikiri* mask. Group 2 includes the dances of the *shishi* mask, the mask of a fierce demon (*kijin*), the *tenkō*-demon mask and the *shōkō*-demon mask. These correspond to the dances of the *shishi* mask, the mask of a fierce demon and the masks of the 'demon brothers' on the side of the Mi-kagura. Group 3 includes the dances of the *mizunō* mask, the *hinō* mask, the *okina* mask, the *nichi-getsu* mask and the woman mask. They correspond with the masks of the *negi*, of the 'flower seller', of the 'lice infested' and of the woman in the Mi-kagura. If this grouping is correct, then the second group can further be divided into three sections. Having done so we are then compelled to see the initial role of the *shishi* as one of purifying and safe guarding a sacred space (Gorai 1978: 71) for the dances which follow, namely the dances with the masks of the fierce demon, of the *tenkō*-demon and of the *shōkō*-demon (they correspond with the masks of the fierce demon and of the 'demon brothers' in the Mi-kagura). To my mind, it is the *shishi* of the Winter Festival, which expresses this in a particularly clear way. It follows the third group, and in it the dances with the masks of the 'Lord of water' and of the 'Lord of fire'. According to the villager's tradition those dances are meant to dispose of the water and fire used in the ceremony. But if this really were so, there would then be no water left for the *yutate* ceremony. In fact, however, a *yutate* takes place after that. This must therefore be held to mean, that the masks of the 'Lord of water' and of the 'Lord of fire' signify in a similar manner the creating of a purified realm for the masked dances that follow. It is then understandable that the *negi*, who in the Mi-

kagura takes the place of these two masks, appears carrying a *gohei* (a sacred staff with cut paper). In the text "Grand festival at the village's Suwa shrine on the occasion of the shrine transfer according to a time honored rite" mentioned above it says that after the *onyu* ceremony at the Hie and Yasaka shrines, "the dances with masks are performed in order to inform one of the meaning of the *yutate* rite and the accompanying dances. These dances, however, must be performed at night." Yet after the dances mentioned here were over, another *onyu* ceremony took place. This time for the deity of the Kazuma shrine.¹³ The reason, why this must take place at night, is not clear, but there exists a tradition according to which the demons have to return to their world at daybreak. This idea is then also the reason why the old man, the *kamiko* and my informant, had said: "The appearance of the *taikiri* mask is late." The demons En-no-gyōja had hired to build him a bridge between Mount Kimbu and Mount Katsuragi, also had to return at daybreak.

In the first group we find only the dance with the *taikiri*-demon mask of the Winter Festival (Fig. 1). Here dances a demon with two red horns on his head; he has a staff with bells stuck into his belt in the back of his waist and holds an halbert like wooden axe (*masakari*) in his hands. At the end of his act he engages in a fight with two torchbearers. Sparks fly and scatter about when the torches and the axe collide. Would this signify the demon's destructive behavior (his retribution) or rather that he is in charge of the fire, as the folk tradition has it? "*Taikiri*" means "to cut the torches". And in the Hana Matsuri the *sakaki*-demon¹⁴ of the *ōnyū*-tradition exhibits the same action, but here it is called the "splitting of torches". This is then said to resemble the action in the *furikusa*-tradition of the Hana Matsuri,¹⁵ where the demons accompanying the *sakaki*-demon stir the fire called *saito* (or *seito*, i.e. the fire within that space where the ceremony is held. Haya-kawa 1971: 222). In the Mi-kagura it is the dancer of the fierce demon who carries the axe. However, there is no fighting with the torches. I cannot tell whether in this case there never existed a *taikiri* mask since old times, or whether this had fused with the mask of the demon into one single mask. Because the act of the 'demon brothers' in the Mi-kagura, where they cut down the *takara* (the 'treasure', that being a decoration hanging from the ceiling over the cauldron with boiling water. In the Hana Matsuri this action is called "*byakke barai*"¹⁶) is not found in the Winter Festival, it appears that in none of the two actions the perfect form has survived. Although it is difficult to come to a clear conclusion, I feel that it is justified to interpret this from the viewpoint of the demons' character in spite of the fact that here there is no dance of the *taikiri* mask. After all it could be that the dance of the

taikiri mask came to be performed before the dance of the *shishi* as the result of influences exerted by the Hana Matsuri.

