O-Kagura

Field Notes on the Festival Drama in Modern Tokyo

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D. C. Buchanan, in his book on the Inari cult, calls *kagura* "a terpsicorean prayer."[1] W. G. Aston describes it as "pantomimic dance with music," designed for the entertainment of the gods (*kami,* the *ka* in *kagura*).[2] Ashihara Eiryo interprets the *kagura* dance in its earliest forms as an invocation to a deity, in the course of which the dancer might become possessed by the *kami* power, and thereby enter into a trance-like state of mystical communion with the deity: all of which would point to a shamanistic origin for dances of this genre.[3] There is in fact a tradition that the first *kagura* was danced by a shamaness, a sorceress who was herself a *kami*: Ame-no-Uzume.[4] As related in the *Kojiki,* after Amaterasu hid herself in the rock-cave, Ame-no-Uzume lured her out (invoked her presence) by "overturning a bucket before the heavenly rock-cave door," stamping "resoundingly upon it," baring her breasts and pushing "her skirt-band down to her genitals."[5] The eight hundred myriad *kami* assembled there laughed

1. D. C. Buchanan, "Inari: Its Origin, Development, and Nature," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* (Tokyo), second series, vol. XII (1935), p. 126.

2. W. G. Aston, *Shinto (The Way of the Gods)* (London: Longmans, Green, 1905), p. 238.

3. Ashihara Eiryo, *The Japanese Dance* (Tokyo: Japan Travel Bureau, 1965), p. 38.

4. Aston, *op. cit.,* p. 238.

5. *Kojiki,* tr. Donald L. Philippi (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press and Princeton University Press, 1969), p.. 84. An interesting parallel is to be found in the folktale listed as no. 16 ("The *Oni*'s Laughter") in the Seki-Adams collection (*Folktales of Japan,* ed. Seki Keigo, tr. Robert J. Adams, University of Chicago Press, 1963, pp. 36–40). A mother and her daughter are attempting to escape from a tribe of *oni,* but are about to be recaptured, when a mysterious *miko* appears and says: "Why are you here just doing nothing? Hurry, show your 'important place' (*daiji na tokoro*) to the *oni!*" And so "all three of

uproariously, and Amaterasu peeped out from her place of seclusion to see what was going on. Philippi comments that "exposure of the genitals is believed among many peoples to have magic power to drive away evil spirits," and cites another source, with evidence from a variety of cultures, indicating that "this type of exhibitionism was used in religious rites, not only to drive away undesirable influences, but also to amuse, entertain, and impart vitality to the deities."[6] Thus the sacred origins of the dance of the seven veils, and of burlesque. Even the lowly Egyptian belly dance, still performed during the nights of Ramadan[7] and at Muslim weddings[8] (as well as in New York night clubs), seems to originate in ancient rites that represent this same sort of confluence of the holy and the profane. Of the incident in the *Kojiki,* R. H. Blyth comments that it illustrates "the way in which dancing, sex (it was after all a strip-dance), religion, nature (sunshine), and humour 'with such a chain are bound' in primitive times."[9] And modern-day *sato kagura,* as Ono remarks, leaves ample room still for "humor, not to mention buffoonery."[10]

William P. Fairchild, in his classic essay on "Shamanism in

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them began rolling up their kimonos. When the *oni* saw that, they began to roar with laughter, *gera gera.* They rolled over and over in laughter...," and the three made their escape. Another recent work remarks that in eighteenth century Japan, it became customary to use the word *warau* (to laugh) in connection with sexual matters, so that a sexual manual became *warai-bon,* a picture in such a book *warai-e,* and a woman's genitals were referred to as *wara-meru*; in connection with the latter term, the authors remark: "This attitude of indulgent snickering is certainly a long way from precautionary terror, but one can sense behind it a distinct uneasiness—the *wara-meru* evidently continued to maintain a certain authority. Certainly, something of this importance continued to call forth and make necessary a definite attitude, whether awe-struck reverence or deprecatory giggles" (Donald Richie and Ito Kenkichi, *The Erotic Gods: Phallicism in Japan*; Tokyo: Zufu-shinsha, 1967; p. 212. Regarding Otafuku/Okame and Sarutahiko/Hyottoko, see pages 166–7, 220–1, and 250).

6. *Kojiki,* tr. Philippi, p. 84.

7. "Ramadan in Cairo: Holy and Profane," by Thomas F. Brady, New York *Times,* December 17, 1967.

8. "Belly Dance Gets the Go-Go in Cairo: Regime Decides to Relax Its Code of Restrictions," by Eric Pace, New York *Times,* December 22, 1966.

9. R. H. Blyth, *Japanese Humour* (Tokyo: Japan Travel Bureau, 1963), p. 24.

10. Ono Sokyo, *Shinto: The Kami Way* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1962), p. 71.

Japan," observes that although the *kagura* "did not require ecstasy," it was always danced, in earlier times, by the *miko* (whom Aston called Shinto priestesses[11]), who "often did go into ecstasy while performing them."[12] and Ashihara says "there is no doubt but that the early shamans who served the gods exclusively and communed with them were forerunners of the ancient professional dancers."[13] Today's dancers are of course no longer women. All are men, who wear the masks and costumes of the mortals and *kami,* both male and female, whom they portray. That has been the pattern in the traditional dance-drama of Japan. *Kagura,* which is the forerunner to Nô and Kabuki, and is in a sense a parent to both, is similar to them in this detail. How is it that men have come to perform the woman's role on stage? One drama critic, commenting on a similar pattern in British theatre (ranging from the female impersonators of the English Music Hall to the perennial "Charley's Aunt"), suggests that it reflects a cultural conservatism and (psychoanalytically) a "deep fear of the other sex," who are regarded as "mysterious, unfathomable, frightening." And so to see a woman on stage, "and to know that it is not a woman at all but a man...is reassuring."[14] Perhaps this hypothesis is applicable to Japan, perhaps not. What is significant is that *sato* (popular) *kagura* is full of sexual inuendo and grossness, and thus retains its initial blend of ribaldry and suggestiveness—though now under masculine rather than feminine auspices.

Nor has the *kagura* lost its shamanistic flavor. It still has a measured, ritualistic quality, and the dancer still postures and stamps his foot resoundingly (*ton!*) on the polished boards of the outdoor stage, and majestically sweeps his arms, draped in long, hanging, squarish brocaded sleeves, in gestures of cosmic import, generating sacred power with every carefully paced movement. As the English-born poet James Kirkup has written, all Japanese drama is a ritual: it is lyrical, simple in presentation, poetic and formal.[15]

At the same time, as Kirkup has also observed, this is a theatre "without any attempt to convince the spectator that he is witnessing

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11. Aston, *op. cit.,* p. 101.
12. William P. Fairchild, "Shamanism in Japan," *Folklore Studies* (Tokyo), vol. XXI (1962), p. 52.
13. Ashihara, *op. cit.,* p. 38.
14. "Theatre in London: Et Tu, Alec Guinness?" by Martin Esslin, New York *Times,* October 22, 1967.
15. James Kirkup, *These Horned Islands: A Journal of Japan* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 408.

real life."[16] The *kagura* play is truly a dream sequence. It is full of clowns and god-men, incredible heroes and stumbling idiots, in situations of utter terror and complete banality, all mixed together. The music of the play is to a degree the music of a dream, and depicts a dream landscape; and the motions of the masked actors are the motions of the *personae* of a dream. Perhaps that is the meaning of the *senryu*

Kaguradô tachi-giki-rashiku aruku nari

On the stage of the *kagura*
They walk as though
Eavesdropping.[17]

Tanizaki Junichiro made the same association between the dream world and the world of *o-kagura.* One of the persons of his novel, *Some Prefer Nettles,* is musing on a dreamy day in spring:

> It was as if a hundred formless and uncollected dreams were passing through his mind, the dreaming and the waking fused one into the other. ... Call it a taste of the joys of great peace, call it a transport to some fairyland, it was a feeling of serene removal from the world such as Kaname had not felt since the day he had been taken, still a child, to see the Kagura dancing at the Shrine of the Sea God in the old downtown section of Tokyo.[18]

That festival of the Suitengû Shrine is still held every springtime, in the first week of May. The shrine is located in Kakigara-chô, not far from Nihonbashi. Our photographs were taken there, in May of 1966.

Kaname is not alone in having very special childhood memories of *o-kagura,* and *o-matsuri.* But if there is a kind of universal child's prototype of the *kagura,* it would have to be the simple play which is acted out annually at many shrines (and not a few temples) on the occasion of *Setsubun. Setsubun* is the lunar New Year, and occurs in early February. Like all New Year observances, it is a festival of purification, in which all the malevolent spirits of the past must be driven off, and soundly pelted in the bargain. Its core is a child's morality play of good conquering evil, reminiscent of the Jewish Purim, in which the scapegoat Haman serves as the target of ridicule, mockery and browbeating. Here the target is the generalized *oni* (a devil with

16. *Ibid.,* p. 408.

17. R. H. Blyth, *Edo Satirical Verse Anthologies* (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1961), p. 254.

18. Tanizaki Junichiro, *Some Prefer Nettles* (*Tade Kû Mushi*), tr. Edward G. Seidensticker (New York: Berkley, 1960), p. 100.

no particular name or identity, who represents all devils, all manifestations of the demonic), portrayed by a *kagura* dancer, appropriately masked and costumed. As the play begins, two drummers and a flutist take their places on the side of the stage of the *kaguraden,* a building open on three sides, with a robing room to the rear, separated from the stage-area by a wall and curtain. The large drum and the small drum (*ôdaiko* and *taiko*) tap out the announcement that the *oni* is coming. Then the purple curtain-flap is suddenly drawn aside, and there stands the terrifying *oni* in the doorway. The flutist pipes a single zephyrous note, and the *oni* prances onto the stage, holding a *shamoji* or rice-paddle. He takes comical giant steps, his knees high. The children, gathered about at the foot of the outdoor stage by the hundreds, at first shrink back and are afraid: especially the very young children, who have been brought by their mothers. But it is soon clear even to the youngest that the *oni*-dancer, however fearful his visage and however menacing his gestures, is in fact performing a comical jig on stage, and it is all in fun. The children begin to titter. The *oni*-dancer looks toward the shrine (which the *kaguraden* more or less faces), and then proceeds down the wooden ramp that has been especially erected for the occasion, connecting the *kagura* stage to the front porch of the shrine. As he goes, he does his prancing dance—perhaps a masculine transposal of the erotic-magical dance of the ancient *miko*—taunting the spirits present in the shrine, provoking them to come out and show themselves. By the time he is halfway down the long ramp (colorful with its supporting posts wrapped in stripes of red and white), an entourage of priests (*kannushi*) emerges from the shrine and marches down the ramp (to the delight of the crowd), pelting the *oni* with soybeans, peanuts and mandarin oranges. The *oni,* turned coward now, shields himself from the blows as best he can (in comical fashion), and retreats back to the *kagura* stage, and thence through the curtained doorway to the privacy of the robing and masking room. The priests now take possession of the stage (having expelled the devil), and toss handfuls of peanuts and oranges to the crowd (thus expelling *their* devils). The mothers catch the peanuts and eat them then and there, saying now they will enjoy good health in the year to come. Older children scramble for the oranges with lightning movements. Some of the younger children just squat on the ground, to catch whatever gets past their elders and lands in their vicinity. A few police are there, but mainly to ask the exorcists not to throw too hard, in their enthusiasm, lest someone be hurt.

In the meantime, the *kagura* dancer, having retired to the robing

room, removes his mask (with some relief), and sits down by the *hibachi* for a smoke with his confreres the musicians, who have by now joined him. A few children, rather than chase oranges and peanuts, gather behind the building and climb on each other's shoulders to have a look at the *oni* without his mask. He is probably rather an elderly man, and kindly. If he is very good, and very much in demand, he may at this point turn the dancing over to his assistant, and go on to the next shrine that is waiting for him to begin the little drama there.

By now the priests have exhausted their supply of nuts and beans and *mikan,* and walk back along the ramp and disappear into the shrine building. The musicians reappear, and then the *oni,* who again does his taunting dance, as he again ventures down the ramp. This time a bevy of distinguished-looking businessmen emerges from the shrine (they are the pillars of the local community, and their sleek black chauffeur-driven Cedrics are waiting for them in the parking lot to the rear of the shrine); they pelt the *oni*-dancer as before, and he cowers and flees as before (by now some of the people standing near the ramp may join in the fun, and toss a few of their extra peanuts at him, to hasten him on his way). There is great fun and merriment as the oranges and nuts are thrown to the crowd again, and the children squeal and scramble about, having the time of their lives. The little drama is repeated over and over. After the businessmen, there may be a troupe of *sumô* wrestlers (one ought to think twice before trying to catch their oranges, which are thrown with such force they are apt to splatter over a ten-foot radius of the fortunate recipient), or of movie actresses (gracious in their manners, graceful in their traditional *kimono*), or an assortment, with the odd foreigner invited to join in for the good luck of all. It is an especially good time for the participation of men who have reached the "dangerous ages" of 25 and 42, or women of 19 or 32. Lest the repetition of this little performance become tedious and monotonous for the assembly, the shrine sometimes provides for an intermission dance performed by demure little girls who are usually the daughters of the chauffeur-driven industrialists, a last and rather pale reminder of the tradition of the *miko* of another era. Four little girls in white upper garments and red *hakama* dance a very slow and formal dance, each holding a big yellow chrysanthemum, to the accompaniment of some very saccharine recorded music. The boys fidget, until the *oni*'s capers resume.

Participation in the *Setsubun* celebration has led me to two observations, one of which is certain and obvious, and the other conjectural. First: it seems to me that this is one of those unique occasions when

a simple, elemental drama is enacted on a stage in such a way that the audience is drawn into the play, and becomes (collectively, so to speak) a part of the cast of characters. The threshhold between actors and spectators becomes blurred as the drama progresses, and in effect there cease to be any spectators at all, for all present are fully involved in the drama. The traditional theatre of Japan (with its roots deep in the sacred theatre) has shown a fondness for this kind of interplay; that is the purpose of the ramp (*hashi-gakari,* connecting bridge, *hana-michi,* flower path) in the Nô and Kabuki theatres: the actors, coming and going, pass by or among the members of the audience, drawing them into the action of the play. Just so, the *mikoshi* moves through the *machi* (town, neighborhood) at festival time, to draw people into the overall drama of *o-matsuri.*

Second: the effect of the drama is therapeutic, and the therapy (this being Japan) is of course group therapy: the play is in effect a kind of psychodrama. What we have here is much more than just people watching a play. The assembly, and in particular the children of the assembly, are acting out a very important lesson in life: one has to come face-to-face with one's devils, to confront the supposed sources of one's fears, and learn to laugh at fear. Thus the initial response of the child (to draw back in fear of the *oni*) is quickly transformed into amusement, and then play, as the young child observes the behavior of the mothers and the older children around him. The children's devils are shown to them to be simply clowns, who are easily (though perhaps never permanently) chased off.