Group 2 comprises dances of not yet redeemed demons as well as others of already redeemed and purified demons. Before the dances of demons the *shishi* appears in order to purify and safe guard the space for the dancing to take place. In the Winter Festival the *shishi* has no horn on his head, it carries however a staff with bells and a staff with cut paper (*nosa*) in its hands and is manned by two dancers (Fig. 3). The *shishi* of the Mi-kagura is also manned by two dancers, but it carries a horn on its head (called *donzuku*). With the *shishi* of the Winter Festival its wild and resounding trampling of the ground is specially noticeable. It expresses very well the *shishi*'s role for purification and creation of a sacred space. The impersonator with the mask of the fierce demon in the Winter Festival has a demon's mask with two red horns, on the back of his waist he carries a staff with bells stuck into his belt and in his hand he holds the fierce demon's stick. At the Mi-kagura this demon has a staff with bells and a fan stuck into the belt at his waist, he also holds a wooden sword, the "*yachigoma*", wrapped in cloth, while dancing. The fierce demon's stick and the wooden sword *yachigoma*, both thought to be the symbols of a demon, are taken away from him in the course of the dance (in the Mi-kagura they are stuck to the demon's waist). In the Winter Festival, e.g. the demon becomes involved in an exchange of questions and answers with the *negi*, in one of the corners called *goten* of the dancing ground. There his fierce demon's stick is taken away from him. In exchange for this he receives a staff with bells and a fan, then, after having received also an upper garment, he resumes dancing again. At the end he gives the upper garment back and also the fan, then he fastens the staff with bells to the back of his waist belt. After that he receives again the fierce demon's stick and finishes dancing. To have lost in the exchange of questions and answers with the *negi* means that the demon has been subdued and purified through the effect of the *yutate* rite. Since he is purified he has no need anymore for the fierce demon's stick. That he now receives the fan, the staff with bells and the upper garment in exchange can be interpreted as a proof that he is now purified (Fig. 4). If we understand this to be the meaning of the masked dances, we come to recognize why such dances are a part of Mi-kagura and the Winter Festival. When, in the case of Mi-kagura, the demon in the middle of his act sticks his wooden sword away to his waist and starts dancing holding a staff with bells and a fan, this can be taken to have the same significance as when in the Winter Festival he loses his fierce demon's stick.

It is necessary to look at the *tenkō*-demon and the *shōkō*-demon as a pair. In the Mi-kagura the 'demon brothers' also constitute a pair. First appears the *tenkō*-demon with his red demon mask, a staff with bells fastened to his back and with a characteristically long mallet. Then follows the *shōkō*-demon with a blue mask and a hexagonal stick. In the same way as the dancer with the mask of the fierce demon before them the two demons lose their symbols as demons, the long mallet and the hexagonal stick, at the end of a question and answer exchange with the *negi* (In the case of the *shōkō*-demon there is no such an exchange of questions and answers and there may never have been one. This is suggested by the fact, that the *tenkō*-demon in his verbal exchange always uses the plural when he refers to himself. It would then appear from this, too, that *tenkō*-demon and *shōkō*-demon have to be seen as forming one single unit.).

After being clad into an upper garment, the *tenkō*-demon takes the staff with cut paper (*nosa*)¹⁷ and another with bells as his *torimono*-utensils and dances with them, while the *shōkō*-demon after having received his upper garment, takes a staff with bells and a fan as his utensils and dances. And finally, after the dance has ended, each one is given back the long mallet or the hexagonal stick respectively.