When we turn to the sort of *kagura* drama performed as part of the *taisai,* the annual festival of the ordinary neighborhood shrine, we should not be surprised to find that one of the standard characters portrayed in this popular or *sato* (literally, village) *kagura* is the buffoon, commonly called *modoki,* but known by other names as well. Nor should we be surprised to find that audience involvement happens most explicitly at the level of the *modoki* part: it is *modoki* with whom the people most obviously identify, and it is thus *modoki* who contributes most to keeping the *kagura* theatre alive in a rapidly changing Japan.

One authority on *kagura* told me that in his view there are three basic character-types portrayed on the stage: first, there is the *kami,* who is, with rare exceptions, the heroic figure in the play. Next, there is the *modoki* role. He is usually the servant of the *kami* (the feudal footman, as it were), and his actions in a sense echo those of his master; that it to say, in carrying out his master's orders, he

appears to parody the swashbuckling mannerisms of the heroic lead—much to the delight of the crowd, who must feel closer to *modoki* than to his lord. The third character is the enemy of the *kami,* usually a demonic creature of some sort. But there are (or so this learned gentleman's theory goes) *modoki* elements in the performance of the demonic lead, suggesting that a demon is essentially the backwards reflection of a *kami.* For the heroic lead's servant and his enemy have this much in common: they are both doers of mischief. The demon's mischief is destructive, and must be stopped; the servant's mischief is harmless (though time-consuming), and in the end he is always loyal to his master, and follows him wherever he goes. He is in fact Sancho Panza, playing to Don Quixote's lead. As for *modoki* elements in other roles, that seems to be mainly a matter of style and of fashion. In Tokyo *kagura,* it is not at all uncommon to find comical elements worked into the interpretation of all the roles except the hero's—reminding the observer that the Edokko has a special taste for taking the sting out of life. Another scholar-authority told me: "In olden times, the play simply portrayed the contest between good and evil, but as the *kagura* developed in Tokyo, the good *vs.* evil theme was played down, and the comical aspects were played up."

Plates I–III were taken at a performance (at Suitengû) of "*Keishin Aikoku*" (also known popularly as "*Daikok'-sama,*" after the main character). Plate I was photographed from a little distance back, to show something of the outdoor stage itself, and the people watching. On the stage are the two comic characters, *modoki* with his back to the camera, and Shiofuki, fan in hand, facing the camera. The musicians are seated at the far side of the stage. Plate II shows the two *kami* characters of the play, Daikoku, associated with the fertility of the earth, and Ebisu, associated with the fertility of the sea. The *modoki* character who is serving them is Ebisu-sama's servant. Plate III shows Shiofuki, who is the servant of Daikoku-sama. The standard *modoki* mask (such as the one used in this play for Ebisu's servant) reminds one a little of the American cinematic stereotype of the punch-drunk boxer, with its flattened nose, its drooping eyelids, and the somewhat vacant though pleasant smile. In a common variant of this mask, the Hyottoko mask, the lips are puckered, and protrude oafishly; one eye is open, and the other nearly shut. Hyottoko masks are a children's favorite, and can be purchased (in a plastic version!) from the *tekiya* merchants at almost any shrine festival. Hyottoko evidently has brothers outside Japan: see for example the "comic partner" mask used in the Balinese courtship dance (pictured in the Mead-

Bateson study of Bali[19]), which bears a striking resemblance to the Hyottoko mask; or equally striking, two masks in the recent Ray-Blaker collection of Eskimo masks, one of them identified as "the bad spirit of the mountain."[20] Among the Eskimos too, masks are associated with shamanism, and with festival dances. Miss Ray observes: "Because of the Eskimo love of comradeship, the festivals were of profound social significance. Although the shaman's role as interpreter and intermediary with the spiritual world was unquestioned, and his influence was felt at every turn of the festivities, ceremonial development would have shriveled without group interaction.... The various long winter festivities, though aimed primarily at fusing the spiritual world with the early one, were in many cases...occasions of great importance to the solidarity of intertribal relations, and all entertainment was prepared with that in mind. Thus, the masked dances and festivals reinforced man's relation not only to the unknown, which was fraught with danger, but to other human beings, who also presented perils...."[21]

In the extreme variant in Japanese *kagura,* the Shiofuki mask, the protruding lips are even further exaggerated, and have been transformed into a moving part of the mask, set on an axial pin. The nostrils are flared, and the eyes, wide and round as Orphan Annie's, are fairly popping out of their sockets. As the play begins, the smiling Ebisu enters with his servant. Ebisu seats himself, and Daikoku enters, accompanied by his google-eyed servant, Shiofuki. Ebisu's servant laughs at Shiofuki's mouth. Ebisu himself goes over and taps it with his fan, and watches (with his frozen smile) as it jiggles up and down. Now Ebisu, in pantomime gestures, catches a fish, and Shiofuki kills it (with a blow of his fan), cleans it (using his fan as a knife), and he and the other servant cook it and serve it, first to Ebisu, then to Daikoku. Now the servants eat (all in pantomime), in a kind of parody of their masters (while the fish was cooking, Modoki had already attempted to sample it, and was whacked on the head by Shiofuki for his trouble). One of the clowns puts his finger in the pot to see if it is hot, and quickly pulls it out (saying *a-tsu-tsu!*); the other performs a mock *o-harai* (purification rite) and accidentally hits

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19. Margaret Mead & Gregory Bateson, *Balinese Character* (New York: N.Y. Academy of Sciences, 1942), p. 172, plate #59, picture #2.

20. Dorothy Jean Ray & Alfred A. Blaker, *Eskimo Masks: Art and Ceremony* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1967), plate VII (opp. p. 54) and plate #10 (fol. p. 96).

21. *Ibid.,* pp. 48–9.

his friend, who in turn gives him a shove. Meantime Daikoku and Ebisu are seated, watching the performance, and seemingly are chatting with each other (done ingeniously by tilting their heads, and nodding from time to time), grinning all the while. Now the two servants do a long parody on a formal dance with *suzu* (hand-bell) and fan, in which they keep bumping into each other clumsily, and each occassionally giving the other fellow a swift kick in the pants. After the clowns are through, Daikoku himself rises and does a dance, to complete the play, which takes about forty minutes all-in-all. The play is mainly humorous (although the *kami*'s actions all indicate the subliminal fertility theme of the festival, in this shrine which is a favorite of women in pregnancy), and the humor is mainly slapstick and a little cruel (much of it revolves around the deformity of Shiofuki). But there is no malice in it, and Shiofuki presumably learns to laugh with those who laugh at him. Fundamental to the play (and to all *kagura*) is the feudal code of interpersonal relations, without which one can hardly sustain a burlesque theatre of stereotypes. As for Shiofuki's "deformity," although it is an object of ridicule, there are also hints that it ought to be admired because it is extraordinary; and indeed more than a few hints that it has sexual significance, and therefore may be expected to provoke laughter, curiosity, and applause.