This applies also to the dancers of the 'demon brothers' in the Mi-kagura. With a staff of bells at his back and a *sakaki* twig, the 'elder brother demon' appears with a red mask and an axe in his hands. After that the 'younger brother demon' appears in the same manner. At a certain moment of the dance the two demons put the axes away and dance holding the staff of bells and the *sakaki* twig that were attached to their backs. This performance can be considered as showing the purified form of demons in the same way as in the Winter Festival, where the demons have their symbols taken away, the long mallet and the hexagonal stick, and are given an upper garment in return with which to dance. Finally, they take up their axe again and gesticulate as if "cutting down the mountain".¹⁸

This act is not found in the Winter Festival, but instead there is the cutting down of the *takara* (which is called "*byakke*" in the Hana Matsuri and "*yubuta*" (Fig. 5) in the Winter Festival). This sort of act is the same as the *byakke barai* of the Hana Matsuri, an action to cut down a nest of bees, the so-called *zanza*. In the *ōnyū*-tradition this is done by the *sakaki*-demon, in the *furikusa*-tradition, however, by the *asa*-demon (also called *mokichi*-demon. Hayakawa 1971: 22). Furthermore, while in the *ōnyū*-tradition the *sakaki*-demon performs both actions, the cutting of the torches as well as the cutting down of the *takara*, the *sakaki*-demon of the *furikusa*-tradition does only the first,

the other is taken care of by the *asa*-demon. In the case of the Winter Festival or the Mi-kagura either of the two lacks one of these performances. The act of cutting down the *takara* is connected with the pounding of steamed rice by an old man and an old woman as it is represented in the scene called "Wandering down the road" of the Winter Festival. The two old people behave as if they pounded rice, one month after the other through the whole year. This expresses happiness. It signifies a favor that was bestowed upon man by a demon. I think that the splitting of the ambiguity inherent in a demon (favor and retribution, cf. Gorai 1975: 8-9) into two separate units has occurred within the *furikusa*-tradition. In spite of finding myself not in a position to decide which tradition represents the older form, the *ōnyū*-tradition or the *furikusa*-tradition, I think, that people believed it were possible to bestow happiness upon one's children and children's children by helping a demon to become redeemed, and that it needs the *asa*-demon in order to cut the *takara*, an action that signifies this favor.

Going still a step further, I ask myself whether the *tenkō*-demon and the *shōkō*-demon haven't been originally man and wife. In the Mi-kagura they are called 'demon brothers', but it is strange enough that only the 'elder brother demon' grows a mustache. Therefore, it seems to me that after all they were a couple of man and wife. This is confirmed, because the *nichi-getsu* mask and the woman mask, or on the side of the Mi-kagura, the mask of the 'lice infested' and that of the woman, who all belong to group 3, are couples, and further, because their appearance in group 3 is the result of a process in which the demons who belong to group 2 have undergone their appeasement and purification in the *yutate* rite. It is therefore possible to think of the red *tenkō*-demon as the husband demon and of the blue *shōkō*-demon as the wife demon. Already Koyata Iwahashi has drawn attention to a text in the *Iwashimizu Monjo*, the "Records of sacred treasures at the Hachiman Hakosaki shrine" (Iwahashi 1975: 141). There we learn that among the sacred treasures of the Miroku temple there are two demon masks, a red one of the husband demon and a blue one of the wife demon. I believe therefore, that, because the demons of the Mi-kagura have both become red demons, possibly under the influence of the Hana Matsuri, the wife demon was still recognized as such, because the husband demon had grown himself a mustache. Later, when it has finally been forgotten, that the two demons were husband and wife, they came to be called 'demon brothers'.

Rather than explain the three fierce demons in group 2 as the fruit of an influence by the father demon, mother demon and child demon of the *tsuina* ceremony to drive out the demons, it seems more reasonable

to take this as an expression of the two ways by which demons may visit this world. The fierce demon, who appears first, represents one type of visit, the *tenkō*-demon and the *shōkō*-demon (or the 'demon brothers' in the Mi-kagura), who come out next, represent the second type. To the first type belong beings like *daishi*, who is generally believed to be Kōbō Daishi, or *mioya-no-mikoto*, mentioned in the *Hitachi-no-kuni Fudoki*. Among the beings of the second type of visitors we may find the *ta-no-kami* of the *aenokoto* of Noto Peninsula or the visitors of the *bon angama* of Okinawa.