At the May 5, 1966 *taisai* observances at Suitengû, a program of three *kagura* plays was presented, performed by a company whose senior dancer was Tomoyama Shigeo. Mr. Tomoyama lives just a short distance from the Suitengû shrine, but performs at shrine festivals all over Tokyo. I first encountered him, in fact, at the shrine in my neighborhood in Bunkyô-ku, at the autumn *taisai,* during my first weekend in Japan. He told me at that time that "*kagura* is a dying art form, with no new generation to carry on." When I later visited him and his family in their home in *shitamachi,* his daughter commented, "He is 84, or 85 now." I had known he was getting on in years, but expressed surprise, for I had seen him perform at many shrines, for two hours or more at a time, handling the most difficult roles, leaping about on the stage like a young man. She replied: "He lives to dance. It is his prayer to the *kami.* So, on days like this (on festival days, when he dances), he looks young." The Tomoyama household itself covers three generations of a very gifted theatrical family. Old Mr. Tomoyama is a master *kagura* dancer (in the plays shown in the plates, he danced the most difficult role in each: he was Daikoku-sama in "Keishin Aikoku," and he was the serpent in "Orochi Taiji"); of the two women of the middle generation, one is a teacher and performer

of *kouta,* and the other is active in the *shinpa* theatre; the third generation is a young man of college age who is a jazz drummer, and a fan of the Modern Jazz Quartet. I once asked old Mr. Tomoyama whether he had managed to train any students, so that he might pass on his knowledge and skill to the next generation. He replied, "Most of my students have died already. There are just four or five left." The 1966 performances at Suitengû were to be the last for a time. This particular shrine was one of the few that was not destroyed in the incendiary bombings of 1945, but by 1966 it was in need of reconstruction. The rebuilding, I was told, would take three or four years, during which time no *kagura* will be performed. After that, perhaps the venerable Tomoyama will no longer be able to carry on.

Of the three plays done at that last performance, "Keishin Aikoku," just described, was the middle play. The first was "Inari Yama," and the last was the ever popular "Orochi Taiji" (see Plates IV–VI). Each of these plays may be known by several names. The play I refer to as "Orochi Taiji" (The Conquest of the Serpent-Monster) is also known as "Daija Taiji" (which is simply an alternate reading of the same *kanji*) and "Yamata-no-Orochi" (The Eight-Forked Serpent-Monster). It is a dramatic presentation of the familiar tale of Susanô-no-mikoto's rescue of a damsel in distress, and their subsequent marriage. In the Kojiki version, Susanô, the troublesome brother of Amaterasu-Omikami, finds himself in Izumo, where he meets an elderly couple beset with worry lest an awful dragon devour their only remaining daughter. Susanô offers to help them, in return for their daughter's hand; he sets out barrels of *sake,* to render the monster senseless, and then kills him, claiming the girl. In the classic tale, the serpent has eight heads and eight tails, his eyeballs are red as the *hôzuki,* and blood is constantly oozing from his belly. But in Tokyo *kagura,* he walks upright like a man (though his face is snouted), and he wears splendid brocaded robes befitting a *kami,* albeit an evil one (see Plate V). The truth is that Tokyo *kagura* humanizes the great serpent, to the degree that someone who has read the Kojiki story, and then goes to see the play, might not think to identify the two.

In the Tomoyama company's performance, the girl enters, followed by her father; the flute plays long monotonic passages, to the accompaniment of a monotonous drum. The old man explains his family's plight in a voice muffled by the heavy wooden mask, and barely audible. Then he walks about the stage in a wide circle, in a half-comical wobble, using a cane. We see now that his face is rather comical, with its white bushy eyebrows, long white moustaches, and

white chin-whisker (Plate VI). Now he seems to be invoking a god (Susanô) by presenting an offering on a *sambô* (offeratory tray). The dragon enters, to the music of thundrous drum beats and a wildly erratic flute; he spots the *sake* and begins to drink, holding his long hair; finally he sits down on the floor, groggy. Enter Susanô (Plate IV); his *mien* is fiercely heroic, but his actions have been rather more on the cautious and resourceful side. His future father-in-law, with Susanô's encouragement, attempts the execution of the monster, but starts to tremble and loose his nerve; he too is a god in the classical mythology, but on this stage he is cast in a *modoki* role, to some degree. Susanô puts the monster to the sword. Regaining his courage, the funny old man pulls the monster's head back, by the hair, to have a look, and the serpent, not quite dead yet, snaps at him angrily; the old man jumps back, and the audience laughs. The god and the dragon have at each other a few more times, and then the dragon exits, then Susanô, then the girl. The old man dances a jig in celebration of his daughter's rescue and succcessful match, and then exits. In all, the performance has taken about a half hour, and is a shortened version of the full play. It is in fact a very good example of the kind of liberties a dance-company may take with a given play. One person of the drama was left out entirely (the mother of the girl), as often happens when there are not enough actors to do all the roles. I have seen plays where the cast of characters runs to a half-dozen or more, but only one or two dancers are available; and so most of the parts are simply omitted—to the distress of no one, since every one more or less knows the story anyway, and can imagine the rest. Ordinarily, the last scene of "Orochi Taiji" is a merry jig danced by the mother and father of the rescued damsel; but, as we have seen, when there is no one to dance the role of the mother, the father dances alone. The plays are completely flexible and adaptable to circumstances; hence they are apt to be a little different in each performance one sees. Another example of the flexibility of *sato kagura* is the magic sword that can clearly be seen in Plate V, protruding from the back of the dragon; when he kills the dragon, the god-hero Susanô is supposed to extract the sword. In the performance described, in order to shorten the play, the magic sword (which is later to be presented to Susanô's sister in Heaven) is simply ignored, and left in its place!

Other versions of this play done about Tokyo are pretty much the same, except that the Wakayama company interprets the drunken dance of the serpent in a fully comical idiom, making Orochi himself another god-parody in the *modoki* manner. But in the country,

where *kagura* has been influenced far less by the professional *kabuki* theatre, the drama fits the mythic narrative much more snugly. In Chichibu (a market town fifty miles northwest of Tokyo, in the rural-mountainous region of Saitama Prefecture), Susanô is a demonic-looking gentleman with stringy black hair and drooping moustaches who lunges with every step; his step is light, but fearful and firm. Actual clay pots are lugged onto the stage, and Susanô makes the brew there before our very eyes, pulling leaves from the sacred branch he holds and dropping them in the pot. He paces ominously before the audience as he awaits the serpent, he dismisses the girl's elderly parents, he has the girl look into the clay pot, then pushes her away, and he paces some more. Suddenly, the great serpent leaps onto the stage; his snout is three or four times as long as that of his citified counterpart, and is matched by a green scaly full-length serpent suit. All in all, he looks rather like a crocodile. What is more to the point, he moves like a crocodile: horizontally. The monster (or rather the likeable young farmer playing the role) somehow managed to propel himself onto the stage horizontally, and land atop the low railing that runs around the three open sides of the *kaguraden*, along which he began to slither and writhe. He had emerged from the wings like a cannon-shot, to the amazement and delight of all, and now he cavorted on the railing in a way that was half exciting, half terrifying, especially for the children watching. He wormed his way along the side railing, and then onto the railing along the front of the stage; he would leap forward, then flop his head back so that he was hanging out over the audience (they in turn squealed, and took a few steps back); he flopped over and hung suspended over the stage (all took a few steps forward again), took another lunge ahead, let his head flop back and growled and snapped at children who had come too close (they squealed and backed off again); and so on, and on. It was the most brilliant virtuoso performance I have ever seen on the *kagura* stage; all the more remarkable to me because I had chatted with this young man during the intermissions between plays (he was 25, and a farmer from outside the town), and knew he was quite drunk. He had given the impression of being a kindly simpleton, but he was all aglow and very friendly, and fascinated by my small portable tape-recorder. They had invited me to sit on the stage beside him as he played the flute in an earlier play, and during the intermission asked me to play it back, listened with obvious satisfaction, and then invited me to join the musicians who had gathered backstage around the charcoal brazier for a smoke and a bit more refresh-