If understood this way, it will be noticed that the dances of masked dancers in group 3 correspond one by one to the masks of demons in group 2. In this sense the fierce demon mask corresponds to the *okina* mask (or the 'flower seller' of the Mi-kagura), *tenkō*-demon mask and *shōkō*-demon mask (being the 'demon brothers' of the Mi-kagura) find their counterpart in the *nichi-getsu* mask (the 'lice infested' of the Mi-kagura) and the woman mask. The demons that appeared for a visit within group 2 behave in a way as to testify, that they have been appeased by means of the *yutate* rite. They reappear in group 3 in their purified form in order to reveal the divine guise under which they shall return to their former realm.

It is justified to think, that the role of the two first masks in group 3, that of the 'Lord of water' and the 'Lord of fire' is the same as that of the *shishi* who is the first in group 2. The 'Lord of water' wears a mask with a long nose and in his hands he holds a ladle for dipping water together with two bundles of bamboo grass (the *tagusa*, Fig. 7). The 'Lord of fire' wears the mask of a *Tengu* (Fig. 8). He does not perform in any way, but since the 'Lord of water' splashes boiling water from the cauldron into all directions, this cannot but mean to purify the space for those dances that are to follow. According to Gorai, the *shishi*, the long-nosed mask, the *Tengu* mask, they all have originated from the *chidō*-mask of *gigaku* (Gorai 1978: 71-72). But what then about the *negi* in the Mi-kagura, who has taken the place of the 'Lord of water' and the 'Lord of fire' masks of the Winter Festival? Having a wooden sword (*yachigoma*) at his waist and holding a *nosa* (a staff with cut paper) he waves with the *nosa* in all directions, leaving by this no doubt, that he has the same function as the 'Lord of water' (Fig. 9). At the Hana Matsuri, too, it is the *negi* who has the function of purifying the dancing ground, an act, that is called *gedō barai*.

The impersonator of *okina* has a sword at his side with a fan dangling from it. In his hands he holds another fan and a staff with bells (Fig. 6). As I have already pointed out earlier, this *okina* mask (the same as the 'flower seller' in the Mi-kagura (see Fig. 10) is the

purified form of the fierce demon mask of group 2. This can be grasped easily from a passage in Komparu Zenchiku's *Myōshukushū*:

“There is a certain significance to the scene with masks. A demon's mask is placed facing the mask of *okina*. This demon's mask is a work of Prince Shōtoku. He had asked Hata-no-Kōkatsu to perform for him an act of *sarugaku*. At that time he presented Kōkatsu with it. This mask forms therefore a single unit together with the mask of *okina*.”
(Omote, c.a. 1974: 406–407)

In the Mi-kagura *okina* has become the ‘flower seller’. Nonetheless, *okina* becomes involved in an exchange of questions and answers with the *negi*, who to the contrary of the other cases, loses this time to *okina*. Exactly because this event, too, shows the appeased and purified figure of the fierce demon, the performance has the demon return to his world of origin at the break of the day. *Okina* is the appeased and purified form of the fierce demon, who achieved this new state through the *yutate* rite, which is held by his descendants. As an other example of a deity that takes on the form of *okina* and comes to visit this world we have the “visitor of the Year End”.

Next in order follows the performance by the dancers with the *nichi-getsu* mask (the ‘lice infested’ of the Mi-kagura. Fig. 11) and the woman mask (Fig. 12). They are the redeemed and purified form of the *tenkō*-demon and the *shōkō*-demon of group 2 (being identical with the ‘demon brothers’ in the Mi-kagura), who are now shown as they set out to return to their own world. Just like the ‘lice infested’, the dancer of the *nichi-getsu* mask has his upper garment's sleeves braced up with a sash and he has a staff with bells stuck into his belt at the back. The dancer with the woman mask carries a staff with cut paper in his hand and a fan. The ‘lice infested’ in the Mi-kagura does not have a staff with bells, but the woman has a fan as well as a twig of *sakaki* and a staff with bells. It has to be added, that neither the dancer of the *nichi-getsu* mask nor the one of the woman mask engage in a question and answer exchange with the *negi* in the fashion of *okina*, but since they correspond with their counterparts in group 2 it would not be unnatural, if they were engaged in such an exchange.