ment. He had me play the tape over again, for the benefit of his confreres, who were all engrossed, and nodded to the rhythm, and agreed I had gotten the tune just right. A student who was with me ventured the opinion that my young friend the flutist was too fuddled to dance any more that evening; but he fooled us both by going out and doing a very formal *mai* to perfection—these dances are rather dainty in their way, and not what we would call *manly,* but require what Ezra Pound called "the pivot" (*ch'ung*)—and this farmer's pivot was working perfectly, and he danced with perfect grace and balance; he played the flute in the play that followed, and then did his spectacular rendition of the role of Yamata-no-Orochi. It was, I suppose, what might be called a possession dance: all the more remarkable because of the small space within which the dancer had to operate, and the fact that he never bumped into anyone or anything—myself, and the musicians, sitting on the stage; my camera and recording equipment; a sign that was leaning against the railing —however abandoned his dance may have appeared, he was in full control every moment.

So we have here in Chichibu *kagura* certain obvious contrasts with Tokyo *kagura*: it is amateur, rather than professional; it is crude, rather than polished; it is more literal in its presentation; it can be much more intense, both in the involvement of the actors and the involvement of the audience. But even more striking is the fact that each character, whether god or demon or supporting role, combines qualities of terror and seriousness and humor in his performance; that is to say, there is no artificial separation of humor from heroism. The feudal view of human relations is missing; the status differentiation between master and servant is not present; the services of a *modoki* are not required. Yamata-no-Orochi can give us a chuckle without ceasing to make us shudder. One finds a special kind of dramatic integrity in country *kagura.*

And one is inclined to assess the artistic merits of the Tokyo companies along similar lines, and by comparable criteria. The performances done by Mr. Tomoyama and his company are apt to be less "complete," less "professional," less polished than those of other companies; but they have about them a curiously indefinable excitement and authenticity that is rarely found in present-day *kagura.* But the problem is more complicated than that. I encountered, in doing the rounds of the Tokyo shrine festivals, four *kagura* companies: two were largely men in their seventies and eighties, who danced with the kind of authenticity and simplicity I have spoken of.

The two others were headed by relatively young men (in their forties, I should say); and these companies were facing special problems: problems of survival. One, Matsumoto Gennosuke, is moving *kagura* in the direction of popular entertainment, away from the shrines ("Matsumoto's *kagura* for sightseers," one of the older dancers disparagingly called it); the other, Wakayama Taneo, is moving it into the polite world of the concert stage, the world of attentive audiences, of white shirts, business suits and neckties. Of the two, Wakayama's way is apt to appeal to academicians, who like to think of preserving art forms in their purity, in a pickle jar as it were; professors are born museum-keepers. But Matsumoto's way is perhaps truer to the spirit of *kagura,* which is after all a popular art, of the people and for the people. Yet neither solution is quite satisfactory; for *kagura* is not just for the people, it is for the entertainment of the *kami* as well. Thus the priest (*kannushi*) of one of the Fuji Jinja in Tokyo told me that his shrine had never staged *kagura* plays because the shrine is without *ujiko* or *ujigami*; its devotees, during its hay-day in the Genroku era, were the *Fujiko* who directed their veneration toward the sacred mountain. During festival times (marking the opening and closing of the sacred mountain during the summer pilgrimage season), many stages were set up, offering many kinds of entertainment; but since there was no *kami* present there, there was no *kagura.* Nowadays they offer *manzai* acts: a bickering husband-and-wife team, reminiscent of American burlesque humor, or its latter-day heir, the "situation comedy" of commercial television. These *manzai* acts were very popular with the priests after the war, who used them, in the *kaguraden,* to take the place of *kagura* at festivals; the priests had hoped that by "keeping up with the times" they might win back some of the dwindling popular interest in activities at the shrine. The experiment was largely a failure, and most of the shrines have gone back to the traditional *kagura* presentations, on a limited scale —though I do recall encountering at least one *manzai* act at a suburban shrine (as well as on television variety shows). The big shrines in Tokyo of course have their own specialties: Bugaku at Meiji Jingû, Nô at Yasukuni. At these shrine, *sato kagura* is simply too low-brow. There are *kendô* demonstrations and *biwa* recitals on the stage of the Yasukuni Shrine, even "big band" vocalists in floor-length black velvet gowns, singing "Sakura, Sakura" to jazz accompaniment (with electric guitars); but no *kagura.* At Meiji Shrine, one does hear *matsuri bayashi* (the thematic music of *kagura,* performed on the same instruments, by a five- instead of a four-piece

band), but the musicians are placed on a temporary stage at some distance from the sanctuary and the dancing area, just outside the mid-path *torî*. Where *kagura is* performed, at the smaller neighborhood shrines, it does not draw very large crowds nor very attentive audiences. It fares rather better in the true "downtown" (*shitamachi*) neighborhoods than in the *yamanote* ("uptown," white collar); but one has to remember that a quarter of a century has now passed since the end of the Pacific War, and a whole generation has grown up with practically no knowledge of, or feeling for, Japan's mythic heritage. The young simply do not know what is being portrayed on the stage; they only know that it is wordless (in an era that stresses "communications"), rather ponderous (in a world that values speed and impatience), and they are quite bored with it. Add to this the poverty of the smaller, neighborhood shrines (one elderly dancer told me his company of five or six are paid ¥10,000—less than US$30—for a full afternoon's entertainment: about $5 per man per day), and one can understand the need of the younger companies either somehow to expand their area of activity, or perish.

In my interviews with Mr. Matsumoto, he was all in all quite cheerful about how things were going with him; but his fragmentary accounts of his life, patched together, portray a life lived against a backdrop of social change so accelerated that it normally would have taken generations to adjust to. He recalled his youth, as an apprentice to a master dancer-musician. "In the old days," he said, "the student began as the *sensei's* sweeper. And while you were sweeping your teacher's floor for him, he would come up behind you, and take you by surprise. He would hit you with a wooden stick, and you were to respond, with your broom, automatically, and stage a fencing duel, as though you were on the stage. It was part of your training; if you ran away instead of fighting back, he gave you no supper that night. But the young people today will not stand for that sort of treatment. I have twenty students, but I cannot train them the way my *sensei* trained me. But without that kind of training, you cannot have really good *kagura* dancers." What is the future," I asked him. "Bad," he replied; "but I hope we can keep it alive. There are fifteen or sixteen good dancers in Tokyo today, but they are mostly over 60; one is 60, one 73, and one 80. I have a twenty-year old student who will be very good, but he is not a professional dancer. My son is in fourth grade; I am not sure whether he will follow in my footsteps." Matsumoto's father was a shrine priest, and many of his relatives are still today *kannushi*. With the close of the Pacific War