The ‘lice infested’ in Mi-kagura and the *nichi-getsu* mask in the Winter Festival are corresponding roles. And so are both comic figures, the former already by its very name, the latter mainly by performance. It is then this characteristic feature that on one hand leads to the emerging of the *yamabushi kagura* from the *ennen* as the latter was cultivated by artist monks and *shushi*. Nevertheless, this kind of comical act was not at all aimed at mere entertainment. In the first place it was meant

to show, by the means of its performance, that the demon couple has been appeased and purified by its descendants so that it can happily return to its former world.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, one might draw some conclusions concerning the meaning of the masked dances of the Winter Festival (*fuyu matsuri*) and Mi-kagura. According to the threefold division of the masked dances, the summoned demons are transformed and purified by the rite of *yutate* and the dance of *chinkon* performed by their descendants. In the last stage, they return to their own realm. Such is the desired aim brought about by the kagura performance. The essential meaning of kagura is best expressed in the shouted words of the people: "Depart! Depart! Be cleansed and go! Be purified and leave!" Through this entire action the descendants are bestowed with the favour of a new soul from their ancestral spirits.

The *Wamyōshō Kijinbu* quoted in the *Tamakatsuma* speaks of such demons (*oni*) and says that they are men who became deified (*kami*). And in the *Shiseijien*, as quoted in the same *Tamakatsuma*, we find, that an *oni* is the soul of a departed person. Hence the demons are nothing other than the ancestors of the people.¹⁹ According to the threefold division, in the second group the demons appear followed in the third group by their appeased and purified counterparts. Indeed we deal with nothing that can be called mere entertainment or simple amusement.

With this in mind, it is easily understood why two comic, maskless sequences, i.e. "Wandering down the road" and "Fishing", follow the masked dances. The maskless visage indicates this realm of human existence. In "Wandering down the road" an old man and woman prepare *mochi* (steamed rice) every month. Having steamed rice every month is a sign of a blessed life. Could not the same be said of going fishing, the topic of the last scene? Included in all these scenarios of a blessed life is a note of thanksgiving for the harvest of this year and a prayer for continued bountifulness in the year to come. If we were to add a final aspect, it would be to note that hearts are set at ease by such amusing and comical performances.

(Translated by Peter Knecht)