in 1945, with most of the shrines in ruins and their future very much in doubt, he supported himself by performing at U.S. military bases in and around Tokyo (including Tachikawa), and by dancing twice a week for the patients at St. Luke's Hospital in Tsukiji. At one point he was even giving *kagura* lessons to an American army nurse. Today he dances at all the major festivals of almost all the major shrines, and one is apt to encounter him in spring or fall at Hie Jinja, or Yushima Tenjin, or Kanda Myôjin, or Nezu Gongen; at Setsubun, he must initiate the little devil-expulsion drama at four or five shrines; and otherwise he fills his engagement calendar with bank-openings, and an occasional performance at the Prince Hotel. In fact, he continually urged me to see his performances, not at the shrines, but at the banks and hotels, because they "can afford the best *kagura,* and the best costumes, and the shrines cannot." But his pride and joy is the nightclub act he has prepared for the Matsubaya ("a restaurant with theatres"), in the old Yoshiwara section of Tokyo. The clientele seemed to me to be largely tourists from the north of Japan (whom Tokyo people are apt to regard, somewhat uncharitably, as yokels). Few *gaijin* make it to this establishment, but there is a hand-out ready in English for those who do. It explains that Hyottoko "is a funny man of queer face" (he is in fact probably related to the *kamado-gami,* or hearth god), and that his feminine counterpart Okame is "a woman of humorous personality" (she is in fact Ame-no-Uzume, who performed the erotic prototype of the *kagura*; she is also known as Otafuku—the word used in Japan for mumps, because of her round face and puffy cheeks). In Matsumoto's playlet, Okame and Hyottoko (who are in effect a bumpkin variant on Ame-no-Uzume and Sarutahiko, who in turn are an earthy Izanagi and Izanami) fall in love, but need a go-between; Daikoku appears ("his small mallet has a lot of happiness"), and unites them; they quarrel, and he brings about a reconciliation. It is a play that is all *modoki,* and no heroism: a dramatic *reductio ad absurdum,* art totally converted into entertainment. In a playlet done for the Matsuzakaya Department Store, Matsumoto built his story-line around the characters of Hyottoko and Okame (his favorites, because he says they are the most popular with *shitamachi* people) and Tanuki, the folkloric badger. Matsumoto himself sees these adaptations of *kagura* as "arrangements for the stage" and "for shows"; his motive is to "appeal to the younger folk" (thus where traditional *kagura* would call for a sweeping gesture indicating a blow with the sword, Matsumoto converts it into a golf stroke). "It is a changing profession," he explains; "interest in *kagura* is fading among my compatriots, but growing among sight-

seers."

The alternative to adapting *kagura* to the nightclub is adapting it to what we in the West call somewhat pompously the "legitimate" theatre; and that would seem to be the mission of another very fine dancer, Wakayama Taneo. Professor Honda Yasuji, his Boswell, and one of Japan's leading scholars in the field of theatre arts, told me that the Wakayama family began to extend and perfect the repertoire of Tokyo *kagura* two generations ago, and that it was Wakayama Taneo's grandfather, Wakayama Kiyotane, who wrote new plays in the *kagura* manner but intended for the modern stage. The present catalogue of the company includes eleven *"kindai kagura"* or modern *kagura,* based on classical-mythic themes; five *"otogi* (fairytale) *kagura,"* including the stories of Momotarô, Urashima Tarô, and the naughty badger of Kachi-kachi Yama; and six plays adopted from the Nô and Kabuki theatre. The company stages a twice-a-year concert at the famous Suidôbashi Nôgakudô, with selections from its repertoire of forty-two traditional *kagura* plays and these twenty-two "new" plays. Wakayama's students may also put on performances from time to time; some are prominent business men who have developed an interest in actively working to preserve this important element of traditional Japanese culture, and are themselves becoming excellent dancers. Indeed, everything this company does is done in style, and done to perfection. Their costumes are crisp and radiant, their masks are well kept and expressive (there is only one man left in Tokyo who makes these masks, I am told) and their movements are measured and decisive (though for my tastes too consciously imitative of *kabuki* posturings). For the convenience of the play-goer, Mr. Wakayama and his musicians have recorded the basic musical modes of *kagura,* and Professor Honda (who is on the faculty at Waseda University) has written an accompanying booklet[22] which lists the full repertoire of the company, according to the chronological sequence established by the canon of classical mythology. Because any one play can be known by several names, and be done in a variety of versions, and because the Wakayama company had as full a repertoire as any in Tokyo, I found myself using Honda's catalogue rather in the way I can imagine a Mozartian using the Köchel catalogue: "Keishin Aikoku" (Plates I–III) appears in my field notes as Honda #40; "Orochi Taiji" (Plates IV–VI) is Honda #5. The Honda catalogue gives a title for each play, and

22. Honda Yasuji, *Edo no Kagura to Matsuri Bayashi* (Tokyo: Victor Company of Japan, 1962). Accompanying record album #SJ-3004.

then a brief description of the action, in a few sentences: enough to indicate to the knowledgable play-goer the mythological source of the play. But these plays, as I have tried to point out, are done in a highly stylized form of mime: to the degree that there is a great disparity between the mythic source and what is actually done on the stage. Estimates of just how many *kagura* plays there are in all vary considerably; one scholar gave me the figure eighty-five, another said thirty-five. The Wakayama company knows forty-two; one of the older masters outlined a cycle of fifteen plays, and another was able to outline nine plays in detail, which seemed to constitute about half his repertoire. But the point is that the plays are never done as a cycle, and surely no *kagura* company would ever dream of staging its full repertoire in sequence—or even a part of it. The reasons for this are complex. There is of course the practical matter of just how much an audience can take—even an ambulatory audience of the kind that gathers to watch these performances out-of-doors, free to move about, and come and go as they please. Usually the *kagura* players will stage three or four plays for an afternoon set, or perhaps divide their day into two sets, with two or three plays in the afternoon and two or three in the evening. If two or three days of *kagura* are desired, several companies may be invited, to share the burden. The dancers try to select a program that will be appropriate to the shrine; at a shrine dedicated to Susanô-no-mikoto, they will select plays that show Susanô in a favorable light. They would never perform the play (Honda #4) which depicts Susanô's stormy relationship with his sister and his banishment from Heaven. Similarly, they would never perform "Yûgen Bunkai" (Honda #10) at a Suwa Shrine, because it depicts the defeat of Takeminakata (one of O-Kuni-Nushi's two sons) after his unsuccessful resistance to the invasion of the central land of reed plains by the heaven-*kami*. The Suwa shrines venerate Takeminakata, and it would be bad form indeed to shame him on his feast day, and remind him of his dishonor. I once attended the annual festival of the Tôgô Jinja in the Harajuku section of Tokyo (held on May 28, to commemorate the 1905 sinking of the Russian fleet by Admiral Tôgô, Japan's great naval hero); the festival was in effect a reunion of retired naval officers, who shared a sumptuous meal out-of-doors on the shrine grounds, and then stood as the famous "Z" flag was hoisted, faced the holy-of-holies and lustily said their *banzai*'s, and then staggered off (danced off, in some cases) to their waiting Cedrics by the time the *kagura* began. Only a few elderly gentlemen were left (one who was 85, and had joined the Imperial

Navy just after the sinking of the Russian fleet, came over to us and asked if he might practice his English conversation—he was following the lessons on the N.H.K.; he also claimed to be the founder of Seichô-no-Ie, whose headquarters are within sight of the shrine, but of course he was not). The *kagura* company for this occasion was very small, and so the play they did had to be limited to two characters: they chose Honda #3, in which the main character is Izanagi, who has just returned from Hell, having abandoned his wife there and successfully outrun the harpies who pursued him; he stops to purify himself in the clear waters, and in so doing gives birth to several gods. The Kojiki lists twenty-six; in Wakayama-Honda, only three are portrayed on stage: the gods of the surface of the water, the bottom (the floor of the sea and bed of the river?), and the place between. In this particular performance, there was only one dancer, who danced the role of Izanagi, performed the purification with a *sakaki* branch, and then exited, changed masks, and reappeared as the *kami* of the bottom of the sea, performing a stately dance with sword and *suzu*.