NOTES

1. *Kamiko*: a male adult at least 13 years old, a parishioner of a certain shrine. He has been dedicated as a child or has dedicated himself to the deity of this shrine in order to be granted a certain favor. After he has been granted the favor and fulfilled his promised obligations towards the shrine of the deity, he becomes a *kamiko*. In some cases this status is hereditary in the family. Not every parishioner, therefore, is at the same time also a *kamiko*.
2. *Myōto*: the same as *kamiko*. See note 1.
3. *Gempei Seisuiki*, p. 243. According to the *Kyōkun* this had happened when Nichizō went on a mission to China.
4. Hanawa Hokiichi. *Maikyoku Kuden*, p. 198.
5. *Santō*: "Three pagodas". Three sanctuaries (*Tōtō*, *Saitō*, and *Yokawa*) at Enryaku temple on Mount Hiei. *Santō* is also used as another name for Enryaku temple itself.
6. *Torimono*: a ritual object the dancer holds in his hand while dancing. It can be a natural object like a twig or some kind of a utensil.
7. Hanawa Hokiichi. *Zanyashō*, p. 225.
8. Hanawa Hokiichi. *Eikyokushō*, p. 309.
9. Keichū. *Kawayashiro*, p. 15.
10. *Sato, ashi*: Units for measuring distances. 1 *sato* has 300 *ashi*; 1 *ashi* is 1.78 m.
11. *Tsue*: an ancient unit for measuring height. The exact length of 1 *tsue* is difficult to determine. 1 *tsue* is at times said to be 7 *shaku* and 5 *sun* (approximately 2.50 m). But the height calculated with this interpretation of *tsue* would exceed the actual height of Mount Asahi. In the text the mountain is not measured from sea level, but from the ground level, where the observer stands.
12. Kawaguchi, e.a. 1970: 440. Very similar to this is a text in the first volume of the *Shōsekishū*: "(Daijingū, who is the same as Amaterasu-ō-mikami) shut herself up in the heavenly rock-cave. When she had hidden herself, it was continually dark in the lower world. The eight million gods were grieved. And in order to induce Daijingū to come out again, they lit a fire on an open square and performed a *kagura*." Watanabe 1968: 60.
13. Kazuma shrine is a shrine in the village of Urakawa, not far from Sakabe.
14. *Sakaki*-demon: he gets his name because he carries in his hand a twig of the *sakaki* tree (*Eurya ochracea*, Szysz.). This is a tree with hard shiny leaves, which is commonly used in shintō ritual.
15. The two traditions of the Hana Matsuri can easily be distinguished by the kind of structure on which the participants place the cauldron for the boiling of water. In the *ōnyū*-tradition it is an iron four-legged ring. In the *furikusa*-tradition it is a stove built of mud, with a firing hole on one side at the bottom.
16. *Takara*: the same as *byakke*. A decoration made of paper, hanging over the cauldron from the ceiling. See also note 18. Fig. 2.
17. *Nosa* and *gohei* are identical in function and very similar in form. Basically, both are staffs with cut and folded strips of paper attached to them, but in the Winter Festival the staff is called *nosa*, in the Mi-kagura *gohei*.
18. "To cut down the mountain" (*yama wo kiru*) is a symbolic act of releasing the portion of the ancestral spirit to be received by the descendants. This expression is the same as "cutting down the *takara*", where *takara* means the new spirit that is

given to the parishioners, or in other words, to those whose ancestors are the purified demons. *Yama, takara, byakke, yubuta* are all local expressions with basically the same meaning. See Figures 2, 5.

19. The *Sarugaku denki* is very explicit in this respect: "What they call *kami* in Japan were originally the ancestors of the people." Ito, e.a. 1978: 260.

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FIG. 2. Mi-kagura, Ōtani: *takara*, attached to an overhead beam.



Fig. 1. Fuyu matsuri, Sakabe: the *taikiri*-demon preparing to fight with a torchbearer.



Fig. 3. Fuyu matsuri, Sakabe: *shishi*. Notice the *nosa* and the staff with bells.



Fig. 4. Fuyu matsuri, Sakabe: *kijin*, engaging in the question and answer exchange with the *negi* at the *goten*. Notice the fan, staff with bells, and white garment.



Fig. 5. Fuyu matsuri, Sakabe: *yubuta*. Two long sticks with cut paper are crossed and attached to an overhead beam.



Fig. 6. Fuyu matsuri, Sakabe: *okina*, engaging in the question and answer exchange with the *negi*.



Fig. 8. Fuyu matsuri, Sakabe: *hinô*, the 'Lord of fire' with the Tengu mask.



Fig. 7. Fuyu matsuri, Sakabe; *mizunō*, the 'Lord of water' holding the *tagusa*.



Fig. 10. Mi-kagura, Ōtani: *hana uri* ('flower seller'), leaping past the stove with the cauldron.



Fig. 9. Mi-kagura, Ōtani: *negi*. Notice the handle of the *yachigoma* under his white garment. *Hana uri* waits in the background.



Fig. 12. Mi-kagura, Ōtani: *jorō*, the woman mask.



Fig. 11. Mi-kagura, Ōtani: *shirami fukui* ('lice infested'), dancing and acting as if he were pinching lice.