The Honda list, with my own English adaptations of titles and plots, begins as follows:

1 "The Floating Bridge". The creation of the world (i.e., the islands of Japan) by Izanagi and Izanami. They walk around Izanagi's sword, in the dramatized versions I have seen (the mythology calls for a jeweled spear). Their turning is the generative act.

2 "The Harpies Of Hell". Izanami has died (in childbirth), and her husband, Izanagi, goes to the nether-world, the land of Yomi, to bring her back. As the scene opens, Izanami is there, but her face is covered by the sleeve of her kimono; she refuses to show herself to Izanagi; and when she does reveal herself, her face is the mask of *hannya,* or woman as demon! Both exit. Re-enter Izanagi, accompanied by a terrifying god with a red face (Okanzumi in mythology, who repells the harpies, here represented by *hannya,* by hurling the magical peach at them; but to the audience, he is a variant on Sarutahiko); he struts about, then fights with *hannya,* she exits, and he does his triumphal dance.

3 "The Water's Cleanness". At his emergence from the nether-world, Izanagi stops to purify himself.

4 "God's Raincoat". Susanô-no-Mikoto and Amaterasu-Omikami quarrel, and she exiles him to the land below, but provides him with a straw raincoat and hat.

5 "The Dragon's Demise". Susanô kills the eight-forked serpent.

6 "The Rock Cavern". The sun goddess is so upset about her

obstreperous brother's behavior that she hides herself in a cave, and must be lured out by the erotic dance of Ame-no-Uzume and the laughter of the assembled gods.

Almost every *kagura* dancer I interviewed, when I asked him for titles and plot summaries, began with a list something like this. One man listed Honda's #6, "The Rock Cavern", as his #1, "God's Raincoat" as #2, "The Dragon's Demise" as #3, and so on; another began with "God's Raincoat", then "The Dragon's Demise", then the story of how Susanô-no-Mikoto (it was really O-Kuni-Nushi) helped the white rabbit (this is #58 in Honda's catalogue, and listed under "fairytale kagura"), and so on. I have never seen either play #4 nor #6, and cannot attest to how they are done on stage. I do know that the creation dance of Honda #1, "The Floating Bridge", was done in such a stylized way the one time I saw it, that I did not recognize what I was watching until quite near the end; the jeweled spear mentioned in the sources and in the Honda booklet was represented by a sword, and the plot summary otherwise had led me to believe that I would see the divine couple stir the ocean with this long spear, lift it out and watch the sediment dripping from it (to form the Japanese islands), and that they would then proceed to have a great number of children right there on the stage (though Honda correctly points out that usually the spear dance is all that is done). In play #11, "The Holy Descent" ("Tenson Kôrin"), when the gods have decided to colonize the land below and initiate the gradual change-over from the Age of the Kami to the Age of Men, but find the path blocked by the ruddy Sarutahiko, they again send the provocative shamaness Ame-no-Uzume to remove the obstruction; she again bares her breasts and pushes down "the band of her garment below her navel," and confronts Sarutahiko (who will be her mate) "with a mocking laugh."[23] I knew surely I would not see that portrayed on the stage, and indeed I did not; I have seen several performances of "Tenson Kôrin" on the stage, but none of them would have given me a clue to the mythological origin of the play. Sarutahiko enters and does a formal dance; sometimes a *modoki* character then parodies his dance; Ame-no-Uzume enters (both are wearing the most formal, the most beautifully brocaded costumes), they talk, gesturing politely with their fans; then both bow courteously, and Ninigi enters; there are a few more formal dances with the *suzu* (cluster of bells), and that is about it. I said to the master dancer after one of these performances: Ame-no-Uzume is a very

23. *Nihongi,* tr. W. G. Aston (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956), p. 77.

wild woman; why do you not portray her as such on the stage? He replied: "She is a wild woman. But I am dancing before a god, and dancing the role of a god, and so although I know how she is, I must dance it in a more godly way." If I see the play done in Tôhoku, will she be as polite as she is in Tokyo *kagura?* I asked. "When I was young, it was done in a wild way, outside Tokyo. But not any more; not even in Tôhoku." When was it last done wild in Tokyo? I asked. "It was *never* wild in Tokyo," he replied.

In Honda's inventory, plays #1–6 deal more or less with the Genesis period of the classic chronicles; plays #7–10 give an account of the diplomatic missions sent by the heaven-gods preparatory to the coming of their descendents to govern the earth; play #10, as we have mentioned, recounts the collapse of the last resistance to their descent, and in #11 ("The Holy Descent") the Queen of Heaven, Amaterasu, sends down her august grandson Ninigi to inaugurate a new era. The new era comes to fruition around play #15, for that is when the legendary first emperor, Jimmu Tennô, first appears. His exploits are recounted in plays #15–18; later plays tell of the heroic and supernatural deeds of succeeding emperors and empresses and their noble warriors. Some of the dancers are quite conscious that there are two categories of play here: the ones that pre-date Jimmu Tennô and belong to the "Age of the Gods," and those that follow, and belong to what some call the "*Tennô* Age" or Age of the Emperors. But in some ways, the Imperial Age repeats the *Kami* Age; or, if you will, the Age of the Gods anticipates the Imperial Age. Thus, in a sense, Honda #11, "The Holy Descent", in which Ame-no-Uzume confronts Sarutahiko and they mate, and the focus of our attention then shifts from the doings in Heaven to the doings here on earth, is a kind of second creation, a second genesis; it is the story of the heavenly mother and father, Izanagi and Izanami, told over again, but in fully human terms. The mystical wedding that began on the Floating Bridge of Heaven (a rainbow? the Milky Way?) is a celestial harbinger of the flesh-and-blood union of the two exhibitionists. And the embodiment of manly strength in the heavenly dragon-slayer Susanô reappears countless times in the tales about our human heroes; as does the theme of feminine withdrawal ("The Rock Cavern"), the woman who turns monster ("The Harpies of Hell"), and so on.

So let us be wary of the obvious method of tracing plays back to texts (the hardware of the scholar's workshop), and the easy assumption that an orderly summary of the supposed content of the

plays will automatically lead us closer to their social and sacred meaning. For meaning is not necessarily contained in the verbal plot-summary, nor in the cataloguer's sorting of the repertoire according to the accepted mythic chronology. We must proceed along the riskier and uncharted path of observing what the plays mean within the wider context of *o-matsuri,* for its living, modern-day participants: both those who participate from the foot of the stage and those who participate from above. For what after all is chronology? Consider the dream. It discards chronology, or simply has no use for a chronology of events; it prefers to classify memories and images by its own system, which has no apparent time-referrent. Or as Freud puts it: "the impressions of the immediate past...stand in the same relation to the dream-content as those of periods indefinitely remote. The dream may select its material from any period of life, provided only that a chain of thought leads back from the experiences of the day of the dream...to that earlier period."[24] And the world of *kagura* is the world of dream. The parts of the play are interconnected by the same logic that connects the parts of a dream; and the various plays are interconnected by the same logic —just as we may dream three or four dreams in one night, and wake up the next morning unsure of whether it might not have been all one dream. That is why one of my master dancers continually confused all the heroes of all the plays: because in fact they ought to be confused, i.e. poured together, muddled. So should the Age of the Gods and the Age of Man be confused. For the gods are after all only men; and men are capable of being gods. Amaterasu, when her curiosity gets the best of her and she peeps out from behind the cavern door, reveals herself simply as an ordinary Japanese housewife. And a *senryu* poet wrote:

> Wine was needed
> to deceive others
> even in the time of the gods[25]

The poet acknowledges that the Age of the Gods is a source era, a special time, a time set apart from ordinary time; things must after

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24. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* tr. A. A. Brill (New York, Random House, 1950), p. 73. I have corrected what seem to me two simple typographical errors.

25. R. H. Blyth, *Edo Satirical Verse Anthologies* (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1961), p. 239. Blyth thinks the poem refers to Susanô's setting out eight barrels of *sake* for the serpent to drink before he slays him.

all not have been so different then as we might suppose. The heroic deeds done by the gods are not so heroic, examined closely; they are the sorts of things men do to each other, even today. The great hero Yamato-takeru dresses as a woman (in Honda #23) to gain access into the dwelling place of his enemy, the chief of the Kumaso, whom he/she then gets drunk on sake, and runs him through. The stubborn son of O-Kuni-Nushi, Takeminakata, uses false hospitality and *sake* to dispose of Heaven's ambassador, Hohi Jôshi, in the very popular play of the same name (Honda #8). And Post Wheeler quotes this line, from a well-known poem:

> E'en the ancient Kami once
> Were men, as we are[26].

The Honda list follows the chronology of the classical texts. But in retrospect, it seems invaluable to me that before I discovered the Honda list (which in many ways made my field work a good bit easier), I interviewed one of my venerable dancers, and got his version of the Tokyo repertoire, from memory. Using Honda numbers, his sequence was as follows: 4, 5, 58, 25, 15, 2, 13, 11, 29, 31, 10, and so on. At first I thought this jumbling of the sequence was a consequence of his age: which in part it might have been. But the point is that he had surely never been asked for a recitation of this kind before, and so he found it difficult enough to remember all the plays he could dance, let alone get them into some sort of meaningful order (meaningful for a scholar, that is, a keeper of texts). His vocation was to dance the Kojiki, not to read it. So when I first went over my interview notes with him, and tried to relate them to the mythic narrative, I found the job frustrating indeed: especially since the character he had identified as Susanô often turned out to be O-Kuni-Nushi in the text, or vice versa. And then it dawned on me that he had unwittingly given me a great gift. I had seen "Inari-yama" (Honda #33) about five times in Tokyo that year; it seemed to be one of the most popular *kagura* of all. In it the god Inari Daimyôjin asks his messenger *kitsune* (the familiar fox of Japanese folklore) to bring him the hero who will go out and kill a certain *akki* (an evil spirit of the sort that possesses people). In the play the hero comes, accepts the bow and arrow from the god with which he is to kill the devil, and (as the play ends) goes off

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26. Post Wheeler, *The Sacred Scriptures of the Japanese* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. xv.

to do the deed. In the following play (Honda #34, "Akki Taiji" or "Conquest of the Demon"), the hero kills the demon; yet play #34 is somehow never produced. Nor could anyone in the audience watching "Inari-yama," nor any of the dancers, ever tell me the identity of this awful demon. And the point is, no one was particularly worried over the omission. So the *kagura* repertoire is not a sequence that we must understand, if we are to understand the whole *Gestalt* of the festival: it is a *non*-sequence that we must understand. It means that the *kami* world and the human world are all mixed together, and that the transition from Kami Age to Age of Man is not an historical sequence, a time process that *took* place, but an ultimately directionless flow back and forth, from the one kind of time to the other. Thus can these tales be told over and over, year after year, in any order. They do not belong to the realm of passing time—nor do the *kami,* nor does man. That is the message of O-Kagura. It is of course not the way scholars read and interpret the Kojiki; but it is how the Kojiki is done.

All of which leads me to one final reflection on prototypes. I have mentioned Ame-no-Uzume's "belly dance" as the mythic-historical prototype of all *kagura*; I have given my own thoughts on the little exorcism drama of Setsubun as a kind of living prototype, for children; and were I either more presumptuous or an historian, I might make some similar claims for country *kagura* of the sort still to be seen in Chichibu. But for my final prototype, which we might call a phenomenological prototype, we must examine a type of *kagura* that is distinctly not a folk drama, and not done out-of-doors, but within the confines of the *haiden* of the shrine building itself: a sort of private, command performance for the *kami* himself alone. It is known by various names in Tokyo, and takes very different forms in different shrines (each has its own traditions); but it seems most commonly to be known as *dai-dai kagura.* Sometimes it is not too different from the *sato kagura* done in the *kaguraden,* except that it is simpler, more polished, and lacking in the *modoki* roles. But the performance I have particularly in mind is the one that is done inside the *haiden* of the little shrine next to the huge Kannon temple in Asakusa, in mid-May, during the great Sanja-sama Matsuri. There, in the darkness of that sacred hall, two huge lions cavort: two lion masks and costumes, one representing the masculine principle, the other the feminine, each occupied by two skillful dancers. It is a very formal dance, as the lions crouch, then rise and turn and face in the four directions, and crouch and rise again. Watching them,

standing out in the blazing sun and peering in at them, with the crowd pushing ever closer to catch a glimpse, one is present at the creation of the world; and I thought to myself: Do you suppose there was once a time when dances like this were done 'secretly,' inside the *haiden,* and people, peeping in from outside, thought they were actually seeing the gods themselves solemnly cavorting on the *tatami*? I say this because:

1. The movements of those lions is something unearthly, and supra-human. I mean: the line between representation and holy presence is, for me, blurred; I have forgotten to remember that I am watching men, not *kami.*
2. This blurring is intensified by

   a. the bright sun outside, the shadows in there;
   b. the crowds jamming up against the doorway for a glimpse, while the two lions elegantly lurch ahead, then settle back, and turn augustly and monstrously. One feels at once part of the profane 'outside' realm, rightly excluded from being actually present There, with Them; and fortunate to have been granted this rare beatific vision."

It is as the head priest of one shrine told me: "You mustn't worry too much about the origins and locales of the different schools of *kagura.* You must try to get the spirit of the dance. *Kagura* is one of the ways of giving pleasure to the *kami* at *o-matsuri* time; so origins do not matter, only the spirit. The spirit is essential. The atmosphere of the festival. You've got to feel it."

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Plate I. The *kaguraden* of Suitengu Shrine, Kakigara-chō, in "downtown" Tokyo, during a performance of "Keishin Aikoku."

Plate II. "Keishin Aikoku." Daikoku (drinking *sake*), Ebisu, and Ebisu's servant.

Plate III. "Keishin Aikoku." Shiofuki's dance.

Plate IV. "Orochi Taiji." Susanô-no-mikoto.

Plate V. "Orochi Taiji." The Serpent.

Plate VI. "Orochi Taiji." The Serpent, brought to his knees by too much wine, about to be slain by Susanô, as Susanô's prospective father-in-law looks on approvingly.